Revitalization Strategies for Downtown Luray, VA

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Master of Urban and Regional Planning

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Revitalization Strategies for Downtown Luray, Virginia

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For the Town of Luray, VA

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PURPOSE

This plan focuses on existing conditions and prioritizes business retention within downtown Luray to establish a foundation for future growth. Data analyzed through market analysis will provide information in examining spending patterns and business potential.

OBJECTIVE

This plan aims to determine methods that support a foundation for the overall system and structure of Luray's downtown community. By examining these methods and providing informational resources, the Town can plan for future growth. Conclusions resulted from the recommendations within this plan were heavily influenced by community engagement practices and existing conditions.
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Executive Summary

The Town of Luray seeks a better understanding of its foundational challenges that contribute to off-season economic growth and development. This plan examines existing conditions to identify existing assets and missing linkages that can improve downtown economic development.

Background & Context

The Town of Luray and Luray Downtown Initiative (LDI) are the clients for this plan. The research area for this plan is entirely focused on the ‘Main Street District’ in downtown Luray. This area overlaps various other districts located in and around downtown Luray. These districts include the Arts and Cultural District, the Central Business District, and Historic District; all of which provide varying organizational focus and benefit. For example, the Arts and Cultural district is heavily functioned through the Page County Art Council, which encourages weekly art events.

The area of the Main Street District in Luray covers 0.07 square miles. This plan and its recommendations support the Town of Luray’s purpose “to maintain a small-town look and feel while building upon an economy that encourages and promotes a climate to foster small business growth (Town of Luray, 2019).” The Town’s history and context explain the focus on an economy that is driven by tourism. The Town itself is defined by destination sites and natural features including the Shenandoah National Park, the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the Shenandoah River. Shenandoah and Page counties (encompassing and surrounding Luray) both contributed 4% of state agriculture sales in 2017. The top products sold in the county include sheep, goats, wool, mohair, and milk (Wetzler, 2019).

This plan is rooted in the following ideas that emerge from current research and literature on rural planning and economic development:

1) Rural recreation communities have unique inherent strategies toward economic development especially within the downtown scape. Therefore, those strategies and approaches must be specific apart from common planning practices. 2) Often times
overlooked, rural communities and small-town local government require solutions unique to their character and community. 3) The three-step approach including: asset-based practices, strengthen current businesses, and building networks while simultaneously encouraging entrepreneurship will contribute toward the research for small town development patterns.

Research Methods & Findings

Various methods were utilized within the research to develop recommendations for this plan. Numerous stakeholder interviews, a consumer survey, merchant interviews, and a market study were conducted to create a cohesive vision between quantitative and qualitative responses. This plan aims to provide foundational resources toward economic vitality in the downtown scape for the Town of Luray. The following research questions guided the principles within this study providing recommendations: 1.) What assets in Luray can be leveraged to support downtown economic development? 2.) What is the market potential for downtown development? 3.) How can Luray build upon assets and potential to recruit and retain businesses?

Findings resulting from the various methods motivated the recommendations and objectives included below:

**Recommendation 1: Encourage new businesses downtown**
- Objective 1.1: Support the reuse of the “underutilized buildings”
- Objective 1.2: Find entrepreneurs within the local area and foster support for future growth
- Objective 1.3: Approve new zoning code

**Recommendation 2: Create an attractive and accessible streetscape**
- Objective 2.1: Improve pedestrian and sidewalk infrastructure.
- Objective 2.2: Beautify the downtown scape

**Recommendation 3: Foster a sense of space, place, and community expression**
- Objective 3.1: Continue, re-invent, or create events for downtown.
- Objective 3.2: Collaborate with local schools (Luray High and Laurel Ridge Community College) to hold intern positions for the town.

**Recommendation 4: Create structure in local government**
- Objective 4.1: Hire a Dedicated Grant Writer
- Objective 4.2: Collaborate with the Small Business Development Center for Seasonal Educational/Training Sessions
Introduction

Luray, Virginia, is a vibrant rural community among the Blue Ridge Mountains, surrounded by tourist destinations such as the Luray Caverns, Shenandoah National Park, Massanutten Resort, and the Shenandoah River. The town of Luray is economically based around the tourism industry, leaving its community and small-town businesses vulnerable during the off-season of tourism. A “shoulder season” is defined as “a travel period between the peak and off-peak seasons (Keating, 2019).” The shoulder and off-season for the town of Luray typically occur between the Autumn and Winter months. This “shoulder season” begins to ebb and flow during August through October and completely dips toward the off-season at the beginning of November. Rises within visitation rates pick back up toward the end of May. This establishes inconsistent and unsustainable formats for business owners, employees, and consumers. This plan identifies strategies to create a vibrant commercial district for local consumers and business owners. This plan targets the downtown area and locates industries for future investment toward full-time sustainable employment.

Map 1.2 Destination Sites Surrounding Luray, VA.
This plan focuses on existing conditions and prioritizes business retention within downtown Luray to establish a foundation for future growth. Data analyzed through the market analysis will provide information in examining spending patterns and business potential. This plan and its recommendations are informed by the merchants’ and residents' needs, concerns, and visions for downtown Luray. The Main Street Approach serves as a current guide to the Town of Luray. The Town of Luray possesses a Main Street Organization, Luray Downtown Initiative, utilized to fundamentally focus on guiding current and potential business owners toward growth. This organization sets out to identify fundamental practices that bridge the gap between consumer and business owner needs. These identifying figures follow the four points of the Main Street Approach, being that Luray Downtown Initiative is an accredited Main Street Program within the Virginia Main Street Program’s System.

The development of this downtown area is fundamental to the continuing vitality of the community. Luray sits within a unique area of Virginia. Visitors worldwide seek out this destination location due to its singularity. Downtowns are often expressions of the culture and values of a community; this is particularly true of rural towns. This plan aims to offer recommendations for revitalization and reinvestment in downtown Luray, informed by community input, while preserving its unique historic character. This plan aims to address the decline in business ventures within downtown Luray and establish a basis for future growth and investment within the area.

Theoretical Framework
The Main Street Approach is centered around transformation. The conceptual framework of this project is built around the main street four-point approach. These four points include organization, promotion, design, and economic vitality. Main Street America’s focus on community vision and market understanding complements these four points. This focus provides context to local government on establishing a community’s vision for the main street district that acknowledges market realities and provides a foundation for future (re)development. This, in its concept, provides a foundation for community identity, expectations and ideals for future development, and economic market realities for the district (Main Street America 2022).

Within the four points, ‘economic vitality’ refers to building a diverse economic base, catalyzing smart, new investments, and cultivating a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. Economic vitality strongly influenced the consumer survey within the methods section of this plan to determine how Luray’s community assesses those investments and ecosystems. The market analysis utilized within this plan provides a general understanding of the economic base within the town and assesses its market gaps. ‘Design’ within the downtown scape is expected to contain an inviting and inclusive atmosphere. Design is sought to celebrate a community’s historic character and foster an accessible people-centered public space. ‘Organization’ refers to sustainable efforts that cultivate partnerships and community engagement. This approach influences stakeholder and business owner interviews in that partnership effort utilized under the organization. ‘Promotion’ deals with the market district in defining assets. This point encourages communicating unique features and supporting the “buy-local” experience.
Downtown Luray possesses local efforts and assets, which creates the general foundation for future development efforts provided within this plan. The priority of this plan is to build upon those foundational efforts and establish a market reality.

**Background**

Although localities across the U.S. are beginning to implement strategies that increase governmental activities in revitalization; rural downtown areas continue to decline in economic activity and business pursuit. Small towns established around tourism industries are inclined to continue growth to adapt to visitor increase during their on-season months but see a substantial decline in the market during the off-season of tourism (Accordino & Adhikari, 2021). This study addresses this through a critical review of the literature, highlighting existing research practices, known person–environment influences on shopping and entertainment patterns, and limitations within resources. The plan examines strategies such as infrastructure improvements, investment in long-term industry, utilization of funding resources, and programs specifically focused on future and existing entrepreneurs. This plan establishes strategies for the rural downtown market to invest in full-time employment industries and increase economic activity during the Winter months.

**Main Street Approach**

Every community has a unique set of place-based assets, anchors, and consumer markets that contribute to a healthy business district (Main Street America, 2022). The Main Street Approach is characterized by the framework of the four points: economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. This focus on the four points in Main Street's Transformation Strategies is intentional. These four points encourage inclusive and balanced growth, generate meaningful community engagement, and formulate targeted programs and organizational goals for downtown revitalization. Main Street Refresh in 2017 emphasized that all the programming of a Main Street organization should be founded on a realistic market analysis.

Community revitalization is the implementation of intentional efforts toward measurable increases in access to employment, living wage jobs, healthcare, supportive services, community amenities, transportation, quality, and affordable housing stock (IHDA 2022). Revitalization refers to leveraging existing assets of an area using economic development strategies (Burayidi, 2018). These economic development strategies are used in reference to the four points within this plan:

1. Economic Vitality
2. Design
3. Organization
4. Promotion

The Main Street Program is the most substantial and accessible community revitalization program across the United States. The Main Street Approach directs its strategies toward all main streets. These four points are an essential guide and reference for any thriving main street. For example, governmental staff play a vital role in any decision-making process for the main street community. Still, smaller communities may need more substantial resources or a large governmental staff to implement the necessary improvements. All four points are broad, which leaves room for each
unique downtown community to implement these goals while incorporating their community values. To complement these four points, the Main Street Program provides a catalyst strategy "cheat sheet," which relates to the specific downtown area and how they may implement future goals based on that characteristic. These catalyst strategies are determined by the type of economy a downtown may have, such as agriculture, district workers and residents, green products and services, manufacturing, tourism, etc. These catalyst strategies are implemented through simultaneous activity in four broad areas of work that, together, constitute the four points. In summary, this strategy determines a downtown's unique market, provides guidelines and practices by obtaining consumers for that market, and encompasses the four points when providing these methods.

1. Design and Rural Placemaking

Abundant downtowns within livable communities establish a pedestrian-friendly design that encourages incremental growth outward. A compact form within the downtown area may traditionally contain mixed-uses, gathering spaces, public buildings, parks, and other open spaces. The commercial premise within downtown is crucial to the previously stated incremental growth (Arendt, 2016). It is important when establishing design concepts to align with community core values and enhance street function. Form and aesthetics can shape a community's physical and social dimensions.

The formats and measurements can encourage defined public spaces by establishing visual and physical focal points such as trail systems or playing fields. Including elements such as these creates a holistic, pleasant space that brings people in, attracting people downtown. Design is key for expanding and building upon a sparse convenience market or sustaining a destination market. Ranges between housing types, shapes, and styles close to downtown offer opportunities for various levels of income, age, etc. A mix of activities, such as complimentary facilities, creates an engaged downtown area to develop further for residential/mixed-use purposes. Involving natural settings between each building use encourages interest and property value. In communities where physical design has not been analyzed, officials and staff are often unaware of the linkage between their conventional suburban land-use regulations (with their reliance on minimum dimensions) and the steady erosion of their community’s unique identity. Many communities that regulate their growth through zoning do not consciously plan the future development pattern, except in an exceedingly broad-brush way through large, internally homogeneous use districts for residential, commercial, or industrial activities (Arendt, 2016).

If rural communities are to meet the broad challenges of maintaining rural character while supporting economic growth and opportunity, they require a set of tools that can be adjusted to reflect the diversity of rural communities, which can apply to both expanding and contracting economies (ICMA, 2010). The concept of rural smart growth is to allow for walkable communities by utilizing a compact design with a range of housing opportunities while simultaneously preserving open space and farmland and fostering a sense of place. The tools for incorporating this approach first encourage a community to identify its best asset and how it is connected to other communities within its region. Stakeholders must be active in comprehensive planning during the
approach to collaborate for a long-term vision plan. Resources that other rural communities have utilized for this approach include a cash flow analysis to determine where residents are spending their money, forming a citizens committee to renew economic vitality, utilizing grant sources or forming volunteer events to upkeep the downtown streetscape, and arranging seminars for local farmers to emerge into their market toward local and organic produce.

