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6.4.10 Increase the availability of existing parking for commerce by promoting higher on-street vehicle turn over to enhance and sustain commercial vitality. The management of public on-street parking should meet six primary objectives: 1) manages length of stay to increase vehicle turnover in front of retail businesses; 2) is customer-friendly, particularly for downtown visitors; 3) is convenient and easy-to-use; 4) is relatively inexpensive; 5) offers long term parking options for employees; and, 6) creates revenues that can be reinvested in expanding future downtown parking capacity.

Options, in addition to the successful programming operated by the Morgantown Parking Authority, include:

- A parking validation program and residential parking permit program.
- Parking “congestion” pricing designed to promote a switch from driving to alternative modes.
- Utilize Morgantown Parking Authority personnel to better enforce illegal parking (i.e., handicap spaces), keep loading zones clear, and mitigate travel lanes from being blocked by delivery trucks.

6.4.11 Encourage long-term parkers and customers, particularly merchants and employees, to better utilize existing downtown parking structures. Options include:

- Have the price of parking in downtown parking structures less than the cost of on-street parking in high use areas.
- Implement payment plans for lots and structures that encourage employees to park off-street instead of on-street in high use areas.

6.4.12 Identify a location along Brockway Avenue or an adjoining street to place a pedestrian bridge across Decker’s Creek to allow the South Park neighborhood easier access to the trail system.

6.4.13 Improvements for the University Avenue bridge pedestrian underpass need to include; better lighting, random police walkthroughs throughout the day and evening, and short colorful landscape plantings. The underpass walls should also be offered as a mural canvas for local artists to display paintings depicting some of the history and culture of Morgantown.

6.4.14 Create enhanced pedestrian crosswalks at these intersections along University Avenue; Foundry Avenue, Walnut Street, Fayette Street, Hough Street, and Willey Street. Crosswalk improvements should include where possible: installation of a center median to provide a refuge for slower pedestrians; an increase in the crossing time so that people who delay the start of their crossing to confirm the WALK interval will have sufficient time to cross before the signal indication changes; restrict vehicular right turns on red; clarifying the pedestrian crossing area by installing raised crosswalks with detectable warnings (truncated domes) installed at both ends; adding traffic and pedestrian signal indications where they do not already exist.

6.4.15 Build a pedestrian bridge at one or both of these intersections; between Foundry and Kirk Street (the bridge could also double as a sculptural gateway element into the downtown at this location), and at Walnut Street.

6.5 Marketing and Promotion

Goal: Nurture a sustainable and resilient downtown economy through active management of the downtown and its businesses.



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Objectives:

- Strengthen the marketing and promotional programming currently managed by Main Street Morgantown as well as merchant participation.
- Develop new activity, event, and business development strategies within the downtown that cater to broader clientele bases, particular residents.

Actions:

- 6.5.1 Provide more downtown entertainment-related activities geared towards a broader clientele and particularly residents. Specifically, animate the middle and lower sections of the downtown through visual merchandising, storefront window activity, and street activity.

Encourage businesses to incorporate entertainment into their operations by activating their storefront windows. For example, a tailoring business might place a sewing machine in the storefront window so that passersby can see someone sewing; a stockbroker might place a paper or electronic ticker machine in the storefront window, attracting attention from the sidewalk, etc.

- 6.5.2 Add businesses that augment entertainment venues currently available downtown, such as a bowling alley or a combination restaurant and small performance space for author readings, poetry slams, or other live activities.

- 6.5.3 Provide free wireless internet downtown.

- 6.5.4 Create a stronger link between downtown Morgantown and major WVU special events. For example, Main Street Morgantown and the City might close several blocks of High Street or Chestnut Street on the day of a home football game, erect a JumboTron-type screen, and invite people to avoid the traffic near the stadium and watch the game downtown.

- 6.5.5 Create a dynamic, customer-focused website that promotes the types of businesses and experiences available in downtown Morgantown.

