

04

downtown

Chapter Overview

Downtown Bloomington is a vibrant historic, and flourishing center of the community. The downtown offers many things for Bloomington's residents, employees, and visitors alike. Traditionally, downtowns have served as central hubs of activity. Across the United States, downtowns continue to grow, adapt, and evolve in a variety of ways that make them unique, vibrant, diverse, and safe places. Due to varying strategies toward growth and planning, some cities have achieved greater levels of success than others. Currently, many in the community believe that downtown Bloomington is doing quite well and consider it the heart of the community; however, this was not always the case. Not long ago, the prospects for Downtown Bloomington indicated a place that was in decline and losing its significant as the center and heart of the community.

This chapter is about nurturing the heart of our community and keeping it strong and inclusive. By developing policies, that ensure the long-term success of downtown that will enrich the entire Bloomington as a whole. Nationally, Main Street trends show a surge in small business startups, a wide-range of social media applications used to engage and build loyal

customer bases, and the prominent role food is now taking within the downtown marketplace. Trends ranging from offering high-quality snacks in hotel lobbies to the locally-sourced "farm to fork restaurant offerings are all making significant contributions to the life and vitality of downtowns. Placemaking continues to shape the physical characteristics of downtown with more focus on human-scaled design and streets that are walkable, bike-able, and safe for users of all ages. This not only supports the commercial and retail aspects of downtowns but also improves livability as people continue to seek living options in downtown. Downtown Bloomington has recently undergone significant student housing growth while local and national trends indicate Millennial's and Baby Boomers also find the downtown a great place to live, work, and play.

This chapter contains goals, policies, and programs that are informed by the Vision and Goal Statement. This chapter introduces subsections express Bloomington's long-term commitment to the continued success of its downtown. The Downtown Chapter highlights the Sense of Place, Main Street, Design, BEAD (Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District), Trades District and Conference Center, subsections, which are introduced below:



The sense of Place | Density is of principal importance to Downtown Bloomington's sense of place. As density continues to increase, however, a balance needs to be struck between student-centric development and mixed-use downtown amenities that support the entire community. This subsection focuses on providing an introduction to Downtown as a place and how it is influenced by its continued growth and redevelopment.

Main Street | Downtown is a highly walkable district that is enhanced by a mix of commercial, entertainment, residential and cultural amenities with robust multi-modal access. This subsection looks at Main Street as a front door to Bloomington's downtown and how it continues to evolve and redevelop as a district.

Design | Downtown Bloomington has a certain aesthetic that continues to define its character. This subsection support quality design initiatives that strengthen the quality of the Downtown "Brand".

BEAD | The BEAD district is a district within downtown that encompasses entertainment and arts amenities that positively influence the quality of life and place for the entire community. This subsection supports mixed-use cultural opportunities that bring life and vibrancy to Bloomington's downtown.

Trades District | The Trades District is within Bloomington's Certified Tech Park. This site located just northwest of City Hall is a prime redevelopment site and a rare opportunity to revitalize a key component of the City's core. This subsection supports the redevelopment of this site to create a landmark development that supports the continued renaissance of downtown.

Conference Center Area | Bloomington's conference center is a strong downtown asset and a community and regional asset. This subsection supports continued growth and development of the Conference Center and surrounding areas.

This chapter also includes Goals, Policies, and Programs that are implementation based and focus on creating quantifiable outcomes. Outcomes and indicators are tailored to track effectiveness and Goals, Policies and Programs with measurable results.

Sense of Place

In the year 2000, there were just over 1,800 residential units located in downtown; compare that to today, where roughly 1,900 units have been added since then. The number of units essentially doubled (3,700 units) as more people are choosing to live in downtown Bloomington. Allowing relatively higher housing densities through zoning, plus a very strong

multifamily rental market (featuring occupancy rates over 90 percent), has significantly driven the downtown housing market. However, almost all of this residential growth has been targeted to IU off-campus student housing demand, which has created concerns over downtown having a mostly homogenous socioeconomic makeup. This high rate of student demand has driven up rental prices per square foot, and it appears to have priced many non-student households out of the downtown market. Moving ahead, senior resident, workforce, and affordable housing options must be part of the housing solutions for downtown Bloomington. The inadvertent centralization of student housing around downtown could weaken the community's strong and inclusive atmosphere to all age groups. The Housing and Neighborhoods Chapter covers applicable housing issues that should also not be overlooked for downtown Bloomington. It is important that Bloomington continues to support a diverse and robust downtown that is not purely student-centric businesses nor predominately multi-family student housing. Bloomington's downtown has a rich sense of place that is key to the continued success of the City and Indiana University alike.

