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**DOWNTOWN CROZET INITIATIVE, Inc.**  
**DHCD: COMERCIAL DISTRICT AFFILIATE**  
**TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES SUMMARY:<sup>1</sup>**

**Main Street Program**

The Main Street program helps communities rebuild and preserve economic vitality in their historic and older downtowns and neighborhood commercial centers. The Main Street Approach consists of three essential, tightly integrated tools:

1. Community vision that is informed by broad and inclusive community input *and* market understanding.
2. Transformation Strategies that incrementally create positive changes in the district’s economy. These are implemented through simultaneous activity in four broad areas of work that, together, constitute the “Four Points.” In brief:



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- **Design** encompasses a) improving all the physical and visual aspects of the district, b) capitalizing on the unique assets that set the commercial district apart, 2) creating an inviting, inclusive atmosphere that fosters accessible and people-centered public spaces and 4) celebrates historic character.
- **Organization** involves cultivating partnerships and resources; broad community engagement; and leadership and strong organizational capacity for the district.
- **Promotion** is about marketing the district’s defining assets by supporting the buy-local experience and using storytelling to communicate unique features.
- **Economic Vitality** promotes business and property development utilizing capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to: a) build a diverse economic base, b) catalyze smart new investment and c) cultivate a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem.

3. Impact measurement includes monitoring quantitative and qualitative outcomes such as number of new businesses and new employees or number of changes made to attract a targeted customer base or desired niche businesses.

A *Transformation Strategy* is a statement that guides a district’s revitalization initiative and is based on a solid understanding of the district’s economy and its position in the regional market. A *Catalyst Strategy* is a generic, off-the-shelf Transformation Strategy provided by National Main Street that can be adapted to a variety of places and circumstances – and it can be refined and customized over time.

The Crozet community has been very involved in the revitalization of Downtown. Regular stakeholder meetings, a design charette, public engagement events, an architectural conceptual design and most recently a representative community survey have contributed to the formation of the Downtown Crozet Initiative’s vision for the revitalization of Downtown. Building upon this accumulated history, the Downtown Crozet Initiative (DCI) is incorporating that knowledge as the foundation for the *Downtown Crozet in Motion Strategic Plan*. This

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<sup>1</sup> Main Street Model and Transformation Strategies modified for DCI, Inc. from National Main Street (NMS) Catalyst Family Friendly Businesses and other NMS resources

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document represents the first steps in refining the MS Catalyst Strategies for Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, Family Friendly Businesses, and Tourism and Tourists that have been selected for inclusion in the *Downtown Crozet in Motion Strategic Plan*.

## **TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY - FAMILY-FRIENDLY DISTRICT**

### **THE “FAMILY-FRIENDLY” STRATEGY IN A NUTSHELL**

Family-friendly commercial districts offer a range of products and services for all members of the family. But the “family-friendly” nature of these districts is defined as much, if not more, by the types of special events they offer, their store hours, and the overall atmosphere of inclusiveness that they provide. Special events provide opportunities for families to have fun together, for children to have a safe environment in which to play, and for young people to build lasting memories of the district. Businesses adapt their merchandise mix, services, and hours to meet the needs of busy families. And the physical characteristics of the district help make the experience of visiting a convenient and engaging one.

More than most other Catalyst Strategies, a Family-Friendly strategy focuses on children. For this reason, family-friendly districts are more likely to be liveliest in the early evening and on Saturdays – versus, for example, districts focusing on entertainment and nightlife, which are more likely to be liveliest later in the evening. Family-friendly districts also often focus on 1) meeting the shopping and service needs of the community’s aging population, and 2) providing a walkable place to live, shop, socialize and access medical and other personal services.

### **WHO ARE THE CUSTOMERS FOR FAMILY FRIENDLY BUSINESSES STRATEGY?**

The customers for this strategy are families, of course – and, in particular, families with children at home and/or those helping care for aging parents or grandparents. There are several customer segments to pay particular attention to in planning a Family-Friendly strategy:

#### **Families with babies and young children:**

Families with babies and young children generally need inexpensive, convenient services.

They appreciate early-evening activities that include their children, like dining out in family-friendly restaurants or early-evening dance or karate classes.

They need casual places to gather with other young families – places where the parents or grandparents can chat while their children play together

#### **Grandparents and families caring for elderly family members:**

There are a number of ways in which older downtowns can meet many of the needs of elderly family members. Because they are compact and walkable, downtowns offer a place for older people to easily access a variety of shops, offices, and services. This makes downtowns a great location for independent living and assisted living facilities – and for moderately priced restaurants and entertainment venues.

While elderly shoppers are not likely to spend much in some product categories (like furniture and home furnishings), they are likely to spend money on medical supplies and personal care.

And, grandparents are among the top customers of infants’ and children’s clothes, toys, games, and equipment, as they usually have more time to shop than their children.

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### Families with teens:

Teens need fun, social activities in a safe environment. Bowling alleys, movie theatres, game rooms, music shops, snack bars, and ice cream shops can all provide places for teens to get together with their friends – as can corner parks and other public gathering spaces.

Many types of shops can increase teen sales by making part of the shop more teen-friendly, with teen-focused merchandise, décor, music, and in-store promotions.

