

HyettPalma

Warsaw

Downtown
Action Agenda
2023



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June 28, 2023

The Honorable Joe Thallemer, Mayor
Warsaw Common Council Members
City of Warsaw
102 S. Buffalo Street
Warsaw, IN 46580

RE: ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2023***

HyettPalma, Inc., is pleased to present to you the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2023***.

This document is the result of a process undertaken by HyettPalma, Inc., to revisit, refocus, and recharge Warsaw's Downtown enhancement effort, which has been guided for the last twenty-one years by the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002***.

We thank you for the opportunity to work once again with the Warsaw community and to be a part of your continuing efforts to further strengthen your Downtown. As always, we hope you will keep us informed of your success and know that HyettPalma stands ready to assist in any way as you implement the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2023***.

Sincerely,

Doyle G. Hyett

Dolores P. Palma

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Project Overview



I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2002, the City of Warsaw joined **Indiana Downtown®** -- the technical assistance program offered by Accelerate Indiana Municipalities, then known as the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns. Through that program, the **Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002** was completed by HyettPalma, Inc.

In 2023, the leadership of the City of Warsaw decided to revisit the Downtown strategy. To do so, the City once again contracted with HyettPalma.

The purpose of revisiting the **Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002** was to:

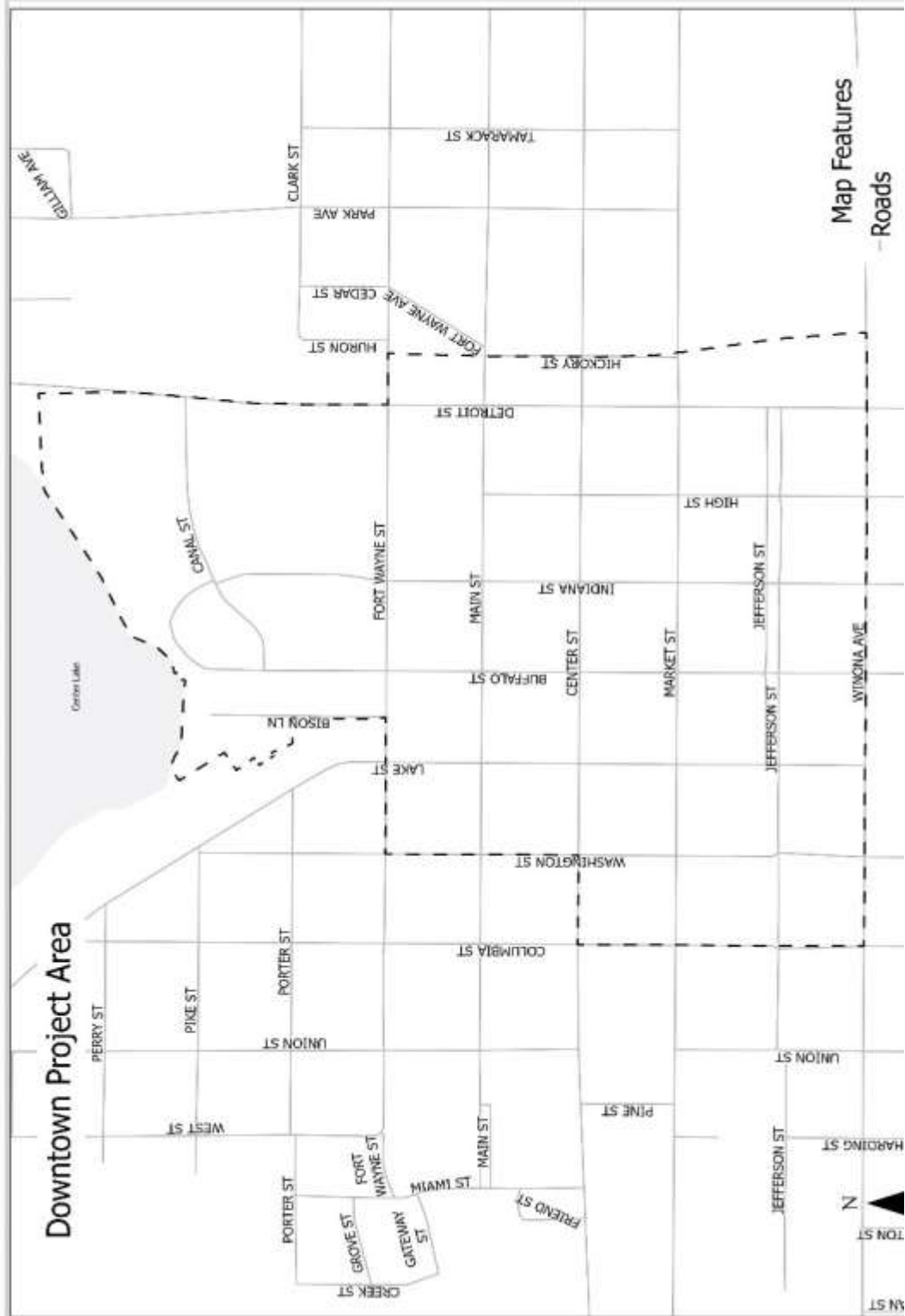
- Review Downtown improvements made since 2002;
- Determine the community's concerns and aspirations regarding Downtown's future; and
- Recommend specific actions that need to be taken over the next seven-years to move Downtown Warsaw forward in attaining the community's defined Downtown vision and the economic potentials facing Downtown.