Several organizations in Adams-Morgan, a neighborhood in Washington, DC, joined forces to create a successful website that allows people to search for activities, experiences, in-store events, and specific businesses without needing to navigate through an organization's website (<http://adamsmorgannow.com>). Each business is responsible for keeping information about its hours, calendar, and in-store events (i.e., special sales, the arrival of new merchandise, or in-store product demonstrations) through a simple to use interface.

- 6.5.6 Create a customer loyalty program to reward downtown workers and residents, residents of nearby neighborhoods, and other loyal shoppers for their ongoing patronage.

The Boston Main Street program has adopted a customer loyalty card that provides customers with special offers from participating businesses, a small rebate, and small contributions to the Main Street organization and to a nonprofit organization of their choice, which encourages local non-profits to help promote the loyalty card. Businesses can change their special offers as often as possible through a website interface, promoting their special offers through their own websites, in store displays, e-mail, snail mail, Twitter, Facebook, and other venues. Businesses pay a small fee to participate in the program.



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6.6 Housing and Redevelopment

Goal: Redevelop vacant and underperforming properties throughout the downtown and promote a variety of mixed-use housing in order to increase density and diversify the demographics of downtown residents.

Objectives:

- Increase the supply, diversity, range, and affordability of housing opportunities within the downtown.
- Increase the utilization of various tax credit programs that support the revitalization of existing buildings.
- Pursue the development of mixed-use and residential development along the Riverfront and Deckers Creek.
- Redevelop underutilized upper-floor spaces throughout the downtown to create 100-200 new housing units.

Actions:

6.6.1 Grow the downtown resident population by creating more, and a broader range of, housing opportunities. The following downtown and community-wide benefits are expected from the increase in housing:

- Boost the captive market for community-serving retail goods and services downtown that will support new downtown residents and the residents of nearby neighborhoods.
- Increase occupancy and mixed-uses of underutilized downtown buildings.
- 24/7/365 living, activity, commerce, and energy will create a safer downtown.

6.6.2 Encourage the reuse and conversion of underutilized upper floors for new residential uses.

One of the functions of the recommended development subsidiary of Main Street Morgantown will be to provide property owners with historic rehabilitation and New Markets tax credit technical assistance that can cover a portion of rehabilitation costs. Technical assistance could be in the form of raising awareness of and participation in these and other similar financing tools; involving several property owners in aggregating their properties to make tax credit financing more efficient; identifying potential local tax credit investors; and, providing pro bono rehabilitation financing assistance.

6.6.3 Stimulate infill development of mixed-use buildings on vacant lots throughout the downtown.

6.6.4 Redevelop the areas along the Monongahela River in order to attract revitalization and infill projects in the downtown.

6.6.5 New housing should support and integrate a diversity of age groups and income levels.



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6.6.6 Use development of new housing to better connect surrounding neighborhoods to the downtown.

Residents and workers in the surrounding neighborhoods pass through many of the downtown “Character Areas” when traveling to work, visiting businesses, and accessing recreational sites.

Developing housing along the Creek and the River will make these areas livelier and, in turn, will make the connections between the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods safer.

6.7 Policy

Goal: Strengthen the City’s role in collaboratively pursuing desired community, economic, and business development and infrastructure improvement investments.

Objectives:

- Update and enact downtown urban design guidelines so that they are current, clearly understood, implementable, and promote sustainable development.
- Create a methodology for downtown project review that is predictable and inclusive of community input.
- Leverage private and public funds for infrastructure improvement and business development investments.
- Revisit Planning and Zoning Code provisions that may hinder the expansion of entertainment offerings in the downtown.

Actions:

6.7.1 City and its partners develop standards that, in tandem with the two existing sets of Main Street Design Guidelines, can strengthen their collective capacity to stimulate sustainable, high quality downtown building rehabilitation, new infill development, and business development. The combined tools should also augment the design characteristics of the downtown’s edges and enhance existing architectural features.

