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SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

AN ANALYSIS OF BRICK AND MORTAR RETAIL IN DOWNTOWN BLOOMINGTON, IN
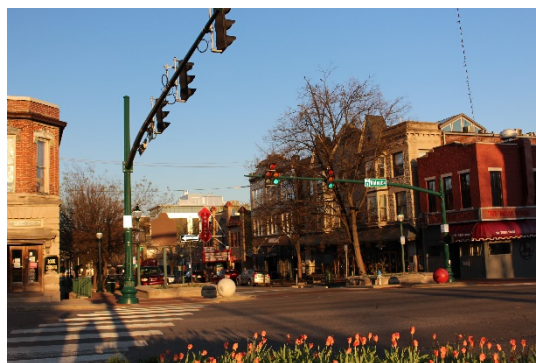
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For:

DOWNTOWN BLOOMINGTON INC.

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Executive Summary

Downtown Bloomington is a lively and walkable district that is home to unique restaurants, bars, shops, hotels, venues, and offices, as well as apartment buildings. It also contains a significant number of vacant spaces and buildings that require attention. The city encourages the development of more commercial space downtown while brick and mortar stores are giving way to online retail.

Downtown Bloomington Inc. along with The Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, the Bloomington Economic Development Corporation, and the City of Bloomington Department of Economic and Sustainable Development, are actively working to strengthen downtown. Although each organization has a different perspective of the area and a different definition of its geographic limits, they collaborate on several projects. These organizations have also identified gaps that they would like assistance in addressing. There are several data sets related the downtown area, but there is no central database for this information. Furthermore, there is a need to inventory the tenants to establish a baseline for analysis and planning.

This past semester, our capstone class, on behalf of and in collaboration with the client, Downtown Bloomington Inc., analyzed the state of brick and mortar retail in Downtown Bloomington, IN. We collected data that served two purposes; provide the client with information regarding the state of downtown retail and formulate recommendations to improve retail vitality.

This final report (1) provides research that identifies best practices for addressing empty storefronts, social infrastructure, and downtown livability (as established by comparable communities), (2) calculates the vacancy rate for retail space in the City of Bloomington, (3) identifies the challenges and opportunities that impact downtown commercial space, (4) organizes the gathered data utilizing Geographic Information Systems, and (5) presents operationalizable recommendations to the City of Bloomington, IN.

Our report highlights several conclusions about the state of downtown retail in Bloomington:

1) The challenges facing Downtown Bloomington stakeholders are in line with those faced by other municipal downtowns of similar size and character
2) Having more data available on the status of downtown retail will help stakeholders better address the challenges of enhancing the region
3) Obtaining spatial data of downtown retail helps discover some patterns that may otherwise be left unseen
4) There are internal barriers between downtown stakeholders, including business owners, the city government, and organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and DBI that represent starting points for discussing ways to improve downtown

Ultimately, this report provides a launching point for further research. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the future state of downtown retail. The data gathered and presented below represents a starting point for stakeholders in determining the best way to proceed in revitalizing downtown. We hope that the data collected, and subsequent recommendations are useful tools that our client, Downtown Bloomington Inc, and other downtown stakeholders will utilize as they work to create a downtown that showcases the best of Bloomington.

Introduction

Bloomington, IN is a city of 84,000 in Southwest Indiana. It is located 45 miles south of Indianapolis and is the home of Indiana University's main campus. While many know Bloomington as a vibrant college town, the city also boasts a strong community of permanent residents. One of the primary strengths of Bloomington is its downtown region which is home to 74+ brick and mortar retail stores, including antique shops, bookshops, clothing shops, music shops, beauty salons, and other specialty stores.

The Downtown Bloomington area is defined by Rogers Street on the west, Indiana Avenue on the east, 3rd Street on the south, and 7th street on the north. This area closely shares a border with Indiana University, which begins on the east side of Indiana Avenue.

With a grid street layout and a concentrated area of attractions, this region is active with bicyclists and pedestrians. In fact, the League of American Bicyclists recognized Bloomington as a Gold-Level "Bicycle Friendly Community" (Visit Bloomington, 2018). In addition to the foot traffic, the downtown area keeps busy as it bustles with 25+ community events throughout the year. Residents and visitors have opportunities to attend festivals, performances, fairs, and holiday celebrations within this space. One of the city's most popular events is the Taste of Bloomington, which is a one-day event that brings 40+ restaurants on site to offer samples of local food. In addition, the city hosts the annual Lotus Music Festival, which is a four to five-day event that

attracts more than 12,000 people to Bloomington to celebrate the diversity of various cultures through art and music (Lotus, 2019). The city also boasts a vibrant Farmers Market that encourages support of local businesses and artists. The Farmers Market operates every Saturday in April through October, with a special Holiday Market in December.

Moreover, Downtown Bloomington has been able to maintain a strong relationship with Indiana University. This relationship is valuable for both units; The downtown area benefits from having a large pool of consumers within walking distance who can offer their time, money, and talent to community events and local businesses, and in return, Indiana University faculty, staff, students, and visitors have an opportunity to further their interests by engaging with local businesses. Furthermore, these entities partner together to sponsor expansive community programs and fundraisers, like the Hoosier Half Marathon & 5K.

The result is a vibrant and walkable downtown region that combines retail with a plethora of restaurants and bars that appeal to town residents and college students alike. With these attributes in mind, Bloomington is continually searching for new opportunities to grow, learn, and improve.

Project Summary

Downtown Bloomington Inc. (DBI) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to revitalizing the downtown region of Bloomington, IN. DBI collaborates with a variety of stakeholders in the community to promote the benefits of a strong downtown, facilitate public-private partnerships, and foster unified leadership that is dedicated to supporting downtown (Visit Bloomington, 2018).

As with other accredited Main Street America Programs, DBI is concerned with the future of retail businesses. As consumers increasingly buy their products online, the viability of in-store retail has come into question. Brick and mortar retail stores are vital to the walkability of downtown and are a natural complement to the many restaurants and bars in the area. Furthermore, Bloomington residents, officials, and retailers have a vested interest in maintaining a low vacancy rate in the downtown area because vacant storefronts often attract litter, graffiti, and homeless individuals. These factors deter customers from visiting nearby establishments and can hinder walkability. Unfortunately, accurate vacancy rates are difficult to calculate because many cities do not maintain a comprehensive database that records and updates this type of information.

In an effort to maintain Downtown Bloomington's appeal, DBI has requested data collection for the current status of retail in the downtown area, a comparison of our findings with other cities of similar size and character, and recommendations that will help revitalize the city. DBI has requested information about the location of the retail properties, the type of retail establishments, and the policies/practices that have proven effective for business owners.

This report will first evaluate existing literature regarding brick and mortar retail and the future of downtowns across the United States. Then, it will present observations gathered from comparable cities, which have been identified as reasonable benchmarks for Bloomington, IN. Specifically, this section will evaluate the policies and practices that work in these cities and posit strategies that the city government and DBI may adopt in Bloomington. Following a discussion on comparable cities, the report will present the

data that our team collected from Downtown Bloomington retailers. The report will conclude with several recommendations that our team has formulated based on the associated findings.

COVID-19

Before presenting our findings, we must include a discussion of COVID-19 (commonly referred to as the Coronavirus) and the effects of this pandemic on both our research and the future of downtown retail. The policies enacted by federal, state, and local leaders to slow the spread of the virus and relieve our healthcare systems has had a profound effect on businesses across Downtown Bloomington. Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb's mandatory stay-at-home order, which was issued on March 24th and reissued throughout the generation of this report, has required businesses to temporarily shut their doors to in-person shopping, dining, and services (ISG, 2020). For business owners, this policy is financially devastating since most small businesses do not have the cash reserves necessary to survive more than two weeks without in-store services. Many of these local businesses are eligible for federal loans and grants administered through the U.S. Small Business Administration, and funding collected from the Food and Beverage Tax from the city. However, these funds are not guaranteed.

The magnitude by which the pandemic has affected daily life in the United States has also raised questions about what communities will look like once the economy reopens and social-distancing measures are repealed. These questions are of particular importance to restaurant and small business owners who have concerns about the viability of their enterprises. While we do not have the answers to these questions, we are confident that our recommendations are still applicable beyond this current crisis. In addition, we believe that our analysis will provide useful
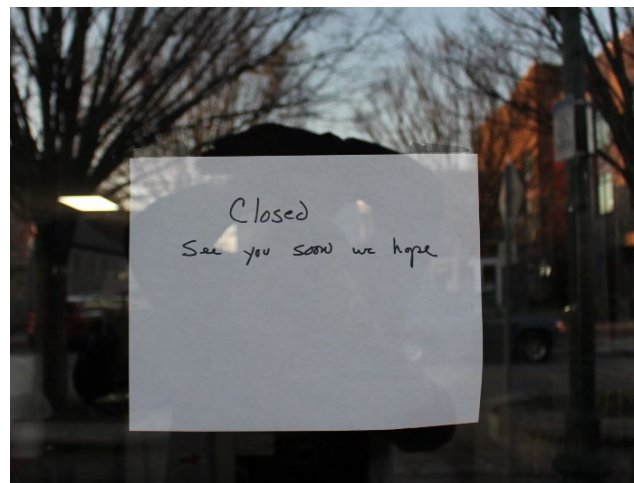
tools and strategies for DBI and other stakeholders to enhance the vitality of Downtown Bloomington in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Considering COVID-19, we anticipated the survey response rate from Bloomington retailers to be relatively low. The virus outbreak coincided with the heart of our data collection phase and consequently hindered our ability to collect as much data as we would have liked. Fortunately, we were able to collect enough data from Bloomington retailers and comparable cities prior to the initial stay-at-home order to generate operationalizable solutions that will positively impact the future of Bloomington's retail environment.

Literature Review

In order to better understand the challenges facing Downtown Bloomington, it was necessary to examine existing literature on the state of brick and mortar stores across the country. In general, improvements in technology have changed the landscape of how consumers buy and compare prices for products and services. The empirical question becomes, 'how can brick and mortar retailers continue?' The answer to that question seems to be that more brick and mortar retailers are incorporating strategies that bring customers to their stores by creating an experience, while also providing a convenient shopping experience. In other words, retail stores are adapting to survive in a world where in-person shopping is becoming less common.

Diane Hoskins, in the Urban Land Magazine's article "Three Trends Shaping Retail's Great Transformation" and a New York Times article by Michael Corkey, "Hard Lessons (Thanks, Amazon) Breathe New Life into Retail Stores," examine how retailers can find a balance between the

convenience of online shopping and the community that can be found in an offline experience. According to Genseler's Experience Index for Retail, 49% of shopping time is focused on the purchase and making efficient transactions. The other 51% of the time is a person's interest in getting value from the time they spend shopping (Hoskins, 2019). Hoskins and Corkey highlight that retailers must be cognizant of these two types of experiences and bring them together. Ideally, retailers should have transitions that are fast and efficient. The customer should be able to go into a store and within minutes find and purchase what they need quickly.

Many retailers, such as Target and Walmart, have created options where consumers can order items online and pick them up in the store or make returns at the store. These practices focus on creating a quick and easy consumer experience. Unlike many other retailers, stores like Target have seen growth and are planning large scale renovations (Corkey, 2018). At the same time, stores should have the ability to support shoppers who

are looking for more of an experience. The physical space can contribute to creating this experience and even a community. This idea is something that Starbucks, and many other coffee shops, have effectively created. Customers have the option of coming in quickly to get their order, however, coffee shops are also known for creating a comfortable space for people to stay to meet with friends or to work (Hoskins, 2019).

Hoskins further highlights that, in order to successfully create a physical environment that is welcoming to customers, you have to have strong customer service. When you are making shopping into an experience, the people working in the store must be correctly trained to support that experience. She further elaborates and discusses how 76% of younger shoppers (ages 13-19) prefer shopping in physical stores (Hoskins, 2019). Further, when brands are able to forge meaningful connections, they are more likely to be considered a consumer's favorite place.

While these articles focus on larger chain retailers, the suggestions provided can be applied to local businesses as well. Ultimately, these articles don't shy away from the fact that consumers have embraced online shopping. There are strategies that small retailers can incorporate to be successful, offering quick pick-ups, and creating spaces that promote connection and experience. This has become increasingly important for small retailers to capitalize on their differences from stores like Target and Walmart. This emphasis on what makes them different can be invaluable for their success.

In an article by ICMA's Kim Briesemeister, she argues that the current 'Retail Apocalypse' provides a unique opportunity for local retailers to innovate and be creative. While the article most directly addresses bigger box stores and malls, it also provides suggestions that may be applicable to smaller retail in a downtown environment. This article's suggestions include those of the New York Times, but also recommends that retailers utilize pop up shops (Briesemeister, 2019). This recommendation provides opportunities for retailers, for a set amount of time, to see if their models are successful. ICMA, along with Paul Roberts from the Seattle Times, suggest allowing more than one store to occupy a single space to allow for a lower bar for entry and multi-use stores to draw customers and businesses back (Roberts, 2020). ICMA and the Seattle

Times both suggest cities identify their own processes that may be of a burden to retailers wanting to open stores in the area (Briesemeister, 2019). Those burdens may include outdated systems, unnecessary bureaucracy, failing infrastructures that make it difficult for customers to utilize commercial spaces, zoning that is unlikely to lead to a more walkable and inviting spaces, low parking availability, and surmounting rent costs (Briesemeister, 2019) (Roberts, 2020).

Brick-and-mortar retailers undoubtedly face challenges moving forward; however, there are strategies that they can incorporate to be successful. The customer experience is an important piece. Incorporating online elements creates an efficient and easy process that customers are looking for. While many customers appreciate the convenience of online shopping, others are still interested in having an experiential element that draws them to a physical space. Incorporating new ideas like pop-up stores and multi-use spaces lowers the barrier to entry and often incorporates an experiential element that draws in customers. Cities can further support retailers by considering infrastructure elements like walkability, parking, and zoning. By continuing to evolve and incorporate new strategies, retailers can be successful.

Comparable Cities

One of our tasks was to research the downtowns of comparable cities in order to analyze Bloomington in relation to cities of similar size and character. Determining the challenges and strengths of other city downtown regions helps us better understand Bloomington's position relative to cities identified by the client. Therefore, we designed our research to answer two questions:

1) *Are the challenges facing Bloomington's downtown retail common to other comparable cities?*

2) *What strategies have other cities adopted that would benefit Downtown Bloomington?*

Methodology

We examined the retail environment of eight college towns that DBI identified as comparable to Bloomington, IN. They are: Champaign, IL; Columbia, MO; Iowa City, IA; Ithaca, NY; Lawrence, KS; Lexington, KY; Lincoln, NE; and West Lafayette, IN. Project members contacted at least one major retailer, one representative from the community's Chamber of Commerce, and a city staff member (preferably from an economic development department) from each locality to collect information about the cities' retail environment.

Two Google Form surveys were developed and administered to aid data collection. One survey is designed to address the market conditions for retailers and one survey is designed to capture the community context of each municipality. The surveys (full surveys can be found in [Appendix A]) inquired about;

- General downtown information (e.g., geographic boundaries of the city, walkability, estimated vacancy rate, etc.)
- Strengths and challenges of the downtown area
- Governmental strategies or policies affecting downtown retail businesses
- Recent major and future development projects in the downtown area
- The local university's relationship with downtown retail and/or the impact of university proximity

Survey Engagement

We received responses from twelve city officials or chamber of commerce members across seven municipalities:

Municipality	Respondent Titles
Champaign, IL	○ Executive Director of Champaign Center Partnership ○ Senior Planner for Economic Development
Iowa City, IA	○ Executive Director of Iowa City Downtown District ○ Economic Development Coordinator
Ithaca, NY	○ Deputy Director for Economic Development ○ Executive Director, Downtown Ithaca Alliance
Lafayette, IN	○ Economic Development Director ○ Economic Development Manager
Lawrence, KS	○ Vice President of Economic Development
Lexington, KY	○ Director of Economic Development and Placemaking
Lincoln, NE	○ Director of Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Dept. ○ Senior Long-Range Planner for County Government

In addition, we received responses from eight retail representatives across six municipalities:

Municipality	Retailers
Champaign, IL	○ Jane Addams Book Shop (Bookstore)
Columbia, MO	○ Fringe Boutique (Clothing Store)
Iowa City, IA	○ The Haunted Bookshop (Bookstore) ○ Iowa Artisans Gallery (Local Art Store)
Ithaca, NY	○ Benjamin Peters (Clothing Store) ○ Jillian's Drawers (Childcare Accessories)
Lawrence, KS	○ The Dusty Bookshelf (Bookstore)
Lincoln, NE	○ Lincoln Running Company (Shoes/Running Accessories)

Findings

Representatives from each municipality reported restaurants/bars, retail stores, office spaces, entertainment/experience, and lodging establishments in their downtown areas. Approximately 50% of respondents listed that restaurants and bars account for a majority of downtown business, while only 16.7% of respondents listed that retail stores account for a majority of downtown business (i.e., Steve Kelly, the VP of Economic Development for Lawrence, KS and Wendy Ford, the Economic Development Coordinator for Iowa City, IA).

Most of the cities we studied have not adopted a formalized system for tracking, calculating, and reporting vacancy rates. For example, the City of Lincoln does not have any process in place to track this type of information, the City of Champaign provides a ranged response between 10-15%, and two Iowa City representatives offered inconsistent findings (i.e., 3% versus 10%). Alternatively, the City of Lexington was able to report more defined figures. According to Ethan Howard, the Director of Economic Development and Placemaking, the 2019 vacancy rate was 5.2% for the ground floor area of their downtown core. Specific vacancy rate estimations parceled out by city can be found in [Appendix A.1].

Furthermore, all survey respondents rated their city as highly "walkable." The lowest score awarded was an 8 out of 10, and the highest score awarded was a 10 out of 10. Representatives directed attention to well-lit sidewalks, public art, proximity of shops, kiosks with maps, improved retail signage, cleanliness, and streetscape amenities (e.g., planters, trees, curb extensions).

Strengths of the Downtown Areas

37.5% of retail businesses listed a downtown organization that promoted the area and advocated for local businesses (similar to DBI) as one of the strengths of their downtown areas. An additional 37.5% of retailers listed that restaurants and bars are a big strength of downtown because they attract a large amount of people to the area.

City officials were confident that the entertainment options provided by the downtown areas were a strength with 33% listing their theaters, art museums, etc. Approximately 25% of city officials listed the quantity and quality of bars and restaurants, a local city center or central gathering space, the historic nature of the downtown, and the compactness or walkability of the downtown as major strengths of their city area.

Challenges of the Downtown Areas

Respondents to the two surveys emphasized different challenges facing their downtown areas, which could suggest a disconnect between the two groups. 42% of city officials reported that the biggest challenge facing the downtown area as a whole is high rent costs for retail spaces, while only 25% of retailers listed high rent costs as the biggest challenge of the downtown area. 75% of all respondents believed that parking is the biggest challenge to the downtown area.

50% of retailers reported that the competition from online shopping was the biggest challenge facing downtown retail stores. Furthermore, 30% of retail owners felt that the spacing of downtown retail stores was their biggest challenge because the stores were too spread out, and subsequently hindered walkability. Approximately 50% of retailers agreed with city officials that the competition imposed by online shopping was the biggest challenge for downtown retailers. Additionally, 50% of retailers report that simply getting customers in the door was their biggest challenge, while 37.5% said high rent costs was the biggest challenge facing downtown retail stores.

