



CLAY COUNTY Downtown Revitalization Project Summary 2020

**Community & Economic
Development Initiative of Kentucky**

 **College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment**

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[Cover Image]

Student intern cohort conduct a visual preference survey with community members

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK) launched a three year, Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant from the POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) Initiative. This grant funded a Downtown Revitalization Project in Kentucky's eight Promise Zone counties. These eight counties are Bell, Clay, Harlan, Knox, Leslie, Letcher, Perry and Whitley. Within these eight counties, twelve downtowns signed up to be a part of this project, including Corbin and Williamsburg, Kentucky.

Within the broad scope of this downtown revitalization project, CEDIK offered a wide range of programs and technical assistance, along with networking opportunities to address the unique challenges each community faces in regards to their respective downtowns. Every community was able to select services to best meet their needs. CEDIK also facilitated quarterly convenings to allow participating communities to share ideas, strategies and information vital to successful revitalization efforts in the region. Communities that participated in this project were then able to access grant money to fund projects in their downtowns in order to successfully move from a planning phase into direct action.



Chalk and Talk participants at the 2017 Manchester Christmas Festival

WHAT IS CEDIK?

The Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK) emerged as a college level unit within the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture, Food and Environment (CAFE) in 2010. The CAFE administration recognized the need for both an internal source of professional development and instruction for students and county Extension agents, as well as an external outreach mechanism for Kentucky communities with programming and research that focused on community and economic development. CEDIK's programming has dramatically expanded to meet the evolving nature of places and economies, as well as recognizing the intricacies of economic development. This Whitley County Downtown Revitalization Project Summary is an example of this evolution, exploring how quality and intentional design and planning initiatives can create a more economically resilient downtown.

CEDIK'S GOALS

- Provide research and information that supports community and economic development.
- Build the leadership and organizational capacity of peoples and communities.
- Support community decision-making and collaborative initiatives.
- Facilitate partnerships and networks that enable communities to thrive economically, physically and socially.
- Sustain CEDIK's organizational capacity to efficiently and effectively accomplish its mission and vision.

IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWNS

Downtowns are iconic and powerful symbols for a city and often contain the most culturally relevant landmarks, distinctive features and unique neighborhoods in a city. Given that most downtowns are generally the oldest part of a city, they offer rare insights into their city's past, present and potential future.

Following de-industrialization and the growth of suburban development in the middle of the last century, many cities across the country forgot about their downtowns. During this period private investment in downtowns stagnated while it increased dramatically on the outskirts of cities. This happened throughout the western world, from Glasgow, Kentucky to Glasgow, Scotland. In Whitley County, this manifested in the suburban style of development often found adjacent to Interstate 75. Here, national big box retailers and



[Image]
Storefronts on Main St. in
downtown Manchester

fast food restaurants opened, drawing the businesses and services that were once a staple of 'going to town' out into the periphery. This reduced foot traffic and the critical mass necessary to support a vibrant and economically resilient downtown and drove future development to the car-centric periphery. Consequently, new developments featured national retail stores rather than the locally based and owned stores that tend to be staples of downtowns. While these new stores offered much needed jobs it often came at the expense of the local downtown landscape and economy.

PRIORITIZING DOWNTOWN

Downtowns are complex places. Physically they are often the oldest part of a city, making redevelopment of infrastructure and buildings challenging. Culturally, many people have memories of 'going to town' and what the downtown looked like when it was bustling, influencing their perception of what the downtown should be in the future. Additionally, downtowns are where most civic, judicial and medical services are located. Each of the elements that have historically represented the important role and function of a downtown are discussed below.

CIVIC

Civic spaces in downtowns bring people together and nurture the larger community. Civic spaces are more than the aesthetic center of the town where public events take place; they allow cultural, economic and social exchanges to occur. Consequently, downtowns that do not have a civic space tend to feel less connected to area residents. As a result, communities without civic spaces are most likely to experience decline in the various forms of community health & wellness (socially, economically, culturally, and environmentally.)

RELIGION AND CULTURE

Vibrant downtowns foster the exchange of religion and culture through various daily interactions and public activities (farmers markets, festivals, etc). As a long-term result, people are more likely to stay connected, develop broader relationships and adopt healthy practices as they integrate other people's culture and/or religion into their everyday life.

MEDICAL

A prospering city and downtown will likely attract new residents, and with the increased residents, the demand for larger hospitals and other medical services will increase to meet demand. New medical facilities to meet the demands of patients will create jobs encouraging medical professionals to move into or stay in the area.

COMMERCIAL/SHOPPING

Downtown spaces are where people are most likely going to be throughout the day. Shops will emerge in the area to meet the public's increased demand for goods and services, leading to higher profits and increased job opportunities.

ENTERTAINMENT

Downtown areas have a civic center where public activities for entertainment can occur. After many successful functions in the area, locals will brainstorm more events to have in the civic center of the downtown area.

SOCIAL

The social aspects of downtown can consist of a town hall, cafe/ diner and even parks/plazas. Some events can also create social atmospheres, like festivals. These areas bring people together for socialization.

RESIDENTIAL

As the downtown renaissance occurs in communities across the country, people will be more likely to move downtown because it is close to their place of employment and in proximity to a variety of resources. This has led to a higher demand for residential spaces in downtown areas, which is a key component of a vibrant and walkable communities

FINANCIAL

Downtowns are historically where a city's central financial hub is located, serving the community as well as local government. These financial services play a key part in the welfare and longevity of the broader community.

EMPLOYMENT

High population densities typically found in thriving downtown areas attract businesses. As a result, there will be an increased demand for workers to meet the growing needs of residents.

EDUCATIONAL

Downtown areas allow people from various backgrounds to engage with each other on a special level. For children, this creates friendly, hands-on learning opportunities to discover other cultures in their community. This socialization can also foster place identity and community connection.

[Image Right]
The gateway into the heart of
downtown Manchester

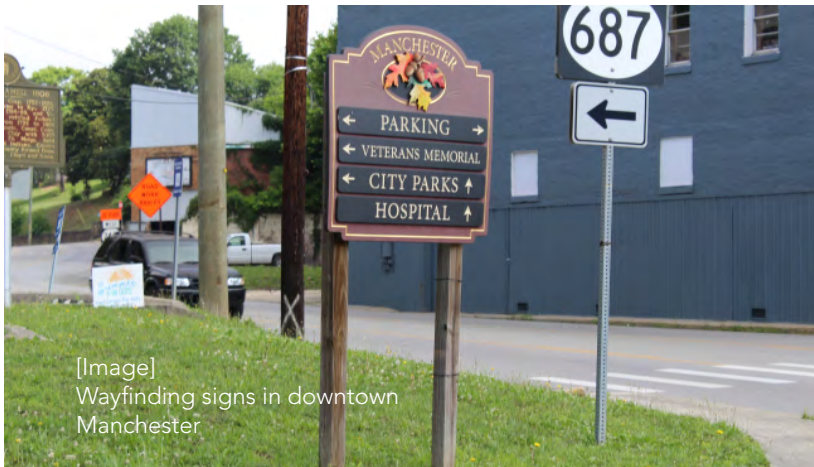
WHY INVEST IN DOWNTOWN?

Downtowns have a significant intrinsic value not easily replicated in new developments. The historic density and concentration of assets, people and businesses make downtowns natural hubs for jobs and tax revenue. Downtowns illuminate and showcase a community's culture and provide insights on its historic identity. Healthy and productive downtowns also have the opportunity to generate a high tax revenue per acre due to the mix and density of their use. Downtowns can be notably economically productive and as a result investments in downtown have the potential to generate great returns. Over time, downtowns have proven to be quite resilient because of the entanglement of built assets, ingrained memories and diversity of uses.



Downtowns are for everyone and often their vibrancy is associated with the density of small businesses and the foot traffic supporting them. Investment in revitalization can create jobs, increase property values, improve quality of life and attract new visitors and residents. Downtowns are also important investments for industrial attraction. Many sites are selected based on the quality of life for employees and a downtown’s cultural and recreational amenities - not just labor, schools, housing and infrastructure. Industries want to be located in unique and authentic places where employees can be happy and healthy.

Downtown investments are as diverse as downtowns themselves. For example, investments can be made in accessibility, public art, building facades or parks and green spaces (to suggest a few) but they all serve a unique purpose while collectively contributing to the vibrancy and value of downtown.



[Image]
Wayfinding signs in downtown Manchester

Parks and green spaces are vital in providing a good quality of life, promoting health and wellness, and contributing to economic growth even though they are rarely considered as important as infrastructure that serves community needs like water, sewage and electricity.

