

Wheeling

The 2020 Plan for Downtown

Spring 2008 Draft



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“ACTION IS ELOQUENCE.” ~ WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The time has arrived for the citizens and leaders of the City of Wheeling, West Virginia to move forward in action to further:

1. Cultivate partnerships which encourage economic growth and quality in-fill redevelopment in Downtown.
2. Promote Downtown as the hub unifying the region’s many successes.
3. Emphasize the City’s contributions to the nation’s musical heritage.
4. Embrace the Ohio River as an aesthetic, economic and recreational asset of everyday life in Downtown.

From being part of the Wheeling National Heritage Area to offering business and occupational tax incentives, Downtown Wheeling is the City’s “heart.” In the region’s on-going planning efforts over the years, numerous recommendations have been implemented and successes have emerged. In *Wheeling - The 2020 Plan for Downtown*, strategies building upon and expanding these past efforts are identified so that businesses and stakeholders of Downtown can collaborate and implement practical and noteworthy project and policy improvements. How is this Planning Guide unique to previous pursuits? Phase I of this Concept specifically focuses on the Main Street, Ohio River and Wheeling Creek corridors and is presented as part of this document. It also lays the groundwork for future phases of *The 2020 Plan* which can emerge as successes from Phase I are realized.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

This Plan represents a historical moment in Downtown Wheeling’s history; the concepts and recommendations set forth are the result of cooperation and discussion among members of the public and key community organizations including the Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation, the Regional Economic Development Partnership, the Wheeling Convention and Visitors’ Bureau and the City of Wheeling. Based upon this involvement, the Plan’s proposed concepts aim to promote principles of:

- Riverfront Orientation
- Economic Viability
- Heritage
- Infill Development
- Consolidated Parking
- Pedestrian Mobility

OVERVIEW

GOALS

Foremost, with the desire to enhance the physical, economic, recreational and social opportunities within Downtown, a series of goals have been formulated. These goals, combined with the above planning principles, serve as the underpinning of all of the Plan's recommendations.

1. Strengthen Downtown Wheeling's role as a destination within the region's existing family-oriented entertainment and recreation opportunities.
2. Reorient Downtown to encourage the Ohio River as the City's "front door".
3. Promote a healthy business climate attractive to a diverse economy inclusive of both the local and regional-scale.
4. Foster cooperative efforts between the private and public sectors to stimulate Downtown redevelopment/revitalization.
5. Honor Wheeling's heritage by celebrating historical, cultural and natural assets.
6. Infill and redevelop sites strategically to leverage market opportunities that recognize the riverfront's significance and appreciate its "value."
7. Create a circulation system which incorporates clearly defined and safe transportation opportunities geared toward vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.
8. Establish concise and realistic action steps for project stakeholder implementation.

REVITALIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

Through a series of analyses, assessments, feedback sessions and general market comparisons, numerous factors influencing potential revitalization were identified. As part of *Wheeling - The 2020 Plan for Downtown*, observations are centered on the delineated study area, urban form and architecture, parking, land use and economic development.

THE DELINEATED STUDY AREA

The Phase I Study Area defined for the *2020 Plan for Downtown* is generally bound between 10th Street, Wheeling Creek, the west side of Market Street and the Ohio River. Upon entering this Area, one can find a number of unique, older buildings with notable architecture. However, some buildings appear underutilized and some streetscapes well-worn. Many retail stores which had historically characterized Downtown Wheeling, including this Study Area, have relocated to other portions of the Wheeling region leaving quality first floor retail space as under-marketed and lacking a “draw.”

In the Study Area’s southern portion, more recently constructed buildings are found along with a number of bank offices of both historic and modern character as well as larger buildings which appear vacant but with potential. Overall, the Study Area, and Downtown as a whole, are quite impressive. There is a great deal of untapped potential and with some basic changes and a targeted action plan, the Downtown area can be enhanced over the short- and long-term.

Many Study Area parcels are characterized by lots used for parking. Unlike most other riverfront areas that have had successful development, such as the Inner Harbor of Baltimore or Cleveland Flats, this area lacks some of the infrastructure to renovate the existing buildings into adaptive re-use. Most redevelopment areas have buildings with footprints in the 2,000 to 4,000 square foot range. Some buildings that remain house warehouse-type uses of which, when canvassing property owner feedback, would prefer to be in a better location with better delivery access and on one level. There is opportunity to move these firms, but many have had a long history in Downtown.

The challenge that lies ahead is how to improve real estate and unify the public realm in order to enhance the viability of this area. Areas such as the workforce and business climate; the retail mix; the entertainment avenues available; and sports, gaming and tourist attractions which surround Wheeling will all play a factor in the revitalization of the Study Area, as well as Downtown. Any future development should make the best use possible of the views that the river offers, as well as developing pedestrian oriented spaces.

URBAN FORM AND ARCHITECTURE

Conservation of historically significant buildings will be important. They not only reflect the City’s history, but they add a layer of depth that only historic urban areas can achieve. They also contribute to the visual interest of an area. In the near term, the cost of restoring an old building might not seem worth it when compared to replacing it with new construction. In the long term, a well-done, rehabilitated historic building may command higher rents than a more modern (or 30-year-old) structure. Conversely, a historic building may not serve as the best

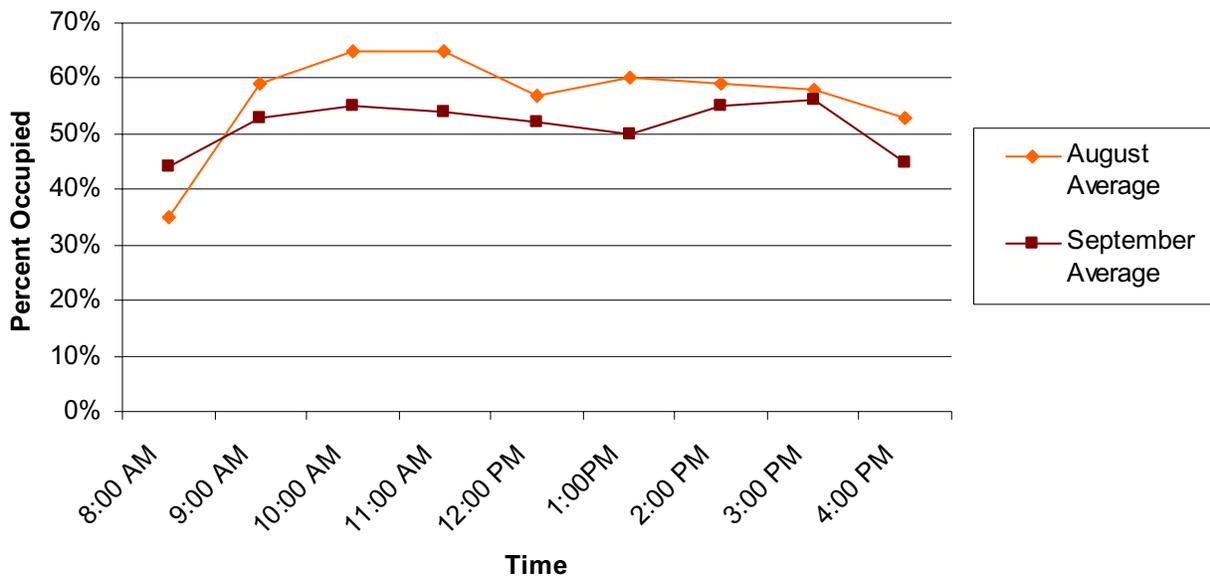
REVITALIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

use for a given area or the value of a replacing it might far exceed the value of restoring it. The opportunities and challenges of these factors will need to be fully and carefully evaluated for each of the structures within Phase I as infill opportunities arise and are pursued.