Governmental strategies or policies affecting downtown retail businesses

Every respondent indicated that their city sponsors community-wide events downtown. Retailers reported that they participate in these events on an average of 3 to 4 times a year. Despite the high level of participation, none of the retailers listed these community-sponsored events as a strength of the downtown, which might indicate that they do not find these events to be integral to business success.

Retailers indicated challenges in navigating the government bureaucracy, such as completing forms and requirements to ensure their business was in good standing. The City of Ithaca, New York has attempted to make the process of establishing and maintaining a business less complicated by creating a technical specialist position within the Planning, Building, Zoning & Economic Development department. This position acts as a liaison between the business owners and the government offices. As per the Ithaca webpage, this person "facilitates zoning, Site Plan Review, environmental review, and any other city council, board, or committee issues facing a project" (City of Ithaca, 2020). A business owner can rely on this person to assist them with any question or problems that may arise in the process. Decreasing the gap between a business and the departments that they are working with is seen as a strength for Ithaca because of the success of this position.

In order to alleviate the pain point regarding parking in the downtown area, Champaign, IL has instituted a new tiered parking system. Parking rates are based on a tiered structure with the rates decreasing in cost the further from downtown you park, which encourages people to park or visit areas of downtown outside the city center. Additionally, Champaign has implemented a "first offence forgiveness program," which waives the first parking ticket an individual receives each year. The city waives the first offence by issuing a notice on the car informing the driver that the city has waived their first parking ticket. "Under the new program, the first violation is free, while the second in a 365-day period is $15. The third and fourth violations are $25 each, and all further violations are $35. After 365 days of no tickets, drivers revert back to a warning. Before, all violations were $10" (Hettinger, 2019).

This program eliminates some of the hesitation of parking downtown for individuals who are less familiar with the area and the associated parking rules. For individuals who receive more than one parking ticket each year, Champaign has instituted a tiered fine structure to make it more affordable for individuals with fewer offenses, and curb repeat offenders.

Permitting and zoning policies can be restrictive and hinder new retail stores. Nancy Bird, the Executive Director of the Iowa City Downtown District, explains that zoning restrictions can be troublesome when the city does not zone for retail space near other retail spaces. Having retail stores clustered together helps with foot traffic, and when developers don't understand this, they then "provide too much for the market in the wrong location" (Bird, 2020).

Champaign, IL has altered their zoning ordinances related to parking requirements. TJ Blakeman, the Senior Planner for Economic Development, explained, "we have recently amended our zoning ordinance to eliminate the parking requirements on new construction. This has allowed more space to be devoted to retail" (Blakeman, 2020). By removing this restriction and allowing for more retail space, Champaign is encouraging new retail stores to move into their downtown with more ease.

Champaign, IL has a "small business incentive program" aimed at providing one-time assistance to a new or existing business in the city. This program is open to all forms of small businesses (retail, restaurant, bar, entertainment, etc.). Under the program, the city will cover between 50%-75% of a one-time service costs up to $7,500 of legal, marketing, training, financial or payroll services. Businesses are chosen based on proven financial need (City of Champaign, 2020).

Although not an official government-sponsored strategy, the gift card program created by Downtown Lawrence Inc (DLI), an organization located in Lawrence, KS and is similar to DBI, is noteworthy. DLI has created a gift card that can be used at over 130 businesses located in their downtown area (retail, restaurants, bars, entertainment, etc.). Once the businesses agree to participate in the program, they are included on DLI's website and brochures for the gift card program. This allows DLI to drive consumers to downtown businesses, and allows the businesses to benefit from the increase in consumers and additional marketing outside of their own.

Recent and future development projects in downtown areas

The trend for recent development projects in the downtown areas show that mixed-use development was the most commonly utilized. These projects primarily consisted of residential space, office space, and parking garages.

Looking to the future, four cities (Champaign, IL; Iowa City, IA; Ithaca, NY; West Lafayette, IN) are focusing on mixed use developments. These developments will incorporate parking, housing, retail space, and office space. Most cities are embarking on smaller-scale projects, like Ithaca, NY which is redeveloping two out of three of their current public parking garages. For example, one proposal suggests replacing the parking garages with 218 affordable housing units, a 49,000 sq foot conference center, and 350 additional parking spaces (Butler, 2019). On a larger scale, Champaign, IL is in the first phases of a $200 million development called *The Yards*. This project will expand the transit center, add new hotel/conference center, residential, office, retail spaces, and install a 5,000-seat arena that will be used for University of Illinois athletics (MTD, 2018).

Both Champaign, IL and Lexington, KY are incorporating parks or public spaces into their future development plans. Champaign, IL is focusing on public space in order to add more greenspace to their downtown area: "We are in the design phase to construct a new City Plaza in the heart of Downtown to provide much needed green space and gathering space in Downtown" (Blakeman, 2020). Meanwhile, Lexington, KY is implementing a unique idea to add greenspace to make their downtown more walkable. "The addition of a world-class linear park along Vine Street, known as the Town Branch Commons, will vastly change our pedestrian focus and increase the walkability of our Downtown" (Howard, 2020).

Local university impact on downtown retail

Respondents to the city/chamber questionnaire report that students typically push for bars, coffee shops, and restaurants, but do not shop locally. Moreover, representatives state that university presence still has a positive impact on retail environments. According

to Steve Kelly, the Vice President for Economic Development in Lawrence, KS, the proximity of the University of Kansas to the downtown district increases pedestrian foot traffic, and affiliated events (e.g., commencement ceremonies, sporting events, student move-in) attract regular visitors to the shopping centers (Kelly, 2020). Representatives from Lafayette, IN, and Iowa City, IA, and Lincoln, NE, and Lexington, KY have reported similar trends.

Seven of the eight retail respondents stated that they have no formal relationship with the university/universities in their town, however university affiliates (e.g., faculty, staff, students, student families) are customers who engage in regular business. Lincoln Running Company in Nebraska has witnessed this trend through irregular fluctuations in business; on days of sporting events business will slow, and the day after sporting events business will spike higher than usual.

Alternatively, the Haunted Bookshop in Iowa City has established a formal relationship with the University of Iowa. This business supports the library, graduate student union, faculty union, and student groups in various ways, including assistance with literary projects, the provision of study spaces, the offering of book clubs, and a venue for poetry slams. Furthermore, Iowa City Artisan's Gallery benefits from university presence as they often receive art contributions from University of Iowa staff.

Conclusion

As evidenced above, studying the state of downtown retail in cities of comparable size and character to Bloomington can provide useful analysis as we consider ways to enhance Downtown Bloomington. Understanding the problems facing other municipalities helps us understand the challenges faced by stakeholders in Bloomington. Our conversations with a variety of downtown stakeholders in other college towns across the Midwest has given us a baseline by which to analyze Downtown Bloomington.
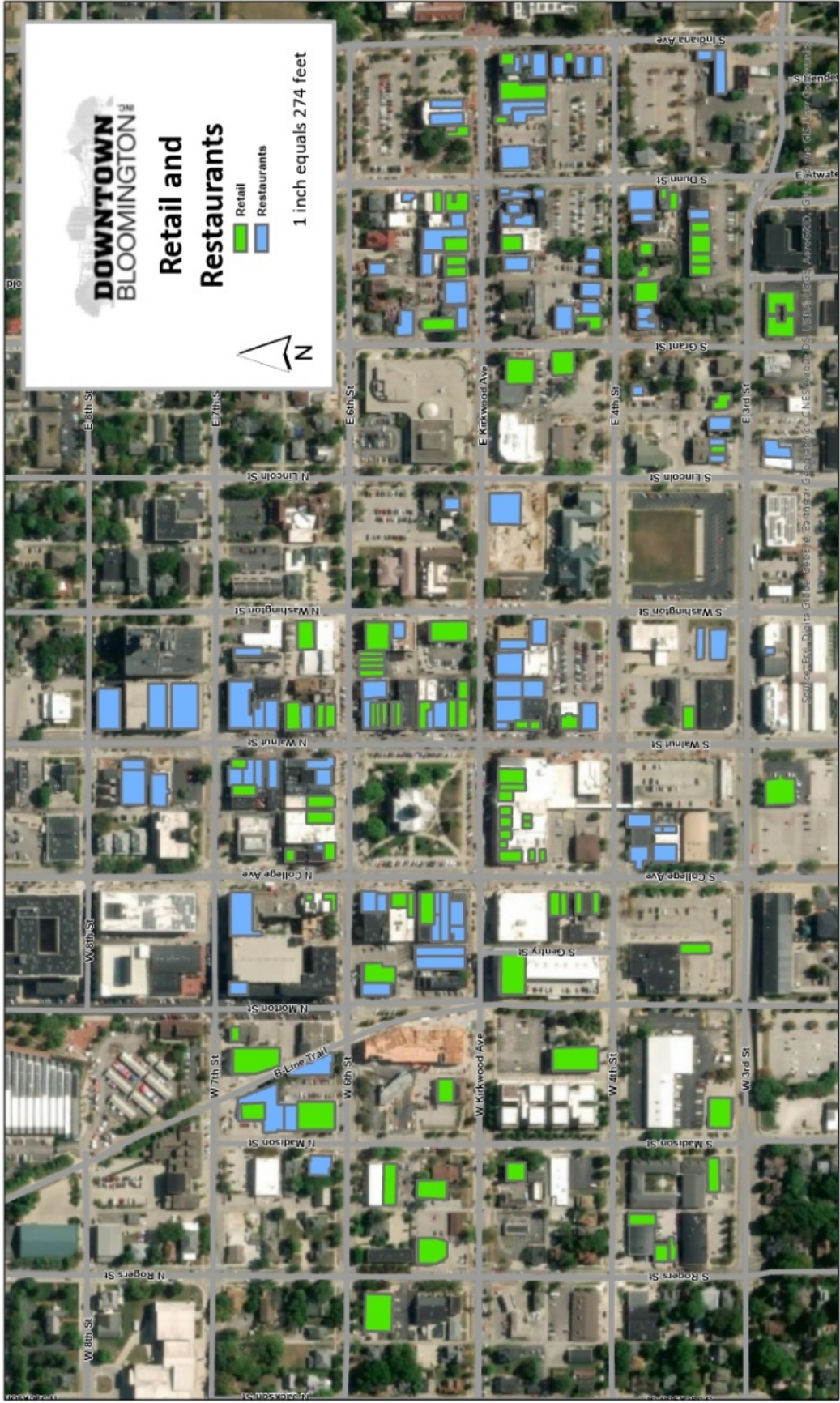
Downtown Bloomington Retail

In order to understand how Downtown Bloomington Inc. can improve the vitality of its retail, we collected data from brick and mortar stores in the downtown area. This data was gathered in an effort to provide DBI with a solid database about the types of retail stores that exist downtown and the characteristics of these stores. After collecting information regarding the location of brick and mortar retail stores in our designated area, we compiled our data into the map which is displayed on the following page.

Methodology

Our Bloomington Data team identified 74 different brick and mortar retail stores in Downtown Bloomington that are a focus for DBI revitalization efforts. After consulting with the client about vital information they wished to gather from retailers, our team created a survey. This survey was administered either in-person or as an online Google Form. Out of the 74 retailers identified in the area, 21 completed the survey, resulting in a 28.38 percent response rate. While this response rate is not necessarily as high as we had hoped, the data collection process was brought to a sudden halt due to the rise and spread of COVID-19 cases across the country. [Appendix C.1] The map on the next page identifies downtown parcels and distinguishes between retail and restaurants.

Downtown Bloomington Inc.

Retail and Restaurants

Retail
Restaurants

1 inch equals 274 feet

Quantitative Data

The data collected from the 21 respondents in Downtown Bloomington identified significant trends that would be useful for DBI. First, 70% of respondents have a Triple Net Lease, [Appendix D.1] in which the tenant or lessee is responsible for all the expenses of the property including real estate taxes, building insurance, and maintenance. This lease is beneficial to the tenants because their base price would be lower than the amount of a gross lease. In turn, this has the potential to attract buyer interest. When respondents were asked about the amount spent on their monthly lease payments, the range was quite significant. The expenses extended from the $1,000-$1,499 range to being over the $4,000 range [Appendix D.2]. This range could infer that rent costs may differ significantly depending on downtown location. According to the data, 45.5% of businesses have been at their current location for over 10 years, followed by 18.2% staying in the same location for 5-10 years. These figures indicate a strong correlation between location and retail success. In terms of retail space, 47.6% [Appendix D.3] of respondents state that their store is larger than 1,500 square feet. This characteristic would suggest that when looking to fill retail space, planners should build retail spaces as close to this size as possible.

Furthermore, the majority of retailers are visited by less than 75 customers per day, with the highest percentage of traffic sitting in the 1-25 person range [Appendix D.4]. The type of stores in Downtown Bloomington are smaller businesses, which would explain this metric. The rating of the condition of these buildings sat between 3 and 4 out of 5 point rating scale. This is an area that DBI can look into and potentially examine the condition of the buildings. Finally, the busiest time of the day for retailers is in the afternoon (12:00 pm-5:00 pm) [Appendix D.5]. Overall, this data provides insight into the nature and patterns of retail in Downtown Bloomington.

Qualitative Data

To gain a deeper understanding into how business owners feel about the current standings of their business and Downtown Bloomington overall, we asked a series of open-ended questions. This structure gave business owners an opportunity to answer questions with

flexibility to express any problems and concerns they had. The general findings from each question is described below [Appendix C.2].

> *Do you feel as though you are grossing an adequate amount of monthly revenue to make your lease payment without having to cut back on other necessary business functions?*

The majority of respondents, (16/21) were comfortable with their current lease payments as a proportion of their business expenses.

> *How would you describe your customer base?*

Many of the retailers had a customer base that was predominantly female. Across the board, most of the customer bases are young professionals to middle aged, typically educated and affluent. While not the primary customer base, many relied on students and found that during the summer their stores see less foot traffic than the rest of the year.

> *How do you see your business changing/developing over the course of the next five years?*

Most of the respondents had a positive outlook for the future. They expected to expand or change locations and a few were interested in possibly franchising. There were several retailers that discussed the implementation of events and strengthening customer relationships. There was also a trend of trying to conduct more business online to stay competitive.

> *Have you found parking downtown to be an issue with your business? If so, how?*

The majority of the stakeholders have found the lack of downtown parking to be a hindrance to their business. A couple of the respondents noted that the people who complain the most about metered parking are locals who live permanently in Bloomington. They do not want to travel downtown, struggle to find a parking spot, and then have to pay in order to walk around and shop. Retail owners expressed the lack of parking inhibits the walkability of downtown and foot traffic in their stores. Another issue concerning parking that arose was issues of accessibility. Customers who have

disabilities or children often cannot find parking close enough to the store they want to shop at, which discourages them from going downtown. The topic of the Fourth Street garage was brought up occasionally when retailers expressed their desire for more parking downtown. Another big issue is their hourly workers having to pay for parking. One respondent wrote, "Employees that make minimum wage have a terrible time [with parking]! $1.00 an hour for 8 hours a day! $2,000 a year! Enough said." A few wished that there would be parking moratoriums during Indiana University breaks so it incentivizes locals to shop and walk around downtown.

➢ *In your opinion, what types of retailers would best fit in the vacant storefronts in downtown?*

For the most part, respondents wish to fill the vacant spaces with local retailers or experiential stores. Only a couple suggested restaurants and bars while a majority were against that route. Most believe that Downtown Bloomington is overloaded with restaurants and bars and the vacancies should be occupied by locally owned niche and specialty shops. Some of the suggestions that were made to fill the storefronts were: an arcade, toy store, craft store, craft creation space, clothing, yoga/fitness studios, flower shop, shoe stores, home goods, etc. The appendix includes all of the respondents' answers to this question.

➢ *Has your business been affected by the current vacancies? If so, how?*

The general consensus from the survey responders is that vacancies do not negatively affect existing retailers. However, it has been mentioned that vacancies make downtown less inviting. This could be remedied by the city requiring property owners to keep properties well-kept if there is a vacancy.

➢ *How would you describe the typical relationship between property owners and business owners downtown?*

Relationships between property owners and business owners vary based on the landlord, but are generally positive. Common complaints include keeping up with general

maintenance of the properties and strained communication with the landlords. Most business owners believe that the rent for downtown properties is expensive. Overall, the relationships were deemed professional, but the business owners believe there is room for improvement.

> *What do you need to help your business become more stable/successful?*

Bloomington has an eclectic mix of retail in the designated downtown area, making it difficult to synthesize the wide array of answers into a succinct, clear set of needs. Each physical location and retailer has their own specific needs. However, there were some overarching trends that the business owners seemed to have consensus on. The most prevalent concern was in regard to foot traffic and parking. Retail owners generally believe that their businesses would be more successful if they were more accessible. They fear that the parking meter situation in downtown and a lack of adequate parking make their businesses somewhat inaccessible. Customers are not able to shop for extended periods of time because of the parking meter rules. Some retailers suggested that ceasing the use of parking meters earlier in the day would increase foot traffic. One retailer claimed that in the twelve months after the initial installation of parking meters in their area, their revenue decreased nearly twenty percent.

Additionally, some retailers claimed that less stringent rules from the city on signage would help their business. These retailers claimed that the city's sign code makes it difficult to attract business. Two retailers made remarks that overall community awareness of their business was very low, and that they are unable to put a big enough sign (or any sign at all) on their building. They believe that policy changes from the city in the form of relaxed/simplified signage rules could help them out. Finally, multiple retailers mentioned the need for improvements to their buildings or retail spaces. These include updated plumbing, electrical, and HVAC upgrades, but also general improvements among all retail spaces in their area to encourage foot traffic. Other less-common needs include decreased rent costs, overall reduction in neighboring vacancies, and community awareness or advertisement opportunities.

> *What policies from the City of Bloomington or other regulatory bodies have been*
> *beneficial to downtown retail? What policies have been harmful?*

The answers to this question closely resembled the previous question's answers. The single biggest city policy concern among downtown retailers is parking. The lack of adequate parking spaces and the wide-spread use of parking meters by the city decreases overall walkability and, according to business owners, is harmful for local retail. Seven of the respondents made comments about the harmfulness of parking. One retailer suggested that not only does it hurt their business's ability to attract customers, but it also makes it difficult for their employees to find spaces to park. Employees, in their opinion, should not have to pay to park downtown if they are employed by one of the downtown businesses. Multiple retailers suggested having free parking in metered spaces on the weekends and on holidays would increase foot traffic, or that the city should create more free parking opportunities to encourage community engagement with the downtown. The need for more parking was mentioned as a way to improve walkability once visitors enter Bloomington.

Retailers suggested that the city's mandate for first floor retail in new developments has been harmful. They claim that while the policy has created some new business, it is overshadowed by the number of vacancies that it has created. Building owners are required to designate their first-floor spaces for retail, and according to some of the retail owners, these spaces not only turn into vacancies very quickly, but they tend to stay vacant. Overtime, the conditions in these vacancies deteriorate because it is costly and laborious for the property owner to maintain a vacant space while simultaneously trying to attract a retail tenant for the vacant space(s). Multiple retailers suggested that if the city wants to continue this policy, they should also create a program that incentivizes building owners to fill their first-floor spaces. This would encourage the building owners to be more proactive in responding to vacancies.

There were some other less common policy concerns. Multiple respondents mentioned the city's sign rules, how they are harmful to business and advertising. Only one of the

respondents mentioned a beneficial City policy. They claimed that the police and social workers have lately been doing a better job of managing the city's homeless population.

