



retail strategies // downtown strategies

5-Year Strategic Action Plan

Downtown

Lebanon

PENNSYLVANIA

2026



About Us



Who We Are

Downtown Strategies, a division of Retail Strategies, exists to provide realistic, implementable strategies to communities for revitalizing their downtowns. Led by a team of downtown revitalization practitioners, our combination of real-world experience, plus expertise in real estate and retail uniquely qualify us to assist communities with backfilling vacancies, increasing tourism, and enhancing the sense of place in their downtowns. Serving rural communities in 27 states, Downtown Strategies is the leading national firm for downtown revitalization planning with an emphasis short-term, incremental success.

5-Year Plan

At Downtown Strategies, we believe that action and implementation are more important than a flashy 20-year vision. Our process is based on our team's experience as practitioners. Our team members have been in your shoes as community leaders and know what it is like to manage downtown revitalization efforts.

Most communities do not suffer from a lack of ideas; they struggle with knowing where to start when it comes to implementing their ideas. Rather than brainstorming everything that you could ever potentially do in your downtown, we focus on a five-year timeframe. This plan is designed to help you identify where your community should focus its energy and effort in the near-term. Implementing these short-term, doable strategies will incrementally shift the trajectory of your downtown and create the spark that you desire.

Our Team

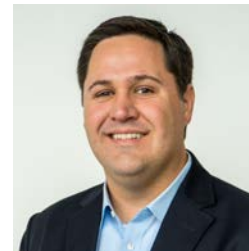


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Our Partnership

In the fall of 2025, the City of Lebanon partnered with Downtown Strategies to develop a short-term strategic vision for Downtown Lebanon, Pennsylvania.

The focus of the partnership was to advance revitalization efforts; provide a shared vision for community organizations and stakeholder groups; and re-spark the momentum that was building prior to Covid.

As part of the Discovery Phase of the process, Downtown Strategies conducted an in-market Strategic Visioning Workshop, including a Core Team Meeting and Stakeholder Input Session. The input and observations gathered throughout the Discovery Phase informed the strategies outlined in this 5-year Strategic Action Plan. The strategies are practical, tactical, asset-based, and market-driven.

Kick-off Call	August 2025
Strategic Visioning Workshop	December 2025
Market Analysis Presentation	January 2026
Strategic Plan Delivered	April 2026



Focus Areas

In this 5-Year Action Plan created for Downtown Lebanon, Downtown Strategies identified 4 Focus Areas for downtown initiatives. Each focus area was identified based on feedback received during the in-market Strategic Visioning Workshop, as well as the consultant team's expertise and analysis. The 4 Focus Areas for this 5-Year Action Plan include:



Policy & Administration

Policy & Administration involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for downtown.



Design

Thoughtful design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that create a vibrant and inviting place for people.



Tourism & Promotion

Smart promotion initiatives position downtown as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases the community's unique characteristics.



Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality involves analyzing the retail and real estate as the foundation of downtown's redevelopment opportunities and creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators.

Guiding Themes

The strategies outlined in this Strategic Action Plan for Downtown Lebanon are the direct result of a thorough Discovery Phase that included Core Team input, a community input survey, existing conditions analysis, a review of prior plans and programs, and the Strategic Visioning Workshop with downtown stakeholders. What emerged was not a list of disconnected ideas, but a set of clear, recurring themes pointing consistently toward the same core challenges and opportunities. Those themes form the foundation for every strategy in this plan.

The most consistent theme across every source of input was the loss of organizational and financial infrastructure. The dissolution of the Business Improvement District in 2019, followed immediately by COVID-19 and five years of rising costs and economic uncertainty, was a perfect storm that stalled the momentum Downtown Lebanon had built. Stakeholders still benchmark against the BID and Main Street era as proof of what is possible. That loss eliminated both stable funding and dedicated staff capacity simultaneously, and without that organizational backbone every other strategy became harder to execute. Rebuilding that capacity is the most important step this community can take.

At the same time, it is important to recognize what the City of Lebanon has accomplished. The city has invested heavily in the physical environment of downtown through the Cumberland Street streetscape, decorative streetlights, Liberty Trail Park, Veterans Memorial Walkway improvements, the relocation of City Hall, street repaving, and ongoing beautification. The public sector has done its part. The goal of this plan is to provide the tools, strategies, and structure needed to spark the private sector investment that must follow.

Key Themes

- **The public sector has done its part. Now it is time for the private sector to follow.** The city has made significant investments in the physical environment of downtown. While it is important that efforts continue to add vibrancy to the district, it is critical that private sector activation and investment follow. Vacant, underutilized, and deteriorating properties are a barrier to downtown's progress.
- **The loss of the BID and Main Street was detrimental to progress.** The loss of the BID and Main Street program eliminated dedicated staff and stable funding simultaneously. Without that infrastructure, every other strategy became harder to execute.
- **The current tenant mix is not meeting expectations.** 68% of survey respondents say downtown businesses do not offer what they want. Recruiting quality retail, restaurants, and destination businesses to supplement existing businesses is the most important economic vitality need.
- **There is a desire for nightlife activity.** Residents want to dine, shop, and gather downtown after 5:00 p.m., but the business mix and operating hours do not currently meet that demand. The lack of nightlife activity also contributes to the perceived safety concerns. More programmed activity is essential to changing that perception.
- **Limited foot traffic and a consistent customer base is a challenge.** Sparking entrepreneurial and business growth requires a consistent and predictable customer base in order to justify private sector investment.
- **Promotions and events are fragmented and underperforming.** There is no unified voice for downtown marketing, promotion, and coordination. Events are inconsistently promoted and attendance is low. A coordinated approach to programming and promotions is needed.



downtown strategies

FOCUS AREA 1

Policy & Administration

Policy & Administration involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

1.1 Action Teams

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

How many times has your community been through strategic planning? Are they jaded that not enough was accomplished afterwards? Implementation is a key focus of our process at Downtown Strategies, and the Action Team model is how we ensure this plan does not sit on a shelf. The approach is built on a simple principle: start with one strategy, execute it well, and let that early success build the confidence and momentum needed to take on larger initiatives. Communities that try to implement everything at once quickly become overwhelmed and accomplish very little. Communities that focus on relentlessly “doing the doable” see dramatic change over a five-year horizon.

In Lebanon

Implementation begins with the Core Team, which will serve as Lebanon's first Action Team. In the final months of the first year of our partnership, Downtown Strategies will guide the Core Team through a structured Project Mapping process: identifying a single high-priority strategy from this plan, mapping the major steps and timeline, inventorying available resources and community partners, and assigning individual action items with 30-day deadlines. The team will select a strategy that is attainable based on current capacity, skills, and resources (not a wish list) and will focus exclusively on that initiative for the first six to eight months. This disciplined approach ensures the Core Team experiences the full cycle of planning, executing, and completing a project before expanding the model.

In subsequent years of the partnership, the Action Team model expands outward. The Core Team can recruit additional volunteers to form Action Teams organized around each of the four focus areas (Policy & Administration, Design, Tourism & Promotion, and Economic Vitality) with 4-8 members per team. In many communities, these teams are built from existing civic groups, municipal committees, or organizational partners rather than created from scratch. Each Action Team follows the same Project Mapping process the Core Team learned in Year One: review the strategies in their chapter of the plan, rank them by attainability, select one to implement, map the project, and execute through 30-day action cycles. The Core Team shifts from implementers to an oversight body, convening quarterly at minimum to review Action Team progress, reallocate resources, and adjust priorities as conditions change.

The Project Mapping Process

- Each Action Team selects one strategy to implement over 6–8 months, chosen by team vote based on attainability
- Teams map the project: challenge, solution, deadline, resource inventory (what we have vs. what we need), and community partners
- Each team member commits to at least one task every 30 days with specific deliverables and deadlines
- Teams meet every 30 days (the “30/30 Meeting”) to review the past 30 days and plan the next 30
- A Project Mapping Workbook is included with this plan as an implementation support tool

Why This Works

- Starting with the Core Team builds internal expertise before scaling the model to the broader community
- Focusing on one strategy at a time prevents overwhelm and ensures early, visible wins
- The 30-day action cycle creates accountability and keeps momentum between quarterly check-ins
- Expanding to volunteer Action Teams in subsequent years distributes responsibility and creates a pipeline for community engagement

1.2 Vacant Property Registry Ordinance (VPRO)

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Long-term commercial vacancies impose costs the property owner does not bear, code enforcement, fire risk, and depressed surrounding property values absorbed by the municipality while the building sits idle. A Vacant Property Registry Ordinance redistributes that burden through registration, escalating fees, and minimum maintenance standards that shift accountability to the responsible party.

In Lebanon

Lebanon's Fight Blight initiative and IPMC enforcement respond to deterioration already underway. A VPRO closes the preceding gap: from the day a commercial property goes vacant, the city gains a registration contact and an active maintenance framework before conditions worsen. With a draft ordinance in development, Year 1 adoption is achievable and consequential.

The 2025 Fire and the Case for a Fire Safety Provision

Although the building in this instance was occupied, the 2025 downtown fire illustrates the risk that vacant, unmonitored buildings can pose to adjacent properties. Lancaster and Pittsburgh both require vacant commercial buildings to maintain active electrical connections and monitored smoke detection, which present at minimal owner cost but offer meaningful risk reduction. This provision belongs in Lebanon's VPRO from adoption.