Downtowns are multifaceted systems and the investments we make to support revitalization efforts are increasingly broad as well. There is no singular way to measure downtown revitalization success over time. Rather, we suggest a broad set of indicators similar to the 2014 University of Illinois Extension ‘Downtown Success Indicators’ found in the appendix. This publication was used to provide insights on how to begin broadening how we measure revitalization progress. The provided indicators and metrics increase our understanding of, and measure the success of, downtown investments.



[Image]
Painted salt kettle planters are located throughout downtown Manchester

COMMUNITY DESIGN

WHAT IS COMMUNITY DESIGN?

Community design focuses on the creation and implementation of places for people. This process promotes change to the built environment from the neighborhood to regional scale, and aims to meet community needs through participatory decision-making at all levels.

One of the more innovative ways CEDIK achieves its mission is through the use of community design. The value of design and planning is often overlooked during economic development and revitalization efforts, especially in rural communities. This project seeks to challenge that. These efforts began in 2012, with the hiring of a faculty member in the Department of Landscape Architecture (UKLA) who partners with CEDIK through the Cooperative Extension Services. Deploying these efforts through Cooperative Extension, CEDIK has developed a library of publications centered around spatial design and planning elements for communities to learn from and incorporate themselves. These are available through the CEDIK website (<https://cedik.ca.uky.edu/>).

The following section presents a summary of community design efforts undertaken as part of the Downtown Revitalization Project.

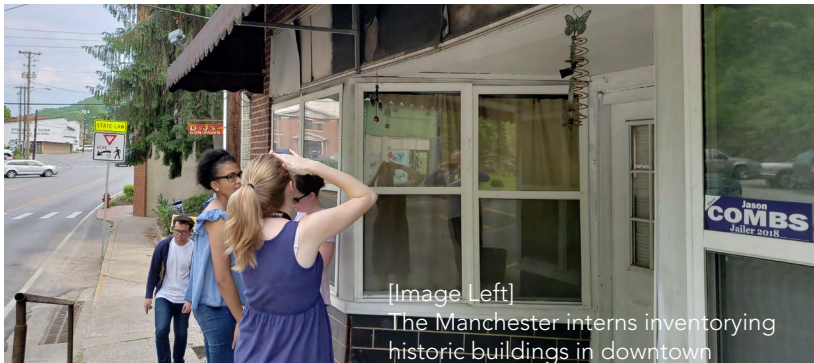


Local residents at a community engagement event in Manchester

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN FOR MANCHESTER

BACKGROUND

The Downtown Plan for Manchester created a foundation for future revitalization efforts by inventorying, analyzing and making recommendations for the City of Manchester to aid in prioritizing future investments. The recommendations developed during this project helped the city capitalize on what sets it apart from its peers in eastern Kentucky, from its founding as a salt mining community in the heart of Appalachian coal county, to its warped street grid that gives the perception of more triangles than squares. The plan was developed by a multi-disciplinary intern cohort embedded in Manchester over the summer of 2018, led by CEDIK's Community Design Program Manager. While working from a pop-up design studio in a downtown storefront, the interns were able to interact with residents and visitors to gather input about the town's future development. This ultimately led to presenting a fresh perspective to the local project partners which will allow them to see their downtown through a new lens.



[Image Left]
The Manchester interns inventorying historic buildings in downtown

THE PROCESS

Throughout the development of this plan, outreach and engagement efforts have been centered as cornerstones of the project to ensure that proposals are grounded in the community's interests. Each Thursday for thirteen weeks the intern cohort set up a mobile design studio in downtown Manchester in an effort to truly embed themselves into the community. This allowed them to gather as much input as possible, through both personal experience and community engagement, providing significant insight on the findings in this plan. The following process was used to develop this plan:

Inventory

- What do we need to know about downtown Manchester?
- What are the residents' thoughts and feelings about the potential of downtown?
- How do people experience downtown?
- What are the community's values regarding their built environment?
- What are the main concerns residents have about downtown?

Analysis

- Using the information gathered, what does it all mean?
- Through executing a visual preference survey, what are the community's preferred styles when it comes to the downtown, such as buildings, parks and benches?
- Looking at the residents' views of downtown, is the reality of the downtown different than the perception?

Findings

- What are the realities of downtown?
- How is the perception of downtown different than the reality?
- What are the opportunities to address the challenges?

Recommendations

- What efforts can be undertaken to address the findings?
- What is the range of potential projects that could be undertaken?
- How can projects be structured to be financially feasible and not reliant on the city to execute them?



[Image]
Touring
downtown
buildings with
local partners



[Image]
Talking through
findings with
the local State
Representative

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN FOR MANCHESTER OUTLINE

The ultimate goal of this plan is to act as a catalyst and lay the groundwork for future revitalization efforts in Manchester. This plan was outlined in the following chapters:

Chapter 1: The Purpose and Introduction

- Identified how this plan came about, the process that was undertaken, historical context and what it sought to accomplish.

Chapter 2: The Importance of Downtown

- Emphasized the economic, cultural and social importance of the downtown and why it is important to prioritize it as the center of future revitalization efforts.

Chapter 3: Opportunities and Challenges

- Explored the process employed to gather information, what that information told us and why it is important.

Chapter 4: Current Conditions

- Covered where downtown Manchester is today, centering around the pedestrian experience, the character of the built environment and how downtown buildings are currently used.

Chapter 5: Actions and Recommendations

- Featured the findings and a list of recommendations and action items that can be implemented to lay the groundwork for future revitalization efforts.

Chapter 6: Appendix

- Featured definitions of the key language and phrases used, as well as a menu of projects within a variety of budgets that can be implemented by local stakeholders.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There is no better way to learn about a community than to be immersed in it, and this summer program was designed with this intention in mind. Taking place from the beginning of May through the end of July, the intern cohort established themselves in Manchester. Working from a mobile design studio set up at The Makery, 'open office hours' were set each Thursday at noon for local stakeholders and residents to come in and discuss their views of downtown. The intent of this was to learn as much about the community as possible with constant local feedback.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

The first step in the engagement efforts was to raise awareness about this downtown plan to encourage participation and crowdsource information on the plan's focus areas in downtown Manchester. This led to invitations from local leaders and organizations present topics addressed in the downtown plan and what it seeks to accomplish. Presentations were shared with the Clay County Tourism Commission, the Chamber of Commerce and Stay in Clay. These presentations were successful in raising awareness and support that carried on throughout the plan's implementation.

BROAD ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The weekly mobile design studio in downtown Manchester was the cornerstone of our engagement process. Building upon this consistent presence in downtown Manchester we employed opportunities at Manchester's Main Street Market in June, 2018. At this event we brought two complimentary opportunities for engagement: the Chalk and Talk and a Visual Preference Study. Each of these gathered unique, yet complimentary findings.

CHALK AND TALK

CEDIK utilized the Chalk and Talk in Manchester twice; the first, at the Old Time Christmas Festival in December 2017, and the second, during the Main St. Market where the Visual Preference survey was undertaken. The Old Time Christmas Festival provided an extensive amount of comments, including the following main themes came from distilling the comments.

- Downtown Retail
- Downtown Amenities
- Community Pride
- Youth Engagement
- Community Expression (Arts)

Chalk and Talk Summary

Through each of these themes people expressed interest in a more engaged and active downtown. The desire for an active downtown extended beyond retail destinations to a downtown that they can engage with. Downtown Manchester is currently a static environment with limited places to sit and enjoy scenery or engage with art. Simple elements like benches and public art bring people downtown and can help establish it as a regional destination.

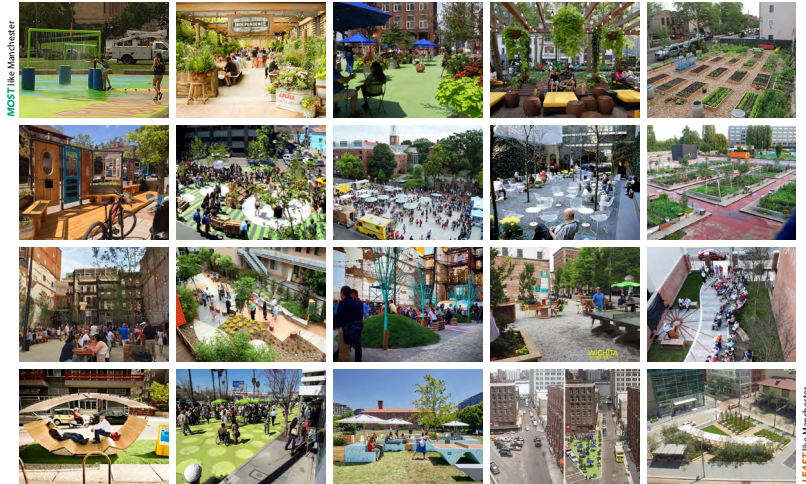


VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

During the Main St. Market event, each intern selected a group of themed community design photos, based on their individual backgrounds. These photos represented a wide range of options within these themes, such as parks ranging from pop-up parklets to large scale urban plazas. Each photo was chosen because of its similarity of an existing opportunity in downtown Manchester. Using up to twenty photos, interns placed them on a table with Post-its beneath each photo. On these Post-its, participants would write a check mark if the photo was *most like* Manchester or an 'X' mark if was *least like* Manchester. There were over three dozen participants representing a broad range of backgrounds, ages and interests. Each photo's response was tallied and each theme's photos were categorized based on their popularity with participants.