2. Promotion and Economic Vitality

Tourism is an economic base that can be viable for rural downtown areas. For tourists, shopping is one of the most important activities (Kemperman, Borgers, Timmermans, 2009). Virginia Main Street uses catalyst strategies that revolve around a community’s captive market and organize it by the town’s customer base. These strategies describe why a specific group of consumers adds to the support within an economically viable downtown district. To become a downtown that others may want to visit or spend money on, the town or specific area must first be a destination. This destination theory dives into the local characteristics of a specific downtown community. What will bring visitors to the downtown area? Why would they want to stay and spend money on local businesses? This catalyst strategy explains the benefits and trade-offs of a tourist-based downtown. This type of downtown brings outside consumer spending, which adds to regional buying power, but the local community may not be happy about outsiders making it feel “less local.” Increased tourism can result in higher prices for food or housing for locals (Main Street America, 2022). ‘Tourist towns,’ which are economically dependent on the fluctuating seasons, create instability for downtown businesses attempting to stay afloat during the off-season.

Studying the shopping patterns of tourists within a local economy can establish great benefits for future implementation plans. First, a community must identify its strengths and anchors that determine that area to become a destination. Listed within Kemperman, Borgers, and Timmermans’ book on tourism management, there are eight hypotheses about how a tourist might determine where they will shop. These hypotheses are listed as follows:

1. Tourists’ shopping route choice behavior is affected by the supply of shops, in the sense that tourists prefer a link over other links in the downtown shopping network when the link provides a larger amount of shopping floor space.
2. Links in a downtown shopping environment that give good access to attractive shopping streets will have a higher probability of being chosen by tourists.
3. Tourists prefer links/streets that are physically attractive, have good visibility and are pedestrian friendly.
4. In the beginning of the trip, tourists tend to choose a link in the network that will increase the distance from the entry link, while after traversing some distance, tourists tend to decrease the distance to the entry link. Consequently, the probability the trip will end increases with the distance walked and the time spent in the shopping environment.
5. Tourists do not prefer a link that has been passed before or to make a turn in the current link.
6. The route choice behavior of hedonic tourist shoppers differs from that of utilitarian tourist shoppers, such that hedonic shoppers spend more time per shopping trip, walk a longer distance, and are more likely to visit links with shops for fun than utilitarian shoppers.

7. Tourists unfamiliar with the shopping area spend more time walking a longer distance.

8. The route choice behavior of tourists who planned their shopping trip differs from that of tourists who did not plan their trip in the sense that they spend less time in the shopping area and walk less far.

Most hypotheses were deemed accurate, and others were determined as partly true, such as #1 and #2, which conclude that tourists do not prefer links with restaurants, lunchrooms, bars, and the like (Kemperman, Borgers, Timmermans, 2009). Design and streetscape are factors that consider the influx in visitor population during tourist season. Route choice behavior and pedestrian movement can determine how a market is established and what gaps there may be to fill when implementing attractive downtown strategies. The shopping environment determines tourist shopping behavior. Within the built environment, aspects of supply and accessibility and physical characteristics contribute to engagement, not only within visitation but local shopping and engagement. Identifying place-based techniques, such as the ones presented above, attests to the model of primary consumption. This model recognizes each link within a downtown network and measures determinants on the types of downtown shoppers to respond effectively. This study concludes that tourism is a viable tool for economic development. Still, destination marketers and planners must maintain the challenge of providing an attractive environment for tourists and residents alike (Kemperman, Borgers, Timmermans, 2009).

3. Organization

Cooperation among stakeholders, business owners, local organizations, etc., is important within downtown revitalization. This aspect of revitalization aligns future development visions between consumers, community leaders, and local government. The Main Street Approach works with organization leaders to understand the market data and develop comprehensive and execution-driven strategies to deliver economic development results. This approach accomplishes several goals (Main Street America 2022).

- Build local knowledge and understanding of your district’s economy to create a foundation for successful revitalization.
- Identifies current strengths of the business mix and existing business clusters.
- Supplies relevant consumer data to the revitalization program so it can help existing businesses become stronger.
- Identifies opportunities for future business attraction and business cluster expansion.
- Builds a strategic framework for niche development, including real estate development, business development, promotions, marketing, branding, etc.

A 2018 strategic planning guide was provided to the town of Luray by Main Street America to implement these strategies within downtown revitalization. Revisiting these strategies are necessary tools to consider when determining recommendations within this plan.
Existing Conditions

This section assesses Luray’s downtown character as it stands today. The adjustments necessary in place of this downtown character will be determined by its current circumstances and community input. The history of downtown, description of the study area, demographic data, zoning, existing uses, business inventory, vacancies, surrounding influences, design, and aesthetics contribute to the understanding of downtown Luray’s current conditions. These current conditions are evaluated to help inform the research questions.

History of Downtown

Luray, Virginia, sits at the center of the Shenandoah Valley, located ninety miles West of Washington D.C., just ten miles from the Shenandoah National Park, twenty miles from Massanutten Resort, and is home to the Luray Caverns. Downtown Luray is the historic commercial core of Page County (National Park Service, 2022). Luray was founded in 1812, containing only ten acres along Hawksbill Creek. By 1871, Luray became an officially incorporated town and was enacted as the county seat for Page County. Luray was initially a primary area for log construction. The commercial function of Luray’s downtown took the form of general merchandising and luxury goods. In 1833, the Page County Courthouse was completed on the edge of Main Street, which stimulated growth for hotels, law offices, and small-scale industries such as blacksmithing and tanning. By the 1880s, the “Shenandoah Railroad built its line through town, setting off a wave of industrial and residential construction.” The development of the Shenandoah National Park and Skyline Drive in the 1920s and 1930s contributed to the town's growth in the 20th century. The construction of Route-211 in the 1970s diverted travelers around the downtown scape, and large national retailers began arriving toward the west end of town, just off the highway. Images A and B below show downtown Luray's depictions circa 1930 versus today. Both photographs are taken from the top of the hill, at the corner of Bank Street and West Main Street, leading toward the core of downtown. Image A contains a 1930s depiction of the main street and the structural resemblance in architecture as it still stands today. Both photographs depict car-oriented Main Street corridors that now involve upgraded infrastructure such as paved roads, sidewalks, green space, and designated on-street parking. These photos illustrate the historic integrity and character of the Main Street corridor, which has been preserved over the past 90 years.
Description of the Study Area

The existing downtown structures follow the same historical pattern as its commercial core within the 19th century; the area has retained much of its historic character. Image C. below shows the downtown plat of the study area in the 19th century. The "commercial core" is studied along Main Street, Court Street, and Broad Street. The downtown area, shown in Image C., begins at the Mimslyn Inn on the corner of Memorial Avenue and West Main Street and ends at Bradley’s Funeral Home on North Deford Avenue and East Main Street. The Hawksbill Greenway, following beside Hawksbill Creek, is a walking and bicycling path that travels through the center of Main Street. The railroad tracks cut diagonally across the downtown district, going from East Main Street to Broad Street.
Demographic Data

Luray, Virginia, is located within Page County. Page County contains three small, incorporated towns and many unincorporated towns/areas. These incorporated towns include Luray, Stanley, and Shenandoah. Luray is the largest town within the county, containing a population of 4,831. Luray covers a total of 4.8 square miles compared to its neighboring towns, which only cover 1.1 square miles (Stanley) and 1.4 square miles (Shenandoah). Compared to Luray’s neighboring towns within Page County, Stanley only has half of the population compared to Luray, estimated at 1,703. Shenandoah contains one-third of the amount of Luray’s population, to be 2,486, according to the 2020 U.S. Census. (U.S. Census, 2020).

Demographic information such as age can help determine market behaviors and contribute to a more comprehensive analysis. The average age within the town of Luray is 48 years. According to the World Health Organization, an aging population is defined as an increasing median age because of a decline in fertility and increased life expectancy (World Health Organization, 2010). Aging populations within small or rural towns contain a smaller portion of young, working-aged adults due to social and economic implications such as job availability (Caldwell, 2011). Figure 1.1 demonstrates below the difference between Luray’s population in 2000 and 2020 based on age. The smallest age group is those within the 18-24-year age range. This group has consistently contained a minor portion of the population within the town for the past two decades and has had the most significant decline in the population by age group since 2000. Between 2000 and 2020, the age group of 18-24 years had a population decrease of 33%. Those within the 55-64 age range
had the most considerable population increase of 39%; Luray has an aging population and little to no influx of younger residents. The population has continuously decreased by 1.5% since 2000. According to VA State Demographics, the peak population of Luray was in 2010, when its population was 4,895. Luray is currently 2.1% smaller than it was in 2010.

Figure 1.1 2000 and 2020 Age in Luray, Virginia. Data provided by the US Census.

Map 1.4 demonstrates Luray’s population by race. The map designates the downtown area's location and determines the population by race based on dot density. Each dot within the map represents one person located within that area. Luray’s population is majority white but stands as the most diverse town within Page County. Luray contains a population with 87% of its residents being white alone, whereas Stanley and Shenandoah’s population is more than 92% white alone. Comparing this data to the entire region is consistent with the fact that the Northern Shenandoah Region contains 88% white residents. It is important to note that data like this may skew the perception of what a community looks like within a small town. Although Figure 1.2 below shows only 5.4% of the residents are Black or African American, there is a prominent Black community within the town.
According to the Northern Shenandoah Regional Commissions’ data, of individuals 25 to 64 in the town of Luray, VA, 18.9% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Of the entire population, 40% hold a high school diploma, and 10% hold a bachelor’s degree. The average household income for a person living within the town of Luray is approximately $50,000, but 12% of residents fall below the poverty line. Luray holds a higher poverty level than the state of Virginia. 9.9% of Virginia residents fall below the poverty line, 2.1% less than the town. Luray’s median household income falls below the State median. Virginia’s median household income is $76,398 compared to Luray’s median, which stands at $51,747. Figure 1.3 and 1.4 below compare 2020 household income estimates between the town of Luray and Virginia. Income comparisons demonstrated in Figure 1.3 and 1.4 determine whether the town is economically suitable for future living standards. It is essential to acknowledge that there is a fair number of those living below the poverty level. By providing a diverse economic base and potential for full-time employment, future trends will demonstrate a decrease in poverty rates.
Demographic data such as age and income level can affect the types of businesses or goods solicited for future development. Income determines the purchasing power of those within the surrounding area. Job growth and the economic base is crucial toward improving the area's poverty levels and distance traveled for work. Appendix C. demonstrates an inflow-outflow map and those who live and work within the town and incorporates those within the town who are traveling elsewhere for job opportunities. This map shows that only 606 residents live and work within the town of Luray. Incorporating full-time employment eliminates travel costs and time spent outside town boundaries and encourages residents to spend locally. This demographic data determines how to serve the community best and presents business growth and implementation tools within the downtown district.

**Zoning Analysis**

The study area is located within Map 1.5 and is designated as B-1, which is Business. The town of Luray’s 2019 Comprehensive Plan states that B-1 zoned areas are intended for mixed use within future development (Town of Luray, 2019). Mixed-use as defined in the town’s zoning code is
“the use of a structure (existing or new) on a lot/parcel zoned for general business in which a mixture of commercial and residential uses is conducted. Buildings on such parcels in which a minimum of 25 percent of the gross floor space is dedicated for business/commercial uses where the remainder is utilized for residential purposes. Such residential use shall likewise not be less than 25 percent of the gross floor space of the structure. Residential uses must conform to all requirements set forth by the local Building Official and the Code of the Town of Luray (Municode, 2023).” Table 1.1, provided in appendix A, depicts the zoning uses in Luray, VA, specifically focusing on the commercial core. Although some buildings are already utilized as mixed-use, light industrial, and residential, the historic downtown is designated as B-1 within the zoning ordinance. This specific zoning within the ordinance allows for the incorporation of commercial buildings anywhere labeled within the B-1 sections. Table 1.1, listed within Appendix A., includes zoning allowed within the town of Luray and permitted uses based on zoning type, height, and setback requirements. Although Table 1.1 depicts the entirety of zoning uses within the downtown district, it does not include uses such as floodplain conservation, open space/park zoning district, planned neighborhood development district, arts and cultural district, and Luray Enterprise Zone. These zoning districts, in some instances, overlap within the downtown zoning, although it does not contribute differently to how the uses function and their setback requirements.

