A GATHERING PLACE: AN ACTION PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN PLAINFIELD, INDIANA

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Table of Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Charts

List of Figures

I. Introduction

II. Methodology

III. Literature Review

IV. Comparison Communities

V. Data Analysis and Findings

VI. Recommendations and Conclusion

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Bibliography

List of Tables

Table 1 - Comparison Community Table showing key characteristics. 16

Table 2 - Downtown Amenities and retail businesses in case study communities. 46

Table 3 - Housing in case study communities. 47

Table 4 - Retail and commercial establishment in the downtowns of case study communities ... 52

Table 5 - Civic and cultural facilities in the downtown of the case study communities. 57

Table 6 – Strategies for Downtown Plainfield 69

List of Charts

Chart 1 - 0.5 Mile Housing. 49

Chart 2 – 1.0 Mile Housing..... 50

Chart 3 -- 1.5 Mile Housing. 52

Chart 4 – 1.0 Mile Businesses..... 54

Chart 5 – 1.0 Mile Businesses..... 55

Chart 6 – 1.5 Mile Businesses..... 56

Chapter One

Introduction

Problem Statement

Built in 1927 the Downtown Plainfield Prewitt Theater was a popular gathering place for community residents. For many years it attracted families and visitors to the center of the town. The downtown theater was the "go to" place for live performances, but mainly movie entertainment (PrewittHistory, n.d.).

By the mid-twentieth century, however, observations show that the theater had seen better days. The development of modern movie theaters in different parts of the community decreased demand for the downtown theater. As the crowd drifted away, revenues dropped, and the theater could not generate a profit to pay its operational costs.

The fate of Plainfield's downtown theater is similar to other civic and cultural amenities in small towns and cities across the United States. This creative project seeks to understand the problems of downtowns in these cities as a means for identifying intervention measures that can return these quaint and historic small downtowns back to health. Plainfield is used as a representative case study for these downtowns.

Specifically, this project serves as a research guide to addressing the problem of minimal meeting places in small linear downtowns. Limited meeting spaces minimize opportunities for community interaction (Morris, 2016). Small linear downtowns, defined as straight commercial corridors holding a community population of no more than fifty-thousand, typically lack central meeting places (Burayidi, 2013). Without public spaces, downtowns miss an opportunity for events, economic development, and community growth. Healthy downtown revitalizations stem

from community engagement and entertainment (Walker, 2009). This project compares civic amenities and community gathering spaces in similar small cities to identify successful formulas for downtowns. The intent is to measure success and in turn create an action plan that activates Plainfield's downtown theater space. Reinventing the space and forming a central gathering place draws individuals to interact in the town center and improve the community as a whole (Burayidi, 2013). The plan, created for city planners and civic leaders, will provide action steps for transforming the downtown with the starting point being the historic theater.

Downtown Plainfield

Plainfield, Indiana is a community just southwest of Indianapolis. This suburban area grew out of the expansion along Interstate 70 as a quiet town. After sometime, residents recognized its ability to be a great place for families to live. Although the community continues to grow and develop, the town's downtown is failing to prosper. This creative project examines the challenges and prospects for the town's downtown. Community growth negatively extends west towards the rural part of the county. External expansion negatively affects the town's internal and original downtown. Similar to most suburban areas, the lack of downtown investment enables individuals to spend time and money in other community districts.

The Prewitt Theater was originally built in 1927 by Lowell W. Prewitt. Prewitt built the theater on the site of his tractor and implements store in Downtown Plainfield. The structure's architecture aligns with the popular Spanish Eclectic style of the 1920s. When built, this new entertainment venue could seat 450 people, included a large stage, and at the time the best projection equipment (National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet, n.d. & PrewittHistory, n.d.). The theaters opening date was November of 1927. The opening premier was of *No Place to Go*, a film developed and produced by L. W. Prewitt and O. T. Hancock.

Later, in 1949 the theater showed a locally filmed movie *Johnny Holiday*. This movie was filmed just west of the downtown at the Indiana Boys School. The premier of this local wonder drew record attendance to the theater (National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet, n.d.).

In 1970 the theater closed and later reopened as an adult theater (National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet, n.d.). However, this use was strongly opposed by Plainfield residents and later changed to the Village Theater in 2002. The Village Theater showed mainstream movies and provided free matinees for children during the summer months (National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet, n.d. & PrewittHistory, n.d.). In 2005 a new movie theater opened at Plainfield's local open air mall, drawing people away from the downtown (PrewittHistory, n.d.). Currently, the city is attempting to acquire the theater (A. Klinger, personal communication, January 22, 2018).

To create a sense of place in the downtown, in 2003 Plainfield enacted the Plainfield Town Center Plan. This plan examined existing conditions and recommendations in terms of organization and finance, business development, marketing and communication, physical improvement, and maintenance. The document also included design guidelines and action-items that aligned with the town's vision (Context Design, 2017). The town's Plainfield 2025 Comprehensive Plan has been used for the last fourteen years and guided many efforts to develop low density areas. Similarly, this plan focused on creating adequate east-west transportation access through the town (Context Design, 2017). In 2010 the National Register of Historic Places designated a portion of the downtown as the Town Center Historic District. This district includes 177 buildings and approximately 64 acres. It also includes a mix of uses – residential, commercial, and religious. Each of the buildings display 19th century architecture – Late Victorian Gothic, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Stick/Eastlake Design (Context Design,

2017). The 2011 Downtown Parking Study provided inventory of existing parking while also documenting and suggesting places for additional parking. In 2016 the Town of Plainfield Comprehensive Plan examined and provided direction for the whole community, but also focused on developing quality of life within the downtown core (Context Design, 2017). One key suggestion explores funding opportunities to transform the Prewitt/Village Theater into a multi-functional entertainment venue and destination. The document also suggests managing downtown parking uses and wayfinding signage, reorganizing and managing parking, leveraging the Downtown Historic District for funding and revitalization, stabilizing and improving homes, and implementing placemaking strategies (HNTB Corporation, 2004).

Recently Plainfield has addressed the lack of amenities and uses within the downtown. The most recent plan adopted in December of 2017 suggests creating a Main Street District, Neighborhood District, Village District, and Parks/Open Space District (Downtown Redevelopment, n.d. & Context Design, 2017). The proposal includes many actions for revamping the downtown, but specifically performing a Main Street District Redevelopment. The plan suggests placemaking efforts such as gateway and corridor redevelopment, neighborhood and creek front park development, traffic calming efforts, pedestrian connections, and parking additions. It also includes street, intersection, sidewalk, and alley improvements (Context Design, 2017).

What Has Been Done in the Past

American downtowns grew and changed during the industrial revolution. This time of high tech innovation fostered a mix of residents, businesses, factories, municipal buildings, places of worship, and many other uses within downtowns. As development occurred, downtowns faced the challenges of growth. Densely compacted downtowns limited space for

expansion. Rather than expanding from the city's center and maintaining a mix of uses, rapid industrialization encouraged factories, residents, churches, and businesses to separate from the city. This separation created a downtown zone entirely dedicated to commerce and civic affairs. As transportation options expanded, wealthy residents moved to the suburbs and most downtowns became home to poor and working class residents. At first downtowns were a destination place for specialized commercial activities such as retail, hospitality, and entertainment. Department stores, hotels, and movie theaters all existed in these walkable areas. However, as the masses relocated and began commuting into the central business district, the commercial and entertainment uses also moved to high end residential suburbs. What was left were aging and vacant buildings (Schwarzer, & Mitchell, 2016).

As downtowns began to decline due to business flight and middle class migration to the suburbs, civic leaders sought to reinvent downtowns to make them similar to the suburban malls. Designing downtowns like suburban malls was an effort to compete for business. Unfortunately, these downtown shopping and pedestrian malls failed to compete with the suburban ones. Even though both shopping districts had similar amenities, because of their convenience and safety, customers chose to shop at malls. As malls thrived away from main streets and in suburban areas, downtowns could not compete and/or attract business. Seeing that downtowns could not successfully compete with the suburban malls, community leaders sought other methods to combat these issues. The idea was to compliment rather than compete with the malls, which meant creating another shopping venue for people to enjoy (Burayidi, 2018). Building on the positive assets downtown districts poses, revitalization strategies encouraged economic development.

New Useful Knowledge

It is still common for communities to use incentivized efforts like tax increment financing, façade grant programs, business improvement districts, fee waivers and rental assistance to create healthy downtown districts. However, new actions are used to generate local business activity in downtowns. Some of the strategies include creating entrepreneurial centers, business incubators, makers hubs, and innovation clusters. All of these methods are common business startups and generate economic activity within a downtown. The primary goal of the incubator space is to nurture exciting talent within the community and in turn attract new talent from outside of the city. As new talent moves to the community they have an opportunity to work in these spaces and start up new companies (Burayidi, 2018).

Downtown placemaking is another factor in creating a successful and lively downtown. Some cities begin downtown redevelopment and revitalization efforts by modifying and improving existing physical conditions. Placemaking transforms public space into quality places for individuals to utilize and enjoy. Not only does placemaking improve the aesthetics of a downtown, but it also improves the downtown's function. Placemaking is often used as a tool for economic development as it also attracts and retains community members. By providing a cultural hub for activity and communication, these efforts also foster a sense of pride and belonging to the community (Burayidi, 2018).

Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* notes the importance of people in forming great urban places (Jacobs, 2011). Community gathering facilities are where community members bond and come together. Public spaces create identity in cities, improve land values, reduce the need for vehicles, and create a setting for cultural social events and activities (Great Public Spaces: What Makes a Place Great?, n.d.). A sense of belonging is fostered and created in public spaces (Why Public Places are the Key to Transforming our

Communities, n.d.). According to Project for Public Spaces great activities and destinations provide reasons for individuals to visit and stay in a specific place. To create a vibrant and dynamic location there need to be activities and options for a diverse group of individuals (Project for Public Spaces, n.d.) The Power of 10+ concept believes that places thrive when visitors have multiple reasons to be there. Many of these amenities may include art, music, food, history, and people. These activities and spaces are unique to the particular area and reflect the communities culture and history (The Power of 10, n.d.).

Revitalizing Plainfield's theater could draw visitors while reinventing the downtown image. Currently, there are a limited number of downtown civic and cultural amenities. Adding an entertainment use would increase the district's popularity and improve the downtown health. Activating the space will encourage pedestrian activity, which in turn provides incentives for additional downtown retail and dining uses. The theater could create a central location for enjoying movies or participating in the local theater. By remodeling and using the theater, this underutilized space will once again create a lively cultural hub within the downtown.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Overview

For this project both qualitative and quantitative analysis were used to analyze the variables of this study. Qualitative research examines nature's social construct. The University of Southern California also explains that this form of research examines processes and considers many social and behavioral actions (2017). Quantitative methods measure statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data. This statistical research may be accomplished through polls, questionnaires, surveys, or by manipulating existing data. According to the University of Southern California, this method gathers numerical data and generalizes it through a sample; it then explains a particular phenomenon (2017).

Several qualitative and quantitative means were used for this study. The first stage was selecting five similar downtowns for comparing to Downtown Plainfield. These comparison communities were dependent on four criteria: 1) population of twenty to fifty-thousand people; 2) proximity to a metropolitan area; 3) linear commercial development/corridor; 4) a city or town in Indiana. The selected comparison communities are – Brownsburg, Zionsville, Greenfield, Valparaiso, and Westfield. During the selection process, correspondence with each planning department also occurred. Next each downtown was visited for a field study. Concurrently analysis was done on each community's economic status and general demographics. Civic and cultural amenities were also pinpointed and compared to Downtown Plainfield's. While conducting research, Plainfield staff planners and Town Council, Plan Commission, and Redevelopment Commission Members participated in a downtown survey. After compiling this qualitative and quantitative research, findings were analyzed and used to form recommendations.

Community Profiles

After identifying the comparison communities shown in Table 1, preliminary research was conducted on the demographics for these cities, including that for the downtowns. This information displays the community's structure in comparison to Plainfield. Plainfield's downtown population compares well with that of the other communities. While downtown residents make up 1.6% of Greenfield's population, 1.3% of Plainfield's population lives downtown. The other communities had a negligible size of their population living downtown. Table 1 shows each of the comparison communities key characteristics.

Table 1 - *Comparison Community Table showing key characteristics.*

City/Town	Population	Downtown Population Size	Percentage of community population that lives in the downtown	Key Characteristics of Downtown	Age of Incoroporation
Plainfield	31,631	419	1.32%	Village theater, along historic US 40,	1893
Brownsburg	25,891	28	0.11%	Town Hall Green, some historic structures, busy street, new development	1848
Zionsville	28,738	22	0.08%	Diverse amount of uses, street wall, defined district, open spaces	1982
Greenfield	22,283	365	1.64%	Well defined boundaries, mixd use buildings, street wall, Courthouse square, trail head	1876
Valparaiso	33,568	147	0.44%	Well defined boundaries, mixed use buildings, public space, mix of uses	1836
Westfield	38,406	301	0.78%	Large open space, beginning to expand and develop, mural	1834

Brownsburg is a community just west of Indianapolis and holds a population of 25,891 people (Esri Forecast, 2017). The community was incorporated in 1848 and similar to Plainfield has a downtown that runs along the community's main thoroughfare, South Green Street (Houseal Lavigne Associates, 2012). Brownsburg is currently working on a redevelopment project similar to Plainfield's Downtown Redevelopment efforts.

Zionsville is a community northwest of Indianapolis and holds a population of 28,738 people (Esri Forecast, 2017). This community was incorporated in 1982 and includes The

Village, a quaint downtown featuring many elements that Plainfield may aspire to achieve (W. Delong, 2018).

Greenfield is a community east of Indianapolis and holds a population of 22,283 people (Esri Forecast, 2017). This community was incorporated in 1876 (J. Fitzwater, 2018). Due to its use as the county seat, the community's downtown is bigger than Plainfield's. Both communities feature trail systems within walking distance of downtown.

Valparaiso is a community in northwest Indiana with a population of 33,568 people (Esri Forecast, 2017). This community was incorporated in 1836 and exhibits a downtown featuring many civic amenities within a linear district (C. Lemmon, 2018). Some side streets jut from the downtown's main thoroughfare, however much of the civic, cultural, and economic activity occurs along the linear corridor. Valparaiso is not only a county seat, but also a college town.

Westfield is a community north of Indianapolis with a population of 38,406 people (Esri Forecast, 2017). This community was incorporated in 1834 and continues to grow and change (C. Ernest, 2018). Similar to Plainfield, development has occurred away from the downtown and along U.S. Highway 31. Nevertheless, the community continues to expand and improve their downtown district (C. Ernest, 2018).

Communication with each community occurred during this process. Conversations about current efforts to achieve downtown success were compiled. From interviews and collected data, successful downtown civic uses were determined and compared to downtown Plainfield's uses.

Next, within the downtowns and a 0.5, 1.0, and 1.5 mile radius buffer around the downtowns, civic and cultural amenities were mapped using ArcMap. A spreadsheet was used to categorize civic amenities found within each radius. Data points include theaters, courthouses, municipal buildings, recreational facilities/public gathering areas, libraries, museums, religious

facilities, schools, and higher education. Business data was also collected and mapped to compare economic assets of each community. Map data was downloaded from IndianaMap and Esri Business Analyst.