Downtowns also provide a great laboratory for entrepreneurial, business-minded teens, with coworking spaces, maker spaces, business internships, and summer jobs helping build teens' business acumen and cultivate entrepreneurship.

### **BENEFITS AND TRADE-OFFS**

Besides the obvious benefit of offering products and experiences for all members of the family, a Family-Friendly strategy helps young people develop positive memories of the district – memories that will hopefully translate into lifelong preferences for walkable, mixed-use districts.

The primary trade-off for a Family-Friendly strategy is that it is not generally compatible with a strategy heavily dependent on bars and nightlife. Also, to the extent that a Family-Friendly strategy depends on attracting shoppers from a relatively large geographic area, rather than primarily from walking-distance neighborhoods or from the district's workers, it might place additional demands on downtown parking.

### **IS THIS FAMILY-FRIENDLY BUSINESS STRATEGY A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR DISTRICT?**

Respondents to the 2017 Community Survey found Crozet to be a family-friendly community, rating it 4.2 on a 1 to 5 scale where 5 best described Crozet. While the survey indicated a desire (very important/somewhat important) for more restaurants and bars (74%), retail stores (67%), and a lower interest in professional services (61%), employers offering professional/technical jobs (61%) and more lodging/hotel (%43%), greater insight is needed to determine what makes a business and its location family-friendly.

Survey respondents cited the need for more restaurants and bars however it will be helpful to discover specifics to further define this market segment. While family-friendly strategies are not generally compatible with a strategy heavily dependent on bars and nightlife, Downtown restaurants serving alcohol would not be characterized as nightlife establishments. Only three restaurants have separate bars. They each have a neighborhood pub-like atmosphere and are more of an accompaniment to the food service areas. Of the seventeen Food and Drinking Places serving alcohol, 3 serve only beer and 4 serve beer, wine, and liquor served at a seated meal service. Anecdotally, customers engage in responsible social drinking either in the pub-like atmosphere or as an accompaniment to a meal, behaviors that are compatible with family-friendly meal service. It appears that Downtown Crozet is not heavily dependent on bars and nightlife. More information is needed about what kind of bars residents and visitors want.

Additional information is also needed about survey respondents interest in more restaurants Downtown. Determining if interest is in more restaurants offering "date-night" dining, a wider range of culinary choices or more teen hangouts will better inform new businesses interested in locating Downtown and existing businesses who want to emphasize the family customer base.

Based on observations, shoppers that patronize Downtown businesses drive from nearby subdivisions and areas outside of the Crozet District with very few biking or walking from home or work. Survey respondents

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cited the importance of transportation options as (very important/somewhat important) increasing pedestrian safety (93%), greater motorist safety/traffic management (91%), walking as an alternative (87%, and biking as an alternative (76%). These responses coupled with 94% of respondents agreeing that Downtown should be the social and business center of Crozet suggests that Downtown needs to offer safe pedestrian and biking options to create a family-friendly environment.

The inclusion of the town center as part of the revitalization planning is another factor making the Family Friendly Business Strategy a good fit for Downtown. The center will be designed to offer casual places to gather with other young families, with features accessible to parents and grandparents. It will also be an area where teens can gather and engage in suitable activities. The town center will also be where family-focused events are held. The benefits of the town center are documented throughout the community development literature

Parking Downtown is already a problem; 86% of Survey respondents cited a need to increase the amount and ease of parking in the Downtown area. As the revitalization process advances, solutions to parking must be considered.

Anecdotally, the Family Friendly Business Strategy is a good fit for Downtown and in principle is supported by the 2017 Crozet Community Survey. However, an effective implementation plan will require more detailed information. A market study that includes psychographic characteristics of Crozet's market segment including drive time is needed. It will allow personality and lifestyle profiles to be contrasted with demographic, behavioral, and organizational variables, providing a more detailed descriptions of the market segment. Coupling the market study with additional community and business survey data that is specific to family friendly goods and services will provide businesses both new and existing with the tools needed to analyze market niches.

#### **INFORMATION YOU'LL NEED FOR THIS STRATEGY**

Effective use of the Main Street Model requires a working knowledge of the market. A full market study is cited as key to accomplishing this goal. There are market research tasks that can be completed in anticipation of completing a full market study. They include:

- **Inventory:** An inventory of all existing businesses in the district has been compiled. Factors gathered include name, address, telephone, contact person, website, Facebook page, parcel and comments about business. Businesses that offer family-friendly products and services are grouped based on personal experience with the businesses.
  - Task:** Review the business groupings for completeness
  - Task:** A more detailed list of products and services needs to be developed.
  - Task:** A tally of the approximate size of each of these businesses (in square feet) and the number of people employed by each business needs to be gathered and recorded.
- **Customers:** Compile demographic characteristics of regional residents – particularly information about household income, age, household size, ethnicity, number of earners, and education levels, number of households with children, adult age ranges, numbers of households that include elderly members. (see: US Census website and/or from third-party geospatial data providers like ESRI or Nielsen PRIZM). Crozet is a Census Designated Place (CDP). In addition to census data, we have an extensive, statistically significant, survey of our community that accurately reflects the interests and attitudes of the residents both inside the Crozet growth area and the nearby neighborhoods. Further analysis is warranted to determine if additional questions specific to businesses and customers need to be asked.