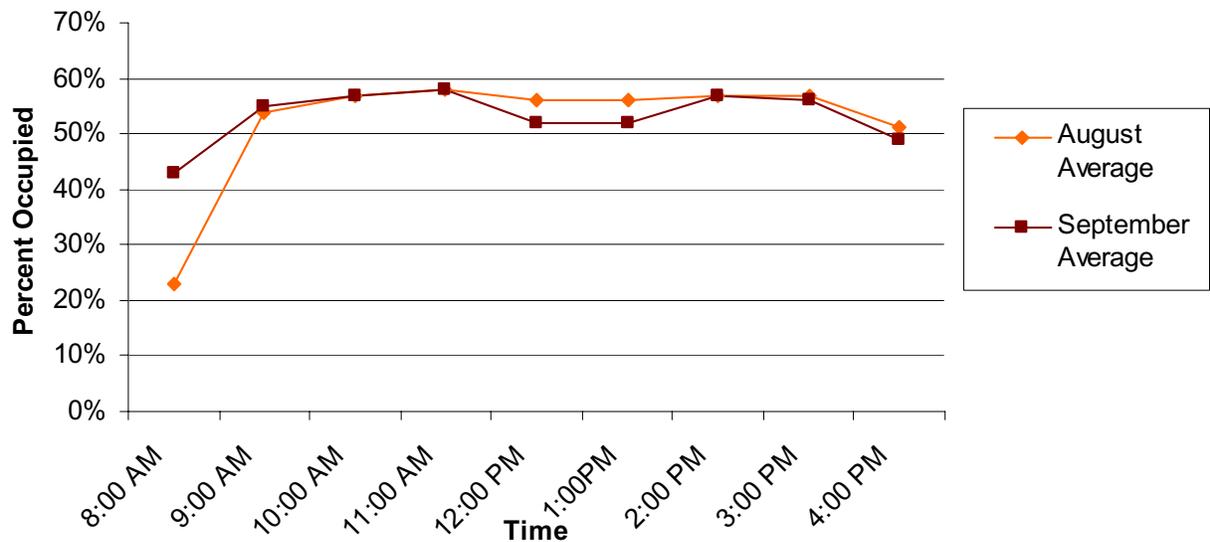
PARKING

Parking plays an important role in all downtowns and balancing its location, access and quantity is typically challenging. Based upon analyses completed throughout the planning

**Average Occupancy for All Off-Street Parking Lots
Wheeling, WV
8/28/07 & 9/26/07**



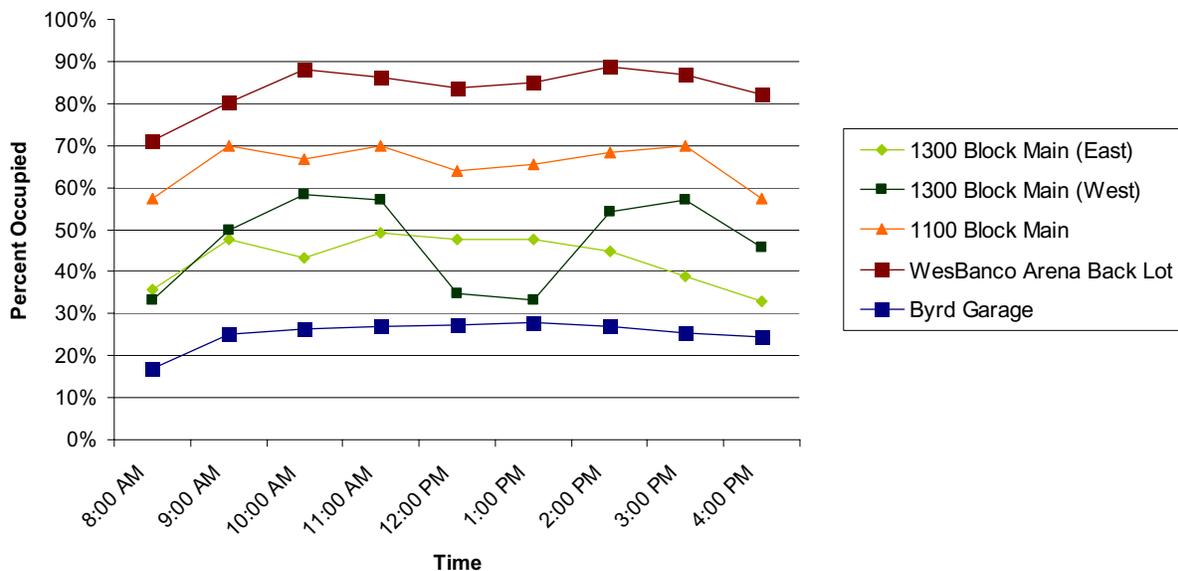
**Average Occupancy of All Off-Street Parking Lots with More Than Fifty Spaces
Wheeling, WV
8/28/07 & 9/26/07**



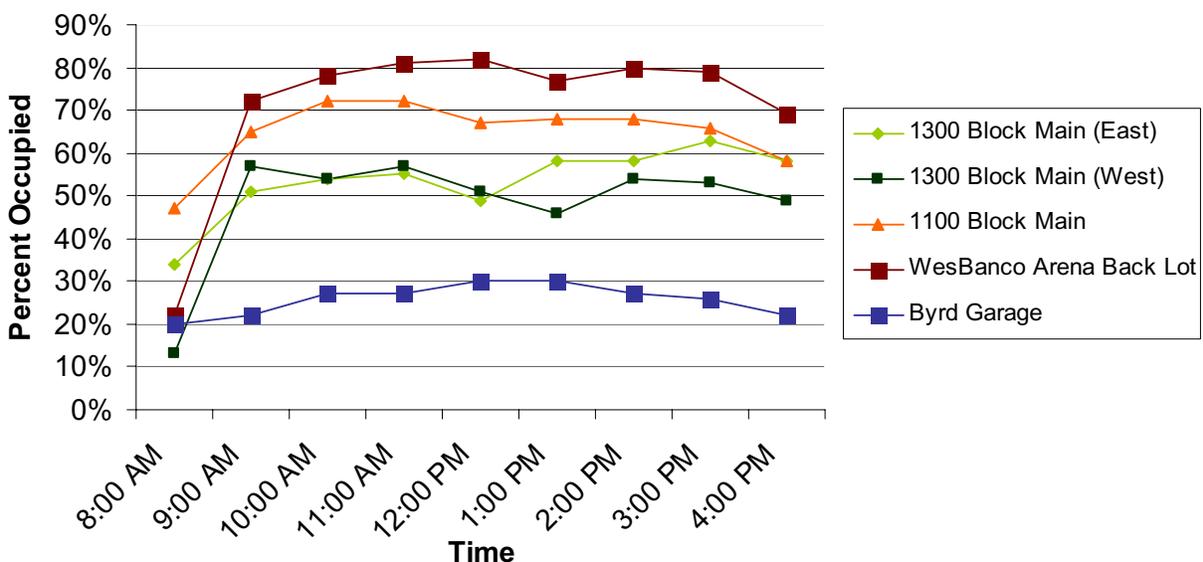
REVITALIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

process, patterns emerged which illuminate the sample sufficiency of available parking throughout the Study Area. The graphs depicted on the preceding page and below represent a sampling of occupancy trends within the Phase I area. Of the 1,500+ spaces mentioned, the overall daily percentage of occupied spaces is $\leq 60\%$. Notably, the lowest average daily rate of occupancy ($\pm 25\%$) occurs in the area which has the most abundant supply—the Robert C. Byrd Multi-Modal Center. It is generally advised that considerations of additional parking are added to development areas in which parking occupancies exceed $\pm 80\%$. It is highly likely that rather than adding more spaces to Downtown Wheeling’s parking supply, the City and private sector can work to optimize future development opportunities along with a more efficient parking program.

**Occupancy of Off-Street Parking Lots with More Than Fifty Spaces
Wheeling, WV
9/26/07**



**Occupancy of Off-Street Parking Lots with More Than Fifty Spaces
Wheeling, WV
8/28/07**



REVITALIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

LAND USE

The following chart represents a general breakdown of land use and parking patterns generally within the project's Phase I area. Notably, more than 1/3 of the Study Area is characterized by parking and/or vacant land use activities.