After determining some of the community assets, site visits were conducted for each community. During these visits information was gathered through a downtown audit. This downtown audit analyzed the district from an infrastructure, architectural, and social aspect. Elements on the audit include analysis of: boundaries, gateways/gateway signs, wayfinding signs, destination points, street wall, activity venues/events, economic activities, mixed use buildings, sidewalks and pedestrian furniture, streets, blocks, gathering spaces, civic and cultural amenities, architectural styles, historic buildings, trees and landscaping, public art, and people. The Downtown Audit can be found in Appendix A.

I also analyzed and compared census and Esri data. The collection of housing statistics, population, diversity, educational attainment, marital status, age groups, household income, and home value were all gathered for analysis within the downtown, 0.5, 1.0, and 1.5 mile buffers.

To gather community and stakeholder input a survey was created to address some of the current issues downtown Plainfield is facing. Rather than conducting a traditional public outreach meeting, surveys were sent to Plainfield's staff planners, Town Council, Plan Commission, and Redevelopment Commission Members. This step imitates the public outreach portion of the project. The survey can be found in Appendix B. With little time to conduct an actual meeting the survey addressed the following items:

- Things missing in Downtown Plainfield.
- Uses that fit with Downtown Plainfield's wants, desires, needs, and values.
- Uses for the Prewitt/Village Theater.

- Challenges of development in Downtown Plainfield.
- Potential for downtown civic and cultural activities.
- Desires for Downtown Plainfield.
- Businesses missing from Downtown Plainfield.

All of the approaches above led to the study's key findings and informed the suggested proposals for fostering downtown civic and cultural amenities and revitalizing the Prewitt/Village theater. Before delving into detailed data analysis, the next chapter puts this study in context through a discussion of literature.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

As the heart of the city and a gathering place for all residents' downtowns are important community districts. This is the reason civic leaders spend considerable effort to ensure they are healthy. Physical improvements make downtowns places where people want to visit, stay and live. Healthy downtowns also have a mix of businesses that attract people to shop and do commerce. Courthouses and churches, historic architecture, and public gathering spaces all make downtowns or a community's living room. The following literature elaborates on the significance of these amenities to creating healthy downtowns.

Design, Placemaking, Quality of Place

Proper design, placemaking, and quality of place efforts are all key to the success and improvement of downtown districts. Creating a walkable urban environment is crucial for revitalizing a struggling downtown. Properly mixing retail units, hotels, grocery stores, housing, offices, artists' studios, restaurants, and entertainment venues forms a quality of place that attract pedestrians (Leinberger 2005; Walker, 2009). Downtowns may survive without quality places, however public space, art, and interpretation make a downtown come to life (Walker, 2009). Public art is an example of a simple placemaking effort that can be beneficial to downtowns. Public art adds an interesting and attractive element to the district, drawing individuals to visit and spend time there. Art pieces can also create downtown identity and character (Walker, 2009). Murals and street light banners are simple forms of public art that take up minimal space and spruce up a space (Walker, 2009). Unlike those that are uniform, cities with quality spaces are stimulating, (Herzog, 2006). Districts, landmarks, and nodes define urban places. Paths,

define how one moves through a space. A sense of place may be well recognized in districts that preserve these layers of history and culture (Herzog, 2006). Downtown's should have strong private/public partnerships and should provide multifunctional spaces (Burayidi, 2015).

Economic Development

Physical enhancements alone are not a solution for a downtown's long-term success. A beautiful and well-designed downtown is rarely the only reason individuals are attracted to the district (Walker, 2009). The decentralization of economic activity has occurred because land in existing built up areas of cities is difficult and costly to assemble. Developers find it difficult to gather land in the central city that's owned by several people. With this being said land on the outskirts of the area is easy to assemble and develop. The lower land cost developers are drawn to these areas on the outskirts of town. Originally American downtowns were populated with people through pedestrian activity and mass transit. Twenty-four hour activity in the downtown provided a thriving market place in downtown districts. Unfortunately, during the post war era, the federal highway program and homeownership subsidies for middle class households aided in the growth in suburbanization. Firms built their businesses near highways to increase their visibility for those driving in their cars and to capitalize on the middle class population who were now living outside of the downtown (Burayidi, 2015).

Density and diversity of uses are two of the most important downtown ingredients. There are multiple markets within a downtown – the housing market which includes those who live downtown, the "office market", downtown employees, the tourist and entertainment market, individuals who may play downtown, and the retail market, people who purchase goods and services within the downtown district. The market can also be a broader system that includes the market functions such as places, pricing, and competition (Walker, 2009). Through revitalization

efforts like tax increment financing (TIF), façade grant programs, business improvement districts (BIDs), fee waivers, and rental assistance cities and towns provide economic incentives to encourage businesses to locate within the downtown (Burayidi, 2018).

Civic and Cultural Amenities

Retaining civic and cultural amenities in a downtown directly relates to the district's health and environment. Since Roman civilization, civic and cultural buildings such as courthouses, municipal offices, police stations, and jails were all located in the center city. Entertainment and cultural uses like stadiums and ballparks were also located in the center of the city. In the last century, however, these uses have faced the pressure of relocating to the community's fringes. This is because many buildings are now outdated and their designs no longer accommodate their original uses (Burayidi, 2013). Local and public leaders recognize that these uses can impact their downtown's health. More so than large cities, public buildings form a strong and significant presence in small downtowns. Ensuring that these buildings exist within the central city guarantees the vitality of the downtown. The Grabow et al. (2005) survey discovered that communities with county government buildings had 8.4% more businesses in their downtowns compared to communities with few or no county offices within their downtown (Burayidi, 2013). The civic uses create foot traffic which subsequently support other local businesses. For successful downtown redevelopment to occur, redevelopment programs must include retention and expansion of civic and cultural amenities (Burayidi, 2013). Inventing entertainment and cultural facilities/activities draw downtown visitors after 5:00 pm. After spending time at cultural event, visitors have the opportunity to shop and enjoy local shops and restaurants (Walker, 2009).

Institutional uses (government, academic, and religious uses) are primary anchors for downtowns. Public spaces within these uses are often the essence of democracy and the civic realm. These uses generate traffic and help keep retailers and services in business. Employees of these civic sites can also be an asset to the downtown (Walker, 2009).

Historic Redevelopment

Historic preservation is a useful tool for protecting and sharing a districts cultural identity. Unique historic character makes a space appealing, interesting and diverse (Walker, 2009). Taking a building and modifying the original structure and purpose for a new use is adaptive reuse. Adaptive reuse can be done on historic or non-historic structures. Original building uses may also become irrelevant because of changes to the surrounding context; this is an appropriate time to consider adaptively reusing a space or structure. Neighborhood Landmark designations allow for a wider range of permitted land uses (Walker, 2009). To create resilient downtowns, communities link historic preservation to heritage tourism (Burayidi, 2013).

It is important for the success of downtowns to maintain local historic theaters. Specifically, Plainfield's Prewitt/Village Theater. Maintaining and utilizing the theater would activate a vacant building and create opportunities to experience a film or theater production in a historic theater, ultimately increasing the number of people regularly visiting the downtown. Sacrificing architecturally interesting historic buildings for new complexes that feature mainstream films, national retailers, and chain restaurants, causes the activities in the older downtowns to be utilized less. Vacating these historic entertainment structures causes trouble to the surrounding uses. New theaters are designed to draw pedestrians in. These theaters are easily funded in outlying areas of cities (Langdon, 2000). Kendallville, Indiana created a "Save the Strand" campaign to protect a local downtown theater from closing. This landmark was too

expensive to maintain and/or show digital films. By revitalizing a cultural landmark, Downtown Kendallville utilized creative placemaking efforts to renew the downtown (Burayidi, 2018).

Open Space

Open spaces contribute to the vitality of downtowns. Public spaces typically refer to parks, plazas, amphitheaters, greenways, and similar spaces (Walker, 2009). Contemporary American urbanism fails to include basic forms of public space – pedestrian streets, squares, plazas, promenades. Public life is changing and losing its role in cities and communities (Herzog, 2006). However, the demand for public space still exists. We see this demand through the shopping malls in urban America, festival marketplaces, regional fairs, parks, theme parks, and other forms of public entertainment (Herzog, 2006). Other cultures have "third places" or public gathering spaces that are celebrated cultural icons in their cities and communities. Examples of third places are churches, cafes, and parks. Places like this are disappearing in America and are replaced by private homes (Herzog, 2006).

Not only are open spaces desired amenities, but they also improve surrounding property values (Cherry, Rubin, Tawilian, & Clark, 2014) Open space can not only increase nearby residential property values, but also property tax revenues (American Trails, n.d.). Public spaces were first places for civic embodiment of political life. (Herzog, 2006). They serve basic political, religious, commercial, civic, and social functions (Mehta, 2014). In many urban and mixed-use neighborhoods, people continue to use public space for personal and community activities (Mehta, 2014). To establish livability urban parks should be easily accessible and safe for all. These open spaces should also facilitate activities and create a sense of belonging for individuals to enjoy. Research from Crowhurst-Lennard and Lennard (1995) shows that public space is important for generating, enhancing, and sustaining a sense of community. Public spaces

offer the opportunity for social interaction and the ability to experience diversity (Sennett, 1971; Mehta, 2014). Public space should represent and foster public life, provide a meeting place for social groups, and offer urban activities (Mehta, 2014). Public spaces are essential to a downtown (Walker, 2009).

Public spaces should be carefully planned and located where they will not become an eyesore from a lack of maintenance. This causes a desolate environment and can become uninviting and unsafe for individuals. Therefore, downtown open spaces should be purposefully planned and placed. Small formal plazas are appropriate near public buildings functioning as venues for civic uses. A large green space might be better suited to accommodate multiple uses and should hold larger numbers of people while also leveraging opportunities for surrounding economic activity. Public spaces are underused when they lack street access (Walker, 2009). So visitors do not feel like they are invading in a private space, it is important to surround public open space with some public right-of-way (Walker, 2009). Public space characteristics are important, however, in many cases so are the adjacent land uses. Surrounding open spaces with active and vibrant uses like dining and retail retain visitors. Event programing also contributes to the success of public space. Periodic events draw individuals to experience and see the space, making public spaces "Places" for people to visit (Walker, 2009).

Plenty of land and buildings like abandoned strip malls and open-air shopping centers, sit vacant in suburban areas. These structures could be candidates for public parks or open space transformation for community members and visitors to enjoy (Garvin, Berens, & Leinberger, 2001).

After researching and understanding current literature on the topics of design, placemaking, and quality of place, economic development, civic and cultural amenities, historic

redevelopment, and open spaces, the next chapter examines the chosen comparison communities. The chapter analyzes and discusses each of the six community backgrounds, demographics, and downtown features.

Chapter 4

Comparison Communities

Communities Selected for Study

This study used a non-random purposeful approach to select each community. Selecting these communities was a non-random purposeful approach. This method ensures that the selected communities met specified criteria and made them comparable to Plainfield. As explained in Chapter 1, communities had to have a linear downtown, be small communities and located close to or within a metropolitan area. Only one of the communities, Greenfield, is designated as an Indiana Main Street. The other downtowns do not have any designation and/or are not a part of the Indiana Main Street Program. Some of these communities like Zionsville, Greenfield, and Valparaiso were especially selected because of their downtown's reputation. For example, Zionsville is renowned for its new urbanist style downtown and popular shops and restaurants, Downtown Greenfield is known for its walkable, bikeable environment with a variety of shops, restaurants, and architecture. Downtown Valparaiso is well known for transforming a parking lot into a popular community gathering place (City of Zionsville, n.d., Greenfield Main Street, Inc., n.d., & Central Park Plaza: Valparaiso, Indiana, n.d.).

Plainfield. Plainfield is a "Community of Values" and offers a great environment for working, living, and visiting. Located just 15 minutes from Downtown Indy, Plainfield offers many amenities for its community and region. Some of the town's amenities include the open-air mall Perry Crossing, the Plainfield Recreation and Aquatic Center, Splash Island Family Waterpark, the hundreds of acres of parkland, more than 50 restaurants, many houses of worship, a stable employment base, and multiple hotel options for visitors. The community is

conveniently situated just 5 minutes from the Indianapolis International Airport (Visit Plainfield, n.d.).

Downtown Plainfield. Over the year's new downtown businesses have developed in the area. Unfortunately, little pedestrian activity resulted in many downtown companies' failure to last in the district. Every summer the Plainfield Chamber Farmers' Market takes place on Plainfield Friends Meetinghouse lawn (Farmers' Market, n.d.). This weekly activity draws shoppers to the district, but the market only attracts business to the eastside of the downtown. One of Plainfield's main thoroughfares, U.S. Highway 40, runs through the downtown. The Oasis Diner is a popular U.S. 40 landmark in downtown Plainfield. This 1950s structure is one of Indiana's remaining diners. Through the work of Indiana Landmarks, it was recently relocated four miles east to Downtown Plainfield (Sabalow, 2014). A pedestrian bridge connects the White Lick Creek Trail to the downtown and provides access to Plainfield's many community parks. A variety of commercial, retail, dining, municipal, recreational, and religious uses all exist downtown. However the district struggles to capture and retain business as a limited number of pedestrians visit the district and traffic drives past.

Esri Forecasts show that Plainfield's population in 2017 was 31,631. Since 2010 the population has grown by 4,000 people. This growth occurs on the outskirts of town in suburban neighborhoods where property is cheaper. 12,511 housing units exist within the community. The census shows that the median age in Plainfield is 37 years old, which suggests that young professionals and families are living in the community. 2,374 companies are located in the Town of Plainfield and 91% attained an associate's degree or higher. The town's median income is $61,410; however, 7.7% of individuals are below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

According to the ESRI community profile data, 204 housing units are in Downtown Plainfield. Of these units, 40.2% of them are owner occupied housing units, 50.5% are rental units and the remaining 8.8% are vacant housing units. This area's median home value is $127,174. With a median household income of $50,536. The median age is 37. The downtown population is 95.7% Caucasian compared to the town's population of 31,632. Limited downtown diversity could hinder the district's cultural vibrancy. In terms of educational attainment, 35.8% of the population 25 or older has attained their associates degree or higher. Marital status data shows that 44.0% of the downtown population is married; more than 50% of the downtown is unmarried. Within the district there are 20 retail businesses and 13 commercial units. These downtown businesses are somewhat diverse, but do not add much in terms of quality of place to the central core.

Downtown Plainfield has a few civic and cultural amenities. The community's Town Hall sits within the district and provides a civic use that draws people to the downtown. The Plainfield Friends Meeting House, Central Elementary School, and the Central Elementary School playground, also sit within these limits. Connected to mixed-use buildings in the downtown's central core, the Village Theater's is currently closed. Three more community parks and four more churches exist within 0.5 miles of the downtown. A limited number of civic and cultural amenities prevent pedestrians from leaving the trail, passing businesses and restaurants, and venturing further downtown.

Plainfield's traditional historic downtown creates well-defined boundaries on account of its street wall and well-defined edge at both east and west ends of the denser block and a half. However, with limited downtown wayfinding and or gateway signage, it is difficult to determine how far the downtown's residential district extends. There are a few destination points like the

Friends Meeting House lawn and popular restaurants like the Oasis Diner and Dairy Queen. The Prewitt/Village Theater has potential for becoming a popular destination, however, as an underutilized building the theater currently does little for the downtown. This space may also potentially serve as an activity/venue for downtown gatherings. Until then, there are limited areas and opportunities for gathering. The popular farmer's market occurs on the Friends Meeting House lawn. Plainfield's Town Hall, serves as the community's municipal building. The Friends Meeting House not only hosts the summer farmer's market, but it also opens its doors for the Quaker Day Parade and Festival. The mixed-use buildings in the downtown's core create a sense of density and historic charm. Because business owners chose to build away from the downtown, where parking is convenient and accessible for patrons, downtown's economic diversity is limited. The streets are complete and provide a buffer between pedestrians and the busy two-way U.S. 40 traffic. Beside the outside seating at restaurants on the downtown's west side, not many places are provided for sitting. The landscaping adds to the complete streets and proves to be a sustainable method for storm water runoff and beautification. Limited public art exists in the downtown, but is included in the downtown plan. With the addition of many of the plans suggestions and uses, the downtown may experience an increase in pedestrian activity and ultimately create a healthy vibrant downtown.