The **Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2023**, contained in these pages, presents the findings and recommendations that resulted from revisiting Downtown Warsaw and the **Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002**.

The Downtown Warsaw boundaries are shown on the map presented on the next page.

The recommended target area within these boundaries where resources and efforts should be concentrated at this time to create a solid, visible cluster of improvements as quickly as possible is from Fort Wayne Street to Jefferson Street and from Lake Street to Indiana Street.

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***Downtown
Accomplishments
Since 2002***

II. DOWNTOWN ACCOMPLISHMENTS **SINCE 2002**

A tremendous amount has been accomplished since the start of the Warsaw Downtown enhancement effort in 2002. Following is a listing of many of those accomplishments.

- Implementation of the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002*** as a guide for the overall Downtown enhancement effort;
- Construction of a new City Hall;
- Demolition of the old City Hall and development of the site as a parking lot;
- Continuation and aggressive promotion of the Low Interest Loan Program to stimulate a higher level of building renovation;
- Creation of a matching grant program to assist building owners in their building enhancement efforts, consistent with the Downtown Action Agenda guidelines;
- Introduction of a significant number of apartments in the upper floors of Downtown's existing buildings, both for sale and for rent;
- Renovation of a large number of Downtown's valuable historic buildings;
- Design, implementation and maintenance of a streetscape enhancement plan throughout the Historic Courthouse District;
- Continuation of the aggressive and focused effort to connect the heart of Downtown to Center Lake, further emphasizing Downtown's position as a Lakefront Downtown;
- Facilitating the construction of townhouses along North Buffalo Street;
- Development of the Buffalo Street Plaza at the north end of Buffalo Street, including an interactive fountain, public art, fishing deck and a pavilion;

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- Renovation of the Center Lake Pavilion;
- Completion of the Center Lake Recreational Trail;
- Incentivize the upcoming development of the former water plant site to include commercial uses on the first floors and residential uses on the upper floors with the potential of having some rooftop spaces for dining and events;
- Formation of the Warsaw Public Arts Commission;
- Installation of sculpture and murals throughout Downtown;
- Continuation of the development of the Lake City Greenway project;
- Planning for the Market Street Multimodal Trail;
- Activation of an alley adjacent to the new City Hall;
- Development of the Courthouse Plaza;
- Introduction of outdoor dining;
- Introduction of a greater number of specialty dining options, specialty retail and art;
- Introduction of Third Fridays in Downtown;
- Enhanced code enforcement by hiring a full-time Code Enforcement Inspector;
- Enforcement of Downtown parking time limits;
- Installation of parking signs; and
- Continuation of efforts to examine the feasibility of developing a Downtown parking structure in partnership with the County.

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***Downtown
Vision
2030***

III. DOWNTOWN VISION 2030

As part of this ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2023***, a Town Hall meeting and a variety of discussions were held to define the community’s vision for Downtown. Participants were asked their preferences regarding what Downtown would be like in 2030. A summary of the most often expressed preferences follows.

Downtown Warsaw would be filled with mixed-use buildings containing retail, food, culture (art, live music, live theater), and housing. There would be a greater mix and diversity of retail and food businesses, which would lead to more foot traffic and greater vibrancy both day and night.

Green spaces would provide opportunities for people to gather and socialize in Downtown. And parking would be available and convenient for customers.

There would be “a balance” between vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. In addition to accommodating vehicular traffic, pedestrians would feel safe walking Downtown. Bike lanes and secure bike racks would be in place, making the area “bikeable” as well as walkable.

The former Owens property would be developed as multi-family housing. The North Buffalo Street multi-family housing development would also be completed and efforts would continue to connect the core of Downtown to Center Lake.

More people and “additional populations” would be involved in Downtown, making it “a welcome space for all.” The City would continue with its “excellent commitment” to providing translated versions of documents, translations regarding available services, and a hot line.

When asked which aspects of Downtown they are most proud of, participants most often cited the following.