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**Task:** Gather analyze data from the US Census Quickfacts and the American Fact Finder for Crozet CDP, including the categories of Topics, Geographic's, Race and Ethnic Groups, Industry Codes and EEO Occupation codes.

**Task:** Incorporate demographic analysis in scope of work for the market study

- Competition: An inventory of businesses has been compiled for the two shopping centers on Route 250, Old Trail and other businesses. Those areas are easily mapped using Google maps.

**Task:** Evaluate how these commercial areas compete with Downtown, Charlottesville and Waynesboro.

**Task:** Articulate how your Family-Friendly strategy is (or can be) differentiated from competing commercial areas. The planned town center Plaza is unique to Downtown and once constructed will be the only gathering place for families and other customers, a feature not present at Clover Lawn or Blue Ridge shopping centers. Creating makers place Downtown will also be a unique feature.

- Potential barriers: Several issues exist as potential barriers.

Parking is currently a challenge throughout Downtown. Solutions to parking can be costly, such as parking decks. Improving bicycle access will reduce traffic, replacing parked bikes with parked cars.

- Negotiating safe pedestrian and vehicle railroad crossings poses multiple factors to overcome.
- Not completing construction of the town center Plaza will eliminate the central gathering place, removing the social interaction space that is so desirable for family-friendly customers. New family focused businesses may not be drawn to Downtown without this crucial attraction being built in the heart of the commercial district.
- An autonomous trolley taking customers from car to shops would also be an asset differentiating Downtown from other shopping areas
- A strong economy Downtown will minimize migration of businesses to outlying areas in Crozet.

## **SAMPLE ACTIVITIES**

There are many different activities that DCI and its partners might do to successfully implement a Family-Friendly strategy. The activities you choose should address problems and opportunities that are specific to your district. Start with activities that are relatively easy, then gradually tackle more challenging ones.

Here are some examples:

### Design activities:

- Create a central plaza in the new town center slated for construction on the Barnes Lumber property, selecting a unique design that contributes to the Crozet brand.
- Ensure the design for the revitalization of Downtown allow for walkable, accessible paths for both the existing and new areas allowing easy access for strollers, wheeled mobility aids, and pedestrians of all ages. Old and new spaces need to seamlessly connect.
- Develop solutions to providing adequate, accessible parking. As a partial solution to insufficient parking, evaluate implementing an autonomous trolley with predefined stops that will shuttle shoppers from parking to storefronts; perhaps seeking federal funding for a pilot project.

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- Explore creating “pocket” gathering places for teens to hangout, conducive to acoustic musical instruments for music jams, perhaps using the stage planned for the market center plaza.
  - Explore interest in installing outdoor cement chess tables and benches.
  - Add kid-friendly, kid-scale street furniture to public spaces.
  - Sponsor a design competition for high school students to decorate fire hydrants or traffic light switching boxes within the district.
  - Designate restrooms available for public use offering baby-changing and accessible options, or develop a public restroom offering these characteristics.

Organization activities:

- Conduct pedestrian counts on major blocks or entry points in your district at key times of day, noting their approximate age cohorts.
  - Conduct a business survey that determines what services are provided, price range of goods, hours of operation, availability of early-evening hours, etc.
  - Survey the Mom’s club members to ask what suggestions they have about family-friendly places for preschoolers and other age groups; MOPS - Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) at *Crozet Baptist Church* and the *Crozet Play Group on Facebook*.
  - Initiate conversations with high school and middle school students to learn what matters to them about living in Crozet and visiting Downtown. Collaborate with the appropriate classroom teacher to assign the topic as a writing assignment made up of two parts. One is to summarize the student’s thoughts. Part two is homework to have the same conversation with family and friends then incorporate what is learned in the final writing assignment. Integrate the results with the design and promotion of Family Friendly businesses strategy. [from Heart & Soul Talks, Comp Plans that Rock]
  - Explore the feasibility of gathering information from Crozet parents of children who qualify for any of the Albemarle County preschool programs (Bright Stars, Head Start, Title I, ECSE), asking a standard set of questions about what Family Friendly businesses would offer. [from Heart & Soul Talks, Comp Plans that Rock]
  - We have prominent musicians in the area; will they offer a summer skill building experience?
  - Determine what teen friendly activities can be scaled to the Crozet demographic. Assess what skills are being taught in schools that would be a natural extension for continuing development in skills and interest in a topic?
  - Explore developing a museum like the Discovery Museum in Charlottesville, perhaps a satellite center of the existing museum.
  - What can we do to help build STEM skills? Not just a community center, but someplace to build “things” – a maker space.
  - Survey Mountainside residents, and assisted living facility in Downtown. Determine how residents access existing businesses and restaurants.
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- Explore joining with the Albemarle mentor program, offering opportunities for students to obtain experience with local businesses, perhaps developing a “makers place” downtown. Consider approaching the owner of the building currently occupied by Region 10 to discuss future building uses.
  - Explore the need for an internet café to accommodate those whose homes do not have broadband access needed for homework and career exploration
  - Conduct market study, incorporating psychographic and demographic analysis with an emphasis on data related to families

Promotion activities:

- Developing a family friendly restaurant list for families and a brochure for businesses reporting the recommendations from information gleaned from parents.
- Organize a summer camp opportunity events, showcasing what is available for kids out of school in the summer
- Organize a Halloween window painting event for children.
- Ensure that all promotional events include activities specifically for children.