Phase I Area Lots (# and % Total)	Percentage of Total
Occupied Lots with Structures	42%
Occupied Lots without Structures	40%
Vacant Lots with Structures	13%
Vacant Lots without Structures	5%

Phase I Area and Adjacent Land Use Patterns	Percentage of Total
Retail/Service	37%
Office	19%
Light Industrial	2%
Residential	2%
Warehouse	3%
Entertainment	1%
Parking	24%
Vacant	11%

Parking (approx.)	Percentage of Total
Off-street (Private) Surface Spaces	42%
Garage (Public) Spaces	53%
On-Street (Public) Spaces	5%

REVITALIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Wheeling has a strong history as an important hub of country and bluegrass music. Capitol Music Hall reflects that era and is a unique venue. Programming for the Music Hall is crucial – since its closing, many citizens and interest groups have been evaluating the potential for the facility’s reopening. As a Wheeling Heritage Landmark, the revitalization of the theater to house music events and other acts would be a draw to Downtown. Bringing in country music acts, plays or smaller music acts like “name” bands who were in flavor in the 1960’s, 1970’s or 1980’s would bring in the 30-60 year old demographic market that has money to spend on dinner and other types of shopping. The continuation and promotion of this facility, led by the Stakeholder of this Plan, is crucial to the Downtown’s overall cultural district appeal. If it succeeds, related businesses should be encouraged to also fall into place as part of the WesBanco Arena’s program.

The lack of restaurants and retail establishments throughout Downtown is a shortcoming. Nationally, the development of downtown retail areas is now centered around entertainment areas or other “fun” venues to create a draw. There is the opportunity to enhance this area with attractions that will draw people to this area. With the amount of people coming to this area and from the existing opportunities that exist all around the Downtown area, the ability to capture or “piggy back” on these venues is great.

In the short run, the Downtown should be encouraged to develop attractions which will bring in “family”-type entertainment. Downtown stakeholders should also work to attract attention to the parcels of ground which could be made available for sale in the private sector. Although Downtown Wheeling is centrally located between the Highlands, Oglebay Resort and Conference Center and the Wheeling Island gaming center, Downtown has yet to capitalize on fully synchronizing with these special and/or ongoing events. Coordination activity schedules and/or transportation (land or water) between these venues can promote even a small percentage of increased visitation to Downtown from these already captive audiences.

Heritage Port is one of Downtown’s principal destinations for regional celebrations as well as daily recreation outings. There are more than 300,000 annual participants in Heritage Port activities. Coursing along the Ohio River and planned for an extension on Wheeling Creek, the Wheeling Heritage Trail is an integral part of the Downtown landscape, however, there is minimal interaction between trail users and the immediate surrounding Downtown development. Currently, few businesses and amenities exist in Downtown which are attractive to the Trail’s pedestrian-oriented users. Surprisingly, minimal signage exists to guide unfamiliar visitors from Market, Main or any cross streets to Heritage Port.

REVITALIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

THE CONCEPT - PHASE 1

STRATEGIC PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Wheeling - The 2020 Plan for Downtown is a project and policy plan developed through cooperation. What should Downtown Wheeling look like in the coming decades? What is its position in the regional marketplace? What amenities and activities are needed to stimulate private-sector investment? As a long-range plan, *The 2020 Plan for Downtown* is a framework to guide both decision making regarding land use strategies, public realm improvements, programs and policy management.

Wheeling's 2020 Plan for Downtown provides a broad, consensus-focused approach to planning for both community leadership as well as the private sector. Based upon on-going related planning activities throughout the region and the Downtown, the Plan concentrates on the first phase of Downtown revitalization—along the riverfront and its immediate vicinity. The central idea behind the Downtown's revitalization is its role to honor successes of Wheeling's past and to exemplify opportunities of the City's future. In providing a concentration of service-oriented businesses, entertainment and other river-front oriented opportunities which reach out to those of all ages, Downtown can serve the role in which it is positioned, both figuratively and literally, to be: the "hub" of success in the Wheeling region. The long-term success of this ambitious concept is dependent on the active participation and investment of both the public and the private sectors.

This Strategic Plan is composed of a series of recommended actions and implementation concepts. Whether physical or policy-oriented, all recommendations have been formulated to create a synergy between Downtown activities, character and amenities. In establishing a "music" identity for Downtown, Wheeling can create a structure with which it can build a unique market niche; coordinate amenities in the public realm and leverage private-sector investment. The Phase I Planning Concept provides a comprehensive diagram of the Plan's land use and public realm improvement recommendations. The Phase I Area has been identified into four planning districts: Music Row, Lower Main, Riverside and Creekside. To accompany the Phase I Planning Concept, specific actions are defined for each district and are outlined on the following pages.

Foremost, *Wheeling - The 2020 Plan for Downtown* introduces a formal structure for implementing recommended policies and programs. Because a defined organization and administrative structure is a key to the Plan's short-term and long-term success, the Plan seeks to build upon the momentum of cooperation initiated as part of this Phase by defining a formal network of management and communication.

THE CONCEPT - PHASE I



THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

DISTRICT CONCEPTS

The 2020 Plan for Downtown seeks to be innovative and practical, while establishing a sound approach to expansion of community-wide economic vitality. Each of the four planning districts outlined as part of Downtown's Phase I revitalization efforts are unique in their character and their potential. Through common improvements proposed for the public realm, distinct opportunities within these districts can be woven together.

As part of the overall revitalization efforts within the Phase I Area, three different approaches exist and should be carefully evaluated as efforts are pursued: infill, redevelopment and replacement.

in•fill (n): development of vacant or remnant lands passed over by previous development in urban areas

re•de•vel•op•ment (n): the act of improving by renewing and restoring; the act or process of rehabilitating or rejuvenating a blighted area or accommodating new development within the context of existing streets and buildings

re•pla•ce•ment (n): the act of remodeling or reusing an existing building or structure

In evaluating and pursuing any of these approaches, it is encouraged that the public and private sectors work together to assess the conditions of existing architecture and the feasibility for reuse and/or adaptation. Independent of the approach selected for a certain block or building, it is also recommended the public and private sectors work together to formulate Design Standards applicable to both the reuse of existing structures and the introduction of new buildings to Phase I and to the overall Downtown. These Standards should highlight the treasured, historic architectural character for which Downtown is known. Moreover, the City of Wheeling should also encourage that all construction, whether new or rehabilitated, promotes energy-efficient, green building techniques. Guidelines for these techniques should reflect the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system. Given the scale and breadth of opportunity of infill, redevelopment and replacement within Downtown, Wheeling has the opportunity to become the model City in the State of West Virginia for energy-efficient infill design and building reuse.

Music Row

The northern most portion of the Phase I Area is Music Row. Generally located along Main Street between 10th and 12th Streets, Music Row provides the opportunity for the City to establish and highlight



At the intersection of 10th and Main, renovation of the Capitol Music Hall will enable people to re-embrace its past present and future contribution to America's musical history. Nearby, infill development opportunities (A, B & C) can further provide space for music-oriented venues or office uses.

THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

a heritage-based theme for this portion of Main Street as well as for throughout Downtown. Anchored by the Capitol Music Hall near the intersection of 10th and Main, parcels "A" through "E" are shown as part of the Plan for their consideration for either infill, redevelopment or replacement. The parcels, ranging in size and scale, should be encouraged to provide mixed-use development which can provide opportunities for evening/ weekend entertainment for all ages.

Based upon on-going planning and funding coordination, several portions of this district are recommended as priority projects, including renovation of the Capitol Music Hall, contiguous vacant structures within the 1100 block (spanning between Main and Market Streets) as well as vacant land along 11th Street between Main and Water Streets.

Each of these priority project areas is significant to strengthening Downtown's overall physical and economic health:

- a) the Capitol Music Hall for its historical and future contributions to entertainment and art in Downtown and the overall Wheeling region;
- b) the 1100 block's former multi-floor retail spaces/structures for reuse and/or creating larger common footprints which are rare in Downtown as well as
- c) the vacant, riverfront-oriented land between Main and Water Streets to establish a needed visually and physically connected pedestrian open space to Heritage Port.

Also notably, to encourage continuity along the street, reconfiguration of larger-scale surface parking areas, specifically in the 1100 block (E), should be encouraged as an area to infill. This infill will create additional building square footage; reconfiguration and improvement of parking access from the varying elevation levels of both Main and Market Streets should also be explored.

