



**WHITLEY 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 rendering of River Fog Park
in downtown Williamsburg

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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.



The United States, Kentucky and Williamsburg flags flying in downtown

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]
Historic mixed use buildings along
Main St. in downtown Williamsburg

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.

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.



[Image]
View looking north along Main St. in
downtown Williamsburg

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]
Downtown businesses along Main St.
in downtown Williamsburg

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]
Patrons at The Wrigley in downtown
Corbin watching the Kentucky Derby

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.



Children playing during the River Fog Festival in downtown Williamsburg

CHALK AND TALK

During Williamsburg's Bicentennial Celebration in April 2018, CEDIK set up the Chalk and Talk, a community engagement tool that gathers information from festival participants on their desires for the community. In Williamsburg, one of the most consistent themes people shared when they approached the chalkboards revolved around their experience at the ice cream social. The responses included their desire to have increased access to food or local crafts on the courthouse square, historical demonstrations, additional ceremonies, and improved communication and advertising of events. The comments shared may provide a starting point to reflect on both the ice cream social and ways to improve the experience of visitors at similarly planned celebratory events in Williamsburg.

ACADEMIC DESIGN COURSES

SCHOOL OF INTERIORS

In the spring of 2018 the School of Interiors in the College of Design at UK brought two academic design studio courses to look at downtown Williamsburg. Led by Rebekah Radtke, Assistant Professor in the School of Interiors, these Studios had dual focus: to envision new uses for underutilized buildings in downtown Williamsburg and to re-imagine the city's identity surrounding their bicentennial. A community engagement event located at the Whitley County Fine Arts Extension Community Arts Center was also sponsored by the School of Interior courses.

"Icebreaker questions selected for the community meeting in Williamsburg were designed to relax participants, remove pre-existing tensions and encourage positive interactions and

contributions to the meeting without inhibitions.

These questions included:

- Where would you take someone on a date?
- What would you like to see added to the Town of Williamsburg?
- Where would you take someone from out of town?

Each of these questions not only acted as an icebreaker, but also helped the students identify the locations and elements that people most identify with Williamsburg.

As Williamsburg celebrated its bicentennial, the students explored what a new identity and logo could look like for the city. With a variety of photos, colors and fonts, participants chose which of them they best felt represented Williamsburg. This information was then aggregated into a new logo and iconography for the city.



[Image] Conceptual branding materials created by students in the School of Interiors

DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

The overall goal of this UKLA semester-long project was to plan, design and recommend conceptual spatial design solutions for a sustainable community. This includes streetscapes, parks, public spaces and/or open spaces with relevant wayfinding systems in and around Williamsburg and Whitley County. The design solutions aim to complement existing efforts and further potential endeavors. The broad goals for this project include generating conceptual and practical ideas by:

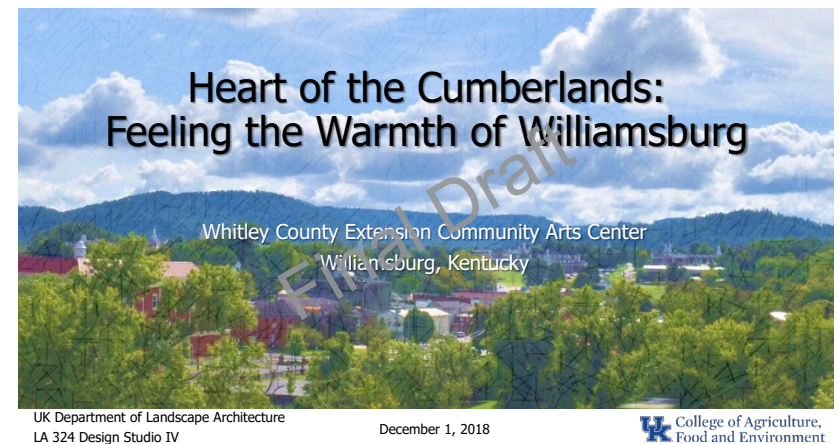
- Documenting research relevant to parks, public spaces, trails, greenways, etc.
- Thinking creatively and generating design ideas relevant at both the local and county scales.
- Demonstrating design skills that are visionary and implemented over time, but also practical.
- Communicating clear and professional level graphics to clients and intended beneficiaries.
- Working effectively as a team to present professional level products.
- Engaging with community members during the workshops and focus group sessions.