Brownsburg. The Town of Brownsburg was incorporated in 1848 (Houseal Lavigne Associates, 2012). In 2009 it was the 33rd best places to live according to Money's list of America's best small towns (Best Places to Live, n.d.). Brownsburg is within the same county, Hendricks, as Plainfield. Brownsburg is located fifteen miles northwest of Indianapolis and is conveniently off Interstate 74. The community is commonly known for its quality schools, housing, and the Lucas Oil Raceway Park (Houseal Lavigne Associates, 2012). Much of the

downtown auto-oriented. The Walgreens and CVS each at the corner of West Main Street and South Green Street sit far off of the street and fail to provide rear parking. The original mixed-use downtown structures sit on the east side of Green Street. These buildings currently house a boutique, barbershop, mortgage company and pizza place. The Town Hall and green space serve as a great example of community development that aspires to create a downtown feel with a public green space for activities and events.

The Esri Forecast shows that the 2017 community population was 25,891. Like Plainfield since 2010 the community grew by around 4,000 people. Much of this growth has occurred in suburban neighborhoods. There are a total of 9,272 housing units in Brownsburg. The median age in Brownsburg is 37 years old. Also like Plainfield, this implies that the community is young. There are 1,741 companies within the community and the educational attainment is 92.8%, suggesting that Brownsburg is a well-educated community. The median household income is 68,647 dollars; however, 4.3% of individuals are below poverty. Compared to Plainfield, Brownsburg has a higher median household income and 3.4% less of the population is below poverty.

Downtown Brownsburg. According to the 2017 Esri data 15 total housing units are located within Downtown Brownsburg. Of these 15 housing units 60% of them are owner occupied while 33.3% are rentals and 13.3% are vacant, which is higher than the national average of 7%. This high vacancy rate could make housing options cheaper and more attractive for lower income households. The median home value in downtown is $125,000 while the median household income is $50,000. In comparison to the median home value in Brownsburg, this is an affordable area for the downtown residents. The median age of downtown residents is 41. The data shows that 100% of the population is white alone, suggesting that the downtown is

not culturally diverse. 26.4% of downtown Brownsburg has attained an associate's degree or higher which is 20.2% lower than the town as a whole. 41.7% of the population is married. Consequently, over half of the population is unmarried. There are 18 retail businesses and 15 commercial businesses within Brownsburg's downtown district. Similarly, to Plainfield, both districts do not have many businesses to draw people to the area.

Downtown Brownsburg provides three civic and cultural amenities. One is a church while the other is the Brownsburg Town Hall and Plaza. Additionally, within 0.5 miles is Arbuckle Acres Park, a popular area for community activities. The downtown is also currently expanding and developing an area northwest of the downtown. This area will be transformed into a pedestrian-friendly economic center with a goal of creating a vibrant downtown. These mixed-use buildings provide additional commercial, retail, and residential uses (Town of Brownsburg, Indiana Homepage, n.d.). The existing downtown civic and cultural amenities actually appear to be less impressive than Plainfield's. Both communities include their town halls, a central green space, and a church.

Brownsburg does not have well defined boundaries. During the field work research, it was difficult to find where the downtown began and where it ended. Brownsburg lacks downtown wayfinding signage and gateways. There were a limited number of destination points: a few shops, parks, and a new development that is not yet complete. There is a short street wall, right along the corner of East Main Street and Green Street. A limited number of activity venues and events were found downtown. There is an insufficient mix of economic activities within the downtown. Only a few mixed use buildings are within the downtown, mainly the ones on the corner of East Main Street and Green Street. These buildings have retail on the ground floor and what appears to be underutilized or storage areas on the second floors. There are an adequate

amount of sidewalks running through the main corridor of downtown Brownsburg, however there is heavy traffic in this area. The commercial corridor runs along a two-way street popular for vehicular traffic. The streets are not complete. Gathering spaces are a high priority as there are multiple park/open areas within the downtown. Unfortunately, there are not many places for people to sit. There was not a great amount of diversity in architectural style within the downtown. However, there seemed to be some historic buildings, mainly homes and the mixed use units at the main intersection. The trees and landscaping are limited and there is no public art. During the site visit there were only a few people walking around. Instead, most people were in their cars driving through.

Zionsville. Zionsville is 20 minutes north of Indianapolis and provides local shopping, art galleries and dining options for community members and visitors to enjoy. The community has a great school system and a small town atmosphere that is only minutes away from Downtown Indianapolis. Zionsville has seventeen parks and facilities. The park system includes 400 acres in the community. These include playgrounds, a splash park, Skateboard Park, a sledding hill, sports fields and courts, picnic areas, and nature trails. The city also has a Nature Center, that provides environmental education for students and families (Zionsville, Indiana, n.d.). Downtown Zionsville is a popular place for day trips and afternoon outings. Its charming village feel provides a safe environment for pedestrians to walk, shop, and enjoy an urban environment without the hustle and bustle of a larger downtown. Diverted vehicular traffic and other traffic calming efforts provide a safe pedestrian environment. Rear parking for shops and restaurants ensure a proper street wall. The downtown's alleys are also activated for safety and use.

The 2017 Esri Forecasts shows that Zionsville has a population of 28,738, which is approximately 5,000 increase from the community's 2010 total population. It appears that the

growth is occurring in sprawling suburban neighborhoods because of their lot sizes and amenities. There are 9,615 total housing units. The median age in the town is 38 years old; this age indicates that young families and professionals live in Zionsville. There are 2,818 companies in the community. 97.9% of Zionsville's populations achieved a high school graduate degree or higher. The median household income is 118,190 dollars. However, 2.7% of individuals are below the poverty level, which is 5% less than Plainfield (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Downtown Zionsville. According to 2017 data Downtown Zionsville has a total of 19 housing within its boundaries. Of these 19 housing units, 52.6% of the units are owner occupied units while 31.6% are rental units, and 15.8% are vacant. Compared to Plainfield, Downtown Zionsville has a higher homeownership rate. For such a popular downtown it is shocking that the downtown's vacancy rate is higher than the national vacancy rate of 7%. This could indicate the housing is unaffordable for the individuals living in the area. The median home value is $333,333. The median household income is $80,071. In terms of affordability this district is not affordable considering the median household's income. The median age is 51 and 95.5% of the population is white alone suggesting that the area is not very culturally diverse. Of the population, 58.8% attained an associate's degree or higher. This comparison suggests that Downtown Zionsville attracts more educated individuals than Plainfield to live in the downtown. 40% of the population is married showing that more than 50% of the population is unmarried. There are 63 retail businesses and 21 commercial businesses in downtown Zionsville. This high number of businesses raises property values and explains the median home value. Compared to Zionsville's downtown Plainfield is significantly lacking businesses/economic development.

Within its boundaries, Downtown Zionsville contains two civic and cultural amenities, the Village Corner plaza and Lincoln Park. Both of these public spaces provide a quiet park like

environment and plaza feel for pedestrians to experience while exploring the shops and restaurants of the downtown. Within 0.5 miles of the downtown there are ten additional recreational areas, the community's public library, and an elementary school. These recreational areas create an atmosphere of outdoor living and healthy quality of life. The SullivanMunce Cultural Center also sits within the 0.5 mile buffer just west of the downtown. This cultural center provides opportunities for individuals to enjoy art, history, and genealogy. The community recognizes this center as the historical, artistic, and cultural center of Zionsville (SullivanMunce Cultural Center, n.d.). This use supports a strong cultural community influence.

Downtown Zionsville's street wall allows for individuals to recognize the specific downtown boundaries, however Zionsville lacks wayfinding signs and/or gateway signs. There are many destination points in downtown Zionsville. Many of these include different shops, restaurants, and parks to visit within the downtown district. Some of these restaurants include Salty Cowboy, Noah Grant's Grill House & Oyster Bar, The Friendly Tavern. Popular shops in the downtown include the Village Yarn Company, Fivethirty Home, and Lesley Jane. The Village Corner is nestled within the heart of downtown and offers a pocket park space in the downtown context (Village Corner in Zionsville Indiana, n.d.). The street wall is also impressive and defines the downtown area. There are multiple activities within the community, but mostly just shopping and dining in the downtown. A large diversity of economic activity also exists in the downtown. It appears that many of the buildings are mixed use and there are multiple sidewalks and pedestrian furniture for pedestrians. The vehicular corridor through the downtown is a two-way street, but it is not the main corridor of the community. Traffic is diverted around the downtown to the west. Diverting the traffic away from the downtown district providing a quieter and safer pedestrian environment. In terms of complete streets many of the streets are

complete with a green buffer and sidewalks for pedestrian use. There are a couple gathering spaces within the downtown. Most of these spaces are large parks just outside of the downtown, but there is a plaza within the downtown space and a small green space. Each of these spaces add great locations for outdoor activities within the downtown. Moreover, there are multiple locations for civic and cultural events to occur within the 0.5 mile buffer around downtown, however there is mainly just shopping within the downtown. The downtown area definitely has a diversity of architectural styles, maybe not so original to the area, but it definitely is diverse. There seems to be a high tendency of historic preservation within the downtown especially in terms of historic housing units. There is also a desire for trees and landscaping within the downtown as well, however I noticed no public art. Multiple people were not only driving through the district, but also walking around from shop to shop. There appeared to be individuals visiting for the day. Overall downtown Zionsville is a very healthy district that provides both community amenities and elements for visitors to enjoy. Their placemaking strategies and building structures form an urban district within a suburban area that encourages walking and activity for a vibrant downtown environment.

Greenfield. Greenfield is the county seat of Hancock County. The community is just east of Indianapolis and home/birthplace of James Whitcomb Riley, a Hoosier poet. Many of the community activities that Greenfield offers are Chalk Fest, Chapel in the Park Museum, Christmas Festival & Lights Parade, and the Chocolate Walk. The community also has antique shops and campgrounds. The community also has summer concerts on the Courthouse Plaza and the County Fair at the Hancock County 4-H Fairgrounds. Farmers Markets also occur on a regular basis. Some other activities amenities include visiting Historic Downtown Greenfield, the James Whitcomb Riley Birthplace Home & Museum, Old Log Jail Museum, and the numerous

parks throughout the community. Connected to the downtown, the Pennsy Walking Trail, has an Art Fair & Music Festival (Visit Greenfield, n.d.). Activities specific to the downtown include Shamrock the Block, Bikes in Bloom, National Road Yard Sale, North Street Fitness Festival, Hometown Heroes Cornhole Tourney, Chalk Fest, Booze & Brew, Shop Small Saturday, and other holiday activities. Run by Main Street Greenfield, these events are intended to draw residents and visitors to the downtown in hopes of activating its public spaces and encouraging economic activity (Greenfield Main Street, (n.d.).

According to the 2017 Esri Forecasts data shows that 22,283 people live in Greenfield, Indiana. This 2017 population is approximately 2,000 more people than the 2010 data. The community is growing in new developments away from the downtown, similar to the pattern of growth in Plainfield. In total, 9,287 housing units exist in Greenfield. The median age of Greenfield is 36.9 years old. This may suggest that younger professionals and families are using the city as a bedroom community. In terms of businesses there are 1,858 companies in Greenfield. 90.7% of Greenfield residents attained a high school degree or higher suggesting that there are higher paid wages in the community. The Median Household Income is 52,513 dollars. However, 12.7% of the population is below poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Similar to each of the communities previously discussed a trend appearing is educated families living in each of these communities and possibly commuting to Indianapolis.

Downton Greenfield. Within Downtown Greenfield there are 90 total households. Of these units 39.8% of them are owner occupied and 39.8% are renter occupied and the remaining 20.4% are vacant housing units. This level of vacancy much higher than Plainfield, but comparable to Zionsville. Similar to Plainfield, this could indicate that development is occurring outside of the downtown. The median home value is $98,529 and the median household income

is $40,726. This area is very affordable for the existing residents. The median age group is 36 years old. 95.4% of the population is white alone suggesting that the downtown could be lacking cultural diversity. Of the downtown population 29.1% has attained an associate's degree or higher. 42.7% of the population is married showing that more than 50% of the population is single, suggesting that downtown attracts single personas such as millennials. There are 31 retail businesses and 5 commercial businesses within the Greenfield downtown district. Some of these businesses include McCleerey's Sporting Goods, LRF Electronics Inc., and the Greenfield Fitness along with some other law firms. With a high number of businesses one would assume that the downtown property values would be high.

In terms of civic and cultural amenities, Downtown Greenfield includes its county courthouse square and plaza. It also holds three churches and a museum/the home of James Whitcomb Riley, a Hoosier Poet who became a celebrity through his work. After his death, the Riley Memorial Association was formed in his honor. The organization addressed the need in Indianapolis for a children's hospital (About Us, n.d.). This history adds to the community's cultural identity. Downtown also houses the city hall, drawing people to the district for municipal affairs. Within the 0.5 mile buffer around the downtown central point, the community also offers the Pennsy Trail and the community park, Central Park. Within walking distance for pedestrians, the Pennsy Trail adds to the downtown's quality of life. There are two additional churches and one elementary school within this district as well.

Downtown Greenfield also had well defined boundaries. As the county seat, much of the downtown surrounds the county courthouse. There are no defined gateways and/or gateway signage. Without gateways, it is difficult to determine where the downtown boundaries end. However, there are a good amount of wayfinding signs. Many destinations points are also within

the downtown, especially county buildings. The street wall is a significant part of the downtown; it definitely adds density to the area and creates an urban setting. There are opportunities for many activity venues and events. Downtown Greenfield provides diversity of economic activity. There are also many mixed use buildings, which add density and create an urban setting within the downtown. Downtown Greenfield offers sidewalks and pedestrian furniture appropriate for use when walking around the district. The streets are mostly complete and most of them are two-way traffic patterns. There are a few gathering spaces, both small and large. The downtown also provides a great amount of places for people to sit. Downtown's architectural styles are also very diverse and many of the structures remain historic and/or are designed to reflect the historic context. A limited amount of public art is within the district, while the trees and landscaping are adequate. Multiple people were in the downtown and a constant flow of vehicular traffic exists as well.

Valparaiso. The Porter County seat boasts historic buildings, local parks, quaint neighborhoods, and many successful businesses. The city regularly hosts events throughout the year. Some of these include Central Park Plaza Market, Summer Rhapsody Music Festival, Valpo Brewfest, Holly Days and the Popcorn Fest, a community favorite. The community also has a variety of attractions and cultural activities. These include the Memorial Opera House, Brauer Museum of Art, and the Chicago Street Theater. The community also boasts it local college, Valparaiso University. This institution offers many amenities such as sporting events and also cultural entertainment opportunities (Valparaiso, Indiana, n.d.). Specifically, Downtown Valparaiso provides fantastic performance venues, art, museums, retail and dining options. Lincolnway is a thriving thoroughfare for the community and especially the downtown (City of Valparaiso, 2015). The Central Park Plaza is recognized for its cultural activities and community

events (Central Park Plaza: Valparaiso, Indiana, n.d.). The downtown density and mix of uses creates an urban environment that attracts and entertains residents and visitors alike.