Pennsylvania Enabling Authority

- Third Class City Code, 53 P.S. § 36101 et seq.
- PA Neighborhood Blight Reclamation Act, 2010
- Municipal police power to regulate real property
- IPMC provides existing enforcement infrastructure

Pennsylvania Peer Cities:

- Lancaster: Chapter 213 Vacant Building Registry
- Pittsburgh: Citywide VPRO with fire safety provision
- Reading: Commercial vacancy registration and fees
- Allentown: Vacancy monitoring, code enforcement

Year 1 Actions:

- Finalize draft ordinance with legal counsel
- Include fire safety provision at adoption
- Adopt through City Council (Q1-Q2)
- Launch registration cycle; notify vacancies (Q3)

1.2 Vacant Property Registry Ordinance (VPRO)

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

An effective VPRO operates through three coordinated mechanisms: a registration system that creates an ongoing city-owner relationship before deterioration occurs; a fee schedule imposing financial urgency on continued vacancy; and appearance standards that address visible symptoms while resolution is pursued. Each mechanism reinforces the others.

Registration and Fee Structure

Properties vacant 90+ days register annually with owner contact information, proof of insurance, and a maintenance plan. Annual fees begin at \$250–\$500 and escalate each year to \$750 in year two and \$1,500 in year three with no cap for chronic vacancies. Fee revenue funds the Vibrancy Grant and Activation Grant programs.

Exterior Appearance Standards

Ground-floor windows must remain clear or display-activated, not boarded. Facades must be free of peeling paint and visible damage. Abandoned business signage must be removed within 90 days of closure. Lancaster's Chapter 213, tying appearance standards to annual registration renewal, is a directly applicable Pennsylvania model.

VPRO Key Components

- Registration required after 90 days of vacancy
- Graduated annual fees: \$250 → \$750 → \$1,500+
- Local agent required for out-of-area owners
- Active electrical and monitored smoke detection
- Appearance standards tied to registration renewal

Enforcement Philosophy:

- Lead with outreach: personal visit before citation
- Present Vibrancy Grant at first property contact
- 90-day compliance window before formal action
- Document baseline conditions at registration
- Publish annual compliance report publicly

Year 1 Adoption Milestones:

- Q1-Q2: Legal review complete; ordinance introduced
- Q2-Q3: Council adoption; registration portal live
- Q3: Owner notification letters sent
- Q4: First registration cycle complete
- Q4: Fee revenue directed to Vibrancy Grant fund

1.3 Vibrancy Grant Program

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Matching grant programs for sidewalk-level improvements are among the most effective early-stage tools in downtown revitalization. By reducing the upfront cost barrier, they unlock private investment that market conditions alone would not produce. Each completed project shifts district perception and raises expectations for neighboring properties before larger capital arrives.

In Lebanon

Lebanon's Facade Grant covers major exterior work but not the sidewalk-level elements such as seating, planters, window displays, and branded signage that determine whether a visitor slows down and steps inside. The Vibrancy Grant fills that gap, funding improvements the Facade Grant was not designed to cover at a scale accessible to every downtown business.

Connection to the Sidewalk Vibrancy Campaign

The Vibrancy Grant is the financial mechanism for the Sidewalk Vibrancy Campaign (Strategy 2.1), and the coordinated storefront activation initiative outlined in Strategy 2.2. Pairing the grant with a district-wide campaign produces both visible improvements and the program identity that signals to prospective tenants that Lebanon's downtown is actively managed.

Pennsylvania Peer Programs

- Lancaster DID: annual facade grant cycle
- Bethlehem BID: matching grants, BID-administered
- Gettysburg DBA: small grants via downtown org
- Harrisburg: CDBG facade improvement program

Recommended Program Terms:

- 50% matching grant, \$500 min - \$2,000 max
- One-page application; 30-day review cycle
- Reimbursement upon completion with documentation
- Seasonal application periods
- Transition to BID management once re-established



1.3 Vibrancy Grant Program

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

The Vibrancy Grant is designed to be simple, fast, and visible; qualities harder to achieve in practice than in design. Many grant programs fail not from insufficient funding but from complexity and slow review. The guiding principle: apply in 30 minutes, receive a decision in 30 days, complete within one quarter.

Eligible & Ineligible Uses

Eligible: outdoor seating, planters, window displays, awnings, sidewalk signage, storefront display signage, exterior accent lighting, storefront display lighting, and visible street-facing repairs.

Not eligible: interior improvements, structural work covered by the Facade Grant, work already underway, and properties with outstanding code violations or tax delinquency.

Program Evaluation

Year 1 success is measured on three dimensions: total awards and geographic distribution across the downtown; documented street-level improvement through before-and-after photography; and the rate at which recipients apply for the grant within 12 months, testing whether small visible wins build confidence for larger private investment.

Recommended Application Requirements

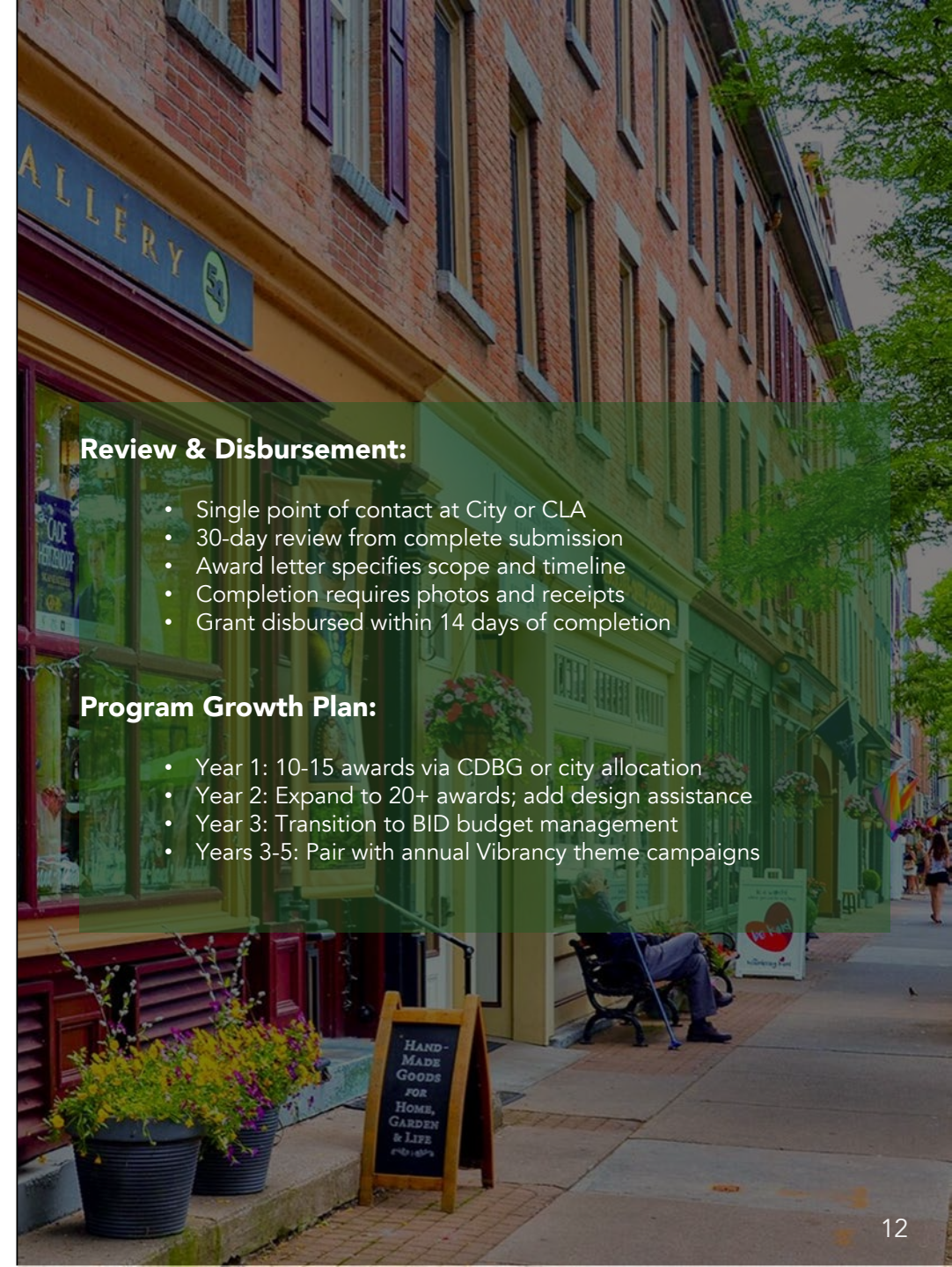
- One-page application with project description
- Before photos of existing conditions required
- Cost estimate from vendor or contractor
- W-9 and electronic payment authorization
- Property owner approval (if tenant applicant)
- Current taxes and accounts in good standing

Review & Disbursement:

- Single point of contact at City or CLA
- 30-day review from complete submission
- Award letter specifies scope and timeline
- Completion requires photos and receipts
- Grant disbursed within 14 days of completion

Program Growth Plan:

- Year 1: 10-15 awards via CDBG or city allocation
- Year 2: Expand to 20+ awards; add design assistance
- Year 3: Transition to BID budget management
- Years 3-5: Pair with annual Vibrancy theme campaigns



Streetscape Vibrancy Example



1.4 Downtown Activation Grant Program

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Open-ended activation grants establish impact criteria, such as evening economy activation, foot traffic generation, and cross-business collaboration, and invite local operators to propose solutions rather than prescribing eligible activity types. Those closest to the district identify what generates lasting activity better than any external planning process.