- “The Mayor and Council have done a great job – this is the best Downtown we’ve ever had!”
- The private sector has adapted – “we didn’t lose a single business to COVID” – and invested in Downtown

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- There is a high level of “engagement” in Downtown – with the community, the City, and businesses supporting Downtown events.
- Downtown has “world class restaurants,” beautiful Central Park, easy walking access to Center Lake, the newly activated alley and Courthouse Plaza, a YMCA, and a library that has become “a gathering place.”
- Downtown is safe 24/7.
- Warsaw is a “strong entrepreneurial city with strong philanthropy,” two assets that Downtown can build upon and expand.
- The art, murals, and sculptures that have been brought to Downtown add to its character.
- The City has made a tremendous commitment to Downtown with the relocation of City Hall and streetscape improvements, plus City departments do a great job keeping Downtown clean and well-maintained.
- The City and County governments cooperate well.
- Downtown is the hub of a “small city with big city amenities,” a city that is the Orthopedic Capital of the World, the seat of Kosciusko County, and has been designated as a “Bicycle Friendly Community.”
- Downtown, and Warsaw, have “people who want to and are making positive change.”
- Warsaw and Downtown are extremely entrepreneurial and forward-thinking, City Hall supports business and property owners, making it “easy to be an entrepreneur here.”

When asked to consider their priorities for further enhancing Downtown, participants emphasized the following.

- Improving access to Downtown –
 - “By car, by foot, by bike, etc.,”
 - Between Downtown and Winona Lake;
 - Across the railroad tracks and State Route 15.

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- Maintaining “our Values” –
 - Friendly;
 - Welcoming;
 - Family;
 - Inclusivity;
 - Safety;
 - Civility;
 - Philanthropy.
- Businesses being “inviting and welcoming to other communities,” for example by offering menus in Spanish.
- Make Downtown a destination of choice --
 - Where there’s a lot going on;
 - “Market Downtown as a place to visit;”
 - “Make Downtown a fun place to live, work, and play.”

Overall, as a result of a continuing public-private effort, participants agreed that Downtown’s further enhancement would result in the following image.

***The economic, cultural, and civic heartbeat
of a thriving community,
full of food, retail, the arts, and diversity.***

***A Downtown that captures the imagination
and attracts and serves all cultures
as well as new generations.***

***A Downtown that is everybody’s neighborhood –
where we socialize, shop, eat, and play –
and that has amenities that attract residents.***

***A destination of choice,
a place to come to, not drive through,
the place you take family and visitors to spend the day.***

***Where we hang out together, dream together,
and share a common vision,
knowing that together we’re better.***

Recommended Actions

IV. Recommended Actions

There are several factors in place at this time that HyettPalma believes bode extremely well for Downtown's future. These include the following.

- Many improvements have been made in Downtown Warsaw over the last twenty years – by both the private and public sectors. These improvements are highly visible and appear to be very much appreciated by the community.
- It became clear during the course of revisiting the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002***, that community members are not satisfied with Downtown being “good enough.” Instead, there is a strong desire to make Downtown even better than it has become.
- A large number of community members continue to believe that Downtown's health and prosperity are important and are excited about being involved in Downtown's further enhancement.
- There is a new, palpable energy in Downtown, one that was not present in 2002. This energy embodies the belief that very good things are happening in Downtown and even bigger things are possible.
- There is very strong and capable leadership behind, and propelling, Downtown's further enhancement – on the part of those in both the private and public sectors.
- To date, the Downtown enhancement effort has spanned two City administrations and is about to be carried into its third. This would not have occurred without dedicated Mayors and Common Council Members. The commitment of these individuals to Downtown and its brighter future should be recognized and applauded.

Given the above, the Downtown enhancement effort appears to be poised on the brink of being able to successfully undertake big, bold projects. These projects should be combined with continued attention to seemingly small details, for it is often the small things in a Downtown – such as a tattered awning – that are critical to creating an environment and the confidence that makes the larger projects possible.

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HyettPalma is honored to have been a part of Warsaw's Downtown enhancement effort and offers the following strategic course of action designed to propel Downtown on to even greater levels of success over the next seven years. The recommended actions were designed to incorporate the desires of the community, enable Downtown to take advantage of its realistic market opportunities, and leverage Downtown successes realized over the last twenty years.

The recommended actions are divided into the following categories:

- Building Uses
- Real Estate Development & Building Improvements
- Business Development
- Housing
- Streetscape & Maintenance
- Parking
- Multimodal Trail
- Art & Culture
- Additional Anchors & Draws
- Marketing
- Management

Again, the recommended target area is from Fort Wayne Street to Jefferson Street and Lake Street to Indiana Street. The terms "Downtown target area" and "Downtown core" are used interchangeably throughout this document;

It should be noted that "placemaking" is a central concept and goal embodied in the recommendations. As defined by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority:

"Placemaking is an on-going, collaborative process that fosters a greater sense of place within a community. It capitalizes on the strengths of an area to create worthwhile places where people of all ages and abilities can live, work, and play."