6.7.2 Dedicate a larger percentage of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for economic development projects in downtown Morgantown.

Pursue CDBG funded activities that expand and develop micro-enterprise opportunities, particularly in historic downtown buildings.

Use CDBG funds to leverage private-sector loans and equity investments for the development of targeted downtown business clusters. For example, Winston-Salem, NC developed a model CDBG assisted “Restaurant Row” catalyst business program, which provided funding for start-up businesses and jobs for low and moderate income individuals.

Seek Continuum of Care grant funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for homeless and transitional housing programming, which would allow additional CDBG funding for economic development projects.



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- 6.7.3 Provide a broader range of financial and regulatory incentives to businesses locating in the downtown and to property owners and developers interested in rehabilitating and developing property.

Streamline permit review and approval and other regulatory processes for building rehabilitation and new infill construction projects that conform to the applicable set of design guidelines.

Provide density bonuses for new mixed-use development in high priority downtown areas.

- 6.7.4 Use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and dedicate a portion of construction business and occupation tax revenue generated by development within the downtown to fund specific public improvement projects (i.e., permanent shelter for the Farmers' Market; alley upgrades and pedestrian linkage improvements between the downtown, Deckers Creek, and the River; etc.).

- 6.7.5 Purposefully study the practicability of present zoning regulations relating to night clubs, private clubs, and private club restaurants within the B-4 District.

Although the current standard of 60 percent food to 40 percent alcohol for conditional use private club restaurants appears to have aided in cutting down on underage drinking and restrained the proliferation of night clubs catering primarily to college students, it may have also slowed the development of food service establishments serving the larger community. Relaxing this provision to 50/50 may bridge the entertainment gap between 5:00 PM and 11:00 PM. However, careful study is necessary to ensure that relaxing present standards do not undermine desired retail business development strategies that cater to broader clientele bases, particular residents.

- 6.7.6 Improve collaborative planning with Monongalia County to better manage the type, location, and quantity of retail and residential development taking place in the greater Morgantown region.

- 6.7.7 Develop a stronger, more active working relationship between WVU, Main Street Morgantown, and the City to carry out aligned Plan initiatives.

6.8 Downtown Safety

Goal: Enhance downtown safety by providing increased police presence and improved lighting and related facilities to make the downtown more accessible and attractive to a broader demographic in the evenings.

Objective:

- Remedy the perception of downtown being unsafe. Many downtown business and property owners feel that while police visibility is relatively good, enforcement is not as aggressive or consistent as it should be. Whether this is true or not, the perception is, by itself, a problem.

- 6.8.1 Increase the visibility and effectiveness of police presence downtown.

Consider providing downtown beat police with bicycles, Segways, and motorcycles to boost visibility and make it easier for them to quickly respond to requests for assistance.

Continue to diligently enforce laws and policies regarding serving alcohol to persons not of legal drinking age and to persons who appear to be intoxicated.



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Increase the enforcement of overcrowded and nuisance “house parties”.

Create a website where business owners and members of the public can anonymously and confidentially provide comments and concerns.

- 6.8.2 Create a new Business Improvement District (BID) downtown, using the funds to, in part, augment policing with on-the-street ambassadors.

Many of the nation’s Business Improvement Districts use their revenues to hire “ambassadors” who spend their days outside, offering directions and information to visitors, serving as friendly representatives of the downtown and its offerings, keeping public spaces tidy, discouraging panhandling, and promptly contacting police if there is a need.

- 6.8.3 Collaboratively seek funding opportunities that support the development of one or more drop-in centers for people experiencing homelessness that provides access to information, education, resources, and services.

The presence of the homeless increases the perception that downtown is unsafe or an unpleasant place to be, even if the vast majority of them do not pose a legitimate threat to public safety.

Homelessness is a complex issue, with a variety of causes. Partnerships between the City, Main Street Morgantown, downtown merchants, and social service providers working on continuum of care strategies is the best approach at identifying and implementing long-term solutions.