These responses directly influenced our recommendations. Visual preferences for places, building, storefronts, placemaking and downtown furnishings were noted as follows:

Places - Main St. Market Engagement Findings
Manchester, KY



Placemaking

1. The inclusion of sound in downtown through the use of various installations was not generally supported by participants.
2. There was strong interest in the idea of interactive elements in downtown that provide an experience, such as see saws or kinetic installations.
3. The idea of painted and artistic crosswalks was strongly supported, especially the two crosswalks that have quilt and swinging bridge inspired designs. Modern designs were strongly rejected.
4. Painted crosswalks and intersections were supported as a way to include color and an authentic feel to downtown Manchester.
5. Participants strongly supported temporary installations in downtown in effort to try projects out.

The images selected by participants indicated a strong interest in having a more engaging and experiential downtown.

Public Spaces

1. An interactive water feature was a highly desired amenity to have in downtown from participants of all ages.
2. Areas with adequate shade were well received and desired.
3. The desire to use vegetation for education and aesthetic qualities.
4. Areas for events and to socialize were sought for people to spend leisurely time in downtown.
5. Participants supported making use of underutilized areas to activate the downtown and provide additional things for people to do.

Participants strongly favored more intimate, lush spaces than large plazas. These spaces provided areas to both socialize and be active.

DOWNTOWN INVENTORY

The elements that make a community unique are not always easy to quantify. Visually, it is possible to note that Manchester's catalog of stone buildings is unique to the city and fundamental to the city's architectural heritage. Intangibly, walking down Richmond Rd. through downtown is not a welcoming experience. The design elements that contribute to how a place makes us feel should be explored and evaluated.

This section explored the range of elements that contributes to downtown Manchester as a 'place'. This includes the experience of entering downtown, the elements that make downtown aesthetically unique and how the downtown is currently being used.

Specifically, this inventory focused on three primary categories:

- Public realm infrastructure (vehicular and pedestrian)
- Buildings (architectural character and how downtown buildings are currently used)
- Public spaces (how people use downtown)

12 PM

- High Pedestrian Activity
(-10 Pedestrians)
- Medium Pedestrian Activity
(4-6 Pedestrians)
- Low Pedestrian Activity
(-3 Pedestrians)



These elements were identified as some of the most important to focus on in downtown Manchester, especially in terms of prioritizing future investments.

EXAMPLES OF INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS MAPS

Topography and Walkability

- Located deep in the Appalachian Mountains, it is no surprise that the mountain topography has played an important role in the development of downtown Manchester and continues to influence how the city is experienced today.

Vehicular Circulation Levels

- The vehicular circulation levels of downtown Manchester were studied in an effort to understand the daily vehicles traveled data obtained from the Kentucky Department of Transportation. This allowed for specific understanding of when specifically and where the heaviest vehicle traffic occurs in downtown Manchester. These observations were undertaken on weekdays.

Downtown Parking Overview

- With the knowledge that parking is a common concern in downtown Manchester, this plan evaluates the realities of parking to identify what the challenges and opportunities are. This centered on several key questions:
 - Where are the parking spaces?
 - Who owns them (are they public, private or on-street?)
 - How are they used throughout the day?
 - What percentage of the parking spaces are typically utilized at different times throughout the day?

[Image Left]
Pedestrian observation map showing a heat map of pedestrians at noon

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDED INVESTMENT FOCUS AREAS

Through the research and filters previously outlined in the plan, three different zones have been identified in terms of their overall potential ability to support economic revitalization in downtown Manchester: high, medium and low.

Primary Focus Area - High

- This area has the primary concentration of retail businesses in downtown and has the highest visibility in downtown. Investments here have the highest likelihood for supporting downtown revitalization and is where minimal investment can result in the most impactful outcomes.

Primary Focus Area - Medium

- Investments in this area are important and will have an impact. However, for a number of reasons, including the loss of historic character due to demolished buildings and the complicated road network, this area is relatively disjointed and would require longer-term and significant investments in both the road network and the surrounding buildings for a significant impact to be felt.

Primary Focus Area - Low

- These areas are disconnected from the downtown core and are generally home to businesses that don't require foot traffic to be successful.

[Bottom Left Image]
Proposed downtown social space at the gateway into downtown Manchester

[Bottom Right Image]
Rendering of proposed facade improvements to the Mural Building

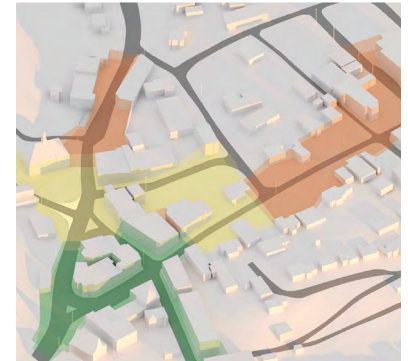
STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

This diagram shows proposed pedestrian improvements along KY 421 in the heart of downtown Manchester. These include traffic calming measures and new pedestrian facilities.



RECOMMENDED INVESTMENT ZONES

The three areas illustrate where investments are likely to have the greatest impact on downtown revitalization. Bridge St., Main St. and KY 421 is the core commercial area in Manchester and where investments should be prioritized.

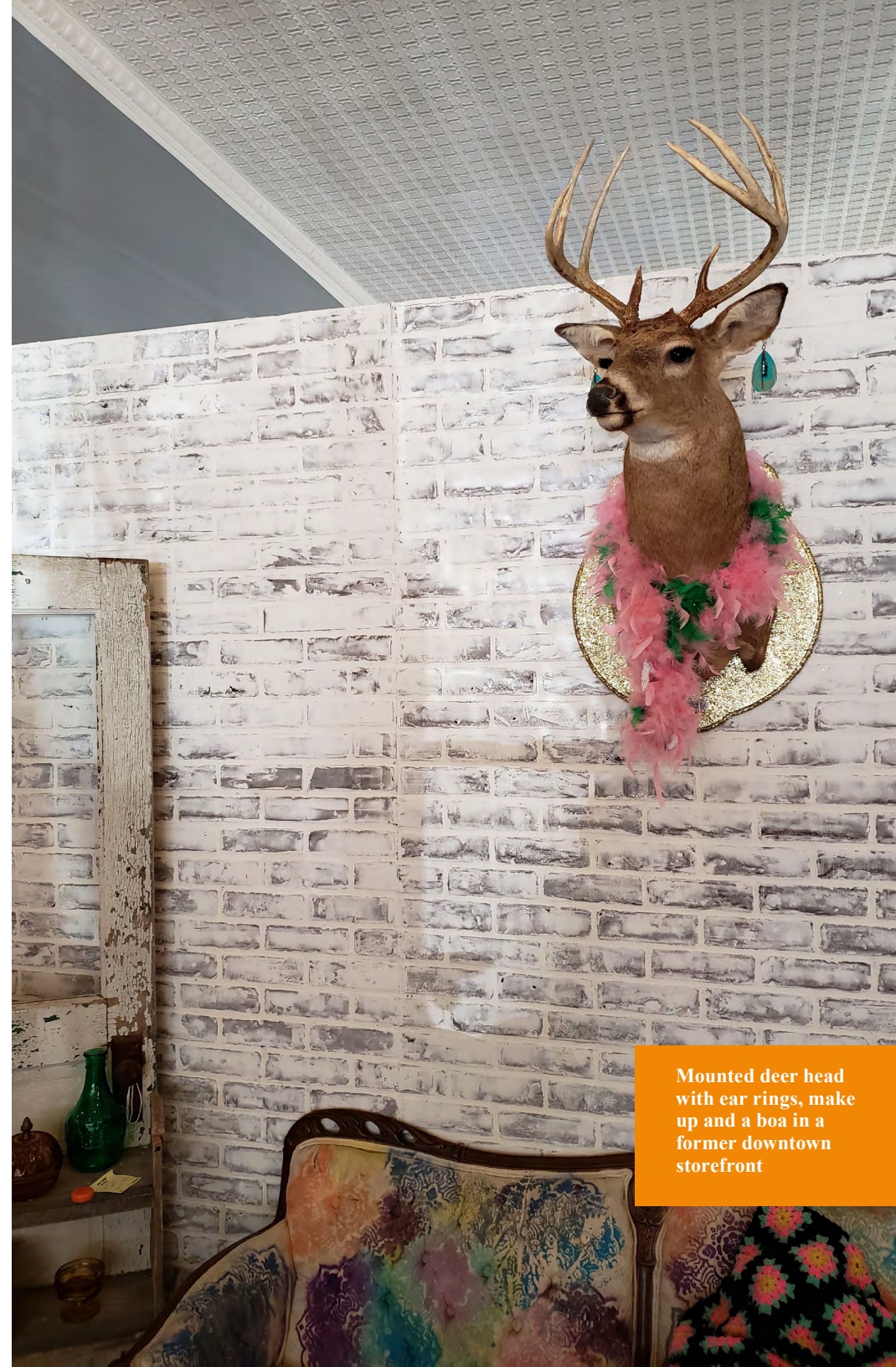


FIRST IMPRESSIONS

WHAT IS FIRST IMPRESSIONS?

