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Executive Summary

Downtown Mansfield has been on a revitalization path since 1991 when the Richland Carrousel Park opened. During the planning, many people in the community scoffed at the idea that a wooden carrousel could improve downtown. Twenty-eight years later, most would agree it was a fantastic idea. Since then, many improvements have been made in downtown. But it has not reached critical mass with regards to development and investment. This plan offers ways to help reach critical mass.

“We can’t operate from a mindset of scarcity, we need to operate from a mindset of possibility”

- Carl Fernyak, Idea+Works

The Richland County Foundation invested in fifteen local citizens by sending them to the South by Southwest Conference in Austin, TX. The goal was to come back with ideas on how to improve Downtown Mansfield. Turning regular citizens into consultants gives depth and authenticity to the plan. It has been vetted through the community, developed through historical knowledge and written through the voices of fifteen local citizens. It provides a road map of projects and opportunities for partnerships to continue the renaissance of Downtown Mansfield.

The production of the plan was fostered by the Richland County Foundation. However, this is a plan for any organization, business, citizen, or group looking to get involved.

Neither the Foundation nor the City of Mansfield can fund or execute every aspect of this plan. In order to be successful, this must be a comprehensive effort. The execution phase will be just as collaborative as the development one. Costs range from sweat equity to millions of dollars. The Foundation will continue to lead, convene, guide, and fund efforts that support this plan.

Creating an emotional connection to a community has been shown to generate both long-term pride and commitment, as well as growth in overall GDP which enhances a community’s ability to grow and meet the needs of its residents.¹ Specific factors that most affect this sense of community attachment are social offerings, aesthetics, and openness/welcomeness.² Healthy communities afford social offerings (e.g. arts and cultural opportunities, availability of social community events, the community’s nightlife) that are plentiful, relevant, and easily accessed by their residents and visitors.

The vision is for Downtown Mansfield to become an optimal place to conduct business, gather and live. This vision can be achieved through five key areas: effective land use, wayfinding, technical assistance for business, branding and marketing, and safety.

For years plans have sat on shelves with little or no action. The Richland County Foundation will use this plan to prioritize its investments in Downtown Mansfield. It will be implemented at various speeds and through various organizations with an end result of a better Downtown Mansfield.

¹ “Soul of the Community Overall Findings.” Knight Foundation, 2010, knightfoundation.org/sotc/overall-findings/

² Gallup, Inc. “Social Offerings, Openness Key to Community Attachment.” Gallup.com, The Knight Foundation, 15 Nov. 2010, news.gallup.com/poll/144476/Social-Offerings-Openness-Key-Community-Attachment.aspx.

Introduction

The Richland County Foundation is spearheading a bold project based on its willingness to think about a civic investment strategy in a new and different way.

In 2017, the Foundation leadership decided to take an unusual track to develop an investment strategy for Downtown Mansfield. Instead of hiring a professional consulting firm, it would adapt an idea put forward by two community leaders to create a plan through a citizen-led group. This investment would result in a plan, the reasoning went, that took advantage of the fact that those selected to participate have significant “skin in the game.” They have something to gain if the plan became a success, or something to lose if it failed.

With the assistance of Richland Area Chamber of Commerce President Jodie Perry and Richland Source President Jay Allred, Foundation leadership hand-selected a diverse and qualified group of 15 individuals (the SXSW419 core team) who were willing to commit nearly a year of their lives to develop this plan. Those individuals attended the South by Southwest Conference (SXSW) in Austin, TX. SXSW is a world-renowned thought and ideas festival that brings the sharpest minds in government, technology, business, and entertainment together in one place.

Immersed in a world of innovation and excellence, the SXSW419 team publicly documented their experience with blogs in partnership with local media. The core team experienced hundreds of in-person and digital conversations, presentations, and meetings. This information was crucial to the planning process. The SXSW419 team also received input and oversight from 28 advisors.

Everything about the creation of this plan has been risky.

It’s risky to take a chance on unproven people. It’s risky to trust an unfamiliar process. It’s risky to delay gratification and not see an immediate return. This process will create better outcomes because it engaged people who are truly invested in the area. Mansfield needs to continue its revitalization with bold and decisive leadership.

The Foundation engaged the Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC)³ which develops and advances policies and practices that value urban cores and metropolitan regions as economic drivers and preserve Ohio’s open space and farmland. Through advocacy, research, outreach, and education, GOPC strives to create a policy and political climate to allow communities to stabilize and thrive for statewide economic growth. GOPC was identified for its work with research and development of smaller reinvention cities which aligns with the findings of the SXSW419 team for Downtown Mansfield. A GOPC publication, *Revitalizing America’s Smaller Legacy Cities: Strategies for Post-Industrial Success from Gary to Lowell*,⁴ covers eight strategies to help revitalize small and mid-size legacy cities, the problems and opportunities facing these cities, and how they and their residents can prosper and be resilient in the new economy.

The eight strategies are: build civic capacity and talent, encourage a shared public and private sector vision, expand opportunities for low-income workers, build on an authentic sense of place, focus regional efforts on rebuilding a strong downtown, engage in community and strategic planning, stabilize distressed neighborhoods, and strategically leverage state policies.

This plan was possible because the Foundation let go of power and used its ability to convene groups of people. It trusted Mansfielders to be more than just residents, and invited them to become true citizens.

³ <https://www.greaterohio.org/>

⁴ <https://www.greaterohio.org/publications/revitalizing-americas-smaller-legacy-cities>

How We Got Here

In March 2018 forty-three local citizens, with visionary support from the [Richland County Foundation](#)⁵, took a big step forward in the re-imagination of one of Richland County's greatest opportunities, Downtown Mansfield. They came together under experimental circumstances to examine civic investment in a bold and innovative way.

What makes this strategic plan unique is also what gives it a markedly better chance to have immediate and long-term impact on Mansfield. The critical difference is how the plan was formed. We'll get to that, but first, a word on strategic planning and consultants.

If you ask around, you will learn that Mansfield is littered with strategic plans. They are generally stuffed in new three-ring binders and can be found, unread and dusty in office closets all over the county. How did they get there?

Typically, it works like this. The consultants arrive from someplace else and begin to dig in. Clear-eyed and objective, they research the problems, meet with a few key community leaders and discover what needs to be done. They make suggestions for how to fix it. Finally, they deliver the aforementioned binder and promptly leave town for the next job.

Usually there's a big meeting where everybody reviews someone else's plan for our hometown. Often, the best of intentions struggle from that point forward. That's the problem.

It's not that the plan is bad necessarily; it's because there's a critical disconnect between the plan and the people. Who owns it? Who is accountable? Who created these solutions? These questions create a vacuum where the critical steps of ownership, accountability and execution go to die. It's easy to look across the table and assign responsibility for delivery to someone - anyone - else.

WE FLIPPED THE ORTHODOXIES

How is this document different?

- Citizen planners are now the professional consultants.
- Drive-by recommendations are now rooted in community wisdom.
- A lack of accountability is replaced with clear ties to local ownership.

In short, instead of having the ideas come to us, we went to the ideas. A core team of 15 people spent a week immersed in the world-renowned festival of ideas and technology. They focused on five key impact areas: [city and walkability](#),⁶ [food](#)⁷ and [entertainment](#),⁸ [startups](#)⁹ and [technology](#),¹⁰ [social impact](#),¹¹ and [workplace culture](#).¹²

Eventually, those five areas were narrowed down to three pillars which served as the team's vision to imagine a future for Downtown Mansfield: A place for business, a place for gathering, and a place for living.

Supporting those pillars are the following foundation blocks in each piece of this plan:

- Safety
- Parking
- Wayfinding
- Aesthetics
- Equity and Inclusion

Over the course of 2018, the team worked with 28 advisors to sort through the ideas gathered and create action plans to implement. Partnerships are identified for various projects to help solidify accountability and ownership.

UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

The team that went to SXSW is diverse and skews young. The average age is under 40 and that's absolutely intentional. Fresh ideas come from fresh eyes, some of whom are being tapped for the first time to help lead their community. The team includes a city engineer, an architect, artists, marketers, technologists and nonprofit leaders.

The team looks like Mansfield, too. Members are all colors, genders and backgrounds. Politics and interests vary, which was intentional because diversity is the enemy of echo chambers. They've come at this challenge from all perspectives.

5 <https://www.richlandcountyfoundation.org/>
6 <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2018/events/PP97105>
7 <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2018/events/PP76022>
8 <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2018/events/PP77471>
9 <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2018/events/PP99539>
10 <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2018/events/PP98612>
11 <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2018/events/PP80656>
12 <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2018/events/PP80452>



“I am very encouraged to see such a talented group of young leaders... keep the ball rolling on downtown improvements. This certainly includes the Foundation’s willingness to financially support good projects. It makes an old timer like me feel good about the future of the city.”

- Tom Brennan,

Former Editor Mansfield News Journal

TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST

The process has been transparent and extensively documented. Group members wrote blogs and posted to social media regularly, indexed by the hashtag #SXSW419. A public forum event at the Renaissance Theatre on May 30, 2018 informed several hundred citizens. It was followed by extensive person-to-person interviews during the month of June.

BUT THAT WAS JUST THE BEGINNING.

The collective effort, investment, and sacrifice undertaken by the group on behalf of Mansfield will be counted in thousands of hours. It’s a measure of the commitment bubbling up in the community. The plan is only part of the return on investment for the Foundation. Another piece is the investment in 15 new local leaders committed to the rebirth of Mansfield.

This is only a piece of a city [rising from rust](https://www.richlandsource.com/rising_from_rust/).¹³

Who Are These People?

Jay Allred is the President of Richland Source and a



founding board member of Idea Works. The Richland Source newsroom reports on a four county area with a focus on Solutions Journalism, which looks beyond reporting on problems, and examines how similar communities are successfully addressing issues and how their methods can apply locally.

Damien Beauford, father of five, is a barber and entrepreneur who has a heart for his city and young people who will be the future leaders. He has a passion for small businesses and opportunities they could bring to the community.



Bob Bianchi is the City of Mansfield Engineer. The Engineering Department strives to provide professional services to sustain and enhance the quality of life, health and safety for the citizens of Mansfield. Bob enjoys project development that collaborates with community members and seeks to provide progressive and innovative solutions.



Benjamin Davis is a native of Mansfield. A 2000 graduate of Mansfield Senior High, Benjamin obtained a degree in Film from Full Sail University in Winter Park, FL. After many years away, Benjamin returned to work with the youth in his hometown. Joining Mansfield Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach



Program team has been one of his most prized achievements. Benjamin finds fulfillment in family, traveling, film, music and writing. He is an innovative thinker, problem solver and is very motivated to build a better Mansfield. A better Mansfield gives our youth and young adults the opportunity to thrive and grow.

Aurelio Villa Luna Diaz has worked in the human services



field for 20 years in the areas of direct care, case management, and departmental management. He has worked closely with homeless youth and adults as well as with adults with developmental disabilities. In addition to human services, Aurelio creates music under the moniker Chico's Brother which has given him a cathartic and therapeutic healing source. Currently the Community Development Coordinator for Downtown Mansfield, Inc.

Cameron Haring is a native son with the desire to accelerate a bold regeneration of our city. Cameron grew up spending much of his time downtown at his father's jewelry store and uncle's clothing store and has a particular affinity for the Central Business District. He is President of Deca Manufacturing in Lexington.



Jennifer Gerberick Kime serves as the CEO of Downtown Mansfield, Inc (DMI). As a certified Main Street Manager with the National Main Street Center, Jennifer's work focuses on business development, historic preservation, planning, promotions and strategic investment. She is passionate about moving the community forward by implementing authentic development strategies with measurable results.



Nikki Lewis is the Chamber Foundation Manager for the Richland Area Chamber of Commerce. The focus for the Chamber Foundation is to educate our youth and adults in areas relating to economics, leadership and entrepreneurship. She is a transplant to the community and is excited to be part of helping Richland County grow.



Jodie Perry is the President & CEO of the Richland Area Chamber of Commerce and Richland Community Development Group (RCDG). These county-wide organizations work to establish a healthy business climate, provide opportunities for networking, drive community and workforce development initiatives and attract new businesses to town. Originally from Upstate NY, and a proud Ashland University alum, she is a collaborator at heart and is invigorated by the teeming potential for our communities.



Jotika Shetty is a planner and the Executive Director of the Richland County Regional Planning Commission. The Commission seeks to guide the growth within the region along a sustainable and resilient path with a focus on multi-modal transportation and smart land-use policies. She seeks to collaborate and engage around the common purpose of enhancing quality of life for the people who choose Richland County as home.



Leona Smith is the Executive Coordinator at the North End Community Improvement Collaborative (NECIC) and Temp2Higher. NECIC's focus is to improve the economic landscape of the North End community while Temp2Higher, which is NECIC's first social enterprise, is an alternative staffing organization. Leona primarily works with executive management in addition to her involvement with workforce development and housing initiatives.



Matthew Stanfield is a local architect, husband and father of seven who is deeply invested in the future of this community through volunteerism and as principal architect at FiELD9: architecture. Where he strives to provide community minded architecture with a modern sensibility and an eye towards sustainability.



Maura Teynor is the Chief Advancement Officer at the Richland County Foundation. She works with donors to ensure their charitable wishes are fulfilled. Maura's duties include donor cultivation, community collaboration and communication. She looks forward to being a part of the continued renaissance of Mansfield.




Chelsie Thompson is the President of the Renaissance Performing Arts Association, an organization that presents and produces over 55 performances each year in its historic theatre in downtown Mansfield. Chelsie is a strong proponent of the power of the arts and arts education as a necessary driver for personal, economic and social growth.



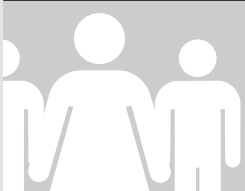
Allie Watson is the Senior Community Investment Officer at Richland County Foundation. Allie helps donors fulfill their charitable wishes through grant making. She discovers and discusses community opportunities, projects and programs with donors and grant recipients. Raised within the same boundaries of this plan on First Street, she enjoys being part of the improvement process in Downtown Mansfield.




A PLACE FOR BUSINESS

SXSW Participants	Advisors
Benjamin Davis	Beth DeLaney
Cameron Haring	Carl Fernyak
Jay Allred	Gog Miesse
Maura Teynor	Jay Goyal
Nikki Lewis	Jay Miller
	John Siegenthaler
	Nick Tanchevski
	Shane Hostettler
	Steve Zigmund

A PLACE FOR GATHERING

SXSW Participants	Advisors
Allie Watson	Annamarie Fernyak
Chelsie Thompson	Cheryl Carter
Jotika Shetty	Dave Eichinger
Matthew Stanfield	Fr. Gregory Hite
Leona Smith	Joe Trolian
	Lee Tasseff
	Commissioner Marilyn John
	Peter Haring
	Tom Brennan

A PLACE FOR LIVING

SXSW Participants	Advisors
Aurelio Diaz	Chuck Hahn
Bob Bianchi	Dan Seckel
Damien Beauford	Deanna West-Torrence
Jennifer Kime	Debbie Schenk
Jodie Perry	Jessica Gribben
	John Fernyak
	Kerrick Franklin
	Margie Tasseff
	Rob Miesse
	Mayor Tim Theaker

Partnership with Advisors

The group was divided into three teams and advisors were assigned to each team.

Teams are: **Mansfield is a Place for Business, Gathering, and Living.**

It was difficult to choose the SXSW419 team because many people in the community could have been a great addition to the team. During the selection process, project leaders decided to create an additional role to involve an even greater number of people: Advisors. Potential advisors were contacted and their involvement in the project was explained. Each advisor accepted the invitation to serve and waited for the team to return and the work to begin.

The advisors also had experience in leading community projects and could provide feedback, ideas, history, perspective, connections and support.

The advisors met the team shortly before they left for Austin. Together they went through an exercise to draft their ideal news headline for Mansfield in five years. Here is the document compiling the responses from this [Headline Exercise](#).¹⁴

The advisors were also involved in a Design Thinking Process Workshop led by Heather Tsavaris at Idea Works in April. Their participation was helpful as it set the stage for how the plan would unfold. After the group split into three areas: Business, Gathering, Living, the advisors were assigned to work with a specific team. The full group of teammates and advisors met monthly from May through October to work on different parts of the plan.

Perhaps the biggest role for the advisors is yet to come - helping the group achieve the ambitious goals identified in this plan. The advisors have been an essential part of the planning process and deserve recognition for the hours of work, connections, and support. The advisors for the SXSW419 project are listed in tables on the left.

¹⁴ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qLibjoHDy96KPfa5iLqfdvxBWJ8RcdYq/view?usp=sharing>

Building Social Capital

As noted earlier, this plan was created through an unconventional strategy. Taking a diverse group of community members to a conference that is internationally renowned for its speakers, thinkers, and innovators and asking them to bring back ideas to continue to reimagine Downtown Mansfield is not the usual path to draft a strategic plan. The project leaders were innovators along the way as they structured a guide to create the plan.

It was crucial for the team to form a strong bond early in the process so that it could work effectively on the project.

In order to understand different work styles, team members participated in a [DiSC behavioral styles](#)¹⁵ workshop. “The DiSC profile is a non-judgmental tool used for discussion of people’s behavioral differences. The DiSC profile asks a series of questions to produce a detailed report about a person’s personality and behavior. It provides tips on how to work with people of other styles.” The workshop created a deeper understanding and insight among the teammates. The team met for four months prior to the trip in order to get to know one another and cover other important topics related to the trip and process.

The scope of the SXSW Conference is tremendous with hundreds of speakers and sessions to attend. The team of 15 was divided into five subject groups to help ensure a broad range of topics were covered. Each day, teams were paired up to have dinner in order to have diverse conversation and perspectives. These conversations were lively and teeming with ideas and inspiration from the day. Team members got to know each other, beyond just what their professions were, they learned about each others backgrounds and family, and they learned why each was passionate about the revitalization of Mansfield.

In other words, the team was building social capital. According to [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)¹⁶ online,

Social capital revolves around three dimensions: interconnected networks of relationships between individuals and groups (social ties or social participation), levels of trust that characterize these ties, and resources or benefits that are both gained and transferred by virtue of social ties and social participation.

Some of the team compared their bonding experience during SXSW to what happens with class members during Leadership Unlimited, a local leadership program that unfolds over 10 months. In this situation, a similar amount of social capital was built in just one week.

Why did this strong bond develop? One obvious reason is the intensity of the conference where literally hundreds of sessions are offered each day. It forced the team to communicate where they were going and what they were learning in real-time through the [Slack](#)¹⁷ app. Another reason was the team was in a different state without the distractions of daily life. They experienced each day together as a small team among a sea of 40,000+ participants. A third reason was simply the overwhelming content presented at the event. The individual participants were going from one mind-blowing session to another and they were excited to share their experiences with others who could understand.

Something else interesting happened: they did not always agree with each other. Often while discussing a topic they would find that another team member viewed the situation through a completely different lens. Because this was intended to be an exploration of ideas, they could have spirited conversations with each other without feeling like they had to produce a consensus. That has continued through the planning process, allowing for more well-rounded discussions.

¹⁵ <https://www.discprofile.com/what-is-disc/overview/>

¹⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-capital>

¹⁷ <https://slack.com/>

Why does this matter? Certainly in the short-term it helped facilitate the planning process as the team was able to work together more effectively. There was a level of trust that was built in Austin and it has been a key factor in making the project work. The project leaders agree that the same idea, without the trip to SXSW, would have yielded a different process with very different results.

