

**DOWNTOWN MT. PLEASANT STRATEGIC PLAN  
MARCH 23, 2023**

*Mt. Pleasant*  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Downtown Mt. Pleasant Strategic Plan is a comprehensive document outlining the strategic objectives and initiatives aimed at revitalizing, enhancing, and sustaining the economic and social vitality of Downtown Mt. Pleasant. This plan serves as a guide for the stakeholders to collaborate, invest, and undertake projects that will collectively contribute to the growth and development of downtown.

## **BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES**

The primary objectives of the Downtown Mt. Pleasant Strategic Plan are as follows:

1. Enhance economic development and create opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs.
2. Improve the overall aesthetic appeal, walkability, and accessibility of the downtown area.
3. Strengthen community engagement, cultural expression, and social connections.
4. Promote redevelopment and new construction opportunities throughout downtown.
5. Foster collaboration among public, private, and nonprofit sectors to achieve shared goals.

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF KEY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

The Downtown Mt. Pleasant Strategic Plan features several key strategic initiatives designed to address the identified objectives. Some highlights include:

1. Establishing business attraction programs/methods and support network to attract entrepreneurs and startups.
2. Implementing streetscape improvements and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to enhance walkability and accessibility.
3. Hosting community events, festivals, and cultural programming to engage residents and draw visitors.
4. Developing green spaces, parks, and sustainable infrastructure to promote environmental responsibility.
5. Creating partnerships with local, regional, and national organizations to leverage resources and expertise.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS FOR DOWNTOWN MT. PLEASANT**

The successful implementation of the Downtown Mt. Pleasant Strategic Plan is expected to yield numerous positive outcomes and benefits for the community. These include:

1. Increased economic activity, job creation, and a diverse mix of businesses and services.
2. An attractive and vibrant downtown that encourages residents and visitors to explore, live, shop, and dine.
3. A strong sense of community pride, engagement, and social cohesion, fostered through shared experiences and cultural activities.
4. Improved environmental quality and sustainability practices, contributing to the overall well-being of downtown residents and visitors.
5. A collaborative and innovative environment where public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders work together to achieve the vision outlined in the strategic plan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Downtown Mt. Pleasant Strategic Plan is designed to provide a comprehensive and actionable roadmap for the revitalization and long-term growth of the downtown area in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. This plan acknowledges the importance of fostering a vibrant, thriving downtown district to create a strong sense of community, support local businesses, and promote economic development. In this introduction, we will provide background information on Mt. Pleasant, discuss the importance of a revitalized downtown, and outline the purpose and scope of this strategic plan.

## **BACKGROUND ON DOWNTOWN MT. PLEASANT, MICHIGAN**

Located in the heart of Michigan, Mt. Pleasant is a charming city with a rich history and a strong sense of community. Established in 1889, the city of Mt. Pleasant, has grown to become the largest city in Isabella County, with a population of 21,688 according to 2022 Census data. Home to Central Michigan University, Mid Michigan College and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, the Mt. Pleasant area offers a unique blend of cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities. Downtown serves as the city's historic and cultural center, hosting various events and festivals throughout the year.

## **IMPORTANCE OF A REVITALIZED DOWNTOWN**

A vibrant, thriving downtown is crucial for the overall health and well-being of a community. It not only serves as a hub for local businesses and economic growth but also provides a gathering place for residents and visitors to connect, socialize, and celebrate their shared heritage. By investing in the revitalization of Downtown Mt. Pleasant, the City can:

1. Foster a strong sense of community and identity.
2. Attract and retain businesses, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth.
3. Encourage tourism by offering unique experiences, events and cultural attractions.
4. Improve the quality of life for residents by providing access to essential services, amenities, and recreational opportunities.
5. Enhance the city's overall aesthetic appeal, making it a more desirable place to live, work, and visit.

## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Downtown Mt. Pleasant Strategic Plan aims to provide a clear vision and actionable steps to create a vibrant, thriving downtown district that meets the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. The plan focuses on several key areas, including economic development, infrastructure, public spaces, and community engagement. Specific goals and objectives are outlined, along with a timeline for implementation and evaluation. The scope of this strategic plan includes:

1. Identifying and prioritizing short-term and long-term projects that support downtown revitalization.
2. Engaging stakeholders, including residents, business owners, community organizations, and local government, to collaborate on the plan's development and implementation.
3. Establishing measurable goals and objectives to assess progress and success.
4. Developing strategies and tactics to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities.
5. Fostering partnerships and securing funding sources to support the plan's initiatives.

## VISION AND MISSION

### LONG-TERM VISION FOR DOWNTOWN MT. PLEASANT

In the next 20 years, Downtown Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, will be a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community hub that serves as a destination for residents, students, visitors, and businesses alike. We will foster economic growth, preserve our cultural heritage, and enhance the overall quality of life by investing in diverse amenities, green spaces, and innovative infrastructure.

Our downtown will be characterized by a unique blend of historic charm and modern amenities, featuring a thriving and walkable business district with diverse retail, dining, and entertainment options. We will celebrate our rich cultural heritage and promote public art, cultural events, and recreational activities that highlight our community's spirit and diversity.