Relative to the current zoning, Luray contains urban development areas. According to the town’s comprehensive plan, these areas promote higher-density development due to their proximity to transportation facilities and utilities. The town’s Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances provide mechanisms for traditional neighborhood design such as pedestrian-friendly street design, interconnected streets, preservation of natural areas, mixed-use neighborhoods that include mixed housing types, shallow or no building setback requirements, and reduction of subdivision street widths. These urban development areas are specifically located within the downtown district. The flexibility for denser development enables sustainable practices that will encourage growth and foster an inclusive environment. Under special uses, certain home types are eligible within the B-1 zone, such as mobile homes, apartment houses, wholesale houses, two-family dwellings, etc. Single-family dwellings are not permitted within this zoning type. Within Luray’s 2019 comprehensive plan, the town determines two goals for the future of this downtown zoning area: Promote a combination of residential and business uses in the business district and investigate residential use in commercial Districts as a by-right use (Town of Luray, 2019).
Existing Uses and Business Inventory

Varying uses occur within the small town's core commercial district. As the previous section listed, the historic downtown zoning is labeled B-1. Still, most uses are mixed-use, containing apartments on the top floor and businesses on the lower levels. This level of service benefits the future development of a viable, walkable, and sustainable downtown district. Incorporating varying uses and establishing a diverse economic base lowers the area's economic failure risk. Currently, there are 74 businesses within the downtown area. This is also important for the ‘organization’ of the Main Street Program because business owners will be contacted for one-on-one interviews to demonstrate their current understanding and knowledge of the downtown streetscape and how visitation affects their business type. A further explanation is demonstrated in this document's ‘methods’ section. Most of the historic district's industries are retail trade, accommodation, and food service. Figure 1.5 below demonstrates the industries within the historic downtown district.

Figure 1.5 Luray, VA Industries within the Downtown Historic District. Trinity Waldron manually collected data.
Table 1.2 consists of a list of businesses that have opened within the downtown district in the past three years and is in Appendix B. This table demonstrates the business name, hours of operation, location, and general description of services or items sold. Most businesses listed within this table opened during COVID have continued operations. These businesses have become known as increasingly prominent draws to the downtown area. Most people frequent these places daily, especially on the weekends during peak tourist seasons. In addition to these businesses, several previously vacant locations will soon become occupied within the district.

**Vacancies**

There are 110 commercial buildings located within the historic downtown district. Within this downtown district, there are currently 37 vacant commercial units. Of these 37 vacant units, one is in the process of claiming new ownership and beginning businesses. This vacant building, previously known as the old Chapman House, was a single-family home owned by the organ player of the Luray Bell Tower. This building is at 211 West Main Street and has been transferred to a new owner since 2021. This location is set to become *Porch and Vine*, a restaurant and wine dealer, and has already begun marketing on its website. Their location opening date is set for some time in 2023. A photo of the current building is in Image D. below.

Since the pandemic, vacancies have increased within the downtown district. Many vacancies have dilapidated structures and actively distract from the "quaint" downtown appearance. Three known restaurant businesses have closed within the past couple of years: *Baby Moons*, *Moon Shadows*, and *Uncle Bucks’ Uncle Bucks*, located within the center of the downtown district across from Town Hall, is currently occupied by the Luray Republican Party until the structure is wholly bought or rented by another owner. The photographs below show the current conditions of vacant buildings with structural issues.

![Image D. Old Chapman House Underway of New Ownership.](image-url)
Vacant downtown buildings in need of repair.

**Surrounding Influences**

Specific influences within and surrounding the town of Luray add value and appeal. These influences include Luray Caverns, Shenandoah River, Shenandoah National Park, and Massanutten Resort. Luray, located in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley, tucked between the Blue Ridge Mountains, is known as an event destination. According to the *Weddings in Luray and Page County*, event page TLC named Luray and Page County the #2 Beautiful Destination Wedding Locale (Visit Luray-Page, 2022). Luray Caverns receives over a half-million visitors annually in addition to its ability to hold events and weddings for on-site and offsite locations and is located just two miles outside the downtown district. It is unknown how many visitors come into the town solely for Luray Caverns and detours to experience downtown. However, Route 211 is a bypass that diverts travelers away from the commercial core.

The Front Royal and Thornton Gap entrances to the Shenandoah National Park are located ten miles north and east of Luray. Visitors coming in from Southern Virginia and further must pass through the town of Luray to visit the park. According to local news reports, almost two million people visit the park annually (National Park Service, 2020).

Massanutten Spa and Resort is another significant draw to the town, especially during the shoulder season for tourism within the Luray area. Luray’s peak season of visitors is typically within the beginning of the summer months and ebbs and flows until mid-October due to outdoor activities and changing leaves. Massanutten Resort offers winter sports such as snowboarding, skiing, snow tubing, an indoor water park, ice skating, and other stay-in amenities. This attraction is twenty-seven miles south of Luray. Those from the northern parts of the U.S. must pass by or through Luray to reach this resort. The tables and graphs located in Figure 1.6, provided by the Northern Shenandoah Regional Commission’s office, illustrate a snapshot of the visitation patterns of those coming to downtown Luray. People spending money within the downtown district are residents who live less than 30 miles from Luray. Those visiting downtown from outside of the area are typically from the Harrisonburg area. Harrisonburg has a substantial population of people ages 18-24 due to the location of James Madison University.
Design and Aesthetics

Luray’s downtown is located within a designated Enterprise Zone, allowing grants and funding toward façade work. Every year, three businesses are awarded facade improvement grants. In 2021, companies such as Reed & Reed, JLK Management LLC, and The Auction House were awarded facade improvement grants. Over the last few years, much work has been done toward improving Luray’s Road infrastructure, such as replacing the Main Street Bridge within the downtown core. This bridge replacement included wider sidewalks along the downtown area. The aesthetic and appearance of the site have been improved by increasing seasonal decor, lighting within the downtown district, and plant beds.

The downtown contains various architectural styles—many commercial buildings within the downtown district date from the 1840s through the 1940s. Commercial, religious, and institutional buildings within the commercial core are examples of 19th and 20th-century influence. The Page County courthouse represents a Jeffersonian Classical architectural style, commercial and residential buildings contain a Greek-Revival kind, the railway depot has a Queen Anne and Tudor-Revival style, and the post office includes a Colonial Revival style (National Park Service, 2022).

Plans to continue to improve the downtown district are already underway. The town of Luray identifies six categories of importance under the economic development section of the town’s 2019 comprehensive plan. Tourism, property marketing, economic designations, community policies, downtown redevelopment, and education connections are referenced as important factors within
downtown Luray’s economic development practices. Although these categories within the comprehensive plan are not described in detail, subcategories are determined by the town to begin projects or construction. Tourism is vital to this plan when implementing year-round development practices to bolster Luray’s economy. The 2019 comprehensive plan designates coordination and promotion as two key factors under this subcategory within economic development. Promotion is identified within the four points of this plan which encompasses strategies that guide recommendations for downtown Luray. Within downtown development and community policies, Luray identifies small business development and property improvements as factors of importance. Both factors are identified within this plan when determining vacancies and entrepreneurial support. Luray designates several projects to improve infrastructure, safety, and aesthetics. The extension of the Hawksbill Greenway is a project that has been studied for several years. This project contributes to the access of non-motorized vehicles within the downtown area on a safe route. The Hawksbill Greenway is currently used recreationally, but the growing commercial base for the downtown district could influence commuting patterns as shown in image G.

The Page County comprehensive plan may lead to a more detailed resource within the development of this plan. Page County’s 2020 comprehensive plan deems “smart growth” and “community vision” as leading factors in the county’s future development. Both concepts are evaluated within the literature review section of this plan and provide ample evidence of how these concepts can contribute to the implementation of specific development plans.

Image G. Hawksbill Greenway. Photo provided by the Department of Forestry.
Methodology

Research Questions
The following questions are being formulated for the goal of this plan.

1. What assets in Luray can be leveraged to support downtown economic development?
2. What is the market potential for downtown development?
3. How can Luray build upon assets and potential to recruit and retain businesses?

Data Collection and Analysis

Consumer Survey
The following results are from a community survey conducted between October and December 2022. The survey received 176 responses, all conducted via Google form links shared among private and public social media formats such as the Town of Luray webpage, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. A physical format of this survey, including a barcode, is automatically linked to the online format, was distributed to all downtown commercial businesses, Luray Caverns, and posted within the town library and visitors center. A copy of the Luray Downtown Revitalization Survey is provided in Appendix D.

This survey provides information regarding where visitors come from, where people most frequently shop, issues within the current downtown atmosphere, and improvements necessary. The feedback provided in this survey is used in the aggregate regarding analytical research. The data will enhance improvement recommendations by creating a comprehensive analysis between public opinion and those provided by the researcher. This survey was provided to the town of Luray and LDI on Friday, October 14th, 2022. This survey was immediately posted to the town’s official website and Facebook Page. The town approved keeping this survey on its website until October 31st, 2022. The Downtown Revitalization Survey was also announced on the local radio station, The River 95.3 WZRV.

Flyers of this survey with a scannable barcode were provided to nine business locations, the local library, Luray’s visitor center, Luray High School, Hawksbill Greenway, and the town office. These business locations included West Main Market, Shenandoah Moon, Curated, Broad Porch Coffee, Compass Tea Room, Gathering Grounds Patisserie and Cafe, Virginia Gift Shop, Nest and Hive, and Warehouse Art Gallery. An example of this scannable flier is provided in Appendix E. Business locations were chosen due to their location within downtown Luray and the frequency of visitors based on the type of business and retail location. The visitor center was determined to be a prominent location due to the necessary feedback made by tourists. As previously stated, tourists are the economic driver within downtown and therefore act as a prominent stakeholder. The Hawksbill Greenway was chosen for the survey location due to its frequency of travel and proximity to downtown. The Hawksbill Greenway, as stated in previous sections, is a prominent walkway used for leisurely travel and is in the center of downtown Luray. The local library was
determined as an essential location due to the age of the visitors that frequented said location. Older individuals provide diverse demographic data that is essential to this research. The local library, Hawksbill Greenway, and the visitors center are also within downtown limits. Luray High School was chosen as a later location due to the demographics who had answered the public survey. By November 21st, 2022, zero individuals under 18 answered the downtown survey. Much of the feedback provided by those who had already taken the survey often included information regarding store options or activities examined as “kid related.” After examining the age of respondents and the types of responses received, it was determined that demographic analysis is a vital asset to this research. This survey was provided to the school on Tuesday, November 22nd, 2022. The Survey officially closed to the public on December 14th, 2022.

**Merchant Interview**

In addition to local citizens and visitors, several local business owners were contacted to understand operating and owning a business within downtown Luray and their commentary on how business circumstances differ between the “on” and “off-season” of tourism. Being that the town's economic driver is tourism, business owner input is essential when attempting to understand how the market ebbs and flows throughout the year. Business owners were contacted with the understanding that the interview process would take at least 30 minutes of their time. After guided feedback from a few business owners, those contacted were given the option to answer the 15-question survey on their own time. The feedback given justified the time constraint of small-town business owners due to their involvement in day-to-day activities. Results from this interview/survey process will guide future recommendations and identify problem areas where they see fit for LDI or local government to assist. Future development depends on the current state of downtown Luray. Those holding space within downtown contain a full understanding of downtown Luray’s past, present, and future trends within the retail, government, and other customer service industries. This approach’s four-point strategy, specifically, ‘organization,’ identifies collaboration with stakeholders or business owners as a key factor in community development and revitalization practices.