The reuse, redevelopment and infill in Main street's 1100 block has the potential to stimulate needed economic development as well as elevate civic pride in Downtown. From a market standpoint, the general focus of music-oriented venues, entertainment and office space should be concentrated between 10th-11th Streets where possible along both sides of Main Street; south of 11th Street, boutique retail, office and additional music-oriented venues should be encouraged. All buildings, whether addressed by infill, redevelopment or reuse should be promoted to be compatible with historic architectural influences and to be energy efficient.



Building on the renovation of the Capitol Music Hall, additional infill and redevelopment priorities existing within the 1100 block of Main Street and constructing River Plaza.

THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

The current vacant land along 11th Street between Main and Water Streets should be encouraged for redevelopment as Melody River Plaza. Transformation of this vacant lot into a formal open space/plaza should occur to be designed as visual and physical connection between the higher elevation of Music Row and Water Street's lower elevation incorporating transition between the east and west portions of the Main Street right-of-way. Melody River Plaza serves as northern "entrance" to Heritage Port. Art installations, site furnishings and water-inspired features should promote talents of local craftsman. Importantly, this space should include associated pedestrian-oriented wayfinding to identify desirable destinations and connections.

One of the key elements of the wayfinding system is the Melody Pipes. Melody Pipes can be introduced as Downtown's central "wayfinding" icon with a music-themed form/appearance. Columnar (20+') sculptural pieces could be fabricated in conjunction with local artists. The possibility of electronic capacity for music to be emitted should also be pursued. An accompanying pedestrian-scale signage/wayfinding system would provide further directional guidance to highlight access to Heritage Port for pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

Lower Main

Lower Main represents the area between Main and Market Streets spanning from 12th Street to the Robert C. Byrd Multi-Modal Center. In an portion of Downtown currently dominated by the presence of surface parking lots along the street right-of-ways, this district represents opportunity to expand Downtown's office environment as well as introduce additional related daytime and evening entertainment-oriented support such as restaurants and smaller-scale supporting retail businesses. Significant areas of attention should be drawn to parcels noted



Infill redevelopment and replacement opportunities in the Lower Main district should emphasize office uses and the improvement of pedestrian spaces and visual and physical connections to Heritage Port.

THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

“G” through “J.” All buildings, whether addressed by infill, redevelopment or reuse should be promoted to be compatible with historic architectural influences and to be energy efficient.

Given other non-residential activities in the Wheeling region, the current market seems to support the need for additional office users to enter the Downtown area. Several building owners interviewed are ready to develop additional office space. A majority of the demand will come from existing business owners who desire to own their own building. Smaller professional firms with employee size of four to fifty should be the target market. Signage and identification are driving factors for these types of firms. Doctor and other medical uses help the Downtown space absorption of office space, provided there is ADA accessibility and close proximity to free or reasonably priced parking.

Varying in form and function, two notable pedestrian-oriented spaces should be explored as part of this heavily traversed daytime office corridor: Blues Corner and the Century Corridor. Blues Corner, targeted for the northwest corner of Main and 14th Streets should be created as a semi-formal open space is visible from primary traffic route, adjacent visitor's center and other surrounding side streets. Blues Corner can serve as the southern "entrance" to Heritage Port and the feasibility for other open-air activities, such as outdoor dining, should also be explored given captive weekday business audience and adjacent entertainment-oriented activities. Similar to Melody River Plaza, associated wayfinding to desired destinations should be provided.

Based upon the current sampling and observations of parking occupancy, there is an abundance of parking supply in the Phase I area. To emphasize that parking remains in adequate supply and access, even in context of infill and redevelopment activities, it is encouraged that the public and private sectors work together to develop an awareness campaign of Downtown parking opportunities (See also Creekside). While this campaign should be made as part of Downtown-wide efforts, the assessments and feedback gained through Phase I work illuminates the significance that such a mapping, circulation and information campaign can bring to those with work and/or entertainment-related destinations within the Lower Main District and surrounding areas.

Riverside

Envisioned as a pedestrian-oriented corridor with facades which open to an active sidewalk environment, Riverside is the jewel of Downtown Wheeling. Oriented along Water Street, flanked by Melody River Plaza to the north and WesBanco Arena to the South, Riverside serves as both a connector and a destination capitalizing on the many other successes that Wheeling has achieved in programming year-round activities which repeatedly attract hundreds of thousands to events.

The days of “big box” retail coming into Downtown Wheeling, or any downtown, is very unlikely. Downtowns today typically do not have the land areas needed, nor the parking area designed. The highest potential for success would be to attract restaurants and more unique types of retail stores and commercial enterprises. There seems to have been some success around the Centre Market District where antique stores, specialty shops and eateries have

THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

opened. Where possible, music-oriented venues should be targeted. Based upon programming considerations, other districts' land use recommendations and feedback received, it is recommended that ground floor uses focus on smaller scale/specialty retail and restaurant activities; upper floors should could accommodate office and ultimately unique residential dwellings.

Parcels within Riverside, and other districts where possible, need to incorporate both indoor and outdoor spaces to enhance the retail experience and make full use of the riverfront and Heritage Port. A place to eat, dance or participate in other family-friendly activities is needed to attract night life to this area and keep many visitors that seem to "pass through" without any reason to stay. With over 400,000 people visiting WesBanco Arena every year to attend the festival and concerts, there is a need for better retail, dining and entertainment opportunities.

12th Street is a main connection point to access Downtown from the riverfront. In the past there were studies and recommendations to improve the lighting and make this an entrance to the waterfront area. This street should be open, well lit and safe. There should be emphasis placed on the retail storefronts which are on all four corners of 12th and Main Streets and 12th and Water Streets, with a prime draw or retail store on the corner of 12th and Water Streets.

It is also suggested that a continuation of Oglebay's holiday lights occur in Riverside and throughout the Downtown area. Even if Downtown were to attract only an additional 5% of the 1.5 million visitors which drive to visit the holiday lights at Oglebay every holiday season, that would equate to 75,000 people. Downtown could also display or even light up the historic buildings like downtown Pittsburgh has done, which attracts additional visitors to the downtown Pittsburgh area on an annual basis.

Although different in scale and character than Melody River Plaza, Jamboree Alley serves a similar function as a pedestrian-oriented walking route between Main and Water Streets. This pedestrian connector, recommended for construction in the right-of-way north of the Manor Building, possesses a gradual grade change. It could also function as a limited-access vehicle route. Also similar to Melody River Plaza and Blues Corner, pedestrian-scaled art installations, amenities and lighting for beauty and safety could be designed with the cooperation and skills of celebrated local craftsmen.



THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

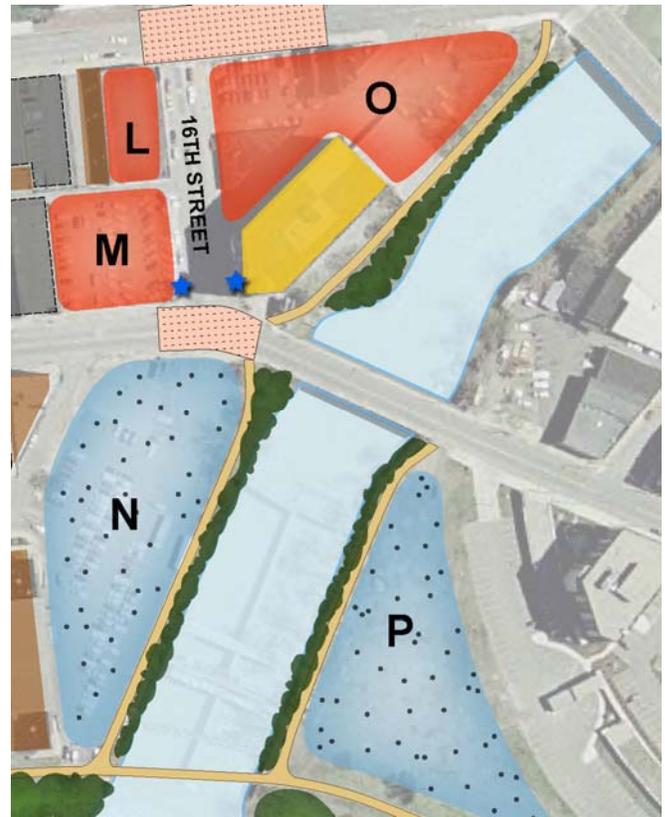
Creekside

After crossing over Wheeling Creek, this unique portion of the City has long served as Downtown's southern entrance. A triangular area generally bound between 16th Street, Market Street and Wheeling Creek, Creekside possesses several surface parking lots, a few notable historic buildings and a few other retail/industrial-oriented parcels. Several opportunities exist to enhance the current underutilized portions of this district. Foremost, as part of the Downtown parking improvement strategy, the public and private stakeholders should work to identify infill development opportunities of office, ground floor retail or other entertainment for the parking lot south of WesBanco Arena and which borders Wheeling Creek. Any new structures which may be constructed should be respectful of established historic guidelines and should promote energy efficient design.

