

FINAL
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Strategic Plan For the **Howell Main Street DDA**

2014-2019



Heritage
Consulting Inc.

Prepared by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
What is a mission statement?	4
Suggested revised mission statement	4
What is a vision statement?	5
Suggested new vision statement	5
Main Street Howell DDA Four Strategic Goals	7
Role of work plans	8
Business Development—strategic goal and projects	11
Outreach —strategic goal and projects	14
Promotion--strategic goal and projects	16
Design —strategic goal and projects	19
Credits	21

Introduction

Downtown Howell is a downtown commercial district catering to shoppers in Howell and Livingston Counties, Michigan. In 2014, Howell Main Street DDA will be celebrating our tenth year in the Michigan Main Street program. The Board, volunteers and staff have been working hard to enhance the district by promoting high quality retail and special events; beautifying the downtown district; helping existing business to expand while also recruiting new ones; and marketing and communicating about the downtown and the DDA's work.

The Howell Main Street DDA is a hybrid of two different programs. As a Downtown Development Authority, a state authorized program set up by and accountable to the Howell City Council, they have access to Tax Increment Financing funds for downtown projects. As a Master level affiliate of the Michigan Main Street Program, they follow the Main Street Four Point Approach™ which is a volunteer driven, historic preservation based, economic development program. The Main Street program is a nationally successful model for revitalizing downtowns that is entirely dependent on grants, donations and volunteer muscle to get things done. For the last ten years, Howell Main Street DDA has blended both to form a highly effective public-private partnership to revitalize downtown Howell.

The downtown commercial district is the historic and current heart of Howell. It defines the local identity and reflects the community's history and 'sense of place.' The Main Street Approach™ stresses historic preservation as the underlying design principle for the revitalization effort. Main Street efforts nationwide aim to maximize the economic potential of each historic commercial district while preserving its authentic character. For Howell, the volunteer-led committees are critical to the success of the program and involve stakeholders—residents, business owners, or property owners—in making decisions about the future of the downtown. These stakeholders participated in all facets of the research leading up to the creation of this new Strategic Plan. This represents the next phase in Main Street Howell's organizational development.

Consulting Services from Michigan Main Street

The state coordinating program provided staff assistance and consulting services to the Main Street Howell DDA as part of the State's effort to enhance the growth, effectiveness, and sustainability of participating Michigan Main Street organizations.

Heritage Consulting Inc. is a Philadelphia-based consulting firm with a contract with the Michigan Main Street Center to provide technical assistance to Howell. They led the three-phase Strategic Planning effort. Donna Ann Harris of Heritage Consulting Inc. worked collectively with Cathleen Edgerly, the Main Street Howell Director, and with Brittney Hoszkiw, the Organization Specialist with Michigan Main Street to develop this Strategic Plan. There was active participation by Main Street Howell DDA Board members, business owners, merchants,

the Mayor, the City Manager, and City Council Members. The research was conducted over five months and included four distinct activities, which are outlined below.

1) SWOT Analysis. Held on July 22, 2014, this three-hour evening meeting received the input from 34 participants, including Main Street Howell DDA Board members, downtown merchants, property owners, City Council members, the City Manager, and Planning Board members. During the meeting, we discussed the current conditions of both the downtown shopping district and the Main Street Howell organization. A summary memo was prepared that offered observations and recommendations for solving several specific problems in the short- and medium-term.

2) Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey conducted for three weeks from August 7 to September 2, 2014. This survey was an extraordinary success with more than 385 responses, representing a statistically valid sample of the Howell population. The survey provided critical demographic and market data about the current downtown district shoppers. A 109-page report prepared by Brittney Hoszkiw of Michigan Main Street, with recommendations by Donna Ann Harris was circulated to the Main Street Howell Board on September 18, 2014.

3) A Visioning and Strategic Planning Workshop was held on Wednesday evening, September 24, 2014. This session was two and a half hours long and included fourteen Main Street Howell DDA Board members, business owners, key volunteers, the Mayor, and City Manager. Prior to the workshop, all participants received copies of the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey Report and an executive summary. This workshop began with a brief summary of the results of the Online Survey. During the workshop, all participated in a visioning exercise to help the assembled group visualize the future of downtown five years from now. Finally, we used the visioning exercise to identify specific strategies to implement projects toward the realization of this long-term vision of downtown.