**Market Analysis**

Market studies are typically conducted in the downtown area to help businesses understand their trade to improve the capture of sales, explore new business development opportunities, demonstrate the economic importance of downtown, and understand the changing market of reverse inequities (University of Wisconsin Madison, 2022). Providing an easily accessible, wide variety of shops and businesses downtown further encourages economic growth. Encouraging growth and business development which stabilizes patterns between the influx of visitors and residential entertainment and shopping needs. Engagement can be challenging, especially in low-income areas where people only have the time to give input on the current circumstances if compensation is offered. Focusing on community-driven needs bridges the distance between town priorities and the public, and it also ensures that people feel like their concerns are being heard and addressed. This issue can focus on goal setting and chain mapping progress. First, receiving input and information from business owners, residents, and visitors encourages awareness and increases interest in involvement. Small-town planning relies heavily on competitive funding resources.
Coordinating a Main Street Program provides preservation-based economic and community development funding opportunities (VADHCD, 2022).

**Research Findings**

**Community Survey Results**

**Respondent Characteristics**

Most respondents surveyed lived in Luray (72%). Those living within the State of Virginia, except for Page County, had the second highest number of respondents, including those from northern Virginia (Alexandria, Arlington, Reston) and those from Richmond, which is approximately 124 miles away (14%). The remaining respondents come from nearby residences within the county, such as Stanley, Shenandoah, and Rileyville (9%). The remaining 5% of respondents were visitors out-of-state but included those from nearby or bordering states such as North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Delaware, DC, Tennessee, and others such as New York and Texas. Figure 1.7 below shows the data in visual detail.

![Where Respondents Live](image_url)

Figure 1.7 Where Respondents Live

Respondents' ages varied, mostly ranging between 18 and 34 years of age, with ranges dispersed evenly. The breakdown between age groups is provided in figure 1.8 below. The wide range of respondents benefits from the response toward recommendation strategies when examining what demographic shops within downtown are currently catered toward.
**Frequency of Visits**
Respondents visit the study area frequently. Out of 176 respondents, fifty-four visit the area weekly, which amounts to 31%. Another 47, or 27%, visit downtown Luray daily. 15% of respondents demonstrated that they only visit downtown Luray once or twice a year, and 3% of respondents almost never visit. Half of the respondents who listed that they almost never visit downtown Luray currently live in the town itself, whereas the other half lives outside of the town. Entire results show that most respondents who live in the town of Luray visit downtown daily, weekly, and/or monthly.

**Consumer Preferences**
Respondents were asked about their preferences for downtown Luray to offer suggestions for future development. Figure 1.10 below demonstrates that most respondents indicate that they would like to see more food establishments in downtown Luray (78%). The term “food
establishments” refers to bars, pubs, restaurants, etc. Grocery stores refer to specialty foods, small food markets, etc., and entertainment refers to theater, arcade, rolling rink, etc., followed by respondents' preferences (entertainment: 51% and grocery: 52%). The category “other” was provided with a “fill in the blank” short response. Respondents provide additional preferences such as, a gym, urgent care, drugstore, Lowes, and a library. One respondent expressed that there are already too many options available within downtown Luray.

Figure 1.10 Businesses Desired by Respondents

Respondents were asked to express their top three concerns facing downtown Luray. Figure 1.11 demonstrates the respondents’ top issues facing downtown are the stores themselves (80%). This answer choice refers to building vacancies, store variety, and inconsistent hours. Aesthetics such as curb appeal, green space, buildings needing repair, and cleanliness are also determined to be priority issues for the respondents (59%). The category “other” was provided with a “fill in the blank” short response. Respondents provide additional problem areas such as lack of transportation services, lack of EV charging stations, lack of bike parking areas, lack of diversity (including more LGBTQIA businesses and just being more open to different types of people and businesses), lack of affordable options, lack of small black-owned businesses, lack of medical services, and lack of jobs employing the local population.
Respondents included their favorite aspects of downtown Luray, demonstrated in Figure 1.12 When asked about their favorite part of downtown, respondents answered in myriad ways. The most common responses are visualized below in a word cloud. The more common the response, the larger the size of the word.

Figure 1.12 Respondent’s Favorite Aspects of Downtown Luray.

**Qualitative Responses**

In addition to the above questions, comments and opinions on downtown were not able to be accurately captured by the survey. Respondents are generally pleased with downtown Luray’s potential and small-town feel. Most respondents' concerns deal with the approval of new businesses and downtown aesthetics. Other categories such as, infrastructure including, bicycle
and pedestrian accommodations and the town's lack of investment within the community itself rather than toward the visitors through the tourism industry were provided in the long-paragraph feedback portion of the survey. Many of these concerns include lack of affordable housing, lack of employment opportunities, and aging population/inability to provide sufficient accommodations for the aging population (i.e., retirement homes) and inability to provide accommodations for the younger population to stay within the town of Luray rather than move away. Overall, respondents encouraged the potential of downtown Luray by providing a unification between Luray Downtown Initiative and residents.

Popular comments generally fell into the categories listed below. Table 1.3 outlines the number of comments received per category. A full table of comments is available in Appendix F.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Number of Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Involving the Desire to Cater to the Local Attractions (i.e., Luray Caverns, Shenandoah National Park, Massanutten Resort)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Street Improvements</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approval of New Businesses</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire for More Community Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire for Improved Aesthetic</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire for Improved Emergency/Medical Services</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for Local Government Action</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage Alternative Energy</td>
<td>2</td>
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Table 1.3 General Respondent Commentary Topics.
Merchant Survey Responses

In addition to visitor and citizen responses, local business owners within the downtown area were contacted to understand their experience operating in downtown Luray. Questions from this survey/interview are provided in Appendix G. Depending upon the availability of the business owner, most were either contacted via zoom or over the phone for a 30-minute interview session or provided questions via email to respond within a timely manner. Results from this survey/interview will assist in identifying the town's current challenges during the off-season or all year depending on the perspective of the business owner and how the town of Luray may aid current and future business owners during its downtown development process. The businesses within Table 1.4 below are provided responses via email, over the phone, or zoom.

Years of Operation

Respondents were first asked how long their business had been in operation. Available in table 1.4 below, only one business is reported to have been open for less than a year. The businesses interviewed provided a variety of responses ranging from four months up to 53 years. This indicates a successful relationship between business owners and the community as well as an interest in investment within downtown Luray. As presented in the previous section, “existing uses and business inventory,” many businesses opened during the pandemic, which caused a drastic decrease in revenue. Although out of the businesses that opened during the pandemic had challenges, five out of the six remain open.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Business Name</th>
<th>Years of Operation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Beverage</td>
<td>Broad Porch Coffee and Co.</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Luray Copy Service</td>
<td>53 Years</td>
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<td>Food and Beverage</td>
<td>Watch and Warrant</td>
<td>Less Than 1 year</td>
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<td>Food and Beverage</td>
<td>Main Street Bakery and Catering</td>
<td>20 Years</td>
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<td>Food and Beverage</td>
<td>Hawksbill Brewing Company</td>
<td>7 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food and Beverage</td>
<td>Main Street Flavors</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 Merchant Respondents- Years of Operation

Number of Employees

All respondents surveyed are small business owners. Many of those within the food and beverage industry within downtown Luray have 10 or more employees with the more end of the spectrum leading up to 40 with hopes of expansion. Many business owners are involved heavily with day-to-day operations. Figure 1.13 below determines the number of employees provided by respondents.
Busiest Day

Respondents were asked about their busiest days of operation. It is important to note that some businesses indicate more than one busy day of the week. In Figure 1.14. Most respondents noted that Saturday is their busiest day of the week. This aligns with the general knowledge that most consumers spend leisurely time within downtown areas on weekends.

No business indicated that Tuesday through Thursday were busier days for their business, which coincides with general workweek schedules. This may provide an opportunity for the town of Luray to invest in businesses that collaborate with work week schedules such as downtown workspaces, encouraging those to spend their break or direct after-work hours within downtown Luray. This will capture potential sales during the week and market customers during less conventional shopping hours.
**Challenges to Operation in Downtown Luray**

Most respondents mentioned the dip in foot traffic during the “off-season” previously mentioned. Discussion on this off-season topic involved staffing challenges, which is congruent with the nationwide struggle for staffing and lack of local involvement. Other challenges included infrastructure such as water and sewer, downtown beautification, trash pickup, and narrow sidewalks. Others mentioned the lack of an inviting night scene to extend hours of operation within the downtown area. The cycle of tourism within the areas leads astray these businesses during the Autumn and Winter months. This determines a need for businesses that appeal to residents such as those determined within the “Convenience Trade Area,” notated within the following section of this plan.

Most of the respondents listed that their customers utilize on-street parking. This provides easy access to some storefronts but also poses a challenge in terms of foot access, diversity, and further expansion such as outdoor dining.

**Benefits to Operation in Downtown Luray**

Respondents were asked why they chose the specific location for their business whether it meant downtown Luray or the building itself. Many of the businesses mention that it is located on the main street providing an opportunity for exposure to a larger crowd. Most respondents determined that downtown Luray provided easy and reliable access for visitors to their shops involving the traffic from tourist destinations such as Luray Caverns and Shenandoah National Park while also having an abundance of parking options.

**Town Assistance for Business Owners**

Finally, respondents were asked in what ways the town of Luray could further assist their businesses. Some businesses included downtown-specific goals such as more events, collaboration, tours specific to the downtown area such as restaurant tours and upgrading/improving infrastructure. Others specified things such as incentives and start-up involvement to help business owners have a smooth transition in investment and restoration of downtown buildings. Luray-wide suggestions were given by respondents involving the lack of affordable housing, education, and training within the town. Many respondents are outsourcing their staff due to applicants not being qualified for specific roles. This provides opportunities for the town to collaborate or host job training events. The lack of education is a previously stated, concerning factor. This leads to the assumption of “brain drains” within small towns referring to those receiving a higher education moving away and not returning.

**Market Analysis**

**Trade Area**

The trade area defines where the market draws most of its customers, which is typically where 75% of the customers for local businesses reside (Dean 2021). For this study, the trade area will be determined by driving times in the study area in 15-minute, 30-minute, and 45-minute areas. Expanding the market analysis area to a 45-minute drive time creates more accurate results for a
small rural town such as Luray. Results from the consumer survey made by respondents concluded that 93.7% of respondents travel less than an hour or an hour or more for groceries or leisurely activities (other answer choices included: less than 30 minutes, all of the selections, or none at all). Categories analyzed included spending potential, household expenditure, and retail demand.

The area within the 15-minute drive time will be referred to as the “Convenience Trade Area.” A convenience trade area refers to an area that contains convenience goods and services that residents use daily, such as grocery stores and gasoline stations. Map1.4. Below demonstrates the area and its drive time radius within the analysis. “Drive time radiuses” demonstrate the amount of time it takes to drive from the centroid of downtown to the farthest radial area indicated on the map. These radiuses were selected to better understand how far consumers would be willing to travel for certain retail experiences such as restaurants, health clubs, and unique experiences. It also illuminates gaps in the availability of demanded goods and services.

The population within the convenience trade area in 2022 stood at 14,008 and includes the towns of Luray, Stanley, and Rileyville. Within this trade area in 2022, there were 5,864 households with a median disposable income of $46,398, which is slightly lower than the convenience and destination trade areas. The highest household expenditures for the convenience trade area included food away from home, entertainment and recreation, and apparel.
Market Potential

The MPI (Market Potential Index) measures the relative likelihood of the adults or households in the specified trade area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the U.S. (Esri, 2023). According to the data, besides healthcare, vehicle maintenance and repairs, gifts, entertainment, and recreation have the highest spending potential for this area.

Retail demand outlook focuses on 2022 consumer spending and forecasted demands by 2027. The projected spending growth measures the difference within this time frame. Categories with the highest projected spending growth were utilized for the recommendations section within this plan. Categories with the highest retail demand included, financial services included the subcategory of retirement plans, food (specifically food at home, and entertainment and recreation including the subcategories; TV, video, audio, pet specific items, and membership fees such as, clubs, sports, etc.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities (SWO) Analysis

The existing conditions of the study area include the Town’s strengths, challenges, and opportunities, in reference to its future development patterns. Both the data collection and the various resources utilized throughout this plan are taken into consideration when justifying how each category is summarized. Drawing from these conclusions will further present itself in the recommendations sections when determining the Towns’ assets and liabilities.