> *Additional Comments*

The vast majority of respondents chose to leave this section blank. Only five respondents offered comments, and unsurprisingly, two of them were related to parking. One of the respondents had specific concerns about the use of electric scooters in downtown, and that the city should do more to keep scooters off sidewalks. Respondents claim that the scooters are potentially harmful to pedestrians and they make it difficult to walk on the sidewalk. Finally, two of the respondents made comments about the community of retailers in the downtown area, and that as a community, they should all be working together to help create a thriving small business community.

There are many noticeable similarities in the Bloomington retail data with the data from the comparable cities. This really should not be too surprising given that those cities were selected specifically for comparison with Bloomington. Many of the problems and trends that have been identified within Bloomington are also present in these other cities. Specifically issues with parking, overly strict regulations and a downtown that is dominated by restaurants and bars which hampers walkability in the day. There was also a desire for a stronger sense of community between downtown retailers with community wide events to improve foot traffic.

Downtown Bloomington Vacancies

Methodology

We identified 17 vacant retail locations in Downtown Bloomington. Once the vacant properties were identified, we searched for property owners and managers, as well as contact information. We completed this search by utilizing the Monroe County Surveyor's GIS system to track property records, running

Internet searches on the property addresses, and asking realtors for information on property owners or managers. After we found property owners or managers and recorded their contact information, our team set out to call the contacts, explain the project, and ask for participation in the survey. After contact was made with owners/managers and there was an agreement to complete the survey, the survey was sent out via email. If the owner/manager did not complete the survey, there was a biweekly email reminder sent out to nudge completion of the survey. Follow-up phone calls were also implemented in an effort to increase completion rate. However, the onset of the COVID-19 crisis hampered this effort as many property owners and managers were unable to communicate on this matter due to closed offices or diverted attention.

We were able to find property owners or managers for 14 of the 17 vacancies, as well as contact information. Our team contacted each of the 14 individuals recorded as vacant property owners or managers. Of the 14 properties with contact information, four owners or managers explicitly stated that they were uninterested in participating in the data collection. We secured the survey responses of two individuals who own or manage vacant properties in the Downtown Bloomington area. As four were uninterested and two

responded, the remaining individuals either did not answer phone calls and emails, or verbally agreed to participate but did not follow through after repeated reminders. The vacancy survey had a 14% response rate [Appendix C.2].

Responses

Out of the 17 vacant retail spaces we received two responses to the survey. The two responses came from Olympus Properties and CFC Properties. Both vacant properties were said to be vacant for less than 12 months, with one of them being vacant for fewer than 6 months. However, one of the properties is no longer vacant. This indicates that there is high turnover for the vacant retail spaces in Bloomington. These properties were previously occupied by Food and Beverage Service and a Smoke Shop respectively. Both owners/managers described the condition of the building to be on the higher end of the spectrum with a rating of 4 and 5, respectively [Appendix C.2]. These two properties both occupy between 901-1,100 square feet of space [Appendix C.2].

In regards to the monthly lease rate, one of the properties fell in the $1,000-$1,499 range, while the other was in the $2,000-$2,499 range [Appendix C.2]; these are fairly similar ranges. Furthermore, it was reported that one of the properties may have had trouble occupying space because of staircase access. Therefore, accessibility is something that store owners should consider. Both properties revealed no unique stipulations to the lease agreement -- which would likely make it more appealing for potential tenants to want to rent the property. Moreover, the ratings for the levels of interest were high with 4 and 5 [Appendix C.2] which indicates that tenants have been interested and inquiring about the vacant properties. The two respondents also stated that they believe successful downtown properties are exposed to street visibility and parking options and have ground floor access with storefront windows and are located on the main square. One of the respondents claimed that the space is empty due to the business level of the past tenant. The respondents were also asked if Downtown Bloomington Incorporated/the City/The Chamber can assist in filling the space. The manager/owner with the vacant space revealed they are members of DBI and the Chamber and have been able to use their

advertising channels. Therefore, there is a potential for opportunity for DBI and the Chamber to further assist vacant property owners.

Other responses

Despite efforts to get as many responses as possible, it was very challenging to get responses from property owners, managers, and realtors. This may have been due to the property owners not willing to disclose any information about their properties. Many were not interested in engaging in conversation unless you were interested in buying a property, while others agreed to complete the survey but did not follow through even with regular reminders. In one telling exchange with a property owner who was adamantly not interested in participating in the survey, the owner specifically expressed anger towards the mandate of first floor commercial space in Bloomington.

Despite the low number of responses, we did receive some insightful and helpful information from the responses we received. We believe that it is especially telling that many were adamantly uninterested in participating or expressed resentment towards the

project's collaboration with Bloomington institutions; it potentially points to a greater need for DBI and the Chamber to extend communications and reach-out to vacant property owners in Bloomington to obtain their later cooperation and input.

Major Trends

After collecting data and talking with store owners in downtown, we have highlighted eight prevailing trends that stand out. These trends range from issues specific to a retail location, to issues that are city wide and systemic. The majority of the trends are related to specific retail locations and the actions of a particular retailer. Of the eight trends that have been identified there are three that could be considered systemic.

1. *Disconnect between institutions*

One trend that emerged from the process of reaching out to property owners and managers of vacant retail spaces is the disconnect between the owners/managers and the City, as well as other institutions such as Downtown Bloomington Inc. (DBI) and the Chamber of Commerce. Many of the property owners or managers did not want to participate in the project, often citing a frustration with the regulations or a disillusionment with such a project and its partners. This illuminates a potential need for DBI, the city government, and the Chamber of Commerce to make a concerted effort to better communicate with property owners/managers of vacant spaces and illustrate that their needs are heard and attempting to be addressed. The trend among this group of vacancy owners/managers was a general disconnect and disillusionment with Bloomington business institutions and stakeholders, such as DBI, the City, and the Chamber.

2. *Importance of customer service in property rental companies*

It is imperative that property rental companies uphold a high standard of customer service. As mentioned above, many property rental companies were not interested in speaking or showed a lack of interest in the project. In order for the rental companies to fill vacant spaces they must offer outstanding company service. Disgruntled customers are not easily soothed and can do a lot of harm to the company and Downtown Bloomington by spreading their negative experiences. The quality of service the property management group provides tenants is important for nurturing a positive experience. It is important for Downtown Bloomington Inc. to maintain constant communication with the

property rental companies to ensure that they are keeping good relationships with tenants and to discuss property vacancy trends and possible ways to fill these spaces. This strengthened relationship is especially important for filling vacant storefronts, as many of the property rental companies have first floor commercial space with residential properties on second and third floors of the building; many of these properties are located in the downtown area. These property rental companies handle both residential tenants and commercial tenants, thus they are a special group of property owners that DBI should carefully consider and communicate with.

3.   *Importance of location for success*

Location is an important factor when looking at retail stores and their success. Through the research conducted, it is evident that stores located in the Downtown Square on the ground floor with a visible storefront attract the most attention. Stores located above the ground floor have trouble attracting customers due to visibility issues as well as accessibility issues because of stairs. Because of the lack of revenue being generated by these stores that are not in prime location spots, it is often these stores that are vacant. The store vacancies that we noticed were often stores located away from the main downtown area and ones that are above ground floor, highlighting the importance of location when it comes to store vacancies. DBI, the City and the chamber should collaborate with property managers to increase awareness of these vacant properties that are outside downtown and create more exposure.

4.   *Importance of storefront visibility*

According to the vacant property respondents, the most important attributes of successful downtown retail businesses are street visibility, parking options, and ground floor access with large storefront windows. Location on or near the square was also emphasized as an important element for success in the Bloomington retail environment. Because parking has been highlighted among nearly every group in this analysis, we will focus on the importance of heightened visibility through street access and storefront windows.

The trend of respondents correlating heightened visibility with a successful retail business is important to recognize because it can be leveraged in current vacant spaces. The respondents emphasized visibility as an element for success, and DBI, the City, and the Chamber could use their resources to encourage showcasing storefront windows and street accessibility. This support could include sponsoring pop-ups in these spaces or encouraging collaboration between the vacant owners/managers with nearby retail businesses to draw attention to the vacant space.

5.   *Issues with parking meters and parking more generally*

The parking meters are valuable sources of revenue for the City, and the aim of this recommendation is not to stop their usage. That being said, parking was the single most discussed issue in the survey responses. The City has the opportunity to increase downtown foot traffic by reducing the hours or amount of time that people are required to use them. Some of the respondents mentioned that other Midwestern cities (ex. Holland, MI) ended parking meter hours earlier in the evening, when people are more likely to have time to spend downtown. Additionally, respondents suggested that parking meters could be shut down during weekends, holidays, and during breaks in the IU academic calendar. With a majority of students away from Bloomington during times such as Spring Break, fewer people will be in the downtown area. This means more parking availability, and not requiring meter usage will likely encourage residents to take advantage of this opportunity and spend time downtown. Some combination of reduced hours and designated blocks of time for free parking is likely to encourage foot traffic in downtown businesses.

6.   *The desire for more locally owned specialty/niche/experiential shops*

One of the more prominent trends from the data was that a majority of the respondents wish to see the vacant spaces occupied by locally-owned retailers or experiential tenants. Only a couple of people who filled out the survey suggested that restaurants and bars be what fills the empty spaces, while a majority were against that route. Most believe that Downtown Bloomington is already overloaded with restaurants and bars and that niche and specialty shops are what would be successful and stay in business for a long time.

Some of the suggestions that were made to fill the storefronts were: an arcade, toy store, craft store, craft creation space, clothing, yoga/fitness studios, flower shop, shoe stores, home goods, etc. The appendix includes all of the respondents' answers to this question.

7.   *Customer base and business success*

The survey responses support the idea that it is difficult to form a successful business, but that, if a loyal customer base is created in the early years, that businesses will tend to be successful. The majority of businesses that have been in Bloomington for more than 5 years have an average of more than 1-25 customers per day. Most of the businesses that have 1-25 customers per day are within their first years of operation and generally are not stable businesses. If the business manages to succeed in the first few years and establish themselves, they tend to have an average customer base of either 26-50 or 51-75 people per day. These businesses tend to be stable and comfortable with their current success.

8.   *The desire for less stringent rules from the City*

While some businesses indicated a mutually beneficial relationship with the City, many felt some of the strict policies were detrimental to their own business as well as others. Some common complaints were around signage guidelines, parking, updating the buildings, and mandatory first floor retail. The trend is that the city has become increasingly more stringent about their policies for downtown, which has created a barrier to entry, therefore making it more difficult for property owners to fill vacancies. It seems that business owners would like to see the city implement new and innovative ideas, i.e. green infrastructure, rather than simply increasing the amount of vacant space.

Conclusion

In the trends identified by the collected data, there are several that could be described as systemic issues that affect the whole of the Downtown Bloomington retail environment. Systemically, the trends that have been identified are a disconnect between the business minded institutions within the city, the serious lack of parking and increasingly stringent regulation creating barriers to entry. In addition to these systemic problems there are other issues that stem from the specific retail location and type of business. Ultimately, we conclude that, while there are systematic changes that may enhance the quality of downtown, there is already a solid foundation on which to build.

Geographic Information Systems

Overview

In addition to gathering data from Bloomington and comparable cities, part of our task was to display our findings visually. In an effort to create polished maps that highlight the spatial distribution of retail and restaurant locations in the downtown area and display findings collected from survey results, we assembled a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Research Team. These team members worked with the City of Bloomington's GIS department and the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce to create finalized maps using existing geospatial data that could be utilized to assist Bloomington data collectors. In addition, the team worked to transfer data to Bloomington's GIS Department for ongoing updates to ensure that the information is useful and accessible to the community after project completion. Attached to our report is a document that details the procedures for this process so that it can be easily understood by stakeholders and potentially replicated [Appendix F].

Observed Trends

After entering survey information into the system, the GIS Team observed multiple trends to expand upon. It is important to note that this data is representative of a time period between March 9 to April 15. It is also important to note that the number of survey respondents (i.e., 21 businesses) was relatively small, and therefore most likely not statistically significant, however we still feel that these responses are representative of relevant overall trends.

Triple Net Leasing

The GIS Team observed that all triple net leasing agreements occurred either on the downtown square or directly off of Kirkwood Avenue. Triple net lease is a lease agreement where the tenant agrees to pay all the expenses of the property-estate taxes, building insurance, and maintenance, as well as rent and utilities. This agreement reduces the risks to the property owner and provides them with steady income. Additionally, rent costs tend to be lower for tenants because they absorb the expenses of other property responsibilities. However, we found that the opposite is true in Downtown Bloomington. From our survey sample, businesses with triple net leases tend to pay, on average, over $1,000 more in monthly rent than those without triple net leases (see table 1). We believe this trend is due to the desirable location of the town square and Kirkwood Ave.

Table 1.

Triple Net Lease			
Business Name	**Lease Range**	**Low average**	**High average**
Good For Cooks	2000-2499	2000	2499
Vance Music Center	3500-4000	3500	4000
That's The Rub	More than 4000	4001	4500
Tracks	3500-4000	3500	4000
Gather	3500-4000	3500	4000
Cup and Kettle Tea Co.	3000-3499	3000	3499
	Average	3250.166667	3749.666667

No Triple Net Lease			
Business Name	**Lease Range**	**low average**	**High average**
Posh Boutique	1500-1999	1500	1999
Bikesmiths	1000-1499	1000	1499
Garret Antiques	no response		
Pitaya	3000-3499	3000	3499
Vintage Vogue	More than 4000	4001	4500
Bloomington Smoke Time	3500-4000	3500	4000
Moonstones	1000-1499	1000	1499
Book Corner	no response		
Lola & Company	3000-3499	3000	3499
Global Gifts	1500-1999	1500	1999
Indy E Cigs	Less than 1000	500	999
WonderLab Museum	no response		
Bloomington Salt Cave	1000-1499	1000	1499
The Tailored Fit	1500-1999	1500	1999
My Sister's Closet of Monroe County	2500-2999	2500	2999
	Average	2000.08	2499.17

DOWNTOWN
BLOOMINGTON IN

Triple Net Lease

No
Yes

1 inch equals 216 feet

N

Vacancy Locations

Another trend that the we noticed was that vacancies downtown tended to be closer to restaurants than retail stores. The attached map shows that there were a significantly

higher number of restaurants within 100 feet of vacant buildings than retail stores (approximately 35 restaurants compared to 25 retail stores). This may be due to the fact that there is a larger quantity of restaurants downtown as compared to

retail establishments. However, because of the spatial distribution of the vacancies, this theory is likely not the case. There are little to no vacancies near Kirkwood Avenue, the retail hotspot of Downtown Bloomington. Most of the vacancies are clustered around 4th Street and the square downtown, and both areas coincide with the city's restaurant hotspots. The restaurant industry typically experiences a high failure rate, and it is likely that many of the vacancies are restaurants that have moved out. Finally, buildings that will be used for restaurants typically have more stringent permitting and purchasing regulations than retail stores do not. An example of this regulation is the Bloomington Municipal Code which requires all new food service establishments to install a grease interceptor. This installment adds to the cost of leasing the property and may dissuade buyers from purchasing the vacant property.
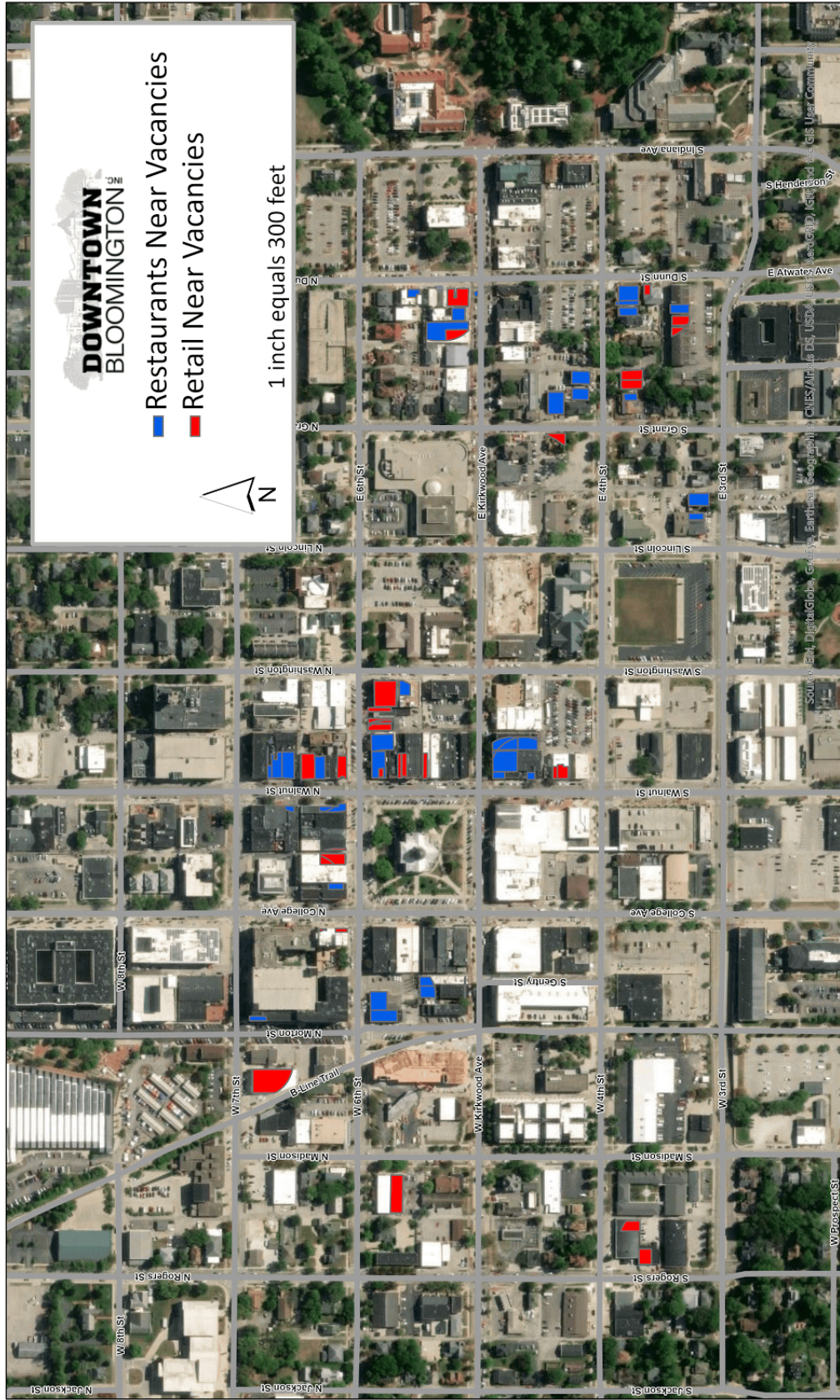
DOWNTOWN
BLOOMINGTON INC

Restaurants Near Vacancies
Retail Near Vacancies

1 inch equals 300 feet

Retail Conditions

The GIS team found that there are more low-condition vacancies in the downtown area than high-condition vacancies. Vacancy conditions were rated on a 1-5 scale by surveyors, with 1 representing "poor" and 5 representing "excellent" (the rating was determined subjectively using the surveyor's best judgement). We also found that retail stores with the best condition were largely located in the Fountain Square Mall and the surrounding area. This phenomenon could be due to the quality of management oversight and/or the fact that Fountain Square Mall is one of the most frequented retail locations in the heart of Downtown Bloomington. Because of the large retail demand in this area, retail stores are most likely to survive here, and related facility construction will be of a higher quality and better maintained. Also, spaces with high-condition levels have higher occupancy rates, which makes it less likely for them to become vacancies. Therefore, compared with other vacancies, there are less vacancies with higher condition spaces downtown.