The building of social capital also matters from a community perspective. Beyond the formulation of the plan, it becomes a key differentiator in the ability of the community to actually accomplish the projects. Even beyond the scope of this plan, professional relationships have been formed and are key to other local collaborations.

A high profile example of this collaboration was the passage of a \$5.00 [license plate fee](#)¹⁸ levied by the Mansfield City Council in May, 2018. An advisory group was formed to provide recommendations on investing the associated revenue which will total about \$215,000 per year for 10 years. The advisory group includes SXSW419 members - Jennifer Kime, Benjamin Davis, Matthew Stanfield, and Jodie Perry, along with two key downtown stakeholders, Phoenix Brewing Company Co-Owner Scott Cardwell and Richland Bank President Chris Hiner. Many team members supported the license plate fee either by speaking at a City Council meeting or directly discussing it with council members. Council unanimously passed the legislation which is a great example of the power of local leaders working together.

Other examples of collaboration influenced by the social capital built by this group include:

- Richland Source hosted a movie screening of “A Murder in Mansfield” at the Renaissance Theatre in June.
- The Richland Idea Audition and StartUp Weekend collaborated to cross promote both events.
- IdeaWorks provided free memberships to the students enrolled in the Chamber’s Young Entrepreneurs Academy.
- Richland County Regional Planning Commission and North End Community Improvement Collaborative worked together on a pilot project to provide extended hours for bus service to the Mansfield Industrial Park.
- The City of Mansfield worked with the Richland County Regional Planning Commission to propose the creation of a trail to connect the Richland County B&O Bike Trail to the Trimble Road multi-use path.
- Three Mansfield census tracts are now designated as Opportunity Zones (which expands the potential for further investment) due to a collective effort by the Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Richland Community Development Group, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., North End Community Improvement Collaborative, Richland County Regional Planning Commission, City of Mansfield, and the Richland County Land Bank.

Other examples will be added to the list as the group members continue to innovate and collaborate. This earned social capital will extend into areas far outside the scope of this project and can help propel a number of projects forward.

18 https://www.richlandsource.com/news/mansfield-raises-motor-vehicle-license-fee-by-article_ea85db4c-586b-11e8-97b4-6f592786d57d.html

Media Involvement and Transparency

Another piece that makes this plan different is the transparency. While in Austin, team members wrote [blogs about their experience](#).¹⁹ The blogs talk about everything from what to expect out of the plan, what they learned from speakers they would have never been exposed to and the unique perspective of taking in Austin for eight days. After all, one of the city's tag lines is: "Keep Austin Weird." The goal of the blogs was to provide transparency for those in Mansfield about what was happening, what the team was seeing and hearing while at SXSW. The outcome far surpassed the expectations. There were over 17,600 page views on the blogs and over one million views of the hashtag #SXSW419. Here is a list of dates, authors and titles with links to the originally published blogs.

Oct 4, 2018	Jodie Perry	Jodie Perry shares SXSW Team's guiding principles: Part II
Oct 3, 2018	Jodie Perry	Jodie Perry shares SXSW Team's guiding principles: Part I
Oct 2, 2018	Allie Watson	SXSW team member describes "sausage-making" process
June 4, 2018	Matthew Stanfield	The Walkability Challenge
May 31, 2018	Brittany Schock	SXSW forum sparks excitement, inspiration in Mansfield
May 15, 2018	Richland Source	#SXSW419 to host public forum May 31 at The Ren
May 2, 2018	Chelsie Thompson	SXSW team attends Design Thinking Workshop
Apr 3, 2018	Jennifer Kime	We have a problem: It's our self image
Apr 2, 2018	Allie Watson	Spinning after SXSW
Mar 28, 2018	Allie Watson	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Mar 27, 2018	Maura Teynor	SXSW unleashes imagination in Mansfield
Mar 15, 2018	Chelsie Thompson	The Story of a City
Mar 15, 2018	Nikki Lewis	Goodbye, Austin!
Mar 15, 2018	Damien Beauford	One cowgirl and three cowboys...real ones!
Mar 15, 2018	Leona Smith	Re-imagine, Reuse, Repurpose
Mar 14, 2018	Ben Davis	A farewell letter to SXSW
Mar 14, 2018	Bob Bianchi	Goodbye to SXSW, and hello to Mansfield
Mar 14, 2018	Matthew Stanfield	Walkable city = Interesting city
Mar 14, 2018	Cameron Haring	Thinking big in the new age of entrepreneurship
Mar 14, 2018	Maura Teynor	Why does the community pool matter?
Mar 14, 2018	Chelsie Thompson	Wish you were here
Mar 14, 2018	Jodie Perry	Let's put Mansfield on the world stage
Mar 13, 2018	Jay Allred	The psychology of SXSW and why that's important to understand
Mar 13, 2018	Nikki Lewis	How Richland County could use "Hackathons" to tackle challenges
Mar 13, 2018	Allie Watson	Could Silicon Valley fall in love with Mansfield?
Mar 13, 2018	Maura Teynor	How do you showcase a city?
Mar 13, 2018	Aurelio Diaz	"Home is everywhere you go"
Mar 12, 2018	Cameron Haring	Startup Ecosystem: Say it like you mean it
Mar 12, 2018	Chelsie Thompson	Culture shift: Curating a portfolio of experiences
Mar 12, 2018	Damien Beauford	What does change look like?
Mar 12, 2018	Allie Watson	Branding and promoting Mansfield

¹⁹ https://www.richlandsource.com/rising_from_rust/sxsw/

Mar 12, 2018	Aurelio Diaz	Creative camaraderie and collectivism
Mar 12, 2018	Bob Bianchi	Smart Cities at SXSW
Mar 12, 2018	Jennifer Kime	Confluence of technology, innovation & development
Mar 11, 2018	Jodie Perry	What's our Strategy?
Mar 11, 2018	Nikki Lewis	The Midwest personality
Mar 11, 2018	Chelsie Thompson	Lessons from Austin: Observing, interacting, and finding purpose
Mar 11, 2018	Jotika Shetty	Avoiding the mediocrity trap
Mar 11, 2018	Jay Allred	Changing economic landscapes mean new road maps for companies
Mar 11, 2018	Ben Davis	Turning apples and oranges into smoothies at SXSW
Mar 10, 2018	Leona Smith	What is the housing solution for Mansfield?
Mar 10, 2018	Aurelio Diaz	How making connections at SXSW has proved powerful
Mar 10, 2018	Maura Teynor	Shiznizzy: Fitness guru provides inspiration at SXSW
Mar 10, 2018	Allie Watson	SXSW preaches the power of networking, the importance of reaching out
Mar 10, 2018	Matthew Stanfield	Conveyor of Soul: Design thinking critical to change
Mar 10, 2018	Cameron Haring	Day one of SXSW delivers mind-bending content
Mar 9, 2018	Jay Allred	We're at South by Southwest, but how did we get here?
Mar 9, 2018	Allie Watson	Redefining Mansfield: South by Southwest style
Feb 28, 2018	Jay Allred	It's time to re-imagine Mansfield from the inside out

PODCAST

The team landed in Columbus at 1:00am on Thursday, March 15. The following week, Richland Source Reporters Brittany Schock and Tracy Geibel scheduled time to interview each participant about their experiences at SXSW. The interviews culminated into a podcast that was shared with over 400 listeners. [Click here to listen to the podcast](#).²⁰ "Why The Hell Am I Here? Episode 12: Unpacking #SXSW419".

VIDEO

Local production company, DRM²¹ created a two-minute video giving the public an overview of the Downtown Investment Plan and trip to SXSW. [You can view the video here](#).²¹

LISTENING TOUR

From May 30 through July 31, 2018 the team hosted a Listening Tour which created space for question and answer sessions with various groups. The goal of the Listening Tour was to speak with small groups to gain feedback and provide updates. A minimum of two SXSW participants reviewed the talking points on page 14 and answered questions during these presentations. Some sessions included specific questions for the attendees to give feedback to the SXSW participants. [The questions and feedback are detailed here](#).²³

²⁰ <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/why-the-hell-am-i-here/id1343902368?mt=2&i=1000407585176>

²¹ <https://drminc.com/>

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mT4jDojyK8M&feature=youtu.be>

²³ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Et300kVvNDJptg5uTgwHLYJcVsaL8pW4H6sRDw18KZI/edit?usp=sharing>

#SXSW419 Talking Points

HOW DID THIS COME UP?

Richland Source President Jay Allred and Richland Area Chamber President Jodie Perry asked the Richland County Foundation to fund a trip to send a group of local citizens to the SXSW Conference in Austin, TX.

One of Richland County Foundation's 2018 objectives was to invest in downtown Mansfield. The health of an entire county is predicated on the success of its county seat.

Instead of hiring outside consultants, the Foundation Board of Trustees approved funding for 15 local residents to go to SXSW with the explicit purpose of bringing back ideas to improve downtown Mansfield.

WHO WENT?

- Jay Allred
- Damien Beauford
- Bob Bianchi
- Benjamin Davis
- Aurelio Diaz
- Cameron Haring
- Jennifer Kime
- Nikki Lewis
- Jodie Perry
- Jotika Shetty
- Leona Smith
- Matthew Stanfield
- Maura Teynor
- Chelsie Thompson
- Allie Watson

WHAT DID YOU SEE?

- Each person attended 25-30 sessions listening to speakers from all over the world.
- The city of Austin, TX was an interesting example of things that we could do in Mansfield with regards to utilizing space, public art and creating walkable areas.

WHAT WERE THE IDEAS?

- Accessibility and Livability - how are people moving into and around downtown Mansfield and how can that be made easier, better or more enjoyable for the community?
- Public Space - could we improve our public spaces with art?
- Quality of Place - many cities employ professional storytellers to promote their cities to the residents and also people who could be potential customers, residents, business-owners, employees, etc. - could we have the same?
- Technology, Startups and Entrepreneurs - how can we be more futuristic with regards to technology?

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- There are 28 local advisors who the 15 SXSW participants will work with throughout this process together in three teams (Business, Gathering and Living).
- Listening Tours will be scheduled throughout the month of June to capture questions from the community and also feedback on ideas the group is considering.

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

- Prioritizing investments, identifying partners and testing hypotheses for the improvement of downtown.
- A plan will be developed and presented to the Foundation Board of Trustees at the December meeting.
- The Richland County Foundation will create an investment strategy for downtown Mansfield.

BELOW IS A LIST OF LISTENING TOUR DATES

- May 30, 2018 a Public Forum was held at the Renaissance Theater to kick-off the Listening Tour. The group of 15 participants presented on stage and followed with break-out sessions hosted by each team.
- June 14, 2018 at the Richland County Democratic Party Executive Committee; Chelsie Thompson, Jay Allred and Aurelio Diaz presented.
- June 13, 2018 at the Inter-Church Council Group meeting; Allie Watson and Jotika Shetty presented.
- June 20, 2018 at the RCDG & Chamber Joint Board Meeting; Jay Allred and Allie Watson presented.
- June 27, 2018 at the Richland County Coalition on Housing and Homelessness collaborative; Matthew Stanfield and Allie Watson presented.
- July 10, 2018 at the NECIC Elder group monthly luncheon; Aurelio Diaz, Nikki Lewis and Leona Smith presented.
- July 31, 2018 at the weekly Rotary Luncheon; Jodie Perry, Nikki Lewis and Jotika Shetty presented.



Map of Downtown Mansfield

The area marked by the red perimeter indicates where funding from the License Plate Fee can be invested. While this plan focuses on the same area it also acknowledges opportunities outside the boundaries and understands other funding sources are not confined to this specific area.

Guiding Principles

After returning from Austin, the team had a debriefing dinner with Carl and Annamarie Fernyak. That evening they discussed their initial thoughts and ideas from Austin. A Design Thinking Workshop followed a few weeks later and a set of guiding principles began to emerge to form the backbone of the plan.

The principles are the plan's foundation. These are high-level concepts that each goal, strategy and action item has been tested against to ensure integrity of the plan. The principles were inspired by the trip to Austin, but were formed by the team's beliefs about our downtown. There was robust conversation around the principles which helped the team expand their understanding of the potential for downtown.

The Guiding Principles are:

DOWNTOWN IS EVERYONE'S NEIGHBORHOOD

As the heart of Richland County, Mansfield should promote a diverse, equitable and inclusive downtown environment where everyone feels that it is their neighborhood. Downtown Mansfield should serve as a premiere destination for people to live, shop, work and play. Improvements to Downtown Mansfield will benefit the entire county.

BIG CITY AMENITIES WITH SMALL TOWN FEEL

The variety and extent of amenities in Downtown Mansfield are similar to what may be found in larger cities, but the small town feel remains and contributes to a high quality of life for those in the area. As the downtown grows, it is imperative to focus on the ease of accessibility, sense of safety and livability within Downtown Mansfield.

SUSTAINABLE CHANGE OCCURS INCREMENTALLY, NOT OVERNIGHT

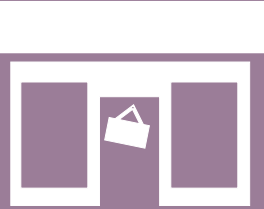
Downtown Mansfield has been evolving over the last three decades and has potential for more improvement and growth. This plan will help guide future public improvement, private development and investment. Future growth will occur if what is done now contributes to the sustainability of Downtown Mansfield. Sustainability is accomplished through a long-term vision with community commitment of time and financial investments. Merchants, agencies, businesses and stakeholders must be willing to partner to promote and celebrate successes.

PLACEMAKING IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The growth in a knowledge-based economy has given more significance to the importance of place to attract economic development. Building on the assets of Downtown Mansfield to create a quality space teeming with activity improves prospects for attracting talented workers, investors, visitors and business to the region.

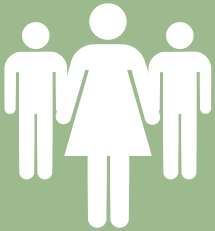
Goals by Team

The next section provides an actionable structure for investors and interested organizations. The goals to improve Downtown Mansfield incorporate the Guiding Principles. Goals have been identified by team (business, gathering, living). Each goal is supported by strategies and action items.



MANSFIELD IS A PLACE FOR BUSINESS.

- Promote Downtown Mansfield as a business-friendly community.
- Develop a cohesive aesthetic appeal for Downtown.
- Create a feeling of security and inclusion in Downtown.



MANSFIELD IS A PLACE FOR GATHERING.

- Create an accessible and welcoming environment for current and potential residents and visitors.
- Engage diverse groups across all socioeconomic backgrounds and abilities in downtown Mansfield.
- Foster a bustling community by maximizing use of all available spaces.



MANSFIELD IS A PLACE FOR LIVING.

- Strengthen housing market to sustain market-rate living.
- Create mixed-use, mixed-income developments to ensure that downtown living remains open to all.
- Utilize the creative community while developing downtown infrastructure projects to integrate the culture of downtown into permanent enhancements.

Once the goals, strategies and action items were in place, it was time to prioritize. This prioritization process aggregated feedback from the SXSW419 participants and advisors. It was cross-referenced with information regarding when action items can occur, and the cost and priority or impact level of each action item on the overall improvement of Downtown Mansfield.

THE REMAINDER OF THIS DOCUMENT OUTLINES ACTION ITEMS IN THE ORDER THEY ARE RECOMMENDED TO OCCUR PENDING SUPPORT.

Outline of Goals: Strategies and Action Items

The following two pages lay out each team's goals, strategies and action items. There is a correlation between each action item and how they support the strategies which then support the overarching goals.

MANSFIELD IS A PLACE FOR BUSINESS.

Goal: Promote Downtown Mansfield as a business-friendly community.

Strategy: Develop a Community Brand, Message and & Communications Strategy

1. Action Item: Create a brand and campaign for Downtown Mansfield.
2. Action Item: Create the position of Chief Digital Officer (CDO).

Strategy: Build-out Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

1. Action Item: Solidify an entrepreneurial alliance.

Strategy: Create a one-stop process to doing business in Mansfield for entrepreneurs, startups and established businesses.

1. Action Item: Create a Business Concierge Position.

Goal: Develop a cohesive aesthetic appeal of the Downtown.

Strategy: Create a more welcoming and defined Central Business District by dramatically improving the appearance and maintenance of the main arteries leading into the district.

1. Action Item: Upgrade the city's main arteries.

Goal: Create a feeling of security and inclusion in Downtown.

Strategy: Take the lead on diversity in business.

1. Action Item: Create a leadership cohort to improve diversity and inclusion.
2. Action Item: Create strategic partnerships and focus groups to enhance diversity.

Strategy: Create the future as well as promote security and business development.

1. Action Item: Reimagine empty storefronts.

Strategy: Build a better relationship between law enforcement and the community to promote safety

1. Action Item: Create a Downtown Neighborhood Watch.

MANSFIELD IS A PLACE FOR GATHERING.

Goal: Create an accessible and welcoming environment for current and potential residents and visitors.

Strategy: Develop a platform to showcase available events by interest point: families, young adults, adults and older citizens.

1. Action Item: Build a free mobile app.
2. Action Item: Install free public wifi.

Strategy: Create an interconnected, safe, multimodal transportation system to access Downtown Mansfield

1. Action Item: Adopt and Implement a Complete Streets Policy for the City.
2. Action Item: Encourage new real estate developments to have transit and pedestrian supportive amenities.
3. Action Item: Implement alternative transportation options.



Strategy: Promote street infrastructure as setting for public life (streets as places)

1. Action Item: Promote Sustainability by Design.
2. Action Item: Implement Traffic-Calming Measures.
3. Action Item: Enact car-free zones.

Strategy: Establish consistent wayfinding tools.

1. Action Item: Create a wayfinding plan.
2. Action Item: Create informational signage.
3. Action Item: Develop a central processing system and calendar.

Goal: Engage diverse groups across all socioeconomic backgrounds and abilities in downtown Mansfield.

Strategy: Create a network of green spaces to foster a sense of community for all.

1. Action Item: Construct parks for children and pets.
2. Action Item: Create linear parks.
3. Action Item: Develop meaningful green spaces.

Strategy: Invest in infrastructure that encourages multicultural and multigenerational use.

4. Action Item: Develop a skate park.
5. Action Item: Build a community center.
1. Action Item: Build a community pool.
2. Action Item: Invest in a year-round multi-use space available for public use.

Goal: Foster a bustling community by maximizing use of all available spaces.

Strategy: Create effective places which will be utilized in a multitude of ways.

1. Action Item: Implement a Placemaking Policy.
1. Action Item: Increase the number of public facilities.

Strategy: Encourage community engagement with attractive and engaging public spaces.

1. Action Item: Showcase family-friendly movies on outdoor public screens.
2. Action Item: Develop “Better Block” Project.
3. Action Item: Invest in Public Art, Commission local artists.
4. Action Item: Engage the citizenry through interactive experiences.
5. Action Item: Create a Downtown Volunteer Coordinator position.

MANSFIELD IS A PLACE FOR LIVING.

Goal: Strengthen market to sustain market-rate living.

Strategy: Encourage more private investment in downtown to improve the look of downtown businesses.

1. Action Item: Enact a residential CRA (Community Reinvestment Area) for Mansfield.
2. Action Item: Create a Design Assistance incentive to encourage downtown development.
3. Action Item: Recapitalize the Facade Improvement Grant Fund.



Goal: Create mixed-use, mixed-income developments to ensure that downtown living remains open to all.

Strategy: Further develop existing assets, building and land in the central business district to include residential space.