Economic Vitality activities:

- Broaden the products the district offers by adding new product lines to existing businesses. For example, restaurants might package and sell homemade baby food, or a pack-and-ship store might offer gift wrapping and shipping services to help grandparents send gifts to their grandchildren. Determine what additional information can be gathered to define this market niche.
- Ensure there are late-night options for after youth sports practice to grab a bite and hang out? Ice cream? Snack bar?
- Explore options for creating an independent living and or additional assisted living facility downtown, perhaps adapting an older or historic warehouse, or industrial building for this purpose. Establish if there is a market gap as part of the scope of work for a market study.
- Explore what businesses can do to meet the needs of the elder market. Determine how existing businesses who service this niche be supported or if there is a missing product line.
- Identify salons and barbers who cater to the family demographic.
- Create a daycare center within the district, serving district workers and shoppers.
- Explore options to deliver meals or provide car-side service to avoid pressures of drive-up service, relieving pressure of increased traffic Downtown and meeting a need typically met by fast-food drive-in restaurants.

**POTENTIAL FAMILY-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Arts and crafts supplies and lessons

“Baby and me” yoga, Pilates, and aerobics classes

Bowling alley

Children’s books

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Consignment stores specializing in infants' and children's clothing and equipment

Dance studios

Daycare

Family-friendly movies

Family-friendly cafes and restaurants

Infants' and children's clothing and clothing accessories

Infants' and children's furniture and equipment

Martial arts studios offering children's instruction (karate, judo, Tae Kwando, etc.)

Medical equipment rentals and sales

Music rehearsal rooms

Musical instrument rentals and sales

Sporting goods

Teen-focused clothing, shoes, and clothing accessories stores

Toys and games

## **MEASURING PROGRESS**

The following tools can be used to track your success in implementing the strategy and in measuring its impact on the commercial district as a whole:

- Conduct on-street surveys when you implement this strategy – then, conduct surveys one year, three years, and five years later, asking the same questions. Are more people patronizing the district for its family-friendly businesses and activities? Are their impressions and perceptions of the district improving?

Your surveys should include questions in four specific categories:

- Attitudes and perceptions about the district
- Current shopping habits
- Additional products and services shoppers would like to be able to buy within the district
- Demographic characteristics of those participating in the survey, including home zip code
- Track trends in the number of square feet of retail space in businesses catering primarily to families.
- Ask the owners or managers of a representative sample of businesses catering to families to keep an informal tally of foot traffic, average transaction amount, and gross sales. Interview the owners and managers at regular intervals and hold an annual focus group with them. Are the numbers increasing?
- Track the number of changes (in service offerings or product mix) that businesses have made to serve the Family-Friendly market.
- Choose several intersections or entry points in the district and count the number of people who walk by during 30-minute intervals. Do this at two or three key points in the day (e.g., morning, noon, and evening). Repeat the pedestrian counts at least twice a year, at the same times of day. Are the numbers increasing? Are the age cohorts of pedestrians changing?

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## TAKING THE NEXT STEP

Over the next year or two, after your Family-Friendly has begun taking root, you should plan to conduct additional research that can help you refine the strategy and adapt it more precisely to your district's particular circumstances. You may tackle some aspects of the market research on your own, or you may choose to engage professional assistance. Whichever route you choose, this additional research should help you answer questions like these:

- What are the boundaries of the primary trade area for this strategy? Are there other geographic areas that you should try to reach?
- Of the businesses that exist in your district that support a Family-Friendly strategy, how many square feet do they comprise, in total? What are their estimated total annual sales, including all selling channels?
- How much do households in the trade area spend on purchases related to children and teenagers? Or to elderly household members?
- What is the estimated regional sales void (or surplus)? If additional sales were captured, how many additional square feet of retail space (if any) could those sales support?
- What is the estimated regional sales void (or surplus)? If additional sales were captured, how many additional square feet of retail space (if any) could those sales support?
- What is the profile of the target customer? What are the profiles of secondary customers? How large is each customer segment, and approximately how much of each segment's spending do you think you can realistically capture in the future?
- What are the nascent trends in this sector? What are the waning trends?

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## TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY – ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS

### THE “ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS” STRATEGY IN A NUTSHELL

By most definitions, entrepreneurial ecosystems refer to the strategic alignment of a variety of public and private efforts, including government policies, funding, and finance, human capital, and regulatory frameworks – to provide necessary financial, social, and human capital to foster entrepreneurship in innovative and creative ways. Frequently overlooked in these definitions is the value of place



and the physical environment as central factors in creating and growing successful enterprises. By emphasizing the creation and support of great places and spaces for people to live and work, commercial districts can attract new businesses and new ideas, thus contributing directly to the development of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.<sup>2</sup>

### WHO ARE THE CUSTOMERS FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS STRATEGY?

Customers frequenting Downtown are either tourists visiting nearby sites, both from afar and nearby counties; residents and their guests who appreciate the short distance from home to Downtown; commuters; and lunch break shoppers. According to the Crozet Community Survey many customers drive to Charlottesville (32% several times a week; 26% weekly; 24% several times a month), Waynesboro (6% several times a week; 19% weekly; 24% several times a month) or to Crozet shopping areas along Route 250 who compete with Downtown (37% several times a week; 34% weekly; 18% several times a month). Customers frequently shop Downtown: 42% several times a week; 22% weekly; 15% several times a month. At the same time, 98% of respondents support existing small businesses in Crozet and 90% want Downtown Crozet to be a quality commercial center with a diversity of businesses and services. This contrast suggests customers would prefer to shop in Downtown Crozet if the desired goods and services were present.