In Lebanon

Lebanon's survey is unambiguous: 67% prefer to dine after 5pm, but only two full-service evening restaurants operate in the entire downtown. The Activation Grant bridges this near-term gap, funding programming that creates after-hours energy while formal restaurant recruitment, a 12-to-24-month process, proceeds simultaneously.

Breaking the Evening Economy Feedback Loop

Lebanon's downtown operates in a well-documented negative feedback cycle: no after-hours activity produces perceived unsafety; perceived unsafety reduces foot traffic; reduced foot traffic gives businesses no incentive to extend hours. Breaking this cycle requires promoted programming that creates foot traffic before individual businesses have the financial incentive to respond.

Program Model: San Francisco's Downtown Economic Recovery Grant (ENRG)

Launched in the wake of the pandemic, the city of San Francisco made grants of up to \$50,000 to arts organizations, nonprofits, and small businesses to activate downtown through events, performances, and programming with no prescribed format, only a documented requirement to generate public activity in the district. Applicants proposed their own concepts: outdoor markets, live music series, pop-up dining, cultural events. Within six months of the first award cycle, participating blocks showed measurable increases in evening foot traffic and a documented uptick in adjacent restaurant and bar receipts. The program's core design insight was counterintuitive for municipal government: rather than defining what activation looks like, set the outcome standard and get out of the way. Communities that have replicated this approach consistently report that the most effective activations come from operators who already know the district.

Downtown Memphis Commission: Activation and Event Grant

- Administered by the Downtown Memphis Commission; grants range from \$150–\$2,500 depending on scope and concept
- No restrictions on event type, Music, art, fitness, food, community gatherings, and more are all eligible
- Events must take place within downtown boundaries and demonstrate positive impact on community engagement, foot traffic, or local business activity
- Outdoor events or those highly visible from the street receive priority in scoring; free and inclusive events receive additional consideration 50% of the grant is disbursed at approval; the remaining 50% is paid after the event upon submission of a post-event report with attendance estimates, photos, and an impact summary
- First-time applicants and first-time events are explicitly encouraged to apply

1.4 Downtown Activation Grant Program

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

The Activation Grant funds ideas, not categories. The application requires only a description of the activation, an explanation of how it generates downtown foot traffic, and a basic budget. Eligibility is determined through a weighted scoring rubric with after-5pm foot traffic generation carrying the greatest evaluation weight.

Scoring Rubric

Applications are scored on five criteria: after-5pm foot traffic likelihood (30%); cross-stakeholder collaboration (20%); recurrence potential beyond the grant period (20%); budget clarity (15%); demonstrated applicant capacity (15%). Proposals scoring below 60% on the first criterion are ineligible regardless of performance on others.

Grant Administration & Accountability

CLA or designated city staff reviews applications on a rolling 30-day cycle. Award letters specify scope, timeline, and required reporting. Grantees submit a post-activation report within 30 days: foot traffic estimate, photographs, and a brief outcome summary. Reports are published publicly to document that Lebanon's evening economy is growing.

Award Tiers

- Tier 1 (\$1K-\$3K): single-business or single-event
- Tier 2 (\$3K-\$7.5K): collaborative or multi-day
- Tier 3 (\$7.5K-\$10K): recurring or district-wide
- Maximum 2 awards per applicant per annual cycle
- Preference for first-time applicants



Potential Activation Ideas

- Extended-hours First Fridays with retail and dining
- Weekly food truck and live music series
- Pop-up retail in vacant storefronts or Liberty Trail
- Restaurant week with a Lebanon Valley identity
- Outdoor film series or sidewalk performance events

1.5 Launch a Campaign to Re-establish BID

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Business Improvement Districts are among the most durable organizational structures in downtown revitalization. Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Improvement District (NID) Act, Act 130 of 2000 (53 P.S. §§ 5501–5516), funds them through annual property assessments independent of the city budget cycle supporting professional staff capacity that no volunteer organization can sustainably replicate.

**Many Pennsylvania communities and practitioners use the term "BID" colloquially to refer to their NIDs, as Lebanon has done in the past. For familiarity, the district will be referred to as a BID in this plan.*

In Lebanon

Lebanon's BID was unanimously adopted in 2016, enabled PA Main Street designation, and supported a full-time downtown director. It was dissolved in 2019 after a legal challenge over the 60% approval threshold calculation, a specific technical deficiency, not a prohibition, that can be corrected with proper BID counsel.

What the BID Era Demonstrated

Lebanon's BID years produced professional management: a paid director, reliable revenue, and organizational identity that gave the district credibility with brokers and prospective tenants. Many challenges downtown since 2019 flow from losing that funding simultaneously. The BID is not one recommendation; it is the infrastructure that makes all others sustainable.

Building a Legally Defensible Ordinance

The campaign must be legally defensible from the outset. Pennsylvania's 2019 Supreme Court ruling resolved an Act 130 ambiguity: whether the 60% approval threshold is calculated against all district properties or only those subject to assessment. Counsel must answer that question in writing before any property owner conversation begins. Lebanon should retain PA BID counsel before drafting any ordinance language. Counsel must document the threshold calculation methodology before the outreach campaign begins. Property owners who understand how the legal deficiency has been corrected are significantly more likely to support the new BID and sustain that support if it is challenged.

Why the BID Campaign Should Be Property-Owner Led

Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Improvement District Act requires that 60% of property owners within the proposed district support its establishment. That threshold is not a formality, it is the legal foundation the ordinance stands on, and as Lebanon's 2019 Supreme Court case demonstrated, it must be calculated and documented with precision.

A campaign led by city staff or elected officials carries an inherent credibility problem: property owners who are skeptical of a municipal assessment may view city-led outreach as advocacy for a revenue mechanism rather than an honest effort to build a district that serves their interests. The BID that dissolved in 2019 was adopted unanimously, which means the political will existed. What the campaign needs now is not municipal authority, but property owner trust.

The re-establishment campaign should be convened and led by a downtown working group – possibly the CLA - made up primarily of downtown property and business owners, with the city in a supporting role providing staff time, legal resources, and seed funding, but not leading the public-facing effort. Property owners who help design the BID are significantly more likely to vote for it, defend it publicly, and sustain their support if it is challenged. The city's most important contribution is not persuasion, it is removing barriers: retaining legal counsel, funding an interim coordinator, and signaling that the infrastructure of the plan is in place when the BID is ready to inherit it.

POLICY & ADMINISTRATION Action Team

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Implementation Partners
Policy & Administration	1.1	Establish the Core Team as Lebanon's first Action Team. Follow the Project Mapping process to select one high-priority strategy and execute it over 6–8 months, with individual action items and 30-day deadlines. Convene monthly 30/30 Meetings using the Project Mapping Workbook as the accountability framework.	NOW	--	Core Team
Policy & Administration	1.1	Expand the Action Team model to recruit volunteers organized around each of the four focus areas with 4–8 members per team. Shift the Core Team to a quarterly oversight role, reviewing progress and reallocating resources as conditions change.	Ongoing	–	Core Team
Policy & Administration	1.2	Retain Pennsylvania BID/NID legal counsel and document the 60% approval threshold calculation before any property owner outreach begins. Convene a working group of downtown property and business owners — possibly through CLA — to lead the re-establishment campaign, with the city in a supporting role.	Years 1-2	\$	City
Policy & Administration	1.2	Draft a legally defensible BID ordinance, communicate how the 2019 deficiency has been corrected, and achieve documented 60% property owner support. Adopt through City Council and launch BID with dedicated assessment revenue independent of the city budget cycle. Hire a full-time downtown director.	Years 3-5	\$\$	City
Policy & Administration	1.3	Finalize the VPRO draft ordinance with legal counsel, including a fire safety provision requiring active electrical and monitored smoke detection in all vacant commercial buildings. Adopt through City Council and launch the owner registration portal.	Years 1-2	--	City
Policy & Administration	1.3	Implement the graduated fee schedule (\$250–\$500 Year 1 → \$750 Year 2 → \$1,500+ Year 3) and exterior appearance standards. Lead enforcement with outreach — personal visit and Vibrancy Grant referral before any citation. Publish an annual compliance report. Direct fee revenue to the Vibrancy Grant fund.	Years 1-2	\$	City



POLICY & ADMINISTRATION Action Team

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Implementation Partners
Policy & Administration	1.4	Launch the Vibrancy Grant Program. Designate a single staff contact, create a one-page application, and communicate availability to all downtown property and business owners within 60 days of adoption. Eligible uses: outdoor seating, planters, window displays, awnings, sidewalk signage, and exterior accent lighting.	Years 1-2	\$	City
Policy & Administration	1.5	Launch the Downtown Activation Grant Program. Accept any concept that generates foot traffic — music, food, markets, pop-ups, film — and score on after-5pm potential (30%), collaboration, recurrence, budget clarity, and applicant capacity. Require a post-activation report within 30 days; publish publicly.	Years 3-5	\$\$	City, CLA



downtown strategies

FOCUS AREA 2

Design

Thoughtful design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the downtown district apart.