The objectives for the project were to research and propose design solutions while also organizing and facilitating a community design workshop. Students documented and communicated all phases of the project including community input and feedback. The community design workshop was held in Williamsburg in the fall of 2018.

Students proposed plans and design solutions that addressed the community's needs and goals. As part of a longer-term

implementation strategy, the class also provided further logistic and management recommendations. The student designers researched standards and case studies relevant to the planning and designing of streetscapes, parks, public spaces, open space, trails, trail systems, way-finding, land use, etc.

Specifically, students researched, analyzed, planned, designed and presented appropriate design suggestions in collaboration with community members from Williamsburg and Whitley County. The resulting design proposals address small to large-scale goals, objectives and designs complementing the community's long-term objectives. At a minimum, students approached and provided creative yet practical plans and designs applicable to the region.



[Image]
Draft cover page of the report prepared by the Landscape Architecture students

1.4.2 SURF & TURF: RIVERWALK

DESIGN RENDERINGS

The following before and after images depict the application of some of the proposed design features to sites along the riverwalk and the resulting impact on the environment.

Figure 1.4.2.10 shows the existing conditions in the area identified for the proposed third entrance to the riverwalk. The site is a large parking lot located behind the courthouse and could afford to lose a few parking spaces in the back. This area is suitable for a plaza because it is mostly flat when compared to the rest of the adjacent riverwalk terrain. Figure 1.4.2.11 illustrates the creation of a seamless flow from the parking



Figure 1.4.2.10: Existing conditions in parking lot behind the courthouse



Figure 1.4.2.11: Proposed riverwalk plaza and new riverwalk access point behind the courthouse

lot to the new riverwalk access point plaza. The plaza offers space for people to gather and social while enjoying the river. The plaza would also provide some much needed color with vibrant planters and multiple seating options.

Figure 1.4.2.12 shows the existing conditions at the residential cul-de-sac entrance to the riverwalk. Currently, this is a vast open space where pedestrians often feel exposed. The riverwalk access point is located at the end of a residential area and has the potential to stimulate change in the neighborhood. Figure 1.4.2.13 illustrates the implementation of a vast and diverse



Figure 1.4.2.12: Riverwalk residential entrance existing conditions



Figure 1.4.2.13: Riverwalk residential entrance with a landscape buffer area

vegetative buffer between the residential area and the riverwalk. The landscape buffer would bring color and texture into the area, and help identify this space as an entrance to the riverwalk.

The final images illustrate the pedestrian experience traveling along the riverwalk in the residential area. Figure 1.4.2.14 shows the existing conditions of exposure and openness. Figure 1.4.2.15 shows the difference adding a landscape buffer would create. The plantings block out the private properties adjacent to the riverwalk in the residential area while still maintaining the feeling of openness.



Figure 1.4.2.14: Existing conditions along riverwalk in residential area



Figure 1.4.2.15: Riverwalk pedestrian experience with a landscape buffer to screen views

44 | FOCUS AREA

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | FALL 2018

CONNECTION | DIVISION: WALK & BIKE WILLIAMSBURG

3.4.3

SECTIONS & WAYFINDING

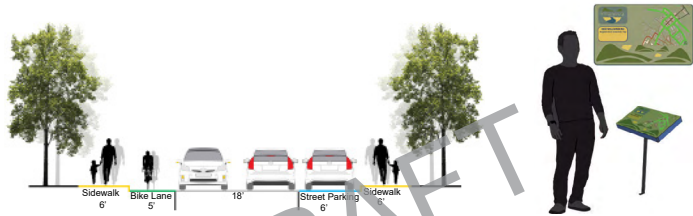


Figure 3.4.3.9: Section cut of the proposed complete streets featuring: dedicated bike lanes and street parking.

Figure 3.4.3.12: Wayfinding maps on placards for city connectivity.



Figure 3.4.3.10: Wayfinding bollards for extended trail.

Figure 3.4.3.11: Overhead wayfinding along routes.

Figure 3.4.3.13: Section cut of the proposed secondary routes with a protective planter barrier for the bike lanes.

HEART OF THE CUMBERLANDS

FOCUS AREA | 127

The following is a preliminary list of needs and potential project ideas from the community at large. As a class, UKLA expanded/refined the scope of work upon agreement with stakeholders.