According to Esri 2017 Forecast Valparaiso's population is 33,568. This is approximately a growth of 2,000 people from 2010. It appears that growth occurs north of the downtown in suburban neighborhoods. However, compared to the other communities, especially Plainfield, this growth does not seem as rapid. 13,400 total housing units exist in Valparaiso. The median age in the city is 33 years old. This population is younger than all of the previously compared communities. This may be because Valparaiso University retains a younger population. The number of companies in Valparaiso is 2,658. 93.9% of the population has attained a high school degree or higher. This suggests that the majority of the community has higher wage paying jobs. Higher than Plainfield, this is not shocking because Valparaiso is a college town. The median household income is 49,429 dollars. However, of the total population 14.9% of individuals are below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 2010).

Downtown Valparaiso. There are 102 total housing units within Downton Valparaiso. Of these housing units 38.2% are owner occupied, 50% are rental units, and 11.8% are vacant housing units. Compared to the 7% average vacancy rate the district has a high vacancy rate. Similarly to Plainfield there are also more renters than home owners in Downtown Valparaiso. This may be due to home prices and affordability. The Median home value is $150,000 and the Median Household Income is $53,333. The Median age group is 35 years old. Which is higher than the City's median age group. This suggests that younger individuals are living out in suburban areas. Of the downtown's population, 91.2% is white alone which suggests that the downtown could be missing cultural diversity. 51.4% have an associate's degree or higher. 28.1% of individuals are married, suggesting that more single individuals live in the downtown

or people have roommates and share housing. There are 69 retail establishments and 43 commercial businesses in Downtown Valparaiso. This type of economic development has created a diverse mix of uses drawing many people to the downtown and adding foot traffic to the district. Ultimately adding to the success of downtown. Compared to Plainfield's lack of uses, this shows potential of what could be in Downtown Plainfield.

Downtown Valparaiso includes many civic and cultural amenities. The downtown contains many religious facilities; a total of three churches are within the downtown's boundaries. The downtown also holds the Porter County Public Library and the Porter County Courthouse. The library may draw a variety of individuals from differing age groups and socioeconomic statuses, enhancing the downtowns diversity. The Valparaiso City Hall and a park commonly used for community activities and events, also sit within the downtown. Finally, the Memorial Opera House exists in Downtown Valparaiso. This performing arts theater works to build community and create a sense of belonging (Memorial Opera House, n.d.). Within a 0.5 mile buffer from the downtown central point there are two additional parks, two additional schools, and the Chicago Street Theater, another live performance venue.

Downtown Valparaiso has defined boundaries, but no gateways and/or gateway signage are provided. There were a few wayfinding signs and several destination points. The street wall was very evident and there were many spaces for activities and events. As a college town, there was a diverse amount of economic activities and multiple mixed-use buildings. These elements again create an appropriate downtown environment and feel. There were a total of twenty-two places for people to sit. The sidewalks were also appropriate to walk on. Unlike Plainfield's downtown sidewalks, which have a limited buffer in certain areas. Some parts of the downtown include plants as buffers but other parts only have railing to block from vehicular trafficking

passing by. However, the plants add to the setting of the downtown. There are some two-way streets, but the main corridor of Lincolnway is a two-way street and these streets are somewhat complete with street trees, lighting, and benches, however there is a limited buffer between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. There are a few gathering spaces downtown, especially one that has a skating rink and amphitheater, which is great for events and activities. There seemed to be a diversity of architectural styles and many efforts to maintain historic structures. The trees and landscaping are great, as there were many street trees. Minimal public art exists within the downtown, however that did not deter people from venturing to the district as there were many pedestrians shopping, eating, and enjoying the sunshine.

Westfield. Just thirty minutes north of Downtown Indianapolis on U.S. 31 is Westfield, Indiana. In 2013, Westfield was named one of the 50 "Best Places to Live" by CNN Money. The community also ranked fifth in the Midwest and 18th in the nation according to the focus of "America's Best Small Towns" (Westfield, Indiana, n.d.). With a small town feel, Westfield has a unique sense of identity and has significant natural areas and open spaces. The community has a low crime rate, easy access to public services, excellent school, and a high-quality of public services (Greg & Bergman, 2007). The downtown is not very dense and fails to offer much in terms of entertainment and cultural uses. However, the community is making strides to improve the space and add public open space for community events and pedestrian use. The downtown also features an impressive mural that adds to the spaces quality of life.

According to the 2017 Esri Forecasts population data 38,406 people living in Westfield. The population has grown by 8,000 individuals since 2010. This growth is occurring west of US Highway 31 in suburban developments. The total housing units in Westfield are 12,152. The median age of individuals in Westfield is 34 years old. This suggests that younger families are

living in Westfield and possibly commuting to Indianapolis, good schools and many community amenities. In terms of business and industry there are 3,345 companies in Westfield compared to Plainfield's 2,374. The educational attainment shows that 95.8% of the individuals have a high school degree or higher and suggests a high number of higher wage individuals. The community's median household income is 90,048 dollars. However, 6.6% of the city's individuals are below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 2010).

Downtown Westfield. Downtown Westfield includes 141 housing units. Of these housing units 70.9% are owner occupied while 23.4% are rental units. The remaining 5.7% are vacant housing units. This suggests that there is a need for more housing units in the downtown district. In 2017 the median Household Income was $79,590 and the Median Home value was $192,708. This shows that the downtown is a considerably inexpensive place for the median household. The median age in the downtown district is 32 years old. 86.8% of the downtown's population is white alone suggesting that more cultural diversity may exist in downtown Westfield than downtown Plainfield. In terms of educational attainment, 62.3% of the population earned an associate's degree or higher. 63.3% of the population is married showing that young married families are living in Downtown Westfield because of its affordability. Westfield has 24 commercial businesses and 31 retail business within the downtown district. Slightly more than Plainfield this may be because of Westfield's large downtown district.

Downtown Westfield includes some civic and cultural amenities. Two of these amenities are the Westfield City Hall and an intermediate school. However, the largest asset is the Roy O. Hadley Community Park. Downtown also includes the Old Friends Cemetery Park and Grand Junction Plaza. The Westfield Public Library sits within this district as well. Within a 0.5 mile buffer around the downtown central point, there are two additional churches, an intermediate

school, and a middle school. At the downtown's central intersection of Union and Main Street there are minimal uses that attract visitors and residents. However, on the downtown's south west side, near a residential area and by the Roy O. Hadley Community Park, the city is working to create a restaurant district within a low density residential area. In this district, it appears that homes are adaptively reused to function as restaurants. To create quaint quiet eating environments, a similar project could be applied to residential areas of Downtown Plainfield.

Besides the buildings at the intersection of East Main Street and North Union Street, Downtown Westfield does not have any well-defined boundaries. There were hardly any gateways and gateway signs except where the mixed-use buildings sit at the intersection of East Main Street and North Union Street. There were a low number of destination points and the street wall was very short. The remainder of the downtown looks like larger lots with buildings set back off the road. There is a nice park and some restaurants on the west side of the downtown. Only some activities and events occur in the downtown. There is a small amount of diversity when it comes to economic activity. The main core of the downtown did have mixed use buildings, but this is a small portion of the whole downtown. Not much seating was available for individuals to sit on and there were existing sidewalks, but not complete streets. There are clearly defined two-way streets running through the downtown. The main intersection of East Main Street and North Union Street is a busy thoroughfare. There is a large park being developed and a great trail that runs through the downtown. The area has a small amount of diversity in terms of architectural styles and there did not seem to be many historic buildings and structures. There are hardly any trees and/or landscaping elements, and minimal public art. One impressive there is a mural was painted on a structure at the downtown's main intersection. Only

a couple people were in the downtown on the day of the site visit. However, like many of the other communities, a lot of vehicular traffic ran through the district.

Downtown visits show that some of these suburban communities have made efforts to maintain their downtown's while others have not. These findings may be outcomes of downtown structure and design and/or existing uses in the district. According to the rank order, communities displaying success included a mix of uses and many civic amenities within the downtown district. This success was not the case for all five comparison communities or Plainfield.

The case study communities were all settled in the 19th century and their downtown populations are declining. However, the case study communities show a lot of diversity, but also some similarities. For example, with respect to housing tenure Brownsburg, Zionsville, and Westfield, had more than half of those living in the downtown as homeowners while Plainfield, Greenfield, and Valparaiso had fewer home owners in their downtowns. In addition, Zionsville and Westfield had higher income residents in their downtown compared to Plainfield, Brownsburg, Greenfield, and Valparaiso. Furthermore, Zionsville, Greenfield, Valparaiso, and Westfield had more than 10% of the total retail in their downtown, while Plainfield and Brownsburg had fewer retail units. Brownsburg, Zionsville, Valparaiso, and Westfield had more than 10% of the total commercial units in their downtown, while Plainfield and Greenfield had fewer retail units.

The next chapter discusses the findings from the study and draws lessons that will be used for Plainfield's downtown redevelopment plan in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter analyzes data from each downtown case study from three ranges. The buffers were drawn at 0.5, 1.0, and 1.5 miles around a central point within each downtown. In order to gather data, specific features pinpointed in each community. ESRI data showing recreation, library, museums, religious centers, schools, higher education, municipal buildings, courthouses, theaters, retail, and commercial units were mapped for each community. To examine how Plainfield compared to different communities this section discusses housing, economy, and civic and cultural amenities.

Table 2 - Downtown Amenities and retail businesses in case study communities.

Community:	Recreational Facilities:	Libraries:	Museums:	Religious Centers:	Schools:	Higer Education:	Municipal Buildings	Courthouse	Theaters	Retail	Commercial	Total:
Plainfield	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	20	13	38
Brownsburg	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	18	15	35
Zionsville	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	63	21	86
Greenfield	1	0	1	3	0	0	1	1	0	31	5	43
Valparaiso	1	1	0	3	0	0	1	1	1	69	43	120
Westfield	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	31	24	61

Table 2 above depicts the number of civic/cultural and retail/commercial amenities within each downtown. It shows that Valparaiso offers the most in terms of shopping and dining establishments while also providing many civic and cultural amenities. This could be due to the city's location as a county seat and the fact that Valparaiso is a college town. Zionsville ranks second in terms of civic/cultural and retail/commercial amenities. However, compared to Valparaiso, downtown Zionsville lacks more cultural amenities. Downtown Westfield encompasses the next highest count of amenities. This data may be skewed, because downtown Westfield is so large and includes a much larger pool of data points. However, Greenfield, Brownsburg, and Plainfield all align in many ways. It is interesting to recognize that these three

downtowns are lacking prosperity because of their minimal economic activities. Specifically Plainfield has five civic and cultural amenities ranking it as fourth in terms of civic and cultural amenities. Valparaiso's eight downtown civic and cultural amenities make up every category except museums, schools, and higher education. Each of these uses are present in different parts of the community. Unlike Valparaiso, Downtown Plainfield does not have a library or courthouse within the downtown. However, both communities have theaters, municipal buildings, and recreational facilities. In terms of retail and commercial businesses, Plainfield and Brownsburg both ranked last. Both communities only have 33 businesses compared to the highest-ranking community, Valparaiso with 112 downtown retail and commercial units. The maps displaying each communities civic and cultural amenities can be found in Appendix C.

The case study communities show some diversity, but also some similarities. For example with respect to total downtown amenities Westfield, Greenfield, and Valparaiso had more civic and cultural amenities than Plainfield, Brownsburg, and Zionsville. In addition, Plainfield, Brownsburg, and Greenfield approximately share the same number of downtown businesses however; they fail to compete with downtown Westfield, Zionsville and Valparaiso who have at least 40% more businesses.

Housing

Table 3 Housing in case study communities.

Housing (units)	Total	Downtown	0.5-Mile	1-Mile	1.5-Miles
Plainfield	11735	1.7%	10.1%	16.2%	28.4%
Brownsburg	10,159	0.1%	11.5%	18.8%	29.2%
Zionsville	10,904	0.2%	7.5%	13.1%	26.1%
Greenfield	9,543	1.2%	15.1%	25.0%	28.9%
Valparaiso	14,169	0.7%	14.1%	14.8%	25.7%
Westfield	14,411	1.0%	8.8%	6.9%	13.0%

0.5 Mile Buffer. There are 1,188 housing units within a 0.5 mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 0.5 mile Buffer, Plainfield has 1.3% more housing units than Brownsburg and 31.5% more housing units than Zionsville. However, Plainfield has 21.6% fewer housing units than Greenfield's 1,445 total units and 7.1% fewer housing units than Westfield's 1,272 total units. 10.1% of Plainfield's housing units are located within a half mile of the downtown. Compared to the other communities 10.1% is an adequate percentage; only Greenfield, Valparaiso, and Brownsburg have a higher percentage of total housing units within the 0.5 mile buffer. Table 3 depicts the housing statistics in the study communities.

Of the housing units within the 0.5 mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 42.9% are owner occupied. Only one community, Valparaiso (35.4%), has a smaller percentage of owner-occupied units. Brownsburg (62.6%), Zionsville (50.7%), Greenfield (46.4%), and Westfield (65.5%) all have a greater percentage of owner occupied units.

Of the housing units within the 0.5 mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 48.1% are renter occupied. Four communities, Brownsburg (37.4%), Zionsville (40.7%), Greenfield (40.3%), and Westfield (27.9%) have smaller percentages of renter occupied units. Only one community, Valparaiso (55.4%) has a greater percentage of renter occupied units.

Of the housing units within the 0.5 mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 9.0% are vacant. Two communities, Zionsville (8.6%) and Westfield (6.6%) have smaller percentages of vacant units. Brownsburg (11.9%), Greenfield (13.6%), and Valparaiso (9.3%) all have a greater percentage of vacant units.

Plainfield's 0.5 mile buffer median home value is $140,500. When compared to the study communities, Plainfield's median home value is higher than Brownsburg and Greenfield. However, the median home value is less than Zionsville, Valparaiso, and Westfield. See Chart 1.

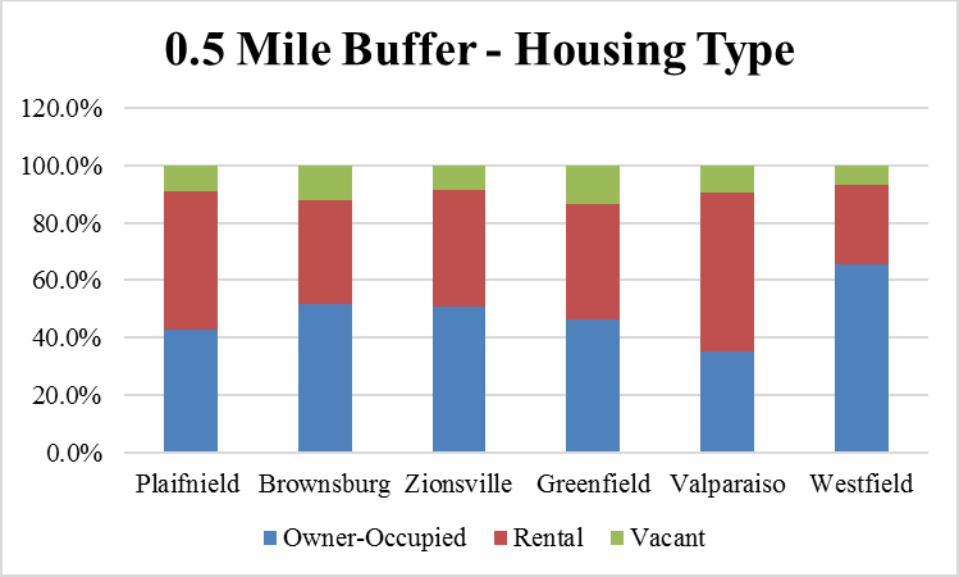


Chart 1 - 0.5 Mile Housing.