2.1

Launch a Sidewalk Vibrancy Campaign

Focus Area 2: Design

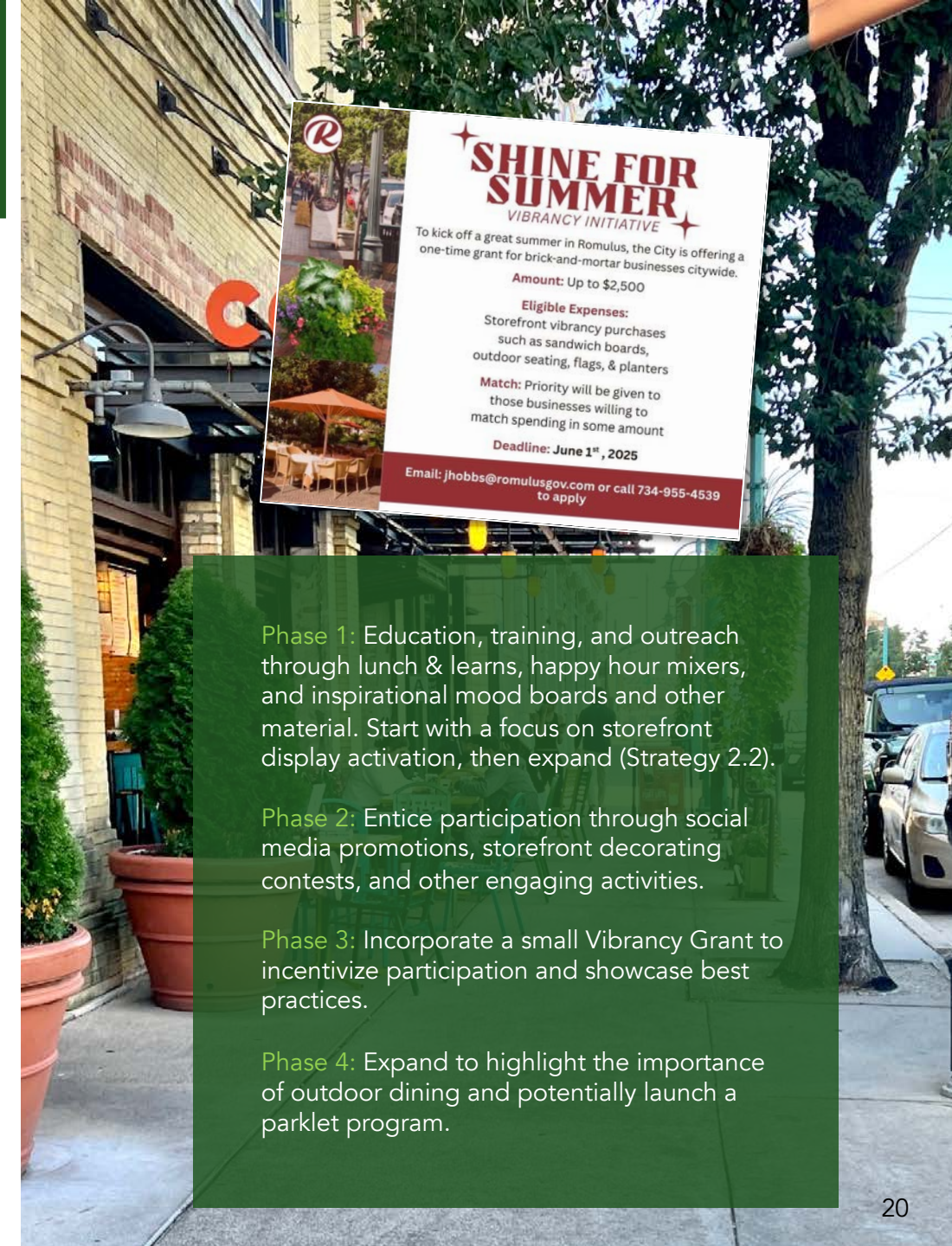
A vibrant streetscape is one of the most powerful tools a downtown has for making a strong first impression. Vibrancy is built in layers through three components: public infrastructure enhancements, sidewalk vibrancy initiatives, and storefront activations. Public infrastructure including decorative streetlights, street trees, quality sidewalks, banners, and beautification sets the stage. But the energy that makes a downtown feel alive comes from the private sector adding signs of life to the sidewalk: potted plants, outdoor dining, merchandise displays, sandwich board signs, and activated storefronts. When both sectors are firing together, the result is a downtown that feels welcoming, exciting, and worth visiting.

In Lebanon

The City of Lebanon has invested heavily in the public infrastructure layer, including major streetscape enhancements along Cumberland Street, decorative streetlights, repaved streets, civic building investments, and ongoing beautification. The public sector has done its part. Now it is the private sector's turn.

The City should partner with the Community of Lebanon Association (CLA) to launch a coordinated sidewalk vibrancy campaign. Potential names for the program could include **"Sidewalk Spark," "Facelift," "Downtown Blitz," "Brighten the Block,"** etc. Early efforts should focus on education and inspiration through lunch & learns, happy hour meetups, door-to-door outreach, mood boards, and photo presentations that show how modest investments can transform a block. Later phases can layer in social media promotions and storefront decorating contests. Once a funding source is identified, a small vibrancy grant program (Strategy 1.3) should be established to incentivize participation from business and property owners. Each storefront that adds some type of vibrancy elements begins to shift the momentum on that block. Then each block begins to shift.

Outdoor dining should be a priority activation, as it adds life, extends evening activity, and makes streets feel safer. In years 3 to 5, the campaign should expand to include a focus on outdoor dining along with a potential **parklet program** allowing restaurants to convert adjacent parking spaces into outdoor dining areas on a seasonal basis.



Phase 1: Education, training, and outreach through lunch & learns, happy hour mixers, and inspirational mood boards and other material. Start with a focus on storefront display activation, then expand (Strategy 2.2).

Phase 2: Entice participation through social media promotions, storefront decorating contests, and other engaging activities.

Phase 3: Incorporate a small Vibrancy Grant to incentivize participation and showcase best practices.

Phase 4: Expand to highlight the importance of outdoor dining and potentially launch a parklet program.

2.1 Launch a Sidewalk Vibrancy Campaign

Focus Area 2: Design

Case Studies

Deer Park, Washington: Downtown Beautification Blitz Campaign

Deer Park's volunteer downtown organization launched a "Downtown Beautification Blitz" campaign to educate and inspire property and business owners to improve their facades, conduct minor storefront maintenance, and activate sidewalks with potted plants, outdoor dining, and merchandise displays. The group hosted after-hours social meetups featuring example photographs and plain-language explanations of why sidewalk vibrancy matters. Within a few months, previously bare sidewalks were lined with planters and outdoor seating, a visible, low-cost transformation that shifted the feel of the entire district.



Bloomington, Indiana: Seasonal Parklet Program

Bloomington manages a [parklet program](#) running spring through fall. Downtown restaurants apply to participate and pay a small fee to "lease" the adjacent parking space from the city. In return, the city installs an ADA ramp and temporary water barriers wrapped in banners featuring local artist work. Restaurants are responsible for furnishing the space with seating, planters, string lights, and other décor. Originally launched as a COVID-era response, the program has become a permanent and popular feature of the downtown. It demonstrates how a well-structured city-led program can turn a single parking space into a revenue-generating, foot-traffic-driving asset. Bloomington is now exploring options for allowing the temporary parklets to evolve into semi-permanent installations.



2.1 Launch a Sidewalk Vibrancy Campaign

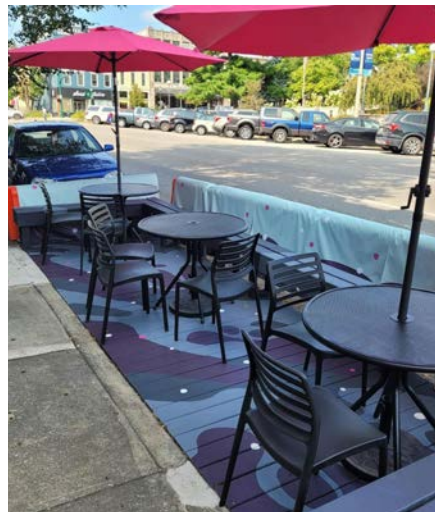
Focus Area 2: Design Sidewalk Vibrancy Examples



2.1 Launch a Sidewalk Vibrancy Campaign

Focus Area 2: Design

Parklet Examples



2.2

Launch a Storefront Activation Initiative

Focus Area 2: Design

Every storefront along a downtown street is either adding to or subtracting from the overall district. Storefronts activated with merchandise displays, curated windows, and visible interior life invite passersby in and signal that a district is worth exploring. Storefronts covered with blinds, curtains, paper, or mirrored glass do the opposite. They create dead zones that contribute to perceptions that downtown is struggling. Architect Steve Mouzon describes storefront displays as a tenant's "gift to the street," a contribution to the shared character of the district that benefits everyone. An organized effort or initiatives can help showcase the need for downtown stakeholders to activate their storefronts in some way. This effort should focus on simple, high-impact actions including basic cleanup such as fresh paint and minor repairs, combined with proactive window activation. This principle applies whether a space is occupied or vacant.

In Lebanon

During stakeholder input, locals described Downtown Lebanon as "boring" and "empty." Empty and underutilized storefronts are a significant contributor to that perception. As the first phase of the Sidewalk Vibrancy Campaign (Strategy 2.1), the city and CLA should launch a "Windows of Opportunity" storefront activation initiative.