- Inventory bio-physical, socio-economic, historical and cultural information of the community and context
- Analyze the opportunities and challenges of the community's geographic location at the regional and local scales
- Research precedents, standards, requirements and guidelines at a minimum for the following topics: streetscapes, parks, public spaces, open spaces, trails, greenways, way-finding, walkability, accessibility and inclusive design among others
- Facilitate the workshop sessions with select activities on-site
- Identify expanded public space networks or future connectivity opportunities in the broader study areas based on connecting to larger/existing established tourism resources in the region
- Develop conceptual public space network plans for the study area including designs for streetscapes, parks, public spaces, trail systems, inclusive design considerations and unique challenges discovered during the workshops among others
- Select focus areas from the developed public space network plans and further develop site-specific detail designs with a variety of perspectives

As a class project, 4 city-wide proposals, 11 case studies and 11 focus area design proposals are presented in this community design project report.

[Top Left Image]
Student ideas for improvements along the Riverwalk through downtown

[Bottom Left Image]
Student ideas for pedestrian focused wayfinding and signage in Williamsburg

RIVER FOG PARK

One of the key findings of the community engagement and student work was the desire to turn a currently underutilized city-owned lot in the heart of downtown Williamsburg into their first downtown park. The goal of this design is to visually enhance the space and allow more community events to be held in River Fog Park. Currently, the lawn is occasionally used when activated with festivals, but investments are needed to make the space more welcoming. These investments aim to promote River Fog Park as both an everyday green space and festival location where live

music and seasonal markets can be held in the heart of downtown. The recommendations in this plan also seek to promote and support the local businesses that are located around the future park site. Downtown Williamsburg is experiencing significant investments from both the University and local business leaders alike. Acting as Williamsburg's living room, River Fog Park is well suited to support these businesses. Patrons would be able to buy lunch, ice cream or other items from these businesses and eat them in the park. This would provide an authentic Williamsburg experience for residents and visitors alike.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