In summary, placemaking is a people-centered approach to building strong, vibrant communities and Downtowns.

Building Uses

It should be made clear to the real estate development community that mixed-use buildings and multi-family housing are the desired development forms for Downtown. The reason behind this is that this type of development will lead to and foster Downtown's on-street vibrancy and overall vitality.

- **Mix of Uses** – In what has been defined as the Downtown target area – Fort Wayne Street to Jefferson Street and Lake Street to Indiana Street -- the mix of uses in Downtown's buildings should be:
 - Impulse-oriented businesses – meaning retail, food, art, and entertainment – in first floor spaces;
 - Office and service businesses in second floors; and
 - Housing in second floors and above.

Through the Downtown enhancement effort, property owners should be strongly urged to rent their first floor spaces to impulse-oriented businesses rather than to office and service businesses. This is important because, first, it is impulse-oriented businesses that attract pedestrian activity and encourage pedestrian movement along Downtown's sidewalks. Secondly, in Downtown's core, there are a limited number of buildings – and therefore, first floor building spaces – making it imperative to fill as many of these spaces as possible with impulse-oriented uses.

Over time, a goal of the enhancement effort should be to encourage office and service businesses now located in first floor spaces – within the Downtown target area – to relocate to second floor space within the core or to buildings outside of the core, but still within Downtown.

- **Housing** – Encouraging the development of multi-family housing throughout Downtown should become a major priority of the Downtown enhancement effort – and this should be widely communicated to the development community. This is important, since multi-family housing will not only create an added market for Downtown's businesses, but it will also increase Downtown's vitality by making it a neighborhood again.

Real Estate Development & Building Improvements

A very good job has been done to date regarding Downtown real estate development and building improvements. Now, the following actions should be taken to build on that work.

- **Historic Buildings** – The word should be widely put out that Downtown’s older buildings are very important, since they are what give Downtown its unique visual character and walkable, pedestrian-orientation. Therefore, they should be retained and any exterior improvements should respect and be in keeping with their architectural character.
- **Awnings & Business Signs** – All awnings in Downtown that are torn, dirty, or in any way damaged should be repaired or removed immediately. And all obsolete business signs should be immediately removed. These are some of the seemingly “small” details that create a poor image and negative perception of a Downtown. If a building that has a damaged awning or an obsolete business sign is slated to be rehabbed, the awning/sign should be removed ASAP, without waiting for the rehab to begin.
- **Façade Grant Program** – This is an excellent tool, which has been created and successfully used in Downtown. Now, the program should be made even more effective by the following.
 - Increase the amount offered to \$10,000 per grant.
 - Grow the pool of available funds to between \$100,000 and \$150,000 and, if needed, identify additional funding sources to do so.
 - Create design guidelines for façade improvements, and require they be tied to grant use – because improvements that damage a building’s architectural character also damage Downtown’s overall uniqueness.
 - Retain a preservation architect to offer grant applicants assistance in making preservation-friendly improvements that are also cost-effective.
 - Make façade grants available for awnings and projecting business signs – even if no other improvements are being made to a building’s façade.

- **Revolving Loan Fund** – This is another excellent incentive that has been created to spur Downtown investment. Now, to encourage an even greater level of real estate and building improvement projects, it is suggested that:
 - Loans should not be capped at a \$50,000 maximum;
 - Instead, loan amounts should be flexible and based on both project need and benefit to Downtown, with applications considered on a case-by-case basis; and
 - Improvements that might affect the feasibility of a project – such as elevators and fire suppression measures – should be eligible for funding under this program.

Business Development

Business development should be made a major focus of the Downtown enhancement effort by taking the following actions.

- **Niche** – Downtown’s target area should be positioned as the vibrant *Food, Art, Culture, and Specialty Retail Hub of Kosciusko County* and offer a diverse mix of businesses, with diverse price points, allowing Downtown to serve all markets.
- **Niche Impact** – It has been recognized locally that creating a vibrant niche and mix of businesses will allow Downtown Warsaw to not only attract additional customers, but will make Downtown a very desirable place to live. This is absolutely true. It should also be noted that creating a vibrant mix of businesses in Downtown will make Downtown more appealing to office workers – which will help companies motivate their employees to come back to work in their Downtown offices again.
- **Top Businesses** – The business development effort should target the following types of businesses for location in Downtown’s target area:
 - Restaurants of all types, including fine and casual dining with the maximum amount of outdoor seating opportunities possible;
 - Small, specialty food shops, such as a bakery, deli, meat/fish market, coffee houses, an ice cream shop, with maximum emphasis on locally sourced products;
 - Specialty retail of all types;
 - When market demand justifies, development of a full line grocery store; and
 - Personal care businesses, including beauty shops, barber shops, and spas – in upper floors.