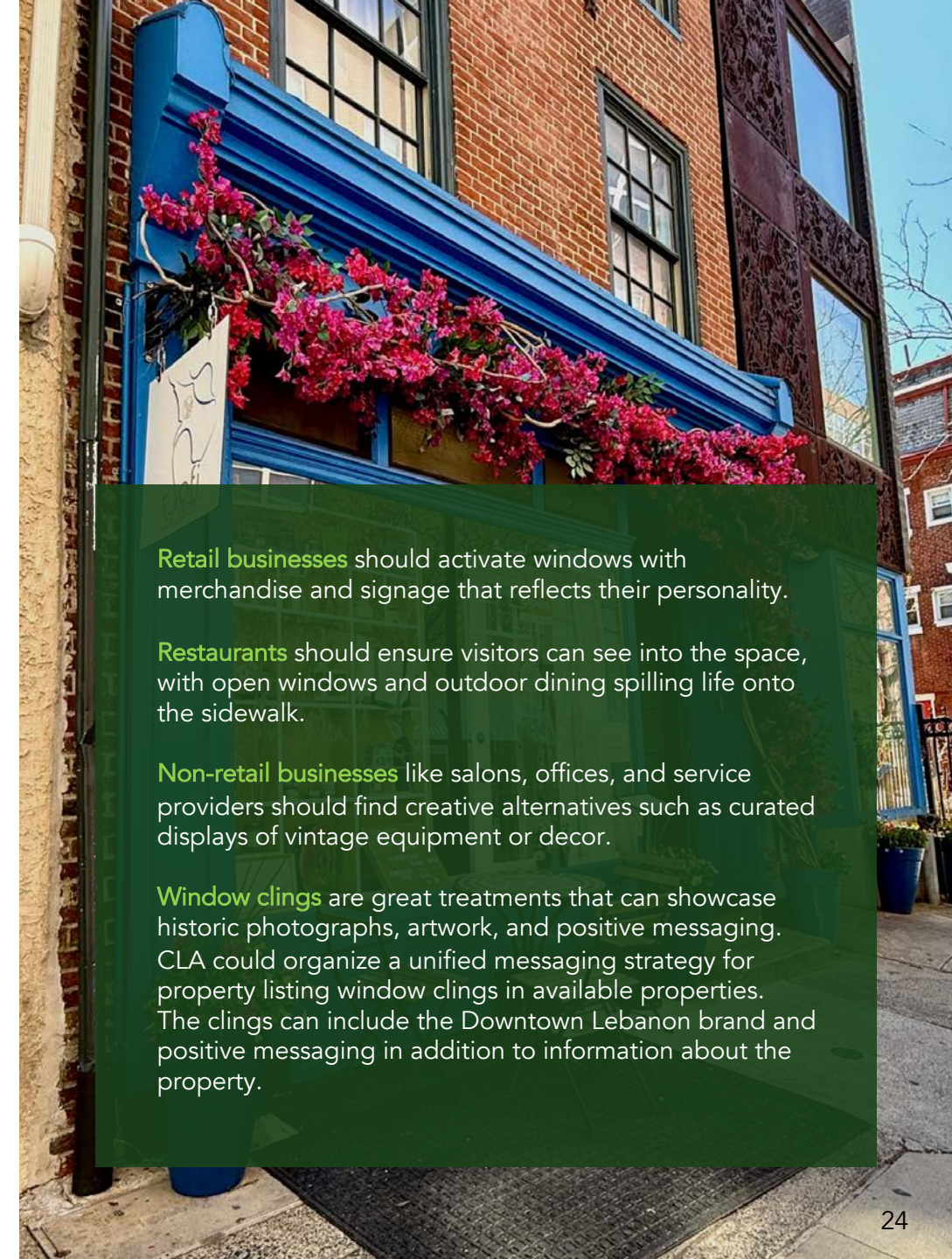
The effort should begin with basic cleanup such as minor repairs, fresh paint, and general upkeep as well as proactive storefront activations. The goal is for every downtown storefront to be activated in some manner. Blinds, curtains, and mirrored windows that block visibility should be actively discouraged or even prohibited. Where privacy is necessary, tenants should be encouraged to shift screens back 18 to 24 inches to preserve a display zone at the window. These spaces create tremendous opportunities for local art displays, which can be coordinated through an "Art in Public Places Team" and collaboration with the Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts to connect local artists with vacant and underutilized storefronts for rotating seasonal installations. By ensuring every storefront, whether occupied or vacant, includes an intentional display, the district will quickly feel more welcoming, interesting, and vibrant.

Retail businesses should activate windows with merchandise and signage that reflects their personality.

Restaurants should ensure visitors can see into the space, with open windows and outdoor dining spilling life onto the sidewalk.

Non-retail businesses like salons, offices, and service providers should find creative alternatives such as curated displays of vintage equipment or decor.

Window clings are great treatments that can showcase historic photographs, artwork, and positive messaging. CLA could organize a unified messaging strategy for property listing window clings in available properties. The clings can include the Downtown Lebanon brand and positive messaging in addition to information about the property.



2.2 Launch a Storefront Activation Initiative

Focus Area 2: Design

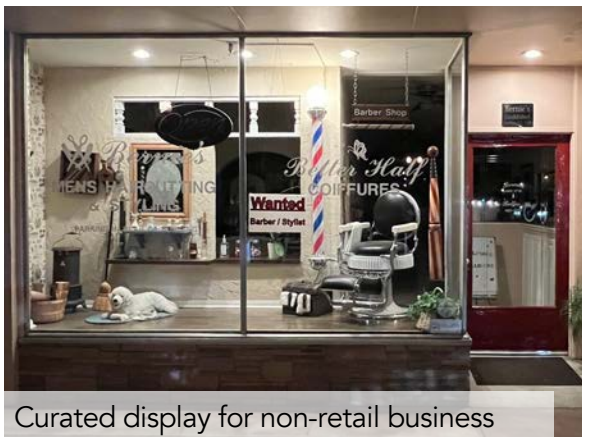
Storefront Activation Examples



Window painting



Seasonal display



Curated display for non-retail business



Window clings with art and historic photographs



Local art display



District map



Privacy screen with display



Coordinated property listing window clings



2.3 Activate with Art

Focus Area 2: Design

Public art is one of the most powerful and cost-effective tools available for adding vibrancy, personality, and visual interest to a downtown district. It takes many forms: two-dimensional murals, three-dimensional sculptures, guerilla art, selfie walls, and artistic treatments on utility boxes, bollards, and planters. When placed strategically, public art creates focal points at key intersections, activates underutilized walls and spaces, and serves as breadcrumbs that guide visitors deeper into the district. Experiential art, meaning installations that invite visitors to interact, pose for photos, and share on social media, is among the most effective strategies for generating organic visibility and drawing new visitors downtown. These are also referred to as "Selfie walls." Temporary and short-term installations are a low-risk way to test locations, build excitement, and keep the district feeling fresh.

In Lebanon

Downtown Lebanon has a genuine foundation in the arts. Several murals are already present throughout the district, the Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts is an active organization, and 8th Street has been identified as an Arts District. That foundation is real but underutilized. **"Arts on 8th" should not simply be an event; it should define the character of the overall corridor.** The recently completed Liberty Trail Park also offers immediate opportunities for sculpture and installation art, and the broader downtown streetscape has blank walls, utility boxes, and other spaces waiting to be activated.

CLA should partner with the Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts to develop a coordinated **public art** program that expands murals, introduces three-dimensional sculpture installations, activates utility boxes with art, and supports other forms of short-term artistic treatments. Short-term efforts should focus on engagement features that encourage engagement and generate positive social media traffic in the 8th Street Arts District and along Liberty Trail Park.

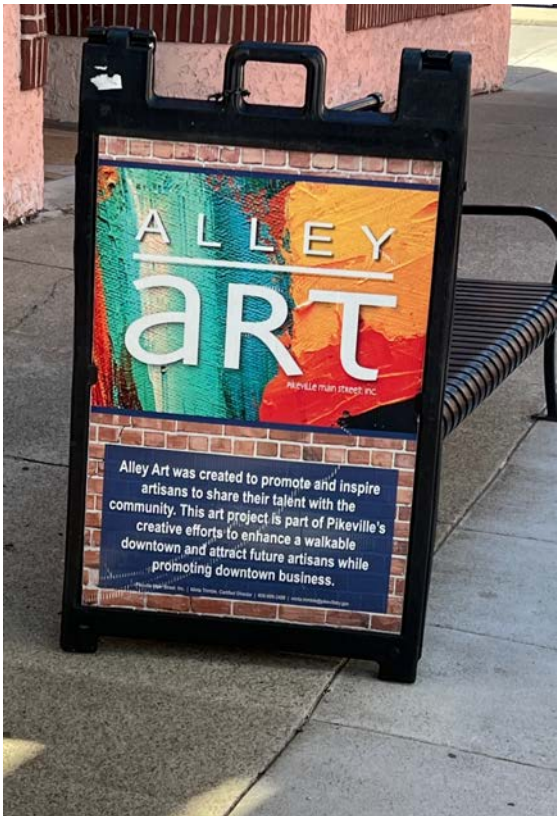
Additionally, **selfie stations** should be used as engagement features for visitors during high traffic time periods and in key locations throughout downtown. These stations can be temporary, fun photo ops; more substantial semi-permanent installations, or selfie wall public art installations.