Sustainable urban design principles and green technologies will be integrated into our infrastructure to improve the environment, reduce our carbon footprint, and support a healthy, active lifestyle for all. We will prioritize the creation of pedestrian-friendly streets, bike lanes, and accessible multi-modal transportation options, connecting downtown to other neighborhoods and regional attractions.

### MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The mission of the Downtown Mt. Pleasant Strategic Plan is to cultivate a thriving, connected, and sustainable downtown district that serves as the social, cultural, and economic heart of our community. In collaboration with residents, students, visitors, business and property owners as essential stakeholders, we will utilize innovative urban planning, and strategic investments, to enhance the quality of life for all members of our community, foster economic growth, and celebrate the unique heritage and identity of Mt. Pleasant.

## SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF MT. PLEASANT, MICHIGAN

The demographic profile of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, provides essential information to guide the strategic planning process. Based on 2022 census data, the population of Mt. Pleasant consists of:

- Total Population: Approximately 21,688
- Age Distribution: 59% under 24, 32% between 25-64, and 9% over 65 years old
- Gender Distribution: 48% male and 52% female
- Racial and Ethnic Composition: 79% White, 6% African American, 3% Asian, 3% Native American, 2% from other races, and 7% from two or more races; 6% Hispanic or Latino
- Median Household Income: \$38,324
- Educational Attainment: 31% high school diploma, 32% some college, 22% bachelor's degree, and 15% graduate or professional degree

### ECONOMIC TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

Several economic trends and challenges are shaping the development of Downtown Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, including:

- Employment: Central Michigan University and the Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort are major employers in the area, but there is a need for more diverse and high-paying job opportunities to attract and retain skilled workers. The limited variety of job opportunities in the area can result

in difficulty attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. This can lead to a less competitive economy and a reduced quality of life for residents.

- **Decline In Central Michigan University Enrollment:** The drop in enrollment numbers has led to adverse effects on the downtown Mt. Pleasant community, negatively impacting local businesses and property owners. The reduced consumer spending and lower demand for housing necessitate the development of strategies to work with CMU to increase enrollment and devise strategies for student attraction and retention while also focusing on diversifying the local economy and supporting property owners in adapting to these changes.
- **Increased Competition From Online Retailers:** The growth of e-commerce platforms and online shopping has led to a significant shift in consumer behavior, with many customers preferring the convenience of online shopping over visiting physical stores. This trend has negatively impacted brick-and-mortar operations for local businesses and property owners, leading to reduced foot traffic, lower sales revenues, increased vacancy rates, and challenges in maintaining a vibrant and thriving downtown area. A future challenge for downtown will be to find ways to address this change in consumer spending patterns while still being able to be relevant and recognizing downtown as a destination for visitors.
- **Business Development:** While there has been an increase in small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures, a lack of available commercial space in the downtown area limits further expansion.
- **Inability to meet new construction demand:** Limited availability of space for new construction may hinder the city's ability to accommodate expanding needs for housing and commercial spaces.
- **Poorly maintained and/or absentee landlords:** In some cases, landlords who are not actively selling or leasing commercial space or who do not adequately maintain their properties can hinder business expansion. This issue can create a stagnant environment in the downtown area, discouraging new businesses from entering the market and negatively impacting the local economy.
- **Housing:** The demand for affordable housing is growing, . Limited housing options, especially in the downtown area, contribute to inadequate housing types. As the demand for affordable housing grows, the limited availability of reasonably priced options can exacerbate issues such as overcrowding, long commutes, and inequality.
- **Infrastructure:** Aging infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, and public facilities, requires significant investment to ensure safety and support future growth.
- **Economic downturns:** Fluctuations in the broader economy can negatively impact local businesses, leading to job losses, reduced consumer spending, and difficulties for small businesses and entrepreneurs in particular.

- Competition from neighboring towns and cities: Surrounding towns and cities may offer a more competitive business climate for certain business types, making it challenging for Downtown Mt. Pleasant to attract and retain businesses and residents.
- Natural disasters and climate change: Climate change and the increasing risk of natural disasters, such as floods and storms, can impact infrastructure and development, leading to additional costs and potential disruptions to businesses and the community.
- Potential loss of historic and cultural assets: Inadequate preservation efforts can result in the loss of historic and cultural assets, eroding the unique character and identity of the downtown area. This can negatively affect tourism, as well as the quality of life for residents who value their community's heritage.

### **CURRENT DOWNTOWN ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Downtown Mt. Pleasant also offers numerous opportunities that can be harnessed for the benefit of the community and the local economy. These opportunities include:

- **Historic District and Architectural Charm:** In 2014, downtown Mt. Pleasant was proudly designated as a National Historic District, showcasing its rich heritage and architectural appeal. This prestigious recognition not only attracts tourists but also fosters a sense of pride among residents. The preservation and celebration of the city's unique history are further enhanced by opportunities for adaptive reuse, allowing historic buildings to be repurposed for contemporary needs while maintaining their original charm.
- **Green Spaces:** A network of parks and open spaces, including Island Park and Nelson Park, offers recreational opportunities and enhances the city's overall appeal.
- **Cultural and Arts Scene:** Various cultural institutions, including galleries, dance studios and theaters contribute to a vibrant arts scene. Supporting cultural events, galleries, and performances can stimulate the local economy and help to define the area's unique identity.
- **Walkability:** The downtown area's walkable layout promotes foot traffic and supports local businesses and can be promoted to encourage a healthy, active lifestyle for residents and make the area more appealing for businesses and visitors alike. Ensuring pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and amenities can further enhance the area's livability.
- **Strong sense of community:** Building on the existing strong sense of community can help to create an atmosphere where residents feel connected and invested in the area's success. Encouraging community involvement and fostering local partnerships can result in a more resilient and thriving downtown.
- **Attract new businesses to diversify the local economy:** By actively attracting new businesses to the area, Downtown Mt. Pleasant can diversify its local economy and generate additional employment opportunities. This can be achieved through incentives, streamlined permitting processes, and targeted marketing efforts.
- **Improve transportation options to support downtown accessibility:** Enhancing public and multi-modal transportation options, such as I-RIDE bus services, e-scooters and ride-sharing, can