0.5 - 1.0 Mile Buffer. There are 1,899 additional housing units within a 1.0 Mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 1.0 Mile Buffer, Plainfield has 47.8% more housing units than Westfield, and 24.6% more housing units than Zionsville. However, Plainfield has 0.6% fewer housing units than Brownsburg's total 1,911, 25.9% fewer housing units than Greenfield's 2,390 total units, and 10.4% fewer than Valparaiso's 2,096 total units. 16.2% of Plainfield's housing units are located within 1.0 mile of the downtown. Compared to the other communities 16.2% is a high percentage; only Brownsburg and Greenfield have a higher percentage of total housing units within the 1.0 mile buffer.

Of the housing units within the 1.0 Mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 64.2% are owner occupied. Three communities, Zionsville (44.7%), Greenfield (59.9%), and Valparaiso

(49.6%), have smaller percentages of owner-occupied units. Brownsburg (67.1%) and Westfield (72.0%) both have a greater percentage of owner occupied units.

Of the housing units within the 1.0 Mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 29.5% are renter occupied. Only one community, Westfield (21.6%), has a smaller percentage of renter occupied units. Four communities, Brownsburg (34.6%), Zionsville (42.7%), Greenfield (34.5%), and Valparaiso (42.3%) have greater percentages of renter occupied units.

Of the housing units within the 1.0 Mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 6.2% are vacant. Only one community, Brownsburg (5.5%), has a smaller percentage of vacant units. Four communities, Westfield (6.6%), Zionsville (12.6%), Greenfield (10.2%), and Valparaiso (8.1%) have greater percentages of vacant units.

Plainfield's 1.0 mile buffer median home value is $148,134. When compared to the study communities, Plainfield's median home value is higher than Brownsburg, Greenfield, and Valparaiso. However, the median home value is less than Zionsville and Westfield. See Chart 2.

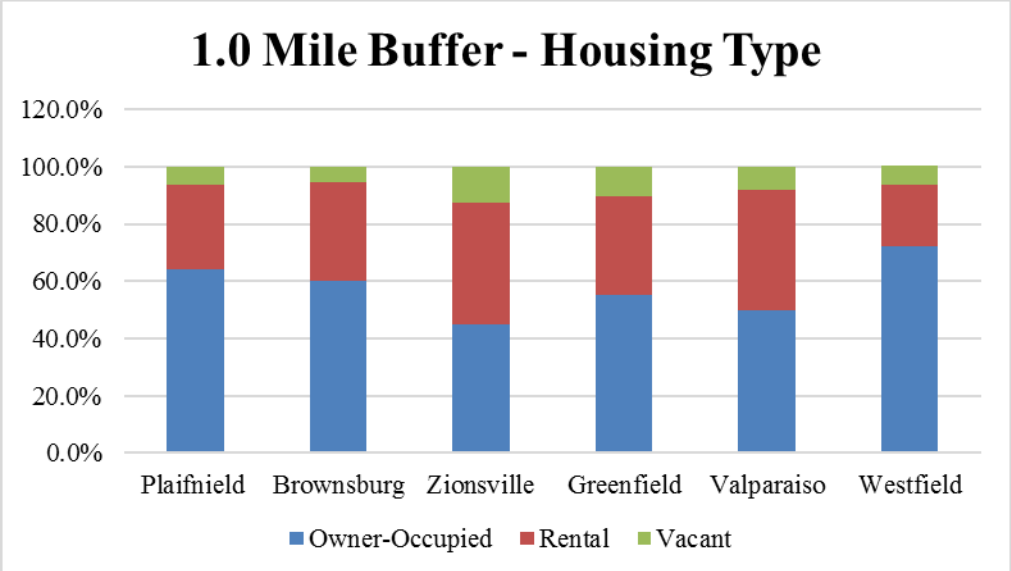


Chart 2 – 1.0 Mile Housing.

1.0 - 1.5 Mile Buffer. There are 1,899 additional housing units within a 1.5 mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 1.5 mile Buffer, Plainfield has 11.2% more housing units than Brownsburg, 14.9% more housing units than Zionsville, 17.3% more housing units than Greenfield, and 44.0% more housing units than Westfield. However, Plainfield has 9.3% fewer housing units than Valparaiso's 3648 total units. 28.4% of Plainfield's housing units are located within 1.5 miles of downtown. Compared to the other study areas 28.4% scores higher than three communities; only Brownsburg and Greenfield have a higher percentage of total housing units within the 1.5 mile buffer.

Of the housing units within the 1.5 mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 71.0% are owner occupied. Three communities, Zionsville (70.7%), Greenfield (61.0%), and Valparaiso (48.0%), have smaller percentages of owner-occupied units. Brownsburg (75.7%) and Westfield (73.6%) both have a greater percentage of owner occupied units.

Of the housing units within the 1.5 mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 24.0% are renter occupied. Three communities, Zionsville (19.7%), Brownsburg (20.6%), and Westfield (20.7%), all have smaller percentages of renter occupied units. Greenfield (27.3%), and Valparaiso (46.1%) both have a greater percentage of owner occupied units.

Of the housing units within the 1.5 mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield, 5.0% are vacant. Only one community, Brownsburg (3.6%) has a smaller percentage of vacant units. Four communities, Zionsville (9.5%), Westfield (5.7%), Greenfield (11.7%), and Valparaiso (5.9%) all have a greater percentage of vacant units.

Plainfield's 1.5 mile buffer median home value is $157,293. When compared to the study communities, Plainfield's median home value is higher than Greenfield. However, the median home value is less than Brownsburg, Zionsville, Valparaiso, and Westfield. See Chart 3.

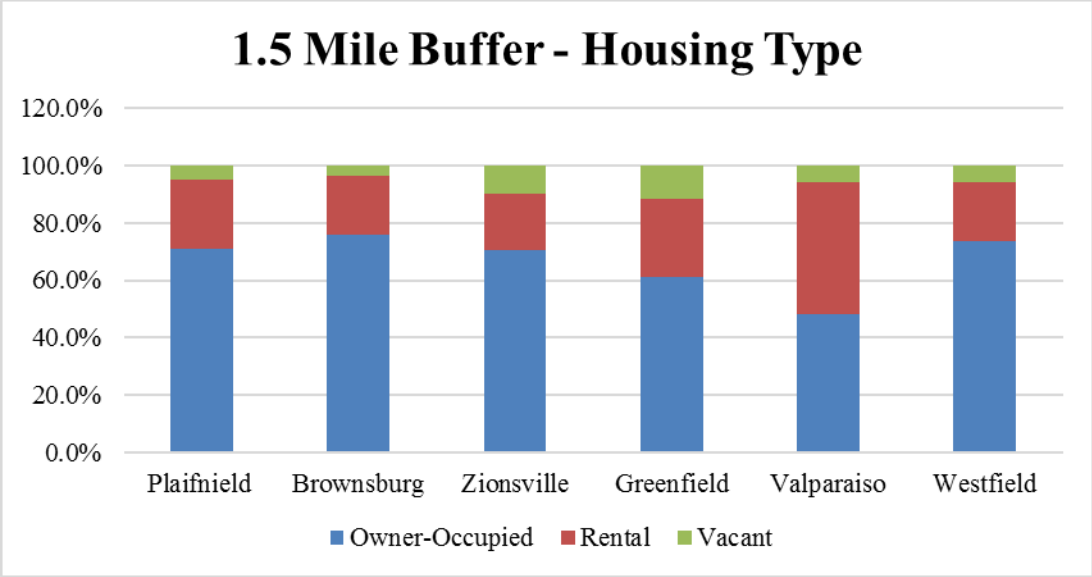


Chart 3 - 1.5 Mile Housing.

Economy

Table 4 - Retail and commercial establishment in the downtowns of case study communities

Retail (units)	Total	Downtown	Percentage	0.5	1	1.5
Plainfield	332	20	7.53%	25	25	40
Brownsburg	224	18	11.61%	26	101	69
Zionsville	138	63	47.83%	66	33	26
Greenfield	195	31	23.59%	46	29	54
Valparaiso	422	69	21.56%	91	89	89
Westfield	128	31	24.22%	31	64	33

Commercial (units)	Total	Downtown	Percentage	0.5	1	1.5
Plainfield	157	13	12.10%	19	8	20
Brownsburg	142	15	17.61%	25	68	31
Zionsville	84	21	29.76%	25	32	17
Greenfield	96	5	20.83%	20	22	31
Valparaiso	256	43	24.22%	62	39	47
Westfield	75	24	34.67%	26	14	11

0.5 Mile Buffer. There are 25 retail units within a 0.5 mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 0.5 mile buffer, Plainfield has 4.0 percentage points fewer retail units than Brownsburg's 26 total units, 164 percentage points fewer retail units than Zionsville's 66 total units, 84.0 percentage points fewer retail units than Greenfield's 46 total units, 264 percentage points fewer retail units than Valparaiso's 91 total units, and 24 percentage points fewer retail units than Westfield's 31 total units. 7.5% of Plainfield's retail units are located within 0.5 miles of downtown. Compared to the other study areas 7.5% scores lower than all five communities; Brownsburg, Zionsville, Greenfield, Valparaiso, and Westfield all have higher percentages of total retail units within the 0.5 mile buffer. Table 4 depicts the retail and commercial units in each comparison community.

There are 19 commercial units within a 0.5 mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 0.5 mile buffer, Plainfield has 31.6 percentage points fewer commercial units than both Brownsburg and Zionsville's 25 total units, 5.3 percentage points fewer commercial units than Greenfield's 20 total units, 226.3 percentage points fewer commercial units than Valparaiso's 62 total units, and 36.8 percentage points fewer commercial units than Westfield's 26 total units. 12.1% of Plainfield's commercial units are located within 0.5 miles of downtown. Compared to the other study areas, 12.1% scores lower than all five communities; Brownsburg, Zionsville, Greenfield, Valparaiso, and Westfield all have higher percentages of total commercial units within the 0.5 mile buffer. Chart 4 shows the 0.5 mile businesses.

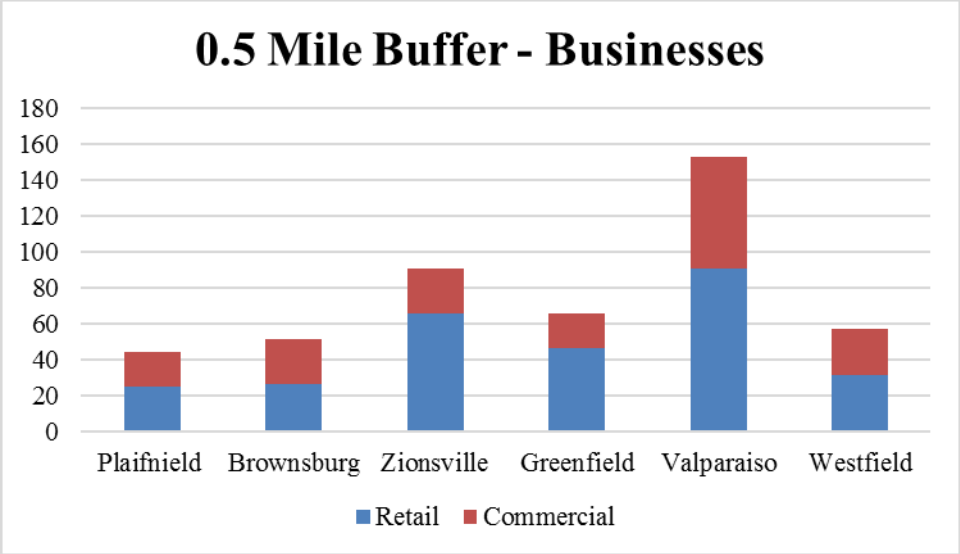


Chart 4 – 1.0 Mile Businesses

0.5 - 1.0 Mile Buffer. There are 25 retail units within a 1.0 mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 1.0 mile buffer, Plainfield has 304 percentage points fewer retail units than Brownsburg's 101 total units, 32 percentage points fewer retail units than Zionsville's 33 total units, 16% fewer retail units than Greenfields 29 total units, 256 percentage points fewer retail units than Valparaiso's total 39 units, and 156 percentage points fewer retail units than Westfield's 64 total units. 7.5% of Plainfield's retail units are located within 1.0 mile of downtown. Compared to the other study areas 7.5% scores lower than all five communities; Brownsburg, Zionsville, Greenfield, Valparaiso, and Westfield all have higher percentages of total retail units within the 1.0 mile buffer.

There are 8 commercial units within a 1.0 mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 1.0 mile buffer, Plainfield has 750 percentage points fewer commercial units than Brownsburg's 68 total units, 300 percentage points fewer commercial units than Zionsville's 32 total units, 175 percentage points fewer commercial units than

Greenfield's 22 total units, 338 percentage points fewer commercial units than Valparaiso's 39 total units, and 75 percentage points fewer commercial units than Westfield's 14 total units. 15.9% of Plainfield's commercial units are located within 1.0 mile of downtown. Compared to the other study areas, 15.9% scores lower than all five communities; Brownsburg, Zionsville, Greenfield, Valparaiso, and Westfield all have higher percentages of total retail units within the 1.0 mile buffer. Chart 5 shows the 1.0 mile businesses.

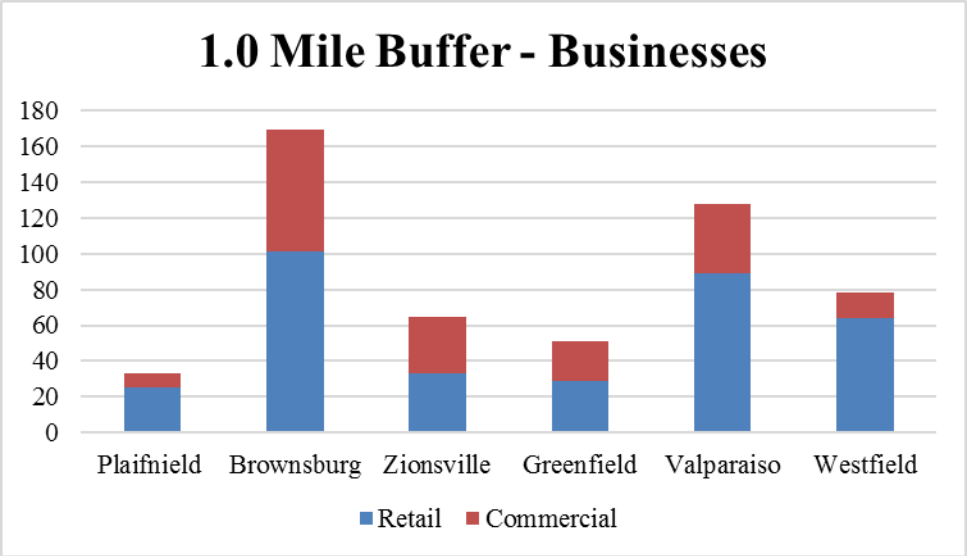


Chart 5 – 1.0 Mile Businesses

1.0 - 1.5 Mile Buffer. There are 40 retail units within a 1.5 mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 1.5 mile buffer, Plainfield has 35 percentage points more retail units than Zionsville and 18 percentage points more retail units than Westfield. However, Plainfield has 73 percentage points fewer retail units than Brownsburg's 69 total units, 35 percentage points fewer retail units than Greenfield's 54 total units, and 123 percentage points fewer retail units than Westfield's 33 total units. 12.0% of Plainfield's retail units are located within 1.5 miles of downtown. Compared to the other study

areas, 12.0% scores lower than four communities; only Westfield has a lower percentage of total retail units within the 1.5 mile buffer.