2.3 Activate with Art

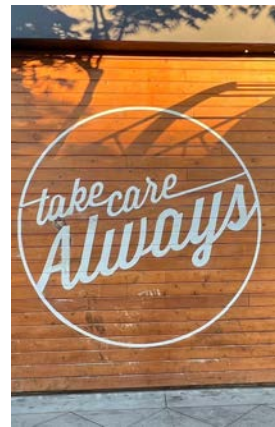
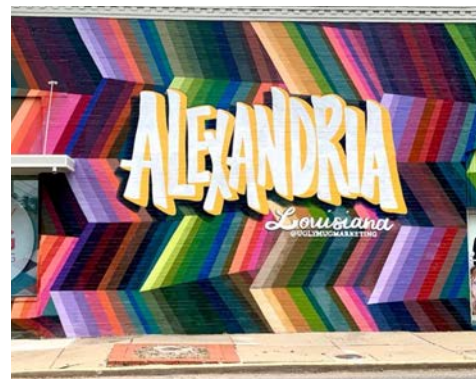
Focus Area 2: Design

Public Art Alley Activation Examples



2.3 Activate with Art

Focus Area 2: Design Selfie Station Examples



2

DESIGN Action Team

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Implementation Partners
Design	2.1	The City should partner with the Community of Lebanon Association (CLA) to launch a coordinated sidewalk vibrancy campaign. - Phase 1: Education, training, and outreach through lunch & learns, happy hour mixers, and inspirational mood boards and other material. Start with a focus on storefront display activation, then expand (Strategy 2.2). - Phase 2: Entice participation through social media promotions, storefront decorating contests, and other engaging activities. - Phase 3: Incorporate a small Vibrancy Grant to incentivize participation and showcase best practices.	Years 1-3	\$	CLA
Design	2.1	Phase 4: Expand the program to include a focus on outdoor dining along with a potential parklet program allowing restaurants to convert adjacent parking spaces into outdoor dining areas on a seasonal basis.	Years 3-5	\$\$	City
Design	2.2	Launch a “Windows of Opportunity” storefront activation initiative as the first phase of the Sidewalk Vibrancy Campaign (Strategy 2.1),	NOW	-	CLA
Design	2.2	Collaborate with the Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts to establish an Art in Public Places Team to connect local artists with vacant and underutilized storefronts for rotating seasonal installations.	Year 1	-	Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts
Design	2.3	CLA should partner with the Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts to develop a coordinated public art program that expands murals, introduces three-dimensional sculpture installations, activates utility boxes with art, and supports other forms of short-term artistic treatments. Initial focus should be on Liberty Park and the 8 th Street Arts District.	Years 3-5	\$\$\$	Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts
Design	2.3	Utilize selfie stations as engagement features for visitors during high traffic time periods and in key, strategic locations throughout downtown. - Start with temporary stations during events and high traffic time periods. - Then explore options for semi-permanent and long-term installations in key location.	NOW Years 1-3	\$ \$\$	CLA City and/or CLA





downtown strategies

FOCUS AREA 3

Tourism & Promotion

Smart promotion initiatives position your Downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

3.1

Host “Downtown Connection” Merchant Meetings

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Regular, structured merchant meetings are a proven strategy for strengthening downtown ecosystems. These gatherings create a reliable channel for sharing updates on projects, promotions, and partnership opportunities while also giving merchants a voice in shaping initiatives. Incorporating post-event debriefs allows organizations to share metrics such as attendance, reach, and economic impact while inviting honest feedback. This two-way communication builds trust improves event quality over time and fosters a sense of shared ownership among stakeholders.

Equally important, these meetings help merchants connect with one another. Rotating locations between businesses encourages peer-to-peer awareness and strengthens relationships. Over time, this connectivity leads to organic collaboration, with merchants initiating micro-events like themed shopping nights, open houses, and cross-promotions. Supplementing meetings with tools like group texts or private social platforms ensures consistent communication between gatherings and keeps momentum strong.

In Lebanon

A couple of consistent themes identified through input was the need for better communication and more collaboration among downtown businesses. **The CLA should lead the establishment of regular “Downtown Connection” or “Merchant Meetups” merchant meetings in order to create much-needed structure for communication and collaboration.** These meetings can begin quarterly and evolve as participation grows, with a consistent format that includes updates, upcoming opportunities, and post-event debriefs. Sharing data and outcomes will help merchants better understand the value of downtown initiatives and increase buy-in.

Rotating meeting locations throughout downtown will also expose merchants to each other’s spaces and offerings, helping build a more unified business community. Over time, this effort should lead to increased merchant-led activity, where businesses collaborate on micro-events and small-scale promotions that activate downtown beyond major festivals. **CLA should also consider establishing a complementary communication tool such as GroupMe or a private social media group to facilitate engagement between meetings and support real-time coordination.**



Starkville Main Street in Starkville, Mississippi refers to their event recap as a “**Postmortem**” as a funny way to provide a summary of the event and elicit constructive feedback from downtown stakeholders.

3.2 Host Recurring Micro-events

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Successful downtown districts are shifting away from a reliance on large festivals and performance-based tourism toward a consistent rhythm of micro-events and small-scale promotions. These events are low-cost, flexible activations that focus on creating a vibrant atmosphere and an engaging experience. Staff time is limited, and the hours required to plan one large festival are often better invested in executing multiple smaller activations that keep consistent energy in the downtown throughout the year. Rather than requiring months of planning, micro-events rely primarily on two things: coordination with participating businesses and strategic promotion. The goal is to create an atmosphere that generates energy, encourages repeat visits, and creates buzz on social media. When visitors share organic content about a downtown district, it gives the impression that something is always happening and makes the community feel like a destination worth visiting. At their core, micro-events are simply about giving people a reason to come downtown. A downtown that hosts small events on a regular basis builds a consistent customer base and a reputation of being an active district. Social media is an essential tool in this effort, providing a free and highly effective outlet for promoting events, generating anticipation, and documenting the energy of the day for those who could not attend. Ideally merchants would begin planning and hosting events on their own rather than always depending on an organization to lead.

In Lebanon

Coordinated efforts among multiple merchants are far more powerful than individual businesses acting alone. Deraco's recently partnered with Queen's Natural Market to host a small-scale promotion but did not gain the traction they had hoped. While that type of coordination is exactly the right instinct, it needs organizational support and a broader coalition to gain real traction. **CLA, the city, or another coordinating entity should lead the coordination of four pilot micro-events, one per season in Year 1.** Open houses, Sip and Shop events, Sidewalk Sales, and themed evenings like Ladies Night Out or Date Night Downtown are all easy starting points. **At least one or two of these pilots should focus specifically on after-hours activity**, whether that is an 80s Night, a Pajama Party, or another fun evening concept that gives people a reason to be downtown after dark. Extended hours should be paired with outdoor music, selfie stations, or other details to make the evening feel like a genuine destination. **Lebanon City Musicians should also be engaged as a partner to tap into local musical talent.** Bloomington, Indiana, and Mobile, Alabama, hosts events like "Busk at Dusk" and "Sidewalk Sessions" where buskers are placed strategically throughout downtown to create a trail of live music. This creates a unique experience and special vibe that generates activity past 5:00 p.m. into the nightlife. With any of these events and activities, focus on providing a unique experience. As capacity grows, the calendar can expand incrementally in subsequent years with the goal of hosting 1 micro-event each month.



3.3 Develop a Unified “Voice” for Downtown

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

A strong, unified voice and consistent social media presence is essential for positioning downtown as a vibrant destination. When a district communicates with a consistent voice, tone, and visual identity, it builds recognition, and a sense of place. Dedicated downtown social media accounts allow for a tourism-focused approach that highlights experiences rather than technical or administrative information. Successful districts use a mix of content such as event promotion, business features, “day in the life” storytelling, local history, and community spotlights, all supported by consistent branding elements like color palettes and fonts. Establishing a content calendar and using tools like Canva templates ensures regular, high-quality output even with limited staff capacity.

Many communities struggle when multiple organizations promote downtown independently, resulting in fragmented messaging. A single, recognizable voice helps unify these efforts and makes it easier for residents and visitors to engage. Over time, consistent and engaging content can reshape perceptions, increase visitation, and support local businesses by keeping downtown top-of-mind.

In Lebanon

Downtown Lebanon should establish a primary voice with consistent branding dedicated to promoting the district. While the City and Community of Lebanon Association (CLA) both contribute, each has limitations. The city balances technical government notifications with promotional content and CLA must prioritize members. There is also a “Downtown Lebanon” profile, but it has been dormant for several years. In the short term, CLA is best positioned to lead this effort by expanding **beyond event-focused posts** to include more storytelling, business highlights, and experiential content. **Developing a content calendar and incorporating short-form video will help create a steady rhythm of engaging posts.** It is also important that every “win” is promoted and celebrated by connecting the dots between projects.