First Impressions is a structured assessment program that enables communities to learn about the first impression they convey to outsiders. It offers a fresh perspective on the appearance, services and infrastructure of each community. Volunteer teams undertake unannounced, one-day visits, record their observations, and give constructive feedback to the community. Their photos and responses are then compiled and presented back to the community by a CEDIK representative. In addition, the program offers suggestions and resources to address the areas identified for potential improvement. The knowledge gained through this program is intended to serve as a basis for community action.

First Impressions was developed by Andy Lewis, University of Wisconsin Extension Associate Professor, and James Schneider, Grant County (WI) Economic Development Director. CEDIK has adapted the First Impressions Program to meet the needs of Kentucky communities.



Mounted deer head with ear rings, make up and a boa in a former downtown storefront

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OVERVIEW

This program coordinates anonymous visits to the community by professionals in community and economic development, small business owners, community leaders and more, depending upon the specific community assessment needs. Analysis includes detailed feedback from internet search engines, social media platforms and in-person experiences. Assessors document their experience and interactions with community members.

PROCESS

Visits to Clay County were conducted by 11 assessors on both weekdays and weekends to capture a variety of activity within the community. The Clay First Impressions assessors consisted of small business owners, young professionals, traveling retirees, and community development professionals. Overall, conditions were favorable for visiting and exploring the roads, small communities, parks and businesses within Clay County. While quotations in this report should not be considered exhaustive, they do provide a valuable snapshot of a visitor's perspective in Clay County from a variety of ages, life experiences and interests.



[Image]
Artistic signage incorporated into railings in downtown Hyden

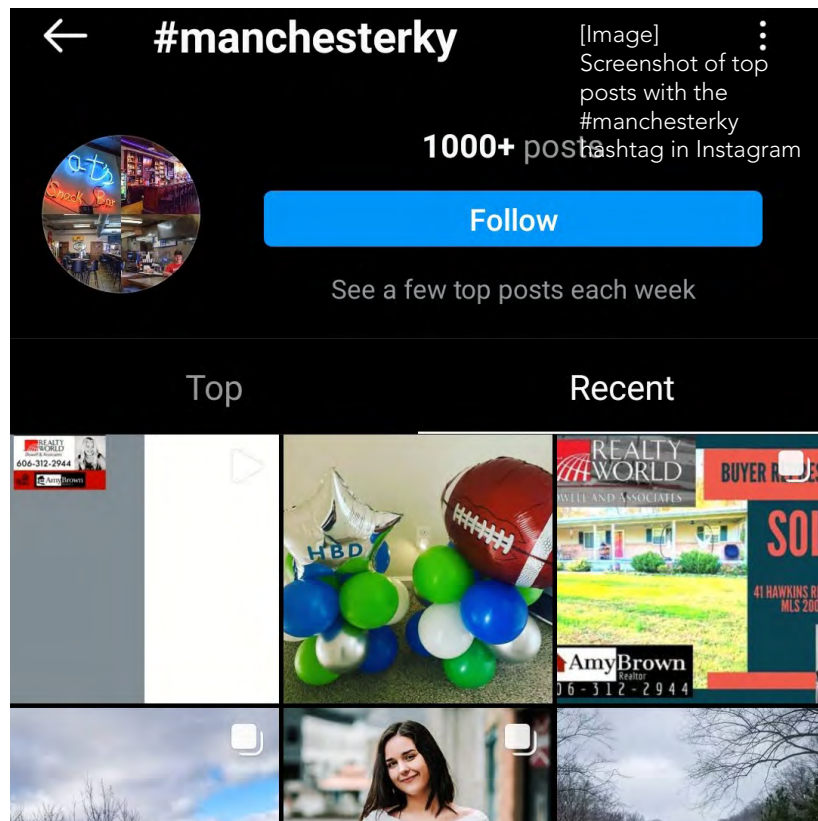
WEB PRESENCE

Prior to visiting Manchester, assessors researched the community on the internet: visited official and non-official sites from search engines, restaurant and hotel reviews, and even school and media outlets.

Overall, assessor impressions of the web presence were favorable. Several assessors noted that there were a few websites that came up in the search results. WeLoveManchester.com, ClayCountyKY.org, CityOfManchesterKentucky.com and StayInClay.org are all hits on search engines, but not usually high on results lists. The variety of sites confused assessors, though they did report that the sites had some information useful for planning their trips. Assessors felt the layouts were clunky and could be better organized to guide them through their trip. The Manchester City Guide on manchesterky.com had listings of many organizations, clubs and businesses in Manchester, which is helpful to visitors and locals. Many enjoyed the City of Manchester website, a reviewer wrote "It includes nice photos of natural environments and does a very nice job promoting the city and surrounding area."

One reviewer noted that since local sites did not appear at the top of the search, negative news coverage from national outlets were prevalent. One wrote, "Maybe the community could take control of their narrative by making other, more relevant articles and information more easily available to internet searchers." Curating content that is relevant to Manchester would increase and better the town's web presence. Some assessors experienced difficulty with broken links and clunky layout while navigating web pages on mobile devices and offered suggestions for improvement. They also noted that while the webpages were attractive, some had out-of-date event tabs so they were unable to easily see updated calendars for community events.

Assessors also analyzed Tripadvisor, Urbanspoon and Yelp reviews to identify strengths and weaknesses. All assessors reported planning their trip and selecting locations to visit based on reviews on these sites. Pat's Snack Bar was listed more than once. One volunteer reported, "This place should also be advertised all over the place in town! It was right in downtown and easy to find." Unfortunately, some businesses that volunteers hoped to visit were closed.



On social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, reviewers had largely varied responses. Some observed high traffic for certain organizations on certain platforms. The hashtag #ManchesterKY had positive posts. Others felt social media presence could improve considerably and encouraged the community to make note of pages that are outdated and recommended for page owners to increase activity to improve presence. For example, a volunteer wrote, "The newspaper has a strong media presence." Reviewers also observed that many small businesses were not adequately represented on social media, suggesting opportunity for community social media trainings to support business owners.

COMMUNITY VISITS

After completing their pre-visit research, the teams began their time in Manchester by doing a Quick Pass Impression: driving through the community quickly without stopping to create an instinctual impression without focusing too much on detail.

During the Quick Pass, reviewers noted the limited signage for Manchester, many not noticing the small Welcome sign until a later drive through of downtown. However, they did note the character of downtown and appreciated the unique buildings located downtown. A reviewer wrote, "It really felt like a unique little downtown and I liked that it didn't feel like just any other small town." More than one noted that the shape and flow of downtown was special to Manchester. More signage was a common suggestion.

After completing the Quick Pass, assessors returned to locations that caught their attention and began detailed exploration and documentation of the community. Highlights from these categories include the interest sparked by the salt kettle planters, the Heritage Pavilion and murals located throughout Manchester. Others noted

the beauty of Rawlings/Stinson Park and the lovely riverside. All visitors noted the availability and ease of parking in all the cities. They valued the free public parking lots, and were able to navigate themselves with thorough signage. But many struggled navigating the city, and it didn't feel very walkable to visitors, with many observing that there was little pedestrian traffic and few crosswalks.

Assessors struggled to locate the Visitor's Center, so volunteers had to find information elsewhere. Some stumbled upon City Hall "by accident" and struggled to find information there. Improved signage at this location could be beneficial. Visitors hoped to visit the swinging bridges, but many reported avoiding the area due to perceived safety concerns. There was a disconnect concerning housing in downtown, as some storefronts seem to be used as makeshift housing. The majority of community engagement seemed to stem from the religious entities in Manchester.

Visitors spent most of their time at the local restaurants and shops. More than one reported their willingness to return to Manchester for attractions, such as Pat's Snack Bar and The Makery. The "Main Street Market" area or the "Manchester Arts District" was popular with visitors, and many were both intrigued and impressed by the Manchester Music Festival. One comment read, "The Manchester Music Festival is free to everyone and offers a great sense of community. The offering of food, music, games and entertainment serves the greater good of bringing the community together for a good cause." Visitors were very impressed with the customer service at Pat's and were eager to return. The pride in heritage is obvious in Manchester. A volunteer wrote that Manchester's identity can be defined as "A hardworking Appalachian community whose roots are buried deep in salt works, heritage and features beautiful landscapes."