improve accessibility to and from the downtown area. This can make it easier for residents and visitors to explore local businesses, attractions, and events, while also reducing traffic congestion and parking demand.

- **Skilled Workforce:** Partnerships with Central Michigan University and Mid Michigan College can help develop a skilled workforce tailored to the needs of the local economy. Programs such as internships, apprenticeships, and continuing education opportunities can bridge the gap between education and the job market, fostering a more competitive and sustainable economic environment.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ACTION PLANS

### INITIATIVE 1: PLACEMAKING AND PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

#### **ACTION PLAN: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.**

##### **1. CIP Financial Alternatives:**

In accordance with current practices, we will continue examining financing sources for all downtown CIP projects and seek out alternative funding opportunities.

- Work with local, state and federal granting agencies for funding opportunities.
- Apply for local, state and federal grant opportunities that align with CIP project scope.

##### **2. Downtown Improvement Program:**

Implementation of the CIP program focused on the addition of or replacement of aged streetscape elements, such as benches, trash cans, and bike racks, to improve the overall aesthetic and functionality of the downtown area by:

- Developing a comprehensive inventory of existing streetscape elements to identify those that require replacement or maintenance.
- Assessing the condition of current streetscape elements and prioritizing replacements or upgrades.
- Selecting high-quality, durable materials that complement the downtown's visual identity.
- Implementing a regular maintenance plan to keep streetscape elements in good condition and extend their lifespan.

##### **3. Alleyway Reconstructions:**

Revitalize and reconstruct underutilized alleyways to create safer, more inviting spaces that can be activated for various uses by:

- Evaluate the current condition of alleyways and identify necessary improvements.
- Upgrading paving, lighting, and drainage systems to improve safety and accessibility.
- Incorporating public art, greenery, or other design elements to enhance visual appeal.
- Identifying opportunities for programming or temporary activations to increase foot traffic and community engagement.
- Engaging the community in the design process to ensure that the new alleyways meet their needs and preferences.

#### **4. Parking Lot Renovations/Reconstructions:**

Improve and reconstruct downtown parking lots to address safety concerns, enhance aesthetics, and optimize space utilization by:

- Conducting assessments of current parking lots to determine their condition and identify necessary improvements.
- Resurfacing and restriping parking lots for improved functionality and safety.
- Implementing sustainable practices, such as permeable paving, stormwater management features, and electric vehicle charging stations.
- Implementing safety features, such as improved lighting and pedestrian walkways.
- Incorporating sustainable materials and practices, public art and electric vehicle charging stations where possible.

#### **5. Streetscape Replacement:**

Replace aging streetscape elements, such as sidewalks, curbs, and lighting, to enhance safety, walkability, and overall aesthetics by:

- Conducting an inventory of streetscape elements that are over 30 years old and prioritizing their replacement based on condition and community impact.
- Developing a phased replacement plan that minimizes disruption to downtown businesses and residents.
- Incorporating modern, durable materials to ensure that the new streetscape elements last for many years.
- Coordinating with utility providers to address any necessary infrastructure upgrades in conjunction with streetscape work.
- Implementing best practices in pedestrian-friendly design and accessibility.

### **ACTION PLAN: CREATE AND ENHANCE PUBLIC SPACES.**

#### **1. Town Center Civic Space Placemaking:**

Reconstruct the existing parking lot and expand green space, creating a vibrant civic space for community events and activities by:

- Develop a flexible, multipurpose space that can accommodate various events, such as concerts, markets, and festivals.
- Upgrade the electrical service in this area to support events and activities.
- Incorporating seating, shade structures, and landscaping to create a comfortable, inviting environment.
- Ensuring the space is accessible and welcoming to all community members.
- Engaging the community in the planning process to ensure that the new space meets their needs and preferences.

#### **2. Continuation Of Care - Downtown Public Spaces:**

Ensure ongoing maintenance and care of downtown public spaces by the City's Parks and Public Spaces Department through special assessment funding. This could include:

- Developing a comprehensive maintenance plan that outlines the responsibilities and tasks required to keep public spaces in good condition.
- Consider the cost of maintenance when proposing new infrastructure investments with priority given to options that reduce the time and costs associated with future maintenance activities.