Recognizably, to maintain service needs of WesBanco Arena, parking and loading areas should be encouraged to be incorporated into a portion of the building's first floor layout. To maintain continuity in building scale and form, infill development should be designed to complement the surrounding existing buildings' height. New office development on both sides of the Creek should also be oriented toward both the Creek and Ohio River.

In the future, stakeholders should explore the potential for expanding adjacent institutional uses, such as the West Virginia Northern Community College. Campus growth was an identified need during the 2020 Plan planning process, and Creekside provides opportunity for such activity while maintaining continuity of the existing development and adjacent Independence Hall's historic architecture.

Whether it's part of these developments or part of other building/parcel revitalization along the Creek, pedestrian connections are a key component of Creekside. Designating these alignments as well as potentially improving the pedestrian/vehicular relationship at the 16th Street/Main Street intersection should be an integral part of this area's overall renewal. These connections should link activities on Market Street to Creekside and ultimately provide a formal connection to the Wheeling Heritage Trail. Where possible, a system of platforms, ramps and/or stairs could be used to encourage the improved physical and visual connection between land and Wheeling Creek.



THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

More Opportunities

As the land use patterns evolve within the Phase I area, the public and private sectors should be mindful of additional opportunities that can arise especially related to overnight accommodations and residential development.

Overnight Accommodations

Ultimately, the need for a new limited-style hotel could be built within the Phase I area - a facility which could complement existing services in town while taking advantage of the river views as well as serve the entertainment, sports and recreational events which taking place in the Downtown area as well as the 2.5 million visitors that go to the Wheeling Island Race Track and Gaming Center. One area in which this may be best served is at the northern or southern ends of the WesBanco Arena Complex in order to take advantage of the daily guests being able to walk through the Main and Water Street corridors as well as in and around Downtown and to maximize the opportunities that this brings to the retail, food or other shops.

There are several prime historic buildings which could be renovated into unique bed and breakfast type of establishments to accommodate the overnight and weekend tourists.

Residential Development

Ultimately, there is a great opportunity to develop and change the use of existing vacant buildings into unique residential developments and lofts. Cities which have been developed residential in downtown areas have increased retail use by 20-40%, and most revitalization has come through the success of downtown housing. More housing will create more retail demand.

There are many buildings in the Downtown area which could be targeted for residential development, and most would prefer to be on or be able to see the river or water. With the employment that the casino offers, the banking institutions, the hospital and educational institutions, the ability to remodel the vacant upper floors and bring additional housing, both loft and condo, to the Downtown area is strong.

The key is starting small with one or two successful loft-style renovations. This will start to create a demand and acceptance to live in the Downtown area. Building codes would need to be reviewed in order for a developer to make an easy conversion to residential housing.

THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

Infrastructure

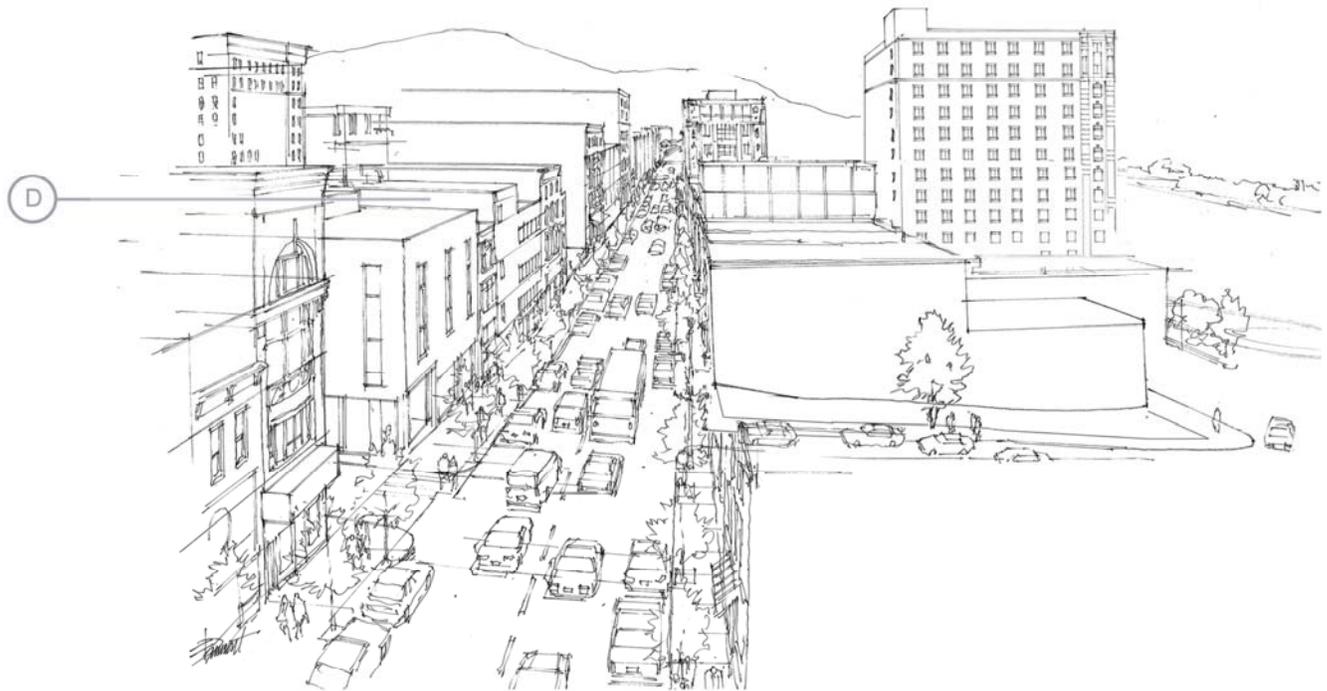
Based on a general investigation of previously compiled data and information available for the Phase 1 area, water and sewer lines in the Downtown Wheeling area are adequate to support proposed non-residential and residential activity. Once development decisions are finalized, further investigations should be completed. Investigations should include physical inspections of the lines and structures including televised inspections, flow monitoring, material testing and valve inspections.

Future development should also include maintenance work on the existing water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer lines. Work should include separation of sanitary and storm sewers, replacement or lining and cleaning of lines, replacement of structures including manholes and catch basins and replacement of equipment such as valves, meters and fire hydrants as needed.

Main Street Possibilities

The following series of graphics represents view of the Main Street Corridor looking south. Graphic 1 depicts existing conditions. Graphic 2 delineates a concept of infill with historic façade enhancement of several buildings, improvement of public spaces including Melody River Plaza at 11th Street and the overall Main Street streetscape. For any infill improvements which are made, the Downtown stakeholders should thoroughly evaluate opportunities for emphasizing historic architectural patterns and character.