Strengths

Location and Anchors

Luray, VA sits within a prominent spot just ninety miles east of the Nation’s capital (Washington D.C.). Destination areas such as the Shenandoah National Park, the Shenandoah River, Luray Caverns, and Massanutten Resort encompass the area of Luray and present as natural draws to the Town itself and the Main Street District.

The Main Street District contains necessary anchors, drawing locals to the area for essential services. For example, Luray has a post office at the center of the main street district. Other anchors include Town Hall, the Page County Office, Page County Public Library, and the courthouse. Another anchor is the “Center for Performing Arts of Luray (PAL).” Established in 2005, which sits at the heart of downtown and includes events such as comedy, music, plays, galas, and more. Such events are mostly held inside, but the PAL Center does have a small-incorporated outdoor performance area for the warmer months.

Other anchors within the downtown district include the Hawksbill Greenway and Ruffner Plaza. Hawksbill Greenway runs four miles North and South through town and crosses under the main street bridge. This bicycle-pedestrian path is frequently used by residents and visitors alike.
Ruffner Plaza is located just off the main street bridge where outdoor events are held such as concerts and holiday festivities.

Name Recognition and Designation

Luray, Page County, and the Shenandoah Valley are designated as destination sites with a multitude of name recognitions. In 2018, Luray was named as the number two most beautiful wedding by “The Learning Channel” (TLC). Luray-Page County has the largest concentration of cabins and is called the “Cabin Capital of Virginia.” Additionally, to these recognitions, Luray is among a short list within the region of designated Main Streets. In fact, towns within the Shenandoah Region that are designated main streets by the Virginia Main Street Program include Berryville, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Luray, Staunton, and Winchester. Image H. provided below shows data recorded by the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) in 2019 and its description of Shenandoah Valley visitors.

CURRENT VISITORS

According to research collected by VTC and TravelTrakAmerica, the primary visitors are:

- 63% Married
- 29% Traveling with children
- $3616 Spending per trip in Virginia
- 36% Average household income of 100k+
- 3.7 Nights per trip
- 2.7 Average travel party size

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<th>18-24</th>
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<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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</table>

Image H. Shenandoah Valley-Current Visitor Description. Data provided by Virginia Tourism Corporation.

Resources and Grant Opportunities

Downtown Luray, Virginia is a designated main street with the Virginia Main Street and Main Street America. This designation provides an abundance of grant opportunities and staff resources such as, catalyst strategies formed by Virginia Main Street staff specifically for the Town of Luray and grant opportunities provided by Main Street America. Additionally, to this accreditation, downtown Luray contains an enterprise zone. This zone provides grant opportunities to small/local business for improvements in areas such as facade, landscape, parking, etc. Luray’s main street district also overlaps with its historic district. This historic district protects current structures and its inherent aesthetic. Through this protection and designation grant opportunities are provided by the State to maintain these structures. This aesthetic and infrastructure improvement are vital to Luray’s strong community character. Additionally, within the past year, Luray has received a multitude of grant opportunities such as, the VATI grant, which improves broadband infrastructure throughout the Page County area, the T-Mobile grant, which will be utilized to revitalize
Ruffner’s plaza. As mentioned previously within this research, Ruffner’s plaza is an anchor within the core of downtown Luray.

In the beginning of 2022, the Town of Luray was provided a large sum to begin a ‘work from home pilot program’ that engages in attracting and integrating remote workers into their new community and continue investment toward Luray’s downtown revitalization (Page Valley News, 2022. Aside from funding resources, the Town of Luray is centered around a hub of network and support sources for small businesses. Organizations like the Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center (SBDC) utilized toward advising small businesses, “Visit Shenandoah;” utilized as a tourism guide and tool for the Shenandoah valley, and the Shenandoah Valley Partnership which leverages economic development opportunities for private and public sectors within the Shenandoah region.

**Mixed Use**

Most buildings within the Main Street District are mixed-use. As previously defined in the *Existing Conditions* section of this plan, mixed uses allow for flexibility in development and do not limit a structure to a singular use. For example, many of the downtown structures include businesses on the ground floor of the building and apartments/rentals utilized in the back or top unit of the building. If a business owner also owns the building, this allows for a stabilized revenue stream during the off-season dip.

Downtowns integrated with mixed-use structures allow for effective functioning for all types of businesses, social, and cultural activities. This also connects residents and visitors to the downtown area, further creating a sense of community and space. Those living within the downtown area or renting an area to stay the night, are more likely to spend money more often within the main street district due to its proximity.

**Weaknesses**

**Vacancy**

Accounted for across 15 buildings the main street area currently has 36 vacant commercial parcels (Map 1.7). This data was processed through GIS address points within the Page County real estate system and on-the-ground research incorporating units with for-sale signs located on the property.

Not only does vacancy pose an obstacle to downtown revitalization, but most of the properties are also underutilized. Shown in the previous section of this plan, *Existing Uses and Business Inventories*, photos of vacant buildings in disrepair are shown. Vacant properties that are underutilized draw negative attention to the downtown surrounding areas and businesses, a concern captured in the consumer survey included infrastructure and aesthetics to be among the top three issues within the main street district. Suggestions made by respondents included rehabilitation of these buildings for resale. Merchant interview/survey respondents also mentioned the infrastructure issues with downtown buildings, especially for those wanting to start a business and invest in downtown properties.
Map 1.7 Downtown Luray Vacant Buildings

**Small Town Government Structure**

Small Communities struggle to keep up with local administration and requirements while having higher turn-over rates for positions. When jurisdictions are small, services are often more limited in comparison to a larger city counterpart (Gonzalez 111, Kemp, Rosenthal 2017). When developing commercial core or downtown areas, having a designated economic development manager or community development administrator is vital. A large challenge toward much slower economic growth is due to Town officials often taking on many roles within their position. For example, the Town itself does not have an economic development department, therefore this role may be passed onto the Town Manager, LDI, or further Page County staff. Although it is understandable that a much smaller number of staff are needed due to the nature and size of the Luray itself, this will become an important challenge due to the inevitable growth. This challenge may also occur sooner than later with the growth of the local community college, “Laurel-Ridge Community College,” and award of the VATI and remote workers grants. Further budgeting and accounting for position opportunities now, by creating internships in collaboration with local school systems may be a foundation item to consider toward future growth.

**Opportunities**

Both strengths and weaknesses alike provide opportunities for the town to build upon assets and plan for future necessary adjustments. In tandem with the efforts of addressing andremedying the challenges presented above (for which recommendations for improvement are presented later in this report), Luray must also consider capitalizing on opportunities for greater economic vitality that are available to it now.
Challenges such as vacant buildings provide opportunities for investment and curation of infrastructure that best fits the community. Recommendations and implementation sections dive further into the possibilities of what can fill these vacant spaces and how to do so. Luray has a strong sense of community, and the residents take pride in being a small-town destination surrounded by natural beauty. This provides an opportunity for the town and LDI to maintain and improve the town character, specifically within the main street district. Concluded from the responses within the consumer survey, residents and tourists want to see more opportunities and improvements from the town. Most support and love downtown and its curated identity over the years. This expression of support is vital for revitalization.

Recommendations

Community outreach, market data, and literature review have provided substantial evidence to further gauge best practices and recommendations for downtown development within the Town of Luray. Main Street principles were noted previously as the guiding principles of the plan. Those, such as economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization provide the given context of a district's defining assets and how a community may build upon those assets to become a sustaining and thriving main street community.

Economic Vitality

Goal 1: Encourage new businesses downtown.

Objective 1.1: Support the reuse of the “underutilized buildings.”

Consumer survey results Creating or re-establishing town anchors within existing vacant spaces are necessary for everyday activity and further foot traffic downtown. Recently, Page County received a VATI grant from the State to expand broadband infrastructure. This extension of broadband encompasses the Town of Luray. Following the grant reward, the Town of Luray announced its participation in the Virginia Main Street ‘Work from Home’ pilot project. This project requires the Town of Luray and Luray Downtown Initiative to leverage remote work opportunities as part of a comprehensive downtown revitalization strategy. Technical assistance will be provided over six months to analyze the demand, target market, amenities, and opportunities for supporting remote workers. This project will include the development of a remote work assessment tool, and a summary report with a set of recommendations and resource options for implementation. With the support of this grant and an increase in the remote workforce because of COVID-19, there will be an influx of city dwellers moving to rural areas such as ones like Luray. Creating a designated remote workspace within the downtown area will increase foot traffic and essential consumers. Those working remotely will have the accessibility to spend their break, lunch, or after-hours within the downtown space.

Action 1.1.1 Identify housing opportunities for remote workers to live in proximity to downtown Luray. Specifically, look at relationships and walking/biking distance from these housing
opportunities to the Hawksbill Greenway. Promote Hawksbill Greenway as more than a “leisurely activity,” by investing in its potential for commuting patterns.

**Action 1.1.2** Collaborate with a non-profit such as IBR in the restoration of an underutilized or dilapidated building.

**Action 1.1.3** Leverage Virginia Main Street grant opportunities as a designated and accredited Main Street within the Virginia Main Street system.

![Image I: Example for Downtown Co-working Space. Photo provided by Venture Richmond.](image)

**Objective 1.2: Find entrepreneurs within the local area and foster support for future growth.**

Placemaking and fostering an aesthetic environment that promotes small businesses in downtown Luray is important to draw customers and regional travelers. Hosting community events such as craft fairs or festivals where vendors can set up booths and tables build a greater customer base for small businesses and help establish their network. Connecting with entrepreneurs helps determine the needs of local artisans and ways to support their vision.

Entrepreneurs typically have friends, family members, and other individuals in their network that operate small businesses out of their homes or garage. Many of these entrepreneurs advocate for each other and recommend customers to each other, creating a network of small businesses. These networks exist in Luray and need only be identified and supported for future events in the town and/or assisting in setting up permanent locations for these businesses.

**Action 1.2.1** Identify and establish a network of entrepreneurs and small businesses in Luray and surrounding areas. Establish a subgroup of the Chamber of Commerce and invite them to join, participate and learn from more established business operators.

**Action 1.2.2** Organize regular craft fairs in which entrepreneurs and makers, craftspeople, and small business operators can set up tables to display and sell the products that they create.

**Action 1.2.3** Engage in the supporting steps for attracting and facilitating a Community Business Launch program, which is outlined below.
Objective 1.3: Pursue action on adopted code.

On October 11th, 2022, an agenda item was called to the town council meeting in consideration of approval. This agenda item is included in Chapter 26 – Buildings and Building Regulations of the Town Code and Article IX of Chapter 78 to establish regulations on blighted properties and derelict buildings. State Code 36-49.1:1 and 15.2-907. The action item states that the owner of a derelict building has ninety (90) days to develop a plan to abate the building. For residential properties, owners who fail to submit a plan face a $500 civil penalty per month until the owner submits a plan. The total civil penalty assessed cannot exceed the cost of demolition.

Many of the respondents from the consumer survey and business owner interviews included that infrastructure such as downtown design and appearance were among their top concerns for downtown Luray. Many comments insinuated that underutilized infrastructure results in lower foot traffic.

Action 1.3.1 Establish a program to identify qualifying properties.
Action 1.3.2 Notify the property owner of the property/building status.
Action 1.3.3 Require an abatement plan.

Design

Goal 2: Create an attractive and accessible streetscape.

Objective 2.1: Improve pedestrian and sidewalk infrastructure.

Utilize the “Complete Streets” method to establish clear crosswalks, bike lanes, and accessible sidewalks. Complete Streets are determined as Streets that are truly “complete” provide all people—children, older adults, and people living with disabilities—with a choice of mobility options.

Action 2.1.1 Painting shared-use lanes to navigate safely for bicyclists and traffic downtown.
Action 2.1.2 Create a sidewalk, trail, and infrastructure gap analysis.
Action 2.1.3 Extend sidewalks to become more accessible and up to date with ADA compliance.
Action 2.1.4 Decrease or eliminate on-street parking.