1. Action Item: Redevelop the Municipal Lot to its highest and best use.

Goal: Utilize the creative community while improving downtown infrastructure to integrate culture into permanent enhancements.

Strategy: Improve infrastructure in downtown.

1. Action Item: Invest in Main Street
1. Action Item: Develop recycling program.

Action Item:

Redevelop the Municipal Lot

The municipal parking lot between Third and Fourth Streets is a major redevelopment site. This large void could be developed to connect Central Park and the Carrousel District. During the Listening Tour, it became apparent these two districts need a strong connection in order to create a more robust downtown.

The best project would include retail, residential, tiered parking, and greenspace. The site could be more than a parking lot, it could be a vibrant space for the community.

A multi-level structure would provide a centralized parking area to serve the greater downtown. Retail space on the ground level along Main, Fourth and Diamond streets would provide a walkable and inviting experience. Ideally, new residential units would be on the upper floors. Green space located adjacent to the structure would be used for recreation. A transformative new development would send a clear message that the local economy is growing and responsive to the community. Incorporating new mixed-use buildings has been an effective strategy used in many cities including Kent, OH and Des Moines, IA.



Cost: The cost varies greatly between \$15-35M. Due to the substantial investment necessary, the project could develop as a public-private partnership. Possible funding streams include: public bond financing, [Private Opportunity Zone Fund Investment](#)²⁴, [PACE Investments](#)²⁵, [OAQDA Financing](#)²⁶, low-income tax credits and new market tax credits.

Partners: City of Mansfield, Richland County Commissioners, Downtown Mansfield, Inc, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Richland Community Development Group, private investors, [Novogradac](#)²⁷, [OAQDA](#)²⁸, [Donovan Energy](#)²⁹, all related funding organizations, architectural firms, Richland County Regional Planning Commission, Ohio Department of Transportation, along with state and federal elected officials.

Timeline: The first step is to identify a core team to determine funding, design and ideal mix of uses and layouts. The next step is to structure an investment fund, explore bond financing opportunities and layout development in easements. Then it needs to stack financing and recruit key first-floor businesses. Finally, design, fund, build and lease spaces.

A less expensive option would be to create a multi-tiered parking structure on the municipal lot. Downtown has several dozen public and private parking lots. However, visitors constantly talk about the lack of parking. This misconception is due to poor wayfinding/directional signage to available spaces rather than a scarcity of parking.

Newark and Kent, Ohio both built multi-tiered parking garages. Newark has a smaller, two-level basic parking garage near the public square within easy walking distance to the heart of downtown. Kent has a much larger multi-use structure that includes first floor retail and an interior public transit terminal. The price tag for each structure varies greatly, but they are good examples of the options.

²⁴ <https://eig.org/opportunityzones>
²⁵ <http://pacenation.us/pace-in-ohio/>
²⁶ <http://ohioairquality.ohio.gov/>
²⁷ <https://www.novoco.com/>
²⁸ <http://ohioairquality.ohio.gov/>
²⁹ <https://www.donovanenergy.com/>



Photo taken by Jodie Perry in Kent, OH July 2017

To build a stand-alone structure with two parking levels to accommodate about 225 vehicles; the cost estimate is \$5-6 million. Functionality, operation and maintenance, safety and security, and wayfinding will be a part of the design. Aesthetics will be carefully considered to compliment the downtown's urban fabric. Artists and architect professionals will be tapped to incorporate landscaping and facade treatments to the facility.



http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/a34e2f_c1e5f323e55a460aa2548231f5e4c6f3.pdf

Action Item:

Create a brand for Downtown Mansfield

The purpose of branding Mansfield is to weave a powerful and positive story to raise awareness about why this is a great place to live and conduct business. Beyond raising awareness outside the city limits, a brand and positive message could improve the story Mansfield residents re-cite about their city. It could promote civic pride.

Some local organizations have similar themes but the messages are specific to the organization. Since the city lacks a brand it is difficult to drive a cohesive message. A branding campaign should include “open source” content so anyone can access it to deliver a cohesive message about Downtown Mansfield.

One example is Marion, Ohio’s MarionMade! campaign sponsored by the Marion Community Foundation. According to the [website](#)³¹, “MarionMade! recognizes the community’s amazing past but is focused on the present and future of the lively and remarkable community. MarionMade! promotes positive features and stories about Marion’s people, products, places, programs, and projects. MarionMade! seeks to ensure people view Marion as a positive place to live, work, play, and visit.”

Elements of a branding campaign include the creation of a brand and message, coordinating stakeholder websites and identification of a key person to manage and care for the brand.

“Your community brand is your culture’s connection to commerce”

-North Star Destination Strategies

Cost: Market research, content, artwork, and communication strategy would be \$50,000-\$100,000. Ongoing management of the brand and delivery of the message could average \$50,000 a year.

Partners: Steering committee made up of the “public faces” of Richland County - Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Mansfield, Richland County Foundation, Richland Community Development Group, Downtown Mansfield Inc., Destination Mansfield, Richland County Commissioners, and large employers such as OhioHealth, Gorman Rupp, the 179th Airlift Wing, and Avita.

Timeline: Nine-12 months - Steering committee coordination of three-six months, and three-six months to develop and deliver a plan.

³¹ <http://www.marionmade.org/about/>





WELCOME TO MANSFIELD

Think about how you feel when you drive by the grain silos on North Main Street today compared to how you felt one year ago when you drove by that same spot.

Photo taken by Jodie Perry

Action Item:

Upgrade the city's main arteries

Think about how you feel when you drive by the [grain silos](#)³² on North Main Street today compared to how you felt one year ago when you drove by that same spot. *Photo pg 23*³³

That sums up how to create a welcoming appearance.

Reality check: None of the main arteries leading to Downtown Mansfield are beautiful. They are car-focused pathways through industrial centers, distressed neighborhoods, and business-zoned urban centers. Objective beauty or walkability is not the goal, but a clear sense of care and priority must be.

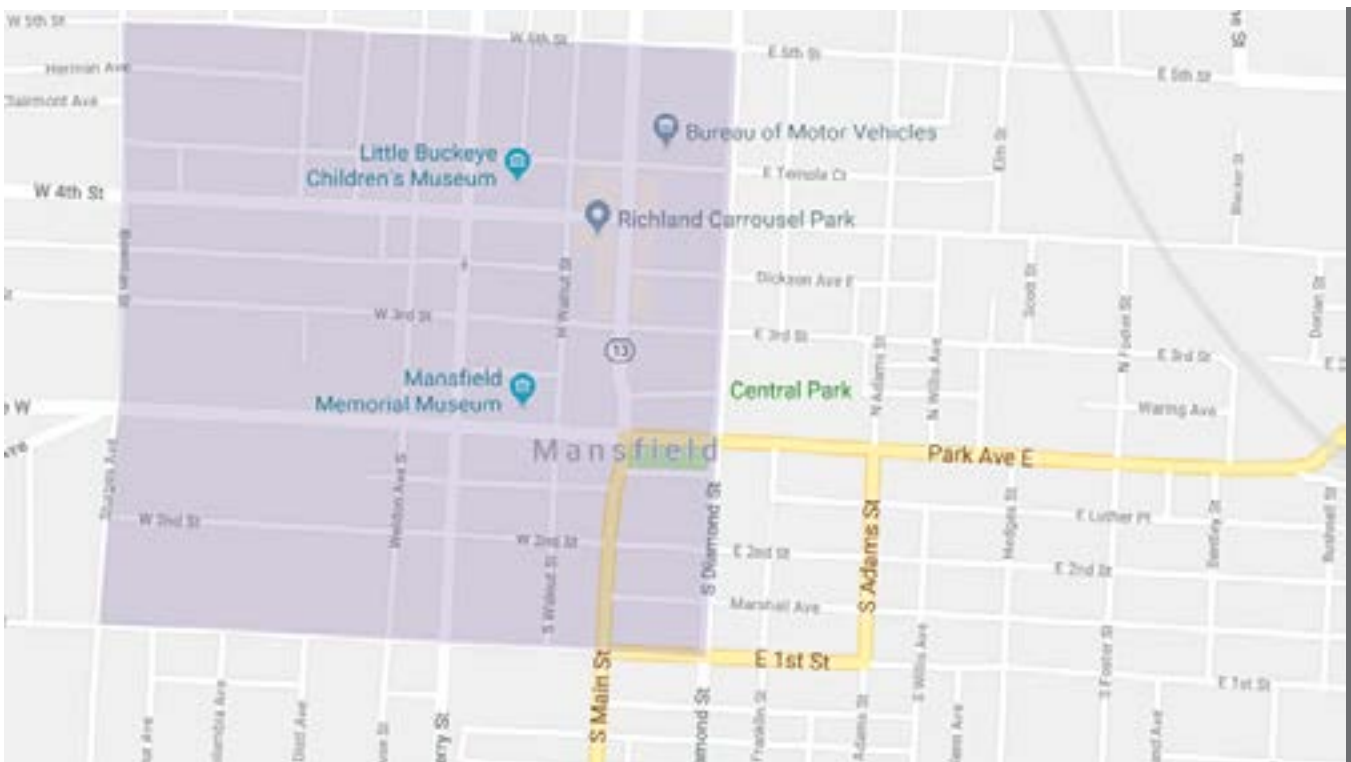
The North and South Main Street, East and West 4th Street and East and West Park Avenue must be constantly improving and maintained as key entrances to downtown. They are the front door to our downtown and are often treated like the doormat. There should never be overgrowth, excessive potholes, trash, or landscaping gone to seed on these critical arteries.

The city is the key player in the maintenance of pathways, so their buy-in is mandatory. The initiative will require the city to prioritize central arteries that circulate customers and clients into downtown to be maintained at the highest possible standard.

Cost: Cost will depend on how the City budget can be reallocated and what supplemental funding is deemed necessary.

Partners: The City of Mansfield, private landscape/maintenance contractors, Richland County Land Bank, community tool sheds, job-first initiatives through the City or County Job and Family Services, and Catalyst WIOA workers.

Timeline: This could begin in spring 2019 with re-prioritization of city funds if agreeable by the Mayor, Council and Streets Department. Step one would be to coordinate a meeting to determine if re-prioritization is a possibility.



32 https://www.richlandsource.com/business/what-s-the-story-behind-the-welcome-to-mansfield-sign/article_c2b3cdd8-af38-11e5-afc3-83c463efcea2.html
33 <https://www.mansfieldnewsjournal.com/story/news/local/2018/05/27/welcome-mansfield-sign-repainted/655164002/>

INVEST IN MAIN STREET

Concerns were voiced during the Listening Tour about the deteriorating streetscape of Main Street. Objectives of the project include: revitalize and beautify Main Street from First Street to Fifth Street, improve the pedestrian experience along the corridor and solidify this area as a destination.

Main Street serves as an urban artery and is an instrumental corridor to the downtown street network. The corridor consists of office, retail and entertainment businesses. New businesses located on Main Street have increased the pedestrian traffic. As Main Street increasingly becomes a place for pedestrians, the streetscape needs to accommodate them as a mode of traffic. The existing streetscape was installed 38 years ago and has outlived its design life. Sidewalks and streetscape bricks have heaved and settled; they are unsightly trip hazards. The street lighting is outdated and the curbs have deteriorated. The streetscape in its current state does not represent the Mansfield community. This project will engage the arts community (local artists and the Ohio Arts Council) to include public art to reflect the local culture. Design features will incorporate the history and heritage of Mansfield coupled with modern amenities.



Recommended Improvements:

- Replace sidewalks, curbs, and pedestrian ramps
- Install new ornamental lighting and arches
- Install bike racks/benches/trash & recycling receptacles
- Create public art
- Repurpose plazas in front of Richland & Mechanics banks into “pocket parks”
- Install landscaping, trees and planters
- Incorporate wayfinding elements
- Upgrade public utilities

Cost: Preliminary estimates are \$4M. This project would involve funding from a number of potential sources and an example how the funding could work is outlined below:

- Regional Planning Commission (Surface Transportation Program): \$2,500,000
- Ohio Public Works Funds: \$500,000
- Local Funds: \$1,000,000

Partners: City of Mansfield, Richland County Regional Planning Commission, Ohio Public Works Commission, Richland Community Development Group Arts and Culture Sector, Ohio Arts Council, Downtown Mansfield Inc., Richland Area Chamber of Commerce.

Timeline: This project will take several years from start to finish. The design work and grant preparation needs to begin immediately. Construction could begin in the spring of 2021 depending on Regional Planning Commission funding plan and project allocation for the County.



Action Item:

Create a wayfinding plan

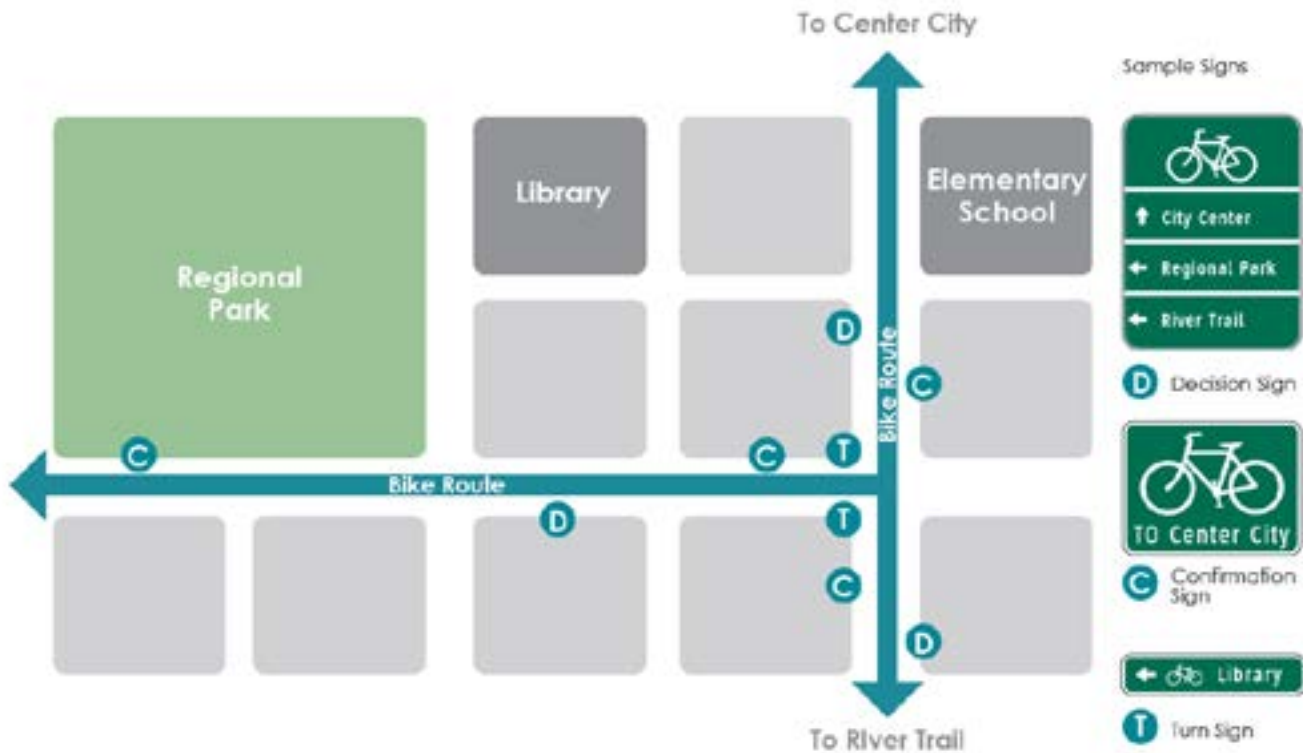
A Downtown Mansfield Wayfinding project should integrate navigation and communication tools to provide people with the necessary information to reach their destination. The intent is to offer multiple wayfinding tools and present them through a single graphic language and context.

The main gateways to Downtown Mansfield are the five-way intersection at Marion and Park Avenue West, the intersection of State Routes 30 and 13, the intersection of State Route 13 and US 42 and the railway subway on Park Avenue East. These will each serve as a “Gateway District” as the point of arrival to the destination: Downtown Mansfield. In addition, the Stanton Transit Station (at the corner of South Diamond and East First Streets) is the first point of entry for bus riders. *Kent photo above*³⁵

The use of landmark buildings, environmental cues, and public art should enhance the user experience. Landmarks not only provide reference points but also orient us, especially when we are in unfamiliar surroundings.³⁶ Public art is a way to engage artists in the process. Future developments should also be encouraged to build with the eye to provide impression points to the Downtown. This can be achieved using orientation, scale, appropriate location and visual forms of the building.

The wayfinding system should be integrated with the City’s roadway sign placement policy. It is encouraged that the City create policies and procedures related to the wayfinding system. Conflicting existing wayfinding signs and traffic signs should be removed prior to implementation of the new system.

Immediate and clear wayfinding signage will direct people to attractions and destinations, availability of paid and public parking and public restrooms. A simple, easy-to-understand format builds trust in both first-time and frequent users while creativity adds interest.



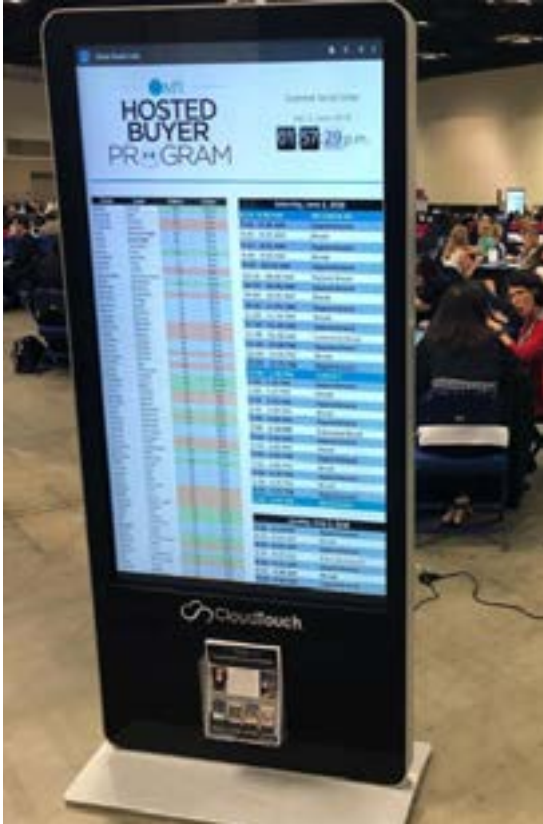
Cost: A consultant-prepared wayfinding guidance plan and manual: \$25,000-\$50,000, fabrication and implementation: \$75,000-\$300,000 depending on complexity and an annual budget of 10% of construction cost identified for maintenance. *Photo above.*³⁷

Partners: Consultant: Guide Studios, Destination Mansfield, City of Mansfield, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Richland Community Development Group Arts and Culture Sector.

Timeline: Short-term implementation for key elements such as parking and existing tourist attractions can be accomplished in 2019. Long-term changes to the downtown infrastructure may change the need for and placement of signage which should be taken into account during implementation. *Photo below.*³⁸



37 <http://guidestudio.com/budgeting-signage-wayfinding/>
 38 www.destinationmansfield.com



CREATE EFFECTIVE INFORMATIONAL SIGNAGE

Effective informational signage is a key factor to increase ease of use and accessibility to downtown events and activities. The signage could include banners, kiosks and a mobile app. Decorative banners could be created and placed by potential partner Downtown Mansfield, Inc. to inform motorists. Working with Destination Mansfield to re-open its gazebo in the municipal parking lot would make use of an underutilized structure and serve as an informational hub. Interactive kiosks with a digital screen could inform pedestrians about activities, events and wayfinding. A mobile app could be developed to work in conjunction with the kiosks and signage. Paid advertising on the kiosk screen and mobile app could sustain this project.