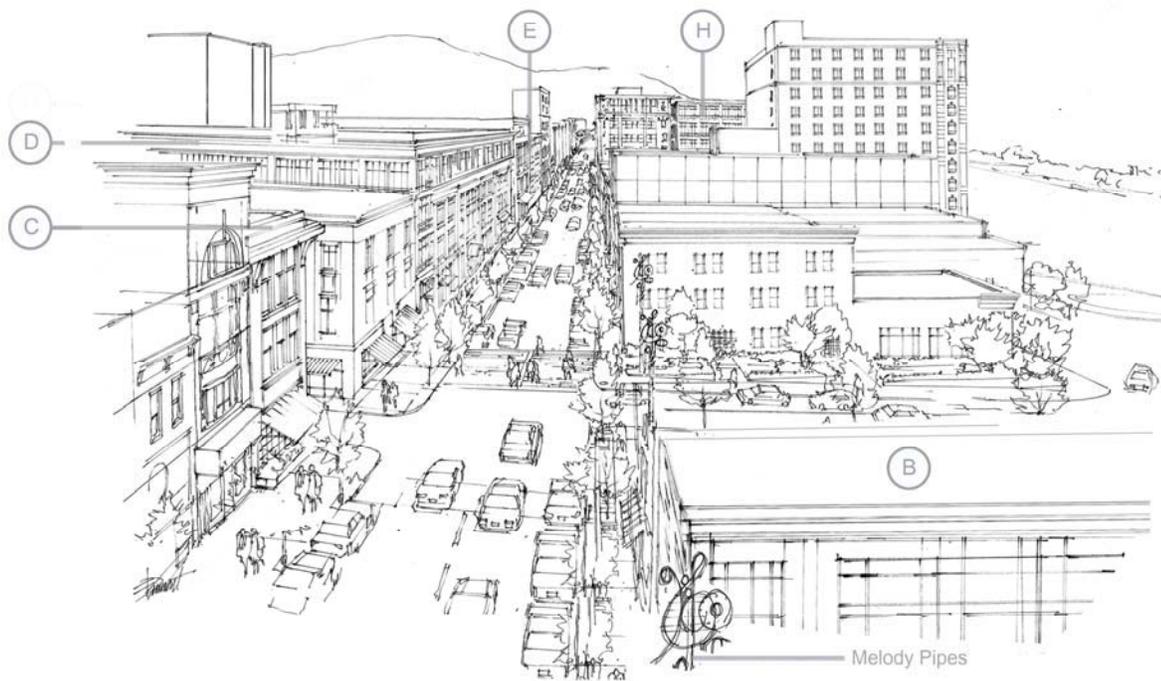
Graphic 1



EXISTING CONDITION

THE CONCEPT - PHASE I

Graphic 2



INFILL WITH HISTORIC FACADE ENHANCEMENT

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

NEED FOR A DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Much time, effort, and money has been spent in creating a Planning Concept and Strategy for Downtown Wheeling. As in the case with other downtowns, the strategy may never be implemented due to the absence of an organization in place that will provide the leadership needed to spearhead the revitalization effort.

In Wheeling, the key Community Partners and potential funding sources have been in place. In order for Downtown Wheeling to reach its full potential, there must be a management organization established that allows the Downtown's key partners, stakeholders and constituents, to work together towards a common goal: A Revitalized Downtown Wheeling.

The Downtown Advisory Committee would act as THE umbrella that unites all the key partners in implementing the Vision and acting for the betterment of Downtown Wheeling as a whole. The focus of this Organization is Downtown Wheeling, not only in implementing the strategy, but also in the day to day operations of Downtown Wheeling as well.

Leadership Matters

In the corporate world, the lack of leadership results in a lack luster corporation that does not achieve goals and objectives, the organization struggles to survive in the global environment, and eventually dissolves because it cannot effectively compete. This practical theory is true in our Downtown as well.

Without the formation of a Downtown organization, created to guide and direct Downtown revitalization, the Planning Concept and Strategy which has consumed many hours and dollars to develop will never be implemented. With the Downtown Advisory Committee in place, change in Downtown is possible; the organization will transform Downtown by creating and communicating proper direction.

Role of the Downtown Advisory Committee

The Downtown Advisory Committee will:

- Build a cohesive team where constituents and key stakeholders are united in pursuit of the goals and objectives defined in the Vision and Strategic Plan for Downtown Wheeling;
- Collaborate to accomplish results and ensure Downtown Wheeling is tackling the right issues as a team;
- Continue to build and strengthen relationships between Downtown Wheeling and the community partners and stakeholders;
- Attract new investment and interest for Downtown Wheeling;
- Assume responsibility and accountability for Downtown Wheeling;
- Maintain a keen sense of market forces and opportunities;

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Ensure Downtown Wheeling has a global view and is sensitive to national trends and market forces;
- Shape the perception of Downtown Wheeling; shape the image and reputation of the Downtown Advisory Committee ;
- Maintain its credibility, thereby maintaining the credibility of Downtown Wheeling;
- Create a genuine sense of enthusiasm about the revitalization future for Downtown Wheeling;
- Develop a commitment to the Planning Concept and Strategy for Downtown Wheeling and communicate that the Planning Concept and Strategy to guide all future decisions and activities;
- Articulate the goals and objectives and create a sense of urgency for change that supports the Planning Concept and Strategy ; and
- Make the case for change and communicates this effectively to key stakeholders.

WHEELINGS COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- City of Wheeling
- Regional Economic Development Partnership
- Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation
- Wheeling Convention and Visitors Bureau

RELATIONS OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS WITH DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

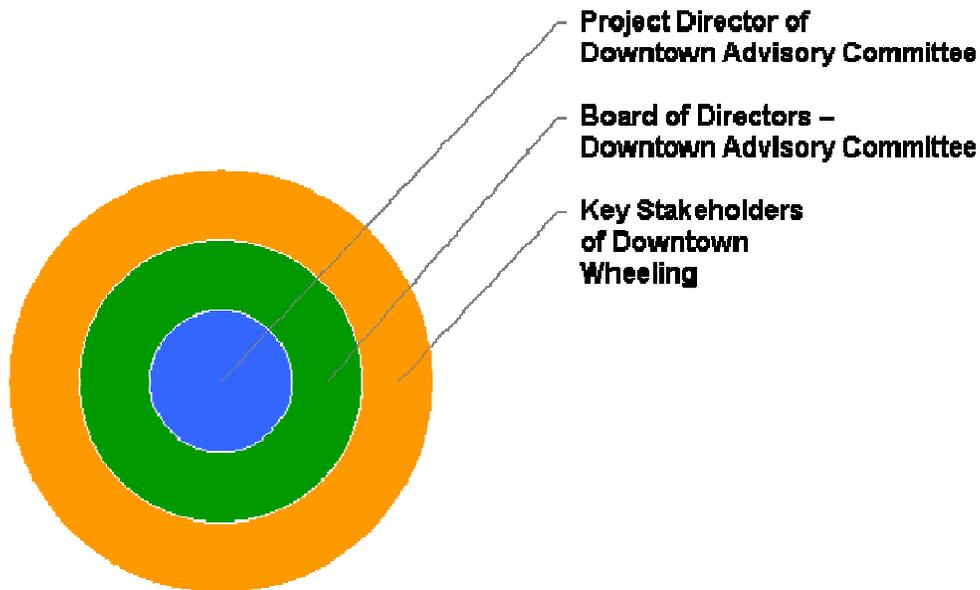
The Board of Directors for the Downtown Advisory Committee will be comprised of members of the Community Partners as well as other key stakeholders for Downtown Wheeling. The following chart shows the relationship between the Community Partners and the Downtown Advisory Committee :



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Downtown Advisory Committee should be created with a twelve member board and an Project Director to oversee the daily operations. The twelve member board would include two seats for each community partner, two property owners and two business owners. The Downtown Advisory Committee could also create an advisory board that would include other constituents and stakeholders of Downtown Wheeling. The Project Director of the Downtown Advisory Committee will play a key role in assisting the board in setting priorities for implementing the Vision and Strategic Plan. The Director will build consensus among board members and provide a leadership role as previously identified.