Shopping trends are requiring customers to adjust to the entrepreneurial business model. No longer can customers of entrepreneurial businesses know in advance the taste of foods prepared by a corporate formula or find the identical item in 5 to 100 other big box stores. A National Main Street publication says it best. “As communities experience this transition in entrepreneurship, there is a corresponding transition in the habits of consumers. The move away from regional shopping malls and sterile big box stores represents a profound shift towards a more bifurcated shopping pattern. On the one hand, shoppers are seeking convenience and lower price points, while there is also a growing desire and willingness to support more experiential and value-add consumer shopping. Acknowledging these changes, and catering to those needs, is critical for commercial district managers. The article goes on to say “a place-based entrepreneurial strategy is needed. **A truly robust local entrepreneurial ecosystem recognizes a location’s physical environment as a critical factor for ensuring small business success.**

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<sup>2</sup> National Main Street explanation

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Putting “place” in a prominent position within an entrepreneurship strategy recognizes that historic business districts have the character, building stock, and walkable human scale that provides a competitive advantage within the marketplace and is conducive to the kind of personalized, experiential shopping desired by today’s consumers.”<sup>3</sup>

In many ways the entrepreneurs are customers of the commercial district. To attract entrepreneurial businesses, Downtown Crozet must have the attributes that these businesses seek. Entrepreneurs who work in a commercial district are likely to need a variety of convenience items, from groceries to carry-out meals and from small hardware items to greeting cards. They also need easy access to personal and professional services, such as hair care, daycare, and medical services. And, they are most likely to need things before work, at lunchtime, and immediately after work as they are leaving for home. The redevelopment plan for Downtown Crozet is designed to create a place where entrepreneurs will want to work, live and play.

### **BENEFITS AND TRADE-OFFS**

According to the Small Business Administrations’ Office of Advocacy, “small firms accounted for 60% of net new jobs since the end of the recession (mid-2009 to mid-2013).” By definition, small businesses are independently owned and have fewer than 500 employees. Almost 89% of small businesses are sole proprietorships or businesses without employees.<sup>4</sup> An increase in new jobs is a benefit to Crozet, given the closure of Barnes Lumber, Con Agra Foods, and Acme Visible Records, resulting in over 850 jobs lost from three primary downtown businesses. Redevelopment efforts will likely result in new job creation stemming from entrepreneurial businesses

The entrepreneurial spirit, if cultivated properly will attract both new businesses and customers as Downtown Crozet reemerges as a pastoral destination. With the proposed design of the Barnes Lumber property, the new town center Plaza will complete the “live/work/play” neighborhood feel of Downtown, located near historic properties, restaurants, cafes, and other Third Places desired by entrepreneurs as a group.

The trade-off will be more traffic and the need for more parking. Mini-roundabouts required by VDOT for the construction of the new internal roads will help traffic flow. Plans are to seek grant funding for a pilot program to be relieve parking by implementing an autonomous trolley system, moving customers and workers along predetermined stops from a parking area. If successful, the project could be replicated in other areas nearby and other localities.

### **IS THIS ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS STRATEGY A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR DISTRICT?**

The overwhelming majority of businesses in Downtown Crozet are entrepreneurial. Expanding the support system that will attract more small, independent businesses is a natural fit for this commercial district. Many customers will not recognize the term “value-added,” an attribute typical of entrepreneurial businesses. But they do recognize and will pay more for what it means – good service, which is a trait already present in Crozet.

The level of collaboration between the citizens, Albemarle Office of Economic Development, Albemarle Community Development Office, Albemarle Planning Commission, Crozet Community Advisory Committee, The Board of Trade, Crozet Community Association, and the Downtown Crozet Initiative is fully developed and can only continue to flourish as we together build a revitalized space around a new town center plaza that is conducive to place-making, new businesses and maker spaces.

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<sup>3</sup> National Main Street “Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and the Role of Commercial Districts,” page 3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. page 2

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## INFORMATION YOU'LL NEED FOR THIS ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS STRATEGY

Effective use of the Main Street Model requires a working knowledge of the market. A full market study is cited as key to accomplishing this goal. There are market research tasks that can be completed in anticipation of completing a full market study. They include:

- **Inventory:** An inventory of all existing businesses in the district has been compiled. Factors gathered include name, address, telephone, contact person, website, Facebook page, parcel and comments about business. Businesses that offer products and services that attract entrepreneurial businesses are grouped based on personal experience with the businesses.

**Task:** Review the business groupings for completeness.

**Task:** A more detailed list of products and services needs to be developed.

**Task:** A tally of the approximate size of each of the existing businesses (in square feet) and the number of people employed by each business needs to be gathered and recorded. Also tally the vacant properties and an assessment of their potential use by entrepreneurs, especially for a makers space.