Image J (Left). Image on “Solutions for Downtown Main Streets” Provided by AARP. Image K (Right). Mooresville, Indiana Sidewalk Photo Provided by Morgan County.
Objective 2.2: Beautify the downtown landscape.
Responses from the consumer survey showed support for beautifying downtown. Specifics of this support acknowledged modern murals, art, music, more lights, and improving the facade of underutilized spaces. Creating an attractive downtown inherently directs people to visit downtown more often or want to spend more time there. This, in return, influences others to spend more money and want to keep coming back. Improving downtown to become an environment sustainable for people built by people also creates a sense of place, space, and identity. This identity sets apart destination areas vs. other downtowns utilized as a “pass through.”

Action 2.2.1 Host resident or business service events to encourage public art through engagement (find local artists).

Action 2.2.2 Collaborate with property owners (especially those of underutilized buildings) to determine ways of funding or resources to improve the building facade.

Action 2.2.3 Frequently change the seasonal decor, improve downtown greenspaces, and upkeep lighting system for all-hour use/sight.

Objective 2.3: Formulate an Infrastructure Improvement Plan
Responses from the Merchant survey heavily exposed challenges to start-up businesses due to the conditions of the existing infrastructure. Comments included, piping and sewer issues, trash pickup, and limited customer parking. Encouraging support through grant opportunities and budgeting in a site study would further develop inter-relational ties between businesses owners and local officials. Infrastructure improvements must be done so with the condition that these improvements consider historic structures and the aspect of keeping a “small-town appeal.”

Action 2.3.1 Hire an engineer to conduct a piping and sewer infrastructure study.

Action 2.3.2 Provide a central location for parking such as a parking garage behind the PAL center to eliminate on-street parking.

Action 2.3.3 Work with current property owners of vacant or underutilized buildings to formulate a feasibility study.

Promotion

Goal 3: Foster a sense of space, place, and community expression.

Objective 3.1: Continue, re-invent, or create events for downtown.
Luray’s parks and recreation departments create a yearly event calendar update with updates on things going on within the town. Nonetheless, the consumer survey results proved that an abundance of people would like to see more sustainable events. One event that held true to the town, which is no longer an occurrence since COVID-19, is the “Mayfest.” This festival of Spring-into-Summer closed off the main street from vehicle access and allowed residents and visitors to roam the main street and enjoy the event.

A suggestion made by a respondent to the survey encouraged the town to incorporate events and art celebrations such as, “First Fridays.” This is a monthly occurrence that happens along an arts
district (which happens to overlap with the main street district) where that is when the galleries on and around the main street open their doors, people fill the streets, local restaurants and shops are open for business and pop-ups pop up all over. Artists within the area are encouraged to show off their talent and performances occur along the same area. With the recent closure of Warehouse Art Gallery, a well-known downtown anchor, the loss of art space has created a hole within the sense of pride and expression for the town. Events like “First Friday” can encourage local performers and artists that Luray’s art district alive and thriving.

**Action 3.1.1** Collaborate with local non-profit organizations to create and organize local events.
**Action 3.1.2** Create an engagement activity such as a round-table or survey to formulate event ideas that the community would like to see.

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

*Image L. Mayfest in Downtown Luray, VA. Photo provided by VRBO.*

**Objective 3.2:** Collaborate with local schools (Luray High and Laurel Ridge Community College) to hold intern positions for the town.

Luray, VA is home to local schools such as Luray Elementary, Middle, and High School, as well as Laurel Ridge Community College. Laurel Ridge contains programs such as business and hospitality, arts and communication, and public service. Young adults, especially those within a small-town, need the opportunity for experience in their professional field. If Luray can invest in an opportunity for local government interns this would benefit those living within the area and the town government office. Promotional flyers, as shown below, are examples of well-established marketing that the town could pay for or provide curricular awarding for an intern to complete. As previously stated in the *Existing Conditions* section, Luray’s educational attainment leans toward the lower end of the spectrum. Providing opportunities and assistance for young adults encourages them to invest in the community they work for and may continue their residency within that area.

**Action 3.2.1** Collaborate with local schools to promote internships for professional experience and opportunity.
**Action 3.2.2** Propose a budget to accommodate new hires for an internship position or gain approval for an unpaid internship with credit awarding (community service for high school students and credit toward class/assignments for college degrees).
Organization

Goal 4: Create structure in local government.

Objective 4.1: Hire a Dedicated Grant Writer
Luray contains an Enterprise Zone which benefits businesses by providing grants for façade and exterior work. LDI, while containing a small staff, juggles multiple roles in upkeep for downtown Luray and fostering relationships with current and future business owners. Developing a designated role that focuses on the enterprise zone aids staff in staff support and assists in overall function. Structure and organization within small-town local government are essential to a full-functioning downtown and its surrounding area.

Action 4.1.1 Identify opportunity and form a role analysis within the current local government structure.
Action 4.1.2 Draft additional roles and responsibilities while identifying current gaps to gain support toward additional funds within the upcoming budget.

Objective 4.2: Collaborate with the Small Business Development Center for Seasonal Educational/Training Sessions
The Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is located in Harrisonburg, VA on the James Madison University campus. SBDC serves six counties, including Page County which encompasses the town of Luray. SBDC works with start-ups and existing businesses, free of charge, to provide services such as advising, information, and providing connections to external suppliers. Organizations such as the SBDC are crucial in collaboration with small towns like Luray that have vacancies and business longevity issues. Collaborating with the SBDC on market reports and educational training for business owners specifically during the off-season may provide a
sustainable format for those owners to have to continue full operations during the Autumn and Winter months, as opposed to barely surviving during this time.

**Action 4.2.1** Look at the individual businesses and their market during the winter months. Create a concise data study of the off-season trends that determine market value and small business support.

**Action 4.2.2** Coordinated an approach and understanding as to what services downtown Luray has now for businesses to collaborate on and draw in a specific market.

**Action 4.2.3** Coordinate an idea board or information strategy to give to business owners.

**Action 4.2.4** Partner with SBDC to develop an educational training series and guide.

**Implementation**

As some of the market- and economic-based suggestions work in tandem with some of the placemaking and design recommendations, an iterative, phased approach is best.

Provided below this section is a general timeline for these actions. The goals, objectives, and actions are outlined in the short-term, mid-term, and long-term phases also known as a one to three-year, three to five-year, and five-year plus timeline goal. The first phase comprises more easily addressed and lower-cost essentials for revitalization.

- Bolstering Luray’s Sense of Identity → Short-Term
- Create Structure and Identify Local Resource → Mid-Term
- Redesigning and Reinvigorating Main Street → Long-Term

Many of the more intensive recommendations, presented in the second, mid-term phase, rely on completing the recommendations in the first.

The third, long-term phase requires further steps such as planning, approval, and budgeting.

**Short-Term: Bolstering Luray’s Sense of Identity**

In the near term, Luray should:

- Work through creating, completing, or continuing Town events.
- Work with local creatives and artists to further bolster Town design efforts
- Collaborate with local schools to create a marketing internship opportunity.

**Mid-Term: Create Structure and Identify Local Resources**

Most of the recommendations for the second, mid-term phase of Luray’s revitalization can get kicked off while work is starting on the first phase.

- Collaborate with the SBDC for educational and seasonal training opportunities for
- Address and Promote Market Opportunities
- Champion and Apply for the Community Business Launch Program
Long-Term: Redesigning and Reinvigorating Main Street

With longer-term strategy and budgetary planning, Luray can round out the recommendations in this report in a third phase.

- Restructure the streetscape of the downtown stretch of Main Street
- Re-use underutilized buildings
- Constructing a parking garage behind the PAL Center

Forming a gap analysis and Completing sidewalk areas that may need enhancements or extension along Main Street is a long-term goal for the town. Widening sidewalks along the main street district creates a more inviting space for pedestrians. Alternative uses from parking provide planting areas, pedestrian safety and additional space for businesses to activate the space in front of their building through outdoor displays or al fresco dining.

Constructing a parking garage behind the PAL center will reduce the need for on-street parking and encourage opportunities toward investing in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

There are several promising opportunities that would spur greater economic vitality through the additions of new businesses in Luray. But first, infrastructure that supports existing businesses is key toward future growth and development.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1: Encourage New Business Downtown</th>
<th><strong>Objective 1.1: Support the re-use of underutilized buildings</strong></th>
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<tbody>
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<th>Goal 2: Create an</th>
<th><strong>Objective 2.1: Improve pedestrian and sidewalk infrastructure</strong></th>
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All actions are monitored and reviewed by the Town of Luray-Page County Collaboration.
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**Goal 3: Foster a Sense of Space, Place, and**

<p>| Objective 3.1: Continue, re-invent, or create events for downtown. | Town of Luray-Page County Collaboration |
| Action 3.1.1 Collaborate with local non-profit organizations to create and organize local events. | PACA, LDI |
| Action 3.1.2 Create an engagement activity by requesting event ideas that the community would like to see. | LDI |</p>
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CONCLUSION

Rural recreation communities utilize planning strategies to grow their economy and revitalize their main street. This professional plan focuses on further supporting Luray’s downtown district and its current conditions by prioritizing business retention and establishing a foundation for future growth. Guiding principles formulated around the four-point approach include economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. Historically, when brought together, these four points have demonstrated success and viability for small-town main streets.

Luray’s economy is predominantly based on tourism and agriculture. Tourism specifically, acts as a driver for the main street district due to the increase in foot traffic during on-season periods which typically occur during the summer months. This type of economic reliance creates financial uncertainty for small businesses during the off-season period. By analyzing existing conditions, conducting a market analysis, and utilizing community engagement practices such as stakeholder interviews and consumer surveys recommendations were determined in support of a year-long economy-viable downtown district for Main Street Luray.

Through this lens of this research, this plan identifies town assets and opportunities to accommodate appropriate recommendations. As a result of these identified assets, recommendation was formed including goals such as, encouraging new businesses and offering entrepreneurial support, creating or further forming an attractive and accessible downtown scape, fostering a sense of space, place, and community expression, and lastly, creating structure within local government.

These recommendations further support the revitalization of a once all-encompassing main street including amenities such as bowling, teen centers, and a vibrant art gallery supported by local artists. Although, the Town of Luray has made great strides within its economic efforts toward downtown development, these goals and recommendation will further support the town’s vision of becoming a “four-season community and fostering small business growth and well-maintained infrastructure (Town of Luray, 2019).”
Bibliography:


ICMA. (2010). Putting smart growth to work in rural communities.