Main Street

Along with changes in downtown housing, changes in hospitality, entertainment, transportation, and commercial establishments continue to enhance the downtown. Three grocery stores and a mini-market provide everyday items. Almost 700 hotel rooms welcome overnight visitors to stay, shop, and enjoy a very walkable downtown. Just over 900 businesses featuring retail, restaurants, and professional services – each topping over 100 establishments – all offer a wide variety of choices for customers and also signify a healthy local economy. Through a joint-venture between Bloomington Transit and Central Emergency Dispatch Center, a new central transit station and emergency dispatch all-in-one facility was built along South Walnut Street & 3rd St. This included extensive streetscape improvements along South Walnut Street. This has transformed South Walnut into a more pedestrian friendly and lively area. Parking meters returned and cannot go without mention, as vehicular parking demands have increased on to limited public parking supply. By some metrics, a parking problem is a good indicator of a vibrant downtown.

Several galleries and venues such as the Bloomington Playwrights project, the Buskirk-Chumley Theater, The

Bluebird, The Player's Pub, and the Bishop offer many arts and entertainment options. Ivy Tech Community College purchased the John Waldron Arts Center, which added another important player to the downtown arts community. The Bloomington Monroe County Convention Center regularly books events from conventions, trade shows, professional training seminars, special events, and even religious services, which, combined, have brought over 1.2 million people into downtown since it first opened in 1991. The Farmer's Market, Fourth Street Festival of the Arts, Lotus World Music & Arts Festival, Taste of Bloomington and the Fourth of July parade are all long-standing events in downtown. Clearing the way for anticipated technology-based employment in the Certified Technology Park and incorporated "Trades District" the recent clearance of vacant warehouses, north of City Hall, is also a positive sign for further business and residential growth in downtown. These are just a few of the highlights that demonstrate change, vitality, and positive opportunities for increased business investment and residential livability of downtown Bloomington.

Design

Architecture, parking, historic preservation, student housing, the homeless population, employment, hotels, convention center expansion, retail mix, and other hot topic issues have played out since the adoption of the last comprehensive plan known as the 2002 Growth Policy Plan (GPP). These issues are good proxies for our downtown's vibrancy and significance at the heart of Bloomington. It demonstrates that residents, businesses, and visitors care about what happens downtown. Imagine little public dialog on several hot topics and one could easily envision the early signs of a lifeless or dying downtown. Dialog, information, public discourse, and positive economic change are good means to help channel this energy into ways that will continue to sustain downtown's prominence as the inclusive heart of Bloomington.

Attitudes of complacency, and standardization, certainly can begin to erode the downtown's success and should be avoided. The 2005 Downtown Vision and Infill Strategy Plan established character areas and helped to better guide specific building design and architecture features. The character areas described in that plan became an overlay district in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), which created height, design, and bulk regulations for each character area. These regulations have helped to shape many of the

newer developments in downtown. However, details on building height, mass, design, and uses are becoming more scrutinized as the downtown continues to grow and evolve. Avoiding standardized templates or boilerplate proposals for new building projects recognizes that need for alternative compliance with the UDO and much clearer policy guidance for each character area. Fine tuning design guidelines, building height, massing, and other site details, such as the ability for student-oriented housing to be adaptively reused for other market segments, is in order as Bloomington moves forward. The community also cannot lose sight on better defining our expectations for the Downtown public realm. After all, an active and lively public realm is what makes downtowns so unique. Guiding new developments in these areas will help the Downtown maintain and strengthen its economic vitality and visual attractiveness as a great place to be.

Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District (BEAD)

While Indiana University houses many wonderful performing and visual arts venues, downtown Bloomington is also an arts center for the entire Bloomington community. The Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District (BEAD) was conceived as an economic development project, and it has been designated as an official Cultural District by the Indiana

Arts Commission. It acts as the promotion hub for a very robust festival and events scene that draws thousands of people often becoming both a local and a regional draw. BEAD seeks to bring the business and creative sectors together to advance commerce and culture, build community, and spur economic development. BEAD is a geographically defined, mixed-use, cultural district in downtown Bloomington. BEAD emphasizes the high concentration of creative assets and related activities to strengthen and enhance the overall economic development of the community. It links a variety of incentive programs and grants to benefit the community and visitors as well as small businesses, creative cultural, and entertainment sectors.