6.9 Economic Development

Goal: Strengthen downtown’s economic performance and diversify its economic uses.

Objective:

- Develop a rich diversity of destinations that will attract a critical mass of people to live, work, shop, and play.
- Increase residential density downtown to create new business development opportunities. Downtown residents typically spend three to four times more, on an annual basis, than downtown destination shoppers, making them clearly a prized retail market segment.

Actions:

- 6.9.1 Strengthen existing businesses by adding new product lines.

Adding new product lines provides a way to introduce new merchandise into the downtown and increase store sales while minimizing risk to the business owner.

A new product line could be added by the business itself, another business, or an entrepreneur could lease space within an existing business for a new product line, paying the business for the leased square footage and for providing in-store sales service. New product lines could be placed in downtown stores by one or more independent entrepreneurs and could provide an excellent way for Morgantown area residents and University students and recent graduates to launch their own businesses.

Successful product lines might eventually gain a large enough market share to be spun-off into an independent storefront space.



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6.9.2 Strengthen existing businesses by helping them develop new distribution channels.

Businesses can increase sales by finding new ways to reach current and new customers. For example, offering deliveries within the district and adjacent neighborhoods, selling things through online storefronts, and placing unique products in other downtown and regional businesses are all good examples of distribution channels that have helped downtown businesses in other communities expand their sales.

Downtown restaurants might increase their sales by selling food through mobile units within the community and region. For example, Koji, a Korean barbecue restaurant in Los Angeles, has developed a very successful mobile unit that travels through Los Angeles neighborhoods, announcing its next locations via e-mail and Twitter. Restaurants that develop popular menu items might also consider commercially packaging these items and selling them through downtown businesses and regional grocery stores.

6.9.3 Strengthen existing businesses by implementing Centralized Retail Management (CRM) strategies.

CRM is a technique used by thousands of shopping malls across the country in which the retailers are organized to function as a single unit. CRM includes coordinated days and hours of operation, common area maintenance, tenant location strategy, merchandising, customer service standards, joint advertising, etc. In a downtown of multiple property owners and business operators, a high degree of organization and commitment is necessary in order for CRM to succeed.

6.9.4 Create a property and business development subsidiary of Main Street Morgantown to play a catalytic development role, which will expand the City's capacity to proactively guide and stimulate development. This new subsidiary would work in tandem with the City to help property owners and developers rehabilitate existing downtown buildings, develop new infill buildings, and redevelop portions of the downtown and its edges with significant new development potential, and to help develop key new businesses and business clusters.

The new subsidiary would function like a historic preservation-based community development corporation that makes capital and technical assistance available for key building rehabilitation and new infill development projects in the downtown. The subsidiary would help property owners convert historic rehabilitation tax credits, New Markets tax credits and, possibly, low income housing tax credits into project equity.

There are a small, but growing, number of local Main Street programs with property development capacity. Good potential models for downtown Morgantown include Pittsburgh's Main Street on East Carson Street and its partner, the South Side Local Development Corporation; and Detroit's Southwest Detroit Business Association and its partner, the West Vernor Business Improvement District.

Seek initial funding to create the development entity from area foundations and from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

Explore the option of earning referral fees from tax credit investors, for tax credit projects to support the development entity's ongoing operations.



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6.9.5 Actively cultivate clusters of new small industries in downtown Morgantown.

In recent years, a growing number of small industries – businesses that create software, conduct research, or are engaged in other creative endeavors – have sought out unique space in older, historic commercial districts. Publishing firms, research firms, crafts people, software engineers, consultants, website designers, product engineers, money market fund managers, and golf course designers are among the many thousands of small industries tucked away in downtowns. Firms like these are excellent tenants for upper floor and side street locations, providing new revenue sources for downtown property owners. Small industry employees increase the captive market of potential customers for the district's retail and service businesses.