There are 20 commercial units within a 1.5 mile radius around Downtown Plainfield's central point. When comparing the 1.5 mile buffer, Plainfield has 15 percentage points more commercial units than Zionsville and 45 percentage points more commercial units than Westfield. However, Plainfield has 55 percentage points fewer commercial units than both Brownsburg and Greenfield's 31 total units and 135 percentage points fewer commercial units than Valparaiso's 47 total units. 12.7% of Plainfield's commercial units are located within 1.5 miles of downtown. Compared to the other study areas, 12.7% scores lower than all five communities; Brownsburg, Zionsville, Greenfield, Valparaiso, and Westfield all have higher percentages of total commercial units within the 1.5 mile buffer. Chart 6 shows the 1.5 mile businesses.

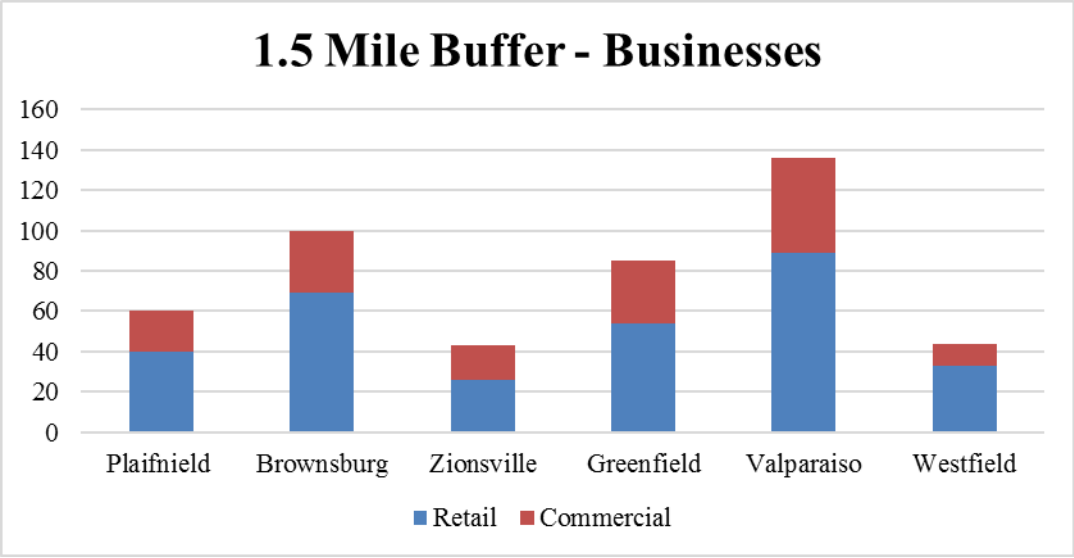


Chart 6 – 1.5 Mile Businesses.

Civic and Cultural Amenities

Table 5 - Civic and cultural facilities in the downtown of the case study communities.

Downtown Community:	Recreational Facilities:	Libraries:	Museums:	Religious Centers:	Schools:	Higer Education:	Municipal Buildings	Courthouse	Theaters	Total
Plainfield	1			1	1		1		1	5
Brownsburg				1			1			2
Zionsville	2									2
Greenfield	1		1	3			1	1		7
Valparaiso	1	1		3			1	1	1	8
Westfield	3	1			1		1			6

0.5 Mile Buffer Community:	Recreational Facilities:	Libraries:	Museums:	Religious Centers:	Schools:	Higer Education:	Municipal Buildings	Courthouse	Theaters	Total
Plainfield	3			5	2		1		1	12
Brownsburg	1			1			1			3
Zionsville	10	1			1					12
Greenfield	3		1	5	1		1	1		12
Valparaiso	3	1		13	2		1	1	2	23
Westfield	3	1		2	2		1			9

1.0 Mile Buffer Community:	Recreational Facilities:	Libraries:	Museums:	Religious Centers:	Schools:	Higer Education:	Municipal Buildings	Courthouse	Theaters	Total
Plainfield	5	1		6	1					13
Brownsburg	4	1		5	3					13
Zionsville	7				3		1			11
Greenfield	6	1		5	4					16
Valparaiso	8	1			4					13
Westfield	5	1		1	2					9

1.5 Mile Buffer Community:	Recreational Facilities:	Libraries:	Museums:	Religious Centers:	Schools:	Higer Education:	Municipal Buildings	Courthouse	Theaters	Total
Plainfield	3			1	3					7
Brownsburg	5				2					7
Zionsville	1				3					4
Greenfield	5			1	1					7
Valparaiso	6			4	5	1				16
Westfield	1				1					2

0.5 mile buffer. ***Recreational facilities.*** Three of Plainfield's parks are included within the 0.5 mile study area - two elementary school playgrounds and one community park. Recreational facilities also exist in the 0.5 mile buffer area in each comparison community. Brownsburg has a large recreational area named Arbuckle Acres Park and a grassy lawn outside of the Town Hall. Zionsville has ten park and recreational facilities; one is an elementary school playground and the others are community parks and plazas. Similar to Plainfield, Greenfield and Valparaiso both have three parks. The recreational areas in Greenfield include the Pennsy Trail, Central Park, and the Courthouse Plaza. In terms of Valparaiso's three recreational areas, one is a Middle School playground while the other is the Central Park Plaza. Westfield's study area only has the Roy O. Hadley Community Park. Table 5 shows the comparison of each communities civic and cultural amenities.

Libraries. Plainfield does not have any libraries within the 0.5 mile buffer area. However, Zionsville's Hussey-Mayfield Memorial Public Library and Valparaiso's Porter County Public Library System sit within the 0.5 mile study area.

Museums. Of all six communities, Greenfield is the only community with a museum in this study area. The James Whitcomb Riley Home and Museum sits within 0.5 miles of Downtown Greenfield.

Religious Facilities. Four churches sit within the 0.5 mile buffer around Downtown Plainfield. Brownsburg only has one religious facility, Saint Malachy Church. Greenfield also has five places of worship within the 0.5 mile radius. Valparaiso also has thirteen places of worship within this area. Westfield's study area only includes two houses of worship.

Schools. Plainfield's 0.5 mile buffer includes two schools. Similar to Plainfield, Valparaiso, and Westfield both have two schools within the 0.5 mile study area. Zionsville and Greenfield each only have one educational facility within the study area.

Municipal Buildings. Five out of the six community's municipal buildings sit in the 0.5 mile study area. Zionsville is the only community that does not have a downtown municipal.

Courthouses. Greenfield's 0.5 mile radius around the downtown central point encompasses the Hancock County Courthouse. Similarly, Valparaiso's Porter County Courthouse also sits within the 0.5 mile buffer. Plainfield is not a county seat; therefore, the community does not have a county courthouse.

Theaters. Plainfield's Prewitt/Village Theater sits along the downtown's main corridors. Valparaiso also has two theaters' in the 0.5 mile buffer, the Memorial Opera House and the Chicago Street Theater.

0.5 - 1.0 Mile Buffer. ***Recreational facilities****.* Five of Plainfield's parks are included within the 1.0 mile radius surrounding the downtown central point, one of which is the Al and Jan Barker Sports Complex. Connected by trail, the recreational fields draw many individuals toward downtown Plainfield. The aquatic center is another Plainfield asset. The recreational facility provides activities like swimming, exercising, and workout classes. Each of these recreational facilities is connected by and accessible to Plainfield's trail system. Within Brownsburg's 1.0 mile buffer around the downtown central point there are four parks. Three of these recreational areas, are elementary school playgrounds. Seven parks and recreational areas spread across the Zionsville study area; similar to Plainfield, one of the recreational spaces is a community trail. Six recreational facilities lie within the 1.0 mile buffer around Downtown Greenfield's central point. One of these facilities is the county fairground. Three of the other recreational facilities are a part of the community's school properties. Similar to Plainfield, Greenfield has The Riley Memorial Park & Riley Park Pool. Valparaiso has eight parks and recreational facilities, two of these facilities are elementary school playgrounds and another is a fairground park. Like Plainfield, the mile buffer around the central downtown Westfield point includes five parks and recreational facilities: Hoover Park (Westfield Park), Simon Moon Park, and the Asa Bales Park and Trail. The remaining two recreational facilities are the Westfield Washington High School Recreational Fields, and the Washington Woods Elementary School playground.

Libraries. The Plainfield-Guilford Township Public Library also sits within the 1.0 mile study area. Greenfield and Valparaiso also have libraries within their 1.0 mile study area. These include Greenfield's Hancock County Public Library and the Valparaiso University Library in Valparaiso.

Religious Facilities. Plainfield holds six places of worship within the 1.0 mile buffer area. Brownsburg and Greenfield both offer five religious facilities within this same study area.

Schools. Plainfield's 1.0 mile buffer includes one school, Plainfield Community Middle School. In Brownsburg and Zionsville, three elementary schools lie within the 1.0 mile study area. In Valparaiso there are four educational facilities: two elementary schools, one private school, and the fourth is the Porter County Career Center.

Municipal Buildings. In this study area, Plainfield does not have a municipal building. However, in Zionsville, the Town Hall sits within this 1.0 mile buffer around their downtown central point.

1.0 - 1.5 Mile Buffer. ***Recreational facilities.*** Three more of Plainfield's recreational facilities are included in this 1.5 mile buffer area. One of the facilities is Hummel Park, the community's largest open space. The other two parks are playgrounds at two elementary schools. Brownsburg, Greenfield, and Valparaiso all include five parks within their 1.5 mile study area. One of Brownsburg's recreational areas is a sport field while another is a soccer league complex. Williams Park is another green space within this buffer. One of the Greenfield's five facilities is a golf club. While two of Valparaiso's parks are elementary school playgrounds and another is a picnic area. Zionsville, only includes one park in this study area, Turkey Foot Park. Like Zionsville, Westfield also only includes one park, Quaker Park.

Museums. Plainfield does not have any museums within the 1.5 mile buffer area. However, Valparaiso's study area includes the Brauer Museum of Art.

Religious Facilities. Three churches are included in the 1.5 mile study area around downtown Plainfield. Rather than three, Valparaiso's 1.5 mile buffer includes four places of worship.

Schools. Plainfield includes three schools as part of the 1.5 mile study area; these educational facilities include Brentwood Elementary School, Clarks Creek Elementary School, and the Saint Susanna School. Similar to Plainfield, Zionsville's study area also includes three schools, Stonegate Elementary School, Zionsville Middle School, and Advent Lutheran Preschool. Brownsburg's buffer area includes two educational facilities, Eagle Elementary School and Brownsburg High School. Like Brownsburg, Westfield, also has two elementary schools within this study area; these include Oak Trace Elementary School and Carey Ridge Elementary School. Only one school, the St Michael's School, exists within Greenfield's 1.5 mile study area. Five total educational facilities exist in Valparaiso's area - two elementary schools, the Wee Care Child Development Center, one middle school, and a private Christian school.

Higher Education. Valparaiso is the only community to include any type of higher education (Valparaiso University) within the defined study areas.

Survey Results

The following section summarizes the findings from the survey of key stakeholders in the Town of Plainfield. For this survey the Town Council Members, Plan Commission Members, the Redevelopment Commission Members, and the planning department were all asked to participate. This group was chosen as they are all a part of the transformation and planning of downtown Plainfield and provide the most weight in terms of downtown revitalization. Of the

thirteen participants, ten individuals responded. The survey received a high adequate response rate at 77%.

When asked what was missing in Downtown Plainfield respondents voted public art, civic and cultural amenities, mixed use buildings, and gathering spaces as the top features. Participants also ranked activity venues/events, destination points, and places for people to sit as missing elements. Following these items were people. The next element noted as missing from the downtown was a lack of economic diversity. Gateways and wayfinding, sidewalks and pedestrian furniture, and trees and landscaping were ranked second to last in terms of priority in downtown. The two final items that participants tallied as missing from downtown were two-way streets and complete streets.

A part form the downtown characteristics listed in the first question, the survey asked participants to suggest uses that best fit with downtown's wants, desires, needs, and values. The individuals noted the need for businesses to create attractive backdoor entrances closer to rear parking. Creating a parking structure was another suggestion gathered from these responses, There is also a desire for at least two quality restaurants for lunch and dinner. Participants also noted the importance of determining a reuse for the soon to be vacant fire station. Expanding or relocating the town hall was also suggested. The survey shows that individuals desire more attractions and linking the trail system. Traffic calming efforts on Main Street were also noted as necessary changes in Downtown Plainfield.

When asked if survey participants preferred the theater to maintain its entertainment use, 40% strongly agreed, while 20% agreed and 30% somewhat agreed. Only one individual "somewhat disagreed" with maintaining the entertainment use.

In reference to the former question, participants shared their opinions on adapting the theater space for a different use. One suggestion was to create an entertainment venue for "night-out" activities. This could be a small movie theater that has a stage for live performances and speech events. This space could also provide flexible seating arrangements for differing events. A different participant suggested using it as office space for the Chamber of Commerce.

Looking at downtown development, this question asked participants to share Downtown Plainfield's greatest challenges. The findings show that local stakeholder's desire downtown revitalization to improve their suggested issues. Ideas that were shared in this respect included the following. First, making the downtown accessible through complete streets so both pedestrians and bicyclists can come to the downtown and feel safe there. This effort increases foot traffic and will help sustain downtown businesses and ultimately promote economic development. Second, as downtown becomes more popular, opportunities for destination points, entertainment, and housing options will be available. Third maintaining the downtowns historic charm will ensure downtown character and history. Finally, as improvements and changes begin to occur, infrastructure issues like parking and utilities may also be addressed.

When asked which civic and cultural activities downtown could support, participants agreed that Downtown Plainfield could support civic and cultural events for all ages.

In rank order, items that respondents desire in Downtown Plainfield are cultural events and amenities, public space, greenery, gateways, and public art andcomplete streets, which tied for last with the same number of votes.

In response to what businesses participants desired to see in Downtown Plainfield, participants suggested a parking structure, quality restaurants, coffee shop, a revitalized theater, event spaces, other local businesses including food and boutiques, sit-down restaurants,

entertainment venues, office spaces, night life, increased commercial and residential units, a small convenience grocery store, plus an institutional destination.

When asked to explain why downtown failed to attract diverse commercial and retail uses participants noted the perception of limited parking, the stagnant results of redeveloping the theater, money, the existing and past focus on the east side of town, the limited advertising and promotion of downtown, lack of investment from current property owners, absent anchor businesses, small lot sizes and difficulty to consolidate land, and non-stop traffic.

Together, the findings from both the spatial analysis and surveys indicate both a convergence and divergence of opinions and ways to revitalize Plainfield's downtown. From the spatial analysis, the findings indicated that Plainfield compared favorably with the case study communities in terms of civic and cultural amenities. On the other hand, the town lags behind some of the communities in the area of businesses within the downtown. The survey results provide support for investing in the Prewitt/Village Theater to redevelop and recreate a healthy downtown. Chapter six elaborates on the suggestions for moving this forward .

Chapter 6

Recommendations and Conclusions

The findings from the study provide insight for the redevelopment of downtown Plainfield. These can be summarized into the following key areas: civic and cultural, economic development, housing, and placemaking. Table 6 shows these findings and recommendations.