PERFORMANCE STAGE

OPEN LAWN AREA

MURALS

BUFFERS



Existing



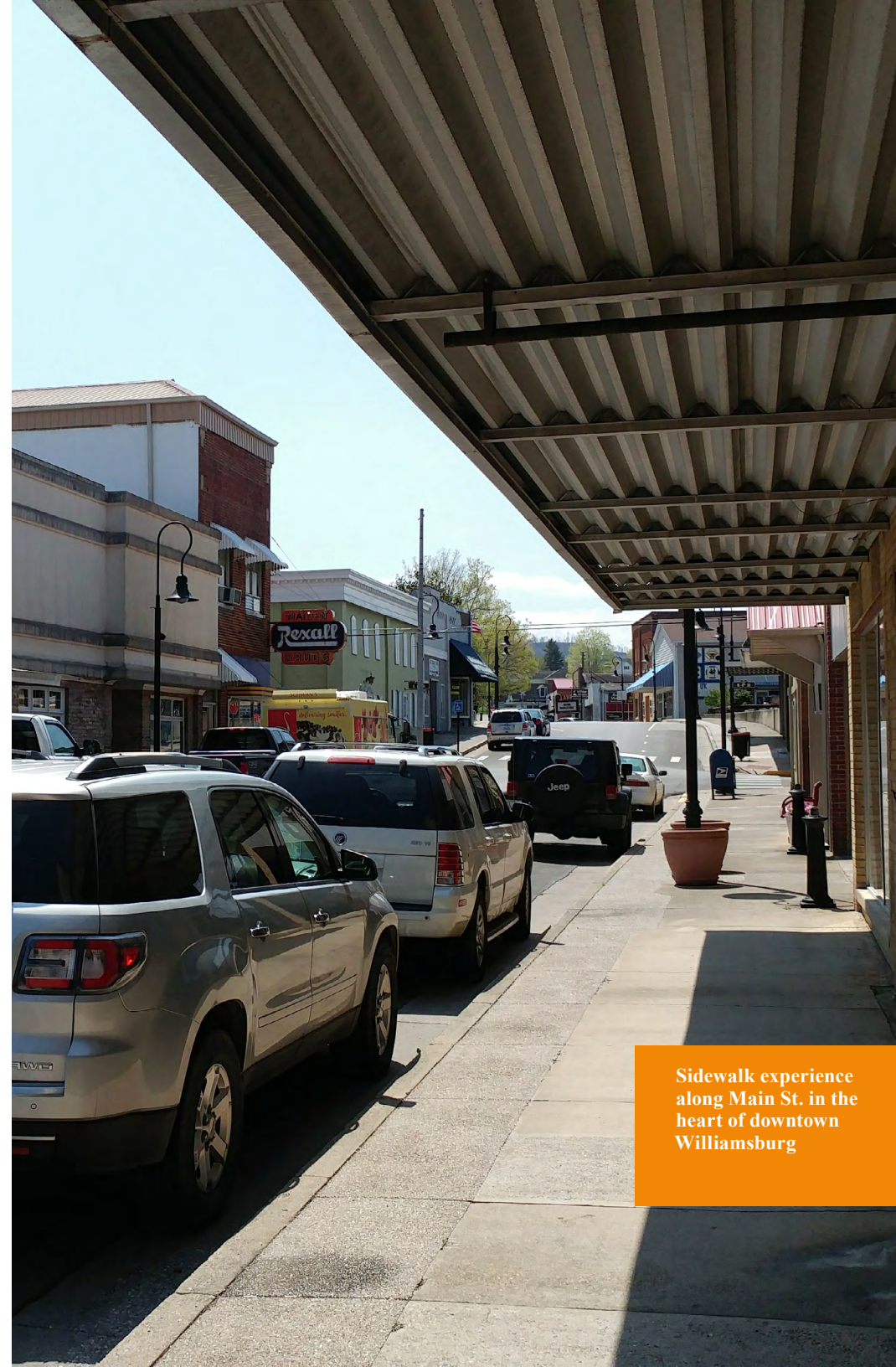
Proposed

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.



Sidewalk experience along Main St. in the heart of downtown Williamsburg

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. Visitors document their experience and interactions with community members.

PROCESS

Visits to Whitley County were conducted by 11 team members on both weekdays and weekends to capture a variety of activity within the community. The Whitley First Impressions assessors consisted of small business owners, young professionals, traveling retirees, and college students interested in outdoor activities. Overall, conditions were favorable for visiting and exploring the roads, small communities, parks and businesses within Whitley County. Assessor feedback provides a valuable snapshot of a visitor's perspective, visitor's perspective. In Whitley County, the assessors were from a variety of ages, life experiences and interests.

WEB PRESENCE

The assessors began their research on the internet, exploring the county's websites and social media presence. The team discovered that there are many opportunities for increased web and social media presence, and the limited information online made it difficult to discover available activities within the county to fill their time. While official websites did have some information about tourism opportunities, there was little representation on Facebook and Instagram to showcase the community.

Official city sites for both Williamsburg and Corbin had some mobile display challenges that made it difficult for assessors to view content on mobile devices. Additionally, there were several non-functional links on both Williamsburg and Corbin websites that made it difficult to navigate. A thorough web audit of community websites and links would be beneficial to the community's web presence to ensure that broken links are removed and updated.

Visitors discovered that there were very few listings for businesses on Tripadvisor, Yelp, and Urbanspoon. Since the major thoroughfare I-75 passes directly through Whitley County, it would benefit from hosting a small business training to educate businesses on how to list themselves on these sites in order to draw travelers in from the interstate.



[Image]
Students walk through downtown while participating in the First Impressions program

COMMUNITY VISITS

Visitors determined that the county is strong with tourism attractions such as Cumberland Falls and the original Kentucky Fried Chicken and they found local folks to be friendly and interactive. Visitors also noted an opportunity to improve tourism signage to and from attractions in order to create a cohesive county branding presence. After a drive through the county, team members spent the day exploring and assessing aspects such as signage, streetscapes, recreation, real estate and how front line staff at retail establishments and restaurants answer questions. Team members visited downtown Williamsburg, downtown Corbin, and Cumberland Falls in order to explore opportunities for tourism and retail within the region. Many team members noted the abundance of natural beauty in the county and the strong development in downtown Corbin, as well as the natural beauty visible from downtown Williamsburg. Team members identified opportunities to create cohesive wayfinding signage to connect the two downtowns, as well as the state park, and suggested improvement in drawing visitors from the original Kentucky Fried Chicken into downtown Corbin.