After several hours exploring Clay County, assessors documented their Lasting Impressions on assets, challenges and opportunities they envision for the community, and made recommendations for further appeal to visitors that travel to the area.

[Image Top]
Wayfinding signs on
the Hal Rogers Parkway

[Image Bottom]
Northern entry into
Manchester from the
Correctional Facility



FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback compiled from visits to Clay County, the following suggestions were recommended for future opportunities:

Support Small Business Web Presence Development

- Assessors noticed quality websites and favorable presence for county and city-led sites, but noted a disconnect for individual businesses. Supporting individual business web development by offering small business trainings, workshops and resources will improve the overall web presence of the county.

Improve Visual Signage and Navigational Wayfinding

- Visitors requested increased signage and wayfinding. They had difficulty easily finding available hiking trails, even though Manchester is a trail town. They also recommended improved signage for the Visitors' Center, pedestrian signs for crosswalks, repairing signage at Salt Works and increased navigational wayfinding to help visitors find their way through town.

Improve Riverwalk and Swinging Bridge Area

- Visitors were excited about the history of swinging bridges from their research online, but could not easily find the swinging bridges. Those who did find them felt the area was not welcoming to visitors. The development of a strategic plan for the improvement of this area via organized volunteer cleanups and other investments will help capitalize on this asset.

[Image]
Sign at the swinging bridge at the end of Bridge St.

SUMMARY OF EFFORTS

After compiling the this information into a full-length report, a CEDIK representative presented the findings to Clay County stakeholders in an open community forum in October of 2018. Stakeholders in attendance included community leaders, small business owners and volunteer organizers.

After reviewing the Community Assessment Report, attendees then participated in a CEDIK facilitated community forum to identify action items and priorities to act upon, based on the information. Several subsequent projects in the Downtown Revitalization Efforts for Clay County were inspired by the groundwork laid through feedback and collaboration gained from the First Impressions Community Assessment.



STAKEHOLDER NETWORKING

COMING TOGETHER

Downtown revitalization takes more than a single person's best intentions. It requires a collective effort involving many people working towards mutual goals. More times than not, the process starts with a single person or organization investing their time and attempting to address an issue they've identified as the most important. Any process can begin with an individual vision for change, but cultivating shared ownership and positive results requires a deeper commitment and understanding of the connections between the community's assets, challenges and vision for the future. This deep connection and understanding is at the heart of downtown stakeholder networking.



**View heading
into Clay County
along the Hal
Rogers Parkway**

DOWNTOWN STAKEHOLDER TEAM

Each participating community in the Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization project was led by a local stakeholder team representing active organizations and the downtown's diverse constituency. The varying perspectives of team members resulted in more diverse solutions being drawn upon. Teams were composed of representatives from local government, chambers of commerce, Main Street organizations, local business owners, tourism organizations, downtown managers/staff, historical societies, county extension agents, community foundations, health departments, local colleges, financial institutions and issues focused nonprofits.

Quarterly convenings provided a dedicated space and time for downtown stakeholders to come together to share, collaborate and inspire each other. These rotating meetings were hosted in different communities as a way to showcase local efforts and bring attention to the stakeholder's collective and shared interests. Convenings often included concurrent sessions providing technical assistance on topics like walkability, hosting film productions, historic preservation, data analysis/collection (intercept survey methods), grant writing and more, but also provided dedicated space for local updates and sharing. Convenings included panels composed of local partners, spotlight presentations on local efforts and exercises aimed at illuminating shared regional assets and visions. These networking opportunities facilitated the cross sector pollination of ideas and in many cases led to communities adopting similar programs they heard others share. For example, nearly every community was inspired by Pineville's local development incentive programs, Harlan's inventory and reinvestment program for vacant or underutilized buildings and Williamsburg's inspiring story of the River Fog Park enhancements and subsequent local festival.

Downtown stakeholders in Manchester were not able to host a quarterly convening on site after the March 2020 gathering scheduled to take place in Manchester was canceled because of COVID-19 related restrictions. This last scheduled convening was designed to showcase Manchester and serve as the backdrop for a hands-on parking inventory training and walking tour. Even though Clay County didn't get the opportunity to host a convening on site, their stakeholder's participation in regional convenings over the course of the project helped create relationships within the network that have been critical to implementing projects. For example, contacts and relationships developed with other downtown stakeholders, specifically in Corbin, KY, made navigating the often confusing landscape of securing permits for wayfinding signage much easier.



DOWNTOWN INVESTMENTS

ABOUT

Participating Promise Zone downtown stakeholder teams that utilized available programing like the First Impressions Program, Business Retention and Expansion Program and community design planning were eligible to apply for funding to implement at least one strategy from their downtown revitalization engagement. Communities accessed two cycles of grant funding to support implementation.

The first was a mini grant to initiate efforts often illuminated by the First Impressions report. These early mini grants acted as catalytic projects providing pathways for broader community engagement and collaboration. Stakeholder teams accessed larger implementation grants as more programs were deployed, leading to a more firm vision of the necessary strategies required to move revitalization efforts forward. All applications were reviewed by a regional committee composed of individuals from CEDIK, Kentucky Main Street Program and the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky.

The Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky executed agreements with each community and provided fiduciary responsibility.



Bridge Street
swinging bridge
and the Dry Goods
Store in downtown
Manchester

PUBLIC – PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The reliance on public funds to support long-term economic development is not a winning strategy and we considered these POWER funds as an effort to re-energize long term solutions in the region. Part of our overall strategy is to amplify the impacts of public-private partnerships and local foundations. The Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky, based in Hazard, Kentucky has been instrumental in providing philanthropic leadership throughout the region. In addition to supporting the creation of a number of affiliated funds, they have continued to build local capacity and facilitate community collaborations and charitable giving.

One recent example of this collaborative capacity and in partnership with the Kentucky Promise Zone coordinator, is the new, regional community fund called the Upper Cumberland Community Foundation (UCCF). UCCF aims to transform eastern Kentucky through charitable giving, community involvement and strategic partnerships by investing in community assets throughout Kentucky's Upper Cumberland counties of Bell, Clay, Knox and Whitley. Local philanthropic organizations like the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky and its affiliated funds like the UCCF will continue to play an important role fostering local collaborations to address place based community and economic development challenges.

[Image]
The Downtown Plan for Manchester
being presented for adoption to city
commissioners

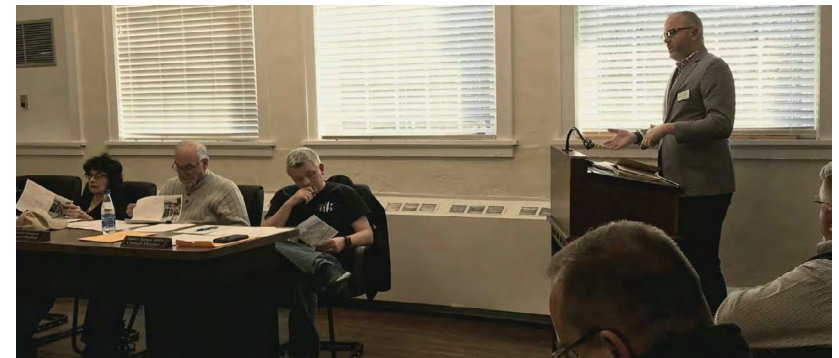
MINI GRANTS - MANCHESTER

The City of Manchester received a mini grant on behalf of their downtown working group comprised of local government officials, Stay in Clay members, Department of Transportation, local business owners and the Cumberland Valley District Health Department to address traffic calming measures and install a new pocket park. This mini grant aims to make downtown Manchester a safer place to walk, shop and experience.

OUTCOMES

Downtown Plan Adoption

- The processes leading up to the plan began as a student intern project in the summer of 2018 and culminated with an award winning plan. In 2019 the Downtown Plan for Manchester won two awards: Achievement in Planning in a Small Jurisdiction from the Kentucky Chapter of the American Planning Association, and a student award from the Kentucky Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.



- A Place for People: The Downtown Plan for Manchester was adopted by the Manchester City Council at their March 2019 council meeting. This new downtown revitalization plan guides future strategies, efforts and investments in downtown Manchester. Now, however, the document represents a new city prioritization of downtown revitalization. This is Manchester's their first downtown revitalization plan.

