



Parade of school children down Morgan Street, 1922.

Implementation Plan and Timeline

Implementation Plan

Overview

The Martinsville Planning Study for Downtown Revitalization outlines recommendations for the enhancement of downtown Martinsville. The intent is to restore a pleasing appearance and physical stability that promotes a strong sense of place that lays the foundation for economic growth. The implementation plan presented in this chapter has four components that must be accomplished to ensure the success of the downtown revitalization goals.

- A strategy for organizational development (immediate—3-5 months)
- Immediate action items (3-5 months)
- Short term action items (1-2 years)
- Long term action items (3+ years)

Organizational Development Action Items (3-5 months)

The Martinsville Planning Study for Downtown Revitalization has been guided by an eight member volunteer steering committee. In order to implement the recommendations included in this plan, it will be necessary to develop a larger organizational capacity. Ideally, this organization will be facilitated by Rediscover Martinsville, the local Main Street program. However, success will depend on a strong public-private partnership and broad-based community involvement. This organization will consist of several specially focused groups as follows.

1. Establish Downtown Leadership Committee

Establish the successful transition of leadership from the Steering Committee that guided development of the downtown revitalization plan to a more permanent Downtown Leadership Committee that will coordinate implementation of action items between public and private entities.

- Enlist key persons representing the public and private sectors, including development, key stakeholders and downtown property owners.
- Define the goals and charge of this committee.
- Define the representation and hierarchy of the committee. Define the spokesperson and day-to-day contact person. A significant time commitment is anticipated for this position; therefore, a full or part time paid position is recommended for the formative years of this implementation plan. For recommendations for financing of this position, see Short Term Action Item #1 below.

2. Downtown Leadership Committee will establish an Implementation Maintenance Plan

The first priority of the Downtown Leadership Committee is to further promote the plan to residents, community officials, business leaders and financial institutions. Lack of promotion may compromise expected results and could be an indicator that everyone is not on the same page and working toward the same goals.

Because leadership and downtown tenant groups change with time, it is important that the historic preservation message and downtown development plan be promoted constantly with all parties being updated on a regular basis either by means of downtown group meetings, lunch presentations, downtown newsletters, newspaper articles and/or internet newsletters and email reminders.

3. Downtown Leadership Committee will establish an Interface Plan with the City of Martinsville

Coordinate the interface between City of Martinsville elected officials, engineering staff, superintendent, plan commission, and parks board and define expectations and goals of street, signage and

infrastructure improvements. The coordination and utilization of all resources will help define who provides the maintenance needed to keep the downtown looking well maintained and to eliminate duplication of efforts.

- Define and understand current annual budgets for maintenance and capital improvements for the downtown area.
- Develop reporting method and go-to person for citizens, property owners and merchants to report maintenance and/or recommended improvements to the proper city agency.
- Coordinate efforts with the City, downtown business and property owners and community residents—for example, local students, service clubs and other volunteers—to develop community clean up days that will include annual flower planting, weekly flower maintenance and continuous monitoring of trash pickup and weed control. By including more people in the maintenance and beautification process, a larger base of people become more invested in the welfare of the downtown area.
- Encourage the City of Martinsville to develop regular fire and building code inspections of downtown buildings. Encourage and support an ordinance enforcement program focused on keeping buildings safe and maintained to a level that will not only stop current deterioration but would encourage building owners to develop regular maintenance programs for their individual buildings. Establish a schedule for annual inspections of buildings.

4. Downtown Leadership Committee will establish a Landscape Subcommittee

The task of this subcommittee is to define specific implementable landscape and streetscape projects within the downtown area that will align with both the revitalization plan and current interest of participating property owners.

- Define and prioritize streetscape improvements that will enhance the higher priority building façade improvements to maximize the aesthetic impact of streetscape and building improvements.
- Define lower priority and lower cost items such as crosswalk improvements and landscape plantings that can potentially be incorporated into annual City of Martinsville capital improvement funding plans.

5. Downtown Leadership Committee will establish a Building Façade Subcommittee

The task of this subcommittee is to define specific implementable projects within the downtown area that will align with both the revitalization plan and current interest of participating property owners. Funding of key building façade restoration is critical to creating a positive aesthetic image for downtown and to further draw both development interest and tenant interest to the downtown area.

- Establish façade improvement grant program using \$500,000 CFF Implementation grant. See Immediate Action Item #2 below.
- Define other funding sources available for façade improvement grants. (See *Financial Tools section in the Appendix*).
- Define specific buildings for first phase façade revitalization funding concentrating on buildings that are included in the revitalization planning study.
- Prioritize buildings targeted for façade implementation grants, giving highest priority to current and immediate structural needs, location of buildings that impact the entrance to the downtown core and building owners with available matching construction capital.

- Plan and provide for self-sustaining, ongoing façade improvement grant program. See page 13.