4) A Board meeting on October 22, 2014 when this Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board of Directors.

What is a Strategic Plan?

Board Source[™], a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance the public good by building exceptional nonprofit Boards and inspiring Board service, defines a Strategic Plan as a written document that defines an organization's over-arching strategies and major areas of work for the next five years to achieve the organization's mission.

Strategic plans for nonprofit organizations are created through a process that builds on research to accumulate wisdom about the organization, its environment, and economic potential. This

process involves stakeholders to ensure that the resulting Strategic Plan contains a comprehensive understanding of the organization's preferred future.

New Mission and Vision Statements

As part of the Visioning and Strategic Planning workshop, we asked participants to review the existing mission and vision statements of the organization to determine if they are still valid, and to note if any changes were necessary. There were many comments made about both of these, so we provided new statements to compliment the overall new direction of the organization as discussed during the workshop.

What is a mission statement?

A mission statement articulates where the organization is now, not at some desired point in the future. An ideal mission statement identifies why the organization exists, who benefits, what the organization does and, finally, how it does what it does. A good mission statement conveys how the organization relates to its public and communities; why and how it enhances the well-being of others and improves quality of life; and, finally, what service it provides. A mission statement should be easily memorized, as it becomes a part of the "elevator speech" about the organization.

Current Main Street Howell DDA Mission Statement

Howell Main Street and Downtown Development Authority will utilize the Main Street Four-Point Approach™ to achieve our vision for Downtown Howell that includes an attractive, vibrant, historic, pedestrian-oriented shopping and dining district. This will be accomplished through a commitment to Main Street, strong partnerships with stakeholder organizations, broad-based community support, volunteer involvement in Main Street, and continued adaptive reuse of upper stories for residential and business uses.

New One Line Mission Statement

The Main Street Howell DDA manages and promotes our historic downtown as the heart and hub of the community.

New Mission Statement

Howell Main Street and Downtown Development Authority uses the Main Street Four-Point Approach™ to promote downtown Howell as an attractive, vibrant, historic, pedestrian-oriented shopping, dining, and entertainment district for residents and visitors. We help preserve our historic downtown by encouraging the restoration and adaptive re-use of buildings' storefronts and upper stories for both residential and or office use. We rely on strong

partnerships with stakeholder organizations, broad-based community support, and a growing volunteer base to accomplish our work. Our downtown is the heart and hub of the community.

What is a vision statement?

A vision statement describes the preferred future of both the organization and downtown after five years of work towards fulfilling the dreams of stakeholders. The vision statement should focus on the community impact and the power of the organization to transform downtown. A good vision statement is ambitious enough to force people out of comfortable routines, and is conceptual but practical, taking advantage of fundamental trends from consumer research. A vision statement should be clear enough to articulate the visual changes in downtown.

Suggested Main Street Howell DDA Vision Statement

Short version

By 2019, downtown Howell has become a true destination for residents and visitors who seek quality retail shops, excellent restaurants, and lively evening entertainment- all housed in our charming historic buildings. We are continually making improvements to our downtown streetscape and green spaces, and encourage property owners to restore and rehabilitate their properties in our National Registered Historic District. We manage our downtown so that it is thriving. Throughout our downtown you will find vibrant seasonal displays, attractive sidewalk cafes, an exceptional seasonal farmers market, new bike lanes, and artist-designed bike racks.

The Main Street Howell DDA produces well-loved promotional events that are held year-round, keeping our sidewalks and parking lots full of shoppers and diners. We advocated for and installed the splash pad/ice rink that brings throngs of families into downtown no matter the weather. In 2019 we finally finished burying all of the utilities downtown. The DDA's budget has grown significantly through grants, sponsorships, our comprehensive fundraising effort to raise \$100,000 yearly from individual donations, and through our highly anticipated, fundraising events. Without our 450 tireless volunteers, none of what we accomplished in the last five years would have been possible. Our Board and staff are proud of our achievements in the last five years and eagerly look forward to an even brighter future.

Long version

Our Vision for Downtown Howell in 2019.