## Appendix A: Zoning Ordinance Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning</th>
<th>Permitted Uses</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Setback</th>
<th>Side yards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R-1 Low-Density Residential</td>
<td>Single-family dwellings. Schools. Churches. Libraries. Parks and playgrounds. Off-street parking for uses permitted in this district. Accessory buildings as defined. Public utilities.</td>
<td>Up to two 1/2 stores and not to exceed thirty-five feet in height. Public and semipublic buildings up to sixty feet. No accessory building shall be more than one story high.</td>
<td>Thirty-five feet from the front lot line; thirty-five feet from the edge of any street right-of-way; and sixty feet from the center of any street right-of-way.</td>
<td>Fifteen feet minimum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-2 Medium-Density Residential</td>
<td>Single-family dwellings. Schools. Churches. Libraries. Parks and playgrounds. Off-street parking for uses permitted in this district. Accessory buildings as defined. Public utilities.</td>
<td>Up to two 1/2 stores and not to exceed thirty-five feet in height. Public and semipublic buildings up to sixty feet. No accessory building shall be more than one story high.</td>
<td>Thirty-five feet from the front lot line; thirty-five feet from the edge of any street right-of-way; and sixty feet from the center of any street right-of-way</td>
<td>Ten feet minimum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone</td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Zoning Standards</td>
<td>Distance Requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-3</td>
<td>Single-family dwellings. Two-family dwellings. Libraries. Up to two 1/2 stores and not to exceed thirty-five feet in height. Public and semipublic buildings up to sixty feet. No accessory building shall be more than one story high.</td>
<td>Thirty-five feet from the front lot line; thirty-five feet from the edge of any street right-of-way; and sixty feet from the center of any street right-of-way.</td>
<td>Ten feet minimum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-4</td>
<td>Single-family dwellings. Two-family dwellings. Libraries. Up to two 1/2 stores and not to exceed thirty-five feet in height. Public and semipublic buildings up to sixty feet. No accessory building shall be more than one story high.</td>
<td>Fifteen feet from the front lot line; fifteen feet from the edge of any street right-of-way; and forty feet from the center of any street right-of-way.</td>
<td>Five feet minimum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-5</td>
<td>Single-family dwellings. Schools. Churches. Libraries. Parks and playgrounds. Off-street parking for uses permitted in this district. Accessory buildings as defined. Public utilities. Up to two 1/2 stores and not to exceed thirty-five feet in height. Public and semipublic buildings up to sixty feet. No accessory building shall be more than one story high.</td>
<td>Five feet from the front lot line; thirty-five feet from the edge of any street right-of-way; and sixty feet from the center of any street right-of-way.</td>
<td>Ten feet minimum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: Zoning uses in Luray, Va. Information pulled from Article III of the Zoning Ordinance.
# Appendix B: Newly Opened Downtown Businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Hours of Operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Valley Cork</td>
<td>55 East Main Street</td>
<td>wine bar, bottle shop, and restaurant</td>
<td>Wednesday-Saturday: 11 am-2 pm and 4 pm-10 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nest &amp; Hive</em></td>
<td>10 East Main Street</td>
<td>Retail store that specializes in vintage and farmhouse-inspired decor, curated gifts, apparel, and full-service floral needs</td>
<td>Monday-Saturday: 10 am-6 pm and Sunday: 11 am-5 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Henhouse</em></td>
<td>12 East Main Street</td>
<td>Retail store/clothing boutique containing skincare, apparel, and accessories.</td>
<td>Wednesday - Friday: 11 am-6 pm Saturday: 10 am-5 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Broach Porch Coffee</em></td>
<td>20 West Main Street</td>
<td>Roastery and cafe that also sells a variety of retail items, such as mugs, shirts, and stickers.</td>
<td>Monday-Friday: 7 am to 3 pm. Saturday &amp; Sunday: 8 am to 3 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Curated</em></td>
<td>47 West Main Street</td>
<td>small retail selling clothing, mostly gently worn resale. There is also new clothing, purses, skincare, books, and other items</td>
<td>Tuesday-Sunday: 11 am to 5 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2: List of Businesses that have Opened within the Past Three Years.
Appendix C: Inflow and Outflow Map
Appendix D: Downtown Revitalization Survey

Town of Luray Downtown Revitalization Survey

Help the Town of Luray know what you would like to see within downtown. For the purpose of this 5-minute survey, downtown is defined as the "historic district" area located along Main, Court and Broad Streets.

All responses gathered in this survey will be kept completely anonymous and no identifying information will be released in this report. These responses will be used in aggregate in a report to inform plans for future business assistance and development. Thank you for your time and your feedback!

* Required

Downtown Luray, VA Map

Guide to Main Street
Luray, Virginia

1. What is your zip code? (e.g., where do you live/where are you visiting from) *

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1b_rgZ1ea4SS4s8k4fUk5c3ZSglY-P4WvCkZI3NH1zJZXC2w/edit

65
2. **What is your relationship to Luray (select all that apply)?**

*Check all that apply.*

- [ ] Live Here
- [ ] Work Here
- [ ] Just Visiting
- [ ] Own a Business Here
- [ ] Other: ____________________________

3. **If you selected "JUST VISITING" on the previous question please respond your reason for visiting Luray (e.g., Luray Caverns, Shenandoah National Park, Massanutten Resort, etc.).**

______________________________

4. **How did you hear about Luray?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Google Search
- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] Twitter
- [ ] Instagram
- [ ] Special Event
- [ ] Friends/Family
- [ ] Other: ____________________________

5. **What is your favorite part of downtown Luray?**

______________________________
6. When thinking about downtown Luray what are two POSITIVE words that come to mind?

7. The top 3 issues facing downtown are: (choose up to three)

Check all that apply.

☐ Aesthetics (e.g., curb appeal/greenspace, buildings in need of repair, cleanliness)
☐ Infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic and safety)
☐ Housing (e.g., lack of housing)
☐ Stores themselves (e.g., building vacancies, store variety, inconsistent store hours)
☐ Parking and Signage
☐ Other:

8. What businesses do you visit most often in downtown? (please list up to three)

9. What days of the week do you most frequently shop or spend time within downtown? (select all that apply)

Check all that apply.

☐ Monday
☐ Tuesday
☐ Wednesday
☐ Thursday
☐ Friday
☐ Saturday
☐ Sunday
10. How often do you visit downtown Luray? *
   Mark only one oval.
   ○ Daily
   ○ Weekly
   ○ Monthly
   ○ Once or Twice a Year
   ○ Almost Never

11. What three business types would you like to see within the downtown/district that are not currently present or would like to see more of? (Choose up to three)
   Check all that apply.
   ○ Children’s/Kids and Family Oriented Businesses
   ○ Clothing
   ○ Entertainment (Theatre, Arcade, Roller Rink)
   ○ Grocery (specialty foods, small food market, etc.)
   ○ Specialty and Craft (e.g., arts, sporting goods, jewelry, electronics, home goods, health & beauty)
   ○ Food Establishments (e.g., restaurant, bars, pubs etc.)
   ○ Other: ______________________________________

12. If you live in Luray, please specify locations as to where you go to shop or spend leisurely time outside of the town (e.g. Harrisonburg, Charlottesville, Winchester, Front Royal)
13. What is your age? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Under 18
☐ 18-24
☐ 25-34
☐ 35-44
☐ 45-54
☐ 55-64
☐ 65+

14. What is your race and/or ethnicity? *

Check all that apply.

☐ White
☐ Black or African American
☐ Asian or Asian American
☐ Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ Two or More Races
☐ Other

15. What is your household income? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Below $50,000
☐ Between $50,000 and $74,999
☐ $75,000 or above
☐ Prefer not to say
16. Please write down any other wants or comments you would like to share about Luray’s downtown below


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Google Forms

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1b-rqZ1ow459e8d492bhiZ3rngUyQ0hKZ1xh1Z6Z2Xz2w/edit
Appendix E: Downtown Revitalization Survey Flyer

Town of Luray Downtown Revitalization Survey

SCAN ME!

Help the Town of Luray know what you would like to see within downtown. For the purpose of this 5-minute survey, downtown is defined as the “historic district” area located along Main, Court and Broad Streets. All responses gathered in this survey will be kept completely anonymous and no identifying information will be released in this report. These responses will be used in aggregate in a report to inform plans for future business assistance and development. Thank you for your time and your feedback!
Appendix F: Community Survey Long Answer Comment Responses

Please write down any other wants or comments you would like to share about Luray’s downtown below

"Widely available data shows that events bolster downtown revitalization efforts. By attracting people (visitors and locals) to businesses and restaurants who may not have ventured downtown before, events bring a quick and significant cash injection, raise the profile of our town among locals and out of towners, and can build pride in Luray and help bring our community closer together. Many of the people who come downtown for an event will discover what Downtown Luray has to offer and then come back after the event, resulting in increased foot traffic -- this is especially important in building LOCAL support of downtown businesses. Year round. I believe Downtown Luray would benefit significantly from having MORE and REGULAR events -- big or small, seasonal or civic. Lots of other small towns have successfully leveraged events to revitalize their downtowns, strengthening economic development for the whole town -- why can't we?

More Events would be fun! Better restaurant hours!

Economic Development Director for. Town of Luray is critical to Luray’s future!

I would love to see more murals around the town

More alternative energy present. Solar energy would be extremely easy on the rooftops... also the town could create a grant or get help with state grants to fix older buildings

I love our downtown aesthetic. It could be improved by offering more restaurants and by rehabbing old buildings for future use. I think store hours could be expanded. Most shops are open between 9 and 5, so shopping local is a challenge when my working hours are the same as their working hours. I think an additional outdoors store would really benefit the demographic that I most often see visiting. We offer so many outdoor activities, but if we can’t retain visitors due to our lack of supplies and restaurants, then they won’t stay. Destinations don’t just happen because of activities — there needs to be a sustainability plan.

Pedestrian and bike infrastructure is abysmal, sidewalks often too narrow for more than one person at a time, and frequently obstructed with trash cans or other debris (this issue is even worse once you leave downtown). Would like to see parking minimums removed and more construction in town, as opposed to endlessly expanding outwards (costing both the town and taxpayer). While not an issue the town can solve themselves, having a grocery store on mainstreet would be great, allowing people to access their needs without needing to drive would decrease traffic and lower the tax burden of road maintainence.
The strange triangle area in front of the post office and Domino's should also probably just be a roundabout, its current set up is confusing and dangerous, there is a severe lack of visibility cause by two way traffic in this area, and limiting traffic to one direction solves this issue in at all three "intersections" it has. Crossing as a pedestrian in this area often feels like a gamble, especially at the crosswalk towards the visitors center, where vehicles often come over the blind hill at speeds exceeding 30mph. Thank you for your time, God bless.

Luray's downtown is a space where local shops thrive, and I believe that it should stay that way. Too many places are overdeveloped and have the same stores in most areas. I think that a bar or pub for some of the younger folks would be a good idea so that we don’t have to drive 45 minutes to go have a fun night out with friends. It just puts more stress on the DD and in my opinion increases the risks of drunk driving, especially down 81. Adding some flowers or greenery to downtown would be cute as well but overall, I like the way downtown is designed and how cozy it feels.

I definitely believe that the sidewalks could be improved; widening & adding trees along the way would give shade to pedestrians and add more protection from vehicles

I would really love to see more family oriented things to do in Luray. I know a few people that travel to elkton or even Harrisonburg to do family activities because there is nothing to do in Luray for a family. I would also like a dog park because I always see people with dogs on the greenway and it would be a nice place for the community to get together

A lot of people on Reservoir walk to the Shoppers Value shopping center, it could really use a sidewalk from there going up past Rugby and Meadow Lane so that maybe more people would feel safer and make more frequent trips into town on foot.

"We *desperately* need more variety in terms of restaurants (seafood, Cajun, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, etc) and restaurants that stay open for dinner. I'd really, really like to see the farmer's market return. I'd also like to see the town invest in a proper skate park for kids and adults. An arcade/bowling rink would be nice too. Bottom line, we need more businesses that not only cater to tourists but to the residents, especially younger residents/families, because the locals are what keep this town afloat during the “off season.”

The east end of town needs more sidewalks; several residents walk to and from the east end shopping center all the time. Rental prices are out of control in this area; I could understand charging DC prices if we lived in a predominantly metro area with jobs a plenty, but this is Page County, and the job market is extremely limited to tourism, healthcare, and retail/fastfood. Additionally, what nice houses that are for sale are immediately snatched up and converted into Air BnBs.

Also, just my opinion, but the town missed a huge opportunity with those new townhouses behind Walmart. Instead, a senior retirement community would’ve made more sense. After all, we have a huge
aging population in this area and, unfortunately, until Luray/Page County invests in an industry besides tourism, young people will continue to move away in droves seeking better jobs, and retirees from NoVA, NJ, NY, etc will continue to move in (most of whom probably not interested in working/starting new businesses) and the town will continue to die a slow death.

Having viable businesses in Luray is not a new problem, in fact is decades old. People get into small businesses with no idea of what it takes to survive in a tourist town, or no idea what the local demographics or buying interests might be.

Desperately need better dining options and extended shopping hours.

The vacant buildings need to be addressed

I would like to see a nice chain restaurant come downtown like applebees, TGfridays

More support for businesses outside of historic district. There are businesses on Main Street and in town limits that need love too!

We need sit down family restaurants, maybe a Chick-Fil-A, something nice that is not only for residents of Luray, but out of towners, tourists. There is no place nice to take friends or family out to eat without driving 45 minutes or so.

Need wider sidewalks. Take away parking on one side of street. Put in speed bumps. too must thru traffic.