We believe that retail locations like Fountain Square Mall may be a beneficial retail option for Downtown Bloomington. The relatively compact retail space keeps rent low for occupants while providing a highly desirable location concentrated by other retailers. In addition, smaller retail establishments benefit because the mall's location relieves the pressure of building maintenance costs. Furthermore, customers are more likely to wander into shops that are within direct proximity of other retailers. Some businesses in Fountain Square Mall even benefit from window shoppers who can view their shop from the street. We believe small square-footage retail locations in close proximity to each other could be a solution to reduce the quantity of vacancies and improve the condition of retail locations.

Map 1: Overall Condition of Retail and Vacancies (1=poor, 5=excellent)

Map 2: Overall Condition of ONLY Vacancies (1=poor, 5=excellent)
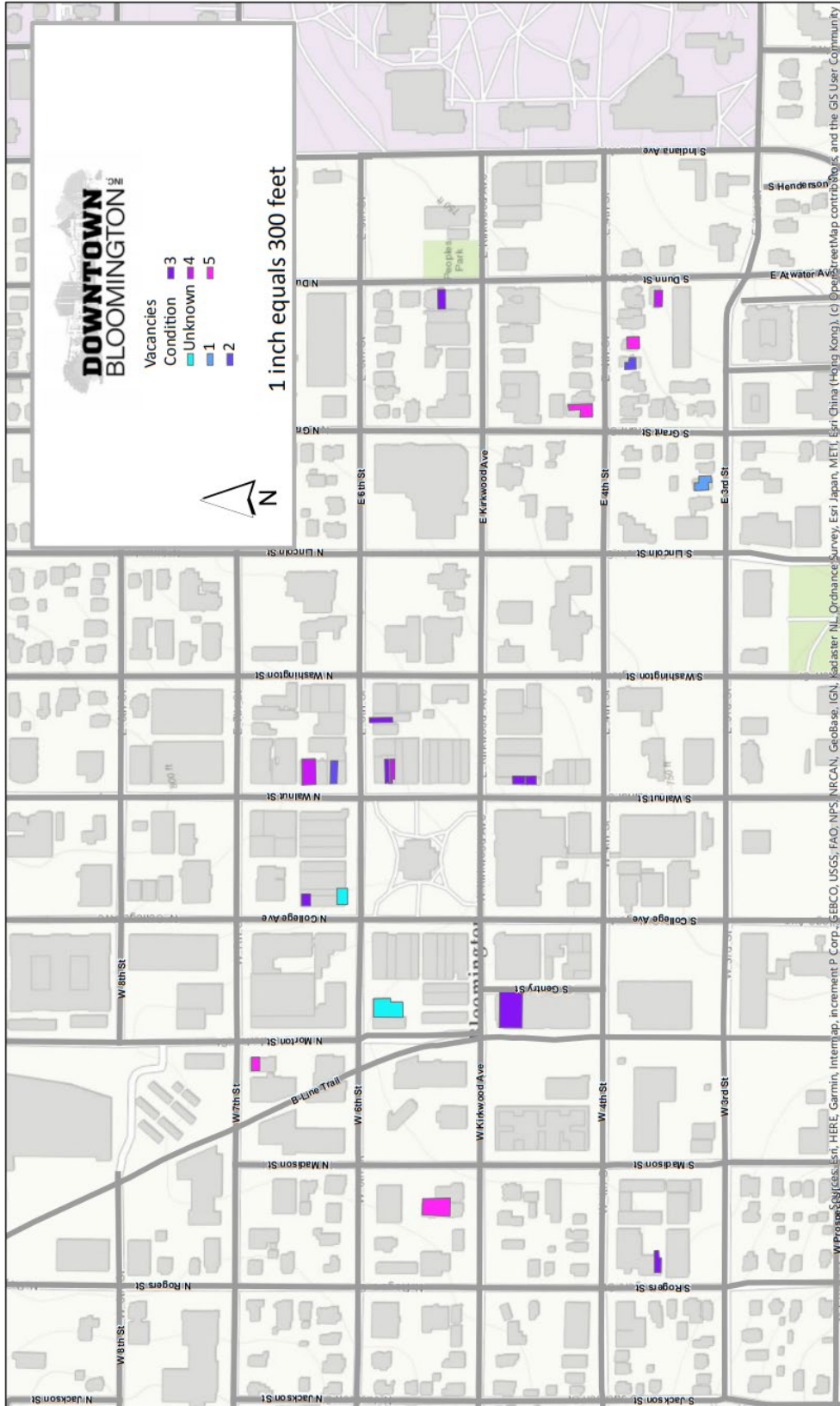
Further Analysis: Graffiti in Downtown Bloomington, IN

The City of Bloomington maintains an open public database containing information about recent reports of instances of graffiti across the city. The GIS team collected this data and mapped all of the occurrences along with vacant spaces in the downtown area.
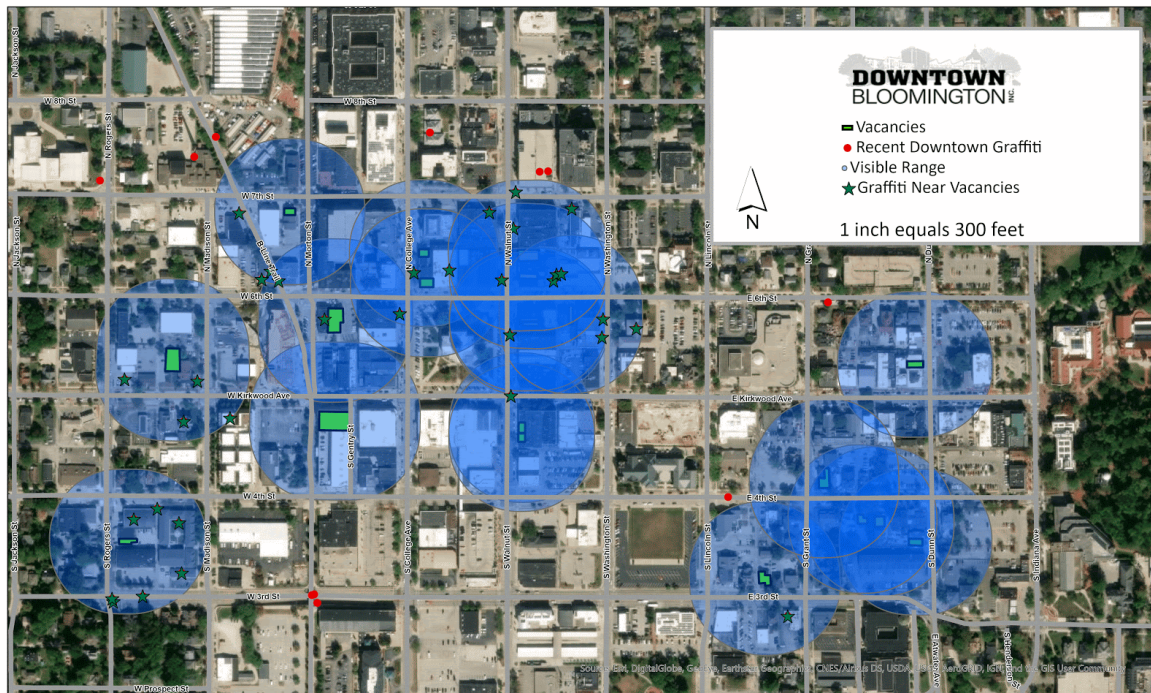
The resulting map shows that nearly all instances of reported graffiti in the downtown area over the past 5 years have occurred within a visible range (250 feet) of current vacancies. While the GIS team only has access to data on current vacancies, it is likely that this trend is significant as the densest cluster of recent graffiti reports and the densest cluster of downtown vacant buildings coincide with each other near the Walnut and 6th Street intersection. This map demonstrates a clear relationship between graffiti incidents and vacancies downtown, and it is possible that the city may have an easier time filling its vacant buildings through effective clean-up and deterrence of further vandalism incidents. Further investigation into the cause of graffiti within these concentrated areas is needed, but typical environments that encourage graffiti are low lighting and sparse foot-traffic. These same conditions might deter business owners from wanting to operate in these areas in the first place.

Data Sharing

A tentative web map of retail, restaurants, and bars was created for classmates and DBI members to view survey results and locations from their own devices. This web map is only temporary, as it is connected to the GIS Team's ArcGIS accounts registered through IU, which will possibly be terminated upon graduation.

For future data maintenance and viewing, the GIS Team has transferred the data in the form of shapefiles to the Bloomington GIS Department Manager, Laura Haley. Going forward, this data will be accessible and managed by their department.

Recommendations

After gathering and analyzing data from Bloomington and comparable cities and identifying significant patterns, we have amalgamated our analysis into recommendations aimed to enhance the quality of downtown. While these recommendations vary in size and scope, each is targeted to one or more stakeholder. Because of the nature of local policymaking, not all of the recommendations are immediately actionable and will require further deliberation and collaboration between downtown stakeholders and the city government. Each recommendation synthesizes the data gathered from comparable cities and Bloomington brick and mortar stores.

1. Revisiting City Policies

Zoning policies can be restrictive on small businesses in how they dictate where commercial markets are provided. One example of this is Bloomington's focus on zoning for commercial use on the first floor of most buildings in the downtown area as found in the Uniform Development Ordinance. Ideally, this placement should minimize the lack of gaps in storefronts, which helps encourage walkability and maximize pedestrian foot traffic. In theory, this strategy is a best practice we identified in the City of Bloomington. The practical application of the theory will create walkability and a more cohesive downtown as long as the market can support the commercial openings and there are storefronts to be filled.

In practice, we have found that there is a tension between this policy and the market demands. The City should continuously revisit this policy and the impacts that it will have on developers and local small businesses. While it is likely to increase the number of commercial spaces on the first floors of downtown, it may also be overly restrictive in certain cases where no business leases the property, thus leaving the storefront vacant and thereby decreasing walkability. Furthermore, the policy has already led to legal complications in the case of the 4th street garage. First floor retail is not the only way to create a walkable and attractive downtown, and the City should look to apply other development principles to their development ordinance and decisions.

Our survey findings also suggest that the signage requirements of the municipal code are unnecessarily restrictive. While the desire to create an attractive downtown is understandable, the code enforcing such a desire should not create excessive hurdles and stress for a business owner. Several business owners indicated their frustration with what

they found to be arbitrary and cumbersome policies. We suggest that the City revisit the signage ordinance and adjust requirements they deem unnecessary.

Another potential long-term strategy for improving brick and mortar retail outcomes, which the City of Bloomington may want to consider for its next update of the Unified Development Ordinance, is to increase the density of apartment buildings in the direct vicinity of downtown. This development would bring more people to be centrally located around the Square, increase regular foot traffic of people who are likely to shop at businesses around Downtown Bloomington, and decrease some of the issues around parking that discourage people from coming downtown in the first place. Higher density creates a more vibrant downtown without the added stress of parking, public transit or sidewalk improvements. Increasing the number of people who live downtown will also create a higher sense of ownership among residents. Small businesses currently carry much of this burden. An increase in the number of residents within the Square will expand the number of individuals who care for the cleanliness, sense of place and walkability of the downtown

2. Establishing a Downtown Bloomington Gift Card

To encourage customers to visit downtown stores, Lawrence, Kansas administers a product known as the *Downtown Lawrence Gift Card*. This gift card operates similarly to other traditional gift cards; Individuals or businesses can purchase this item in-person or online and load the card with an amount ranging from $10 to $500. The cards are accepted by over 130 participating downtown merchants. The card funds do not expire, however a "$3.00 fee will be deducted monthly from the Card balance starting the 1st day after 1 year of inactivity" (Downtown Lawrence, 2020). There is also a $5 fee to replace lost, stolen, or damaged cards. Product/service fees and deductions provide supplemental revenue to the downtown business district (Downtown Lawrence Inc.), while the card itself incentivizes customer engagement with local businesses.

3. Consider ways to bring down rental costs

Many individuals surveyed expressed concerns with the high rent of retail spaces in the downtown areas. It was seen as both a threat to current retailers being able to stay in

business and a barrier to potential future retailers. While the city does not control the cost of rent in the downtown retail space, there are ways they can reduce or at least not increase the financial burdens placed on individual retailers. This can come in the form of minimizing licensing and permitting fees or construction costs associated with city requirements. Alternatively, encouraging the city to consider allowing higher density in the downtown core in exchange for affordable housing deals could be an effective way of lowering rent costs.

4. Implementing Tiered Parking Fine Structure & Tiered Parking

Lack of affordable parking was a major concern for the majority of respondents because in Midwestern cities that lack extensive or reliable public transportation, individuals must drive themselves to visit the downtown retails shops. We recommend working toward an increase in affordable parking and/or a tiered parking system, such as the one instituted in Champaign, IL. Additional programs such as Champaign's "first offence forgiveness" program which pardons an individual's first parking ticket each year and institutes a tiered fine structure for parking tickets beyond the first eliminate this barrier to shop at downtown retail stores. Following a similar structure as Champaign, Bloomington could charge $20 the second violation in 365 days (what Bloomington currently charges), $25 for the third and fourth violations and $35 for any violation beyond the fifth (Blakeman, 2020). A budget analysis of how this proposed structure would affect the revenue generated for the Bloomington General Fund needs to be conducted.

Lastly, we recommend the city look into summer parking rates. Moratorium parking was mentioned by numerous respondents to the survey. They expressed that the parking meters inhibit residents from shopping downtown because they do not want to pay a lot of money to walk around and window shop. Business owners typically see a dip in business activity and revenue in the summer, when the university students are gone. The City should consider moratorium parking. During times when many of the IU students are absent the meter prices could be lowered or free to incentivize residents to travel and shop downtown. This concept could even apply to the University's spring break as well.

5. Encouraging Local Business Partnerships

Local businesses can partner to advertise mutually beneficial products and services. For example, the Haunted Bookshop in Iowa City, IA has partnered with a local coffee shop in town to promote each other's businesses. The products provided by these organizations are complementary goods; in that bookstore customers might also be coffee consumers, and coffee consumers might also be interested in visiting bookshops. The organizations agree to not sell the goods and/or services provided by the other, and this agreement fosters support without increasing competition.

Throughout our conversations with business owners, it became clear that many wanted a stronger sense of community within Downtown Bloomington. We believe that a monthly event such as a "Shop Small Business Saturday" would encourage community members to come downtown and promote unity between brick and mortar retailers. Downtown stakeholders could promote this event that encourages residents to focus their shopping at small businesses in Downtown Bloomington one Saturday every month. These kinds of events represent a good starting point for a marketing push that encourages shopping at downtown businesses.

Educating business owners on the benefits of participating in partnerships and events that DBI organizes could be helpful in moving the needle on having a stronger sense of community. Business owners ought to know that participating in community events will have two-fold benefits: improving their business and building a sense of community in downtown Bloomington.

Conclusions

After conducting our research, we have come to several conclusions regarding Downtown Bloomington:

First, the challenges faced by retailers in Downtown Bloomington are not unique to this community. Our insights into comparable cities indicate that other college towns are in a similar position and are confronting obstacles like Bloomington. Furthermore, our

analysis has identified several solutions from comparable cities that might work in Bloomington.

Second, a better understanding of the spatial, qualitative, and quantitative data will help community stakeholders better address the problems facing Downtown Bloomington. We focused a lot of our efforts on finding ways to gather data on the status of Bloomington retail that will be useful to the city now and in the future. In particular, our GIS work will provide the city with a useful tool that can be refined and developed from this point forward.

Third, there is a desire among some downtown businesses for a stronger sense of community and promotion from the city government and other stakeholders. This is an avenue worth exploring as some of our recommendations will help ameliorate this trend. We recognize that not all businesses will be amenable to stronger bonds between downtown stakeholders but believe that there is enough interest to prompt the exploration of policies such as a downtown gift card or monthly Small Business Saturday.

Lastly, government policies are frustrating some business owners, including parking policies and signage regulation. There is no easy fix for this situation and our research indicates that other cities face similar challenges. However, the frequency of this issue in our qualitative research tells us that this area is of high salience for improving the state of downtown retail.

Further research should focus on the implications of COVID-19 for Downtown Bloomington. Although our recommendations were made to be applicable beyond the current crisis, there will be a new host of challenges facing the downtown community on the other side of this pandemic. We hope that our data and GIS tool helps city officials monitor the state of retail downtown and provide a baseline from which to update as the economic fallout of the pandemic impacts Bloomington.

Additional research should perform a more in-depth qualitative analysis of Downtown Bloomington stakeholders to explore their relationship in greater detail. Our data and survey results represent a launching point for further student projects in both the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the Kelley School of Business focusing on ameliorating downtown retail post-COVID 19.

We hope that our materials are useful to downtown stakeholders in providing the information necessary to strategically improve Bloomington's vibrant downtown.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Comparable Cities Surveys

Appendix A.1: Downtown Retail Questionnaire for City/Chamber

O'Neill School Brick and Mortar Retail Capstone 2020

Downtown Retail Questions for City/Chamber

Graduate students at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University are working on a semester-long project with Downtown Bloomington Inc. (DBI) and the City of Bloomington, IN. The goal of this project is to research and analyze downtown retail business in Bloomington and provide recommendations on how to support these businesses moving forward.

As part of this broader project, we are collecting data on cities that are comparable to Bloomington, IN. Our goals are to build a better understanding of retail business in downtown areas so that we can understand the challenges they face and provide recommendations on how to support these businesses.

First and Last Name

_____

Organization

_____

Position

_____

Number of Years in Position

_____

City and State

_____

What are the geographical boundaries of your downtown?

_____
_____

What is the estimated percentage of vacant retail space (vacancy rate) in your downtown?

_____

How walkable is your downtown?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Poor ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Excellent

Please explain your response to how walkable your downtown is. (e.g. downtown is well-lit, damaged sidewalks, attractive storefronts, etc)

_____

_____

What types of businesses do you have downtown?

☐ Restaurants/bars

☐ Retail stores

☐ Office stores

☐ Entertainment/experience

☐ Lodging

☐ Other

What types of business account for the majority of businesses downtown?

☐ Restaurants/bars

☐ Retail stores

☐ Office stores

☐ Entertainment/experience

☐ Lodging

☐ Other

How often are there community events that encourage people to come downtown? (e.g. festivals, parades, farmers' markets, etc.)

☐ Once a month

☐ 2-3 events per month

☐ Once a year

☐ 2-3 events per year

☐ Other

What are the biggest challenges facing your downtown?

_____

_____

What are the biggest strengths of the downtown?

_____

_____

What are the biggest challenges facing downtown retail stores?

_____

_____

What strategies does your city government use to encourage/support downtown retail?

_____

_____

What are retail businesses doing to stay competitive in the downtown?

_____

_____

What city policies, if any, positively and/or negatively affect downtown retail stores?

_____

_____

How does your organization support new retail businesses?

_____

_____

What were the major development projects downtown in the last decade?

_____

_____

What are your future development plans for downtown?

_____

_____

How does the University affect downtown retail?

_____

_____

What is your relationship with the city/chamber?

_____

_____

If necessary, can we contact you with clarifying questions?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, what is the best method to contact you?

_____

_____

Appendix A.2: Downtown Retail Questionnaire for Businesses

First and Last Name

_____

Name of Business

_____

City and State

_____

Number of Years in Business

_____

City and State

_____

What days and times are you the busiest?

_____
_____

What season(s) are you the busiest?