- Ensuring that adequate funding is allocated for the maintenance of public spaces through the special assessment process.
- Regularly evaluating the condition of public spaces and adjusting maintenance priorities as needed to address emerging issues or concerns.
- Identifying opportunities for improvements or enhancements to public spaces and allocating special assessment funding to support these efforts.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ACTION PLANS

### INITIATIVE 2: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

#### ACTION PLAN: DEVELOP BUSINESS ATTRACTION PROGRAM/METHODS.

##### **1. Research Local Market:**

- Gather basic information on market trends and demographics to determine the types of businesses that would complement existing establishments and serve our community needs.

##### **2. Business Incentive Programs And Resources:**

- Promote and manage the wide range of City incentive programs to attract businesses, such as tax abatements, grants, reduced permit fees, and low-interest loans. Partner with economic development organizations to ensure these incentives are competitive and aligned with regional and state initiatives.
- Share information on available properties, rental rates, and other relevant information to make Downtown Mt. Pleasant an attractive option.

##### **3. Grow Social Media Presence:**

- Expand the social media presence for Downtown Mt. Pleasant on various platforms to showcase the benefits of locating in Downtown Mt. Pleasant, including its infrastructure, available properties, workforce, and quality of life.

##### **4. Networking And Outreach:**

- Engage with local business owners, community leaders, and social media platforms to promote Downtown Mt. Pleasant as a suitable location for new businesses.

##### **5. Support Entrepreneurship:**

- Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation by providing resources and support for startups, such as co-working spaces, mentorship programs, and access to funding.

##### **6. Organize Business Attraction Events:**

- Host events such as trade shows, networking sessions, and site visits to engage with potential businesses and showcase the advantages of Downtown Mt. Pleasant.

##### **7. Foster Partnerships With Regional And State Economic Development Organizations:**

- Collaborate with these organizations to leverage their resources and networks in attracting businesses to Downtown Mt. Pleasant.

**8. Monitor And Evaluate The Results:**

- Regularly assess the effectiveness of the business attraction program and adjust strategies as needed to maximize results.

**ACTION PLAN: IMPLEMENT BUSINESS SUPPORT AND RETENTION PROGRAMS/METHODS.**

**1. Business Information And Support Hub:**

- Engage with businesses to identify their needs, challenges, and opportunities for growth. Provide support and resources to help them overcome obstacles and expand their operations.
- Partner with local educational institutions and organizations to provide workshops, seminars, and courses on topics such as business planning, management, marketing, regulatory compliance, financial planning, and other services.
- Share links to free or low-cost online courses and resources on business management, marketing, and other relevant topics.
- Maintain open and regular communication with businesses, ensuring they are informed about relevant news, events, and opportunities in the community.
- Connect businesses with local banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions to offer financing options and resources looking to grow or improve their operations.
- Host informational gatherings to facilitate connections between businesses to encourage collaboration, support, and mutual growth.

**2. Facilitate Local Procurement:**

- Encourage businesses to source goods and services from each other, helping to strengthen the local economy.

**3. Mentorship Connections:**

- Connect new and existing businesses with experienced entrepreneurs and industry experts who can provide guidance, advice, and support.

**4. Business Recognition:**

- Celebrate the success of businesses by recognizing and promoting their achievements and contributions to the community.

**5. Advocate For Business Interests:**

- Act as a liaison between businesses and local government to address any concerns, issues, or opportunities that arise, and advocate for policies that support a thriving business environment.

**6. Grow Social Media Presence:**

- Expand the social media presence for Downtown Mt. Pleasant on various platforms to showcase businesses products and services, community events, and to communicate with the local community.

**7. Community Events:**

- Work with organizations, businesses and Recreation Department to plan events such as sidewalk sales, holiday celebrations, concerts, festivals, street fairs, etc. to increase foot traffic and promote local businesses.

## **8. Monitor And Adjust:**

- Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the business support and retention efforts, and make adjustments as needed based on available resources and staff capacity.

# **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ACTION PLANS**

## **INITIATIVE 3: TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBILITY ENHANCEMENTS**

### **ACTION PLAN: IMPROVE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT**

#### **OPTIONS.**

#### **1. Parking Management:**

- Collaborate with stakeholders to assess parking needs and develop a comprehensive management plan, including time restrictions and signage.
- Continuously monitor, evaluate, and improve the parking strategy based on feedback and data analysis, while maintaining safe and user-friendly facilities.

#### **2. Develop Safe Bike Infrastructure:**

- Construct dedicated bike lanes, add bike racks at strategic locations, and integrate bike-sharing programs to encourage cycling.
- Offer bicycle maintenance and repair stations throughout downtown.

#### **3. Encourage Walking:**

- Enhance pedestrian walkways with clear signage, improved lighting, and streetscape beautification.
- Develop maps highlighting key attractions and pedestrian-friendly routes.

#### **4. Promote e-Scooters And e-Bikes:**

- Establish partnerships with e-scooter and e-bike sharing companies to provide affordable, sustainable, and convenient transportation options for short-distance trips within the downtown area.
- Develop designated scooter parking areas and ensure the city is equipped with proper infrastructure for safe e-scooter usage.

#### **5. Support Ride-Sharing:**

- Collaborate with ride-sharing companies like Uber and Lyft to establish designated pick-up and drop-off zones, and provide incentives for shared rides or rides to public transportation hubs.

#### **6. IRIDE Bus System Adjustments:**

- Work with the existing IRIDE bus system to optimize schedules and routes to better serve key downtown destinations.
- Encourage businesses to promote public transportation by offering incentives or discounts to employees and customers who use it.