- **Business Attraction** – Downtown Warsaw is fortunate to have business owners who are resilient, entrepreneurial, have demonstrated a willingness and ability to adapt to change, and who are open to the idea of opening additional businesses within Downtown. At the same time, Downtown is fortunate to have building owners and developers who have proven to be excellent recruiters of quality businesses. Therefore, as a first step, Downtown’s business attraction effort should be focused on:
 - Working with, encouraging, and assisting current business owners to open additional businesses in Downtown’s target area – of the types recommended in this document;
 - Encouraging and assisting building owners and developers within Downtown’s core to recruit the types of businesses recommended in this document; and
 - Encouraging and assisting Downtown’s current business owners and current developers/property owners to work together to open the types of businesses being targeted for Downtown’s core.

Once this path of business attraction has been exhausted, attention should be turned to actively scouting for and recruiting businesses located outside of Downtown – and outside of the city – that are of the types being targeted for Downtown’s core.

- **Existing Businesses** – The following steps should be taken to make it possible for Downtown’s current businesses to attract additional customers.
 - Downtown’s impulse-oriented businesses should be made more visible by encouraging projecting business signs (those that are mounted perpendicular to the building’s façade), darker lettering of on-window signs, and brighter lighting of store windows.
 - All food establishments should be encouraged to offer as much outdoor seating for patrons as possible.
 - There is an interest locally in having businesses become dog friendly. Business owners can easily accomplish this by placing a bowl of water outside their shop door.

- **Business Hours** – Varied and numerous attempts, in Downtowns all across the country and over many decades, have proven that it is virtually impossible to get independent business owners to voluntarily keep uniform business hours. It also might not be wise to expect them to, since different types of businesses require different opening hours in order to best serve their customers. Instead of uniform hours, the following should take place to make Downtown business hours more convenient for customers.
 - A goal should be established of having all impulse-oriented businesses within Downtown’s core be open a minimum of 5 days a week.
 - Businesses that manufacture goods in Downtown – without selling those goods out of their Downtown storefront – should be encouraged to do so. If adding a retail component to businesses is not possible, those businesses should be encouraged to relocate outside of Downtown’s core.
 - Owners of impulse-oriented businesses in Downtown’s core should consider shifting to later hours – not longer hours – in order to attract those who work during the business day and younger generations.
- **Connection to Center Lake** – One of the community priorities expressed during the process of defining the *Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002* was to connect the Downtown core to Center Lake by encouraging mixed-use buildings along North Buffalo Street. This is still a community priority, and therefore, efforts to create this connection should be continued.

Housing

As was said earlier, a major priority of the Downtown enhancement effort should be to continue to encourage the development of multi-family housing throughout Downtown – and this should be widely communicated to the development community – since multi-family housing will not only create an added market for Downtown’s businesses, but it will also increase Downtown’s vitality by making Downtown a neighborhood again.

To date, all housing created in Downtown has been high quality and highly sought after, without parking being seen as an obstacle. The next steps in bringing additional housing to Downtown should be as follows.

- **North Buffalo Street and Owens Sites** – The City government should continue full speed ahead, as it has been doing, with efforts to see quality, multi-family housing units constructed on these sites ASAP.
- **Incentivize** – Currently, the City government is taking the progressive position of offering incentives to those willing and able to construct quality, multi-family housing in Downtown. City leadership should be applauded for understanding the importance of Downtown housing and for realizing that incentives are needed at this stage in Downtown’s enhancement. For the time being, the City should continue to incentivize such development projects. It should be noted that at some point in the future, as Downtown’s housing market strengthens, public incentives will no longer be a necessity.
- **Surface Parking Lots** – In the future, as alternative parking is created in Downtown (in the form of a parking structure), additional quality, multi-family housing should be constructed on Downtown’s current surface parking lots.

Streetscape & Maintenance

As a result of the **Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002**, the City upgraded Downtown's streetscape in ways that improved and "softened" the appearance of Downtown's public spaces – something the community requested in 2002 and appears to appreciate today. In addition, since that time, the City has taken over maintenance of Downtown's streetscape elements and does an excellent job of keeping Downtown's public spaces clean and in good repair.

Now the City has determined that the time has come to "refresh" Downtown's streetscape and has developed a plan to do so. The following should be considered as that plan is implemented.