With so many artists, artisans, and talented craftspeople calling Bloomington home, the community has become a very strong arts hub. According to the 2012 American for the Arts study, Bloomington's nonprofit arts sector contributes \$72.3 million to the local economy annually through direct spending by arts organizations and their audiences. In addition, this sector supports 3,430 full-time equivalent jobs and generates nearly \$6.3 million in local and state government revenues. The City of Bloomington has been actively working to leverage these economic benefits through promotion and assistance programs.



Trades District

The Certified Technology Park a.k.a. the “Trades District” is located in a northwest portion of downtown Bloomington. The Trades District offers an excellent opportunity to attract new private investment and jobs to the core of the community. This has the potential to begin diversifying the predominately service-oriented employment base of downtown with more technical and entrepreneurial business start-up jobs. This has led the City of Bloomington and its Redevelopment Commission to begin the planning efforts to create a new business incubator in the Dimension Mill building located between 10th and 11th Streets between Morton and Rogers Streets. This project should catalyze private investment and job creation in the Trades District. One of the main goals of the Trades District is to create jobs in the higher technology sector; it will also provide a location to blend more affordable housing into the downtown. The Trades District is planned to develop organically over time with new businesses and residences. Finally, the Trades District will be environmentally sensitive with stormwater and green building designs that will highlight how future developments in and outside of the Trades District can be developed that are energy efficient, environmentally low-impact, and provide positive economic impacts for private job growth and investment.

Conference Center Area

The Bloomington / Monroe County Conference Center and surrounding properties present another wonderful opportunity for growth of tourism, hospitality jobs and investment in Downtown Bloomington. A feasibility study completed in 2012 conducted a trade show schedule survey that illustrated that Bloomington was the second highest conference selection location in Indiana only behind Downtown Indianapolis - Indiana Convention Center. The study also suggested that the conference center could more than double the number of attendees from 63,000 to roughly 130,000 if the conference center had adequate space to hold the meeting demand. To that end, the study identified that an additional 130,000 square feet of conference space could be supported with an adjoining 200 room hotel. The total capital investment for the conference center expansion was estimated to be \$38.3 million, and the new hotel would be a \$30 million private investment. The annual economic impact was suggested to be about \$18.3 million annually while creating

260 full-time hospitality related jobs. The streetscape improvements to South Walnut Street have prepared the south side of downtown to be the next big area of downtown redevelopment. This would be strongly supported if the Bloomington / Monroe County Conference Center and new hotel project were completed.