☐ Fall

☐ Winter

☐ Spring

☐ Summer

☐ Other

How often and how are you involved in downtown community events? (e.g. Sponsor a festival, promote an event with fliers, etc.)

_____
_____

What are the biggest challenges facing your downtown?

_____
_____

What are the biggest strengths of your downtown?

_____

_____

What are the biggest challenges facing downtown retail stores? (e.g. brick and mortar stores, gift shops, clothing stores, etc)

_____

_____

What are the biggest challenges facing your business?

_____

_____

What strategies are used to encourage/support downtown retail by the government?

_____

_____

What are retail businesses doing to stay competitive downtown?

_____

_____

What, if any, city policies positively and/or negatively affect downtown retail stores?

_____

_____

What is your business's relationship with the university?

_____

_____

What is the likelihood that you would recommend someone open a business in the downtown area?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not likely	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely likely

If necessary, can we contact you with clarifying questions?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, what is the best method to contact you?

_____

Appendix B: Comparable Cities Government Contact Info

First and Last Name	Organization	Position Title	Email	Phone
Tom Knipe	City of Ithaca Office of Economic Development	Deputy Director for Economic Development	tknipe@cityofithaca.org	607-274-6554
Ethan Howard	Downtown Lexington Partnership	Director of Economic Development and Placemaking	ethan@downtownlex.com	
Steve Kelly	Lawrence Chamber of Commerce/Douglas County EDC	Vice President of Economic Development	skelly@lawrencechamber.com	
Dennis Carson	City of Lafayette	Economic Development Director	dcarson@lafayette.in.gov or	765-807-1093
Trent Fletcher	Greater Lafayette Commerce	Economic Development Manager	tfletcher@greaterlafayettecommerce.com	765-742-4044
Genevieve Kirk	Champaign Center Partnership	Executive Director	director@champaigncenter.com	
Nancy Bird	Iowa City Downtown District	Executive Director	nancy@downtowniowacity.com	
Wendy Ford	City of Iowa City	Economic Development Coordinator	wendy-ford@iowa-city.org	
Gary Ferguson	Downtown Ithaca Alliance	Executive Director	gary@downtownithaca.com or	607-277-8679
David Cary	Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department	Director		402-441-6364
TJ Blakeman	City of Champaign	Senior Planner for Economic Development	terry.blakeman@champaignil.gov	217-403-8800
Samantha Castro	Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government	Senior Long-Range Planner	scastro@lexingtonky.gov	859-258-3179

Appendix C: Downtown Bloomington Surveys

Appendix C.1: Downtown Bloomington Retail Survey

O'Neill School Brick and Mortar Retail Capstone 2020

Downtown Bloomington Retail Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather aggregate data of Downtown Bloomington retail space. Your proprietary business information will be used to better understand Bloomington's retail environment and health as a whole. Businesses' individual responses will not be identifiable in the final report.

Business name: _____

Primary business owner name(s): _____

Owner email/phone: _____

Primary manager name(s): _____

Manager email/phone: _____

Business address (with floor # if applicable): _____

Hours of operation: _____

Busiest time of day (select one):
☐ Morning (8:00 AM - 12:00 PM)
☐ Afternoon (12:00 PM - 5:00 PM)
☐ Evening (5:00 PM - 9:00 PM)

Do you have Triple Net Lease?   Y   N

What is your monthly lease payment?

☐ Less than $1,000

☐ $1,000-$1,499

☐ $1,500-$1,999

☐ $2,000-$2,499

☐ $2,500-$2,999

☐ $3,000-$3,499

☐ $3,500-$4,000

☐ More than $4,000

How long has your business been in its current location?

☐ Less than a year

☐ 1-2 years

☐ 3-4 years

☐ 4-5 years

☐ More than 5 years

What is the total approximate square footage of the retail space?

☐ Smaller than 700

☐ 700-900

☐ 901-1,100

☐ 1,101-1,300

☐ 1,301-1,500

☐ Larger than 1,500

Approximately how many customers come into the retail space per day?

☐ 1-25

☐ 26-50

☐ 51-75

☐76-100

☐ More than 100

Do you feel as though you are grossing an adequate amount of monthly revenue to make your lease payment without having to cut back on other necessary business functions?

Which of the following retail categories does your business deal in? (Select all that apply)

☐ Art

☐ Clothing

☐ Jewelry/gifts

☐ Games/entertainment

☐ Household goods

☐ Furniture

☐ Food Goods

☐ Music

☐ Eyewear

☐ Other _____

How many employees do you currently have (full-time and part-time)?

_____

How would you describe the condition of the building?

1   2   3   4   5

Poor   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Excellent

How would you describe your customer base?

_____
_____

How do you see your business changing/developing over the next five years?

_____
_____

Have you found parking downtown to be an issue with your business? If so, how?

_____

_____

In your opinion, what types of retailers would best fit in the vacant storefronts in downtown?

_____

_____

Has your business been affected by the current vacancies? If so, how?

_____
_____

How would you describe the typical relationship between property owners and business owners downtown?

_____

_____

What do you need to help your business become more stable/successful?

_____
_____

What policies from the City of Bloomington or other regulatory bodies have been beneficial to downtown retail? What policies have been harmful?

_____
_____

Additional Comments

_____
_____

Additional Comments

O'Neill School Brick and Mortar Retail Capstone 2020

Vacant Storefront Owner Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather aggregate data of Downtown Bloomington retail space. Your proprietary business information will be used to better understand Bloomington's retail environment and health as a whole. Businesses' individual responses will not be identifiable in the final report.

How long has the space in question been vacant?

☐ Fewer than 6 months

☐ 6-12 months

☐ 13-18 months

☐ 19-24 months

☐ More than 24 months

How would you describe the condition of the building?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	○	○	○	○	○	Excellent

If you answered 1 or 2, please elaborate below.

_____
_____

What has occupied the space in the past?

_____
_____

What is the total approximate square footage of the space?

☐ Smaller than 700

☐ 700-900

☐ 901-1,100

☐ 1,101-1,300

☐ 1,301-1,500

☐ Larger than 1,500

What are some of the difficulties that have kept the space from being occupied?

_____

_____

What is your monthly lease rate for the space?

☐ Less than $1,000

☐ $1,000-$1,499

☐ $1,500-$1,999

☐ $2,000-$2,499

☐ $2,500-$2,999

☐ $3,000-$3,499

☐ $3,500-$4,000

☐ More than $4,000

Are there any unique stipulations to the lease agreement? (ex.distinct property requirements)?

_____

_____

How would you rate the current level of interest from potential tenants in the vacancy?

1	2	3	4	5	
No interest	○	○	○	○	○	Considerable interest

Do you own other properties downtown? If so, how many?

_____

_____

For properties that you may have downtown that are successful, what do you think makes them different than the vacant one(s)?

_____

_____

Are there vacant spots that are adjacent or share walls with the vacant space?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you answered "yes" to the previous question, do you own the additional vacant space(s)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ N/A

Who/what do you envision occupying this space?

_____

_____

Why do you think this space is empty?

_____

_____

What policies from the City of Bloomington or other regulatory bodies have been harmful or beneficial to this space?

_____

_____

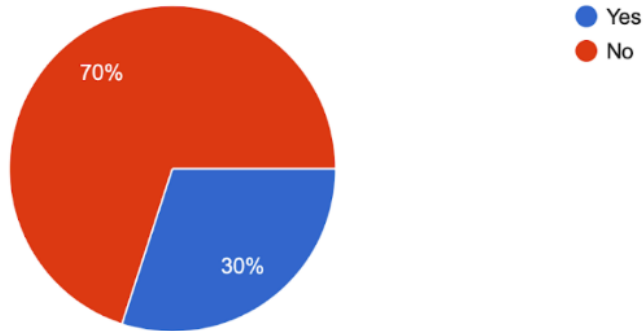Can DBI / the City / the Chamber / Other help in any way to fill your space? If so, how?

_____

_____

Additional Comments

_____

_____

Appendix D: Downtown Bloomington Quantitative Data

Appendix D.1

Do you have Triple Net Lease?
20 responses

- Yes
- No

70%

30%

Appendix D.2

What is your monthly lease payment?
18 responses

- Less than $1,000
- $1,000-$1,499
- $1,500-$1,999
- $2,000-$2,499
- $2,500-$2,999
- $3,000-$3,499
- $3,500-$4,000
- More than $4,000

16.7% 16.7% 16.7% 16.7% 16.7% 16.7%
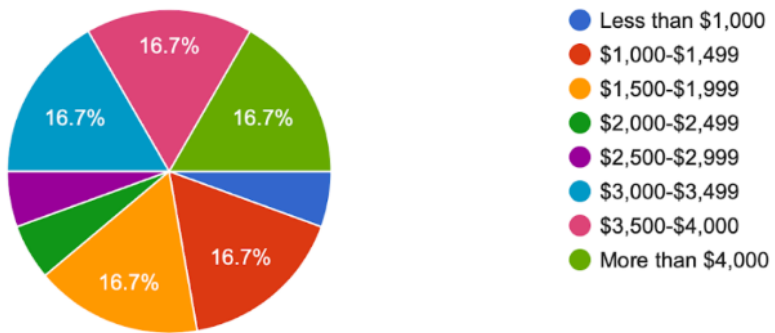
Appendix D.3

What is the total approximate square footage of the retail space?
21 responses

- ● Smaller than 700
- ● 700-900
- ● 901-1,100
- ● 1,101-1,300
- ● 1,301-1,500
- ● Larger than 1,500

47.6%
19%
9.5%
19%
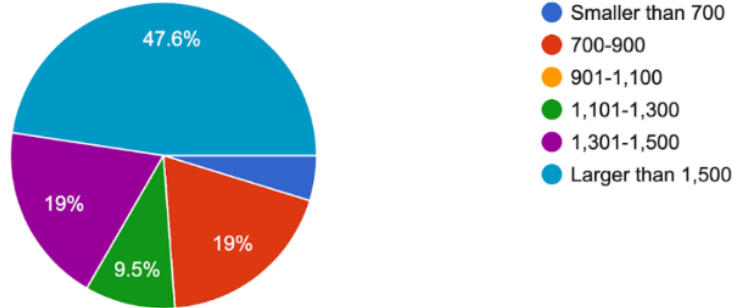
Appendix D.4

Approximately how many customers come into the retail space per day?
22 responses

- ● 1-25
- ● 26-50
- ● 51-75
- ● 76-100
- ● More than 100

27.3%
9.1%
27.3%
31.8%
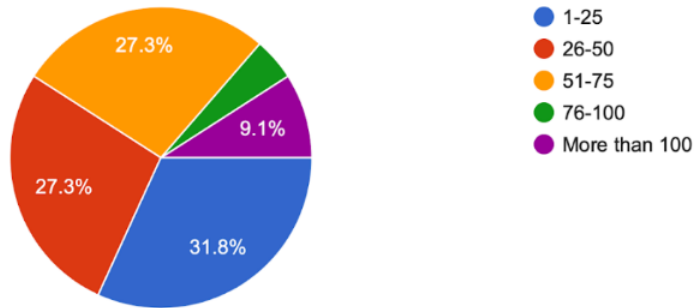
Appendix D.5

Busiest time of day
21 responses

● Morning (8:00 AM - 12:00 PM)
● Afternoon (12:00 PM - 5:00 PM)
● Evening (5:00 PM - 9:00 PM)
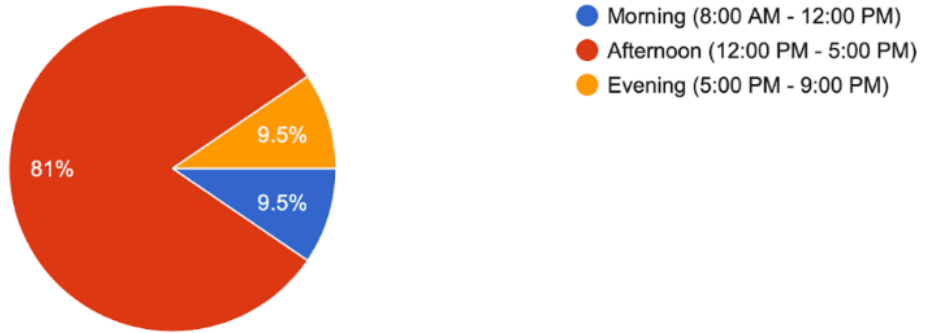
Appendix E: Bloomington Data Table

Entry Number	Busiest Time of Day	Triple Net Lease	Monthly Lease	Current Location Length	Square Footage	Customers Per Day	Employees	Condition of Building
1	Afternoon	Yes	$3500-$4000	3-4 Years	Larger than 1500	1-25	2	4
2	Afternoon	Yes	$2000-$2499	5-10 Years	Larger than 1500	26-50	10	5 (excellent)
3	Afternoon	Yes	$3000-$3499	3-4 Years	1101-1500	51-75	3	4
4	Afternoon	Yes	More than $4000	More than 10 Years	Larger than 1500	26-50	24	4
5	Morning	No	N/A	More than 10 Years	N/A	51-75	4	5 (excellent)
6	Afternoon	No	$1500-$1999	More than 10 Years	700-900	51-75	5	2
7	Afternoon	No	$1000-$1499	1-2 Years	700-900	1-25	3	3
8	Afternoon	No	$1000-$1499	More than 10 Years	700-900	26-50	6	4
9	Afternoon	No	$1500-$1999	Less than 1 Year	700-900	1-25	2	3
10	Afternoon	No	N/A	More than 10 Years	1301-1500	26-50	10	4
11	Afternoon	No	$3000-$3499	1-2 Years	Larger than 1500	51-75	7	5 (excellent)
12	Evening	No	$3000-$3499	5-10 Years	1301-1500	76-100	9	4
13	Afternoon	No	More than $4000	5-10 Years	1301-1500	51-75	7	2
14	Afternoon	No	$1000-$1499	More than 10 Years	1101-1500	26-50	6	3
15	N/A	Yes	$3500-$4000	More than 10 Years	Larger than 1500	1-25	4	4
16	Morning	No	$1500-$1999	3-4 Years	Larger than 1500	1-25	9	3
17	Afternoon	No	N/A	More than 10 Years	Larger than 1500	1-25	3	3
18	Afternoon	Yes	$3500-$4000	More than 10 Years	Larger than 1500	51-75	7	3
19	Evening	No	Less than $1000	3-4 Years	Smaller than 700	26-50	3	5 (excellent)
20	Afternoon	No	More than $4000	4-5 Years	1301-1500	More than 100	3	5 (excellent)
21	Afternoon	No	$2500-$2999	5-10 Years	Larger than 1500	1-25	4	3

Appendix F: GIS Supplemental Report

Appendix F.1: Data Acquisition

Data was acquired and downloaded through multiple means by team members. Below is a list of pertinent data used along with the sources of that data:

Data	Source	Publication/Last Update	Link
Monroe Count Parcels	Indiana Geographic Information Office (IGIO)	10/17/2019	https://maps.indiana.edu/metadata/Reference/Land_Parcels_County_IGIO.html
Bloomington, IN Addresses	City of Bloomington GIS Department, Laura Haley	2/4/2020	https://data.bloomington.in.gov/dataset/bloomington-address-points-gis-data
Bloomington, IN Building Footprints	City of Bloomington GIS Department, Laura Haley	8/9/2017	https://data.bloomington.in.gov/dataset/building-footprint-gis-data
Street Centerlines	Indiana Geographic Information Office (IGIO)	12/11/2019	https://maps.indiana.edu/metadata/Infrastructure/Streets_Centerlines_IGIO.html
Chamber of Commerce Mailing List	Bloomington Chamber of Commerce	unknown	

Since there was no comprehensive list of retail locations within downtown Bloomington, GIS team members acquired address points for the area of interest (Figure 1). The use of this data to acquire a list of retail locations within the study area will be explained in the Processing Steps of this document.

Figure 1: Addresses within the Study Area

Appendix G: List of Brick and Mortar retailers interviewed

1. Bikesmiths
2. Bloomington Salt Cave
3. Bloomington Smoke Time
4. Book Corner
5. Cup and Kettle
6. Garret Antiques
7. Gather
8. Global Gifts
9. Goods for Cooks
10. Indy E Cigs
11. Lola & Company
12. Moonstones
13. My Sister's Closet
14. Pitaya
15. Posh Boutique
16. That's the Rub
17. The Tailored Fit
18. Tracks
19. Vance Music Center
20. Vintage Vogue
21. WonderLab

GIS Supplemental Report

<u>The ArcGIS Collector App</u>

The GIS team determined through conversations with IU professors, Bloomington professionals, and organizations that a comprehensive list of city retail did not exist. Therefore, the need for an updated and comprehensive list was remedied through the use of the [ESRI Collector App](). This mobile app allows for multiple users to simultaneously collect retail locations and attributes and return it to the project managers. The app is available free for download. However, an ArcGIS Online License is required to host the application. See the appendix for useful links and further information about the application.

In order to use the Collector App, data collectors need reference address points to click and enter in retail and vacancy information while walking Bloomington. In ArcGIS Pro, GIS team members created a map that included downtown addresses, roads, and buildings. This address map was published to ArcGIS Online.

As Indiana University students, project members have free licenses to all ArcGIS products. In order to access the collector map, project members created ArcGIS Online accounts through the following steps:

1. Go to IU's ArcGIS Sign In (https://iu.maps.arcgis.com/home/signin.html) page.

2. Select Enterprise Login.

3. Click on Indiana University.

4. If prompted, log in with your IU username and passphrase

Members then joined an online group created by the GIS Team that included the address map. Once logged in to the Collector App, members could click on addresses and add retail names, condition, and leasing information using their smartphones. These edits were saved in real-time and could be accessed by the GIS Team. Once retail location collection was completed, the GIS Team exported an excel document of all retail and vacancy names and locations for the Data Collection Team to use.
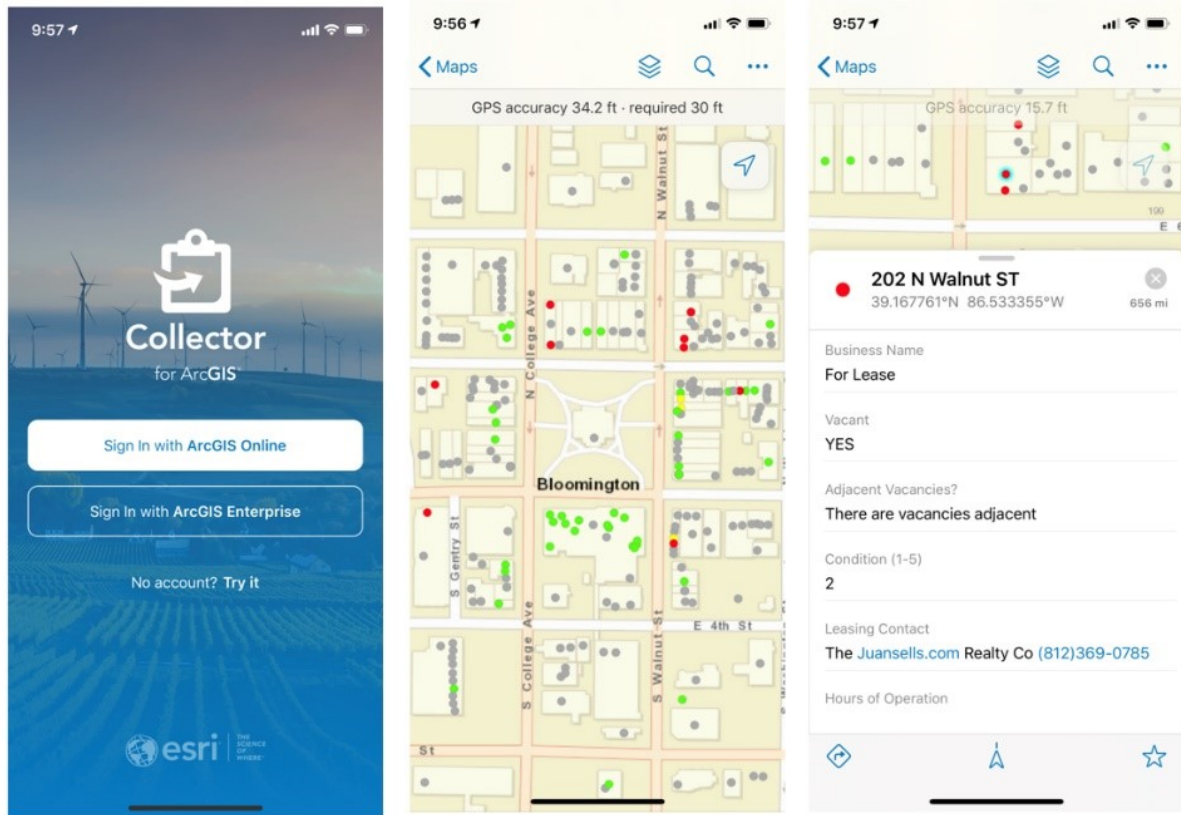
Figure 2: The ArcGIS Collector App

Creating Building Footprints

GIS Team members created building footprints or outlines for each location so that retail locations could be better identified on maps and for online use. The following directions outline the steps taken to create these footprints. The shapefiles used included "Points_Retail" and "Downtown_Buildings":

- **"Points_Retail"** point shapefile: these are the points collected using the ArcGIS Collector App that were used to make polygons for.
- **"Downtown_Buildings"** polygon shapefile: An empty polygon shapefile where building outlines were made for each point in "Points_Retail" (both vacant and non-vacant).