By 2019 downtown Howell will be recognized as a thriving commercial district where county residents find exciting independent shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues. In the past five years, we worked closely with downtown property owners to bring more than two dozen new or expanded businesses into the heart of our community. We were able to do so because

we worked hard to relocate some existing businesses into newly rehabilitated upper story locations, or onto the side streets. Grand River has become our main retail and restaurant location. All of these new businesses have significantly increased the City and County tax base, created new jobs, and generated a positive buzz about our downtown and our future.

We are known for our creative and colorful flower pots that are planted seasonally, as well as for our seasonal decorations installed by the DDA which add to the festive atmosphere. The sidewalk cafes, the Sunday seasonal farmers market, and monthly events organized by the DDA and other organizations in town keep the sidewalks and parking lots full virtually year-round.

Customers walk our downtown during the week as they visit the City and Livingston County offices, run errands, shop, or stop for a quick lunch. On weekends, downtown is crowded with families from the area. They enjoy our fine complement of independent shops and restaurants. Both Friday and Saturday nights are hopping in downtown Howell. We have become a well-known restaurant destination with both fine and casual dining options housed in historic buildings.

Our two thriving entertainment anchors, The Opera House and the Historic Howell Theater, offer exciting and innovative programming for Howell and Livingston County residents. These two beautifully restored buildings host independent and foreign films, events, plays, and musical performances throughout the year. Downtown restaurants and bars are open late for these event patrons. Live music of many genres can be found regularly at our bars, cafes, and restaurants.

The district is managed by the Main Street Howell DDA, which takes responsibility for all aspects of the customer experience: including event planning, beautification projects, and its traditional role in assuring that the downtown is clean and inviting. Downtown Howell's Nationally Registered Historic District continues to be well maintained and celebrated. Reinvestment by property owners continues, and we offer a variety of incentive programs to encourage property owners to restore and invest in their buildings.

New and appropriate uses are found for storefronts when the rare vacancy occurs. When a storefront does become available, there are several potential tenants because Main Street Howell maintains a list of interested local and national retailers. Main Street Howell DDA continues to be the "go to" place for those who wish to locate or expand downtown.

By 2019, the last of the utilities in downtown were relocated underground. State Street has been reborn as our downtown festival and farmer's market location. We completed the rehabilitation of 118 Clinton Street as the DDA office, and have embarked on another downtown rehabilitation project to earn rental income to support the DDA's services. The City and the DDA have studied how to expand downtown parking opportunities and are moving ahead with these options.

The ice rink/splash pad is a complete hit with the community and brings throngs of families into the downtown no matter the weather. Bike lanes have been installed throughout downtown, along with award-winning artist-designed bike racks. New independent businesses have opened to cater to these new recreational users of the downtown.

Main Street Howell DDA works closely with merchants to promote a handful of high quality and creative retail events each year that appeal to the variety of market niches in the district. Main Street Howell collaborates with many other organizations that host regular special events throughout the year. Main Street Howell continues our traditional and new media communication campaign that regularly markets to more than 5000 area residents about the exciting events, shops, and activities happening in downtown.

By 2019 the Main Street Howell DDA budget is over \$465,000. The majority of the budget is from an assessment on the property owners and \$100,000 is raised from a highly diverse number of revenue sources. Our residential membership program, begun as the 100 Friends of Howell has been renamed the 1,000 Friends of Howell to better reflect the broad support we gained from community members. There is superb Board and staff leadership. More than 450 volunteers on the roster provide leadership for, and mount, the award-winning special events and retail events. Over 6,000 volunteer hours were expended in 2019 and partnerships have been expanded with existing civic organizations in town. Our annual sponsorship and co-op advertising campaigns are always sold out.

Main Street Howell DDA continues its long-standing, productive, and cordial working relationships with the City, Livingston County, the Howell Chamber, the Livingston Arts Council, and other key stakeholders for the enhancement of the downtown district.

By 2019, downtown Howell has become a true destination for Livingston County residents who seek quality retail shops, excellent restaurants, and lively evening entertainment housed in our charming, historic properties.

Strategic Goals

The goal-setting portion of the September 24, 2014 workshop helped to take the long-term vision and create a specific future direction for the downtown. Committee members formulated goals that fit neatly within the traditional purview of the Main Street Four Point Approach™. Board and Committee members prepared a brief statement of their committee's overall goal for the future. They were asked to be specific about the outcome of five years' work. The following are the future strategic goals for downtown Howell as prepared by each of the teams and the Executive Committee at the September 24, 2014 evening workshop.