After several hours exploring Whitley 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. Notable comments include the abundance of natural beauty with Cumberland Falls, the Daniel Boone Forest and Big South Fork, as well as the marketability of the original Kentucky Fried Chicken location.

[Top Right Image]
Sanders Cafe, the
original KFC, in Corbin

[Middle Right Image]
Cumberland Falls in
Whitley County

[Bottom Right Image]
University of the
Cumberlands campus
in Williamsburg



FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

DEVELOP A WAYFINDING STRATEGIC PLAN

- Assessors acknowledged the quality of signs in the community, but felt that navigational signage is an issue. Directions, parking, and amenities off of Main Street in both Williamsburg and Corbin city centers could all be highlighted through a wayfinding strategic plan that creates an easily navigable experience from the interstate exits straight to downtowns.

CONNECT KEY TOURISM ATTRACTIONS TO DOWNTOWN

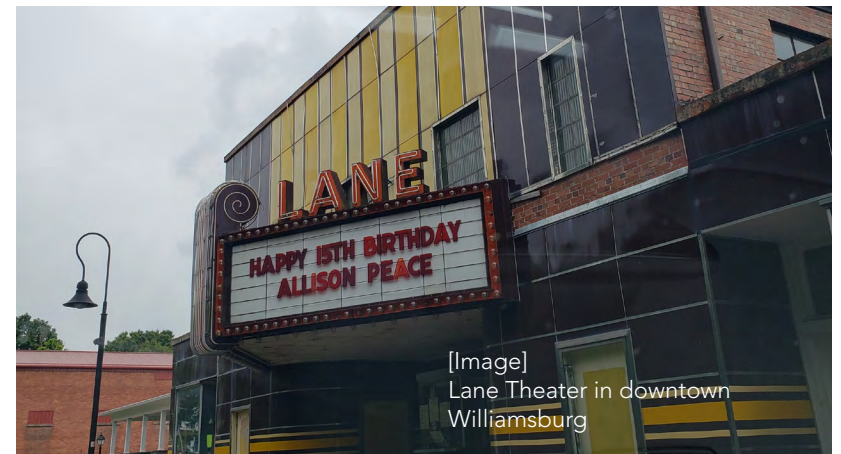
- Tourists are coming to Sanders Cafe and Cumberland Falls, but when they arrive there, they find little guiding them to spend time and money in surrounding communities. Assessors recommend finding ways to connect regional amenities that are 'quick stops' to downtown centers.

DEVELOP PRE-PLANNED ITINERARIES TO HELP VISITORS PLAN THEIR TRIP

- Creating maps that identify key locations and making a pre-planned itinerary including where to hike, where to shop, and where to eat could help inform visitors of the amenities Whitley County has to offer. Itineraries that appeal to millennials, retirees, families and other demographics can bolster local businesses, restaurants and attractions.

SUMMARY OF EFFORTS

After compiling the information into a full-length report, a CEDIK representative presented the findings to Whitley County stakeholders in two separate events: one in April 2018 in Corbin and one in January of 2019 in Williamsburg. Stakeholders in attendance included elected officials, chamber members, tourism professionals, news media, and community volunteers. 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 received.



[Image]
Lane Theater in downtown
Williamsburg

STAKEHOLDER NETWORKING

COMING TOGETHER

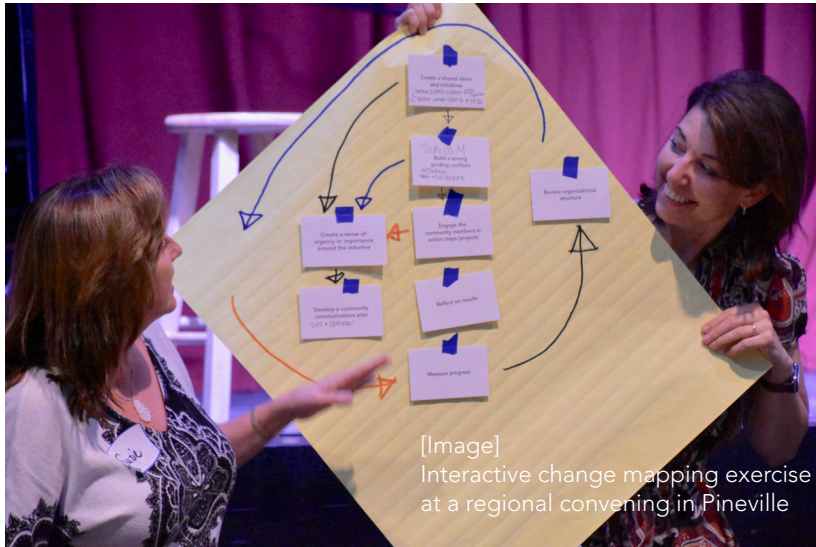
Downtown revitalization takes more than a single person's best intentions. It requires a collective effort involving many people working towards mutual goals. More times than not, the process starts with a single person or organization investing their time and attempting to address an issue they've identified 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.