Cost: \$2,000-\$6,000 per electronic kiosk, three suggested for total \$18,000 hardware/installation cost. Initial software development bears a significant portion of the total cost to operate the kiosk system, estimated at \$12,000-15,000 for development and \$1,800 per kiosk per year to maintain. Taking advantage of a pre-developed software platform such as Cloud Touch or FrontFace for touch kiosks may provide a low-cost solution for short-term software development and management at a rate of \$600-1,000 per kiosk, but may severely limit overall function and capability over time.

Cloud Touch kiosk photo left³⁹

Partners: Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Destination Mansfield, and DRM Productions

Timeline: Larger, more technological pieces can be implemented after data collection, branding and wayfinding plans are complete. Banners can be implemented immediately at a lower cost. *See blue banner in photo left⁴⁰*

³⁹ <http://cloudtouch.com/photos/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.destinationmansfield.com/scavenger-hunt/>

Action Item:

Improve the Look of Downtown Businesses

RECAPITALIZE THE FACADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT FUND

The Downtown Mansfield, Inc. Facade Improvement Grant Fund formerly provided matching grants to building and/or business owners up to \$2,500 to make improvements. These funds were administered by a committee consisting of historic preservation commission, architects, designers, and community members who provided guidance and resources on facade improvements. While the grants were relatively small, the incentive for matching dollars expanded the number of projects. In addition, the resources provided in conjunction with the grant made for quality restorations and renovations consistent with community standards. The City of Mansfield's Historic Preservation Commission assisted property owners in the process of renovation within the Central Park Historic District.

Originally funded by the Richland County Commissioners and joint fundraising events, the program supported 30 projects with about \$65,000 in matching grant funds and leveraged almost \$750,000 worth of building restoration in downtown. Even though the program has not funded an application since 2015, results are evident all over



downtown including the Richland Bank sign, Uncle John's, Athens and Squirrel's Den facades, and more. The grants were used for signage, paint, awnings, repair to windows and doors and masonry work.

Cost: \$15,000 to \$50,000 per year for five years would serve six-20 businesses each year with up to 100 businesses over five years. Possibly consider ongoing funding for new businesses with all being eligible once every 10 years.

Timeline: Five projects could be completed in one year. Since the structure of the incentive already exists, this could be implemented quickly once funding is secured.

Partners: Richland County Foundation, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Historic Preservation Commission of Mansfield, City of Mansfield Codes and Permits, Downtown property owners and businesses, and Richland County Commissioners.

Additional Ideas for Consideration:

- A **retail conversion incentive**⁴¹ which is offered by Longmont, CO to encourage building owners to convert first floor space to retail establishments and also look into how other areas have taken a more direct approach to development.
- **Northern Kentucky**,⁴² **Hamilton, OH**,⁴³ and **Erie, PA**⁴⁴ have worked in their downtowns with the creation of private investment funds directed through nonprofits. This would have broader real-estate market implications and should be studied to determine if this approach is what is needed at this point in Mansfield.
- A focus on recruiting businesses that would be utilized by downtown residents should be considered to occupy storefronts as they become available. Examples include: grocery, walk-in clinic, dry cleaner, etc. This could be targeted through the "Design Assistance Program" or a more specific recruitment effort. These types of amenities will prove very useful when trying to bring residents to the area.

41 [https://www.downtownlongmont.com/_files/docs/incentive-programs-summary-2017\(current\)3.pdf](https://www.downtownlongmont.com/_files/docs/incentive-programs-summary-2017(current)3.pdf)

42 <http://thecatalyticfund.org/>

43 <http://corehamilton.org/#contact>

44 <http://www.eriencedc.org/>





CREATE A DESIGN-ASSISTANCE INCENTIVE TO ENCOURAGE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Stronger incentive packages offered to developers can encourage prioritization of investment in Downtown. Communities commonly offer incentives for new jobs, this would be a similar program but aimed at targeting new development downtown. [Strengthening the urban core of an area](#)⁴⁵ has been demonstrated to be a successful component of economic development efforts in many communities from large cities like Austin, TX to smaller communities such as Hamilton, OH.

This incentive has been [used in Hamilton, OH](#)⁴⁶ and offers assistance to offset the cost of development through the design process. They have used it to target small business development limiting it to businesses with 30 employees or less. They also restrict the types of businesses they allow to access it, and it is capped at a certain level. A structured pilot program in a smaller area with restrictions on the types of businesses that could access it is recommended. The money allocated would be released annually on a first come-first served basis each year, but projects would have to meet a minimum scoring level to qualify.

As described by the City of Hamilton in their Design Assistance Program, “the design process typically provides the owner with some or all of the following: floor plans showing existing as well as new construction; preliminary building, zoning and safety code analysis. These items will assist the owner in setting renovation priorities and in securing financing for the project.” The incentive would be reimbursed after a significant portion of the project is underway. Hamilton does not quantify how it determines “significant” so this would have to be determined by the overseers of the incentive.

Cost: There will be direct and indirect costs for this project. Direct costs are the amount of money the city would put towards the incentive annually. We recommend \$25,000-\$50,000 for the pilot. Indirect costs would be the city staff time to create, evaluate, and manage the applications. There is a potential for the Richland County Foundation to match the city’s funding for this incentive.

Partners: City of Mansfield, Mansfield City Schools, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Richland Community Development Group, North End Community Improvement Collaborative, Inc. and Richland County Foundation

Timeline: If the Hamilton model is used a draft of the proposed incentive could be put together within two months. This would have to be put in the budget, and approved by City Council. It is possible to think something could be in place within one year.

⁴⁵ <http://plannersweb.com/2013/09/healthy-downtown-key-strong-community/>
⁴⁶ http://www.hamiltonohiobusiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Design_Assistance_FAQ_20151.pdf

REIMAGINE OUR EMPTY STOREFRONTS

Have you ever passed an empty storefront and found yourself imagining what was once inside? Or rather, what you wish was inside? Mansfield is lucky to have an up and coming downtown but we also have our fair share of vacant storefronts. Many of us cannot help but imagine a host of new businesses we would love to see downtown. Since those businesses are not here yet, we can pretend.

Working with our partners to create a vision for business in Downtown Mansfield, what types of retail stores do we need and want to bring foot traffic to Downtown Mansfield? Once a list is created, we would hire a local graphics company to print realistic images onto vinyl decals to place in the windows of empty businesses. Instead of passing by empty, dirty windows, you would see the future downtown.

The hope is we would see our dreams come true. People driving by would see the new storefronts and feel compelled to stop and look. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy,

entrepreneurs and developers would invest in Mansfield.⁴⁷ An example of this is Seattle, WA where the Columbia City District did a similar project and within 12 months all of their murals were replaced with actual businesses.

Cost: Estimate for each window decal minimum \$400. There are more than 40 empty storefronts throughout Downtown Mansfield and many with multiple windows. Project estimate \$40,000.

Partners: City of Mansfield, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Richland Community Development Group and building owners.

Timeline: The timeframe is flexible. Once it does begin, it would take approximately one year to complete all required meetings, artwork creation and placement along with follow up. Before starting this project a city brand and message needs to be determined first.

47 <http://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/16-ways-make-your-neighborhood-safer-greener-and-more-fun#sthash.0PLjaM65.dpbs>



Action Item:

Invest in a year-round multi-use public space

Aside from the gazebo in Central Park, there is no place for people to gather during multiple seasons in downtown. Creating a structure to provide shelter from the weather is needed. This gathering place could be used for farmers markets, community meals, performances and food trucks. The structure must be intentionally inclusive of all cultures, ethnicities, ages and abilities. The photo (*top page 31*) shows the area in Newark before the public market was built.⁴⁸

It is imperative to include public restrooms in the design to accommodate people with mobility issues and families with young children. Since the closing of the Central Park restrooms in the 1980s, there have been no public bathrooms in downtown. It is recommended to install a minimum of four restrooms with separate entrances to each stall from a well-lit, highly visible entry point to maintain safety.

The structure should include ceilings high enough to drive a food truck under and electrical outlets for generators. Ample seating whether fixed or movable, will create a space that is inviting for events and food trucks. It also would provide an additional gathering space.

The structure could expand to four seasons if it was built to include garage doors. Other long-range items would be a stage for performances to provide an alternate location for performances from the Brickyard.

Cost: \$500,000 to start then make the space replicable so it can grow if usage shows it's needed. Example of Newark, OH involved a \$3.1M project with three pavilions, buried electrical lines, installed restrooms and brick pavers in the district. Design suggestion: similar to the Carrousel building.

Timeline: 12-18 months to determine location, ownership and build could occur in 2020 or 2021. This could serve as a space for other action items and would be more important once the local microfarm initiative is established.

Partners: City of Mansfield Parks Department. The Parks Department cares for multiple parks throughout the city. Many of these parks contain restrooms, picnic tables and trash cans. The request to the City would be for general maintenance and upkeep of this space with regards to cleaning restrooms, emptying trash cans and providing general maintenance to the structure and the items it contains. The cost to increase their maintenance would be minimal to their budget. There would be partnerships needed between the City of Mansfield and downtown businesses and organizations to develop programming for this new structure. Ownership of the space would need to be determined as it may stretch city resources to add a new space. Also, consideration on liability is necessary. *Photo page 31*⁴⁹

Potential location:

- **Municipal Lot, owned by the City of Mansfield: this is the preferred location due to its proximity to the Brickyard, Carrousel and is a high-traffic, high-visibility area**
- **Parking lot between Walnut Street and Main Street and Third and Fourth Streets**
- **Parking lot near the entrance to South Park Street from Main Street**
- **Alley north of the Municipal Lot**
- **North and South Park Street utilizing on-street parking and build coverage on the park side. This could increase the usage of Central Park as a gathering space.**
- **Diamond Street across the street and south from Phoenix Brewing Co.**



"Public markets enhance the potential for social interaction in public spaces— attracting diverse income levels, ages, and ethnicities—and thereby create a sustainable vehicle for upward mobility and individual empowerment for low-income communities."

- Public Markets as a Vehicle for Social Integration and Upward Mobility, Project for Public Spaces, Inc.



48 Drawing of Newark, OH public market
49 Martin, TN Farmers Market



A lighter, quicker, cheaper version of this structure would be to create an inviting space for food trucks with a variety of ethnic backgrounds and foods.

There are limited options of food variety among the downtown restaurants. Many have expressed a desire to see more food trucks in the downtown area that offer food choice options during off-hours and special events. An example of a community that provides engaging opportunities to enjoy food variety is Columbus. Every year they have a Food Truck Festival that attracts thousands of people. This is a great idea for an annual event but there is also support to have a dedicated food truck space in Downtown Mansfield. The timeline for this project can be fairly short once a space is identified and secured. Planning of events may take longer depending on partners that are involved.

Cost: There is minimal cost to convene operational food truck vendors in a common space. Costs may include but are not limited to tables, chairs, picnic benches and other necessary items to make the space more inviting.

Partners: Current food truck owners, City of Mansfield Codes and Permits Department, Downtown restaurant owners, food entrepreneurs, artists, building owners, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Phoenix Brewing Company.

Timeline: The timeline to organize this space can be as short as six months



Action Item:

Install free public wifi

To lay the best possible foundation for any future-thinking city, public wi-fi is a necessity. A partnership with Downtown Mansfield Inc. would be most effective to create an infrastructure to host wifi throughout the Downtown. Usage should be monitored by the Chief Digital Officer, and automatically limited to a period of time (e.g., 30-60 consecutive minutes) before users are required to re-authorize; monitoring usage will prevent a few users from monopolizing the bandwidth and thereby causing connectivity issues for other users.

Cost: \$1,400-\$1,800 per access point, it's estimated four access points are needed to cover Downtown Mansfield for total hardware setup costs of \$5,600-\$7,200. Annual maintenance fee of approximately \$1,000 plus estimated \$150 license fee per access point would be the needed ongoing funding.

Partners: Businesses located within Downtown Mansfield willing to house a rooftop access point and/or donate bandwidth. The [Vermont Digital Economy Project](https://www.vtrural.org/programs/digital-economy)⁵⁰ has a plan to implement wifi where local businesses donate bandwidth. This plan also recommends having a moderator for the system. This would be a very small task that could fall under the Chief Digital Officer. Possible grants available through [TechSoup](https://www.techsoup.org/about-us).⁵¹

Timeline: Immediately. This is a low-cost, tangible benefit to the citizens and visitors to Downtown Mansfield.

⁵⁰ <https://www.vtrural.org/programs/digital-economy>
⁵¹ <https://www.techsoup.org/about-us>



Action Item:

Enact a residential Community Reinvestment Area



According to the State of Ohio Department of Development, “the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) Program is a direct incentive tax exemption program benefiting property owners who renovate existing or construct new buildings. This program permits municipalities or counties to designate areas where investment has been discouraged as a CRA to encourage revitalization of the existing housing stock and the development of new structures.”

The CRA provides property tax abatement for the increased value of the property for a term of 10-15 years (depending on the project). This would have to be enacted by the City of Mansfield in cooperation with the other entities that receive property taxes (school district, library, health department, PRIDE tax). The City had a CRA from 1991 through 2007. It expired due to proposed changes at the state level. There is a possibility of reviving a CRA but it would come under new regulations.

This CRA would be beneficial to developers because it gives them time to earn back their investment before they have to start paying taxes on the improved property value. In a market with little housing investment in the last decade, this would be a key tool to encourage development in Downtown.

Many other local cities have an active residential CRA program: Wooster, Shelby, Ontario. Akron created a 15-year CRA for the entire city to encourage residential development in various neighborhoods. This CRA should be considered for boundaries beyond Downtown Mansfield as the city has many areas that are in need of further investment. [Dayton has used this strategy effectively in key parts of their city⁵²](#) to leverage a huge amount of investment that is now driving a much needed increase in property value.

Cost: There is no direct cost to enacting a CRA, but rather indirect costs of staff time needed to develop the project. In order to have a residential CRA, a housing market survey is needed, legislation needs to be drafted and enacted, and time will need to be spent promoting the project.

Partners: City of Mansfield Economic Development, Mansfield City Schools, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Richland Community Development Group, Mansfield City Council, North End Community Improvement Collaborative, Richland County Housing and Homelessness Committee, Metro Housing Authority.

Timeline: There are several steps related to enacting the CRA that could be done in less than one year:

1. Determine the geographic area for a CRA
2. Conduct a housing survey
3. Pass legislation at City Council
4. Post a public notice
5. Petition for confirmation sent to Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA)
6. Send documentation to be reviewed by [ODSA⁵³](#)
7. Receive confirmation and tax incentives can be offered

⁵² <https://www.mydaytondailynews.com/news/local/downtown-dayton-housing-growth-fueled-tax-incentives/5jjbNxVPCW1n mInBok5dPL/>

⁵³ <https://development.ohio.gov/>

Action Item:

Implement powerful but low-risk events

DEVELOP “BETTER BLOCK” PROJECTS

Mansfield residents struggle with self-loathing. Fostering a sense of ownership and community will be critical to the success of this plan. The design of public space should be a community activity.

“With community-based participation at its center, an effective placemaking process capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well being.”⁵⁴

Powerful but low-risk events can be used to draw people downtown. Using the “lighter, quicker, cheaper”⁵⁵ method for temporary events and installations can gauge community interest in more permanent implementation. This can include activities like neighborhood block parties, pop-up retail stores, temporary art exhibits, food truck festivals, oversized or life-sized board games, and parklets. Suggestions and funding for such projects should be crowdsourced. Projects will then be realized based on public interest and support thus increasing the likelihood of their success.

Example: A Better Block Project⁵⁶ on North Diamond Street would showcase how to repurpose underutilized spaces and beautify potential eyesores. While North Diamond Street is an important connection and through-way for local residents, it currently is used to cut through downtown at maximum speed. It is bordered by parking lots and buildings not oriented to the street creating zero sense of place. This thoroughfare has an important role to play in the growth and continued evolution of downtown. A few suggestions include reduce traffic by converting to a two-way street along most of its length, increase the width and attractiveness of the sidewalk,



⁵⁴ “Creative Placemaking and Expansion of Opportunity” Maria Rosario Jackson, The Kresge Foundation, 2018, https://kresge.org/sites/default/files/library/cp_white_paper_2_for_posting.pdf
⁵⁵ The Lighter, Quicker Cheaper Transformation of Public Spaces” Project for Public Spaces, Project for Public Spaces, 2018, <https://www.pps.org/article/lighter-quicker-cheaper>
⁵⁶ <http://betterblock.org/how-to-build-a-better-block/>

reorient the public spaces of Central Park, City Hall and the County Courthouse, and provide safer pedestrian crossings. These changes will make it more attractive for mixed-use development that complements Main Street. Over time, with proper development controls, infill development and redevelopment will be oriented toward the street. This will result in higher-density and mixed-use businesses, creating a vital location for office, housing and commercial uses. These changes, over time, could redevelop North Diamond Street into a Business District destination.

An effective method to introduce the concept to the public and city hall is to showcase a “Better Block” project. Started in 2010 “Better Block” projects consist of a rapid two-three month planning effort with a week-long build and transformative event day with resources from an engaged community which temporarily improves the physical and economic environment on a specific city block.⁵⁷

Cost: Variable depending on event with a range of \$500-\$2,500. Largely using available resources.

Partners: City of Mansfield Streets Department, Regional Planning, Richland Public Health, volunteers, City of Mansfield Parks Department, North End Community Improvement Collaborative, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Destination Mansfield, Little Buckeye Children’s Museum, Richland Source

Timeline: Three-six months to plan and 12 months to implement along the entire block. Once there is buy-in, aim to incorporate these as permanent changes. These projects are quickly and easily implemented and could start right away. They should continue indefinitely to maintain community involvement and help create an ever-changing downtown landscape.

57 “How to Build a Better Block” Better Block Foundation, 2018
58 <https://www.mainstreetvermilion.org/msv-events/2018/5/19/movies-in-the-park>

SHOWCASE FAMILY-FRIENDLY MOVIES ON OUTDOOR PUBLIC SCREENS

Families appreciate activities they can enjoy with their kids. Watching movies as a family in public gathering spaces makes the area feel more family-friendly. There is a need for programming for children of all ages. Many current programs are geared toward younger children. Several sites have been identified as prime outdoor movie space. Organizations such as the Renaissance Theatre and the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library could provide movies to show at the Brickyard. An example of an ideal space for a pop-up theater is on the side of a building with an adjacent parking lot. [Main Street Vermilion](#)⁵⁸ hosts movies in the park and does an excellent job in promotion of the series.



Cost: Cost is \$250 per screening, equipment (projector) can range from \$1,200-\$12,000.

Partners: Renaissance Theater, Mansfield Playhouse, Richland Carrousel Park, Kingwood Center, Little Buckeye Children’s Museum, pop-up locations, potential community center, Mansfield Richland County Public Library, Mansfield City Schools, and community organizations. An ideal partner would be the Mansfield Richland Public Library because they already show movies throughout the year. Cost could be shared between multiple interested partners such as service clubs and above partners.

Timeline: Summer 2019 and then annually.



DEVELOP A CENTRAL PROCESSING SYSTEM AND CALENDAR

A healthy and bustling downtown begins with awareness. In order to come downtown, residents and visitors must be able to easily access information about events within their community. To facilitate a valuable listing of all events, a central community “calendar” is needed.