2014-2018 Main Street Howell DDA Strategic Goals

- Manage and expand the downtown business mix by retaining existing retail, restaurant, and entertainment and service businesses and help them expand and actively recruit complimentary new businesses, to expand our nightlife and restaurant niches.
- Make the downtown business district thrive by offering year-round events and activities that our shoppers truly want.
- Expand the organizational budget by \$100,000 through a comprehensive private sector fundraising effort; communicate regularly about the excitement in downtown and involve hundreds of volunteers in our work.
- Promote our built heritage and continue to foster restoration, revitalization, beautification and celebration of our downtown streetscape, green spaces, and historic buildings.

The four Strategic Goals serve as the bridge to the new vision for the future of the heart of downtown Howell. All of the short and longer-term projects, individually and collectively, move the organization towards making this vision into a reality by allocating all of its financial and volunteer resources accordingly.

The activities and programs that Main Street Howell DDA will implement in the future, through the combination of Board, staff, committees, partners, and individual task force volunteers, all must be aligned to achieve at least one (1) of the four (4) above Strategic Goals. If a project does not *clearly* meet any of the Strategic Goals, the project should neither be staffed nor funded, as the organization has a finite number of volunteers and financial resources.

Role of Work Plans

Work plans for each project are completed by the volunteer committees and are approved by the Board. The work plan provides detail on how to implement an effective project. Every work plan contains the following elements: Who (person or partner organization), What, When, How Much Cost, How Much Income, Volunteer Hours, Staff Hours and of course, the Strategic Goal(s) met. Collectively, these work plans become the substance of the materials submitted to the DDA property owners and the City for support each year. The Work Plan can be used to sell sponsorships, as well as to assertively market the volunteer and collaborative opportunities therein to individuals and groups of current or potential stakeholders.

Staffing and volunteers

This Strategic Plan sets out a very ambitious improvement agenda for the Main Street Howell DDA over the next five (5) years. All of these activities are important and worthy, but the Main Street Howell DDA Board must reach agreement about how it will staff them.

While there are already some volunteers involved with the organization, there are not enough to implement even a small portion of these activities. The current staff cannot take on any more duties, as it is already significantly overstretched. The outreach coordinator is critical for the continued success of the organization's ambitious agenda.

If the Main Street Howell DDA Board, along with teams of new volunteers, is to be responsible for implementing these tasks, then the Board must continue to invest substantially in volunteer infrastructure. Leadership for any new volunteer effort must come from the Board itself, primarily in the form of promoting volunteer recruitment throughout the teams and organization as a whole.

Conclusion

This 2014-2019 Strategic Plan for downtown Howell is a review of the past performance of the organization and a representation of its bright future. This Strategic Plan contains new mission and vision statements. The four Strategic Goals mentioned above organize the rest of the document and should be used to guide all of the organization's work in the next five (5) years, which is the useful life of this planning document.

Business Development Committee

Strategic Goal: Manage and expand the downtown business mix by retaining and engaging existing retail, restaurant, entertainment and service businesses. Help these businesses expand and actively recruit complimentary new businesses, to expand our nightlife and restaurant niches.

Responsible Committee: Business Development

Understand the current market downtown

- Post the recently completed Consumer and Stakeholder Survey on the Downtown Howell web site.
- Update existing business inventory including first and second floor businesses in the district at least yearly. Maintain this data on the business directory portion of the Downtown Howell web site.

Educate and retain existing businesses

- Widely disseminate the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey report and fact sheets to existing merchants and work with them to alter their product mix to appeal to the current downtown shoppers as noted in this report.
- The Consumer and Stakeholder Survey noted that the vast majority of current shoppers live in Howell or Livingston County. Use this information to refine any advertising for Main Street Howell, and make existing merchants aware of this information so they can adjust their media buys accordingly.
- Make the Online Survey report widely available especially to existing restaurants so they understand current downtown shopper preferences.
- Create brief profiles about the survey results for retailers and restaurants so they can utilize the market information to make improvements to their businesses.
- Conduct additional workshops as needed with area merchants to help them use the Survey information to expand their product lines or refocus their business to take advantage of downtown customer preferences.
- Continue to regularly visit existing businesses to keep up to date with their concerns, hear about any possible business expansion plans, and to alert them to any Main Street Howell created business promotions and events.