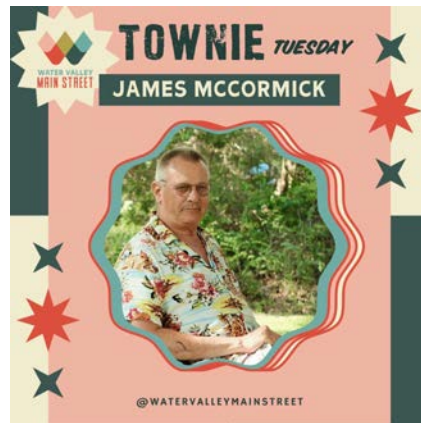
Long term, Lebanon should reestablish a dedicated “Downtown Lebanon” social media presence and website to serve as the primary promotional platform for the district. This account should adopt a tourism-focused tone and maintain consistent visual branding to build recognition. A unified voice, supported by regular content will strengthen communication, improve perception, and better position Downtown Lebanon as an active and inviting destination.

Potential Content Topics & Themes

- Day in the Life in Downtown Lebanon
- Business Spotlight of the Week
- Meet the Merchant employee feature
- New Arrivals or Featured Products/Merchandise
- Menu Highlights or “What to Order” at Local Restaurants
- Quick Video Tours of Shops or Streets
- Before and After Storefront Transformations
- Downtown Event Previews and Reminders
- Behind the Scenes posts for event setup
- Post-Event Photo Albums
- “Did You Know?” Fun Facts about Downtown Lebanon
- Historic Photos and Local History Stories
- Local Heroes and Community Spotlights
- Seasonal Activities and Holiday Promotions
- Window Display Highlights
- Weekend Itinerary Ideas
- Themed Shopping or Dining Nights Promotion
- Live Music, Art, or Entertainment Spotlights
- Polls or Questions to Engage Followers
- “Hidden Gems” in Downtown
- Volunteer or Partner Organization Highlights
- Quirky Holiday Highlights

3.3 Develop a Unified "Voice" for Downtown

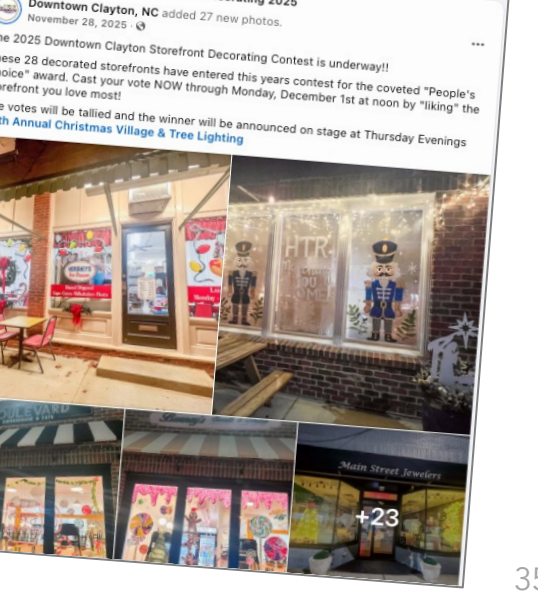
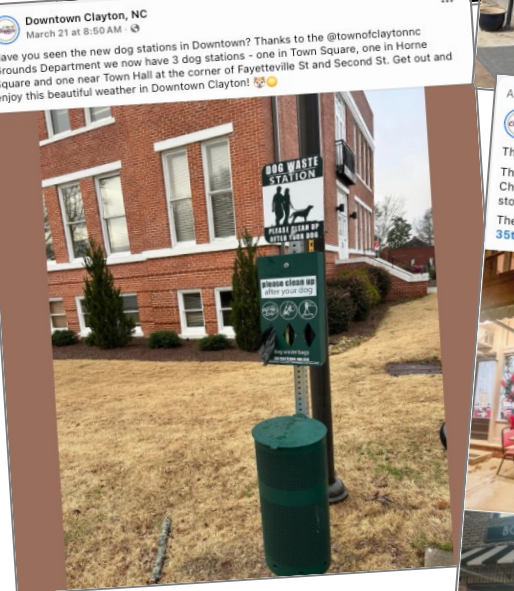
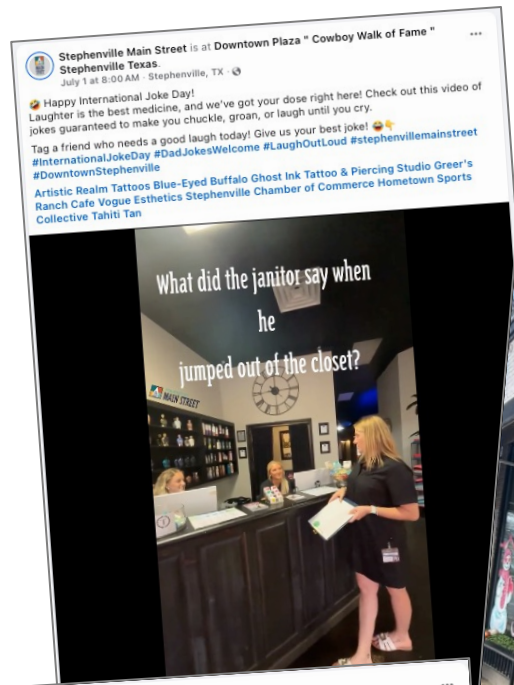
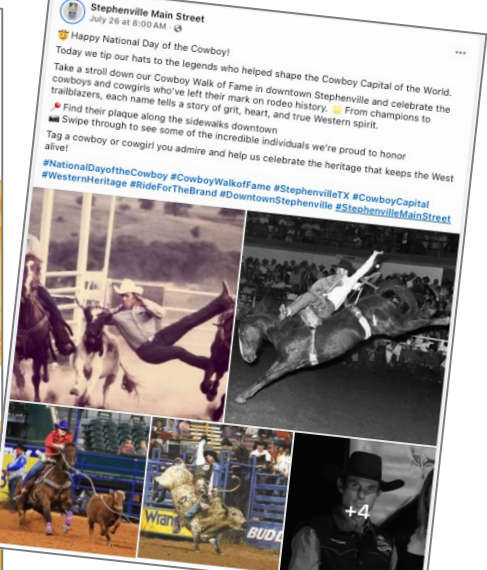
Examples of promotional material from the Water Valley Main Street Association. The use of a consistent color palette and standardized family of fonts creates a cohesive brand and unified voice for Downtown Water Valley, Mississippi. They also use simple themes and topics to guide the creation of regular, consistent content.



3.3 Develop a Unified "Voice" for Downtown

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Creative Social Media Content Examples



3

TOURISM & PROMOTION Action Team

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Implementation Partners
Tourism & Promotion	3.1	Establish regular “Downtown Connection” or “Merchant Meetups” merchant meetings in order to create much-needed structure for communication and collaboration.	Years 1-3	\$	CLA
Tourism & Promotion	3.2	Consider establishing a complementary communication tool such as GroupMe or a private social media group to facilitate engagement between merchant meetings and support real-time coordination.	Years 1-3	-	CLA
Tourism & Promotion	3.2	Lead the coordination of four pilot micro-events, one per season in Year 1. At least one or two of these pilots should focus specifically on after-hours activity,	Year 1 (On-going)	\$-\$\$	City
Tourism & Promotion	3.2	Engage the Lebanon City Musicians as a partner to tap into local musical talent for small-scale promotions and micro-events like “Busk at Dusk” or “Sidewalk Sessions.”	Years 1-3	-	Lebanon City Musicians
Tourism & Promotion	3.3	Downtown Lebanon should establish a primary voice with consistent branding dedicated to promoting the district. In the short-term, CLA should serve as the primary voice for downtown promotions. Focus on developing a process and structure for regular social media content in addition to event-focused postings. Example content ideas are explored in Strategy 3.3.	Years 1-3	-	CLA
Tourism & Promotion	3.3	The long-term strategy is for Lebanon to reestablish a dedicated “Downtown Lebanon” social media presence and website to serve as the primary promotional platform for the district.	Years 3-5	\$	City



downtown strategies

FOCUS AREA 4

Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

4.1 Build the Foundation for Downtown Business Recruitment

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Downtown Lebanon has absorbed significant public investment over the past decade. City Hall returned to the core, Cumberland Street was rebuilt, Liberty Trail Park opened, and LED lighting and safety cameras were installed. The private sector has not followed. Storefronts that should be active remain dark. The evening economy that the trade area can support does not exist. That gap is not a market failure; it is an infrastructure failure. The market is there. The intermediary who connects it to the right tenants is not.