6. Downtown Leadership Committee will establish a Marketing Subcommittee

The task of this subcommittee is to establish a detailed marketing, promotion and public relations program for the City of Martinsville, with an emphasis on downtown. Research firms that have successfully developed and implemented branding campaigns for communities of similar size to Martinsville. This item also includes developing the protocol and point person for answering inquiries from inside and outside the community.

- Consult to and assist Morgan County Council with implementation of Morgan County innkeeper tax and development of Morgan County Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB). Work to designate funds for the marketing and promotion of Martinsville, with emphasis on downtown.
- Interview and select marketing/graphics firms that can develop graphic brand for all written and visual public relations materials for magazine, newspaper, newsletter, internet web page and television advertisement.
- Define point of contact to collect inquiries, distribute collateral graphic materials and coordinate media announcements for downtown events.
- Coordinate downtown graphic and written media with overall Martinsville branding and marketing programs and with the marketing plans of the Morgan County Economic Development Corporation, CVB and other entities.

Immediate Action Items (3-5 months)

1. Rediscover Martinsville will partner with the City, Morgan County, and local organizations to apply for a 2011 Downtown Enhancement Grant from IOCRA (total project cost \$10,000) to fund quick, effective landscape improvements that will make an immediate visible impact as follows:

- Replace gravel plots with perennial beds

2. The City will acquire a \$500,000 Community Focus Funds Implementation Grant to establish a façade improvement grant program for building owners who participated in the planning study and others who may qualify. Other possible projects that could be included are small landscape improvements, a marketing/promotion program, and gateway signage.

3. The City will activate the already established Redevelopment Commission, provide it proper training and be sure it is ready to implement a sound strategy for downtown revitalization, for example, establishing a TIF district.

4. The County will implement a countywide innkeeper tax and designate a percentage of revenue to establish an ongoing marketing and promotion program for the City of Martinsville, with emphasis on downtown. (Such a tax was implemented by the Morgan County Council on September 1, 2010.)

5. The City, Rediscover Martinsville and other downtown advocates will implement the following quick and high-impact landscape improvements:

- De-clutter the sidewalks by removing all two-hour parking signs and other nuisances
- Remove all building signage and sign hardware for businesses that no longer exist
- The City will enforce existing building and weed and trash control ordinances by contacting every property owner by letter and/or in person and carrying out consistent follow-up

Short Term Action Items (1-2 years)

Short-Term Action Items are those that can be undertaken immediately and completed within a 1 to 2 year period. These are projects that typically have an immediate visual impact that generates support, enthusiasm, and volunteerism from community residents. Quick, effective successes demonstrate that the community is engaged with its downtown and often inspire increased private investment and public initiatives that lay the foundation for the targeted and sustained revitalization efforts that must follow.

Some short-term projects are self contained, but others will be early phases of longer, more complex projects detailed in earlier chapters. For example, many of the recommended landscape improvements in the plan could be broken into multiple phases as the availability of funds necessitates. Caution must be taken, however, to not lose sight of the overall long-term goal.

Other short-term action items will be less publicly apparent but no less important. These are public policies and initiatives that lay the foundation for and ensure the success of downtown revitalization because they establish necessary

and ongoing sources of revenue and professional leadership.

1. Municipal Tools/Public Policies – Financing

Citywide economic revitalization will not succeed without due attention by public officials to Martinsville's historic downtown, the historic, geographic and cultural heart of the community. Public policies and initiatives are crucial to reversing the downward slide of the past 50 years. The City will:

- Establish a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in the nine-block downtown core. TIF enables local economic development officials to collect the property tax revenue attributable to increased assessed value resulting from new investments within a designated area (TIF district). Once a TIF district is established, the property tax revenue attributable to new assessed value within a district accrues to the redevelopment district rather than the traditional taxing units (schools, civil city, township, county, etc). The new revenue (increment) can be used to pay for infrastructure or other improvements within the designated area. For more, see page 14.
- Establish an Economic Improvement District (EID) in the nine-block downtown core. An EID is a special purpose district in which property owners agree to collect an additional fee to fund improvements in the district. The EID is developed and managed by the property owners in the district and the investments are intended to support their businesses. Improvements may include infrastructure, such as streetscapes, lighting, and public art; services such as security and landscape maintenance; or staff dedicated to managing and marketing the district. For more, see page 13.

- Provide annual funding for a City Manager and/or Planning Director. The positions could be combined into a single position held by a qualified individual.
- Acquire additional Community Focus Fund grants and other grants for other applicable projects. Also, Rediscover Martinsville and other related not-for-profit organizations will pursue all relevant grants.
- Use Neighborhood Stabilization Funds to acquire, rehabilitate, or renovate abandoned or neglected residential properties contiguous to the nine-block downtown area.

2. Municipal Tools/Public Policies – Ordinance Enforcement

- Building and fire code enforcement. Establish a regular inspection schedule for all buildings in the nine-block downtown area and predictable and equitable enforcement of all related ordinances.
- Enforce all ordinances related to the maintenance and upkeep of sidewalks, vacant lots, and other public and private areas.