To maximize foot traffic in downtown, a targeted number of recurring events (minimum of 250 annually) is necessary to build audiences.⁵⁹ A set standard of events should take place throughout the year. Even more people would be attracted to the area with seasonal activities catering to all age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds. In Independence, OH, events are held from March through December to engage the community and provide activities for all.

A community calendar would give businesses and organizations the ability to easily coordinate and promote events in Downtown Mansfield. The information should feed directly into existing event listings, such as a mobile app, and/or the Destination Mansfield public calendar of “Things To Do” to provide a comprehensive promotion of available activities, resources, and services.

The central calendar and processing system should also measure outcomes like the number of attendees, suggestions for improved experience, and observations of diversity and inclusion. The metrics would provide helpful insights to plan future events.

The comprehensive calendar would be beneficial to those planning events so they can avoid overbooking a specific area, day, or time. Organizations would be able to enter all relevant information for events in listings, including demographic- and interest-specific details to best attract targeted audiences, if desired: for example, organizations listing an ice skating rink or outdoor concert may choose to tag their listing as “seasonal,” while those listing a movie screening may choose to attach a “family” or “date night” tag.

The central processing system should include a list of available spaces for meetings and gatherings in a coordinated effort to draw in residents from outside downtown to raise their awareness and increase business activity. Businesses and organizations with capacity could offer free community space for gathering to illustrate a connection between infrequent downtown visitors and potential activities that may interest them. This system also has the possibility for ticketing and to be used to drive data on future programming opportunities.

⁵⁹ Resurgence of Downtowns, 2017 Roger Brooks, Destination Development Association
⁶⁰ https://www.richlandsource.com/news/downtown-mansfield-inc-announces-final-friday-concerts/article_54abff9c-fec7-11e6-bdb3-7764df6195af.html

Cost: Many affordable options have been developed for the type of data collection/organization required for a central processing system; for the purposes of Downtown Mansfield, the Airtable platform would work well and potentially integrate into a corresponding app for the price of \$10 per user per month (approximately 30 initial users for a total monthly cost of \$300 and \$3,600 per year).

Partners: Destination Mansfield, businesses located within Downtown Mansfield.

Timeline: It will take six-12 months to develop this system and another one-two months to allow for platform and user setup. The use of a pre-developed, user-friendly platform allows for immediate implementation and data collection. It would be best to adopt a brand and collaborative usage of Destination Mansfield's calendar prior to this system and determine which organization will be the owner of this system.

CREATE A DOWNTOWN MANSFIELD VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR POSITION

A Volunteer Coordinator would assist in scheduling, facilitating, and coordinating volunteer efforts in Downtown Mansfield. As people become more invested in Downtown Mansfield, it will become important to provide volunteer opportunities to continue the revitalization. Specific projects such as mural painting and art installations can provide people an opportunity to get involved with a short term commitment. Those seeking to invest their time on a more regular basis can be involved in maintenance projects such as clean-ups and recurring events. This position could be created within the City administration or be part of an independent organization such as Downtown Mansfield, Inc. or Richland Community Development Group. Community support and excitement for what is going on downtown can be further enhanced through an ambassador program to serve as citizen tour guides. Partnering with downtown businesses,

the ambassador program can focus on one-to-one personalized experiences for people who are just discovering Downtown Mansfield. Helping them become aware of what downtown has to offer both spatially and in terms of events and activities.

Cost: \$45,000-\$55,000

Partners: Downtown Mansfield, Inc., City of Mansfield, Destination Mansfield, Richland Community Development Group, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce

Timeline: The city would benefit from the creation of this position immediately. However, it becomes critical in two to three years as activity increases.

Action Item: Increase the number of public facilities

Fixtures and amenities keep a city accessible, vibrant and tidy. Facilities such as restrooms, seating, bus shelters, bike racks are functional and provide convenience. The lack of facilities can discourage usage of public spaces. For example, the lack of safe parking for bikes can convey the message of bikes are not welcome. Adequate facilities in turn, like bus shelters are appreciated in inclement weather. The bus shelter pictured here⁶¹ has been used as a branding tool in a Houston, TX neighborhood. Public facilities need not be just utilitarian but can also serve as street art.

Seating makes open spaces seem more inviting. Downtown currently does not offer a vast amount of places to sit and relax outdoors. Benches offer free community space for gathering, meetings, etc. Tables and chairs welcome people to sit down and enjoy a meal. Shaded seating is a necessary amenity for weather considerations. Prime opportunity spaces for seating are the alleys in downtown. Mansfield's alleys have the potential to create a unique space for people to gather. Utilizing alleys in alternative ways allow additional spaces to display public art on the sides of businesses and opportunity to create a beautiful

aesthetic in an underutilized area in downtown. The cost of these types of projects based on the seating and table cost as well as any other aesthetic items used to decorate the space.

Shaded outdoor seating is critical to providing a place that is comfortable for gathering. Central Park provides a good example of taking advantage of trees to provide natural shading.

Cost: A basic bus stop is \$9,000-\$15,000, bike racks: \$500, tables, chairs and decor per alley: \$2,500, restroom cost will vary depending on the location, and up to \$10,000 to create shaded seating areas around downtown.

Partners: Richland County Transit Board, social service agencies, Richland Public Health, business owners, City of Mansfield Parks Department, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Pioneer Career & Technology Center, and Mansfield Senior High Construction program.

Timeline: Timeline will depend on the nature of changes being made. If it is simply setting up furniture and hanging lights, it can be done fairly quickly. If there are any structural changes that need to be made the timeline could be three to five years.



61 Shelter on York Street in Greater East End in Houston. Photo: Allyn West.

Action Item:

Invest in our streets

ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT A COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

The success of many of the strategies and action items in the plan will depend on the ability and ease of people to travel within the downtown area. A well-designed multimodal roadway infrastructure should be a vision of the future to satisfy the growing desire for an enhanced quality of life less dependent on the automobile. To achieve this vision, the plan identifies projects to improve the bicycle and pedestrian network and make taking transit more convenient and safer, encouraging alternatives to vehicle travel within the study area. The multimodal improvements could be a phased approach over time.

Smart Growth America describes Complete Streets as being designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and tran-

sit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bike to work. Whereas, traditional streets are designed to enable cars to move quickly and efficiently. More than 1,325 entities across the nation have adopted Complete Streets policies as an approach to align community goals with better outcomes for all modes of transport.⁶²

“By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists—making your town a better place to live”

- smartgrowthamerica.org



The City of Mansfield could adopt a Complete Streets Policy to promote equal access to its transportation network for all users. By not prioritizing the automobile, users will have varied options to access downtown conveniently and safely. By formal adoption of the Complete Street Policy, the City will reaffirm its commitment to improving the quality of life for residents.

Cost: As this is a policy goal there would not be any cost associated unless a consultant is hired. The policy can be drafted by using templates and available online resources to adapt it to Mansfield.

Partners: The City Engineer and Regional Planning Commission could provide the technical expertise to draft the policy. The City Council would need to adopt the policy.

Timeline: 12-18 months with public involvement and input.

IMPLEMENT TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES



Street development throughout the district should look toward the elimination of on-street parking, narrower driving lanes, dedicated bike lanes, and wider sidewalk standards. These changes will increase the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. The space of the street, including the pavement between the curbs, should be considered as a shared vehicular and pedestrian-oriented space. **Rather than designing our streets and traffic-flow to give favor to moving cars through as quickly as possible, traffic-calming measures should be implemented to reduce traffic speed, reduce collisions, and improve safety for other users.**⁶³ Lights should be timed to promote the safety of the pedestrian, the

distance between the curbs should be reduced through curb extensions⁶⁴ and crossing islands⁶⁵ at appropriate locations.

Perception of safety is as crucial as actual safety in creating a network of spaces that people will use to navigate Downtown Mansfield. To this end, traffic calming and control will play an important role in successfully implementing this strategy. Walking paths should be well lit while respecting dark sky principles to reduce light pollution. Colorful crosswalks and sidewalks contribute to a sense of playfulness as one traverses the city, which in turn increases a sense of safety.

⁶³ "Traffic Calming to Slow Vehicle Speeds", U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2015, <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/Traffic-Calming-to-Slow-Vehicle-Speeds>

⁶⁴ Photo: https://nacto.org/wp-content/themes/sink_nacto/views/design-guides/retrofit/urban-street-design-guide/images/neighborhood-street/neighborhood-street-1.jpg

⁶⁵ Photo: https://nacto.org/wp-content/themes/sink_nacto/views/design-guides/retrofit/urban-street-design-guide/images/pedestrian-safety-islands/carousel/nyc_dot_pedestriansafetyisland_2.jpg

KEY LOCATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

Park Avenue for narrowing driving lanes, dedicated bike lanes, timing of traffic lights, elimination of on-street parking, and crossing islands. Priority intersections would be Main Street, Diamond Street, Mulberry, and Sturges/Marion/Bowman Streets and the five-way light. West Fourth Street for elimination of on-street parking, dedicated bike lanes, sidewalk expansion, and curb extensions (particularly at Walnut and Diamond streets intersections).

Cost: Curb Extensions: 15-20 at \$15,000 - \$25,000 each; Crossing Islands: six-eight at \$6,000 - \$20,000 each; Road Diet: two-three miles at \$10,000-\$15,000 per mile.

Partners: City of Mansfield, Richland Moves!, Regional Planning Commission, Ohio and U.S. Department of Transportation

Timeline: two-three years.



PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY BY DESIGN

Street design should be actively and passively sustainable. Features such as rain gardens⁶⁶ for stormwater management should be implemented as part of the overall streetscape strategy. Rain gardens are a cost effective way to provide both aesthetic and functional means to manage storm water and reduce the burden on the municipal sewer system. They also help filter pollutants while providing habitat for beneficial wildlife.⁶⁷ Streets that run downhill would benefit most. Locations for consideration should include Main and Diamond streets both north and south of Central Park.

In addition to rain gardens, Park Avenue would benefit from a more robust Urban Tree Canopy (UTC). A UTC has several benefits including stormwater management, pollution mitigation, reduces heat island effect, provides wildlife habitat, walkability, and increased property values.⁶⁸

Cost: \$1,000-\$1,500 per 150 sq. ft. rain garden installation. A UTC assessment would cost between \$10,000 and \$100,000 depending on the scope and level of detail.⁶⁹

Partners: City of Mansfield Streets Department, Mankind Murals, garden clubs, 4-H, Ohio State University Extension, Ohio State University at Mansfield, Master Gardeners, Mansfield in Bloom, and Shade Tree Commission. Proper design is key as maintenance is not the same as typical landscaping.

Timeline: One to three years. An Urban Tree Canopy assessment and plan would need to occur first. As street improvement projects take place, both rain gardens and tree canopy should be included in the discussion and implementation.

⁶⁶ Photo: <https://www.statecollegepa.us/2502/Allen-Street-Rain-Gardens>

⁶⁷ "Soak Up the Rain: Rain Gardens", U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2018, <https://www.epa.gov/soakuptherain/soak-rain-rain-gardens>

⁶⁸ "Urban Tree Canopy", Center for Watershed Protection, Center for Watershed Protection, 2015, <https://www.cwp.org/urban-tree-canopy/>

⁶⁹ "An Update on Urban Tree Canopy Assessment", Arbor Day Foundation, Arbor Day Foundation, 2012, https://www.arborday.org/shopping/conferences/brochures/pct/2012/review/presentations/ian_hanou.pdf

Action Item: Create the position of Chief Digital Officer

This position should be housed within Destination Mansfield, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce or City of Mansfield with the mission of ensuring our digital strategy is comprehensively driven forward across the right channels and consistently maintained.

It is not enough to just create a brand, we must leverage the message broadly and frequently across our communication channels which will be primarily digital. A well educated and connected CDO operating within a framework but having autonomy will create a resounding impact for downtown.

Tasks of the CDO will include proactively managing downtown's digital presence and marketing campaign, dedicated website, social media strategy and coordination across civic organizations and third parties.

A CDO will build a sophisticated web presence to ensure Mansfield's brand and message is seen and heard. This will drive tourism growth above the state average of 3.5%, increase foot traffic, and act as a tailwind to business creation and population growth.

The CDO will be most impactful if paired with a professional downtown branding effort. In addition to positive and cohesive messaging, the CDO can also engage in economic development and entrepreneurship messaging.

A CDO could lead a campaign similar to one developed by Richland Community Development Group several years ago: "I Choose Richland." It highlighted local residents who chose to live and work in Richland County. It was a nice campaign that was widespread but short-lived. With a CDO and cultivated digital assets, Mansfield could amplify its message. In the field of marketing it is known to take seven impressions to generate action.

Like the RCDG campaign, it will be important to show positive messaging which reflects our diverse community as well as to attract a diverse audience to Downtown Mansfield.

Cost: Chief Digital Officer salary \$50,000-\$70,000 plus annual marketing budget of \$50,000.

Partners: Steering committee made up of Destination Mansfield, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Richland Community Development Group, City of Mansfield, and Richland County Commissioners.

Timeline: Six to nine months. The CDO position and the framework for operation and autonomy should be carefully considered by a steering committee and maintained by one organization for the long-term.



Action Item:

Create a leadership cohort to improve diversity and inclusion

We can dramatically improve the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts within the top-levels of Mansfield's business leadership in order to create objectively better **business outcomes**⁷⁰ across Downtown Mansfield. By establishing Mansfield as a leader in diversity and inclusion among small midwestern cities it can become more attractive to potential businesses and **individuals**.⁷¹ Two major **studies**⁷² in the past three years have shown companies that are **more diverse in the boardroom**⁷³ make more money, attract better talent, and make superior customer-focused decisions. Successful and diverse business climates are attractive to highly qualified candidates. The talent pipeline of talent is there; 30% of all STEM degrees are earned by people of color, yet they occupy just **17% of leadership roles in technology, media and telecom companies**.⁷⁴ There are various ways to **encourage**⁷⁵ diversity and inclusion which other cities are implementing.

Create a leadership cohort focused on the improvement/formation of specific and measurable pathways to greater diversity, equity, and inclusion at the top level of Mansfield's business community. Members of the cohort should include those who have direct ability to influence policy, hiring, and membership decisions. Members will commit to a yearlong cohort that establishes evidence-based strategies that point to better business outcomes. This is an investment based upon the prevailing demographics of the country, and extensive research that shows tight correlation between leadership diversity and business success. Based upon this, it is reasonable to assume that the makeup of leadership positions within the organizations led by the cohort will become more diverse and thus, more successful. Secondly, **the message it sends to outside investors and the community at large cannot be understated**.⁷⁶

Steps to follow:

- 1.) Develop an RFP that invites qualified experts in the field to develop a curriculum for a yearlong cohort.
- 2.) Tap three area business leaders willing to spearhead the effort.
- 3.) Engage business leaders from within Downtown Mansfield to participate in the cohort.

Cost: Estimate \$50,000 to engage a qualified consultant for 12 months to lead the cohort.

Partners: Idea+Works/Richland Source, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, North End Community Improvement Collaborative, Potential consultants: **Molly Eyerman**,⁷⁸ **Renee Thompson**⁷⁹ and **Susan Rinderle**,⁸⁰ and the Mansfield Police Chief. Some of the individuals who are striving to have diverse voices at the table include Phil Mazzacco, Renee Thompson, Cheryl Carter, Dan Dickman and Aurelio Diaz along with North End Community Improvement Collaborative and Richland County Foundation.

Timeline: Three-six months to implement and then ongoing.

70 <https://techcrunch.com/2018/01/18/diverse-teams-are-still-really-good-for-business-mckinsey-says/>

71 <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236492/high-quality-job-candidates-look-company.aspx>

72 <https://hbr.org/2018/01/how-and-where-diversity-drives-financial-performance>

73 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/eriklarson/2017/09/21/new-research-diversity-inclusion-better-decision-making-at-work/#7fb7aae54cbf>

74 <https://techcrunch.com/2018/01/18/diverse-teams-are-still-really-good-for-business-mckinsey-says/>

75 <https://cityspeak.org/2018/03/26/how-six-cities-promote-diversity-and-inclusion-for-residents/>

76 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2018/03/08/where-small-town-america-is-thriving/#4f8599e138b8>

78 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mollyeyerman/>

79 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rthompson3/>

80 <https://www.workforce.com/article-author/susana-rinderle/>





A more grassroots, low-cost effort would be to create strategic partnerships to enhance diversity in the downtown environment. The more diverse communities are, the more they thrive. Diverse perspectives make communities livable and serve to ensure equitable opportunities. Underrepresented populations of people need to feel integrated into the society in which they live. Strengthening partnerships with key individuals and organizations, encourages an authentic relationship based on a sense of trust. Some organizations that may already have diversity and inclusion efforts embedded in their work that can organize people around these ideas are North End Community Improvement Collaborative, The Ohio State University at Mansfield, North Central State College, and Richland Area Chamber of Commerce.

These activities could begin within one year and would be ongoing with little to no cost needed.

Direct feedback from underrepresented populations of people offer honest feedback regarding their concerns and needs. Guided, intentional conversations about difficult topics allow people to express their feelings in a safe space to reach a common goal. Diversity and Inclusion has expanded to address more than race and gender, and now also includes sexual orientation, religious preferences, ethnicity, disability, and other differences.

Connecting to current initiatives to learn how to break down barriers to equity, perceived or real, help to strengthen current efforts. One example may be a focus group that provides feedback to Downtown Mansfield Inc. on brickyard programming and its potential to attract a diverse crowd. These groups would also be responsible for providing suggestions to any conflicts that may deter inclusion and expand the network of diverse individuals engaging in downtown activities.

Action Item: Create a Business Concierge Position

The philosophy behind the position is to be dedicated to help a company with its needs whether it is a start-up company or an existing one. The business concierge would act as the general contractor and help step-by-step. To find solutions, they would assist with requirements, regulations, permits, ordinances, funding, and available sites and buildings. They would be a liaison to the codes and permits department.

Step-by-step instructions for a particular type of business could be available on the City of Mansfield website for how to establish a restaurant, a daycare center or a retail shop.

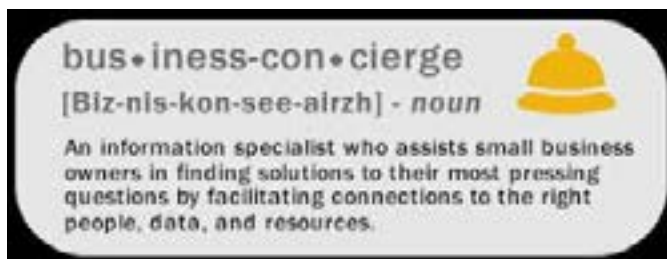
The concierge also would recruit businesses to locate downtown to insure a good mix and variety.

An expanded city concierge department with volunteers would be able to help visitors interested in moving here with their various needs such as housing, employment and entertainment. They would act as ambassadors for the City of Mansfield. Volunteers for business and visitors could be incorporated similar to how SCORE maximizes volunteers.

Many cities have a business concierge including Columbus and Delaware, OH, as well as Dubai. Dubai's Business Concierge is an interactive intelligent online concierge named Rashid that helps businesses, residents and tourists. The process locally would start with a conversation with City of Mansfield Mayor and Economic Development Director to discuss the possibility of housing it within the city and how this would impact the city's organizational chart. The new position/department needs further support from other city employees and could include comprehensive customer service training for employees who interact with current and potential business owners.