Improve Pedestrian Accommodations and Walkability

- A parklet that was inspired by the newly adopted downtown plan was completed later in the summer of 2019. This new downtown social space which features benches and other pedestrian accommodations is installed near the entryway to downtown, creating a small place for people on Main Street. Located within a short walk to nearby shopping, banking, restaurants and a river side walking trail, the location is central to many uses. New trash receptacles were also installed in strategic locations to help decrease the presence of litter that was noted in the First Impressions report.
- The images to the right are of the social space, the first in downtown Manchester, that was installed as part of the mini-grant.



IMPLEMENTATION GRANT - MANCHESTER

Building Upon Our Strengths was a project of the City of Manchester, Manchester Tourism Commission, Healthy Clay, Stay in Clay, downtown Business owners, Project Hope, First National Bank of Manchester, Clay County Fiscal Court, Advent Health Manchester, Downtown Proud working group, Clay County Historical Society, Clay County Detention Center, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Chamber of Commerce and Cumberland Valley District Health Department to improve the safety and aesthetics of downtown Manchester that includes new entryway signage, traffic calming measures, wayfinding, historic murals and new investments in litter prevention and cleanup.

OUTCOMES

Improve Vehicle Circulation Patterns in Downtown Manchester

- The City of Manchester in partnership with the local Transportation Department, partnered to improve the lane striping at the entryway to downtown. Designated parking areas at the northwest corner of Richmond Rd. and Main St. have also been striped. This has improved visibility as drivers enter the intersection, and in conjunction with new entry way and wayfinding signage, will help drivers navigate downtown Manchester safer and more efficiently.

Design a Sense of Place, Zoning and Code Enforcement

- In partnership with the Clay County Historical Society eight buildings have new mural-like heat treated vinyl banners installed on them creating a historical walking tour. Each banner hosts a unique QR code that leads to web pages dedicated to Manchester's history and featured buildings.. This effort was originally envisioned as a way to showcase empty buildings to

potential investors, and it still serves that purpose, but the value and response received by the public about the historic imagery overshadows the marketing element, to date.

- The digitization of current zoning, codes and incentives packages online made them more accessible and supports planned enforcement strategies. COVID-19 interrupted planned convenings with stakeholders (business owners, residents, elected officials, non-profits and building owners) to discuss current ordinances and were later organized as one-on-one conversations. Trainings for business and building owners will resume when possible.
- A seasonal recreation groundskeeper position was created and filled. This grounds keeper was responsible for general upkeep and maintenance of public areas with a focus on keeping them free of litter. Sites of focus included the River Trail, Salt Works Village and Rawlins and Stinson Park. In collaboration with Volunteers of America, city employees, Stay in Clay and the Downtown Group downtown sidewalks and buildings were pressure washed. Nearly every available building in downtown was cleaned in some form or fashion. The visual impact was so dramatic and the public response so positive that the summer groundskeeping position was extended into the fall. Adding to the sense of place, a new tourism branding strategy was developed and marketing materials are being developed for wider distribution.

PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

ABOUT

Over the course of the project (2017-20) local stakeholders, partners, technical assistance providers and communities at large have engaged in and with their downtowns in new ways. We have learned from each other, built collaborative partnerships, explored other downtowns, successfully developed and implemented projects, ignited new ideas, developed new skills, built the skills of others and endured a global pandemic together. However, these accomplishments only represent a launch point for more sustained downtown revitalization efforts in the future. The collective lessons learned, established practices and challenges illuminated can provide the foundation for future downtown revitalization efforts.



Classic
mountain scene
in south eastern
Kentucky

LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

Downtown revitalization takes more than a single person's best intentions and requires a collective effort working towards mutual goals. The Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization Project has shown that local leadership, shared ownership, and broad capacity create positive results but requires a deep commitment and understanding between downtown stakeholders, and about community assets, challenges, and visions for the future.

Understandably, every community is different in regards to skills, abilities, interests, assets and existing investments in downtown revitalization. With so much occupying the development landscape it is understandable why this may be the case. As such, the timeline and delivery of technical assistance programs was not linear or prescriptive but rather delivered as requested, allowing community stakeholders to commit to only what they felt was feasible and impactful. For example, not every community committed to the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program because it required a substantial time commitment. As a result, communities may have missed out on the relationship building with local business owners noted as an unexpected outcome by communities that participated in the BRE program. Local capacity is foundational to future efforts.

Communities with dedicated, paid staff, responsible for downtown revitalization efforts (however narrow or broadly defined) often demonstrated greater overall capacity. A critical piece for many downtown teams in the Promise Zone was a paid staff member to drive, coordinate and provide leadership for the community's downtown revitalization process. Practices often associated with paid downtown coordinators that provide capacity to development efforts were observed:

- Project coordination and acting as liaison between multiple parties.
- Data collection to measure and document project impacts.
- Promotion of downtown activities, opportunities, programs and events.
- Often tasked with grant writing and administration.
- If affiliated with the Kentucky Main Street, the main street manager has programmatic commitment to support enhanced urban design & placemaking efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Work to create or develop a dedicated funding source for a paid staff member devoted to supporting coordination and providing local leadership and continuity to downtown revitalization efforts.
2. Continue to seek out opportunities to build the skills, abilities and leadership capacity of elected officials, community volunteers, business owners and downtown stakeholders to address current and future challenges.



[Image]
Attendees at the regional convening
in Harlan

LOCAL FOUNDATIONS AND PHILANTHROPIC CAPACITY

At the onset of the pandemic, some of the first organizational responses emerged from local nonprofits and philanthropic organizations. In the Kentucky Promise Zone, the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky took a leadership role, in partnership with the Appalachian Impact Fund, CEDIK and Invest 606 to create the Eastern Kentucky Downtown Business Stimulus Fund. This fund leveraged existing assets, relationships and donations to respond directly to local businesses. Communities with existing foundations also created their own hyper-local responses to support businesses, often taking the shape of a stimulus fund or mini grant program.

The Eastern Kentucky Downtown Business Stimulus Fund provided 153 grants, ranging from \$600 to \$3000. In total, \$385,400 went to business owners (60% female) in 23 counties representing a mix of restaurants, unique retail, attractions, personal services and other businesses active in the broader downtown and tourism ecosystem. The fund received over 550 applications requesting more than \$1.5 million dollars.

Communities with existing local philanthropic leadership, capacity and available assets accessed financial support more quickly than communities without existing relationships with philanthropic organizations. Communities without this specialized capacity were relegated to navigate the often confusing assortment of federal assistance programs and loan products available for COVID-19 relief.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Continue developing local (or regional) philanthropic programs or organizations to build local knowledge, leadership, capacity and interests to serve needs with local giving and investment.

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

The arc of this project has shown that our ability to come together and work towards revitalizing our downtowns is often built upon relationships – both existing and those we build. The Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization Project has helped build and establish new relationships within downtowns, counties and among the region. At the heart of the project was an intentional effort to create a regional network of stakeholders using a series of facilitated convenings to learn together, collaborate on efforts, share ideas and support each other's efforts. Even public policies were shared among the network inspiring their implementation in other communities. For example, communities have learned about and later adopted downtown business development incentive programs and nuisance code enforcement updates to address underutilized, vacant, abandoned or dangerous properties as well as litter. The relationships and information shared has inspired and supported a number of innovative regional downtown revitalization strategies.

At quarterly convenings, attendees cultivated space for skills building (team and personal). Stakeholders shared, more often than not, that the networking opportunities and relationship building components that took place during the convenings were most impactful. In focus group conversations with downtown stakeholders, many noted the convenings as among the most impactful elements outside of the First Impressions Program and community design projects.

These networking opportunities facilitated pollination of ideas and in many cases led communities to adapting similar programs or policies they heard shared by others. Stakeholders shared they now feel more comfortable speaking in public as a result of presenting to the regional network and providing updates and that they felt

valued being asked to share insights with other communities. Some shared they were empowered to learn there were mutual challenges faced in other communities ultimately helping them solve issues together, while others shared a new commitment to regionalism and collaboration within their own counties and in the region at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to embrace regional efforts, collaborations and shared ownership (within counties and the region) focusing on mutual interests, assets and capacity to address shared challenges.
2. Seek out opportunities to join regional networks, collaborations or initiatives that provide relationship building opportunities with other stakeholders seeking solutions to shared challenges.

COVID-19

The most dramatic and impactful issue encountered during this project revolves around the unprecedented COVID-19 global health pandemic. The challenges have been substantial, however what we have learned about ourselves and our communities has also been substantial. We have been forced to confront our values and reevaluate priorities. As we consider what is next after the pandemic it is important to reflect on the impacts and observations from this time. For some these impacts may have been mere inconveniences and for others life altering. It has meant working virtually from home, not working at all, travel and crowd restrictions, canceled events and community engagement opportunities, supply chain disruptions, economic uncertainty, job insecurity, increased commitments at home with youth or elders, virtual learning, shifting shopping patterns and dealing with the reality of death and losses in our families and communities. The last year has been incredibly taxing on individuals, families, communities and society.