The consulting team recommends working closely with WVU and with local and regional industrial development entities to identify opportunities to incubate and place small, creative industries in downtown Morgantown. The team particularly recommends building on centers of expertise at WVU, such as electrical engineering, software engineering, and environmental engineering to identify potential opportunities. Given the growth potential of environmentally friendly products in the years ahead, the team suggests focusing particular attention on development of a small cluster of “green” businesses that make products from recycled materials, repair household items, or create products that help with recycling and energy conservation and generation.

The National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) is a good source of information on establishing small business and industry incubators, including their publications *A Comprehensive Guide to Business Incubation* (Hayhow 1995) and *Bricks and Mortar: How to Find and Design the Best Business Incubator Facilities* (NBIA 1992).

The team also recommends examining CATI, the Center for Advanced Technology and Innovation, a program of the University of Wisconsin housed within the Racine County Economic Development Corporation. CATI obtains donations of unused patents from operations throughout the world, and then works with entrepreneurs to develop these patents into new products and services and bring them to market. The team believes a similar partnership with West Virginia University could be mutually beneficial for the University and for downtown Morgantown.

Seek funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to support an active small industry development program within Main Street Morgantown, offering generous incentives to stimulate development of an initial cluster of 6-10 small industries downtown.

6.9.6 Create a co-working space downtown (similar to Affinity Lab – www.affinitylab.com - or Independents Hall - www.indyhall.com) that offers low-cost office space with a shared conference room, kitchen, reception area, office equipment, and other amenities. Market this in collaboration with West Virginia University to alumni/alumnae and to faculty with independent consulting practices as well as to the general public.

6.9.7 Intensify retail offerings on High Street below the Wall Street crosswalk.

Retail offerings on High Street begin to thin below Wall Street and drastically below Walnut Street. This area should be a high priority for more intensive retail development.



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- 6.9.8 Encourage the development of several new restaurants that will provide a more upscale dining experience than is currently available downtown.

While new restaurants could be scattered throughout the downtown, a concentration near the middle to lower end of High Street should well serve future housing developed in that area. This location would slightly position the restaurants away from the nexus of West Virginia University student evening activity and provide opportunities for fine “tablecloth” and family-style dining and a coffeehouse.

- 6.9.9 Strengthen the residential service offerings for downtown residents and for residents of adjacent neighborhoods.

Two of the most important ingredients in a downtown’s success are a density of people and diversity of uses. Residential service offerings that appear lacking are small grocery store/market, pharmacy, hardware/variety store, day-care, DVD/video rental, bookstore (used), shoe store, bakery, photocopying, environmentally friendly dry cleaner, and fitness center. However, the density of housing downtown must increase to attract business development opportunities and entrepreneurs in these areas. The location of a residential service core should be between the connections to adjacent neighborhoods, new higher density downtown housing and low/mid High Street in order to be convenient to both downtown and neighborhood residents.

- 6.9.10 Develop a cluster of home furnishing stores (i.e. kitchen and bath accessories, household textiles, bed linens, affordable art, imported furnishings, decorative indoor plants, floor and wall treatments, glassware, specialty gardening and patio tools and furnishings, home tools for recycling and generating energy, home furnishings made from recycled materials, etc.), particularly located in the lower part of the downtown, with entrances visible from Spruce and High Streets.

- 6.9.11 Continue to cluster businesses that serve the West Virginia University community in the upper part of the downtown, along upper High Street and Willey Street.

This cluster should, in addition to the products and services it has traditionally offered (such as restaurants, banks, University-related apparel, and similar student-focused businesses), also offer products and services that might be of interest to university alumni/alumnae and visiting families. These products and services might include university memorabilia and collectibles, West Virginia crafts and specialized sporting goods, provided that these businesses operate online as well as in bricks-and-mortar locations here.

- 6.9.12 Continue to maintain (with consideration of the Responsibility Hospitality Institute’s 2008 recommendations) the strong commercial presence of the West Virginia University community in downtown Morgantown.