One goal would be for more businesses to locate downtown. It would bring a variety of stores/businesses that would increase foot traffic and a need for downtown housing. That, in turn, would make an impact on the tax base and an increase in population.

Success will be measured with the number of new businesses established in a year. The Business Concierge could send a follow up survey to business owners regarding customer service and ease of setting up a business.



Cost: Estimated Salary is \$45,000-\$65,000 a year plus website/digital assets of \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Partners: The City of Mansfield Economic Development Office, Richland County Foundation, SCORE, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Richland Community Development Group.

Timeline: Six to 12 months.

Action Item: Invest in green spaces



Touloukian Touloukian Inc./livingLAB



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CONSTRUCT PARKS FOR CHILDREN AND PETS

Diversifying the population of people that gather in downtown is necessary and will produce a plethora of benefits. There is a need for cultural diversity in the groups that frequent the area and if successful, may spur economic growth.

Community building is best done on the strengths of a community's assets. Downtown Mansfield has marked success in attracting young families with the Richland Carousel Park, Little Buckeye Children's Museum and the Renaissance Theatre. By ensuring downtown is a welcoming and inviting space for all, the assets of the people are multiplied and concentrated. Families make up a large percentage of the visitors to Downtown Mansfield therefore making it attractive to this group should be a priority.

Downtown Mansfield should be an inviting and entertaining space for all people. In the organic nature of Asset

Based Community Development, the downtown area has the potential to serve more people by enhancing the current infrastructure to make spaces more inviting to gather. There is a particular need for gathering spaces as well as additional programming for families in Downtown. Gathering in common spaces aides in establishing an identity for cities and enhances a sense of community. Our downtown is already buzzing with professional, working adults on a consistent basis while families tend to venture into the area for specific events or activities. Downtown Mansfield would benefit from spaces designed for children and families as it encourages safe movement and social interaction.

Parks are great at attracting families. Well-designed parks are versatile enough to be used for multiple purposes. Various uses for these open spaces can include: a place to rest and relax, enjoy a meal, gather with friends and family, or engage in physical activity. A park should be adaptable as well as convenient for multiple users to foster social interaction. With constantly changing demographics, planning



for diverse and inclusive communities should be a priority. An example of a newly developed park that meets similar needs to what we desire in Mansfield is [Beacon Park in Detroit, Michigan](#).⁸¹ Within the context of downtown, its positioning is similar to Central Park in Downtown Mansfield.

Playgrounds offer a multitude of benefits to individuals as well as the geographical space they inhabit. There is much synergy around programming for children with the cultivation of the Imagination District so identifying a site for a playground will only heighten the experience for families. Playgrounds are a prime location for inclusivity in that they encourage children to participate equally. There are a number of ways that building a playground nurtures a sense of community through tasks like design which builds awareness and gathers input, to construction which instills a sense of pride and ownership. An example of an inclusive playground is [Harper's playground in Portland, Oregon](#)⁸² which is a truly accessible children's park. The playground features play areas for all children.

Cost: Project costs are variable between \$1.2 - \$3 million. The timeline for a project of this size, with the current downtown infrastructure is an estimated 12-18 months however small steps in this direction would be to increase the play equipment available in Central Park and create landscaping and pathways that are inclusive for children of all abilities. These measures could be taken with \$50,000-\$75,000 at a time over a few years to show progress.

Partners: City of Mansfield Parks Department and Friends of the Mansfield Parks, Richland Carrousel Park, Renaissance Theatre, Little Buckeye Children's Museum, Mansfield Area Y, service organizations interested in projects for children, garden clubs.

Timeline: 12-18 months. This is a high priority to offer outdoor recreation and should be considered in 2019.

⁸¹ <https://empoweringmichigan.com/beacon-park/>
⁸² <https://www.harpersplayground.org/>

CREATE LINEAR PARKS

While our streets are the primary method of conveyance, creating a secondary network of spaces to encourage pedestrian traffic to and around Downtown Mansfield is equally important. This secondary network should be supported with traffic control devices, signage, maps, and literature that make people aware of the spaces and how to take advantage of them.



With the Carrousel serving as a hub, **linear parks**⁸³ that make use of existing green spaces, alleys, parking lots, vacant properties, and underutilized properties could be developed to connect to the pending Imagination District, Municipal Building, and perimeter parking. A key part to develop this secondary network is to transform key alleys as destinations and safe walkways by closing them off to vehicular traffic and making their primary function for gathering, exploring, and art. Key opportunity spaces include the alley East of Dan Lew Exchange, Dickson Avenue, Temple Court, and Luther Place.



83 Photo: http://www.west8.com/projects/sagrera_linear_park/
84 <https://www.pps.org/article/lighter-quicker-cheaper>

Cost: Initial individual project costs would range from \$10,000 - \$20,000. To create a comprehensive system of connected parks in downtown, costs could be in the range of \$6 - \$10 million including property acquisition and demolition.

Partners: City Council, City of Mansfield Parks Department, City of Mansfield Streets Department, adjacent business/building owners, and Richland County Land Bank

Timeline: Alleys such as east of Dan Lew Exchange and Dickson Avenue north of Downtown Fitness could see significant transformation almost immediately using the Project for Public Spaces **lighter, quicker, cheaper**⁸⁴ methodology. More permanent installations could be realized in as soon as one year. Other alleys that see more car traffic would take three to five years to transform as traffic patterns would need to be studied and rerouted before any interventions could be actualized.

DEVELOP MEANINGFUL GREEN SPACES

Urban green spaces are important to the health and well-being of Downtown. They should be included in the development of the secondary network of spaces, not only as destinations, but as part of the path. Creating a series of connected green spaces that provide relief to hardness of city infrastructure is critical. In addition to Central Park and the Richland Carrousel Park, additional green space development should be considered at Fourth and Adams Streets, in the current Municipal Parking Lot and at Sturges and Park Avenue. These spaces should be programmed spaces, not simply lawn, but include amenities such as public toilets, seating, games, playgrounds, and vending. *Photo below*⁸⁵

Cost: The cost would vary greatly depending on the size and amenities provided. A small park with moderate amenities could be constructed for \$250,000 - \$500,000. Larger parks with a full range of amenities could cost between \$750,000 - \$2 million.

Partners: City of Mansfield Parks Department, Friends of Mansfield Parks, service and garden clubs.

Timeline: Two-five years.



85 Photo: <http://archive.discoverdesign.org/2015challenge.html>

86 Photo: https://cumberlink.com/news/local/communities/carlisle/new-pocket-park-celebrates-cumberland-county-history/article_72f fa405-073e-50eb-85a2-20b63ebfc71c.html

Action Item:

Invest in activities for youth

BUILD A COMMUNITY POOL

While attending SXSW, Maura Teynor learned about a recent initiative from the City of Austin, TX to invest in their community pools and subsequently [wrote a blog about the need for a community pool](#).⁸⁷ While Austin is much larger than Mansfield, there are smaller cities in and around our county with community pools. The City of Mansfield has struggled to repair the only community pool at Liberty Park over the years and anticipate the need to replace it in the upcoming years. The need for a community pool is important as a gathering space, to promote a sense of community and improve the health and well-being of our citizens. Aside from this, community pools are an essential piece of a city to engage in recreational activities.



87 https://www.richlandsource.com/rising_from_rust/sxsw/why-does-the-community-pool-matter/article_d5655604-2713-11e8-a191-07807be3d53b.html
88 <http://mountvernonohio.org/hiawatha-water-park-pool/>

Liberty pool has served its purpose as a place for people to cool off in the heat of summer. However, the team recommends a competition-size pool with the possibility of indoor and outdoor opportunities. The addition of an indoor pool could serve local high school swim team needs as they currently rent pool-time from the Mansfield Area Y, Friendly House, and Malabar Intermediate School. Having a centrally-located pool to serve the entire city is imperative.

Cost: \$5-\$6M for an outdoor pool complex. If building something as elaborate as this picture of [Hiawatha Water Park in Mount Vernon, Ohio](#),⁸⁸ it would be necessary to create a sustainability plan to ensure long-term benefit to the community. Consider investigating potential levy options as well as a membership fee structure. A bond issuance could be considered to spread the capital cost over a 10-15 year term. An indoor pool could be incorporated with a community center as part of a long-range plan. Annual operating cost for Hiawatha in Mount Vernon is approximately \$364,500.

Partners: City of Mansfield - City Council and Parks Department, local funders, Mansfield Area Y, Mansfield City School District, Richland County Land Bank (future demolition sites). A supporter of Hiawatha was realtors as a new community pool became a benefit to sales.

Timeline: 24-48 months but community conversations will need to occur first to get input on needs in the community and location opportunities.

Potential locations:

- Northwest corner of Fourth and Bowman Streets (former school site)
- Maple Lake Park
- Cline Avenue (former school site)
- Adjacent to a pool and/or community center





DEVELOP A SKATE PARK

Mansfield, as many similar small towns, has difficulty keeping young people engaged in the community. Young people need to be included in the community and feel their contributions make a difference.

In an effort to make downtown feel welcoming to all, input from a diverse group of people ensures that multiple perspectives are heard, instead of the voices of a select few. Young people use green space as much as anyone but oddly, they are rarely included in the process of placemaking. Allowing young people to be involved in the formation of spaces, businesses and activity planning will provide a sense of investment. One city that engages young people effectively is Fremantle, Australia. Fremantle Esplanade Youth Plaza⁸⁹ is a gathering space designed specifically for and with youth, while a skate park serves as the center of its design. A skate park in Downtown Mansfield would not have to be as massive as the photo above.

Cost: \$135,000

Partners: Architects, local artists, construction companies, community youth, and organizations that serve youth. Ohio Dreams could offer design insight as they built an indoor skate park.

Timeline: Six-12 months

Potential locations:

- Old Westinghouse Area
- Northwest corner of Fourth and Bowman Streets (former school site)
- Maple Lake Park
- Cline Avenue (former school site)
- Adjacent to a pool and/or community center

⁸⁹ <https://www.skateboard.com.au/skateparks/australia/fremantle-skatepark/>

BUILD A COMMUNITY CENTER



Many of the activities downtown are targeted to adults or younger children, leaving teenagers without a sense of “place.” There have been countless conversations about a community center. The Mansfield Area Y is a community center, but it is not centrally located. Many teens, particularly those between the ages of 13-18, have highlighted the lack of opportunity for them to engage in downtown. A community center could provide an array of activities and services to teenagers and allow a safe space to gather. An example of an effective community center is the [Palo Verde Library and Community Center in Phoenix, Arizona](#).⁹⁰

In an attempt to make downtown an inclusive space, it is utterly important to create activities, attract businesses and offer programming that caters to older youth and young adults (ages 13-20). Young people seek exciting activities and spaces. One idea for young adults who are too old to hang out on the playground is a gaming arcade. [The Super Arcade in Los Angeles, California](#),⁹¹ is a great place for teens to frequent after school and on weekends. It features various games and activities designed by teens. The cost for an arcade is around \$130,000 which includes the building and outfitting for the games and spaces. Potential community partners include youth, organizations that work with youth, and entrepreneurs.

Cost: \$5.8 million

Partners: Friendly House, Ocie Hill Neighborhood Center, Mansfield Area Y, North End Community Improvement Collaborative, UMADAOP, Mansfield City Schools, Crossroads City Center, local churches, North Central State College, The Ohio State University at Mansfield, churches, businesses, City of Mansfield, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce.

Timeline: Three to five years as community conversations will need to occur first to get input on needs in the community and location opportunities then 12-18 months to re-design a space.

Potential locations:

- **Old Huntington Bank Building on Park Avenue West**
- **Corner of Fourth and Bowman Streets**
- **Westinghouse property**
- **Old VOA sites (280 & 290 N. Main Street)**
- **Adjacent to a pool and/or skate park**

⁹⁰ <https://www.archdaily.com/102240/palo-verde-library-and-maryvale-community-center-gould-evans>
⁹¹ <https://thesuperarcade.com/>

Action Item:

Develop a recycling program

This would include multi-sized recycling receptacles throughout Downtown Mansfield. As ongoing seasonal events continue along with increased tourism and interest in downtown residency, an adequate recycling program is necessary. This recycling program will differ from traditional ones. It will incorporate elements of original ever-changing designs created by individuals, businesses, and organizations within the creative community. *Photo below and right*⁹²

A unique collaboration between Richland County Solid Waste Management, City of Mansfield, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., individuals and businesses, the creative community will determine the patenting of this visually enticing recycling program. This will promote a safe and clean environment, boost city pride and morale while encouraging artists to come together to design and maintain the recycling receptacles.⁹³

Recycling receptacles will accommodate glass, aluminum, paper, and cardboard. Individually-designed recycling receptacles will be stationed in the Imagination District, the Carrousel District, and Central Park. Receptacles will be scaled appropriately to their location. The vibrant receptacles will give visitors and residents a place to recycle materials which will be picked up weekly. The City of Mansfield and Richland County Solid Waste will oversee the operation (pick-up and distribution) and maintenance/sanitation of the receptacles. The receptacle design and artwork will be overseen by artists, downtown residents, and participating businesses.

Cost: Costs for purchase and annual maintenance upkeep of durable and multi-sized recycling receptacles, as well as supplies, (paint, brushes, primer), will vary between \$30,000 - \$50,000.

Partners: Element of Art Studio/Gallery, Hennes Drafting and Art Supply, Mansfield Art Center, Mankind Murals, Richland Community Development Group Arts and Culture Sector, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., City of Mansfield, Green Room Gallery, North End Community Improvement Collaborative, Mansfield City Schools, Milliron Recycling, Richland County Solid Waste Management, local waste removal companies, Pioneer Performing Arts School, Ohio Arts Council, artists and residents of downtown.

Timeline: Once the City of Mansfield approves the placement of the recycling receptacles, multi-sized receptacles could be purchased. Individuals and businesses in the creative community will meet to discuss design ideas and develop a timeline.

⁹² <https://www.ecomaine.org/news-and-events/2016-recycling-is-a-work-of-art-contest/readfield-elementary/>

⁹³ <http://digital.vpr.net/post/group-artists-turns-chittenden-county-recycling-containers-works-art#stream/0>





94 <https://phys.org/news/2012-04-uw-intelligent-kiosks-composting-recycling.html>
95 Photo taken by Suzy Beeson in Oberlin, OH July 2018

Action Item: Implement alternative transportation options



Providing alternative transportation, allows a visitor to ditch their car or to park once and travel to multiple destinations. Cities are encouraging several options including rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft. An urban circulator system⁹⁶ such as streetcars and rubber-tire trolleys provide transportation options to connect urban destinations and fosters the redevelopment of urban spaces into walkable mixed-use, high-density environments. In addition to regular bus service, a trolley could be used as a circulator downtown making continuous loops to pick up and drop off passengers. Bike-sharing programs, pedicabs and electric scooters foster environmentally-friendly transportation.

Alternative transportation is needed if parking is moved to the periphery of downtown or centrally located. Event-based alternative transportation could be used as needed with a partnership of Richland County Transit between key points.

Costs: A self-driving trolley could cost up to \$660,000 to maintain and operate annually. Knoxville, TN implemented a self-driving trolley in 2017.⁹⁸ Transportation options available at a lower cost include Uber, Lyft, bikes, electric scooters, a bike co-op and bus routes available for all residents.

Partners: Lyft is already in Mansfield. Business and entertainment venues could possibly purchase and fund a circulator. Entrepreneurs may be willing to set-up a pedicab company or other alternative transportation options.

Timeline: A Complete Streets policy needs to be approved and implemented before the encouragement of alternative transportation. It will be necessary to create new destinations prior to developing alternative transportation systems.

Examples: Austin, Denver, Cleveland. METRO RTA in Akron offers a free downtown circulator, called DASH, which runs weekdays between 7am and 11pm in 10-15 minute intervals.

96 <https://www.apta.com/resources/hottopics/circulators/>
97 Photo Source: Columbus Underground.

98 <https://www.knoxnews.com/story/news/2017/04/20/self-driving-trolley-comes-knoxville/100690784/>

99 <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/2018/06/21/bird-electric-scooters-rental-costs-hours-charging-locations/720893002/>



Action Item:

Improve the sense of place

IMPLEMENT A PLACEMAKING POLICY

“Cities succeed or fail at the human scale - the place scale - and this scale is often overlooked.” By implementing the [Power of 10+](#)¹⁰¹ as developed by the Project for Public Spaces, big changes can be effected through human-scaled interventions. The community and stakeholders are involved in the process and the uniqueness of the community is brought to the forefront.

Future development of public spaces in Downtown Mansfield should be thoroughly vetted for its ability to be utilized by the public for a variety of activities.

Spaces with highly specified programs should be avoided. Rather they should be designed to accommodate disparate activities. “The most successful public spaces are ‘multi-use destinations’ with many attractions and activities, where citizens can find common ground and where ethnicity and economic tensions can go unnoticed.”¹⁰²

The first step would be to establish a core committee of stakeholders to engage property owners, developers, and the community to put together focus groups for proposed developments that will identify how spaces are currently used and how modifications to the space might change how people use the space. This could be an independent committee or part of the City Planning Commission.

Cost: This is primarily a policy implementation that would have little direct cost. However, there is a cost to hire a Placemaking Consultant to develop a policy. There also are indirect costs associated with staff and personnel to implement the policy.

Partners: City of Mansfield, City Planning Commission, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Destination Mansfield, business owners.

Timeline: six-12 months.

POWER OF 10+

HOW CITIES TRANSFORM THROUGH PLACEMAKING



¹⁰⁰ "The Power of 10+" Project for Public Spaces, Project for Public Spaces, 2018, <https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10>

¹⁰² "Ten Ways to Transform Cities through Placemaking & Public Spaces" Barbara Porada, Arch Daily, 2013, <https://www.archdaily.com/362988/ten-ways-to-transform-cities-through-placemaking-and-public-spaces>

ENCOURAGE TRANSIT AND PEDESTRIAN-SUPPORTIVE AMENITIES

Public transportation and walkability is most effective when it is supported by good land-use planning. Encourage new real estate developments to have transit-supportive amenities like sidewalks, proper lighting, spaces for future transit stops by a plan-review system that involves transit and transportation planning agencies.

Photo lower right ¹⁰³

One good example is State College, Pennsylvania, where the Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) has been working with developers through a voluntary plan review process to secure transit-supportive elements as part of new real estate developments. They have done this over time by building a transit culture and setting expectations among developers. *Photo right* ¹⁰⁴



Cost: There is no capital cost but will involve the City Planning Commission and Richland County Transit committing additional resources with additional staff support, coordination and review time.

Partners: This will require coordination and joint-plan review within the development review process. Coordination between developers, consulting engineers, city, planning commission members, transit and planning agencies.

Timeline: With buy-in from the City process changes could be implemented in one year and should be a long-term strategy with collaboration required between transit, developers and the City.

¹⁰³ A pedestrian pathway separate from parking connecting to bus stop
<https://humantransit.org/2016/09/guest-post-transit-oriented-development-on-a-small-town-scale.html>

¹⁰⁴ A bus stop in a shopping development
<https://humantransit.org/2016/09/guest-post-transit-oriented-development-on-a-small-town-scale.html>



Flying pig in Cincinnati, Ohio

Action Item: Invest in Public Art

COMMISSION LOCAL ARTISTS

Participation in the arts connects communities in ways that otherwise cannot be reached; the arts transcend barriers of social class and ethnicity, with 80% of the city's residents traveling to new neighborhoods to take part in arts activities, as demonstrated in one Philadelphia study.¹⁰⁵ In a separate study, 40% of its participants identified feeling a dramatic change in their positive associations with their community after taking part in the arts activities afforded to them.¹⁰⁶ Communities that invest in the arts have made a commitment to fostering a healthy social culture that values citizens' intellectual and emotional nourishment and creates a sense of belonging and well-being above and beyond fulfilling basic needs.