3. Landscape Improvements

- Improved Street Lighting. The City will replace faulty and ineffective street lamps with new LED street lamps. If existing posts are to be re-used, they will be refinished using durable and attractive methods.
- Beautification, Maintenance and Clean-Up Program. The Downtown Leadership Committee will coordinate efforts with the City, downtown business and property owners and community

residents—local students, service clubs and other volunteers—to develop community clean up days that will include annual flower planting, weekly flower maintenance and continuous monitoring of trash pickup and weed control. By including more people in the maintenance and beautification process, a larger base of people become more invested in the welfare of the downtown area.

- Signage Program – The City and Downtown Leadership Committee will provide welcoming and directional signage to be erected at identified gateway points along the state highways surrounding Martinsville and other signage directing motorists and others to downtown. In the downtown area, erect way finding signs to important locations such as the library, city hall, county administration building, high school and Jimmy Nash City Park. Create design guidelines for downtown building and business signage.

4. Façade Improvements

- Building Design Guidelines. The Downtown Leadership Committee/Building Façade Subcommittee will create an easy-to-use book or online publication for City officials and representatives, business owners, building owners and prospective new owners that outlines façade improvements that are appropriate for the historic character of buildings and the downtown district as a whole. These guidelines will rely on the recommendations in the Martinsville Study for Downtown Revitalization.

5. Marketing & Promotion

- Detailed Marketing and Promotion Program. The Downtown Leadership Committee/Marketing Subcommittee will establish a detailed marketing, promotion and

public relations program for the City of Martinsville, with an emphasis on downtown. Such efforts will include a website and/or printed publication that provides information for existing or potential businesses, including a property database, a listing of community events and promotions, and other opportunities. Revenue to fund such a program can be generated in part by an EID.

6. Expand & Strengthen Rediscover Martinsville, the local Main Street program

- Hire a professional full time director
- Increase membership and number of volunteers
- Create and promote quality events and activities
- Coordinate ongoing beautification, maintenance and clean-up program of sidewalks, drainage ways, streets, alleyways, and other common areas, snow removal, holiday decorations, etc.
- Create data base of building inventory, condition reports, vacancy rates, etc.
- Identify retail needs/opportunities and actively recruit to fill these needs
- Apply for Downtown Enhancement Grants from IOCRA as often as they are available (annual, biannual).

Long Term Action Items

1. Self-Sustaining Façade Grant Program

The Downtown Leadership Committee/Building Façade Subcommittee will develop and implement a self-sustaining façade improvement grant program to assist building owners with making publicly visible updates and repairs. Typically, a grant amount awarded would consist of a percentage of total project cost or a maximum dollar amount. (For example, Nappanee provides financial assistance of 50% up to \$3,000, while Shelbyville provides 50% up to \$10,000.) Participation may also require the completion of essential structural repairs. Plans must be sensitive to the historic character of the building and consistent with those of other downtown buildings. The support of public officials is essential to the success of a façade improvement grant program.

2. Municipal Tools/Public Policies - Historic Preservation Ordinance and Commission

The City will establish a Historic Preservation Commission and designate the nine-block downtown area a locally designated historic district. This provides protection and building and district oversight above and beyond the current Historic Downtown District Ordinance. Added benefits to property owners include professional consultation and guidance by the Commission and/or its representative(s) in developing appropriate building rehabilitation plans. Local programs certified by the state historic preservation office (SHPO) are also eligible for grants allocated from federal funds distributed to the SHPO. These grants are awarded for survey work, education, and planning.

Conclusion

- Downtown is the heart and the core of any city and Martinsville is no exception. As Martinsville moves forward, revitalization of the downtown can and must be done. Talent and business attraction relies, now more than ever, on an outstanding quality of place that is exemplified by the vitality of downtown. Therefore, downtown revitalization is a critical component of Martinsville's overall community and economic development strategy.
- The undertaking of downtown revitalization must not be the sole responsibility of a team of volunteers. For Martinsville to succeed, elected and appointed officials must be fully engaged in all economic development strategies. Moreover, these efforts will achieve their greatest potential under the guidance of dedicated and knowledgeable paid professionals.
- NOW is the time! Next year will be too late. The momentum has begun, investments are being made, and the community desires and anticipates change. Martinsville must seize this opportunity to shape and manage the forthcoming transformation of downtown so that the efforts of so many don't result in unplanned chaos.
- Martinsville is one of 3,141 county seat towns in the United States. Martinsville must distinguish itself from its peer communities by identifying and marketing its unique qualities.
- Downtown revitalization CAN be done; it HAS been done all across the country. In recent decades, Martinsville has struggled with economic development as businesses and industry have closed their doors or relocated. Investment in the renaissance of the downtown will be the impetus for further city wide economic development.

***"If you build a place people want to visit,
you build a place where people want to live.***

***If you build a place where people want to live,
you'll build a place where people want to work.***

***If you build a place where people want to work,
you'll build a place where business has to be.***

***And if you build a place where business has to be,
you'll build a place where people have to visit."***

- Maura Gast