BROADBAND

While physical distancing and other public health practices have been encouraged we have not lost the need to stay connected. This has largely meant outreach, engagement, organizing and simply maintaining interpersonal relationships has shifted to virtual platforms. Not only have we seen the ways we connect change in real time but we are collectively shaping how we use technology moving forward. While virtual spaces are limited by internet connectivity it is important to note that virtual spaces have been more accessible to some. For example, individuals who traditionally work during meetings have been able to join remotely, and for others it has meant not choosing between childcare and attending a meeting. However challenges still persist in terms of access to broadband internet. It is important to note that mobile phone ownership has increased connectivity options. In May of 2019, the Pew Research Center reported that 44 percent of adults in households with incomes below \$30,000 do not have broadband but 71% own smart phones.

Addressing broadband access, while important to the work of this project, was not a central focus. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the issue to the forefront, and this section would be incomplete without providing recommendations focusing on broadband access.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to close the digital divide by prioritizing the reduction of barriers to broadband access and costs associated with realizing the 'last mile.'
2. Continue to develop mobile friendly alternatives to desktop web interfaces and the infrastructure supporting its networks.
3. Continue to hold internet service providers accountable for

services (including upload and download speeds) they have committed to when contracted to provide broadband products.

OUTDOOR SPACES AND THE PUBLIC REALM

COVID-19 has left no place unaffected. Its impacts have reached every rural, urban and suburban community whether they have the infrastructure or capacity to deal with these new challenges or not. The connectivity between people and places has perhaps never mattered more or at least been more obvious. The connections between the physical, social, civic and financial capacity of yesterday is the foundation for our resilience and recovery today.

During lockdown phases and subsequent periods of increased public restrictions and precautions, including social distancing, or limited indoor capacity, the ability to go outside and get some fresh air never felt so important. Parks and outdoor spaces have always been known to offer benefits related to physical and mental health, community relationship building and habitat protection. In seeking refuge from the pandemic, outdoor spaces have been elevated from mere amenities to critical infrastructure needed for escape and recharging.

It has been well documented throughout the pandemic that more people sought out outdoor spaces. Many parks, green spaces, and trail systems have experienced increases in local use. At times, high visitation strained the capacity of local parks and resulted in modified restrictions on the numbers of users at a time, the activities available and in some cases temporary closures. These moments of access inspired many people to explore their neighborhood for outdoor recreation. Many communities throughout the region noted that as car traffic decreased, pedestrian traffic increased. This was most

notable in downtowns and adjacent neighborhoods.

When given the opportunity to invest philanthropic funds targeted at supporting COVID related economic recovery as part of the Healthy Downtowns Initiative, two thirds of the participating Promise Zone communities prioritized investments in the public realm and public spaces. The stakeholders responsible for a community garden and outdoor classroom (planned pre-pandemic) noted that it had a larger impact now than they originally anticipated. They attributed their observation to more residents simply needing a place to go because they have been in their homes more than ever. Each example highlights a real investment in increasing access to outdoor spaces by promoting both public health and economic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritize investments in pedestrian infrastructure that promote increasing accessibility, connectivity and improved access to sidewalks, walking, hiking and biking trails and nearby water resources.
2. Determine the impact of decreased car traffic on downtown streets and businesses and consider the conversion and redesign of currently underutilized parking, alleys or even roads as outdoor seating and dining to support local businesses.
3. Consider prioritizing future investments in accessible pedestrian infrastructure, maintaining aging infrastructure and designing new public spaces that serve the needs of people above cars.
4. Prioritize flexible or multi-use outdoor learning environments and experiences that provide access to COVID safe, family-friendly extracurricular activities, bridging the need for respite from virtual learning and opportunities to enjoy and receive the benefits of being outdoors.

LOCAL MATTERS

It has never been so evident that communities are passionate about their local businesses. As economic uncertainty loomed over every community, one of the most resounding responses were collective actions/programs to support local business enterprises. Never before has the idea of supporting local, generating local tax dollars and keeping businesses open been so prioritized and championed. We have seen the creation of take-out bingo cards, gift card incentive programs, initiatives to feed front line health workers by local businesses, transitioning outdoor spaces to serve the needs of local restaurants with no longer accessible indoor spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to develop programs that promote, bring attention to, and ultimately contribute to the success of local businesses and enterprises.
2. Consider developing a local first campaign, building off of the collective support shown during the pandemic and the collective sacrifices made by many front line retail workers.

WHAT'S NEXT?

DOWNTOWN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

The Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization Project has documented that revitalization efforts are multifaceted and complicated at times because of all the moving parts. It makes sense, given the development histories and existing infrastructure in the region's downtowns, that reimagining their uses can come with challenges. Sustained revitalization will require moving beyond the successes of this project (visioning, planning, skill relationship building, assessments, design solutions, prioritization and implementing

projects) to thinking about how our collective efforts will contribute to a broader investment landscape and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

A September 2020 study by the National Main Street organization, in partnership with the Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking, investigated the impacts that being located in a downtown core had on an establishment's ability to mitigate negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in both urban and rural downtowns. In nearly every example, small businesses in older, established commercial corridors, downtowns and Main Streets proved more likely to leverage their physical location (in proximity to other businesses, resources and amenities that) in ways that mitigated COVID-19 impacts more than businesses in other locations. The affirmation that businesses located in downtowns have generally been more resilient during the pandemic speaks directly to the built environment underpinning a community's resilience more broadly.

Perhaps the most significant and insurmountable challenge faced in the built environment during the Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization Project were the physical constraints and limitations presented by the realities of downtown buildings. Nearly every community has at least one building, however large or small, that presents a real challenge with tangible and varying obstacles. While downtown buildings are iconic they are also difficult to restore and maintain once they have fallen into disrepair. The reality is many Kentucky Promise Zone downtowns are burdened with underutilized or abandoned structures, and transitioning these spaces will require outside private capital investments beyond what is traditionally available in grant supported efforts. The next iteration of CEDIK's downtown revitalization to address just this question is the recently funded ARC POWER grant to launch The ReVitalize, ReInvest, ReDevelop Appalachia (R3) Initiative.

THE REVITALIZE, REINVEST, REDEVELOP APPALACHIA (R3) INITIATIVE

R3 is a strategic partnership between the Appalachian Impact Fund at the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky and the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK) at the University of Kentucky to revitalize southeastern Kentucky's downtowns, support entrepreneurial ecosystems and promising sectors and begin readying our communities for new investment. By creating comprehensive downtown revitalization plans oriented towards supporting entrepreneurs in the downtown ecosystem, building the capacity of local leaders and attracting new private investments, the R3 initiative will help infuse much needed outside capital into our downtowns.

The R3 Initiative takes a four-step approach to readying communities for investment and building markets for multiple forms of capital absorption. These steps include: city-wide planning that engages a diverse set of stakeholders, identification of tangible catalytic projects, deployment of early-stage impact investment capital to amplify the competitiveness for outside capital investment, followed by deployment of later-stage traditional capital to complete projects. In order to concentrate investments into the hardest-to-serve communities there is an underlying need to supplement the existing investment ecosystem that R3 aims to address.

CEDIK is fulfilling a vital need at the front-end of this progression to build local capacity that enables inclusive and comprehensive planning, helping communities determine the necessary and impactful revitalization projects in their own downtowns. The R3 Initiative will help build the Appalachian Impact Fund's existing social impact investment fund with investment capital targeted for

the implementation of catalytic downtown revitalization projects. These investments will be used for downtown revitalization projects that present entrepreneurial opportunities that can: improve infrastructure and the built environment, start and grow small businesses, retain and attract families, draw in visitors for extended stays across the region and attract additional private investment.