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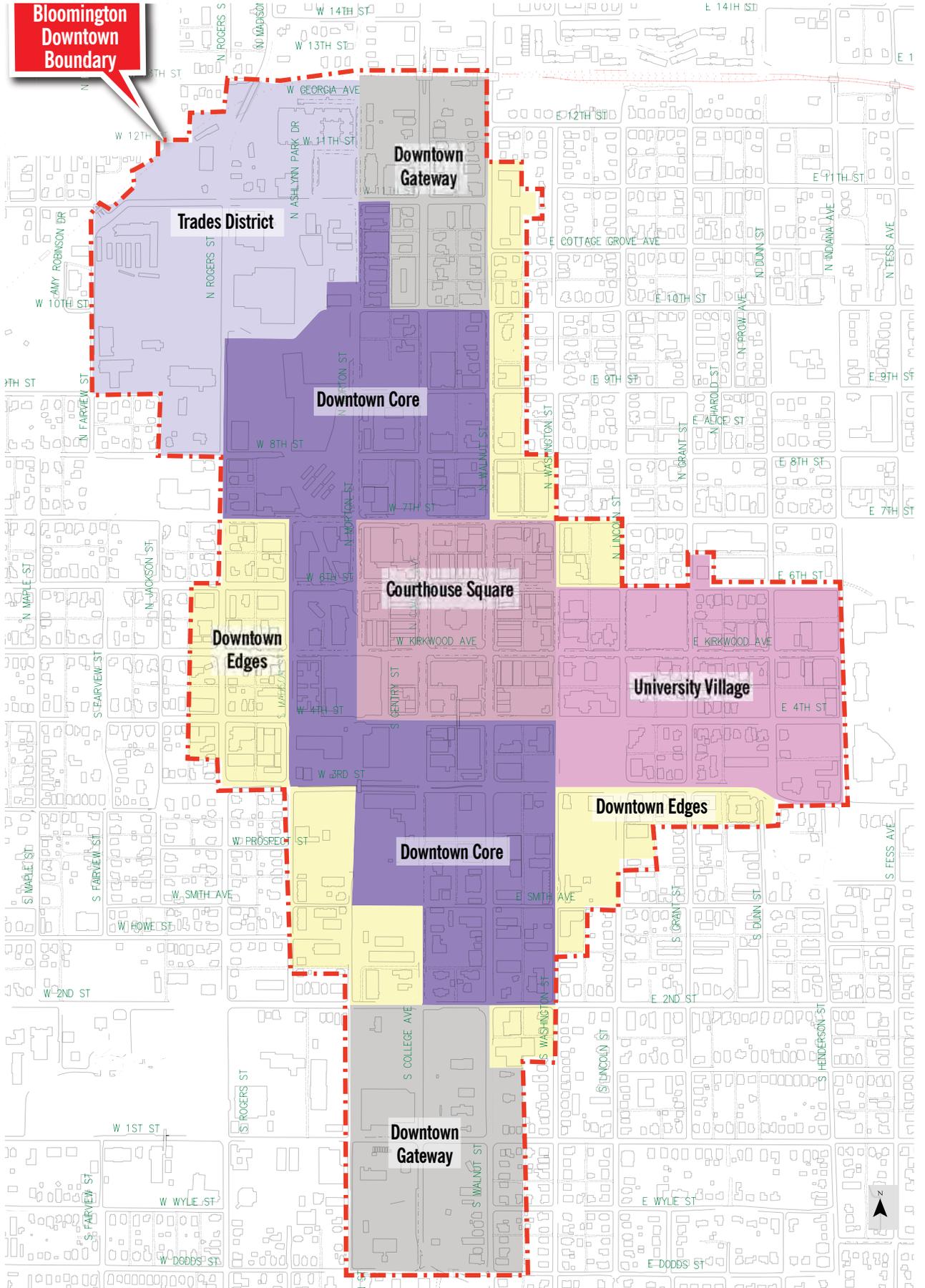
Goals, Policies, and Programs

Goal 4.1 Ensure the redevelopment of downtown enhances its historic character and small-town feel.

-  Policy 4.1.1: Balance public investments in infrastructure and technology to support a robust economy and to enhance Downtown Bloomington’s status as a regional economic and tourist center.
-  Policy 4.1.2: Promote the preservation of significant historic buildings to reinforce the scale and character of the Courthouse Square, Kirkwood Avenue, and ‘Restaurant Row’.
-  Policy 4.1.3: Recognize the significance of innovative, high-quality architecture in supporting community character and urban design.
 - Program: Update and revise the downtown overlay districts with “form-based code” building forms and massing that relate to the street and the pedestrian, whether through traditional architectural forms or innovative new designs.
 - Program: Create an architectural inventory of celebrated structures currently in the downtown area to integrate into design requirements.
 - Program: Investigate the option of a design or architectural review committee to downtown approvals.

Bloomington Downtown Map

This map indicates the sub-districts within the Downtown Bloomington.



Goal 4.2 Encourage attractive, convenient public and private motor vehicle and bicycle parking facilities.



Policy 4.2.1: Provide sufficient parking in the immediate downtown area to support vibrant economic activity.

- Program: Develop a Parking Management Plan/ Program for the downtown area that supports alternative transportation modes.
- Program: Promote programs to encourage ride and car sharing among employees or residents within specific districts.



Policy 4.2.2: Encourage and develop incentive-based approaches to beautify existing parking structures.



Policy 4.2.3: Update the UDO to require the installation of electric vehicle charging stations in new developments.



Policy 4.2.4: Design vehicle parking areas to reduce stormwater runoff, increase compatibility with street trees, and add visual interest to streets and other public locations. Encourage covered parking in parking lots or structures through the use of tree canopies or photo-voltaic panel canopies.

Goal 4.3 Integrate housing, employment, shopping and entertainment in a compact way that promotes walking, biking, transit, and commerce



Policy 4.3.1: Create opportunities for an enhanced retail and restaurant presence within the downtown that caters to multiple demographic levels.