- **All At Once** – If at all possible, the streetscape plan should be implemented as a whole, rather than one block at a time. Doing so will shorten the completion time and limit disruption to businesses.
- **Coordination** – Before any construction begins, it should be ensured that the design of the refreshed Downtown streetscape and the design of the Downtown portion of the Multimodal Trail are coordinated.
- **Signs** –All rusted public parking signs should be replaced. The same is true of all damaged wayfinding signs.
- **Maintenance** – Once the refreshed streetscape improvements are in place, the City should continue its excellent maintenance efforts.
- **Consolidation** – Dumpsters located in Downtown alleys (used by Downtown businesses) should be consolidated and the use of trash compactors should be introduced. This will lessen the number of needed dumpsters, improve the visual appearance of alleys, and allow for additional alley activation. Discussions should also be held with hauling companies to identify ways to reduce the number of recycling bins located in alleys.

Parking

The City has managed Downtown parking well and, at this time, there does not appear to be a shortage of parking in Downtown – except in certain areas at certain times, such as near the County Courthouse when trials are being held and juries are being selected.

To continue to ensure that parking is available and convenient for Downtown’s patrons, the following should occur.

- **Enforcement** – Within the core of Downtown, the City has instituted a 2-hour parking limit for on-street parking. Enforcement of the 2-hour limit must be continued to ensure parking turnover, and therefore availability, of these most convenient spaces for customers.
- **Surface Lots** – As was discussed earlier, Downtown’s historic buildings are what give Downtown its unique visual character. In addition, these buildings should be viewed as an opportunity for Downtown to offer a mix of businesses and housing in often unique spaces. Therefore, it is imperative not to demolish additional historic structures in order to create even more surface parking lots. Word should be broadcast that Downtown’s historic building stock has already been greatly diminished in this way and that continuing on this path is not in the best interest of Downtown or the community.
- **Willingness to Walk** – It has been proven in Downtowns nationwide that the more first-floor, impulse-oriented businesses a Downtown contains, the farther people are willing to walk from parking to those businesses. This is another reason why business development should become a major priority of the Downtown enhancement effort, rather than focusing on parking.
- **Monitor** – The adequacy of Downtown’s parking supply should be continually monitored as additional businesses open in Downtown, and as additional development occurs.
- **Parking Structure** – Over time, as Downtown’s density increases – in terms of number of businesses, number of housing units, and development of additional anchors – construction of a Downtown parking structure will be warranted. The structure’s location should allow it to serve multiple markets, including:

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- County building users;
 - Downtown employees;
 - Downtown customers;
 - Downtown event-goers;
 - Downtown residents;
 - City Hall users; and
 - Users of future anchors that might be developed, such as a hotel, conference center, and performing arts center.
- **Financing** – The parking structure should be built as part of a future development project, such as a hotel or performing arts center, and should be jointly financed by the County, developers, and the City. The structure should not be expected to be revenue generating, unless the demand for Downtown parking increases significantly in the future.

Multimodal Trail

The east and west portions of the Multimodal Trail have been constructed, leaving only the Downtown section incomplete. The concept behind the trail is part of a national movement to create “Complete Streets.”

The US Department of Transportation defines Complete Streets in this way:

“Complete Streets are streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders . . . Complete Streets reduce motor vehicle-related crashes and pedestrian risk, as well as bicyclist risk when well designed bicycle-specific infrastructure is included.”

The Complete Streets movement is not new, with the term having been coined in the early 2000s. According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, as of 2021 over 1,700 Complete Streets policies have been passed in the United States, including those adopted by 37 state governments, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

The Indiana Department of Transportation has adopted a Complete Streets Guideline & Policy and their web site notes that “a number of benefits are realized for Indiana residents (because of Complete Streets):

- **Safety:** Complete Streets can serve as an efficient countermeasure to minimize pedestrian and vehicular crashes in addition to injuries and fatalities.
- **Economic Development:** Complete Streets enhance mobility, connectivity, and accessibility to businesses, offices, retail destinations, schools, parks, residences, and to public transportation. These enhancements often lead to an increased sense of place and community revitalization, including increased commercial and business activity, and tourism and increased property values and land development activities.
- **Reduced Transportation Operating Costs:** Complete Streets can reduce operating costs for both the user and departments of public works.

- Environmental: Complete Streets can result in activities that encourage healthier, active lifestyle choices, such as biking and walking. Supporting these activities benefits the environment by reducing noise and harmful vehicle emissions.”

Complete Streets are the future, and the future is now. Therefore, the following is recommended.