The following chart shows the relationship between the Project Director of the Downtown Advisory Committee, the Committee's Board of Directors:



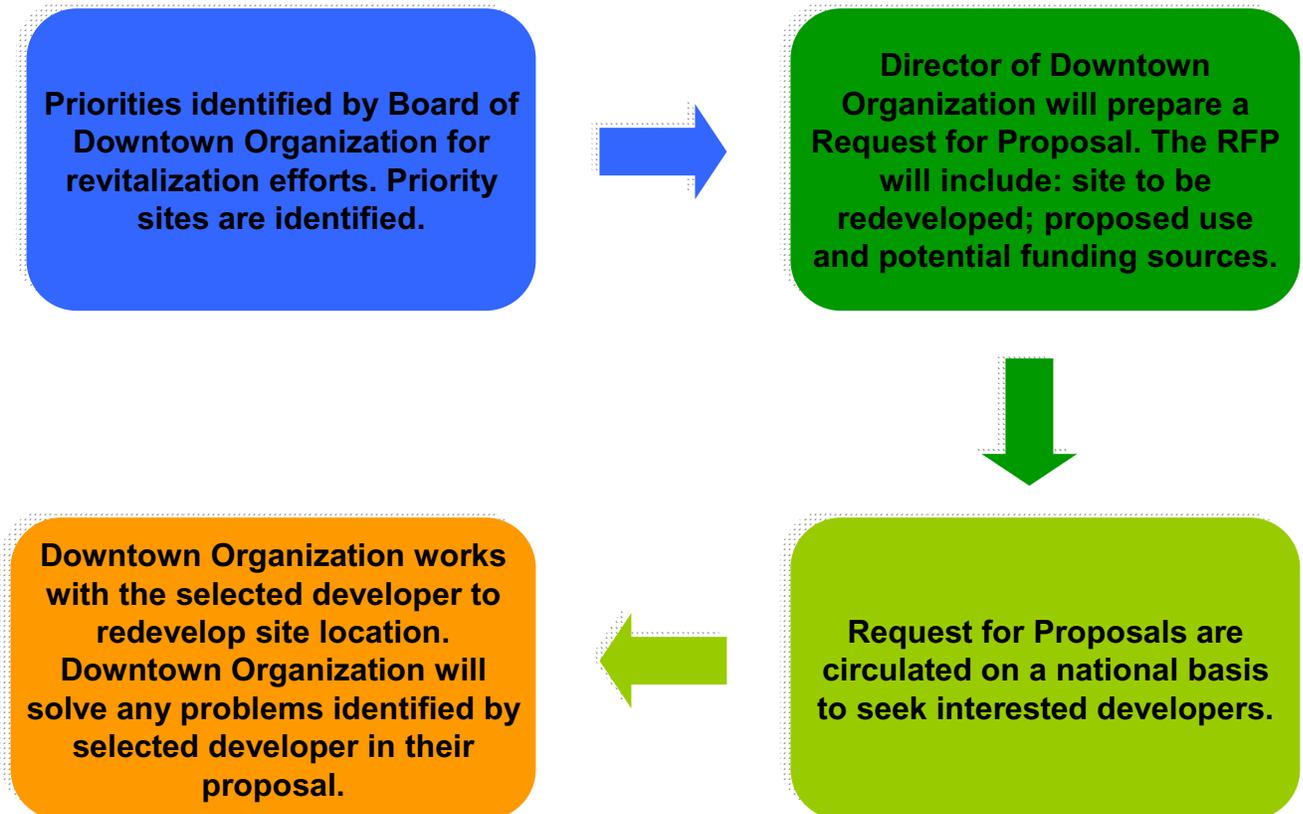
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Project Director of the Downtown Advisory Committee will now take the lead in initiating the process whereby redevelopment projects identified in the Vision and Strategy Plan are completed. The Project Director will:

- Prepare the Request for Proposal which will include:
 - ◆ Site location and attributes (size, topography, current use, etc)
 - ◆ Proposed Financial Package as identified by the Community Partners (funding for demolition, infrastructure, possible Tax Increment Financing and grant funding)
 - ◆ Proposed new use for the site as identified in the Vision and Strategy Plan
 - ◆ Timeframe for completion of the Project
 - ◆ Ranking for criteria by which the Developer will be selected (financial strength of the developer, experience of developer, issues identified by developer in completing the project)
- Work with Developer in Resolving Issues and Securing Funding and Necessary Permitting for Project

Process for Project Implementation



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS FOR FUNDING

Other successful downtown areas have been successful by partnering with others in the community. These include foundations, major business owners in the area, such as any bank in the area, the Ohio Valley Medical Center, Wheeling Hospital, the presidents of Esmark and other historically significant entities.

- There needs to create a buzz.
- Any success or new business moving into the area needs to be well published. Other business owners need to see business willing to move into the area.
- Success breeds success.

Economic Development

Realizing the amount of economic development funds may be scarce, any public or private money available should be parlayed into the maximum exposure to the market place and concentrated on designated priority projects. Phase I, as well as ultimately other sections of Downtown, should be delineated to receive the necessary matching funds to revitalize the buildings and target those developments which will have the highest impact in the shortest amount of time. Where possible, the Plan's stakeholders should pursue State and Federal grants and other related economic development incentive programs. Pursuit of matching fund programs, whereby property owners have a stake in the process are also encouraged. The City's façade program, whereby building owners have benefitted from applying for available funds, is an example of such an incentive strategy. In the future, when funds are again available, the City should encourage applicants to pursue façade projects to further improve the City's streetscape. As an alternative, funding sources can also be low-cost or "conditional" grants whereby the amount of money loaned is interest-free but paid back upon a sale. There would be a lien recorded against the property to secure this as a no-interest loan.

Public incentives are also recommended in the short-term in order to attract developers, retailers and restaurant owners to open or build in this area, especially prior to any additional development or attraction. As an example, a good restaurant owner may benefit from some subsidy until other attractions come into the area to create additional draw and demand.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

National Marketing of Properties

Upon a search of available properties in the area, very little information available on national databases such as Co Star, Loopnet, Realtor.com or other websites real estate investors and developers use to search and review. Any property listed for sale should be done so on a national level for maximum exposure to the market. Each property should have pictures of the outside and inside on the website. Wheeling should develop its own website of potential real estate development opportunities and enable property owners to link to it. All economic development opportunities a developer or investor could take advantage of should be clearly outlined. Links to nearby economic generators and data for groups such as the medical, financial and educational institutions should be provided. Data on the demographics and the amount of the population in close proximity to Downtown Wheeling should also be made available.

Development opportunity signage should be placed on available property with the real estate broker's or owner's name and contact information. In order to attract outside investors to the area, stakeholders need to work with professional leasing, development and consultants. There are a great deal of investors on a national level who are looking to renovate/develop property. Others outside of the Wheeling area will see the opportunities that the area offers. Real estate in Downtown Wheeling is very inexpensive in comparison with other areas of the Country and in other downtowns. There needs to be a better marketing of these parcels on a national level.

SUMMARY

Below are our recommendations for Downtown Wheeling's Study Area. Keep in mind that there is no simple fix, but a menu of many different items, both short- and long-term, which need to flow together and feed off of each other in order for the Downtown area to be revitalized.

Recommendations

1. Future land use and development activities in the Phase I area should be consistent with the core identify of Wheeling, which is rich in history and historic buildings.
2. Someone needs to take a leadership role, in addition to the City government, and in collaboration with other community partners (both public and private) who can champion, market, administer funding and develop the area.
3. There should be a series of meetings to include the leaders of this Plan, community partners, bank presidents, corporate presidents and stakeholders to refine and agree on elements of the Plan, making appropriate modifications that will inevitable be necessary to optimize the Plan for public and private development that is consistent with the Plan.
4. National marketing of available opportunities and the needs that exist or are desired in

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Downtown Wheeling, together with all the potential economic drivers that exist such as the casino, theaters, schools, medical and office needs which can be drawn upon needs to be made available. National marketing of tourist opportunities with the riverboats, marinas, Oglebay Park, running and bike trails and connections to the Highlands Development should also be promoted.

Core Elements of Future Success

1. Define priorities and renovate the Capitol Music Hall, vacant buildings and outdoor open spaces in the central business district
2. Establish an iconic presence, visibility and sense of place and arrival, both at street level and upon entering the Downtown area to identify the City and the Downtown area.
3. Link the additions of theater, recreational business and student gathering facilities and new residents to one another in order to create a close-knit community within the Downtown area.
4. Animate the streetscape, storefronts and public spaces of the Downtown with specialty retail opportunities and better interface the City economic development programs and the community including bookstores, galleries, performance venues and gather spots in the public domain.
5. Identify specific roles and responsibilities within the City or by organizational leaders who will report directly to the Downtown Advisory Committee's Project Director to carry all projects forward.
6. Create additional draws to the Phase I Area to create fun and family types of entertainment and shopping experiences.
7. Pursue a Downtown housing plan which identifies the long-term feasibility of unique residential development opportunities in Downtown.