- Program: Conduct a retail market assessment to identify what is currently missing, based on market demand, in the downtown landscape to help encourage more retail diversity, promote business development, and share with local businesses to assist with securing additional financial capital.
- Program: Continue to improve multi-modal

connectivity with the downtown

- Program: Analyze gateways into the downtown area and prioritize opportunities for improvement for streetscape design.



Policy 4.3.2: Collaborate with Indiana University and Downtown Bloomington, Inc. to integrate planning efforts.

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Outcomes & Indicators

4.1 Downtown Events

- Number of downtown public events
- Number of downtown event residential and non-residential attendees

4.2 Downtown Business Vibrancy

- Retail Revenue annually
- Restaurant Revenue annually
- Employment levels and salary and wage levels per year

4.3 Downtown buildings and sites that are blighted and in disrepair

- Number of properties with code violations
- Percent of properties in downtown with code violation

Profile

Shop Local

In many cities, successful downtowns are integrally linked to the economic health of local businesses which are the foundation of the local economy and serve the needs of residents and visitors alike. Because local owners live in the community they do business in, they are free to make decisions based on local needs rather than corporate policies handed down from decision-makers far removed. Additionally, studies have shown that independent, local owners spend more money at other local businesses creating a “multiplier effect” - money recirculates within the community rather than “leaking out” to remote corporate headquarters or a centralized purchasing department. Listed below are reasons why locally-owned businesses are good for a city’s long term viability.

- **Buy Local - Support Yourself:** Several studies have shown that when you buy from an independent, locally owned business, rather than a nationally owned businesses, significantly more of your money is used to make purchases from other local businesses and service providers, and farms. “For every \$100 spent in locally owned independent stores, \$68 returns to the community through taxes, payroll, and other expenditures. If you spend that in a national chain, only \$43 stays here. Spend it online and nothing comes home.”
- **Support Community Groups:** Non-profit organizations receive an average 250% more support from smaller locally-owned businesses than they do from national businesses.
- **Keep The Community Unique:** Where you shop, where you eat and have fun - all of it makes your community home. The one-of-a-kind businesses are an integral part of the distinctive character of Burlington. Tourism also increases as visitors seek out destinations that offer them the sense of being someplace, not just anyplace.
- **Reduce Environmental Impact:** Locally-owned businesses can make more local purchases requiring less transportation and contributing less to sprawl, congestion, habitat loss and pollution.
- **Create More Good Jobs:** Small locally-owned businesses are the largest employers nationally offering jobs to residents.
- **Get Better Service:** Locally-owned businesses often hire people with a better understanding of the products they are selling and take more time to get to know customers.
- **Invest In Community:** Locally-owned businesses have owners and employees who live in the community, are less likely to leave, and are vested in the community’s future.
- **Put Your Taxes To Good Use:** Local businesses in town centers require comparatively little infrastructure investment and make more efficient use of public services as compared to nationally owned stores entering the community.
- **Buy What You Want, Not What Someone Wants You To Buy:** A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based not on a national sales plan but on their own interests and the needs of their local customers, guarantees a much broader range of product choices.
- **Encourage Local Prosperity:** A growing body of economic research shows that in an increasingly homogenized world, entrepreneurs and skilled workers are more likely to invest and settle in communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character.

Source: <http://www.sbnportland.org/>

Source: <http://www.the350project.net/home.html>



Case Study

Santa Cruz Design + Innovation Center

This Case Study demonstrates how Bloomington's Trade District in Downtown could be activated as an innovation district that directly benefits small businesses and entrepreneurial investment and job growth.

The University of California Santa Cruz partnered with local industry and the city of Santa Cruz to establish the Santa Cruz Design + Innovation Center.

The center's goal is to leverage local design talent to grow design-based business and attract new businesses to the area. The center recognizes that local design talent is housed not only in the larger design-related companies but also in a host of smaller independent architects, engineers, graphic designers, product designers, Web designers, and landscape designers; thus, it seeks to create opportunities for networking and interdisciplinary collaboration as well as a space for teams to tackle cutting-edge design challenges.

Source: www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/0901ARTSANDECONOMY.PDFpreservationnation.org/2013/01/15/10-on-tuesday-10-benefits-of-establishing-a-local-historic-district/#.VLgP7ivF_hs