Directions:

Both Shapefiles were added to either ArcPro or ArcMap. These instructions use ArcPro. A basemap was added with satellite imagery of Bloomington. A basemap can be added from Arc directly or download one from IndianaMAP. This tutorial will create a polygon (building outline) for the dark-roof building in the center of this image:
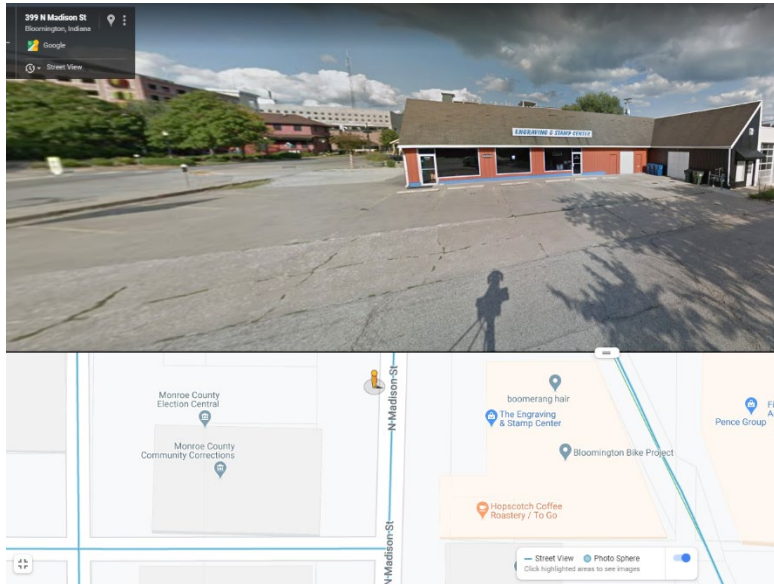
1. Click on the point to view the business name and address
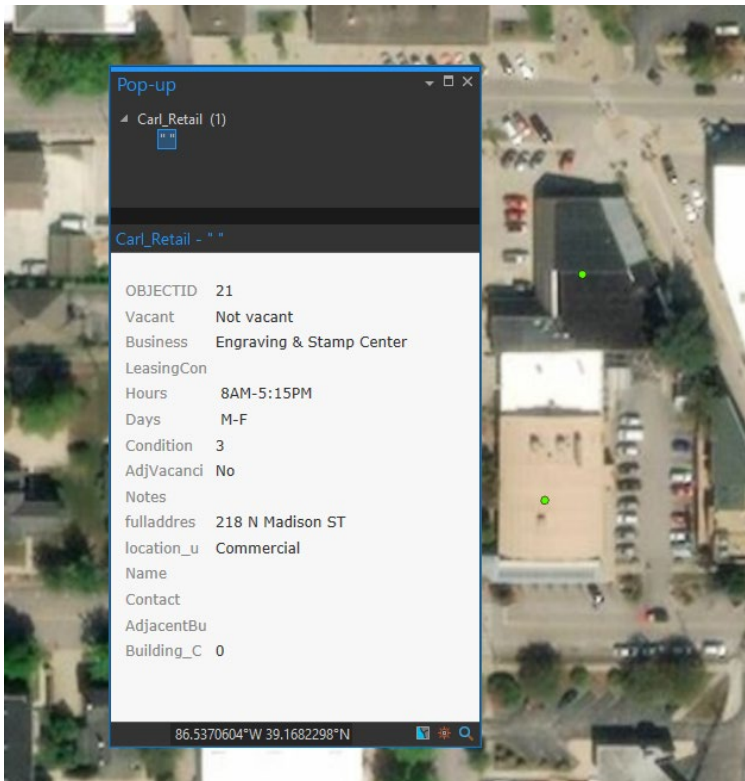
2. Use Google Street View to verify the location and extent of the business within the building

a. If needed, look at the business website or facebook page to see if there are any interior photos.

3. Once you have a good guess as to where the business starts and end, you can make a polygon to represent it:
    b. Go to the "Edit" tab
4. Click "Create"
5. Click the "Downtown_Buildings" square
6. Click either "polygon" or "rectangle" depending on the shape of the business
7. Create your polygon
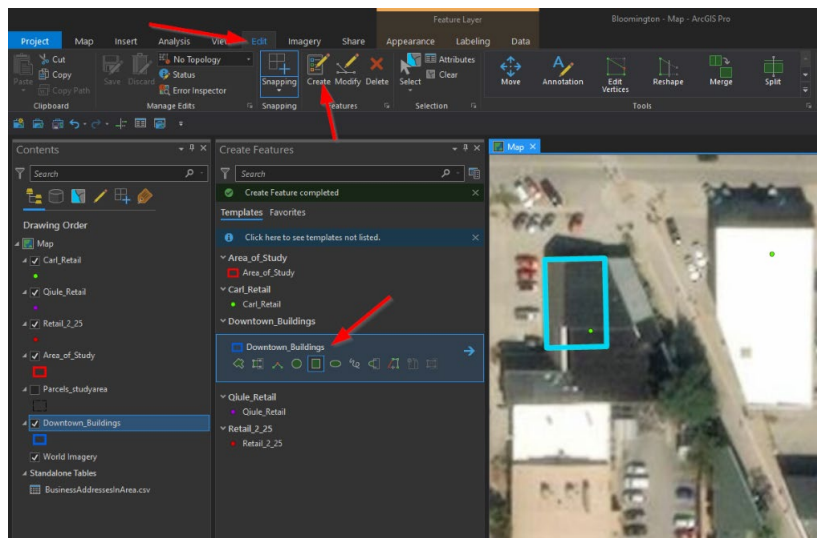
8. Select both the <u>polygon</u> you just created and the <u>point</u> it represents and go to the **<u>attributes</u>** pane: For each polygon, "Business_Address", "Business_Name" and any "GISNotes" were filled in. The exact address and name were copied and pasted from the point shapefile
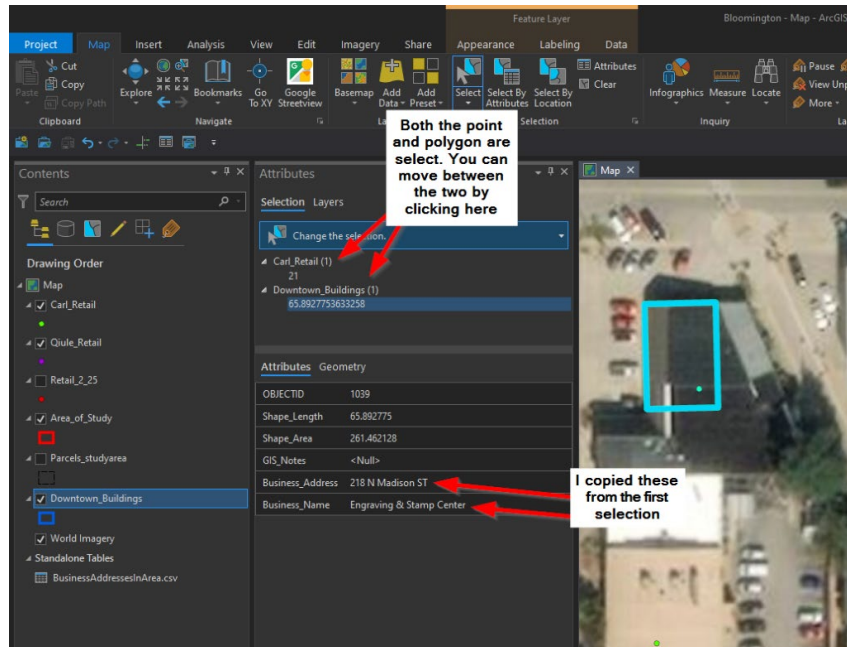
9. Make sure to save all edits
10. Once you have all polygons created with addresses and names, each team member's polygons are appended together to create a complete list of all retail and vacancies now with building footprints.

Entering Survey Information

The Bloomington Data Team created surveys for retail owners and distributed them to businesses determined by field collection using the Collector App. Upon completion of a survey, the Bloomington Data Team would enter the quantitative data into an excel spreadsheet. The GIS Team then took this quantitative data and entered it as individual attributes for each retail polygon. These quantitative attributes could then be displayed to show the spatial distribution of vacancies, rent, customers, etc.

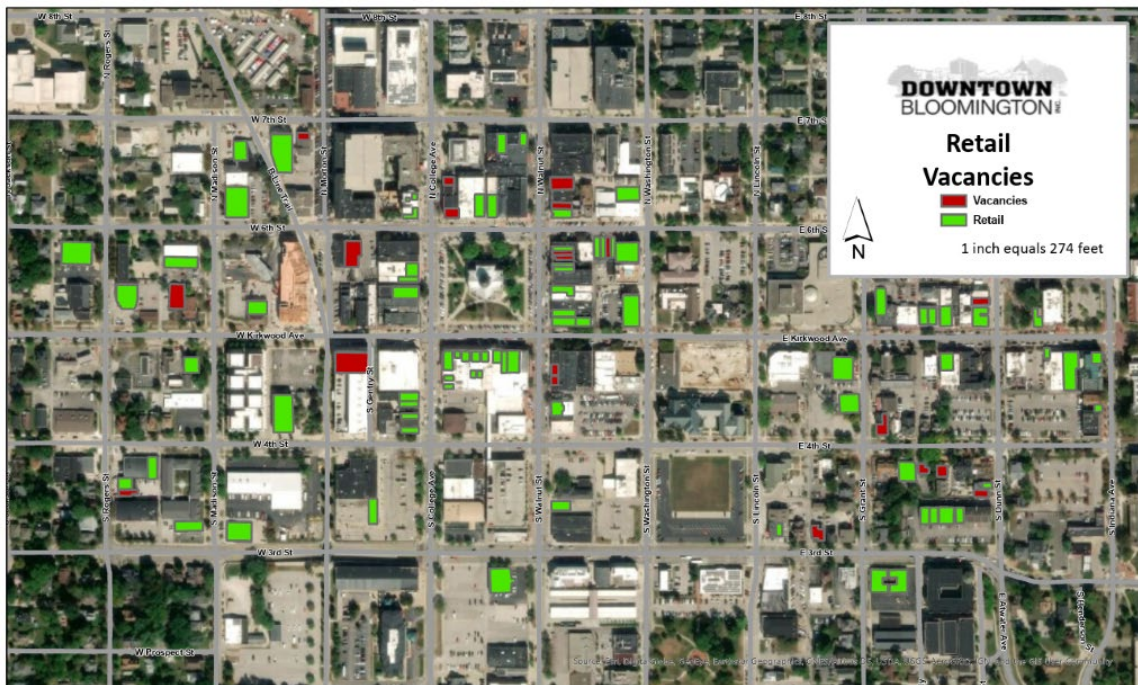Figure 3: Retail Locations Map

Figure 4: Retail Vacancies Map

Figure 5: Retail Survey Responses Map

Figure 6: Restaurants Map

Comparable Cities Supplemental Reports

City of Champaign, Illinois

The city of Champaign is located in Illinois, 135 miles south of Chicago and 124 miles west of Indianapolis, IN. Champaign, along with their twin city of Urbana, is home to the University of Illinois (51,000 students). Parkland College (18,000 students) is also located in Champaign. Champaign County has a population of 209,399 (2017) and the city of Champaign has a population of 87,432 (+7.6% from 2010). There are 33,432 total households and as of December 2019, they have an unemployment rate of 3.3%.

In terms of the community's financial health, Champaign has a Total Equalized Assessed Valuation (2015) of $1,492,156,913 and a AAA Bond Rating. The median household income is $47,502 (2018) while the state of Illinois had a median income of $65,030. The average daily commute time is 15.7 minutes. Champaign has a poverty rate of 26.3%. Demographics information is included at the end.

The city of Champaign has several downtown neighborhoods (Downtown, Midtown, Campustown, etc.); this investigation focused on the Downtown area. This area has over 35 locally owned restaurants and pubs, a hotel, entertainment venues, park, and retail spaces. Restaurants and bars account for the majority of businesses in downtown. Downtown has over 1,700 outdoor café seats and a public art program that fills the streets with rotating public art. The city holds special events, for example the Roger Ebert Film Festival, Pygmalion Music Festival, Blues, Brews and BBQ, and more.

An official from the City Planning & Development department and from the Champaign Center Partnership (CCP) rated the city walkability as 9 and 10 out of 10. They commented that the downtown is "attractive and vibrant" and the city has worked to increase the use of outdoor spaces for seating, to encourage walking between businesses, and the use of signage. The city created an outdoor café program and expanded it to allow sidewalk sales to help create more pedestrian activity and create visibility for businesses. While there is a high level of walkability, retail businesses are not located next to each other and people have to walk a distance between stores.

Increasing costs of rent were identified as a major challenge in the downtown for retailers. Retailers also have to contend with renovations costs, parking issues, and competition from online sales. The city offers incentives to aid with business expenses, offer a historic tax credit, and use a TIF District and Enterprise Zone to assist property owners in making repairs. CCP further supports downtown retailers through trainings and seminars, events downtown, and working to connect retailers with each other.

The city has instituted several policies to further aid downtown businesses. They recently amended the liquor code so that CCP could hold a Wine Walk to connect and encourage consumers to visit different retailers downtown. They have also instituted the following parking changes:

- Amended zoning ordinance to eliminate the parking requirements on new construction – allowed more space to be devoted to retail.

- Tiered parking rates so that the hourly rate decreases as you move further from the core.
- Enacted a first offence forgiveness program so that your first parking offense (per year) is waived.
- Created a tiered fine structure for parking that targets repeat offenders.
- Enacted "Mobile Meter" to make it easy for customers to pay for parking from their phone using debit and credit cards.

While Champaign is home to University of Illinois and Parkland college, students are not very involved in the downtown area. There is a perception of downtown as being for "adults"/non-college students. There is a Campustown area that serves as a downtown for most college students and has more national retailers and restaurants. The city is currently working with the University of Illinois on a $200 million development project, The Yards, which will expand the transit center, add a hotel/conference center, increase residential, office, and retail space, and create a 5,000 seat arena for university athletics. This development would take place south of downtown. The city is also in the initial design phase to construct a new city plaza in the heart of downtown to increase the green space and areas for gathering.

Demographic Information:

Age Demographics:

- Median age is 31
- Under 5 years old – 5.3%
- Under 18 years old – 16.5%
- 18 – 64 years old – 69.7 %
- 65 years and older – 8.5%

Racial Demographics

- White – 65.1%
- Black or African American – 18.8%
- American Indian and Alaska Native – 0.1%
- Asian – 13.3%
- Native Hawaiian – 0%
- Hispanic or Latino – 6.2%
- Two or more races – 2.6%

Gender Demographics:

- Female – 49.5%
- Male – 50.5%

Education Level:

- High School Degree or Higher (age 25+) = **95.5%**
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher (age 25+) = **52.2%**

Retail Sales:

- 2010 - $936,499,215
- 2011 - $953,138,231

- 2012 - $982,486,246
- 2013 - $992,753,615
- 2014 - $1,008,269,815

City of Columbia, Missouri

<u>Background</u>

Columbia, Missouri (CoMo) is a city in the state of Missouri that consists of 123,180 people and home to the University of Missouri (Mizzou). CoMo is the seat of the county government for Boone County. The primary industries for the city area education, medicine, and insurance. CoMo is home to three different universities.

As a college town, CoMo is host to the three higher learning institutions of Mizzou, Stephens College, and Columbia College. The University of Missouri is the largest university in the city, with the largest student population of 30,046 students. Mizzou is a major tourist destination thanks to its SEC-football team and regularly hosts major football games. Stephens College is a women's college that possesses a student population of 850. The university is a regionally, crucial educational institution. Columbia College is a national university with its home campus located in the city.

<u>City Characteristics</u>

The city is a young, median age 27.6 years old and well-educated city, 52.8%. The median household income in 2017 was $51,340, which is lower than the state's median income of $53,578. The top five employers in the city are the University of Missouri-Columbia, University Hospital and Clinic, Columbia Public Schools, Veterans United Home Loans, and the City of Columbia (Table 1.1). The unemployment rate in 2019 was 2.4%, which is lower than the state's rate of 3.3%. The top five most common jobs are general manager, business operations specialists, educational and vocational counselor, accountant and auditor, and computer support specialist (Table 1.2). The gross rent between the years 2014 to 2018 was $854. The city hosts 51,272 housing units.

Retail is a major component of CoMo's economy. In 2012, after adjusting for inflation, the total retail sales were $3,663,469 ($1,000). The service and foodservice sales, from 2012 and adjusting for inflation, was 399,482 ($1,00). CoMo hosts 10,543 companies in the city.

CoMo is a majority white, 76.9%, city (Table 1.3). The largest minority group is people that consider themselves Black or African American (Table 1.3). The city hosts a foreign-born population of 8.6%. The majority of the city, 66%, are working-age adults between the ages of 18 to 64 (Table 1.4). The second-largest age block, 18%, are people under the age of 18 (Table 1.4). The poverty rate of the city is 22.2%. In addition, the disability rate of the city is 6.9%.

<u>Downtown</u>

To better target development, the city divides it downtown into six different subdistricts. The Flat Branch district is typified as an area for economic development. The city has focused its development along the old rail line that runs through this district. Within this district, the city is working to improve pedestrian connections to improve the walkability and developing additional attractions for residents.

The North Village Arts District is the arts district in CoMo.. The development priorities in this area are the promotion of local events and the development of new uses for buildings to augment the economic health of the area.