Recruit new complimentary businesses

- Strengthen relationships with property owners, and area commercial real estate brokers that represent commercial properties in downtown.
- Work with property owners and tenants to move professional services located on Grand River to upstairs and side street locations whenever possible, and create incentives to encourage movement to these spaces.
- Create a new simple sell sheet for downtown using the research from the recent Market Analysis and Consumer and Stakeholder Survey for specific underutilized commercial properties, and make these available as PDF documents on the web site and distribute to commercial real estate brokers and others as needed.
- Continue to host welcome ceremonies and ribbon cuttings when new businesses open in downtown.
- Continue to feature individual businesses on our Facebook page, Twitter posts, and in the E-newsletter.
- Continue to distribute Downtown Business Guides, Business Packets, and other information. Refer people to our web site for further information. Make this information widely available, especially at the local Small Business Development Center and other county and regional economic development entities.
- Target specific business types for recruitment from the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey completed in 2014 once a vacancy is identified.
- Main Street Howell DDA staff will assist the Business Development Committee volunteers in making calls and visits to prospective tenants for underutilized spaces in downtown.

Monitor the district

- Continue to supply Michigan Main Street with the district's Reinvestment Statistics as required and widely promote any successes in attracting new business, new investment, and new jobs in the downtown district. Continue issuing the Annual Report and make these statistics widely available.
- Review existing marketing materials for business recruitment and retention purposes in the downtown and create new materials as needed using data from the new Survey. Make these materials widely available and post them to the organization's web site.

- Work with the Design Committee to provide quality architectural advice to property owners with underutilized spaces to help them solve problems so that more productive uses can be placed in some of historic downtown properties. Consider whether developing incentive programs tied to specific issues (kitchen hoods, elevators) would help solve some of the most vexing and expensive architectural problems downtown.

Community Initiated Development projects

- Cooperate with the Design Committee on any Community Initiated Development Project. Find an appropriate tenant for 118 Clinton Street when that work is complete, and monitor revenue and expenses yearly to generate funds for operations and programming of the organization.
- Identify other buildings where the intervention of Main Street Howell is necessary to assure the building contributes to the downtown and provides a predictable revenue stream for the Main Street organization. Work closely with the Design Committee on all aspects of any Community Initiated Development project.

Outreach Committee

Strategic Goal: Expand the organizational budget by \$100,000 through a comprehensive private sector fundraising effort, communicate regularly about the excitement in downtown and involve hundreds of volunteers in our work.

Responsible Committee: Outreach Committee

Specific Projects

Board leadership

- Use the Nominating Committee to identify possible candidates for DDA Board membership throughout the year, and provide thorough vetting and orientation for each candidate so they can be productive board members upon election.
- Work with Michigan Main Street to provide mandatory board training at least every other year to ensure that each board member understands their roles and responsibilities as a Main Street board member and as a City Council appointed representative for the Downtown Development Authority.

Budget and fundraising

- By 2019, the annual operating budget of the Main Street Howell DDA will be \$465,000. To meet this budget target, we need to raise over a hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) each year from individual donations, grants, 1,000 Friends of Howell membership program, sponsorship, advertising, vendor fees, and other donations.
- To meet our budget target in 2019, we will need to grow our capacity to raise funds from the private sector. In 2014 we raised about \$10,000. We acknowledge that our five year goal is to raise \$100,000 in five years. To grow our capacity we will participate in fundraising training of various kinds to expand the skills of both Board and staff, so we can confidently raise more money each year so we can meet this ambitious \$100,000 goal in five years.
- Because the private sector fundraising goals of the organization for the next five years are ambitious, consider creating a standing committee of the Main Street Howell Board dedicated to coordinating the overall fundraising and revenue diversification efforts of the organization.
- Create work plans for all fundraising events so that the Board can track them on a monthly basis. All fundraising event committees should review the profit/loss for their

event as soon as it is complete. This will inform changes to the work plan for the fundraising event next year.