Like I said, would love more variety for younger crowd in terms of restaurants and hours

We need more restaurants. A special event location. A variety of different shops, not the same things that everyone has.

A lot of businesses' signage doesn't help visitors know what they actually sell. Endless Deals...on what? Baby Moons closed, but their sign said hot dogs, hamburgers, and milkshakes when it was actually a bakery and sandwich shop with more gourmet offerings. The Sugar Shack sign is hard to see, it looks like maybe a show called "Sugar Shack" is playing at the Trackside Theater, not that there is an ice cream shop. Gathering Grounds' signage doesn't really say that they do full meals in addition to coffee and baked goods. Stuff that's off Main like the Hawksbill Brewery and the Warehouse also needs better signage on the main strip.

Be Relevant
We need to appreciate the country side and not try to progress the town to a city.

Luray is absolutely amazing! The potential is undeniable! We do not need to be big but we need to work with all resources (Chamber, LDI, Page Economic Development, etc) to make a modern update. Unify guidelines for exterior design (bright blue and green for the bank.. really? That was an awful idea). Bring a modern charm so there is a pride for our community. EDUCATE residence in the importance of downtown development and the importance of commerce. Look forward... what are upcoming generations looking for in a town to live in? And for the love of all things downtown.... ALLOW STREET CLOSURES FOR FESTIVALS, MUSIC VENUES, AND BEER GARDENS. There is the idea out there that street closures are not allowed... why not? It will impact the shops mildly when the festival occurs but because of the fun and charm Luray would offer during the festival (paired with the abundance of lodging in the county), people WILL come back!! Develop ideas for easily accessible parking. Lastly, food and alcohol sells. Bring in trendy tapas restaurants, gastro pubs, breweries. If you build it, they will come. Sure, they will love it as much as we do and will want to buy our homes but that is where we need to start having conversations of building restrictions and other laws to prevent becoming a “city.” May I recommend a field trip to Lewisburg, WV? They have nailed their potential and their unification. I Luray. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts.

So much potential. So much to clean up and revitalize.

The park area by the library seems underutilized. A splash pad or public pool would be a wonderful asset to the town.

Restaurants open past 8pm, blighted buildings restored

Luray is the perfect small town for bringing in and supporting controlled growth. It should use the demographics of the tourism to invite people downtown for food, entertainment, and music. Not only will tourists benefit, but enhancing the tax base will support vibrant opportunities for the citizens. Local eateries, outdoor fare, and wine/beer/cider along with music and art will build fellowship and allow year-round benefits.

Town must support and renovate all downtown to make more attractive, more lights, more modern mural arts. No more antique shop!

Though it's a decent area, we need spots for bikes and EVs if we want to maximum patrons/tourists

I think Luray residence keep this town operational in winter months and we should recognize that. We love it here and understand we get tourist prices for certain things but if businesses offered a “locals only” discount or a frequent shopper discount, people would be able to visit more often.
PLEASE keep small town feel...when we moved here there was only 1 stop light...now too many plus a roundabout! The Greenway is awesome! Wish businesses wouldn't come and go so quickly...the right kind of business and good management would help.

The blight has to be fixed. Luray could be such a cute, vibrant town however the city has allowed too many buildings to go unchecked for far too long. The town and tourists need restaurants and shops downtown to frequent.

Would be nice to have a indoor center with swimming pool. Basketball, tennis courts. Could hold functions as well as teach arts, crafts, photography lessons, etc. The old Chevrolet dealer building Could be a start.

A community pool would be an immense asset to the town. An indoor option would be even better as it would allow for year round employment, engage off peak season tourists, and provide an option for exercise for those not able to do a lot of walking.

Needs to be small town with residents number 1... Right now roundabout useless, looking like it's turning into the City.. but restaurants never last, stores never last. No jobs to keep residents here working and making a decent living.

Get rid of the Old Browns building and made it into a Hawksbill trading center.

Would like to see trashy and abandoned houses cleaned up. Would like to see druggie gone from streets

Let's Go!!!

I always thought there may be some potential for Luray to attract the outdoor groups with its proximity to the AT, the park and the river.

We need more food establishments (especially that are open for dinner)! We also need consistent hours of operation for the existing businesses.

Anything not directed towards tourism only. There should be a balance for places of employment and tourism. Right now most work in jobs affiliated with tourism (Delaware North, Mimslyn and such.) These jobs don't pay well at all and are seasonal. Not year round and when the season ends you have to find employment elsewhere for 4 months.

Need empty store fronts filled - need curb appeal with city sponsored flowers, etc. and we need some festivals and events that are unique - not just kid focused with face painting and a band. How about a film festival that would bring in film makers and attendees
Thank you for creating a container for this conversation. I’ve almost left Luray many times for the lack of certain things like healthy food options, boutiques, and fun things for kids (esp teens) to do. We need a pool or splash pad of some sort. Also, cost of things are geared toward tourists, not locals. So a lot of locals can’t afford to shop here bc for the most part we are a low-middle class community. I always here from small business “the locals don’t support us” but I just think there’s more to it than that. Most locals are trying to pay their bills on time.

I love the care and holiday spirit this town has.

"More AFFORDABLE family friendly places, especially on super cold or super hot days. Like with activities and food.

Would love a splashpad or pool nearby. An indoor pool would be epic, especially if it had stuff for all ages.

Different zoning regulations. Allow more unique housing and rental options."

Luray has great potential to be a very diverse and wonderful town. I think it’s on the right track, but having more retail stores that cater to more diverse body types, more activity places (arcades, roller rinks etc), and more events catered to younger adults that may not have kids would be ideal. I know many young adults that would stick around locally more if there were more things for us to “do” rather than to just commute to work!

More restaurants
More Grocery Stores, eat-in restaurants and more pharmacies

Many of the eating establishments close very early. Our family likes to eat out Friday nights after work, but the "after 5:00" options are few. It would be wonderful to have more eateries with evening hours.

A farmers market and communal workspaces for remote workers would be great additions to downtown

I love the efforts and dedication to improvement. I would love to see more businesses occupy the empty spaces (old Uncle Bucks and Browns buildings). Please update the artwork (Brown's window) and maybe offer more opportunities to add more murals. Please extend sidewalks throughout the town. Remove
confederate statues or at least balance them with better monuments to honor the Black history of our town. Thank you for all that you do!

"Need restaurants to be consistently open until at least 10pm. Stores in general seem to have very early closing times. Or are inconsistent."

Increased access to healthcare resources

A 24/7 Emergency Veterinarian Animal Hospital is desperately needed! It's 60 miles to the nearest emergency animal hospital. What do people do in bad weather in winter when their dog or cat has an emergency? I didn't know this was a problem when I moved here and I'd jump at the chance to move away for this reason alone. Also the town has only one gym that is closed until further notice due to fire so more gyms are needed.

This town must find some substantial employer to help provide a large portion of the town and county with employment. We have lost Wallace, most of Wrangler, and this town use to also have the Textile and the Tannery that were high paying jobs. These businesses were not in the County they wrote all within the Town limits. Luray has gradually lost most of the places that have for so long sustained employment for the locals and a tax base for the town. The Town has proven ineffective in attracting businesses to replace them and the town and its populace and county suffer because of that.

More activities for kids. Splash pad, community pool, dog park

Better little shops between Broad St and Court St. so much potential there not being used for tourists

Needs more venues that tourists can go to - I often see tourists walking around with no-where to go and no idea where things are.

Restaurants!

Glad to see the road, sidewalk, brickwork improvements. Need bike lanes, better parking, clean up some of the buildings

More restaurants

I would like to see our town rely less on tourism, and focus more on bringing businesses in to become sustainable and stable on our own income. I am so glad we have visitors to our town - we should! It offers so much, but our young adults are not returning back to the town after college, and there is a reason for that - they feel that the town has nothing to offer them. I would like to see that cycle broken to keep more young, educated people in the community. In doing so, our town government will be exposed to more ideals that will only improve town conditions.
An ALL SEASONS Swimming facility at RD Park PLEASE

The downtown has improved but many of the businesses cater to tourists more so than the local community. Housing is skyrocketing as well because many are turning homes into rental properties. Sidewalks can always use improvement for accessibility pertaining to strollers and wheelchairs. The East end of Luray can benefit from daily maintenance. The Dollar General has cigarette butts all over their parking lot and the Endless Deals furniture store does not look nice either and they leave their “Open” sign out and it looks discolored and worn. I believe we can improve as we have and am thankful for this project!

"I would love to see a Children’s Museum in Luray and a summer splash pad near the greenway!

Filling empty spaces is a must!"

Festivals. Downtown events. Beer gardens at events. Live music on the street. Greenways through the entire town (like the Hawksbill Greeway) but more throughout the town. Better unification of the shops. Pedestrian-friendly sidewalks to go up the hill on West Main. BETTER PARKING!! Event signage (banners) across Main Street to advertise events. More lights (similar to the ones on the bridge).

we need to bring people back downtown! We have started (good job) but we need more events that rebuild our sense of community - downtown

Let’s build back better... the right way.

I’m so proud to see a woman from luray become a successful woman like you, hope to follow in your footsteps cuzzo <3

It’s just in my opinion the town favors tourism way more then what the locals needs in their lives. There’s nothing for locals to go join or do especially right after graduating highschool. A community choir or concert band/orchestra that isn’t religious based.

Thank you for taking the time and energy to initiate positive movement for our community.

Tourists need many restaurant options- and residents want year round options too!

Sheetz, Ross or Gabe’s, chipotle or chicflay
Closing the intersection on 211 beside the new roundabout is dumb.

I would just like to see more places that stay open past 9 there’s no night life in luray

I feel like there needs to be a balling alley/ arcade. Stuff for businesses a Lowe’s or Home Depot. Stuff need not more restaurants.

Luray has a lot of potential. The key to this potential is becoming open minded and following through with implementing new plans or development. The town will stay small, but change is needed.

N/A

I don’t know

For a small town it is not a bad place to live

Better shopping

Please give $25,000 of Federal Relief money to the Arise Outreach and to Page One.

A fitness center is essential for quality of life and to promote a healthy mindset for the individual and community.

I really enjoyed the atmosphere of Luray when I visited. I definitely would like to go back one day.

Mixed use would increase pressure to promote more living within the downtown limits. This would promote walkability if more housing & small businesses would move into the downtown area. Granted average income for luray is minimal this would have to be dealt with first to implement a revitalization of Lurays downtown.

The harsh truth is, the part of town farther down Main Street, towards collins avenue, the shopping center with dollar general, shoppers value, hardies, boes; gives grungy eyes sores especially after seeing the well constructed side by the greenway. I believe that part of town needs some more attention to finally make luray feel more unified. Maybe the first step could be taking down the statue....

More focus on family initiatives rather than the bar scene with bars, distilleries, etc.
Need a gym and more restaurants with NORMAL and DAILY dining hours. There’s nowhere to eat dinner that isn’t great or fried. Also need to do something with so many empty spaces.

A lot of potential! Needs downtown revitalization and things like festivals farmers markets etc.. and needs to promote them and bring more people in / encourage them to start businesses!

Thank you for doing this!

More stoplights
There's no gym in the town at the moment, which is difficult for the community
We need more safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ folks and more wheelchair-accessible venues. I also think we need more resources available to those seeking to start a small business.

Love it here. Makes us want to come back/stay. Don’t get too big!
Appendix G: Merchant Interview/Survey Questions

1) Business name:
2) Owner name:
3) How long have you been in business?
   ○ Less than 1 year
   ○ 1-3 years
   ○ 3-5 years
   ○ 5-10 years
   ○ Longer than 10 years
4) Why did you choose this specific location to house your business? (Whether that be Luray in general or the building itself)
5) What goods or services do you offer?
6) What are some challenges associated with operating in downtown Luray?
7) How many people do you employ?
8) What is your busiest day and time of the week?
9) Who is your target market?
10) Is there any way the Town of Luray could help your business?
11) How has your business changed over the last year?
12) Do you have plans to expand or reduce your business? If yes, explain.
13) Where do your customers typically park?
14) What would you like to see happen in downtown Luray?
15) Any other comments or concerns?