Civic and Cultural Proposals

Currently Plainfield does not have many cultural activities within the downtown area. Existing cultural events are limited to the Quaker Day Parade and the summer Farmer's Market. However, both of these events only occur during certain times of the year, leaving the district vacant for the remaining seasons. Downtowns that lack cultural diversity and events often fail to prosper and grow. By adding downtown festival and events, activities will entice people to visit the downtown. This increase in pedestrian foot traffic will foster natural economic growth by visitors spending money and time at the shops and restaurants in the area. Without this economic boost, the downtown will continue to sit vacant or just continue to experience economic and cultural decline. The existing Downtown Development Group would oversee the planning and creating of new events designed to stimulate the community. Promoting these events via the internet, social media, and by other means around the community will remind Plainfield residents, both new and old, that the town still has a downtown with activities. The result of the new events and activities will activate the downtown space and draw visitors to the area.

Plainfield also does not have an appropriate location for downtown activities. Besides the lawn at Friends Church, there is no formal event space for cultural venues that allow people to gather and spend time in the district. Based on the surveys, there is a desire to use the

underutilized theater. Developing a multi-use theater that can show movies and live performances will provide a flexible space for residents of Plainfield to gather. The downtown development group and the town would oversee this project.

Communities that are successful have multiple activities and venues that support and encourage all ages to visit the downtown district. Without diverse age groups, the downtown will only attract certain uses and age groups limiting revenue and success of the district. The downtown development group could be the first sponsor to support events for all age. The surveys proved that the downtown has potential to support multigenerational events.

Economic Development Proposals

Limited variety of local businesses affect the economic diversity in the downtown. This in turn deters new and existing business owners from pursuing downtown business opportunities. Ultimately, this limits the number of people visiting and spending time in the downtown. By providing a downtown incubator space, the district would attract working professionals who are spending time and money in the downtown. To achieve this proposal, the Chamber of Commerce and Town Government might form a partnership to establish an incubator facility.

Investing in existing and new public spaces is another suggestion on how to improve the vitality of Plainfield's downtown. Currently, as mentioned above, there are limited places for community members to gather. By investing in a public open space like parks, plazas, and open air markets, residents will be able to create community and populate the downtown area. This is subject of the Town and would require their cooperation to create new spaces to gather and reinvigorate current public use areas.

The downtown also currently only attracts minimal pedestrians. Without safe accessible ways to travel to and through the downtown, pedestrian traffic is discouraged and residents and visitors are not likely to travel downtown and/or walk to other parts of the town. By implementing placemaking efforts, that double as traffic calming devices, the downtown will see more pedestrians and encourage diverse commercial and retail uses in the downtown.

Housing Proposals

There is currently a limited selection of housing types in the downtown. This creates an environment that only provides housing for certain demographics, and is often too expensive for young professionals or does not have the features empty-nesters or retirees may desire. The town can work to incentivize the development and production of low, moderate, and high-income housing types to provide the housing diversity the downtown desperately needs.

Currently the upper floors of the downtown buildings appear to provide a very limited number of housing units. This discourages 24/7 uses in the downtown and might have an impact on the perceived safety of the downtown during evening hours. Providing resources to property owners to remodel upper floors of buildings for mixed-income residential uses will not only provide further housing in the downtown core, but will also improve the downtown's safety. This task would be overseen by the Chamber of Commerce and local government.

Placemaking Proposals

Plainfield currently lacks easily identified, defined boundaries in the downtown. This leads to the impression of the downtown being a sterile environment, and does little to display or promote the pride and image of the downtown. By creating gateways, those living in and visiting

the downtown will see defined areas that encourage pride and sense of place. This is a job for the Town Government and downtown organization.

The strategies above are suggestions for the issues and information discovered and analyzed for this project. Many items above have been examined in the current Downtown Plainfield Redevelopment Plan; however, some of these suggestions would positively contribute to the success and improvement of the theater space. Ultimately, from the information gathered, it is clear the future of downtown Plainfield should include additional civic and cultural amenities. By maintaining the theater for its intended use, along with providing flexibility for other community events, this space can become a multifaceted hub of activity for individuals of all ages to enjoy. Benefits of the theater are numerous, and the theater could even begin to attract visitors from outside of the community. With this influx of people visiting the theater, it is critical that downtown Plainfield should strive to provide other entertainment options, restaurants, and amenities to encourage the vitality of the town.

Table 6 Strategies for Downtown Plainfield

Civic and Cultural Strategies			
Findings	Planning Implications	Proposed Development Strategies	Pesponsible Agency/Party
Minimal cultural activities	Vacant downtown when no events are occuring	Add additional downtown festivals and events, increase advertisement of local Events/Establish, add a presence on social media	Downtonwn Development Group
Desire to use underutilized theater	No event space and or cultural venues prevent people from spending time in the district	Develop a multi-use Theater Space	Downtonwn Development Group and Town of Plainfield
Limited generational diversity	Without diverse age groups, the downtown attracts a limited population	Create and support events for all ages	Downtonwn Development Group

Economic Development Strategies			
Findings	Planning Implications	Proposed Development Strategies	Pesponsible Agency/Party
Small number of businesses	Lack of economic activity, deters additional local businesses	Provide Incubater Spaces in the downtown	Chamber of Commerce, Town Government
Minimal places for community members to gather	Without community gathering spaces, people cannot create community and or spend time in the downtown	Invest in public open space	Town Government
Small number of pedestrains in Downtown	Discourages visitors from spending time downtwon	Implement placemaking efforts	Town Govermnet

Housing Propsals			
Findings	Planning Implications	Proposed Development Strategies	Pesponsible Agency/Party
Little mix of housing types	Creates an envrionment that only provides housing for a certain type of residnets	Incentivise the development and production of low, moderate, and high income housing types	Town Governement
Miss-use of upper story housing options in downtown	Does not allow for 24 hour uses in the downtwon and may create an unsafe envrionment at night	Provide funding to property owners to remodel upper floors of building for mixed-use residential uses	Chamber of Commerce, Town Government

Placemaking Proposals			
Findings	Planning Implications	Proposed Development Strategies	Pesponsible Agency/Pary
No defined boundaries	Minimal pride for the downtown.	Create Gateways	Town Government Downtown Organization

Appendix A

Downtown Audit

Downtown Audit						
Feature	**Plainfield**	**Brownsburg**	**Zionsville**	**Greenfield**	**Valparaiso**	**Westfield**
Well defined boundaries	2	3	4	3	5	2
Gateways and gateway signs	0	1	3	1	0	1
Wayfinding signs	0	1	2	4	3	3
Destination Points	3	1	5	4	7	3
Street Wall	4	2	5	5	5	2
Activiy Venues/Events	2	2	4	4	5	1

Diversity of economic activities	2	2	5	4	5	3
Mixed use buildings	2	2	3	5	5	4
Sidewalks and pedestrian furniture (e.g. bus shelters)	3	3	4	5	22	3
Two-way streets	5	5	5	4		5
Complete streets	4	2	4	4	5	3
Gathering spaces (small and large)	2	3	4	4	4	3
Diversity of architectural styles	3	2	4	5	5	2
Historic buildings (historic preservation)	3	2	4	4	5	2
Trees and landscaping	3	2	4	4		1
Public art	0	0	0	2	2	1
People	1	1	5	4	10	1

Appendix B

Downtown Plainfield Survey

Hello, my name is Mary Banning and I am a student at Ball State University earning my Master of Urban and Regional Planning. At this point in my education, I am working on my Master's Creative Project. The following survey intends to gather data from local stakeholders related to the growth and development of Downtown Plainfield. This survey seeks the views, desires, wants, needs, and values for the continued growth and development of Downtown Plainfield. The information gathered from this survey will remain confidential. The survey will only take 10 minutes of your time.

My creative project addresses the problem of minimal meeting places in small (population of 30-50,000) linear downtowns. I believe that some small linear downtowns lack central meeting places and that healthy downtown revitalization stems from civic and cultural amenities within public spaces. Lively downtowns include activated spaces and civic and cultural amenities. Specifically, my project aims to solve public space issues by adaptively reusing Downtown Plainfield's underutilized Village Theater. I intend to measure success and in turn, create an action plan that activates Plainfield’s downtown theater space and provide additional civic and cultural amenities.

This survey will remain open for two weeks (2/16/2018 through 3/2/2018). Please contact me if you have any questions.

Email: mabanning@bsu.edu

Cell Number: 317-775-3035

Thank you for your participation and support throughout this process.

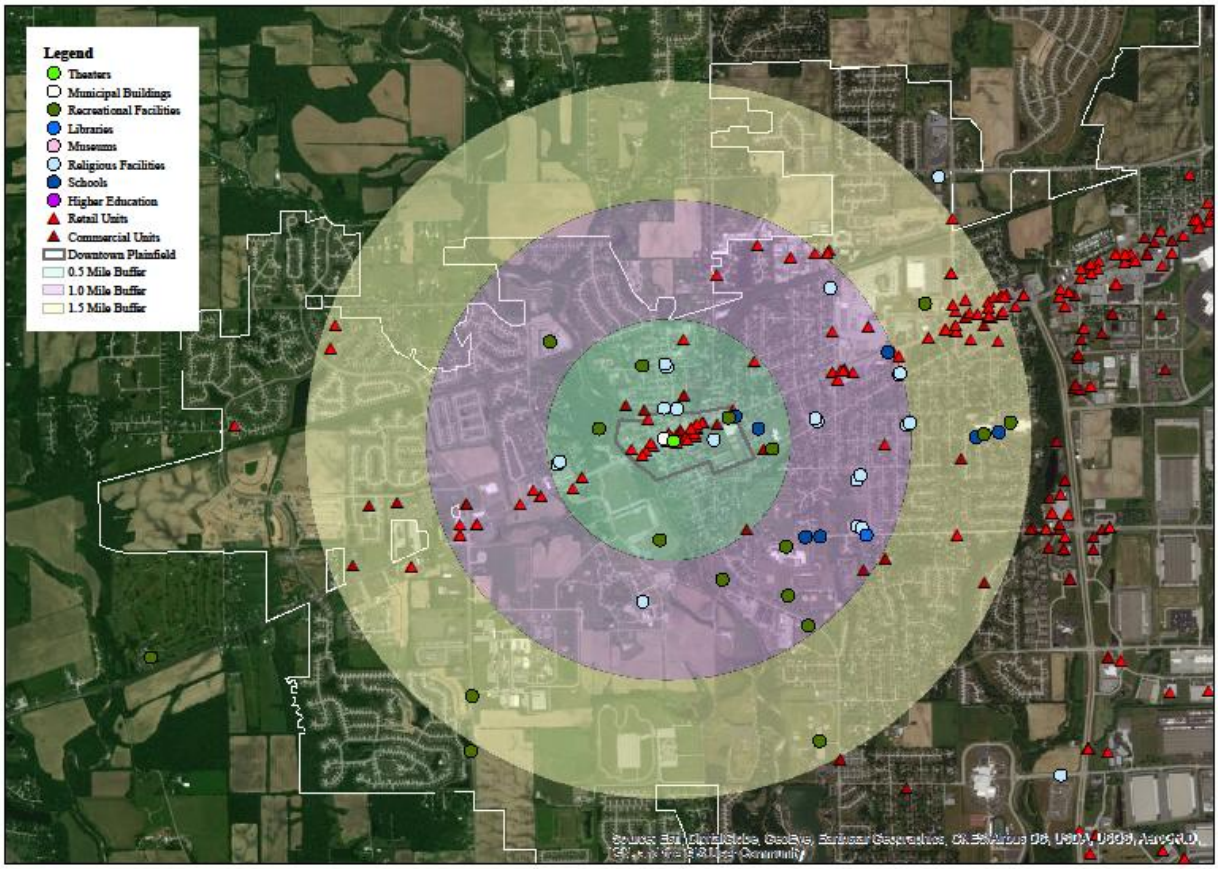
1. Which of the following, gathered from your experiences in other communities, do you think are missing in Downtown Plainfield? Check all that apply.
    a. Well defined boundaries
    b. Gateways and wayfinding signs
    c. Destination points
    d. Street wall
    e. Activity venues/events
    f. Diversity of economic activities
    g. Mixed use buildings
    h. Sidewalks and pedestrian furniture
    i. Two-way streets
    j. Complete streets
    k. Short blocks
    l. Gathering spaces
    m. Places for people to sit
    n. Civic and cultural amenities
    o. Diversity of architectural styles
    p. Historic buildings
    q. Trees and landscaping
    r. Public art
    s. People

2. Which other uses, that are not listed above, best fit with Downtown Plainfield's wants, desires, needs, and values?
3. Would you like to see the Village Theater maintain its entertainment use?
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat agree
    d. Neither agree nor disagree
    e. Somewhat disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly disagree
4. Would you prefer the Village Theater to be adapted for other use? If so what use would you recommend?
5. What are the greatest challenges in Downtown Plainfield's development?
6. Which of the following civic and cultural activities do you think Downtown Plainfield would support?
    a. Museums
    b. Festivals/events
    c. Children/youth activities
    d. Military appreciation activities
    e. Music/concerts
    f. Art galleries
    g. Theater performances
    h. Other, please indicate

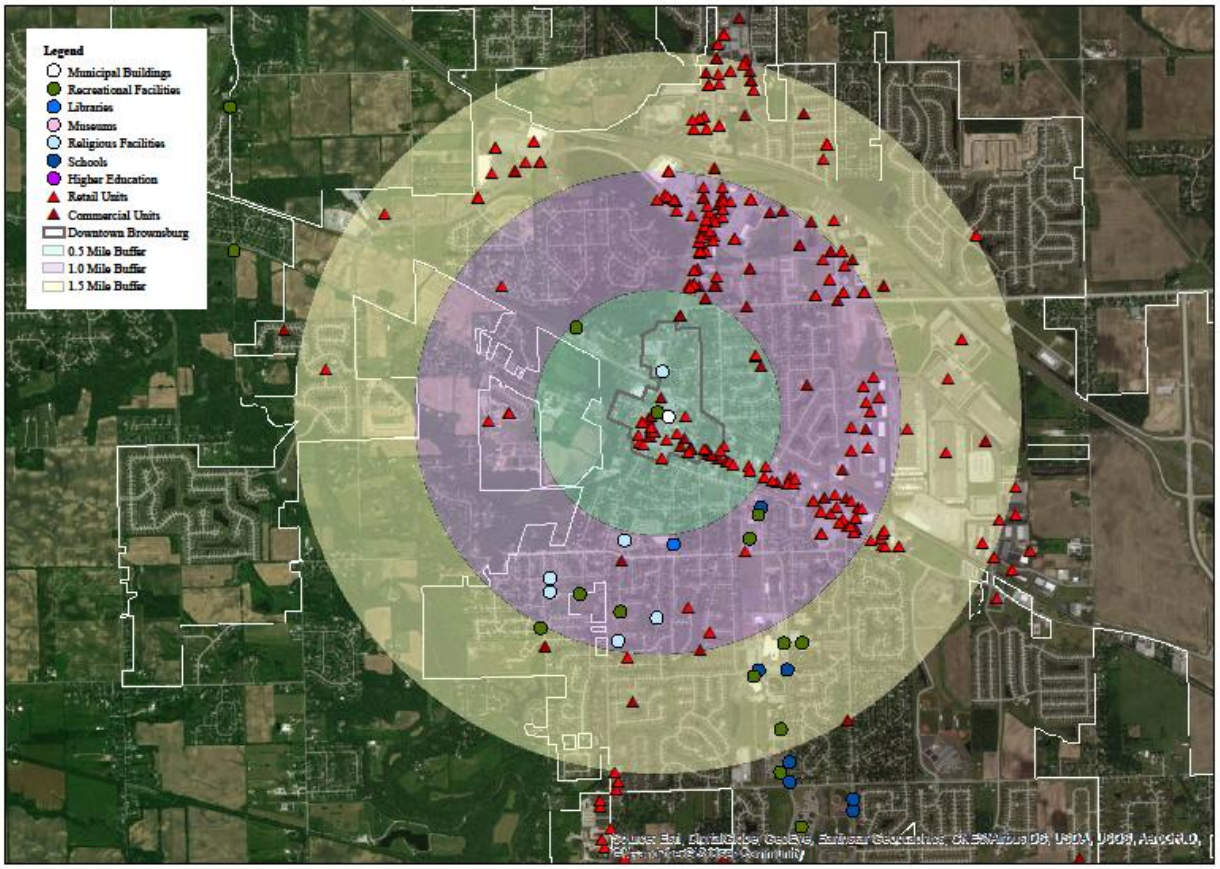
7. What elements do you desire in Downtown Plainfield? Check all that apply.
    a. Public art
    b. Water features
    c. Cultural events and amenities
    d. Greenery
    e. Public space
    f. Complete streets
    g. Gateways
8. What type of additional businesses would you like to see in Downtown Plainfield?
9. Why do you think Plainfield has been unable to attract these businesses?