- **Customers:** Compile demographic characteristics of regional residents – particularly information about household income, age, household size, ethnicity, number of earners, and education levels, number of households with children, adult age ranges, numbers of households that include elderly members, types of existing business profiles. (see: US Census website and/or from third-party geospatial data providers like ESRI or Nielsen PRIZM). Crozet is a Census Designated Place (CDP).

**Task:** Gather and analyze data from the US Census Quickfacts and the American Fact Finder for Crozet CDP, including the categories of Topics, Geographic's, Race and Ethnic Groups, Industry Codes and EEO Occupation codes.

**Task:** Incorporate demographic analysis in scope of work for the market study

- **Competition:** In addition to the inventory of businesses compiled for Downtown, an inventory has also been compiled for the two shopping centers on Route 250, Old Trail and other Crozet businesses. Those areas are easily mapped using Google maps.

**Task:** Evaluate how these commercial areas compete with Downtown, Charlottesville and Waynesboro.

**Task:** Articulate how your Entrepreneurial Ecosystems strategy is (or can be) differentiated from competing commercial areas. Include Charlottesville entrepreneurial clusters generated from the Batten Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the IX center and other areas.

- **Potential barriers:** Several issues exist as potential barriers.
  - Parking is currently a challenge throughout Downtown. Solutions to parking can be costly, such as parking decks. Improving bicycle access will reduce traffic, replacing parked bikes with parked cars.
  - Negotiating safe pedestrian and vehicle railroad crossings poses multiple factors to overcome.
  - Not completing construction of the town center Plaza will eliminate the central gathering place, removing the social interaction space that is so desirable for entrepreneurs and their customers. New entrepreneurial businesses may not be drawn to Downtown without this crucial attraction being built in the heart of the commercial district. The town center Plaza and the new, architecturally compatible

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buildings surrounding the Plaza are key to creating the type of atmosphere that draws entrepreneurial businesses and talented workers.

- Providing low-cost high-speed internet is a must for any business to succeed in this current economy. Gigabit speeds are ideal but must be greater than 25 Mbps.

### **SAMPLE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS BUSINESSES ACTIVITIES**

There are many different activities that DCI and its partners might do to successfully implement an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy. The activities you chosen address problems and opportunities that are specific to Downtown. Start with activities that are relatively easy, then gradually tackle more challenging ones.

Here are some examples:

#### Design activities:

- Ensure the design of the new town center Plaza will fulfill the community's desire for a gathering place that is suitable for intimate to larger events; comfortable for families – parents, children and grandparents; is accessible to wheeled mobility devices (walkers, wheelchairs, strollers, etc.), attractive to tourists, and a destination for shoppers, families, and tourists. It needs to be a place where visitors want to return.
- Enhance the local digital infrastructure, including cell, fiber and Wi-Fi networks. Negotiate with telecommunications providers to ensure that businesses have access to low-cost high-speed Internet, with Broadband speeds more than 25 Mbps, preferably Gigabit speeds.
- Develop a free Wi-Fi system throughout Downtown. Students, commuters, local business, and tourists expect to be connected during and after work. The psychographic characteristics derived from the planned market study will further define this interest.
- Be willing to drive innovative uses of space beyond retail, such as small-scale manufacturing
- Develop design guidelines and incentives that encourage rehabilitations that foster creativity and high character
- Work with Albemarle County to develop a Technology Zone, offering dedicated incentives and easing the permit process.
- Provide bike racks throughout Downtown.
- Create comfortable public lunchtime and weekend gathering places, centered around the Plaza.
- Work with property owners to identify opportunities to create in-fill and/or upper-floor apartments and condominiums for district workers and others interested in living in the commercial district.
- To ensure the atmosphere of Downtown retains the aura of a rural village, create a review committee to develop architectural guidelines that will offer guidance to property owners and developers.

#### Organization activities:

- Develop partnership opportunities with the Batten Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation; PVCC Workforce Development; Small Business Development Center; Community Investment

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Collaborative; young professional groups, tech group; developers; and other entrepreneurship providers.

- Work with regional entrepreneurship technical resource providers to host training workshops in downtown and to develop a network of like-minds.
- Assess feasibility with local businesses of becoming an Appalachian Community, creating an Artisans Trail that complements the Crozet Arts Festival, implementing a Going Green Program, adding the Crozet Trails to the VA Game and Inland Fisheries Birding and Wildlife Trail and forming a marketing network for the wineries and breweries.
- Promoting Downtown Crozet as a destination to the nearby 76 Bikeway (created during the US Bicentennial in 1976) for cycling tours and day trips, devising a cycling event in the year 2026 to coincide with the USA250<sup>5</sup> Semiquincentennial anniversary celebrations of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
- Research the Washington and Old Dominion (W&OD)<sup>6</sup> bike trail to see how they have incorporated signage on the trail with connectivity to off-trail businesses like coffee shops, bike repair, etc.
- Support The Board of Trade, the local businesses association.
- Develop downtown clubs or networking activities for young professionals and entrepreneurs
- Organize a series of “business after-hours” social events where district workers and residents can meet one another and become more familiar with district businesses.
- Invite additional new and/or emerging entrepreneurs onto your board or committees