- Due to myriad community benefits afforded by Complete Streets, the Downtown section of the Multimodal Trail should be completed as quickly as possible.
- Since there is debate locally regarding the exact design and location of the Downtown portion, additional informed public discussion should take place regarding these two aspects of the project.
- The City has retained consultants to study the design and location of the trail’s Downtown section. Consideration should be given to having the same consultants return to assist with further, open, community discussion.
- The goal of further discussions should be for the community to reach a reasonable resolution regarding the design and location of the trail’s Downtown portion and to ACT on that decision ASAP.

Art & Culture

A good deal – and a very good job – has been done in bringing quality public art to Downtown. And, efforts to place additional pieces of public art in Downtown are underway.

- **Performing Arts** – Now, it is time to make art a growing and integral part of Downtown’s character by including performing arts in Downtown’s offerings. At a minimum, this should include:
 - Music in Downtown’s food and drink establishments;
 - Performing arts of all types at Downtown events, such as the Farmers and Artisans Market; and
 - Performing arts in Downtown’s public spaces, such as the Courthouse Square and City Hall parking lot.
- **Multi-Cultural Art** – Art should be embraced as an opportunity to create a Downtown that reflects, includes, and invites all cultures of those living in Warsaw and Kosciusko County.
- **Streetscape As Art** – Whenever possible, Downtown’s streetscape elements should not simply be functional, but should also be pieces of art. This has been accomplished elsewhere by installing “art benches” and “art bike racks.”
- **Covered Event Space** – There is a great desire locally for a covered event space that would allow Downtown events to be held in inclement weather. The easiest and most cost-effective way to create such a space would be to erect an open air pavilion on an existing surface parking lot. The ideal location for this would be the City Hall parking lot.
- **Transmission Pole** – The black, 80 foot tall transmission pole located in Central Park, known locally as Warsaw’s “Eiffel Tower,” should be transformed into an eye-catching piece of public art. This could be accomplished in many ways, such as by creatively painting and/or lighting the pole. Local artists should be invited to submit designs to the Warsaw Public Arts Commission for review and selection.

- **Performing Arts Center** – As market conditions and funding allow, a goal of the Downtown enhancement effort should be to see that a performing arts center is constructed in Downtown. The performing arts center should:
 - Be a modern facility of the highest quality;
 - Offer multi-cultural programming, as a way to attract all communities to Downtown;
 - Serve and draw users from the entire region;
 - Be named the “Warsaw Performing Arts Center;”
 - Incorporate the award winning Wagon Wheel Center for the Arts, now located in Warsaw, if desired by that institution’s leadership; and
 - Be funded through a private-public regional effort.

It should be noted that Warsaw’s proximity to both Indianapolis and Chicago presents a tremendous opportunity to attract nationally and internationally known entertainers when they perform in those cities. Warsaw’s performing arts center would offer those entertainers a more intimate venue with excellent acoustics and sight lines – a true alternative to large city venues. An excellent example of a city that has successfully gotten its performing arts center on the tour schedules of entertainers performing in larger, nearby cities is Westhampton Beach, New York.

Additional Anchors & Draws

There appears to be a great desire locally to see the following additional anchors and draws created within Downtown:

- OrthoWorx business incubator/accelerator;
- Health clinics;
- Additional corporate offices;
- Hotel/conference center; and
- A grocery store.

Except for the first item on the list, these should be seen as longer-term projects that will become economically feasible as Downtown's market strengthens.

HyettPalma supports the addition of these anchors and draws to Downtown, since their presence will cement Downtown as a true, multi-functional regional hub.

Marketing

Currently, a number of events are held in Downtown and individual business owners advertise their Downtown establishments. However, there is not a plan in place to market Downtown as a whole. This should be rectified in the following manner.

- **Events** – Events currently held in Downtown – such as the Farmers & Artisans Market, Food Truck Fridays, Taste of Kosciusko, etc. – bring life and vitality to Downtown and position Downtown as a fun destination. Therefore, these very important events should be continued. And, as mentioned earlier, every effort should be made to add performing arts to Downtown events, whenever possible, and to make the events multi-cultural in nature.
- **Festival Streets** – These are streets that are pedestrianized – meaning closed to vehicular traffic – for a specific number of hours. During these times, the street involved is often turned into a block party, with food, music, and businesses open later than usual. The street can be closed to traffic in a simple, cost-effective manner by using barricades. And, if the “festival” becomes so popular that it is held on a regular basis, retractable bollards can be placed at each end of the street. Using the festival streets concept would be another way to bring activity, vitality, and a multi-cultural dimension to Downtown. A “Downtown By Night” block party could be held one Friday or Saturday evening by closing a Downtown street with barricades. If successful, it could become a monthly event during Spring, Summer, and Fall with retractable bollards installed. An excellent example of such an event is “Clematis By Night,” held weekly in Downtown West Palm Beach, Florida.
- **Social Media & Local Media** – Several groups do an excellent job of keeping the community informed through their social media platforms, such as the Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce and the Kosciusko County Convention and Visitors Bureau. It is suggested that all groups involved in marketing Downtown happenings come together and devise a coordinated strategy for social media postings. Doing so will allow a uniform image and a more consistent schedule of postings to be created for Downtown.