**Attendees of the
inaugural River Fog
Festival in downtown
Williamsburg**

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 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

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 pollination of ideas and in many cases led to communities adapting 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 planned in its space.

The first convening of downtown stakeholders took place in the spring of 2017 and was hosted in Corbin, KY. This first regional gathering provided a space for folks to get to know each other, seek out commonalities and discover regional opportunities represented among the various communities participating. Initiating what would be modeled at each subsequent convening, the Corbin downtown manager led a walking tour of local business showcasing recent downtown investments. This tour was followed by a facilitated

discussion with local entrepreneurs bringing the focus of the day back to the unique food and retail options emerging in Corbin.

In the months following the Corbin convening, CEDIK continued to grow the downtown revitalization team with new staff dedicated to urban design & landscape architecture, business retention & expansion, arts engagement and small business development, further adding to the content of future convenings. Nearly two years after hosting the first convening, Whitley County hosted its second convening in the summer of 2019 in Williamsburg, Kentucky at the Whitley County Fine Arts Extension & Community Arts Center. The Fine Arts Center, located on Main Street in the heart of downtown, offered a central location to gather, share and explore what downtown communities throughout the Promise Zone had recently accomplished. Following previous convenings in Corbin, Harlan, Barbourville, Pineville, Hazard and Middlesboro, the Summer 2019 convening was planned to provide a timely and impactful experience focused on preparing for and sharing proposed efforts associated with Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization Implementation Grant investments.

Throughout the day community stakeholders took the stage to share presentations on their recently submitted implementation grant proposals and received feedback. Stakeholders were invited to participate in a skills building training to develop intercept surveys in addition to a guided walking tour showcasing a variety of creative placemaking efforts in Williamsburg. The walking tour provided context to several specific sites but, more importantly, focused on the synergy being built between local government, citizens' groups like Why Whitley, the University of the Cumberlands and College of Design and Landscape Architecture students from the University of Kentucky.

Together they showcased their collective efforts to reshape the vision for downtown Williamsburg and make strategic investments to reach their goals. The tour included stops at a previously vacant lot recently transformed into a viable community event space hosting outdoor concerts and festivals (River Fog), a newly updated boat launch on the Cumberland River attracting water enthusiasts downtown as well as a series of adjacent buildings being transformed into housing and retail in the heart of downtown by the University of the Cumberlands.



[Image]
Regional partners at a quarterly
convening in Williamsburg

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



Local downtown businesses on Main St. in Williamsburg

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 and the Kentucky Promise Zone coordinator supported the creation of a new regional community foundation 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 UCCF will continue to play an important role fostering local collaborations to address place-based community and economic challenges. The relationship established between Why Whitley and UCCF to execute a mini grant highlights an important role public-private partnerships and local foundations have played in supporting downtown revitalization efforts. UCCF provided critical capacity to this effort acting as the fiscal agent for the grant.

MINI GRANTS - WILLIAMSBURG, KY

Why Whitley, an emerging community action group in Whitley County, Kentucky, received a mini grant to launch the inaugural River Fog Festival in Williamsburg. Why Whitley formed to imagine new ways for residents to interact with downtown and encourage life, activity and fun within the city limits. This festival activated

an under-utilized downtown lot and invited residents to enjoy local food, music and the arts in new and innovative ways.

OUTCOMES

Installations

- This mini grant project resulted in new public art installations promoting community pride and sparking conversations about the public realm. These installations include four rotating murals installed along the edge of the future River Fog Park as well as one temporary installation featuring a vibrantly painted tractor.