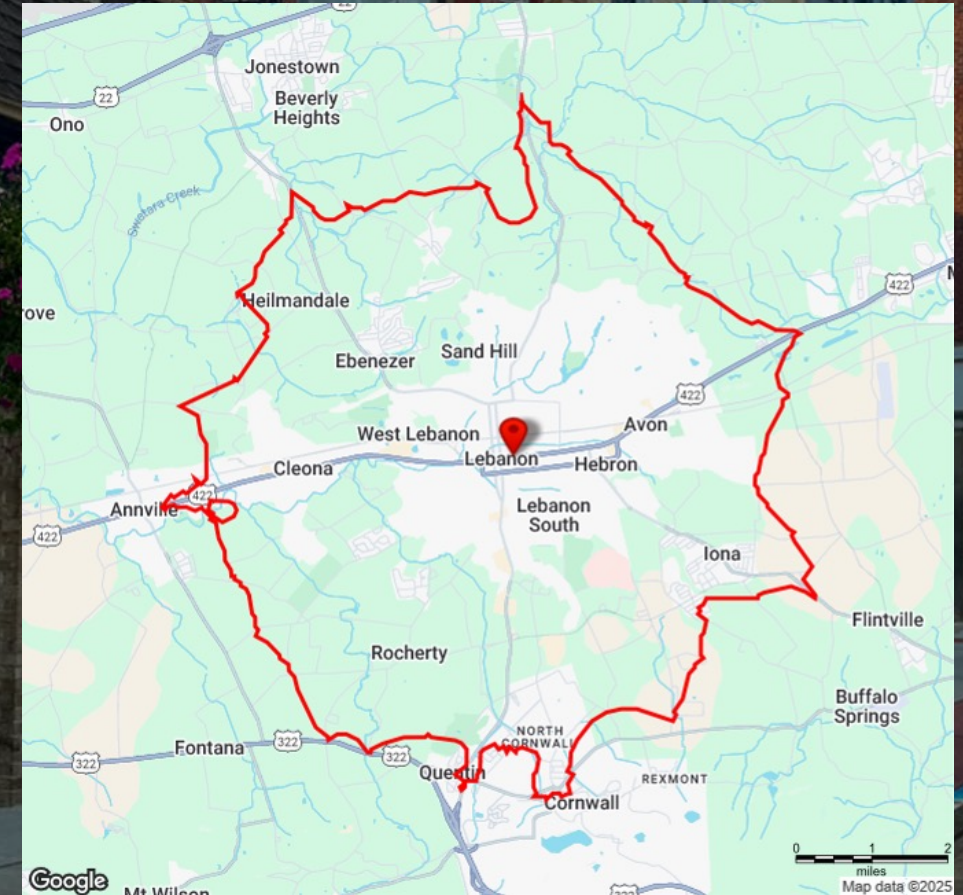
A dedicated Downtown Business Recruitment program is that intermediary function. It identifies specific consumer demand gaps within a defined trade area, builds a targeted prospect universe within those categories, and makes direct, personalized outreach to decision-makers with a prepared market case

In Lebanon

Lebanon's 10-minute drive time trade area includes 63,151 residents, a \$74,353 median household income, a Walk Score of 92, and a projected population of 64,791 by 2029. The retail gap analysis confirms substantial unmet demand in evening dining, health and personal care, specialty food and beverage, and clothing. Survey data reinforces what the numbers suggest: 67% of respondents prefer to dine after 5pm, and only two full-service evening restaurants with alcohol service exist in the entire Central Business District. This is not a community that cannot support quality retail and dining. It is a community whose downtown has not yet been positioned to capture the spending that is already here.

The Recruitment Sequence

Effective Downtown Business Recruitment follows a disciplined **five-step process**: **define target business categories** from the retail gap analysis; **build a named prospect list** of specific concepts within each category; **make direct, personalized outreach** to decision-makers with phone calls and in-person meetings, not email campaigns; **invite qualified prospects to a site tour** with the prepared package and full incentive summary; and **close with a concierge process** that connects prospects directly to property owners, expedites permit review, and removes the friction that loses deals at the finish line.



Lebanon, PA – 10 Minute Drive Time Trade Area
Population – 63,151

4.1 Build the Foundation for Downtown Business Recruitment

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

When a downtown storefront sits vacant, the gap between what a property owner is willing to invest and what a prospective tenant can afford to pay is often the deciding factor that keeps a deal from closing. LERTA, Pennsylvania's Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act, is designed to close that gap. By temporarily abating the property taxes on the assessed value of improvements to deteriorated commercial property, LERTA reduces the carrying cost of a renovation during the years when cash flow is tightest and the risk of failure is highest. For a property owner investing \$400,000 in a downtown building, a 10-year abatement schedule can represent tens of thousands of dollars in tax relief precisely when that relief changes the math on whether to proceed. For a prospective tenant, knowing that the building owner's costs are reduced creates room for more favorable lease terms. Used proactively, presented early in a recruitment conversation rather than discovered after a deal is already structured, LERTA is not just an incentive program. It is a recruitment tool.

Pennsylvania's LERTA Act (72 P.S. §§ 4722–4727) authorizes temporary tax abatements on the incremental assessed value of improvements to deteriorated commercial property not the pre-existing base value. The municipality foregoes revenue only on value the investment creates, making LERTA among the most cost-effective public incentives available to Pennsylvania municipalities.

Lebanon's Existing LERTA Designation

Lebanon has previously designated LERTA areas, so the legal framework exists. What is missing is a proactive deployment strategy: mapping eligible downtown properties, identifying high-priority targets, and communicating the incentive before projects come forward rather than in response to them. LERTA should be standard in every recruitment conversation and every VPRO owner outreach contact.

Pairing LERTA with the VPRO: A Policy Continuum

LERTA and the VPRO function as paired instruments. The VPRO imposes escalating fees on continued vacancy which is the cost of inaction. LERTA provides a tax abatement for owners who invest which is the reward for action. The longer a property sits idle, the more costly; the sooner an owner acts, the greater the public support available.

LERTA: How it Works in Pennsylvania

- Abatement applies to incremental value only not base value
- Pre-existing assessed value continues to be taxed
- Typical: 100% abatement Year 1, declining 10%/year
- Municipality designates eligible areas by resolution
- Application submitted before construction begins

PA Cities Using LERTA Effectively

- Lancaster: LERTA integral to downtown commercial rehab
- Bethlehem: historic commercial building rehab
- Pittsburgh: LERTA paired with neighborhood BIDs
- Allentown: LERTA + NIZ incentive stacking

LERTA Deployment

- Confirm existing LERTA area boundaries in downtown
- Expand designation to cover priority properties
- One-page LERTA summary for recruitment package
- Identify 5-10 high-priority activation targets
- Begin direct outreach to priority property owners

4.1 Build the Foundation for Downtown Business Recruitment

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Effective Downtown Business Recruitment requires dedicated staff time - someone who understands which concepts fit Lebanon's retail gap, knows how to make direct and personalized contact with the right operators, and can manage the relationship from first conversation to lease execution. This is not a task that can be absorbed by a volunteer organization or handled as a secondary responsibility by city staff. It requires focus, continuity, and accountability. The re-establishment of the BID and the hiring of a full-time downtown director is what makes sustainable recruitment possible. Until that infrastructure is in place, Lebanon should designate a single point of contact for all inbound recruitment inquiries and ensure that person is equipped with a recruitment package, the incentive summary, and the authority to move quickly when a qualified prospect engages.

Primary Target: Evening Destination Restaurants

Lebanon's highest-priority recruitment target is the full-service evening restaurant with full alcohol service. The market case is straightforward and compelling: 63,151 trade area residents, a \$74,353 median household income, a Walk Score of 92, documented survey data showing 67% of respondents prefer to dine after 5pm, and zero full-service evening competition in the Central Business District. The pitch leads with those numbers and closes with the full incentive package, including LERTA abatement, the Facade Improvement Grant, and the Vibrancy Grant, plus the offer of a concierge process that connects the operator directly to available property owners and expedites permit review.

Secondary Targets

Secondary recruitment categories are ordered by the strength of the retail gap and the alignment with Lebanon's trade area demographics. Specialty food and beverage concepts, including a craft brewpub, wine bar, or specialty coffee roaster, rank first among secondary targets because they extend both daytime and evening dwell time and attract the professional and young adult demographic segments that the Tapestry analysis identifies as underserved. Health and personal care retail represents the single strongest unmet demand category after restaurants and is well-suited to Lebanon's daytime employee population of 64,114. Locally owned clothing and apparel boutiques round out the priority list, with preference for concepts that have an established following in a nearby market and are evaluating a second location.

Building the Pipeline

Recruitment does not end with a signed lease. It ends when a business opens, survives its first year, and becomes the proof point that brings the next operator to the table. Lebanon should track every recruitment contact, every site tour, and every commitment as part of a living pipeline document that the BID director will inherit. Each Farmers' Market incubator graduate who moves into a permanent downtown storefront, each evening restaurant that fills a dark window on Cumberland Street, and each specialty retailer that gives a resident a reason to stay downtown after work is evidence that the market thesis is correct and that the recruitment infrastructure is working. That evidence is what turns a five-year strategic plan into a ten-year transformation.

4

ECONOMIC VITALITY Action Team

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Implementation Partners
Economic Vitality	4.1	Map the CBD retail gap by target category and build a named prospect list. Designate a single recruitment contact equipped with a market package and full incentive summary (LERTA, Facade Grant, Vibrancy Grant). Prioritize full-service evening restaurants — lead the pitch with 63,151 trade area residents, \$74,353 median HHI, Walk Score of 92, 67% preferring to dine after 5pm, and zero full-service evening competition in the CBD. Make direct outreach to decision-makers and close with a concierge process connecting prospects to property owners and expedited permitting.	Years 1-5	\$	City
Economic Vitality	4.1	Pursue secondary recruitment targets in priority order: specialty food and beverage (brewpub, wine bar, specialty coffee roaster), health and personal care retail, and locally owned clothing/apparel boutiques evaluating a second location. Track every contact, site tour, and commitment in a living pipeline document the BID director will inherit.	Years 1–5	\$	City
Economic Vitality	4.1	Confirm existing LERTA designation boundaries within the CBD and expand by resolution to cover all priority commercial properties. Prepare a one-page LERTA summary for the recruitment package. Train all recruitment contacts to present LERTA proactively — early in the conversation, not as a last resort. Pair every VPRO penalty contact with a LERTA incentive outreach. Identify 5–10 high-priority properties for targeted owner outreach.	Years 1-2	\$	City



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