## **ACTION PLAN: IMPLEMENT ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS.**

### **1. ADA Compliant Ramps And Tactile Paving:**

- Construct ADA-compliant ramps at all intersections and prioritize the replacement of non-compliant ramps throughout downtown.
- Install tactile paving at crosswalks, transit stops, and other key locations to assist visually impaired individuals in navigating the downtown area.

### **2. Curbless Streets:**

- Where feasible, design and implement curbless streets that provide a seamless transition between the sidewalk and street, improving accessibility for wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments.

### **3. Minimum 5' sidewalks:**

- Widen existing sidewalks to a minimum of 5 feet to accommodate pedestrians, wheelchairs, and strollers, while ensuring sufficient space for outdoor seating and other amenities.

### **4. Conduct Accessibility Audits:**

- Regularly assess public spaces and buildings for compliance with ADA standards and make necessary improvements to promote universal accessibility.

## **ACTION PLAN: IMPLEMENT TRAFFIC CALMING IMPROVEMENTS.**

### **1. Trees and Vegetation:**

- Integrate greenery to create a more inviting streetscape and encourage slower vehicle speeds. Trees also provide shade, making the area more comfortable for pedestrians and act as a natural barrier between pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

### **2. Implement Shared Street Designs:**

- Create shared street spaces that prioritize pedestrian and bicycle traffic, with vehicle speeds limited to a maximum of 15-20 mph as a result of good street design principles.
- Convert underutilized streets or intersections into pedestrian plazas or shared spaces where pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists coexist at reduced speeds.

### **3. Curb Extensions:**

- Install curb extensions at key intersections to reduce crossing distances for pedestrians and increase their visibility to motorists.

### **4. Speed Reduction Measures:**

- Implement measures such as speed bumps, raised crosswalks, and lower speed limits in high pedestrian-traffic areas to slow down vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian safety.

### **5. Community Engagement:**

- Host regular town hall meetings or workshops to educate the public about the benefits of traffic calming, accessibility enhancements, and multi-modal transportation.
- Engage the community in the planning and implementation process to build support.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ACTION PLANS

### INITIATIVE 4: Community Engagement and Collaboration

#### ACTION PLAN: PARTNER WITH KEY DOWNTOWN AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS.

##### 1. Continue Working With Various Downtown Stakeholders:

- Invite representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Middle Michigan Development Corporation, Central Michigan University, and local social organizations (Rotary Club, Jaycee's, etc.) to join the committee.
- Schedule regular meetings to discuss downtown initiatives, share information, and facilitate communication between organizations.

##### 2. Develop Joint Projects And Initiatives:

- Identify areas of common interest and collaboration opportunities between stakeholder organizations.
- Develop and implement projects that promote downtown revitalization, such as beautification, economic development, and cultural events.

##### 3. Promote Cross-Promotion And Support:

- Encourage stakeholder organizations to support each other's events, programs, and initiatives through sharing resources, promotion, and volunteerism.
- Create a shared calendar of events and activities to streamline communication and planning.

#### ACTION PLAN: COLLABORATE WITH RECREATION DEPARTMENT AND EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS TO FOSTER COMMUNITY EVENTS AND INITIATIVES.

##### 1. Identify Potential Community Events And Initiatives:

- Work with the Recreation Department and external organizations to identify potential events and initiatives that could be hosted in downtown Mt. Pleasant.
- Consider events and initiatives that cater to diverse interests, age groups, and cultural backgrounds to create a more inclusive and welcoming downtown.

##### 2. Develop An Event Planning Framework:

- Establish a clear process for event planning, including coordination, and execution, including roles and responsibilities, budgeting, and timelines for internally planned events.
- Develop guidelines and resources for hosting events in downtown spaces, such as permits, street closures, and promotional materials.

##### 3. Support Event Organizers:

- Provide event organizers with guidance and resources on best practices including logistics, sponsorships, and marketing to ensure successful events.
- Share event information on social media platforms to ensure widest audience reach.

**4. Evaluate And Refine Community Events/Activities:**

- Establish a post-event evaluation process to gather feedback from event organizers, attendees, and downtown stakeholders.
- Use feedback to make improvements to future events and initiatives and ensure they continue to serve the needs of the community and promote downtown vibrancy.

## **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ACTION PLANS**

### **INITIATIVE 5: REDEVELOPMENT AND NEW CONSTRUCTION**

#### **ACTION PLAN: IDENTIFY STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT AND NEW CONSTRUCTION LOCATIONS AND ASSIST WITH NEEDS.**

**1. Infrastructure Assessment And Identification Of Suitable Areas For Redevelopment And New Construction:**

- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the existing infrastructure, vacant land and buildings in the downtown area to identify areas that are suitable for redevelopment and new construction.
- Work with developers to design mixed-use buildings that fit into the historic downtown area and promote walkability.

**2. Zoning And Building Permitting Process Streamlining:**

- Work to streamline the zoning and building permitting process through pre-application meetings for redevelopment and new construction projects, making it easier for developers to shorten timelines, and obtain necessary approvals and permits.

**3. Financial And Technical Assistance For Developers:**

- Facilitate financial and technical assistance to developers who are interested in pursuing construction projects in the downtown area.