The Government District is the home to the county and city governmental departments. To increase the walkability in this district, the city government has closed down the streets in this district. The current development priority is to increase walkability.

The Avenue of Columns district is a city and university landmark that is under current development. The city and university are investing in the redevelopment of the area to increase walkability by improving pedestrian sidewalks, landscaping green spaces, and incorporating art.

The West End district is the office and commercial district. The drawback of this policy is that the area has become semi-isolated due to the lack of pedestrian crossings and the ample amount of empty spaces for parking. These issues contribute to a lack of access since this is the furthest district away and that its city-goers cannot best utilize the parking.

The Strollway is the primary shopping and entertainment area. This district went under recent renovations to improve the area by removing unsightly concrete structures and implemented a height restriction, 2 to 3 stories, to maintain its original feeling.

Broadway Street is the main road of CoMo. This area crosses all of the districts and is the heart of the city. Broadway possesses a large number of restaurants, bars, and retail locations. The goal of this district is to improve the amount of walkability.

Relevant Issues

City

A major complaint in the city is the lack of parking. Although the city is dedicating an area within downtown for parking, it is far away from where people would want to walk. To attempt to solve the parking issue, the city is dedicating unused lots to parking. This creates another issue since where the available parking is far from the urban core.

Regulations

CoMo's zoning priorities grow downtown. Although the city does not require first floor retail, it encourages storefronts in its urban core. The city is pushing to get as many people into the urban core through the development of high-density housing units.

Survey Response

Their response shows that parking, rent, online shopping, and panhandling are the primary issues facing downtown. The respondent proposed the idea of lowering parking enforcement fees to get more people downtown. The respondent made an important not that rent is high, which could be a vacancy driver. A takeaway from this survey is that businesses want to stay downtown, but need accessible parking for people to visit downtown.

Potential Ideas

- Parking is a universal issue and that the dedicated areas require equal distribution across the city to ensure out of town visitors' access.
- Community events facilitate walkability.
- Mixed-use parking garages.
- Conduct customer profiles to better target potential consumer types.

Appendix

Table 1.1

Top 5 Largest Employers	Number of Employees
University of Missouri-Columbia	8,706
University Hospital and Clinics	4,600
Columbia Public Schools	2,517
Veterans United Home Loans	1,742
City of Columbia	1,487

Table 1.2

Job	Number Employed	Average Salary
General and Operations Manager	1,480	$68,050
Business Operations Specialist	770	$49,540
Educational, Guidance, School, and Vocational Counselors	620	$43,080
Accountants and Auditors	600	$54,970
Computer Use Support Specialist	580	$41,750

Table 1.3

Race and Hispanic Origin	Percentage
White	76.9%
Black or African American	10.9%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	0.3%
Asian	6.2%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0.2%
Two or More Races	4.6%
Hispanic or Latino	3.4%

Table 1.4

Age	Percentage
Under 5 years	5.8%
Under 18 years	18.0%
18 to 64	66%
65 and over	10.2%

Iowa City, Iowa

Iowa City is a metropolitan area located about 114 miles east of Des Moines, in Johnson County, Iowa. The former state's capital now serves as the home for a collection of local history and the University of Iowa (33,334 students).

The City has a population of 75,798 (2017) with a +1.42% projected growth rate. For the year 2019, Iowa City's unemployment rate was listed as 2.3%, and the poverty rate was reported at 28%. Median household income is $45,991 with a +7.66% projected growth rate (2017). The average commute time for workers is approximately 18.3 minutes. Furthermore, the City has maintained a stable AAA Bond Rating since the year 1973. A breakdown of population demographics are included at the end.
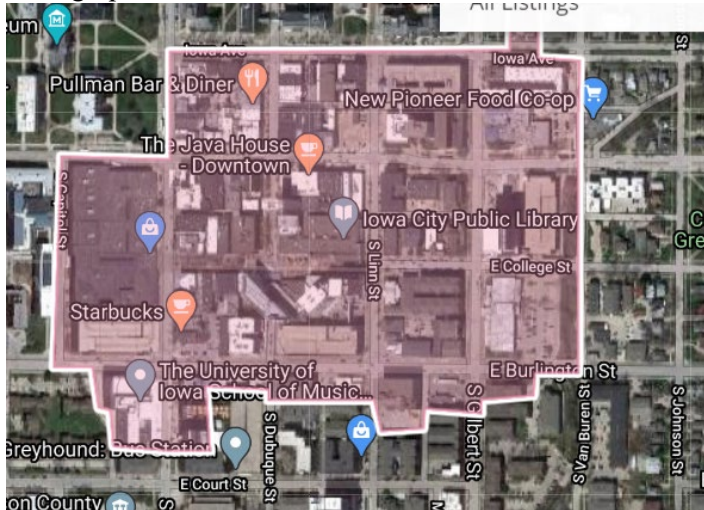
Iowa City's Economic Development Coordinator defines the geographical boundaries of the downtown area as Burlington St, to Clinton Street, to Bloomington St. to Gilbert St. This area is comprised of approximately 150 businesses and property owners who operate restaurants, bars, retail stores, office spaces, entertainment venues, hotels, and libraries.

According to the City's Economic Development Coordinator, retail stores account for a majority of business in town. This trend is due to the downtown's pedestrian walking mall that houses 70+ locally owned restaurants, bars, flower shops, comic bookstores, arcades, entertainment venues, and retail establishments located in the downtown area. The city holds special events including the Annual Maple Syrup Festival, the Mission Creek Music Festival, the German Maifest, seasonal markets, and more.

Iowa City's Economic Development Coordinator and the Executive Director of the Iowa Downtown District rated the city's walkability as a 9/10 and a 10/10. This rating is primarily attributed to the city's urban grid pattern, lively storefronts, new streetscapes, improved signage, and expansive street lighting. The Economic Development Coordinator commented on the specific "vibrancy and community life" that is present when walking the streets of Iowa City's downtown area.

Major challenges facing the downtown area include high rental costs, "wrong-sized" retail spaces, tinted storefront windows, limited parking and increased competition for food and beverage restaurants. Iowa City's 36-year-old Artisan Gallery believes that the greatest challenge facing

local retail is limited customer parking. Alternatively, the city's 41-year-old Haunted Bookshop believes that the greatest challenge facing retail is high rent costs. "The number of bars, and the number of people going to them, is growing in proportion to the high rent and increase in residential development." The retailers differed in their likelihood to recommend opening a business in town. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being "would not recommend at all," and 5 being "Would highly recommend," the Haunted Bookshop rated a 2. Their rating was closely tied to high rent costs. If rent costs weren't so high, then they "would always be looking for new potential neighbors and offering to mentor new small businesses." Meanwhile, the Iowa's Artisans Gallery rated a 5 because of the "vibrant downtown" atmosphere.

Local retailers are struggling to compete with online alternatives, and they are attempting to address these challenges in strategic ways. For example, the Haunted Bookshop has partnered with a local coffee shop in town to advertise and support each other's businesses. The products and services provided by these organizations are complementary goods; in that bookstore customers might also be coffee consumers and coffee consumers might also be interested in visiting bookshops. The organizations agree to not provide the service offered by the other, and this fosters mutual support without increasing competition.
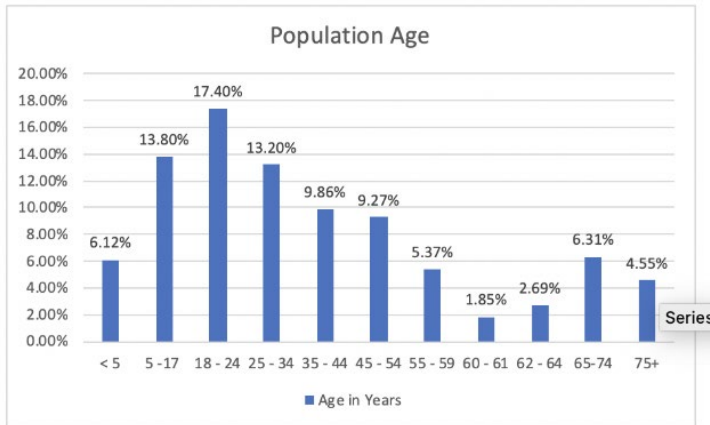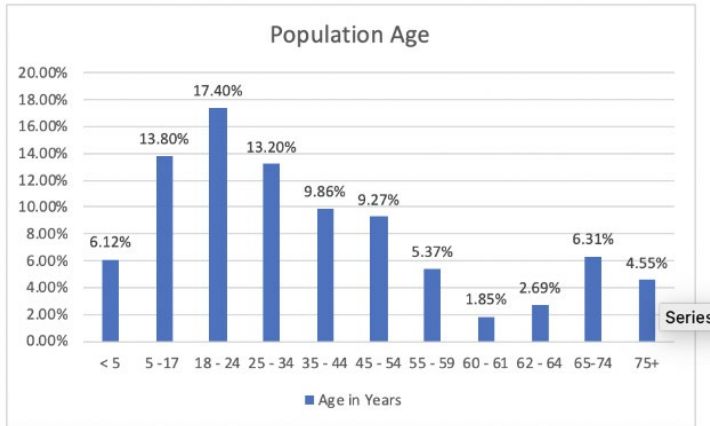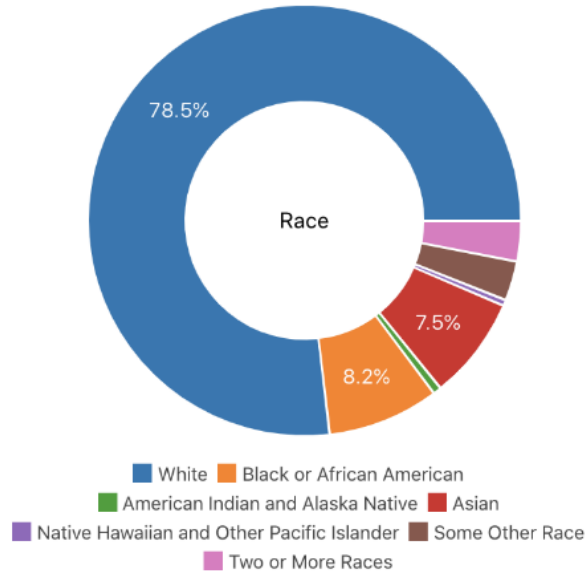
Iowa City has also adopted strategies to address the systemic issues, including but not limited to;

- A $9 million investment in infrastructure (including utility and streetscapes)
- An ordinance focused on increasing competition by prohibiting new bars to locate within 500 feet of each other
- Parking fees that encourage turn-over for street spots (i.e., first hour free parking in city ramps; with higher hourly rates at meters on the streets).
- A self-supporting municipal improvement district (SSMID) tax
- A recruiter on retainer to support regional retail throughout the city
- Additional ad hoc funding for programs and projects
- Advocacy and marketing for local businesses

The downtown area is co-located with the west campus of the University of Iowa, putting foot traffic of 30,000+ students and 30,000+ staff within walking distance of downtown. According to the Executive Director of Iowa City's Downtown District, students push on the demand for beer, coffee, and pizza, but they don't typically shop locally. Iowa's Artisans Gallery states that they have no formal relationship with the university, however the students and staff are "good" customers, and some of the faculty contribute art to their store's inventory. Alternatively, the Haunted Bookshop has a formal relationship with the University. This business supports the library, graduate student union, faculty union, and student groups in various ways, including assistance with literary projects, providing study spaces, offering book clubs, and hosting poetry slams.

Future Iowa City developments will include the "Tailwinds Project," which will renovate a full block of historic buildings and build a high-rise apartment building nearby.

Demographic Information (2017) :

Race

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- Some Other Race
- Two or More Races

78.5% White, 8.2% Black or African American, 7.5% Asian

Population Age

Age in Years	Percentage
< 5	6.12%
5 - 17	13.80%
18 - 24	17.40%
25 - 34	13.20%
35 - 44	9.86%
45 - 54	9.27%
55 - 59	5.37%
60 - 61	1.85%
62 - 64	2.69%
65-74	6.31%
75+	4.55%

Population Age

Age in Years	Percentage
< 5	6.12%
5 - 17	13.80%
18 - 24	17.40%
25 - 34	13.20%
35 - 44	9.86%
45 - 54	9.27%
55 - 59	5.37%
60 - 61	1.85%
62 - 64	2.69%
65-74	6.31%
75+	4.55%

Sources:

https://datausa.io/profile/geo/iowa-city-ia/#economy

https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.ia_iowacity_msa.htm

https://datausa.io/profile/geo/iowa-city-ia/#housing

https://www.press-citizen.com/story/news/2019/05/02/iowa-city-assessed-aaa-bond-rating/3650317002/

https://downtowniowacity.com/about-icdd/

The Haunted Bookshop, Nialle Sylvan

Iowa's Artisan's Gallery, Beth Knudson

https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/iowa-city-population/

City of Ithaca, New York

Ithaca is located within Thompson County, New York. The city has just above 31,000 permanent residents as of 2018 with a 0.31% yearly growth rate. Ithaca is home to Cornell University and Ithaca University, which combined have about 30,000 full-time students.

Ithaca has a generally robust economy but does struggle with poverty. For the year 2019, Iowa City's unemployment rate was listed as 3.2%, and the poverty rate was reported at 43.4%. Median household income is $31,967 with a +5.53% projected growth rate (2017). The industries with the largest percentage of the employee pool are education, office and administrative support and sales occupations. A breakdown of population demographics is included at the end.

The City of Ithaca's Office of Economic Development defines the geographical boundaries of the downtown area as Court Street, to Clinton Street, to S Albany Street to Schuyler Place. This area is comprised of hundreds of businesses and property owners who operate restaurants, bars, retail stores, office spaces, entertainment venues, hotels, and libraries.

According to the City's Deputy Director for Economic Development and the Executive Director of the Downtown Ithaca Alliance, restaurants and bars account for a majority of business in downtown. Downtown Ithaca also has a vibrant retail scene. Many of the successful businesses can be found within the Ithaca Commons. Tom Knipe, the Deputy Director for Economic development said " the Ithaca Commons pedestrian mall forms the geographic and psychological center of Downtown. It is 2.5 blocks of car free public space with shops, restaurants, office and housing" (See figure 2).

Both the City representative and the Downtown Ithaca Alliance rate the walkability of downtown very highly (9/10 and 10/10, respectively). They attribute the Ithaca Commons and the dense urban environment as drivers of the walkability of Ithaca. Tom Knipe suggest that some of the greatest strengths of their downtown included the high demand for temporary lodging, a thriving Business Improvement District, a strong entertainment scene and the growth of infill housing.

Gary Ferguson, the Executive Director of Downtown Ithaca Alliance largely agreed. Both individuals mentioned the activity that is created by downtown events put on by the city and the Alliance.

Some of the challenges that downtown Ithaca faces are the changing nature of retail, parking and transportation issues, construction fatigue, lack of anchor retailers and affordability of rent. These challenges discussed by the city and Downtown Ithaca Alliance mirrored some of the concerns raised by retailers. Peter Parkes, the owner of Benjamin Peters, a 26-year-old men's clothing store in Ithaca, suggested that parking, a lack of pedestrian foot traffic and other quality retailers were issues facing his businesses. Kelly Serbonich, a manager at Jillian's Drawers, echoed the concern about the lack of pedestrian foot traffic and high rents. While the downtown area is well established, the challenge of bringing people into the shops and Ithaca Commons is a common thread. The retailers differed in their likelihood to recommend opening a business in town. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being "would not recommend at all," and 5 being "Would highly recommend," Jillian's Drawers rated a 3 while Benjamin Peters rated a 5. Both suggested that for a business to be successful in Ithaca, it would need to fit with the downtown ecosystem and be in an advantageous location.

It is important to recognize that the city's efforts to address issues of parking may also be causing problems. Tom Knipe said that the city is working to redevelop two of the three downtown parking garages. This has caused construction fatigue and is also likely limiting the number of shoppers that are able and willing to spend their time at downtown retail

locations. The city is also revamping the convention center in the downtown. While this is also likely causing problems relating to construction, there are hopes that it will bring more visitors to the downtown area at non-peak hours and seasons.

The retail companies within Ithaca said that there was a "distant" relationship with the universities. While they may benefit from the increase in residents while school is in session, they do not view the university as a main driver of their economic viability.

The city and the Downtown Ithaca Alliance put on events in the downtown area in an attempt to stimulate the economy. These events take place multiple times a month and are well received by business owners. The relationship between the city administration, Downtown Ithaca Alliance and business owners has been represented positively by each stakeholder.
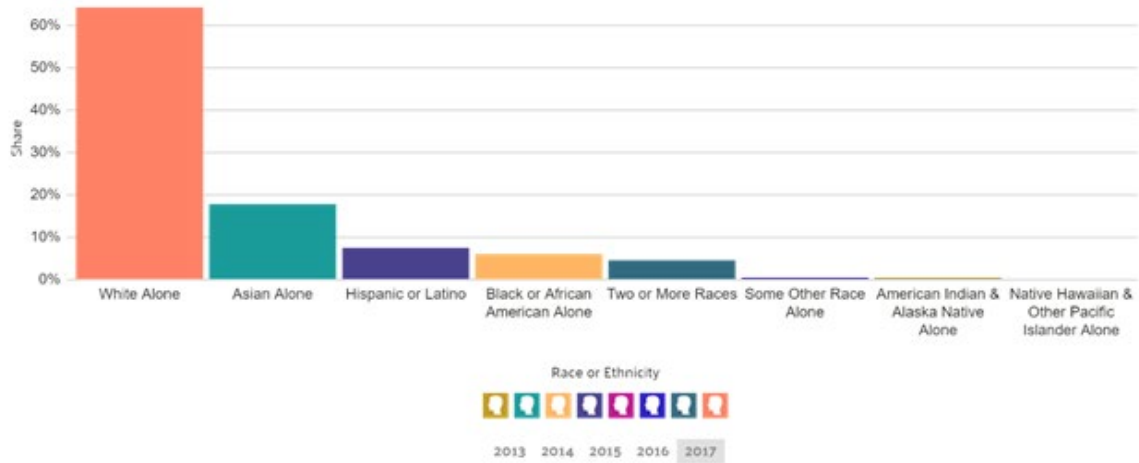
Figure 1. https://www.cityofithaca.org/DocumentCenter/View/1432/Downtown-Ithaca-PDF?bidId=

Figure 2. https://hlblighting.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ithaca-Commons_01web.jpg

Figure 3. https://datausa.io/profile/geo/ithaca-ny#demographics

City of Lafayette/West Lafayette, Indiana

<u>Demographic Information</u>

The city of West Lafayette is located 68 miles northwest Indianapolis, IN and 124 miles southeast of Chicago. Along with its sister city of Lafayette, it is home to Purdue University. Purdue is the land-grant university of Indiana and is known for its engineering, agriculture and veterinary schools.

West Lafayette is a city of 46,269 persons with a Media income of $31,230. Being a college town, it has a median age of 21.7.

The City of West Lafayette is 65.9% White, 23.8% Asian, and 4.23% Hispanic or Latino. It is 54.2% male and 45.8% female.

West Lafayette is pretty well educated with 71.4% of the populous with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, 14.6% have some college or Associate's Degree, 9.6% have a High School Degree or GED, 3.4% have less than a High School Degree, and only 1% have reported no schooling.

West Lafayette's main business sectors are education, manufacturing, and healthcare.

<u>Survey Responses</u>

Because geographically West Lafayette and Lafayette are so close with only the Wabash River separating them, they share many things, including a downtown. It is governed primarily by the Greater Lafayette government system. That being said, responses were gathered from the Economic Development Manager at the Greater Lafayette Commerce and the Economic Development Director from the City of Lafayette.