Recommendations Outside of the Scope of this Report

1. Develop a Business Improvement District
2. More development of upper floors program.
3. Create residential living Downtown.
4. With the amount of school-, gaming- and medical-type employees currently in the area, there is an opportunity for residential development of some of these buildings. This will bring in more restaurants and shops as well as making Downtown more vibrant.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

ACTION PLAN

Ref. #	Action	Priority	Coordinating Stakeholder
Cooperation			
1	Establish broader Downtown coordination and implementation	M	City of Wheeling
	a. Organize existing stakeholders into a Downtown Partnership Board to leverage funding for development, identify opportunities for in-fill/rehabilitation, market development projects and encourage private-sector interaction		
	b. Invite members of businesses and key organizations to bi-monthly Partnership meetings and to serve as liaisons between the Partnership and the public		
	c. Compile and maintain contacts of all organizations and businesses to forward semi-annual updates of Downtown news, successes and lessons		
	d. Work in cooperation with Oglebay, Wheeling Island, the Highlands and the Convention/Visitors' Bureau to actively highlight Downtown as a regional asset/destination		
2	Formalize the Downtown Partnership Board's roles and responsibilities as the "Outreach Coordinator" for promoting Downtown vitality	H	City of Wheeling
	a. Hire an Executive Director/Manager responsible for day-to-day oversight and coordination of Partnership activities and with the general public		
	b. Organize a monthly downtown business owner/tenant "News and Notes" events to discuss upcoming projects, highlight local musician talents and review status of Plan implementation		
	c. Provide semi-annual reports to City Council regarding public and private investments made, grant opportunities, Plan implementation status, etc.		
3	Adopt "music" as a theme/identity for Downtown	H	WNHAC
	a. Promote Downtown as the enclave for local and regional music and entertainment		
	b. Designate music "districts" within Downtown referencing notable styles/legends/accomplished musicians in wayfinding and other nomenclature		
	c. Rename streets within the area to reflect notable music traditions/legacies that have emerged as part of Wheeling's history.		
	d. Initiate a public program requiring "art" amenities from infill/new development; amenities could include urban plazas, art installations, architectural murals and water features with components of music		
	e. Emphasize use of local artists in designing "art" amenities		
	f. Build on success of existing festivals with multi-day music/talent events		
	g. Foster creation of a local musicians' exchange		

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Ref. #	Action	Priority	Coordinating Stakeholder
Marketing			
4	Market Downtown Wheeling to nation-wide audiences	M	RED
5	Provide prospective businesses / developers with a clear message about locating Downtown	M	City of Wheeling
	a. Prepare and distribute a simple checklist of all permits (local, State, and Federal) and submission requirements that will be needed for encouraged businesses (restaurant, studio, etc.)		
	b. Provide prospective businesses with a concise fact sheet showing the costs, costs-savings, and market information associated with Downtown (e.g. show the savings from having an existing water & sewer system, having excess parking at identified times of the day, etc.)		
	c. Provide land owners and prospective developers with information about available tax credits/abatements		
6	Deliver a consistent message to the public about Downtown revitalization	M	City of Wheeling
	a. Establish an annual "Mayor's Award" for development, in-fill or redevelopment that espouses high quality design, character and use. Provide recipients with a permanent plaque to be installed on the front of the building.		
	b. Collaborate with the Intelligencer / Wheeling News-Register to establish a regular feature about Downtown (e.g. historic buildings, historic events, new businesses, events, etc.)		
	c. Publicize successes of the Partnership on a regular basis to the public		
Future Land Use Plan and Policies			
7	Formally define objectives, criteria and parameters to promote infill, redevelopment and revitalization	H	City of Wheeling
	a. Refine inconsistencies and discrepancies in current ordinances from that which is desired to encourage redevelopment and infill throughout the Main, Market and Water Street corridors		
	b. Define/amend requirements and standards that no longer meet the needs of contemporary development		
	c. Develop incentive-based ordinance provisions which encourage incorporation of existing historic components and/or historically-oriented characteristics. Regulations should be drafted to create efficient, functional and compatible mixed use developments; incorporate high levels of amenities; and meet public objectives)		
	d. Amend the current zoning map to designate a specially planned district and associated Zones for mixed use office and entertainment generally bound by Water, Market and 10th Streets and Wheeling Creek.		
	e. Amend zoning requirements to enable upper story residential units including artists' and musicians' apartments/lofts.		

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

ACTION PLAN CONT'D

Ref. #	Action	Priority	Coordinating Stakeholder
Future Land Use Plan and Policies			
8	Develop and adopt zoning regulations and approval procedures for the specially planned districts	H	City of Wheeling
	a. Architectural guidelines should address building massing, scale, setbacks, colors and materials		
	b. Create a streamlined review process that makes redevelopment and downtown-infill more simple than new development in areas outside downtown.		
9	Designate Riverfront-oriented Zones (e.g. Music Row, Lower Main, Creekside and River Row) to establish sense of place and highlight unique land use programming features of each	H	WNHAC
	a. Address building massing, scale, setbacks, colors and materials through Design/Architectural Guidelines		
	b. Encourage mixture of uses within each Zone to promote varying peak hour parking demands		
	c. Assign parking receiving areas for each Zone		
	d. Update the City Zoning Ordinance to accommodate/promote desired land use activities in each Zone		
10	Support restoration of the Capitol Music Hall	H	WNHAC
Re-Use of Building Stock			
11	Establish a credit program for rehabilitation of older structures and for infill development	M	City of Wheeling
	a. Supplement State and Federal rehabilitation tax credits with local funds		
	b. Waive any impact fees associated with water, sewer, and / or road maintenance		
12	Create a simple zoning review process for rehabilitation and re-use of small-footprint buildings	H	City of Wheeling
13	Provide start-up capital for a "beginning musicians" studio to encourage young artists to live and work in the area and eventually set up businesses of their own.	L	RED
Transportation/Parking			
14	Develop a transportation system that gives equal weight to movement within Downtown as it does travel through downtown	L	City of Wheeling
	a. Install a clear sign system directing vehicles to key locations and parking areas.		
	b. Install permanent, viable pedestrian crossings at intersections and increase traffic signal time allotted to pedestrians.		
	c. Create a consistent, attractive way finding system directing pedestrians to parks, the waterfront, Main/Market, and historic art & music establishments		
	d. Install pedestrian oriented lighting downtown.		
15	Promote use of bicycles for recreation and transportation in and throughout all of Downtown.	L	WCVB
	a. Install bicycle routes / lanes connecting to the Riverfront Trail.		
	b. Install secure bicycle parking facilities using the local art community to design the racks along a music-oriented theme.		
	c. Make arrangements for a bicycle-commuter shower at the visitors' center / multi-modal center.		

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Ref. #	Action	Priority	Coordinating Stakeholder
Transportation/Parking			
16	Prepare a Consolidated Parking Strategy which identifies considerations and encourages higher use of existing parking structures	M	City of Wheeling
a	Assign parking receiving areas for each Zone and require formal shared parking analysis as part of development/redevelopment proposals		
17	Adjust parking pricing to encourage short term parking for visitors and accommodate long term parking for workers	H	City of Wheeling
a	Adjust price based on duration of stay or time period of the day		
18	Consider developing a Downtown resident/visitor parking program allowing visitors or permanent residents to park for free or reduced prices at peak times and/or seasonal events	L	City of Wheeling
Education			
19	Establish life-long learning programs in Downtown during weekends/evenings targeted toward Wheeling retirees and local higher education alumni	L	WNHAC
a.	Provide continuing education to seniors and retirees		
b	Base the program in a facility located within downtown		
20	Participate in the National Endowment of the Arts Mayors' Institute on City Design	L	City of Wheeling
21	Create a "new business" mentoring program, leveraging the experience of established business owners in the area.	L	RED / City of Wheeling