Appendix C

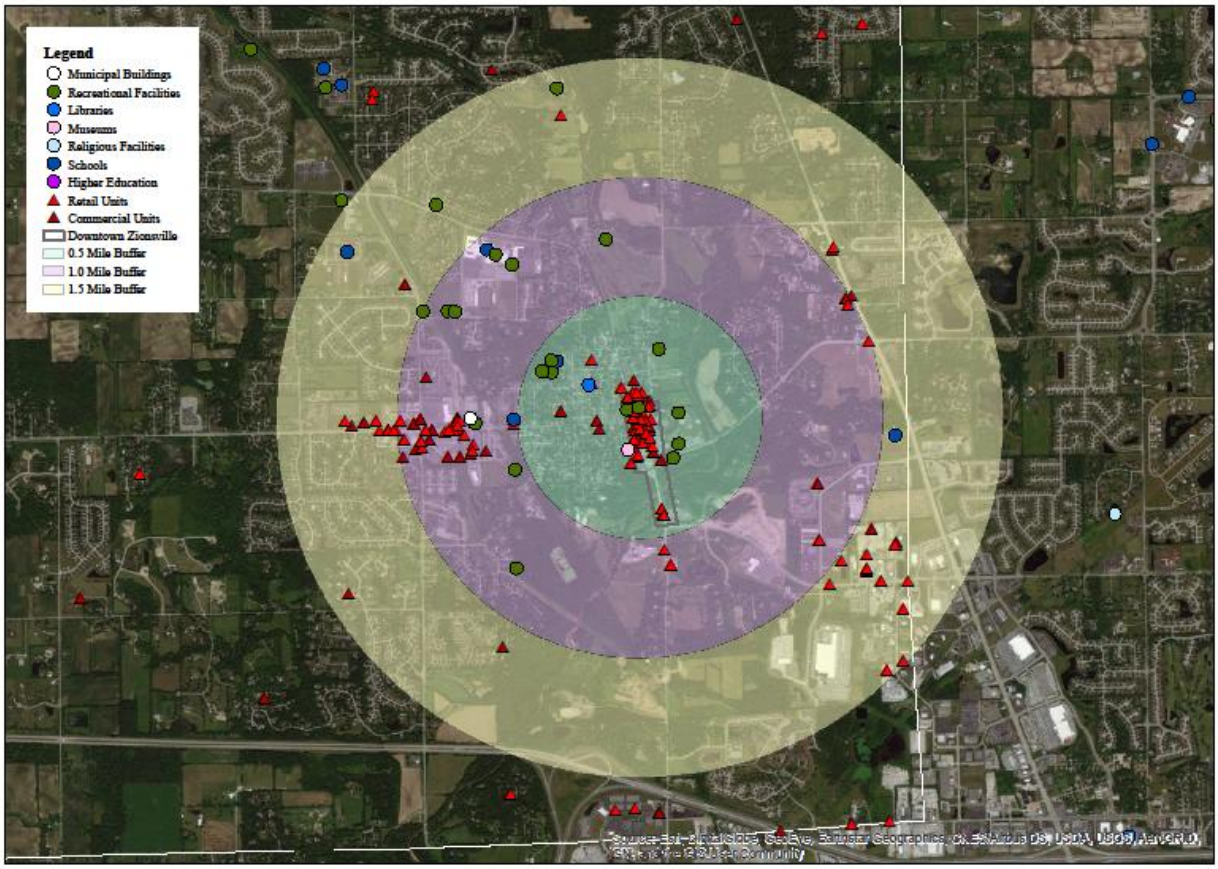
Comparison Community Maps



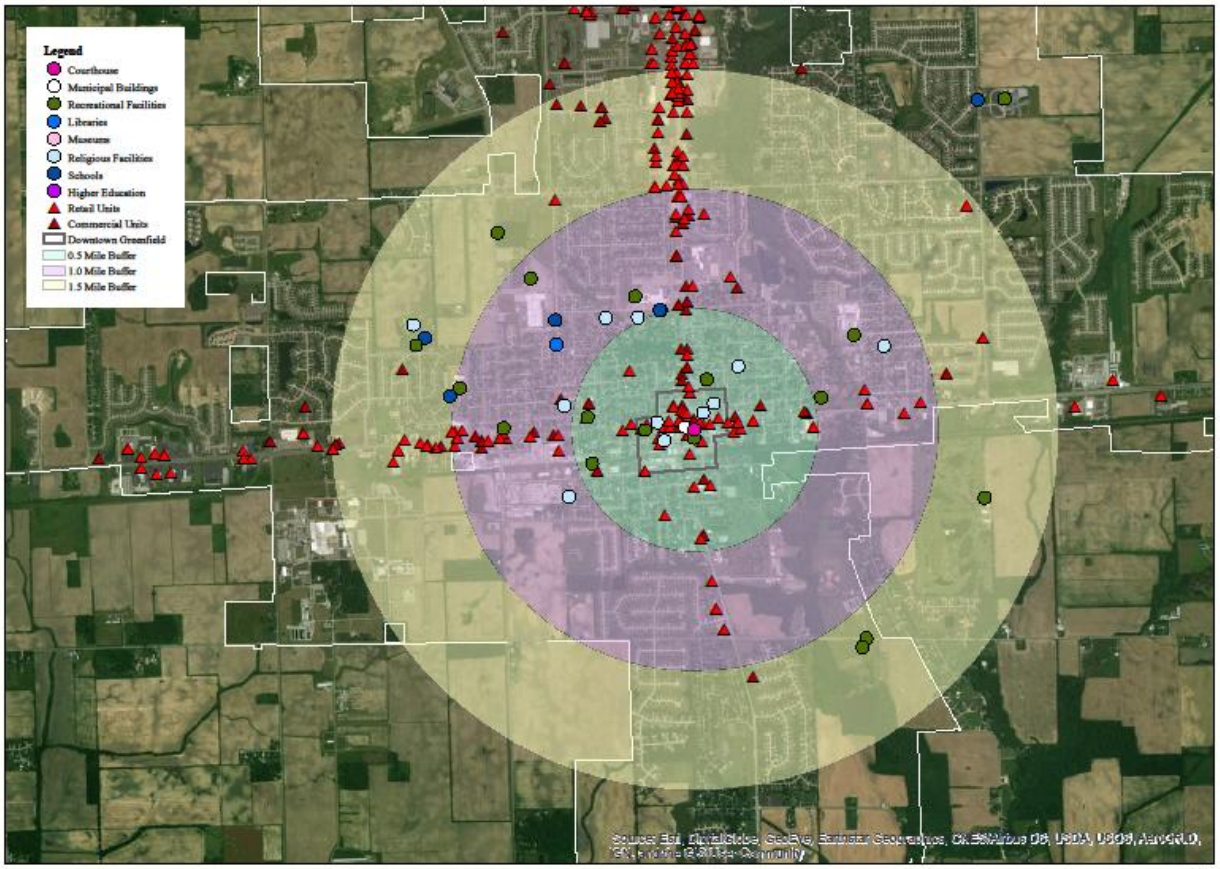
Plainfield Amenities



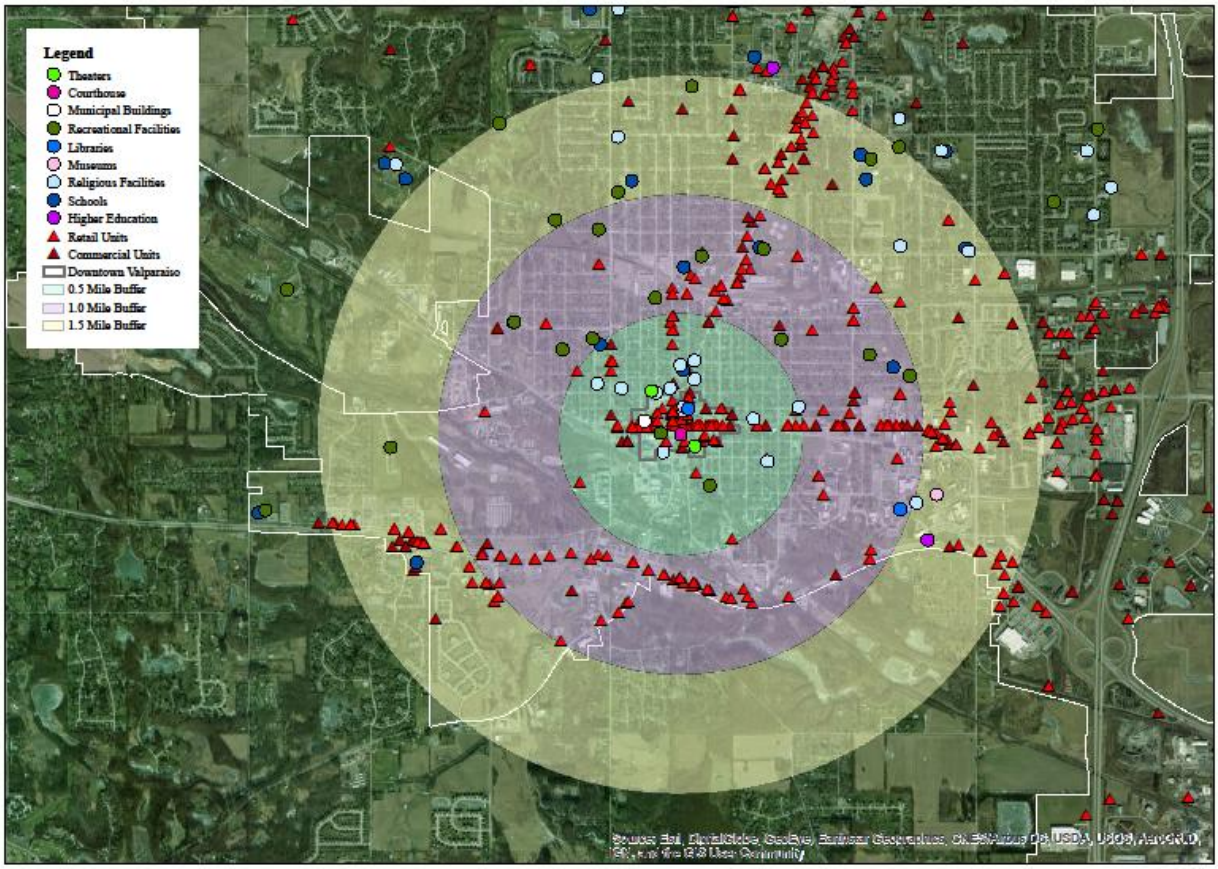
Brownsburg Amenities



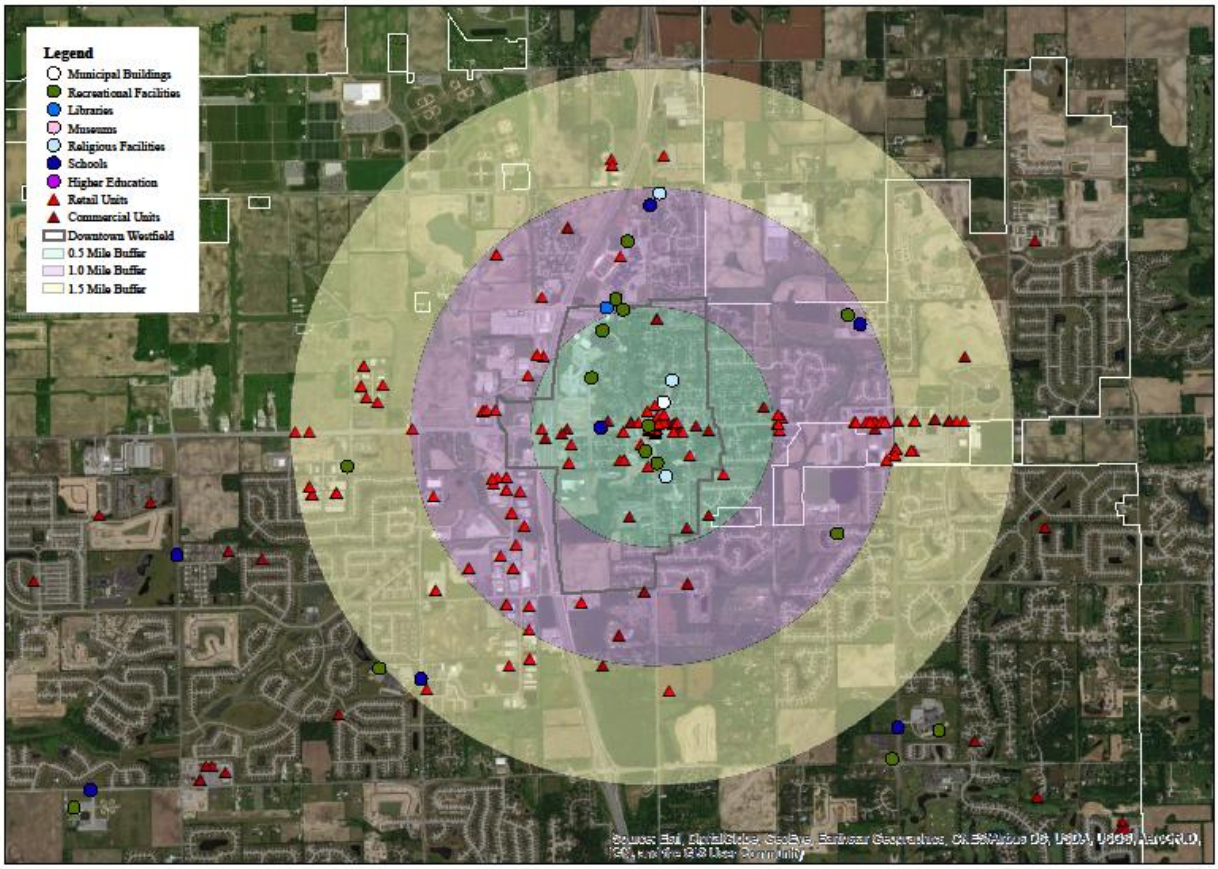
Zionsville Amenities



Greenfield Amenities



Valparaiso Amenities



Westfield Amenities

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