**4. Education On Sustainable Building Practices For Developers And Builders:**

- Educate developers and builders about sustainable building practices, including the use of renewable energy sources, green building materials, and energy-efficient design principles.

**5. Incentives For Sustainable Building Practices In Construction Projects:**

- Offer incentives for developers who incorporate sustainable building practices into their projects, such as tax breaks where permitted by law or expedited permitting processes.

**6. Integration Of Innovative Technologies For Energy Efficiency**

- Encourage developers to incorporate innovative technologies, such as smart home automation and building automation systems, into their projects to improve energy efficiency and reduce costs.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ACTION PLANS

### INITIATIVE 6: HOUSING OPTION EXPANSION

#### **ACTION PLAN: ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS IN AND AROUND DOWNTOWN.**

- 1. Educate On Zoning Regulations:**
  - Inform developers of current zoning regulations that promote mixed-use buildings and walkability.
  
- 2. Promote Missing Middle Housing Types (e.g. duplexes, townhomes, small apartment buildings):**
  - Encourage the development of missing middle housing types to create a more diverse range of housing options that cater to various income levels and household sizes. This can be achieved through incentives such as density bonuses or streamlined permit processes for developers who build these types of housing.

#### **ACTION PLAN: SUPPORT AFFORDABLE AND INCLUSIVE HOUSING INITIATIVES.**

- 1. Access To Affordable And Inclusive Housing Options:**
  - Encourage developers to include a certain percentage of affordable units in redevelopment and new construction projects.
  - Provide rental assistance programs through the Mt. Pleasant Housing Commission, and work with community organizations to provide housing counseling and assistance.
  
- 2. Financial Incentives For Developers To Build Affordable Housing Units:**
  - Offer financial incentives for developers to build affordable housing units such as PILOT contracts, tax credits or grants can help developers offset the cost of building affordable housing units.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ACTION PLANS

### INITIATIVE 7: PROPERTY STANDARDS IMPROVEMENT

#### **ACTION PLAN: DEVELOP PROPERTY STANDARDS.**

- 1. Develop, Implement And Enforce Property Maintenance Standards:**
  - Develop a comprehensive set of property maintenance standards that align with the vision and goals of the City.
  - Clearly communicate the property maintenance standards to all property owners in the downtown area through written materials and public meetings.
  - Establish a system for inspecting properties to ensure compliance with the standards. The inspections should be conducted regularly and consistently to maintain a high level of compliance.
  - Develop a process for notifying property owners of any violations and giving them a reasonable amount of time to address the issues and establish a set of consequences for non-compliance, such as fines or legal action.

## **ACTION PLAN: PROVIDE PROPERTY STANDARD RESOURCES.**

### **1. Provide Resources And Support For Property Owners To Maintain And Improve Their Buildings:**

- Develop a resource guide for property owners that includes information on best practices for property maintenance, available funding sources for building improvements, and contact information for local contractors and service providers.
- Host workshops and training sessions for property owners to learn about property maintenance and improvement topics, such as energy efficiency, historic preservation, and landscaping.
- Provide financial incentives for property owners who make improvements that align with the goals of the City. These incentives could include tax credits, grants, or low-interest loans.
- Develop partnerships with local organizations and businesses to provide additional resources and support to property owners. For example a local hardware store could provide discounts on building materials to property owners who are making improvements.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND TIMELINE**

### **INITIATIVE 1: PLACEMAKING AND PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS**

#### **YEAR 1:**

- Inventory of existing streetscape elements and evaluation of their condition.
- Evaluate the condition of alleyways and parking lots.
- Develop a phased-in, block-by-block replacement plan for streetscape elements.
- Initiate the design process for Town Center Civic Space Placemaking.
- Establish a maintenance plan for downtown public spaces.
- Allocate special assessment funding for maintenance and improvements.

#### **YEAR 2:**

- Continue implementation of the Downtown Improvement Program, Alleyway Reconstructions, and Parking Lot Renovations and Reconstructions.
- Complete construction on the Town Center Civic Space Placemaking project.
- Continue maintenance and care of downtown public spaces, adjust as needed.

#### **YEAR 3:**

- Continue implementation of the Downtown Improvement Program, Alleyway Reconstructions, and Parking Lot Renovations and Reconstructions.
- Continue maintenance and care of downtown public spaces, adjust as needed.
- Launch programming and activation of the Town Center civic space.

#### **YEAR 4-5:**

- Continue implementation of the Downtown Improvement Program, Alleyway Reconstructions, and Parking Lot Renovations and Reconstructions.
- Continue maintenance and care of downtown public spaces, adjust as needed.
- Evaluate the impact of capital improvement projects and public spaces initiatives.



- Conduct a comprehensive review of all initiatives to assess success and identify areas for future improvement.

#### **METHODS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- Regular progress reports on capital improvement projects, including budget tracking, project milestones, and any identified challenges or adjustments.
- Public surveys and community feedback sessions to gather input on the success of implemented projects and identify areas for improvement.
- Periodic assessments of the condition of streetscape elements, alleyways, parking lots, and public spaces to inform maintenance priorities and future initiatives.
- Evaluation of programming and activation efforts in public spaces, including attendance, engagement, and community feedback.
- Performance metrics to assess the impact of capital improvement projects and public spaces initiatives on downtown aesthetics, safety, walkability, and community engagement. These may include pedestrian counts, crime statistics, business revenue, and property values.