[Image Top]
View at Pine Mountain
Settlement School

[Image Bottom]
Kentucky historic
marker

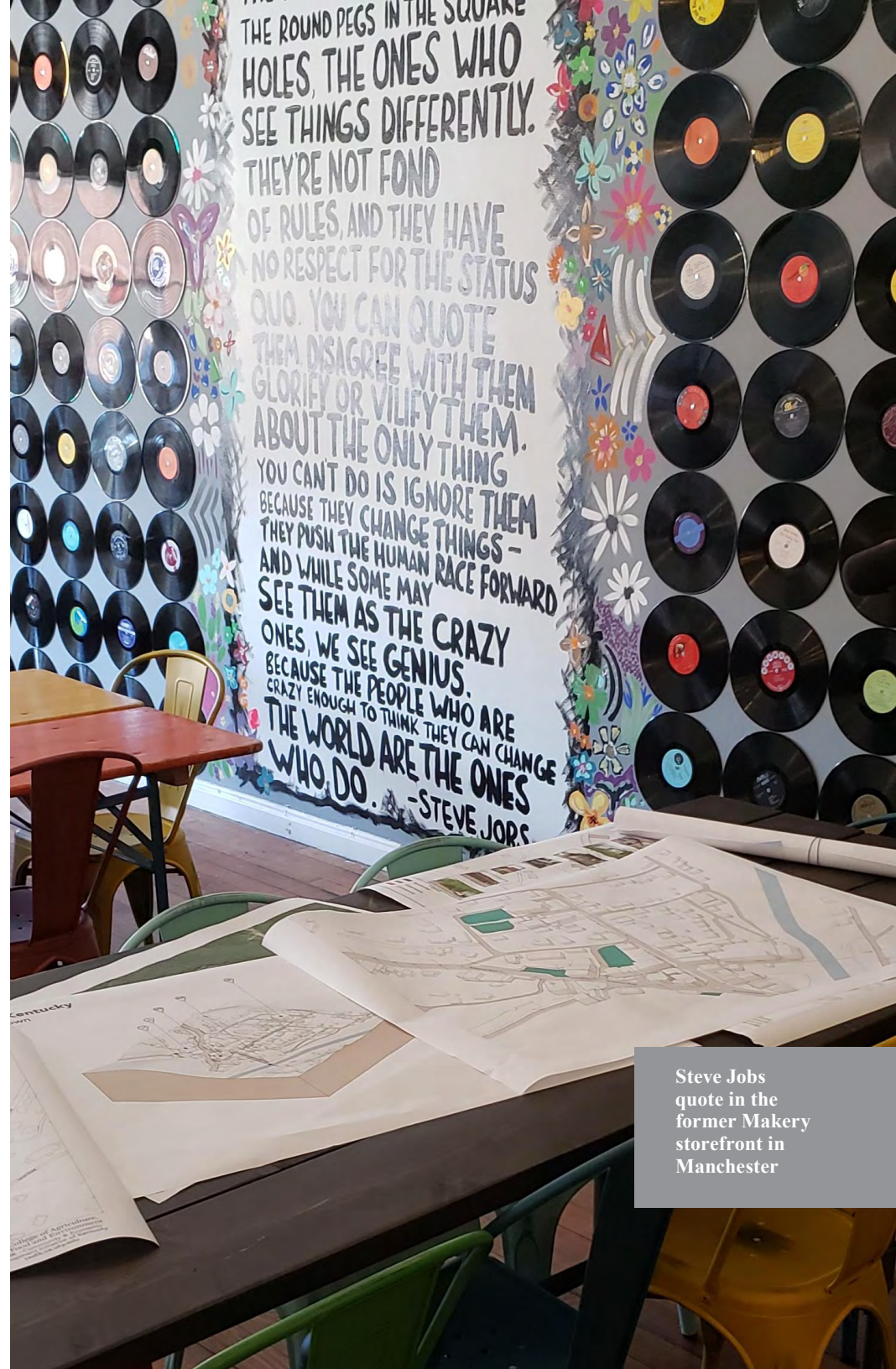


INDICATORS OF DOWNTOWN SUCCESS

A number of broad indicators were introduced using the 2014 University of Illinois Extension 'Downtown Success Indicators' publication to provide insights on how to begin measuring revitalization progress. Indicators are used to provide insights on, and measure, the success of downtown investments. While broad, all the following indicators focus on a need to get people downtown for unique experiences not easily replicated in suburban development. The following represents a summary of indicators to consider in tracking downtown revitalization investments and metrics.

North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and University of Illinois Extension. "Downtown Success Indicators: A Review of Literature." August 2014. <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/resilientdowntowns/files/2016/06/59491.pdf>

DOWNTOWN RETAIL



Steve Jobs quote in the former Makery storefront in Manchester

Downtown Retail has long been understood as an indicator of downtown health and vibrancy. Retail activity attracts a daytime population, contributes to the local tax base and increases to sidewalk activity.

Suggested Measures:

- Proportion of all retail businesses located downtown
- Increase in retail businesses downtown over a time period
- Occupancy rate and longevity of businesses
- Daytime population
- Business mix

DOWNTOWN HOUSING

Downtown Housing and residents provide a 24 hour customer base for downtown businesses and associated amenities. Downtowns provide unique housing opportunities for a number of target populations.

Suggested Measures:

- Proportion of city's population residing downtown
- Increase in downtown housing units over a time period
- Surrounding market rate of residential neighborhoods
- Regulatory framework supporting downtown housing

ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Organizations and Partnerships are critical to the implementation of downtown revitalization efforts. They play active leadership roles while bringing a variety of stakeholders together to develop the community's long term vision.

Suggested Measures:

- Active partnerships and coalitions
- Downtown development authority (or organizational support)
- Downtown centric plan
- Community involvement/engagement (affection from citizenry)

DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC GENERATORS

Downtown Traffic Generators come in a variety of forms but ultimately aim to attract people downtown. These assets, when leveraged, provide a competitive advantage. Traffic generators can be both man-made, like a university, or natural, like a waterfront.

Suggested Measures:

- Proportion of the city's civic and cultural uses located downtown
- Access to natural amenities (or waterfront development or parks)
- Arts and entertainment amenities
- Educational establishments
- Civic or judicial buildings

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Preservation and Rehabilitation of structures neglected by the retail exodus to the periphery protect the identity of unique places not replicable in the suburbs. Historic preservation helps define the character of place and encourages investment in neglected and underutilized buildings.

Suggested Measures:

- Proportion of city's registered historic structures located downtown
- Number of hotel/motel rooms per 1,000 central city residents
- Rehabilitation and Historic preservation initiatives
- Heritage tourism programs and sites

IMMIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

Immigration and Diversity are relatively new indicators of downtown success. Looking at diversity provides insights into a community's openness to a diverse population that includes non-traditional families, LGBTQIA+ and immigrants of varying faiths and ethnicities.

Suggested Measures:

- Percentage of foreign born population in the city
- Percentage of non-white population in the city
- Civic leaders' attitude toward diverse populations

MIXED USES

Multi-functionality refers to the historic roles downtown have played over time as destinations for shopping, services, employment, housing and culture. Successful downtowns offer a variety of interwoven opportunities that serve to attract people at various times of the day.

Suggested Measures:

- Variety of land uses downtown
- Mixed use development featuring housing, office use or conference/meeting space

DESIGN AND PLANNING

Downtown Design can improve the quality of life of residents and functionality of the built environment. Successful downtowns have clear boundaries and entrances - you should know when you have arrived. The sense of place is a cumulative expression of a multitude of downtown design elements.

Suggested Measures:

- Clear boundary and entrances
- Design guidelines
- Bike/pedestrian friendliness
- Public spaces
- Streetscape and facade improvement programs
- Accessibility and connectivity

BRANDING AND MARKETING

Branding and Promotion are marketing strategies deployed to reach larger audiences and disseminate information about downtown programs, opportunities and vision. Successful downtowns use marketing strategies to let residents and tourists know about the unique experiences their downtowns offer.

Suggested Measures:

- Special events
- Marketing initiatives

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Downtown Finance, employment and demographic data provide insights on long term changes.

Suggested Measures:

- Change in assessed value of property
- Change in real property investment
- Change in downtown employment by sector
- Percentage increase in rental value
- Income of downtown residents
- Crime known to police per 1000 residents
- Downtown labor force

COUNTY DATA PROFILES

CEDIK's research team has created and maintains updated data profiles for stakeholders to use, relevant to the community. These data profiles provide insights on a number of valuable metrics and can support various decision making processes. To access the most recent data profiles for your community please visit <https://cedik.ca.uky.edu/CountyDataProfiles>

After selecting the appropriate profile type simply click on your county name using the dropdown menu. These data profiles are compiled from data gathered from federal, state and local databases and are updated as new information becomes available.

County Budget Profile

- Population Estimates
- Total Tax Revenues
- Change in Population
- Change in Revenues
- Change in Spending
- County Revenue Sources
- Weather Related Disaster Indicators

Economic Profile

- Employment (top industries and location quotient)
- Labor Force
- Commute Times
- Median Household Income
- Poverty %
- Unemployment Rate
- Personal Income

Housing Profile

- Total Housing Units
- Owner Occupied Units
- Renter Occupied Units
- Homeowner Vacancy
- Renter Vacancy
- Housing Stock Age
- Housing Characteristics (mortgage rent, taxes, cost burden, etc.)
- Commuting Patterns

Retail Profile

- Retail Employment and Pull Factors
- Percent Change in Retail Employment and Sales
- Retail Earnings and Employee Age

Small Business Profile

- Total Jobs (Gains and Losses)
- Sales per Business & Employee
- Top Employment Industries
- Small Business Types
- Self-Employment

Workforce Profile

- Workforce by Education and Gender
- Commuting Patterns
- Employment by Occupation
- Earnings