Warsaw is fortunate to have a local newspaper and a local radio station. And, both appear to be very willing to report on Downtown’s enhancement. Therefore, an active and consistent effort should be made to reach out to both outlets with any Downtown “news” – and that term should be defined broadly to cover any Downtown happenings, improvements, or changes.

- **Future Lure Brochure** – In the future, as Downtown’s business mix and diversity of uses broadens, a printed brochure should be produced for Downtown and placed throughout the County at all major locations where locals and visitors gather. For an example of such a brochure, please see The Village Visitors Guide produced for the Village of Winona.
- **Blur the Lines** – The Downtown marketing effort should be used to “blur the lines” between – and bring more closely together – the following:
 - Downtown Warsaw and Winona Lake;
 - Downtown and Grace College students, faculty, and staff;
 - Downtown and users of the Multimodal Trail, the Ride Share program, and area-wide Blue Spaces; and
 - City and County governments, as involved in Downtown.

Management

Currently, several entities are directly involved in bringing about Downtown's enhancement, including the Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce, Warsaw Main Street, Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation (KEDCO), the City, and the County. These entities have done an excellent job in implementing the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2002*** and in realizing significant improvements in Downtown. However, the following gaps exist and must be filled in order to propel Downtown on to an even greater level of economic success.

- **Downtown Partnership** – By definition, a Downtown's enhancement must involve multiple entities in order to be successful, because no single entity has the capacity to do all that is required. This can be seen in Warsaw where the above groups, as well as business owners and property owners, are all diligently working on Downtown's enhancement. However, these efforts are largely uncoordinated, which can lead to lack of focus, frustration, and missed opportunities. Formation of a Downtown Partnership is essential. The role of the partnership would be to implement the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2023***. The partnership should be a working group that meets monthly to discuss where progress is successfully being made and where implementation has stalled. At a minimum, the partnership should include:
 - The Mayor of Warsaw;
 - A Warsaw Common Council Member;
 - A Kosciusko County Commissioner;
 - The Director of the Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce;
 - The head of Warsaw Main Street;
 - The Director of KEDCO;
 - The CEO of OrthoWorx;
 - The Director of the Kosciusko County Convention and Visitors Bureau;
 - A Downtown business owner; and
 - A Downtown property owner.

It is not necessary for the Downtown Partnership to be an incorporated entity, or to retain staff, but the group must meet on a regular basis to coordinate and oversee implementation of the Downtown enhancement effort.

- **Downtown Director** – At this time, the Director of the Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce is in essence also serving as the Downtown Director. Downtown and the enhancement effort have evolved to the point where a full-time Downtown Director is needed if the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2023*** is to be implemented in a timely and coordinated manner. The Downtown Director could be either a new City employee or a new Chamber employee. The Director would “staff” the Downtown Partnership, but would not be an employee of the Partnership. Downtown’s economic enhancement should be the Director’s primary focus. Downtown special events should continue to be the purview of Warsaw Main Street.
- **Adopt** – HyettPalma strongly urges the Warsaw Common Council to adopt the ***Warsaw Downtown Action Agenda 2023*** as the City’s official guide for Downtown’s further enhancement and development.

HyettPalma

Priorities

V. Priorities

The enhancement of a Downtown is not a linear process. A linear process would entail working on one project until it is completed and then moving on to the next project.

Instead, enhancing a Downtown is similar to juggling: keeping several objects in the air at all times. In this analogy, each “object” would represent a necessary step or project in the enhancement process. In a successful Downtown enhancement effort, multiple projects are implemented simultaneously. That same approach must be taken in Warsaw.

HyettPalma has compiled the following list of priorities at the request of the community. Implementation of these priorities should overlap. In particular, Priorities 2 and 3 below should be implemented simultaneously.

Priority 1

- Form Downtown Partnership.
- Downtown Partnership members divide implementation responsibilities among themselves.
- Begin implementation.
- Hire Downtown Director.

Priority 2

- Develop multi-use buildings on North Buffalo Street and Owens sites.
- Complete Downtown portion of Multimodal Trail.
- Refresh Downtown streetscape.

Priority 3

- Increase business mix and number of impulse-oriented businesses in Downtown Core.
- Increase visual arts, performing arts, and multi-cultural opportunities.
- Retain, rehab, and fill historic buildings in Downtown core.

Priority 4

- Market Downtown.

Priority 5

- Develop additional anchors and draws, in conjunction with structured parking.