### **INITIATIVE 2: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT**

#### **YEAR 1 - 5:**

- Expand social media presence for Downtown Mt. Pleasant.
- Organize additional business attraction events.
- Advocate for business interests.
- Plan and execute community events in collaboration with businesses and other stakeholders.
- Continue supporting businesses through incentive programs, resources, and events.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of business attraction and support programs.
- Adjust strategies based on evaluation results.
- Monitor the impact of implemented initiatives on business growth and retention.
- Continue to foster partnerships with regional and state economic development organizations.
- Expand mentorship connections and local procurement initiatives.
- Enhance community events to further promote local businesses and attract new ones.

#### **METHODS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- Regular progress reports on business attraction and support efforts, including the number of businesses attracted, retained, and expanded.
- Public surveys and feedback sessions to gather input on the effectiveness of implemented programs and initiatives.
- Periodic assessments of local market trends, demographics, and business needs to inform future strategies.
- Evaluation of partnerships with regional and state economic development organizations to determine their effectiveness in attracting and supporting businesses.
- Performance metrics to assess the impact of implemented initiatives on the overall business environment, including job creation, investment, revenue generation, and business satisfaction.

### **INITIATIVE 3: TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBILITY ENHANCEMENTS**

#### **YEAR 1:**

- Expand bike infrastructure, pedestrian walkways, and partnerships with e-scooter/e-bike and ride-sharing companies.
- Support efforts of IRIDE bus system to expand service routes and bus shelters
- Continue installation and replacement of ADA-compliant ramps and tactile paving.
- Facilitate accessibility audits with downtown business and property owners.
- Continue street tree replacement for aging or diseased trees.

#### **YEAR 2:**

- Implement, where possible, street designs, curb extensions, curbless streets, bike repair stations, and maps for attractions/routes.
- Continue accessibility improvements.

#### **YEAR 3-5:**

- Monitor traffic calming measures and continue accessibility audits, adjust plans as needed.
- Review all initiatives, plan future enhancements, and continue supporting existing improvements.

#### **METHODS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- Regular progress reports on transportation and accessibility enhancements, including the number of implemented improvements and their usage by the public.
- Periodic assessments of traffic calming measures and multi-modal transportation infrastructure to ensure their effectiveness and safety.
- Accessibility audits to ensure compliance with ADA standards and identify areas in need of improvement.
- Performance metrics to assess the impact of implemented initiatives on overall transportation and accessibility, such as pedestrian and cyclist counts, traffic speed data, and public transportation ridership.

### **INITIATIVE 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION**

#### **YEAR 1:**

- Strengthen partnerships with key downtown and community stakeholders.
- Schedule regular meetings for communication and collaboration.
- Identify additional potential community events and initiatives.
- Develop an event planning framework and special event ordinance.
- Support event organizers with guidance and resources.
- Begin the event evaluation process.

#### **YEAR 2:**

- Launch joint projects and initiatives among stakeholders.
- Implement additional events and initiatives in collaboration with the Recreation Department and external organizations.
- Continue the event evaluation process.

**YEAR 3:**

- Strengthen cross-promotion and support among stakeholder organizations.
- Improve and expand community events and initiatives based on feedback.
- Enhance collaboration with the Recreation Department and external organizations.
- Continue supporting event organizers.

**YEAR 4:**

- Reassess partnerships and collaborations for improvements.
- Optimize the event planning framework and resources.
- Implement new events and initiatives based on community needs and feedback.
- Continue evaluating and refining community events and initiatives.

**YEAR 5:**

- Review all initiatives and collaborations, plan for future enhancements.
- Continue supporting and expanding community events and initiatives.
- Maintain strong partnerships with key downtown and community stakeholders.
- Ensure ongoing communication and collaboration among organizations.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION METHODS:**

- Regular progress reports on partnerships, events, and initiatives.
- Public surveys and feedback sessions to assess community satisfaction.
- Post-event evaluations to gather feedback and improve future events.
- Assess the effectiveness of joint projects and collaboration among stakeholders.
- Track attendance and engagement in community events and initiatives.

**INITIATIVE 5: REDEVELOPMENT AND NEW CONSTRUCTION****YEAR 1:**

- Conduct infrastructure evaluation and identify suitable areas for redevelopment and new construction.
- Streamline zoning and building permitting processes.
- Establish financial and technical assistance programs for developers.
- Develop educational resources on sustainable building practices.
- Begin working with developers on mixed-use buildings and promoting walkability.
- Encourage the integration of innovative technologies for energy efficiency in new projects.

**YEAR 2:**

- Launch education on sustainable building practices for developers and builders.
- Implement incentives for sustainable building practices in construction projects.
- Begin working with developers on mixed-use buildings and promoting walkability.
- Encourage the integration of innovative technologies for energy efficiency in new projects.

**YEAR 3:**

- Monitor ongoing redevelopment and new construction projects.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of streamlined permitting processes.
- Continue providing financial and technical assistance to developers.

- Support developers in implementing sustainable building practices and innovative technologies.