Promotion activities:

- Develop a brand awareness campaign that features downtown Crozet as a great place for launching and growing entrepreneurial and tech-based ventures. Conduct market study, incorporating psychographic and demographic analysis with an emphasis on data related to entrepreneurial businesses.
- Conduct events designed to promote, encourage and showcase entrepreneurship. Examples include Barnes Lumber Property in Motion, Buy Local campaigns, Small Business Saturday, Recreation Resource Fair, Breakfast Tour of Vineyards & Breweries, Tour of the Orchards, Farm to Table, pop-up retail and “Shark Tank” events.
- Run feature articles on new entrepreneurs locating to your district.
- Partner with Albemarle County Economic Development and the Economic Development Authority to product a *People of Crozet Video Series*, a subset of the [People of Albemarle Video Series](#) highlighting stories of innovative businesses, people and place in Albemarle County, accompanied by a blog post.
- Create targeted entrepreneurship marketing materials that outline local ecosystem resources rate
- Run a social media contest for favorite, most innovative or quirkiest district entrepreneur

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.usa250.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.novaparks.com/parks/washington-and-old-dominion-railroad-regional-park>

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- Schedule promotional activities immediately after work, when the district’s workers and residents returning home from work are most likely to be available.
- Explore development of [Traipse Map](#) Tour of Downtown Crozet, a destination marketing app. Conduct a scavenger hunt, sending shoppers on a quest to gather a list of certain items stocked by stores – shoppers will learn about what goods and services are offered.
- Obtain sponsors for a month-long arts festival, incorporating events for all ages and all local visual and musical arts, similar to a mini-Spoleto held in Charleston SC and Spoleto, Italy<sup>7</sup>

Economic Vitality activities:

- Develop a tool kit of resources (both financial and technical) that specifically target the development of entrepreneurial ventures, including a section for tech-based businesses.
- In the interest of recognizing the tendency for entrepreneurs preferring to walk or bike to work, evaluate the feasibility of a market constructing housing and co-working spaces.
- Develop a business recruitment marketing piece geared toward entrepreneurs, including tech-based interests. Work with local property owners and developers to expand leasable office space geared toward entrepreneurial and tech-based ventures.
- Create a Downtown Incubator, Accelerator, Shared Office or Drop in Space similar to what is offered at IX in Charlottesville; resource for home businesses.
- Recruit and Encourage development of Third Space businesses, that is, spaces people frequent other than home or work.
- Support efforts to attract a boutique hotel to Downtown.
- Offer technical assistance workshops in support of small business development. Going Global; Succession Planning; Product Diversification, Social Media and the Internet Marketing.

**POTENTIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

CONVENIENCE

Groceries  
 Restaurants  
 Pharmaceuticals  
 Health and beauty products  
 Office supplies  
 Daycare  
 Dry cleaners  
 Postal/pack-and-ship service  
 Medical and dental services

Accounting and tax services

Banking services

Gas stations

Hair care

THIRD SPACES

Bars/Brewery

Cafes

Drop-In-Spaces

Shared Space – Incubator/Accelerator

Maker Spaces

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<sup>7</sup> <https://spoletousa.org/>

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## MEASURING PROGRESS

The following tools can be used to track your success in implementing the strategy and in measuring its impact on the commercial district as a whole:

- Conduct on-street surveys when you implement this strategy – then, conduct surveys one year, three years, and five years later, asking the same questions. Are more people patronizing the district for its family-friendly businesses and activities? Are their impressions and perceptions of the district improving?

Your surveys should include questions in four specific categories:

- Attitudes and perceptions about the district
  - Current shopping habits
  - Additional products and services shoppers would like to be able to buy within the district
  - Demographic characteristics of those participating in the survey, including home zip code
- Track trends in the number of square feet of retail space in businesses catering primarily to families.
  - Ask the owners or managers of a representative sample of businesses catering to independent small businesses to keep an informal tally of foot traffic, average transaction amount, and gross sales. Interview the owners and managers at regular intervals and hold an annual focus group with them. Are the numbers increasing?
  - Track the number of changes (in service offerings or product mix) that businesses have made to serve the Entrepreneurial market.

Choose several intersections or entry points in the district and count the number of people who walk by during 30-minute intervals. Do this at two or three key points in the day (e.g., morning, noon, and evening). Repeat the pedestrian counts at least twice a year, at the same times of day. Are the numbers increasing? Are the age cohorts of pedestrians changing?

## TAKING THE NEXT STEP

Over the next year or two, after your Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy has begun taking root, you should plan to conduct additional research that can help you refine the strategy and adapt it more precisely to your district's particular circumstances. You may tackle some aspects of the market research on your own, or you may choose to engage professional assistance. Whichever route you choose, this additional research should help you answer questions like these:

- What are the boundaries of the primary trade area for this strategy? Are there other geographic areas that you should try to reach?
- Have the entrepreneurs created a network of support?
- Of the businesses that exist in your district that support an Entrepreneurial strategy, how many square feet do they comprise, in total? What are their estimated total annual sales, including all selling channels?
- How much do households in the trade area spend on purchases related to customers of different ages and points of origin

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- What is the estimated regional sales void (or surplus)? If additional sales were captured, how many additional square feet of retail space (if any) could those sales support?
  - What is the estimated regional sales void (or surplus)? If additional sales were captured, how many additional square feet of retail space (if any) could those sales support?
  - What is the profile of the target customer? What are the profiles of secondary customers? How large is each customer segment, and approximately how much of each segment's spending do you think you can realistically capture in the future?
  - What are the emerging trends in this sector? What are the waning trends?