Local artists should be commissioned for murals, sculptures, and other public exhibits. In particular, displays that highlight the work of an artist in a central location and can showcase local talent on a revolving basis. This can be used as an engagement tool for the community to regularly come together for shared experiences, including local food, drinks, and music. To best identify priority projects and locations, crafting a public art policy will be critical in

achieving this action item. Columbus-based firm Designing Local could be a potential partner in this work. The firm specializes in creating locally-remarkable cultural, historic, and aspirational designs and plans and recently completed work on a successful Public Art Policy for Sandusky, OH.

Works by nationally- and internationally-renowned artists should also be considered to draw interest and visitors to Mansfield. Public installations bring together diverse groups of people, thereby encouraging dialogue and understanding across typical boundaries and perceived barriers. This method has been used successfully in several cities, including Buffalo, NY, where the Albright-Knox Art Gallery Public Art Initiative regularly presents artists from around the region, nation, and world, and contributes to a "shared sense of place and cultural identity."¹⁰⁸

Public art should not be the sole responsibility of professional artists, however, projects that show broad community participation are more likely to create lasting, positive change because the community has played a role in identifying needs, formulating solutions, and owning the result.¹⁰⁹ These initiatives often range from small- to large-scale projects, but for the immediate purposes of reaching this goal and fulfilling a need to engage the community in public art, a competition should be held to collect innovative designs of commonplace public infrastructure elements. Examples of potential design projects may include benches, sidewalks, and bus stops.

¹⁰⁵ Stern, M. & Seifert, S. (2001). Culture Builds Communities Evaluation Summary Report. Philadelphia: Penn School of Social Policy & Practice, University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁰⁶ Stern et al., 2001.

¹⁰⁷ Google search for flying pig public art Cincinnati, Ohio

¹⁰⁸ "About the Public Art Initiative." Albright-Knox Art Gallery,

www.albrightknox.org/community/ak-public-art/about-public-art-initiative

¹⁰⁹ Cleveland, William B. "Mapping the Terrain: Arts-Based Community Development." Americans for the Arts, 2011, www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/BCleveland%20Trend%20Paper.pdf



Vacant and underutilized lots and buildings present another opportunity, as these can set the scene for reimagined community development by transforming formerly untapped sites into creative spaces, drawing in both artists and non-artists. Using the spaces as a “blank canvas,” community members will collaborate to create a work of public art that not only celebrates the culture of the city, but also spotlights the potential of typically unwanted spaces. In this way, a wealth of undervalued assets in the city of Mansfield can be used as a catalyst to change the city’s perception of itself and engage a diverse community. A model program of this nature is the Artist in Vacancy Program (Newburgh, NY), which features creative interactive art installations on vacant lots throughout the city. If recreated in Mansfield, the Richland County Land Bank could potentially serve as a prime partner in this endeavor.

110 Schulman, Ben. “Why Newburgh, New York Started an ‘Artist-in-Vacancy’ Program.” CityLab, 12 Oct. 2017, www.citylab.com/equity/2017/10/lifting-a-small-town-through-a-land-bank-arts-program/542625/

111 Photo taken by Matthew Stanfield in Austin, TX March 2018

Cost: Make a significant investment in public art projects, including both commissioned pieces and community-created projects. Initial suggested investment of \$60,000 over the course of one year.

Partners: Designing Local, City of Mansfield Community Development Office, Richland County Transit (RCT), Richland County Land Bank, Richland Community Development Group Arts and Culture Sector to serve as an Arts Council, License Plate Fee Committee. An Arts Council would need to include a diverse group of artists, business owners and public officials to determine direction and content of public art.

Timeline: The initial step would be to establish priorities and guidelines around an Arts Council which could take 12-18 months to encourage an independent arts council established by funders to guide expenditures on public art. The implementation of public art was highly requested throughout the SXSW team’s Listening Tour and will show prompt, distinct, and eye-catching results from the Downtown Investment Plan.

ENGAGE THE CITIZENRY THROUGH INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

Develop a variation of WanderATX that is specific to the place and heritage of Mansfield. Wander ATX is a literary adventure that leads users to discover new and interesting spots in Austin, TX. The Mansfield version would provide a new way to interact with the city. Local authors would be commissioned to write a series of unrelated fictional stories similar to the choose-your-own adventure stories popular in the 1980s. A central starting point would need to be established from which each story starts. The user would select a story arc to follow and would be guided through the city based on the decisions they make at the end of each section. The story does not necessarily have to be connected to the location, but some reference to it in the story could help pique the user's interest. Each location would also have a separate page to explain its importance independent of the story arc. Numerous ways to explore the city are presented in each story arc. This is multiplied by the number of story arcs available. It is also scalable as new stories and locations are added.



Cost: Initial implementation with one story arc: \$35,000 - \$42,000. Each additional story arc: \$3,800 - \$11,000

Partners: Downtown Mansfield Inc., Destination Mansfield, Mansfield Richland County Public Library, Richland Source, Historic Preservation Commission, Richland County Historical Society, local authors and historians, Mankind Murals.

Timeline: Implementation can take between nine months and a year. There are enough existing points of interest that implementation could start immediately.

*Photo above*¹¹²



A lighter, quicker, cheaper version is to follow the lead of Jacksonville, FL. Their initiative was dubbed “Explore the More.” Information was typed inside bubbles in the form of window clings and displayed in storefronts, both in use and vacant, as well as sidewalks and parking meters. The information provided in each bubble was designed for individuals to embark on a type of scavenger hunt to learn the story of [downtown Jacksonville](#).¹¹³

Cost: The cost for this activity is fairly low with the cost of window clings at \$7 each. It could start with just a few windows to gain excitement, then add additional clings. For \$1,000, we could get clings for over 70 windows plus have money to promote the program.

Partners: Potential partners are local businesses and organizations, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Destination Mansfield, Mansfield Richland County Public Library, Mansfield Memorial Museum, Mansfield Art Center and the Richland Area Chamber of Commerce.

Timeline: The timeline ranges and depends on how many organizations are involved but could occur within six months.

¹¹² Photo taken by Matthew Stanfield in Austin, TX March 2018

¹¹³ www.downtownjacksonville.org

Action Item:

Create a Downtown Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watches are forming in many communities across the country including Richland County. A [Neighborhood Watch volunteer program](#)¹¹⁴ is a group of people living and working in the same area who want to make their neighborhood safer. They work with local law enforcement to reduce crime and improve the quality of life. Neighborhood Watch groups have regular meetings to plan how to accomplish goals and assign responsibilities to group members. The volunteer residents understand that by keeping their neighborhood safe, they can create a community where people want to live, work and play. The same could be done for the Central Business District.

By encouraging our residents and business owners to work together, they can identify and report suspicious activity in their neighborhood. The members focus on observation and awareness as a means of preventing crime or changing the perception of crime in the area. They employ strategies that range from promoting social interaction and watching out for each other to active patrols by citizens.

An additional suggestion would be to partner with official people walking around downtown during business hours and in the evenings when there are events. A low-cost solution would be to hire a [service](#)¹¹⁵. A better solution would be to hire a person dedicated to help visitors with wayfinding, act as “eyes on the ground,” get to know merchants and the regulars who gather in public areas, and generally serve as [safety ambassadors for downtown](#).¹¹⁶ They could wear a branded shirt, carry a walkie talkie and small first aid kit.

Cost: This action item would cost little to no money but would need the partnership of the Mansfield Police Department. A Neighborhood Watch group would utilize staff time from Mansfield Police Department. A Safety Ambassador program could cost around \$25,000 annually .

Partners: City of Mansfield, City of Mansfield Police Department, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, Central Business District business owners and residents.

Timeline: It would take about three months to establish a Downtown Neighborhood Watch group.

114 https://www.kirklandwa.gov/depart/PD/Community_Resources/Block_Watch.htm

115 <http://www.ohiosupport.com/index.php?id=14011>

116 <https://downtowncolumbus.com/about/sid/capital-crossroads/>

Action Item: Solidify an entrepreneurial alliance

Over the last 10 years, the convergence of many technologies has led to the significant demonetization and de-risking of starting a business and in-turn created a global startup renaissance. Entrepreneurship is now a more viable path for bold, optimistic self-starters to go out on their own. Last century, entrepreneurs built Mansfield into an industrial powerhouse and that spirit needs to be revived.

The community has a decentralized foundation of resources to help build a potent entrepreneurial ecosystem. However, it lacks a collective strategy. Through a well orchestrated aggregation of existing resources, Mansfield can become the face of innovation in North Central Ohio, "Startup Mansfield."

An Entrepreneurial Alliance formed a few years ago as a result of the Richland County Foundation's Economic Development Plan. A resource map was developed and the group collaborated to present the inaugural Richland Idea Audition in October of 2018. That was a pitch contest in which more than 30 entrepreneurs presented their ideas to panels of judges. Three winners were selected; My Health/ My Mammo, JKR Guitars and Aspire Technology.

An entrepreneurial alliance could attract young talent and drive an increase in annual net business creation rate 5X increase over 10 years (currently sitting at .05% annually as tracked by Richland Vital Signs).¹¹⁷ This is a key measure of entrepreneurial activity and a leading indicator of area GDP trajectory.

In the short-term, map resources, identify programming duplicates and gaps, and build a digital presence much like [Tech Life Columbus](http://www.techlifecolumbus.com).¹¹⁸

Meanwhile, a strategic plan for Startup Mansfield that balances a localized strategy with leveraged growth could be built. Two goals should be: 1.) Double entrepreneurship programs and events using best practices from "Startup Communities" Brad Field 2012, to include marquee events, culture building, speakers, and avenues to capital, 2.) Pursue "leveraged growth" through partnerships with high-growth organizations. Specifically, we should partner with Jumpstart in Cleveland to extend their their Core Cities program and leverage our location to partner with Smart Columbus to pilot programs that they do not have time for or would like to expand.

"...Despite significant steps forward...the statewide macro entrepreneurship needle isn't moving fast enough for Ohio to join the advanced economy"

- Ohio Bold Plan, Ohio Chamber of Commerce, 2018

Cost: \$9,500 with \$3,500 for basic website and artwork, \$6,000 per year for consistent updates, newsletter, and maintenance. Funds for robust programming and engaging partnerships would cost \$50,000 annually.

Partners: Idea Works, Braintree Business Development Center, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, The Ohio State University at Mansfield, North Central State College, Stellar Robotics, Fab Lab and independent initiatives such as TEDx Mansfield, Red Mystic Studios, Mansfield Makerspace, Richland County Foundation and Richland Idea Audition.

Timeline: Six to 12 months to bring the group together and build a website. Leverage CDO if hired.

¹¹⁷ <http://www.richlandvitalsigns.com/>
¹¹⁸ www.techlifecolumbus.com





Action Item:
Enact Car-Free
Zones

Areas to consider for car-free zones include:
Fourth Street from Main Street to Mulberry Street,
Walnut Street From Third Street to Fourth Street,
Third Street from Benton Street to Walnut Street,
Other areas for car-free zones would need to be
evaluated based on future development.

The long-range plan would be to integrate car-free zones with a system of pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout Downtown. *Photo left*¹²¹

Cost: As this is largely a policy change, the direct costs of enacting car-free zones are minimal. However, there could be substantial indirect costs. These costs are related to providing appropriate infrastructure for alternate means of transportation and making public transit a bigger part of everyday life.

Partners: Richland County Transit, Richland Moves!, Richland Public Health, and the City of Mansfield

Timeline: Temporary car-free zones are already occur during certain events. These should continue with greater frequency until such a time the permanent car-free zones could be enacted. The success of permanent car-free zones are dependent on providing alternate means of transportation such as public transit and dedicated bike lanes. Permanent car-free zones should start to be in place in the next five-eight years. To start, one day could be identified as Car-Free Day. This would be best to have a Better Block Project happen with a car-free zone prior to strategic implementation.

Our streets carry the lifeblood of what will transform the Central Business District. Namely, the people who will live, work, and gather in downtown. They are the generators of community. We do a disservice to treat our streets purely as a utilitarian means to convey cars. Rather, we should promote a system of developing street infrastructure as a setting for public life.

“Before cars, our city streets served as social gathering spaces, where neighbors could congregate, street vendors could sell their wares, and children could play.”¹¹⁹

Giving over 80% of our transportation infrastructure to accommodate the least efficient mode of transportation, namely the private automobile, has a high cost to society.¹²⁰

Infrastructure is more expensive to maintain and people tend to be less healthy. Car-free zones should be considered in the transformation of our streets. Among the benefits of dedicated car-free zones are a more robust economy, better health, and safety. Reducing exposure to air and soil pollutants that are part and parcel to combustion engines makes for a healthier population and a healthier planet as does providing the infrastructure to allow people to move freely through the city without a car. Relegating vehicles to the perimeter of Downtown also provides a safer environment and frees up significant space to accommodate a variety of activities, planned or impromptu.

119 “Walkable Cities - Pedestrianization and Reducing our Focus on Cars”, Urban Hub, Urban Hub, 2016, <http://www.urban-hub.com/sustainability/design-for-people-not-cars/>
 120 “Cities Are Creating Car-Free Zones To Ease Congestion And Pollution”, Interview with Charles Montgomery, WBUR, 2017, <http://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2017/02/23/car-free-zones>
 121 Photo: <https://www.treehugger.com/culture/one-city-in-america-where-cars-have-been-banned-1898.html>





The Downtown Cincinnati App.¹²²

A lighter, quicker, cheaper version of this would be to link all websites to cross-promote events and activities and utilize social media to its fullest capacity to promote Downtown Mansfield.

Action Item: Build a free mobile app

With technology use on the rise, a free mobile app should be developed to showcase downtown businesses, events, attractions, public art, and other activities. In conjunction with this app, geofencing may provide a valuable opportunity to cross-promote events in the user's immediate area.

Since the Mansfield-Richland Education Foundation has shown an interest to hold a civic hackathon, this organization may prove to be a valuable partner to develop a mobile app. With an added bonus of increasing community buy-in.

Destination Mansfield could be another potential partner to help develop and pilot the app as well as promotion. Costs could be reduced by identifying and employing an existing platform that is customizable and has shown success in similar projects across the country (e.g. My Tours).

Data from the central processing/community calendar could be used to develop the app and ensure the long-term success.

Cost: Initial setup cost \$2,000 - \$5,000 and yearly cost of \$6,000 - \$8,000.

Partners: Mansfield-Richland Area Education Foundation, Destination Mansfield. White Label Apps are available to apply Mansfield branding to the app; the Renaissance implemented this in summer 2018.

Timeline: Six to 12 months in development. It would be best to have the city brand and message created first along with utilization of the Central Processing/Community Calendar for one year prior to app development.

¹²² <https://www.downtowncincinnati.com/about-us/cincinnati-app>



Mansfield Rising 2024 Update

The original Mansfield Rising project in 2018 was a big risk with no clear path to success when it began. Something like Mansfield Rising had never been done in Mansfield, or anywhere else.

No community foundation had ever sent 15 people to an ideas festival in Texas and then tasked them—as unpaid volunteers—to build a framework for growth, development, and investment.

The big question was what would happen after the plan had been developed and delivered. No one knew if Mansfield Rising would become a rallying point for community action or a footnote in the long line of plans gathering dust on shelves throughout the region.

MANY FORMS OF IMMEDIATE AND SIGNIFICANT ROI

- 17 projects have been either completed or are in process.
 - Main Street Improvement Project
 - Community Branding
 - Development Incentive grants
- Projects noted in the MR plan have attracted over \$19 million in investment from dozens of public and private sources.
- Mansfield Rising turned into a powerful leadership development cohort. Since 2018, members of the original cohort have:
 - Started businesses
 - Purchased businesses
 - Ran for and been elected to public office including school boards, city council, and the mayor's office all of which are now occupied by Mansfield Rising members.
- The term, “**Mansfield Rising**” has been adopted in the local vernacular as synonymous for citizen-led community development and improvement.
- The citizen planners have developed a deep trust in one another and radically expanded the diversity and nature of their professional networks.

FRESH FACES AND NEW IDEAS

In 2024 an anonymous donor who had watched and been impressed by the progress and headway driven by Mansfield Rising wanted more for Mansfield. An offer was extended to send a second group to SXSW and join the effort. This came quickly and with no conditions.

A MORE RIGOROUS, SUPPORTED PROCESS

A team of three went to work to examine what worked the first time and what they wanted to improve.

- To ensure cohesion and buy-in, nominations for the new group of eight came from the original team. This was new and worked well. The nomination process was formalized through an online form, vetted, and ultimately voted upon by the original group.
- The focus on diverse backgrounds and perspectives which proved so valuable in 2018 was carried through to great effect. The cohort was remarkably diverse in all ways, representing the full spectrum of the community they were serving.
- Two original Mansfield Rising members went with the new cohort to SXSW and acted as mentors to the new group and helped them develop of ideas.
- Development of ideas became more rigorous. The new cohort received training in development of a pitch, used a common slide deck and format, and had a mock pitch day for feedback. Their work culminated with a formal pitch night attended by nearly all Mansfield Rising members and many stakeholders.

By the end of 2024, about a year after the effort began, the new Mansfield Rising cohort has been integrated into the effort and some of their projects have begun moving forward.

“There’s a fire burning. We need to add fuel.”

The anonymous donor saw the need to add new leaders and perspectives. They hoped to keep the energy behind Mansfield Rising high and mitigate the inevitable loss of members due to moves, personal situations, or job changes.

SXSW 2024 TEAM



KRIS BEASLEY

Kris is the Mansfield Senior High School Principal. He is working every day at the intersection of our city and the young adults who will make it better or worse based on their choices in the coming decades.



JESSICA HISER

Jessica is the Director of Marketing and Advertising for Spherion Mid-Ohio. She serves on the board of Downtown Mansfield, Inc., and volunteers extensively. She chose Mansfield to build a community and raise her two young children.



JENNIFER BEAVIS

Jennifer is the Marketing Director for the Mansfield Art Center. The MAC has shown a renewed vigor and dedication to arts education and attracting top talent and shows to Mansfield. Jennifer is a driving force behind that work.



NAN MCCARTNEY

Nan is a graphic designer at K.E. McCartney & Associates. She was instrumental in writing and developing the RAISE Grant for the Main Street Project.



BRAXTON DANIELS III

Braxton is the Owner of 3rd Cup Tea in downtown Mansfield. He is an established artist in the Mansfield community working with other artists to bring vibrant events to downtown. He also serves as a member of the Public Art Commission.



SANDY MESSNER

Sandy is the Marketing & Communications Director at the Richland Area Chamber & Economic Development. She is also an essential leader of the branding project, and serves on the board of Downtown Mansfield, Inc.



MARIO DAVISON

Mario recently joined the Mansfield Police Department but previously served as the Finance Manager for NECIC. A North End native, Mario joined the NECIC as a Community Organizer in 2021.



ORIE RUSH

Orié is a small business owner / entrepreneur, musician, and visual artist. He recently was part of a group of young men who stepped up to drive the Liberty DIY skatepark forward.