**YEAR 4:**

- Reexamine identified areas for redevelopment and new construction.
- Optimize financial and technical assistance programs based on feedback.
- Continue educating developers and builders on sustainable practices and technology integration.
- Monitor the impact of incentives on sustainable building practices in construction projects.

**YEAR 5:**

- Review all initiatives and programs, plan for future enhancements.
- Ensure ongoing support for redevelopment and new construction projects.
- Maintain strong relationships with developers, builders, and other stakeholders.
- Assess the overall success and impact of redevelopment and new construction initiatives.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION METHODS:**

- Regular progress reports on redevelopment and new construction projects.
- Analysis of permitting process efficiency and feedback from developers.
- Track participation in financial and technical assistance programs.
- Evaluate the adoption of sustainable building practices and innovative technologies.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of incentives for promoting sustainable building practices.

**INITIATIVE 6: HOUSING OPTIONS EXPANSION**

**YEAR 1:**

- Educate developers on zoning regulations promoting mixed-use buildings and walkability.
- Begin promoting missing middle housing types.
- Encourage developers to include affordable units in projects.
- Develop financial incentives for developers to build affordable housing units.
- Work closely with community organizations to provide housing counseling and assistance.

**YEAR 2:**

- Monitor the progress of diverse housing options in and around downtown.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of incentives for missing middle housing types.
- Continue supporting affordable and inclusive housing initiatives.
- Evaluate the impact of financial incentives for affordable housing development.

**YEAR 3:**

- Continue promoting diverse housing options and encouraging developers to pursue missing middle housing types.
- Monitor the impact of affordable and inclusive housing initiatives on the community.
- Evaluate and adjust financial incentives for affordable housing development if necessary.

**YEAR 4:**

- Reexamines the housing landscape in and around downtown, focusing on diverse housing options.

- Continue supporting affordable and inclusive housing initiatives.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of zoning regulations and financial incentives for promoting diverse housing options.
- Collaborate with developers, community organizations, and other stakeholders to address any emerging housing needs.

**YEAR 5:**

- Review all housing initiatives, plan for future enhancements.
- Monitor the success of diverse housing options and affordable housing initiatives.
- Evaluate the overall impact of housing initiatives on the community.
- Plan for the future development of housing options in and around downtown.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION METHODS:**

- Regular progress reports on diverse housing options and affordable housing initiatives.
- Analysis of the effectiveness of zoning regulations and financial incentives.
- Track participation in affordable and inclusive housing programs.
- Examine the impact of diverse housing options and affordable housing initiatives on the community.

**INITIATIVE 7: PROPERTY STANDARDS IMPROVEMENT**

**YEAR 1:**

- Develop comprehensive property maintenance standards.
- Communicate standards to property owners through written materials and public meetings.
- Establish an inspection system and process for addressing violations.
- Develop a resource guide for property owners and initiate workshops and training sessions.

**YEAR 2:**

- Begin regular property inspections for compliance.
- Provide financial incentives for property improvements aligned with the City's goals.
- Continue hosting workshops and training sessions for property owners.
- Establish partnerships with local organizations and businesses for additional resources and support.

**YEAR 3:**

- Monitor the progress of property maintenance and improvements.
- Assess the effectiveness of resources, workshops, and financial incentives.
- Evaluate the impact of property standards on the overall downtown area.
- Make necessary adjustments to the property maintenance standards, if needed.

**YEAR 4:**

- Continue property inspections and enforcement of maintenance standards.
- Maintain support for property owners with resources, workshops, and financial incentives.
- Strengthen partnerships with local organizations and businesses.
- Assess the long-term impact of property standards improvement initiatives.

**YEAR 5:**

- Review property standards initiatives and plan for future enhancements.
- Evaluate the overall impact of property standards improvement on the downtown area.
- Continue supporting property owners through resources, workshops, and financial incentives.
- Plan for the future development of property standards and improvement initiatives.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION METHODS:**

- Regular progress reports on property maintenance and improvement initiatives.
- Analysis of the effectiveness of property maintenance standards, resources, and financial incentives.
- Track compliance with property maintenance standards through inspections and enforcement actions.
- Assess the impact of property standards improvement initiatives on the overall downtown area.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the Downtown Mt. Pleasant Strategic Plan provides a comprehensive and well-structured roadmap for the revitalization and enhancement of the downtown area over the next five years. By focusing on key initiatives, such as transportation and accessibility enhancements, community engagement and collaboration, redevelopment and new construction, housing option expansion, and property standards improvement, the plan sets the stage for a vibrant, accessible, and thriving downtown that caters to the diverse needs of its residents, businesses, and visitors.

The implementation timelines and monitoring and evaluation methods outlined in this plan ensure a systematic approach to executing each strategic initiative, allowing for ongoing assessment, adaptation, and improvements. Regular progress reports, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision-making will be crucial in maintaining momentum and achieving the desired outcomes.

As the plan is implemented, it is essential to maintain strong collaboration among key downtown and community stakeholders, as well as engagement with the broader community. This collaborative approach will facilitate the sharing of resources, ideas, and expertise, ultimately contributing to the successful revitalization of Downtown Mt. Pleasant.

By diligently following this strategic plan, the City of Mt. Pleasant can anticipate a brighter and more prosperous future for its downtown area, fostering a strong sense of community, economic growth, and an enhanced quality of life for all who live, work, and visit this vibrant city.