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## **TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY -CATALYST STRATEGY BRIEF FOR TOURISTS AND TOURISM**

The following strategy will be further refined for the Downtown Crozet commercial district over the course of the next six months. The Strategy is suitable to Downtown Crozet given the proximity to the Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, George Washington National Forest, Claudius Crozet Tunnel (park under construction), the potential for becoming an Appalachian Community, promotion of the rich agricultural history of the area including the emergent wine, beer and cider industry, farm to table mentality, a destination for day and touring cyclists along the 76 Bikeway, a burgeoning arts community and increasingly a wedding destination site. The brief is offered as provided by National Main Street without any refinements except that the Main Street Model is not repeated here as it has been stated in the beginning of this document.

### **THE “TOURISTS AND TOURISM” STRATEGY IN A NUTSHELL**

A Tourists and Tourism strategy addresses people who visit the district from elsewhere, usually to experience something unique to the place, such as history or architecture, arts and culture, or shopping. The strategy generally builds on something that is already associated with the place, whether or not the attraction is in the commercial district itself. The attraction could be small and discrete (such as a historic figure's birth home) or it might be more diffuse or regional (like a Route 66 trail or the wine country of Northern California).

Sometimes the commercial district itself is the draw, if it is noted for its atmosphere, shops or restaurants. But often, in traditional commercial districts that have a tourism component to their economy, the district itself is not the primary driver of visitation. In these cases, the commercial district provides tourists with amenities and retail services that people need while they are traveling, or it provides supplemental activities that enrich their visit. Virtually all commercial districts serving tourists offer restaurant dining and some convenience items; many offer lodging options (if the destination typically involves an overnight stay). Because these districts serve a non-resident population, there is a greater need for clear way-finding signs to parking and attractions, and online and printed guides to local businesses.

When trying to increase tourism in the context of Main Street revitalization, *authenticity* is a market differentiator. In most cases, that implies a district where independent businesses are an important driver (if not the majority) of retail and dining activity – and, it follows, a district where chain businesses are not the focus. Even in places where “authenticity” might not be immediately apparent (places like Disney World in Orlando or the Las Vegas Strip, for example), there are often nearby historic business districts that would like to capture a portion of the tourism economy. For these places, authenticity matters, too.

### **WHO ARE THE CUSTOMERS FOR THIS STRATEGY?**

Tourism is a vast category and its participants do not fit any one customer profile. Tourism includes visitors to historic places, cultural tourists, weekend/second home-owners, resort-goers, conventioners, business travelers, outdoors enthusiasts, and many others. Each of these types of tourism can exist at varying price points. Tourists may be regional or international and their preferences and interests may vary widely. Some may be interested in shopping and dining in a historic downtown and others may not. Articulating your visitors' typical demographic profile will help you to align your commercial district's offerings with what your tourists want. The quality common to virtually all tourists is that they come from somewhere else. Therefore, they are probably less familiar with your commercial district than locals and they will benefit from information that helps them learn about its offerings.

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## BENEFITS AND TRADE-OFFS

A primary economic benefit of tourism is that it brings outside consumer spending to the community. These are “imported sales,” over and above the buying power of households in the immediate trade area. As a result, commercial districts that attract tourists can often support more restaurants and retail than the local population could support on its own. Tourism can also be an important generator of local jobs and employment, both directly and indirectly related to the hospitality industry.

There can be a trade-off to attracting large numbers of tourists: Locals may not be happy about an increase in visitors if it makes the district feel “less local,” if it gets crowded, if prices go up, if it becomes hard to find housing, if short-term rentals (like AirBnB) bring a transient character to neighborhoods, or if the influx spurs gentrification. In more

extreme cases, the business mix may shift in ways that are not helpful to residents, such as an increase in stores selling t-shirts and souvenirs.

## IS THIS STRATEGY A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR DISTRICT?

The following questions are intended to help “take the temperature” of your commercial district. To answer them, you simply need to be familiar with your district and its environs. The questions are qualitative, and we want you to answer them in the context of what you already know. We are asking you to simply mark the scale to help you visualize whether your district is well-suited for pursuing a Tourists and Tourism strategy. Remember, this strategy is a starting point. As you do more research in the future, you can make it more nuanced and focused.

Knowing what you already know about your district, which of the paired characteristics best describes your district?

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There is no tourism to speak of	We are a major destination <input type="checkbox"/>
The potential market is relatively small	The potential market is relatively large <input type="checkbox"/>
The district competes with many others for visitors	The district has few competitors for visitors <input type="checkbox"/>
We would need new buildings/infrastructure	Our existing buildings/infrastructure are a good fit <input type="checkbox"/>
We would need a whole new mix of businesses and amenities to serve tourists	We have most of the businesses and amenities tourists need <input type="checkbox"/>

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