According to the Director from the City Government, the Downtown is represented by the map below.
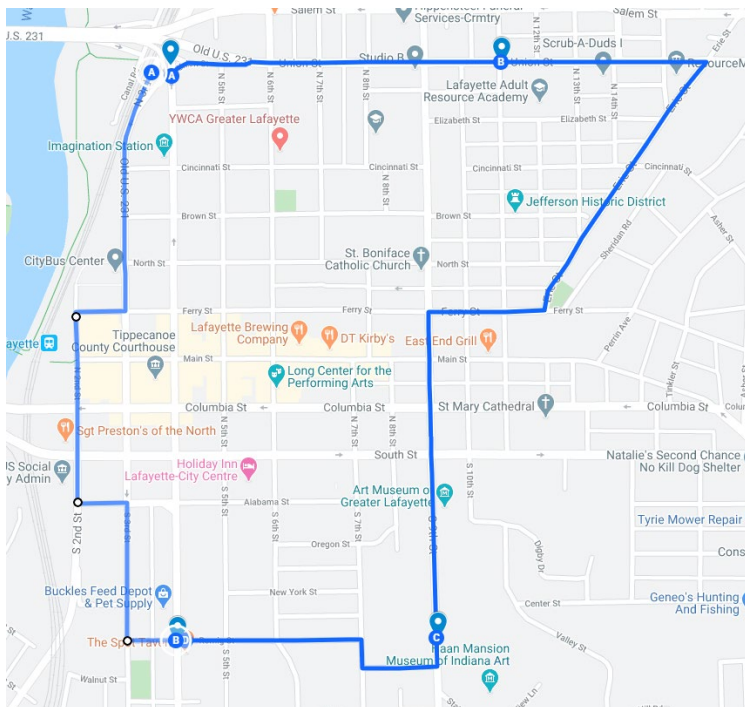
The Chamber takes a different view of the downtown sector and views it much more broadly. According to the Chamber, the geographic boundaries of the downtown area are as indicated by the picture below.
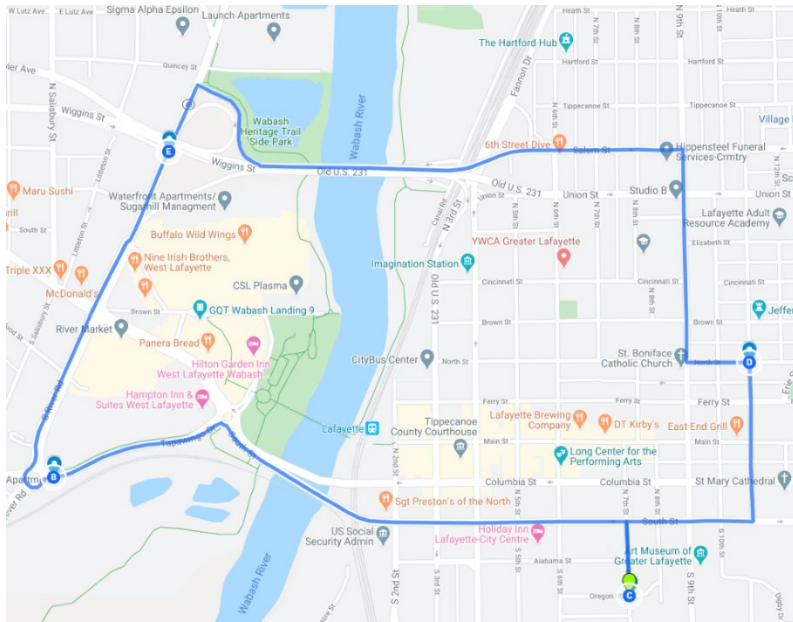
This is important to note as this may account for some differences in the information they found as viable and their estimates in different areas. For example, the Chamber only estimated the vacancy rate as 5% while the City estimated vacancy at 20%. They also differed on what constituted the majority of businesses downtown. The City believed it to be restaurants and bars with the chamber believed it to be office space.

They both rated the downtown's walkability as high at an average of 9 out of 10. Agreeing on the attractiveness of the downtown area, areas for informational maps, and well-lit paths. The City has 2-3 events a month in the downtown area with the intent to get more people downtown.

The City, similar to Bloomington, sees that traditional retail is having the biggest challenge that it has faced in at least 20 years. While the City sees too many retail spaces being empty the Chamber sees the issue as not enough space to develop.

But both agree that the biggest challenges facing traditional retail stores are online retail and bigger box stores.

The City and Chamber are trying to encourage the competitiveness of the local businesses by providing technical assistance programs, regional retail summits, small business of the month events, and encouraging small business days to local consumers.

The small businesses that are successful in Lafayette have been capitalizing on providing unique experiences that online and big box stores cannot offer as well as diversifying their own business models to include both an in-store and online presence.

The only policies regarding businesses downtown that were perceived as negative were the limited/ restrictive parking and the fact the downtown area is designated as historic so that can pose some challenges and extra "hoops" for businesses to jump through.

The City has made a number of developments over the last decade that showed their continued support for the downtown area including trying to increase parking, renovation of older buildings to new uses, adding more apartment space, adding bus routes that stop downtown, beautification projects, and expansion of the downtown business district. There are also continuing to plan for more development that can attract people to shop downtown.

There are mixed reactions to the University in supporting local businesses. The students and University are seen as beneficial to restaurants and bars and the community hosts an event every year for incoming freshman students called "Boiler Bridge Bash" where students are encouraged to explore the downtown and its shops but that doesn't always translate to longer-term retail sustainability.

City of Lawrence, Kansas

The city of Lawrence, Kansas has a population of 95,294 and is the county seat for Douglas County. Located in the Northeastern corner of the state, Lawrence is 26 miles east of the state capital of Topeka and 38 miles west of Kansas City. Lawrence is home to both the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University. The combined student population of both universities is about 30,000.

The 2020 Lawrence Adopted Budget shows the city has a general fund of $82,143,000 and a bond rating of Aa1 for General obligation bonds and Aa2 for Special Revenue bonds.

Lawrence has a median household income of $50,429, a poverty rate of 21.8% and as of January 2020, an unemployment rate of 3.2%. Comparatively, the state of Kansas as a median income of $57,422 and poverty rate of 12% so Lawrence is slightly worse than the state as a whole.

Downtown Lawrence is defined as a relatively small section of the city consisting of the area between New Hampshire Street to the east and Kentucky Street on the west; from 11th Street on the south to 6th Street on the north. Massachusetts Street, which goes straight through the center of the downtown area is considered to be the main street for retail and restaurants. There are 47 restaurants and bars and 48 retail stores found within the bounds of the downtown.

Steve Kelly, Vice President of Economic Development with the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce rates downtown Lawrence as a 9 out of 10 in terms of walkability, explaining "overall very walkable but there are some infrastructure improvements (sidewalk and alley improvements) that would be beneficial." The small size of the downtown area contributes to the high score and overall walkability.

Retail businesses downtown cited parking as a barrier to attracting customers. "High costs of parking tickets [and] limited available parking is hard" according to the Dusty Bookshelf which has been in downtown Lawrence for 25 years. Steve Kelly from the Chamber of Commerce also lists parking concerns as one of the biggest challenges facing downtown retail stores. However, Downtown Lawrence Inc (DLI), a local nonprofit organization with "a mission to preserve, protect & promote Downtown Lawrence as the retail, service & professional, governmental, entertainment and social center of our community," directs visitors to the nearly 1000 metered parking spots or the "many" free 2 hour parking spaces.

Retail businesses in the downtown area also cite high rent costs as a barrier to many businesses. The Dusty Bookshelf explains "It is difficult to remain in a storefront space downtown due to the cost of rent." This is the reason for the low likelihood of them recommending to someone to open a business in the downtown Lawrence. The Chamber of Commerce also recognizes the issue of high rents explaining, "more downtown businesses are struggling because of high rents." The Chamber also lists the high associated property taxes as one of the biggest challenges facing downtown retail stores.

DLI created a Downtown Lawrence Gift Card in an effort to encourage consumers to visit downtown stores. The gift card is similar to a credit card as it can be used at over 130 downtown Lawrence businesses (retail, restaurants, bars, entertainment, etc).

The two universities in Lawrence are not located in the downtown area, however, influx of students contributes to an increase in foot traffic for the retail stores. Neither university has any formal relationship with the city of Lawrence.

Demographic Information

Age Demographics:

- Median age is 29
- Under 5 years old – 5%
- Under 18 years old – 15.9%
- 18 – 64 years old – 71.9%
- 65 years and older – 12.2%

Racial Demographics:

- White – 74%
- Black or African American – 5%
- American Indian and Alaska Native – 3%
- Asian – 7%
- Native Hawaiian – 0%
- Hispanic or Latino – 8%
- Two or more races – 3%

Gender Demographics:

- Female – 51%
- Male – 49%

Education Level:

- High School Degree or Higher (age 25+) – 95.8%
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher (age 25+) – 53.7%

City of Lexington, Kentucky

The City of Lexington is located in Kentucky. Lexington is a combined city-county government, known as the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government. Lexington has a population of 323,780 and is home to two universities: University of Kentucky (30,473 students) and Transylvania University (1,100 students). Both universities are in the urban core of the city. Louisville, Kentucky is 78 miles from Lexington, and Cincinnati, Ohio is 83 miles from Lexington. The median household income for Lexington is $54,918, and the unemployment rate as of December 2019 is 3.0%.

Lexington has several pockets of dense or continuous development beyond downtown. The development along Nicholasville Road, which leads out of downtown and to the south of the city, is a classic example of urban sprawl. Development continues to push to the south staying along the road. Another concentration of development, known as Hamburg, is to the east of downtown and serves as a retail hub. Both of these locations funnel business from downtown, leaving the urban center for office space and college targeted storefronts, such as bars and restaurants.

Downtown was evaluated by two stakeholder groups: the Senior Long-Range Planner at the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government and the Director of Economic Development and Placemaking at the Downtown Lexington Partnership. Both offered insight into how Lexington's downtown operates, its challenges, and its successes.

Both gave Lexington's walkability a 9 out of 10, with an emphasis on extensive sidewalk repair and effective responses to damages or concerns in the area. The Senior Long-Range Planner noted that there is fund for businesses to contribute to that provides amenities such as enhanced art, flowers, and general improvements to the image of downtown that augment the maintained sidewalks and consistent street lighting.

These businesses, however, are in the minority of what constitutes Lexington's downtown. While there certainly are restaurants, shops, and community spaces -- the majority of the space is dominated by offices. This inherently limits the traffic of downtown beyond working hours and is an area of improvement targeted by the City and the downtown association. Lexington's downtown also lacks an anchor business, preventing some of the cohesion that occurs from such an institution.

The first floor vacancy rate in the core of downtown is 5.2% according to the Downtown Lexington Partnership, but the City estimates that the entire downtown area experiences between 10-20% vacancy. Upon my own investigation, I believe the latter estimate is more accurate, given how limited the scope is of the first number.

The most pressing concerns in Lexington's downtown are rent prices (both store and housing) that are prohibitive to riskier businesses and younger populations. The downtown lacks the "play" and "live" aspects of the "live, work, play" model they are striving to create. This is in spite of having downtown bordered on the north and south ends by universities.

The current strategy to promote downtown retail in Lexington is for the local government to organize and promote events in the area. Lexington has events nearly every weekend, with more in the summer, and encourages local businesses to participate. The officials interviewed for this assignment both mentioned that lack of visibility are problems for retailers that are clustered in

nodes of downtown. They lack a prominent street view, and these events are designed to entice people to come downtown and acknowledge what is available there.

Nicholsville Road and Hamburg are the primary alternatives that draw business and traffic away from downtown, but key community sites such as Rupp Arena (where the University of Kentucky men's college basketball team plays), an opera house, and a convention center give people of all ages a reason to come downtown -- but only on certain days.

Recent developments downtown include the completion of a delayed office building and high-end apartment complex with retail on the first floor known as City Center and the old courthouse fully remodeled as a mixed-use development. In the near future, a linear park will run through Vine Street of downtown, functioning similarly to the B-Line. This park will lead to a bike trail that loops around Lexington and a world-class park that is under development in downtown.

Beyond coordinating events, the City is relatively hands-off in their approach to developing the area beyond normal zoning and permit procedures. Lexington focuses more on cultivating a space than directly involving themselves with downtown retail policies.

Overall, Lexington's downtown environment shows higher vacancy rates than Bloomington, but has more competition for retail outlets in places such as Nicholasville Road and Hamburg. Lexington benefits from having safe and maintained streets, sidewalks, and lights -- but must combat the limitations of high rent, urban sprawl, and a domination of office space.

The City of Lincoln, Nebraska

Lincoln is the capital city of the U.S State of Nebraska and is the county seat of Lancaster County. It is the second most populous city in the state of Nebraska and is located in the southeast part of the state. As of 2018, it had a population of 287,401 and covered 96.194 square miles. Additionally, it is home to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the State's flagship university which enrolls approximately 26,079 students and is the City's third largest employer. Additionally, the city has the second tallest state capitol building in the U.S. and is a growing tech hub for the great plains.

According to the Lincoln Planning Department, Lincoln's Downtown is generally defined by G Street as a southern border, Antelope Creek as an eastern border, the University of Nebraska City Campus as the northern border, and the mainline railroad tracks as the western border. It is also considered to have a relatively walkable downtown with many amenities including street trees, curb extensions, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian walkways. Additionally, stakeholders from the Lincoln area described the downtown as "a traditional urban center which by nature is highly walkable. We have good sidewalks, lighting, interesting public art and architecture and an abundance of shops, restaurants and cultural and entertainment venues." This reflects many of the strengths Lincoln has utilized in diversifying its downtown through arts and culture, the university, and the nearby state capitol.

Additionally, Lincoln's business environment was also evaluated by local-owned small businesses. They talked a lot about how the level of activity and engagement varies throughout the year and season, and they host events from the tower square near the capitol. Additionally they said they participate in everything the Downtown Lincoln Association puts on, and that the DLA is a main driver of the downtown. Similar to Bloomington, they felt that a challenge or issue facing downtown businesses was the perceived lack of parking, even when there was some available parking in the area. This is one notable shared challenge to Bloomington, which has had parking and availability struggles over the 4th street garage and other areas of access.
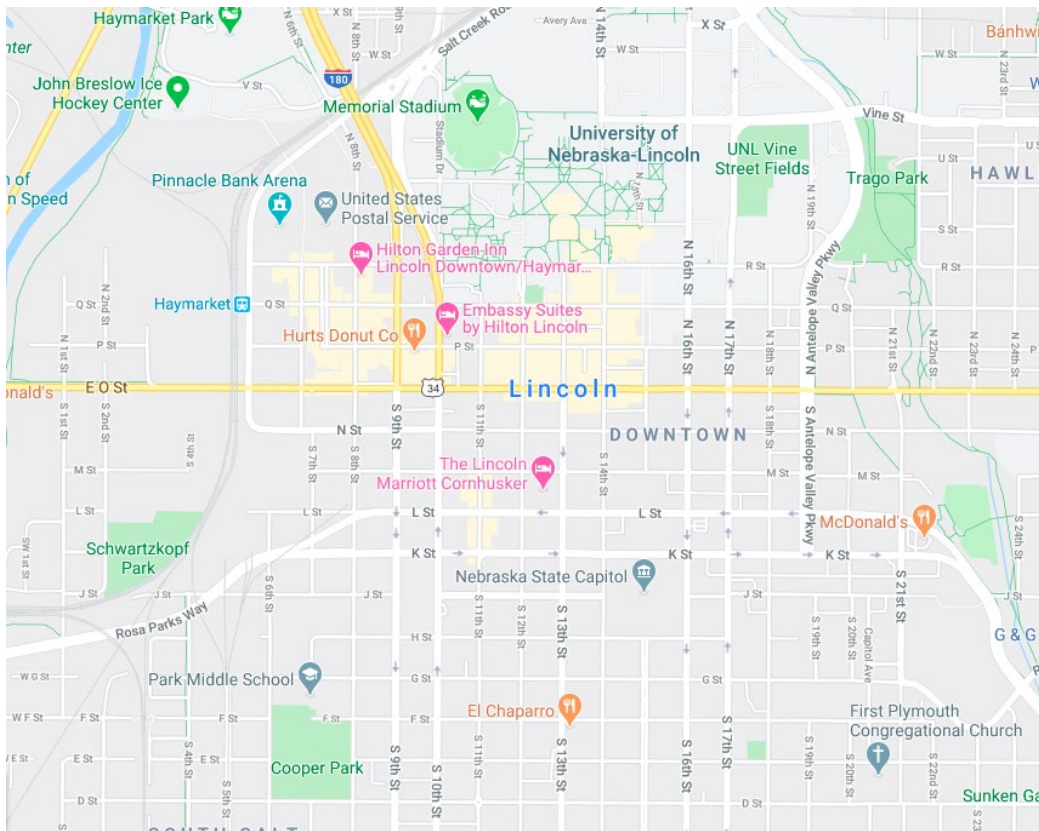
(For reference, a map view of downtown Lincoln. The Haymarket Rail station forms the western edge, the University of Nebraska the northern edge, the Antelope Creek on the right forms the eastern edge, and the southern edge falls a few blocks south of the State Capitol.)

The City of Lincoln has taken some creative strategies to support brick and mortar retail in its downtown. It has a strong and collaborative relationship with the Downtown Lincoln Association and has a comprehensive plan to support the continued health of their downtown. They utilize favorable zoning that does not have a parking requirement as well as tax increment financing to incentivize new development projects to the downtown area as well as streetscape redevelopment. They also support festivals and other kinds of events which helps differentiate the downtown shopping experience from online or other big box stores.

Downtown Lincoln has seen a lot of growth as a result of these policies and incentives. In 2010, there were 1,200 downtown Lincoln residents; in 2016, there were 3,000 (an increase of 140%).[8] Around the middle of the same decade, demand for housing and rent units began outpacing supply. With Lincoln's population expected to grow to more than 311,000 people by 2020, prices for homes and rent costs have risen. Home prices rose 10% from the first quarter of 2015 to the first quarter of 2016; rent prices rose 30% from 2007 to 2017 with a 5–8% increase in 2016 alone. This increase in downtown residents has helped keep foot traffic in downtown areas high and increase the amount of activity for businesses in the area. The lack of a parking requirement and quick development in the area has also led to more people within the downtown area overall, lessening the severity of their parking problems.

While Lincoln has seen fast development, much of this is due to the City's and DLA's efforts on making it a more attractive place to live, work, and shop. Their notable recent projects have

included passing and issuing of a major bond issue to build the new Pinnacle Bank Arena and the private West Haymarket mixed use development on the western side of downtown. This was shortly after the Antelope Valley redevelopment project 10 years ago which is on the eastern edge of downtown. In addition, there have been several mixed-use projects for housing, retail, garage parking, and student housing built throughout downtown that have contributed to both the city's and downtown business's growth.

Lincoln's continued efforts to support brick and mortar retail and diversify its downtown are heavily centered on increasing its affordable housing as well as continuing to improve the street environment throughout downtown. This includes improved pedestrian crossings, adding additional bike facilities, and changing some two-way streets to be one way. This is a priority for Lincoln so they can continue to attract and retain residents of the wider City to shop in the downtown district. Additionally, with a nicer streetscape, that will have positive passive impacts on residents already living in the area, encouraging them to spend more time out walking the streets and passing by local businesses.