River Fog Festival

- The 2018 festival attracted nearly 1,000 people to the green space and some vendors reported making sales totaling over \$1,000.00 and running out of food halfway through the event. Law enforcement was on site for the entire showcase and reported no criminal activity or issues relating to crowd control. At the council meeting following the River Fog Festival, the Mayor shared that several vendors had told him it was “the best festival that they had worked all year, and the community had made them feel at home” and that city officials as well as local residents were already planning for the 2019 festival.
- As a result of the festival's success, Why Whitley was invited to a joint meeting with the City Council and the Historical Commission to begin collaborating to complete larger goals for Williamsburg. This meeting included a presentation and synopsis of the results of the City's First Impressions. During this meeting the Mayor suggested that he would be open to the idea of holding events like the River Fog Festival in the future, since the public space used for the festival was ideal for events.

IMPLEMENTATION GRANT - WILLIAMSBURG, KY

In response to the success of the inaugural River Fog Festival the City of Williamsburg, University of the Cumberlands, Whitley County Public Library, Why Whitley, Whitley County Fine Arts, Williamsburg Main Street Program, and the Upper Cumberland Community Fund partnered on an implementation grant to further activate the River Fog Park and other spaces by investing in strategies to increase public use. This process is delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

OUTCOMES

Public Realm Investments

- Investments include the installation of shade sails, benches, trash cans, public seating, planters, mural panels and lighting to activate Main Street as a visual corridor. The goal is to annually execute three public community events (arts, music, and food) in the space.

Academic Partnerships

- Informed by collaboration with UK's Landscape Architecture Department and College of Design, public wayfinding and navigational signage will be designed, created and installed in key locations throughout downtown Williamsburg to improve navigation and accessibility.

Branding Results

- The First Impressions Program, coupled with visioning exercises, informed the creation of new branding, signage designs and accessible web content to more accurately promote the area. This process also included small business social media training in conjunction with developing user-friendly branding, visuals and graphics available for their use.

IMPLEMENTATION GRANT - CORBIN, KY

The City of Corbin, Corbin Public Works, Corbin Tourism and Convention Commission, Southeast Chamber of Commerce and the Corbin Main Street Merchant Association collaborated on a project to create and install an accessible set of wayfinding signs to support downtown navigation and guide visitors and residents to Corbin's downtown assets.

OUTCOMES

Wayfinding Signage

- A user-friendly and more visible wayfinding system was designed, produced, permitted and installed at eight strategic locations. This effort was informed by the First Impressions report noting confusion and difficulty finding attractions.
- The global pandemic prevented anticipated outcomes including the proposed Trolley rides from Cumberland Falls State Park as well as planned assessments of traffic and revenue metrics resulting from Explore Corbin investments.



[image]
Local leader giving a tour of Williamsburg's mini-grant projects during a regional convening

HEALTHY DOWNTOWNS INITIATIVE GRANT

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic induced economic uncertainty, and building from the success of the Southeast Kentucky Downtown Stimulus Fund, the Appalachian Impact Fund, CEDIK, Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky and Invest 606 collaborated to create the Healthy Downtowns Initiative.

Philanthropic funding was made available to existing community collaboratives and provided support to nonprofit organizations, local businesses and public partners focused on downtown revitalization, community economic development, engagement and public health during the COVID-19 pandemic and Kentucky's reopening. Applicants were chosen based on their collaborative capacity. Why Whitley received grant funds to continue developing outdoor public spaces in downtown, building off of previous grant opportunities.

OUTCOMES

Public Space Activation

- This coordinated effort with property owners will result in new murals and drainage, as well as an official land survey of River Park on behalf of the city of Williamsburg. This effort also contributes to public space activation that utilizes the investments and commitments made to the River Fog Park and the Heart of the Cumberlands report from the Department of Landscape Architecture.

Mini Grants

- Mini grants were provided to four local restaurants that applied for assistance. These grants promoted safer eating options by creating additional outdoor seating due to indoor eating restrictions because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Image Right]

The 'Burg mural in downtown Williamsburg has become an iconic location in the city



[Image Right]

The inaugural River Fog Festival at the site of the future River Fog Park in the heart of Williamsburg



[Image Right]

Example of installed wayfinding and signage in Corbin



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. CEDIK references these indicators in its own work to gain perspective and evaluate the relative successes of investments to downtowns. 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>



Historic art
deco Kentucky
National Guard
building in
Williamsburg

DOWNTOWN RETAIL

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