- Grow the fundraising aspect of the Lunar New Year Event, and add/revise appropriate fundraising components each year to refresh the event.

Partnerships

- Continue to work closely with the Mayor and Council and consider establishing a parking task force to address the many parking concerns in the district.

Volunteers

- Expand our volunteer pool through aggressive recruitment at Main Street sponsored events.
- Identify committee members to develop simple volunteer job descriptions for specific volunteer tasks (writer, designer, accountant, etc.). In addition, promote these opportunities on the website, Facebook page, and e-blast newsletter.
- The Main Street Howell DDA Staff will review the current volunteer database and make sure information is complete in each record (name, home phone, cell phone, email, address, etc.).
- By 2019, our volunteer appreciation event will be considered an important annual event in town.

Communications

- Continue our well-regarded communication efforts to promote our organization and downtown. Continue the monthly merchant (paper) newsletter distributed door to door in downtown; the monthly e-newsletter; regularly update the website; and continue our social media efforts (Facebook, Twitter etc.), other advertising, and PR efforts.
- Regularly evaluate our marketing efforts by conducting surveys at events, online, and through broad outreach to downtown customers.
- Update our website, branding, and recruitment materials as needed.

Promotion Committee

Strategic Goal: Make the downtown business district thrive by offering year-round events and activities that our shoppers truly want.

Responsible Committee: Promotion Committee

Individual projects

Involve more volunteers in events

- Build a larger event volunteer database by creating short volunteer job descriptions. Post these on the organization's web site, promote in the regular e-blast, on Facebook, and at a volunteer booth at each downtown event staffed by another volunteer. Follow up with any potential volunteer within 48 hours, and refer the potential volunteer to a committee chairperson or event chair within a week.
- Undertake more committee outreach for volunteers. Create a speaker's bureau to have board members and other volunteers speak at existing organizations to spread the word about the Main Street Howell DDA and our volunteer needs.

Monitor existing downtown special events and create new ones

- Create work plans for all events so that the Board can track them on a monthly basis. All event committees/teams should review the profit/loss for their event as soon as it is complete, and adjust the work plan for the event next year.
- Eliminate or substantially change any DDA sponsored special event that does not reinforce the current demographic profile of our current downtown customers.
- Conduct simple evaluations of each DDA sponsored special event, to determine volunteer and attendee satisfaction.
- Continue to expand and improve the Lunar New Year event as both a fundraiser and retail event.
- Coordinate with other downtown event sponsors to help them understand who shops in our downtown now and encourage them to make changes to their events to better target our primary customer demographics.
- Work with our merchants to help them draw new customers inside their stores from the hundreds of people who attend downtown special events organized by other groups.

- Consider adding the following new special events:
 - A new major music festival for the downtown for the coming year. Begin planning it in fall 2014.
 - Downtown bonfire as a community wide event during the winter. Add other components to it including outdoor games on or along Grand River.
 - New holiday activities in downtown to fill the holes in the existing downtown event schedule during this most important season for retailers.
 - A Howell Film Festival. Work with Historic Howell Theater to determine if they would be willing to partner on a Howell Film Festival, with film venues outdoors, indoors and all around town.
 - Use the new splash pad/ice rink to host “Figure skating with the stars” series, and partner with area restaurants and cafes to offer specials.
 - Trivia Nights in local bars and restaurants and other venues during the winter months to encourage socializing and community engagement.

Create new and expand existing retail events

- Create work plans for all events so that the Board can track them on a monthly basis. Committee members should review profit/loss after each event to determine if changes are needed.
- Review the current calendar of special events in downtown, even if the event is not managed by the DDA to determine if there are “holes” that the DDA can fill with retail oriented promotions that cater to county residents, area families and specific market niches throughout every season.
- Continue to offer the coop advertising opportunities including the billboard advertising campaign.
- Work with merchants to review the existing retail events to assure that the events are meeting their needs. Make adjustments as needed.
- Consider offering a Progressive merchant treasure hunt, as a new retail event.