Action Item:

Collaborative transportation effort between Mansfield City Schools and Richland County Transit

INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY TO SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

The project aims to address transportation issues for high school students living within a 1.5-mile busing radius of MCS, where one third of students face attendance problems, especially in winter. By partnering Mansfield City Schools with Richland County Transit, the initiative seeks to provide reliable transportation, enhance community connections, and promote punctuality and attendance. Reviving a former relationship

between the school and transit systems, this effort also aims to utilize the underused public transportation system and instill a sense of commitment and perseverance in students.

Cost: The costs to implement will vary depending on the number of buses, rates for usage, and participation. A one-year pilot program would minimize startup costs and measure ridership to determine viability. The pilot would most likely be grant funded.

Partners: Mansfield City Schools (MCS), Richland County Transit (RCT), Parents & families of MCS students, Safe Routes to School Program

Timeline: Ideal start time would be the beginning of a school year.



Action Item:

Emerging Developers Accelerator

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF QUALIFIED, TRAINED HOUSING DEVELOPERS

Mansfield's ability to grow and sustain its housing market is threatened by a shortage of skilled developers interested in completing projects in Mansfield. There is lasting benefit in the cultivation of the next generation of homegrown talent to sustain community growth and attract new investment.

This initiative is designed to cultivate homegrown housing development talent by leveraging a comprehensive training curriculum and providing invaluable mentorship opportunities to first-time developers. The program will equip aspiring developers with essential skills and knowledge while providing guidance from experienced professionals. By nurturing emerging development talent, Mansfield can build a robust housing market which drives both community growth and economic prosperity.

The cornerstone of this initiative is the mentorship program. Each participant is paired with a seasoned housing developer based on their chosen specialization track and career aspirations. Mentors will provide regular guidance, support, and feedback which will enrich the learning experience. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to network and collaborate through local development forums, industry workshops, and community events, fostering a sense of collaboration and shared purpose.

The Richland County Housing Study identified the need for our community to either attract more development firms to Mansfield or increase the capacity to create our own housing developers to meet the needs and grow our community. By growing our own developers, Mansfield will reduce reliance on outside companies to see value in our community.

Successful homegrown projects will naturally increase external demand, which is good for everyone.



Cost: Approximately \$80,000/year for a three-year pilot period

Partners: Richland County Foundation, Richland Area Chamber and Economic Development, North Central State College, Richland County Financial Institutions, Richland County Land Bank, Mansfield Metropolitan Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity

Timeline: 12-18 months to develop curriculum, confirm university partners, and recruit mentors.

We estimate each cohort will last one year.

Action Item:

The Homage Project

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL

Central Park is the front door to our city, and should enrich our citizens lives and welcome visitors to Mansfield. Over the years it has become a crowded memorial space in the midst of one of the least quiet and reflective places in the city. Currently, Central Park neither serves the purpose of quiet reflection and contemplation that the memorials deserve, nor has the room to be a true community gathering space.

Through creative placemaking, we have the opportunity to uplift and inspire by developing a welcoming New Central Park, a serene Mansfield Memorial Peace Garden, and a vibrant Legacy Park for the benefit of all. These are not just parks, but active public spaces that converge and form culture for the city that will enhance the positive changes of the Main St. Corridor Project.

Redesigning Central Park will open new opportunities for art fairs, farmer's markets, and other community gatherings, while still providing space for daily respite. An accessible Open-Air Pavilion, trees wrapped in lights, u-shaped seating, and extensive tree canopy, will transform the cluttered park into an urban oasis at the heart of our city.

Mansfield Memorial Peace Garden will be a space to honor those who have served and allow for private reflection and remembrance. Thoughtful monument placement of our current memorials, accessible pathways, seating, nature, mature trees, flags, and a sense of reverence and quiet will show respect and gratitude to those who served. Mansfield Memorial Peace Garden will be a place to commemorate military holidays, hold celebrations of honor, and family picnics.

Legacy Park will celebrate the rich diversity of our community, and the heritage of Black history in Mansfield. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr -- who gave the dedication at Mt. Hermon Baptist Church where his uncle was a pastor, and returned to Mansfield to deliver a sermon to a packed congregation -- will be honored with a vibrant freestanding lighted mural and a podium sculpture to inspire future generations to speak. The park will create a lasting tribute to Sarah Daisy Barker Thomas, who taught music and founded the local NAACP. Her father George Barker, who was at one time an enslaved person, was one of the first African Americans to purchase a lot and build a home in Mansfield.

These incremental changes to our existing spaces will be a catalyst for building a sense of culture, identity, wellbeing, and connection; bridging the gap from where we are to what we could be, and enhancing the quality of life in Mansfield.

Cost: The costs of this project are variable and site specific with the initial estimate being between \$1.5m-\$3m total. The process for creating these spaces begins with reallocating the existing sculptures to new locations.

Partners: City of Mansfield, Richland County, Sponsors of the current monuments, Richland County Foundation, Veterans Administration, Richland County Historical Society, Mt. Hermon Baptist Church, Mansfield/Richland County Public Library, NECIC

Timeline: The process for creating meaningful public spaces starts with the feedback and collaboration of our community. The work of bringing these spaces to life could happen relatively quickly once final decisions are made.

From start to finish, this project could take 2-4 years.



Action Item:

Housing First for Mansfield

ADOPT HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES ACROSS THE CITY

In 2023 alone there were 257 students in Mansfield City Schools experiencing housing insecurity. Mansfield has a poverty rate which is double the national average.

For kids experiencing homelessness, there are not enough shelter beds or accessible affordable housing options to meet their needs. Often times, couch surfing is the only attainable solution for these kids, leaving them vulnerable and in dangerous situations. Unsafe and unstable housing situations lead to students neglecting school, making their own futures uncertain. These kids are helpless victims in their situation, and the community should help them.

What Mansfield needs is to adopt a Housing First philosophy to reframe how we approach homelessness.

Providing housing options that welcomed tenants regardless of eviction records, addiction, and financial insecurity would create a safe environment for children while they are still in school to focus on their education in hopes of building a successful future. It would allow them to have a functional family environment so that they can grow and learn along with their parents and siblings.

Housing First is a methodology that has successfully been implemented and dramatically reduced or even eliminated homelessness in cities across America. It is a proven, humane, and cost-effective strategy for reducing homelessness.

Housing First works by assuming that everyone is housing-ready, regardless of: evictions, criminal records, addictions or mental illness. People are allowed into housing FIRST, and then support, life coaching and direction are provided to carry them into a sustainable future. Housing First is not a specific program, but rather a service model based on flexible and adaptable principles that would be tailored to fit Mansfield's needs.

Because it is a philosophy and not an organization, Housing First can serve to unite existing organizations in Mansfield currently working towards ending homelessness, and ensure alignment in their outputs. It will look like an umbrella, led by a core group and partnering with local organizations and landlords to create an efficient and effective system.

This new perspective can start small and scale itself organically with time. It will take time and energy for Housing First be accepted across the city as the standard approach to housing insecurity, but doing so will provide safer and more sustainable solutions to end homelessness.

Cost: \$100,000 for comprehensive training in Housing First principles for all the stakeholders working on homelessness in Mansfield and Richland County. The benefits of a shared experience and vocabulary will yield downboard decision-making that's unified operating cooperatively.

Partners: Mansfield's Homelessness Task Force, Mansfield City Schools, City of Mansfield, Great Lakes Community Action Partnership, Catholic Charities, Mansfield Metropolitan Housing, Catalyst Life Services, NECIC, Wayfinders

Timeline: Work on this project could start as soon as funding is secured.





Action Item:

Launch a Digital Trauma Support Resource

Safety and violence prevention needs to be at the forefront of every community development plan. Ensuring our residents have a safe space to live, work, and go to school are the fundamental building blocks that grow a healthy city and attract investment.

During a May 2024 gun violence panel discussion, survivors shared how exposure to gun violence led to insomnia, anxiety, social disconnection, and loneliness. They emphasized strengthening connections with law enforcement and events like “Peace on My Block” as essential for healing.

With 70% of Americans supporting [more mental health funding](#) and a 154% increase in [telehealth services](#) since 2020, Mansfield is ready for accessible trauma support through digital resources. A [Trauma Support Digital Resource](#) would provide access to support groups, workshops, and recovery events, serving as a hub for information and community support while reducing isolation and fostering resilience and mental well-being among residents.

The resource might include:

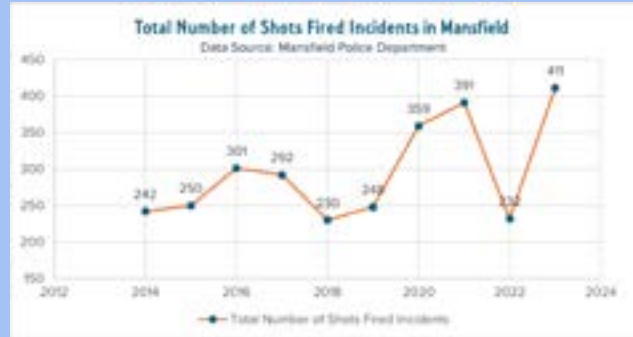
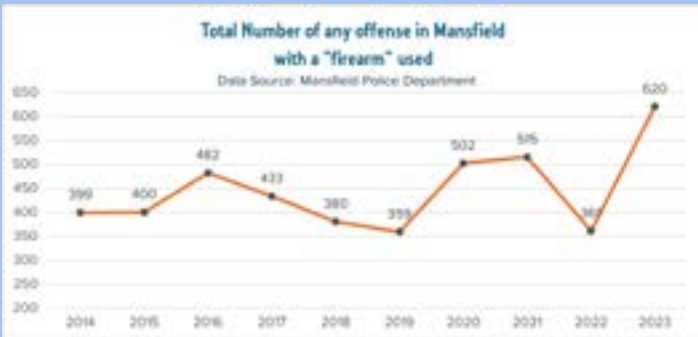
- **AI-Enabled Chatbot:** Instant information, personalized recommendations, and emotional support.
- **Community Events Calendar:** Lists workshops and events for survivors and families.
- **Task Force:** Coordinates local organization efforts for comprehensive support.
- **Support Groups:** Local and virtual support groups.
- **Care Packages:** Resources and items to help manage trauma.
- **Trauma Resources:** Articles, videos, and tools for understanding and coping.
- **Connecting with Users:** Facilitates peer-to-peer connections and mentorship opportunities.

Cost: The estimated first-year cost is \$80,000, covering web/app development, content creation, support materials, events, and marketing. Ongoing costs are \$30,000 annually.

Partners: Local Authorities and Officials, Healthcare and Mental Health Providers, Community and Civic Groups, Educational Institutions, Corporate Sponsors

Timeline: We suggest a 12-month pilot program with significant stakeholders like mental health professionals and law enforcement to prove effectiveness and need.





Action Item:

Mansfield Makes

CREATE A MIXED USE CREATIVE SPACE

Mansfield has a deep history of manufacturing and innovation, and is also developing a deep and diverse creative community. While there are many existing creative spaces, they generally operate as separate units with little overlap or sharing of resources. A multi-use creative maker-space would serve to inspire the next generation of makers and entrepreneurs as well as provide a hub for the creative community to swap skills and connect with each other.

In order to make sure that creatives and idea generators want to stay in Mansfield and that they're well nourished with community and resources, they need a place to make connections and have the potential to cross-pollinate skills and ideas. With a focus on bringing ideas to life, the space will focus on accessible physical mediums such as drawing and sculpture, while also introducing 3D printing as another tool for creatives to explore.

A Creative Hub

Having a centrally located rallying point for creative assets within the city would increase the connectivity between each venue and each creator, some of which may have less exposure on average, and give a cohesive look at the creative pulse of the community. It can also be used as a smaller venue downtown for music or other community shows, widening the creative net.

A Creative Funnel

Along with offering a suite of tools that work in sync with each other to best bring an idea to life, the space can also offer classes and demonstrations by local makers to give the public a casual and accessible entry point to art, manufacturing, and product generation. Attendees are more likely to then take deeper classes or pursue avenues of creation utilizing the city's creative resources.

An Invitation

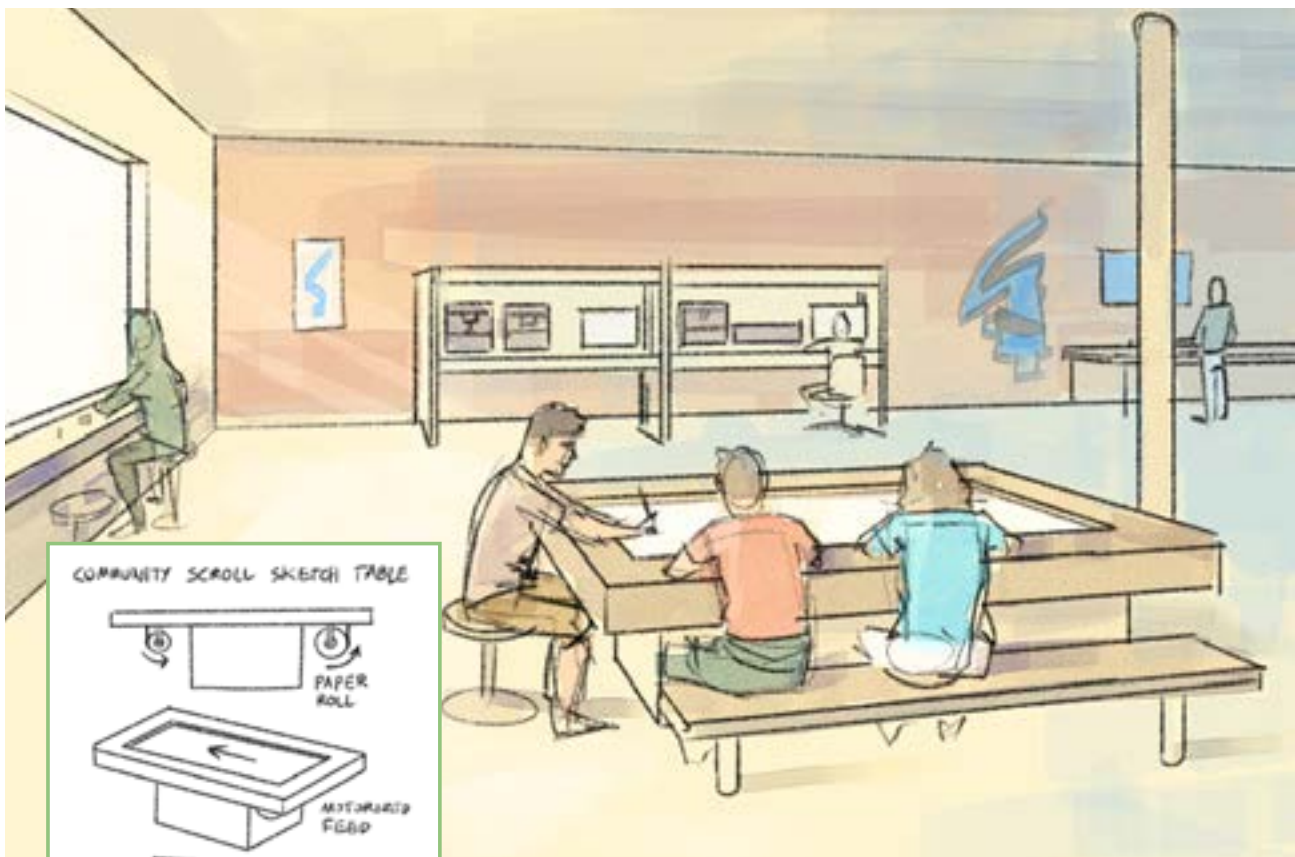
By opening up the creative process to the public, Mansfield Makes will satisfy a deeply human desire to create while simultaneously fostering an appreciation for those things. The more creatively minded people we can collect, the more potential we have to produce novel and productive ideas.

Cost: \$100,000 startup costs.

Partners: Buckeye Imagination Museum, Mansfield Art Center, The Renaissance Theater, The Mansfield/Richland County Public Library

Timeline: From when the space is selected it could be running within eight months. Timelines for different spaces may be closer to 1–2 years of development, but that time can also be used for planning and logistics.





Action Item:

Pocket Park: Creating an Urban Oasis

UTILIZE A DOWNTOWN LOT TO CREATE A SAFE, INVITING, AND FREE RESTING SPACE.

Much of downtown Mansfield is designed for family outings. But navigating the “in-between” time when businesses or attractions are closed can be difficult for families with little ones.

Creating a Pocket Park, near the Carousel District/Brickyard area will provide a much needed space that is inviting, safe and free to the public. The long term goal of Pocket Parks will bring life to numerous locations throughout downtown. The differentiator for this project is a primary playground design geared towards children and young families, with an intentional consideration of serving visitors of all ages.

A Pocket Park will provide more than just physical space. It addresses the growing need for in-person, cross-generational social connections and community engagement.

[Loneliness is at an all time high in the United States.](#)

Well-designed pocket parks will play a role in combating that on a local level.

The inaugural Pocket Park would feature a play area that draws visitors in, provides a safe resting place, offers shade, seating and can be enjoyed year-round. Conversations with a sample group of Richland County residents with young children garnered overwhelming support of an environment filled with “humps & bumps” of rolling hills, small tunnels and climbing structures and interactive art. Our focus group said a nice resting place would extend the visits for families downtown, encourage them to attend more community events, and offer a communal environment to meet others.





Cost: \$1.5m - \$2m

Partners: Mansfield City, Richland County Commissioners, Downtown Mansfield, Inc., Mansfield/Richland County Public Library, civic groups & organizations, landscape companies

Timeline: Once funding is in place and site is selected, we estimate 12 - 18 months for drawings, bids, and construction.

Action Item:

The Yard

ACTIVE UNDER-UTILIZED SPACES FOR HEALTHY AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY RECREATION

Mansfield faces challenges such as physical inactivity and social isolation that traditional parks can't fully address. "The Yard" offers a transformative solution. Designed as a central hub for athletic training, social engagement, and community development and serving users like high school athletes with state-of-the-art facilities and structured programs.

Unlike typical city parks, "The Yard" features advanced sports facilities, including modern fields and courts for soccer, basketball, and tennis which encourage active lifestyles. By providing organized sports leagues, fitness classes, and training sessions, "The Yard" ensures residents have ample opportunities to engage in physical activity, significantly reducing the risk of chronic diseases and sports dropout rates due to lack of enjoyment or stress.

Social isolation is another issue "The Yard" addresses by offering more than just open spaces for casual interactions like those found in the standard city park. It provides a variety of structured programs designed to foster deeper community connections including community events, workshops, and social gatherings. These activities help build a sense of belonging and strengthen social bonds among residents while alleviating loneliness and cultivating a vibrant community spirit.

By hosting youth and adult leagues, instructional programs, and entertainment events, "The Yard" establishes itself as a premier community athletic complex, driving local visibility, economic growth, and lasting community engagement.

"The Yard" is more than just a community complex—it's a beacon of hope and progress designed to uplift Mansfield. It offers organized athletic programs that fuel passion and community events that foster real-life connections.

Intergenerational mentorship which cultivates wisdom and unity across ages will happen naturally as part of the activities The Yard enables. By addressing key physical, and social gaps, "The Yard" sets a new standard for enriching lives and strengthening community bonds, making it a model for community development and engagement.

Cost: \$500,000

Partners: NECIC, Richland County Foundation, City of Mansfield, Carrousel Properties, Engwiller Properties, Downtown Mansfield, Inc.

Timeline: From start to finish, we estimate 24 months.



Mansfield Rising 2024 Update Downtown Investment Plan





181 South Main Street | Mansfield, OH 44902
richlandcountyfoundation.org