- Continue to offer Witches Night Out and Holiday Girls Night Out and partner with the Library to expand their Literary Pub Crawl in the downtown as highly anticipated retail events for merchants.
- Downtown Howell has a handful of restaurants that serve a variety of tastes and price points. Allocate dollars and actively market the downtown as a restaurant destination to Livingston County residents.
- Do more to promote downtown retailers on the new Main Street Howell web site.
- Review and revise the advertising and marketing efforts for all events and activities as needed.
- Continue our aggressive effort to collect email addresses and add these names to our e-blast list so that it continues to grow beyond the 5000 current names. Continue to send out regular e-blasts to this large and vibrant readership.
- Continue to invest in social media. Maintain an active presence on Facebook and Twitter. Consider adding other social media platforms as they become available.

Create image campaigns

- Continue to offer the printed downtown guide.

Design Committee

Strategic Goal: Promote our built heritage and continue to foster restoration, revitalization, beautification and celebration of our streetscape, green spaces and historic buildings.

Responsible Committee: Design Committee

Maintenance of streetscape and green spaces

- Continue to maintain and beautify downtown through planting flowers, hanging baskets, banners, snow removal and regularly clean the downtown sidewalks.

New capital projects

- Turn State Street, the current location for the Sunday farmers market into a festival area to reinforce it as a central gathering place for the downtown. Create a task force to design, fund and implement this project as a public-private partnership.
- Identify the locations where utility lines need to be buried in downtown. Develop a plan that will bury all utility lines in five years. Design the project, identify grant funding and apply, and undertake the work.
- Continue to add to the existing way-finding system in downtown as needed. Add strategically located kiosks with downtown maps for pedestrians showing the location of all shops, parking, service businesses, and restaurants.
- Continue to budget, plan and complete capital projects in the downtown on a yearly basis.
- Identify potential costs and implement a plan to address snow removal within the district in an effort to allow continued pedestrian friendly traffic all year long.
- Work with the Livingston Arts Council to help them restore the exterior of the Howell Opera House. This downtown landmark is a critical anchor for our downtown entertainment niche. A thriving Opera House will help expand our nighttime entertainment options for county residents. We will work with the Opera House board to create a public private partnership to seek grants and donations to fund a high quality exterior restoration of this key landmark.

Community Initiated Development

- Complete the rehabilitation of 118 Clinton for the Main Street Howell office, and work closely with the Business Development Committee to find an appropriate tenant.

Provide good design advice and develop incentives as needed

- Continue to provide good advice to any district property owner or business owner by becoming the “go-to” office for assistance with signage, façade, or exterior improvements by maintaining abundant resource material including examples and vendors.
- Continue to host the annual historic preservation and design awards to celebrate high quality restoration and rehabilitation in the downtown district.
- Work with the Business Development Committee to provide quality architectural advice to property owners with underutilized spaces to help them solve problems so that more productive uses can be placed in some historic downtown properties.
- Continue to offer façade and sign grants and monitor work to assure that quality work is being undertaken with DDA funds. Coordinate with the historic district commission as needed for projects that involve restoration or rehabilitation.
- Consider whether developing incentive programs tied to specific issues (kitchen hoods, elevators) would help solve some of the most vexing and expensive architectural problems downtown. Work with the Business Development Committee on this project.

Credits

Donna Ann Harris wrote this 2014-2019 Strategic Plan for Main Street Howell DDA, which was adopted by the Board on October 22, 2014.

Donna Ann Harris is the principal of Heritage Consulting Inc., a Philadelphia-based consulting firm that works nationwide in three practice areas: downtown and commercial district revitalization, historic preservation and nonprofit organizational development. Prior to starting her firm ten years ago, Ms. Harris was state coordinator for the Illinois Main Street program for two years and the manager of the Illinois suburban Main Street program for four years. During her tenure, Ms. Harris served 56 Illinois Main Street communities, led a staff of 12 and managed a budget of over a million dollars. Prior to her Main Street career, Ms. Harris spent 15 years as an executive director of three start-up and two mature preservation organizations, each with its own organizational and fundraising challenges. Since starting her firm, Ms. Harris has worked with state, regional and local Main Street programs in 23 states. She has written five feature articles in The National Trust Main Street Center's monthly journal *Main Street News*, and is a regular contributor to their *Main Street Week* blog. Ms. Harris has authored scholarly articles in the American Association for State and Local History's *History News* and the National Trust's *Forum Journal*. Ms. Harris's book *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* was published by AltaMira Press in 2007. Ms. Harris is a certified Main Street manager.

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