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IDA DOWNTOWN ACHIEVEMENT AWARD SUBMISSION:

# Downtown 2.0, Livingston County Commercial District Assessment



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**Downtown 2.0 is a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic retail opportunities of Livingston County, with unique strategies and efforts outlined for each of the county's nine downtowns.**

The study, led by the Livingston County Development Corporation (LCDC) and consultant Streetsense, offers the urban place management industry a model for multi-downtown regional planning efforts that are critical to regional collective action and effective resource allocation.

This effort builds upon the LCDC Downtown Partnership's previous success and efforts to revitalize the county's downtown districts by offering strategies beyond the usual tools, including retail attraction, retail retention strategies, and innovative approaches to capital improvements.

# The Challenge

Like many rural areas nationwide, the villages in Livingston County face issues of **low density, aging** populations and a **lack of diversity in business mix.** However, the region's **natural assets** garner strong annual visitation and the **growing young** Millennial population are key assets that are poised to be leveraged by the county's nine downtown districts.







# The Innovative Approach

The Livingston County Development Corporation (LCDC) engaged downtown retail market specialist, Streetsense, to develop *Downtown 2.0*, a comprehensive plan for the county and its nine downtowns that **identified retail opportunities** and **clear strategies and tactics** for business attraction and sales growth, capital investment, and redevelopment.



# Streetsense employed The Commercial DNA Framework™

a diagnostic approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data in four key areas of analysis:

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

**BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

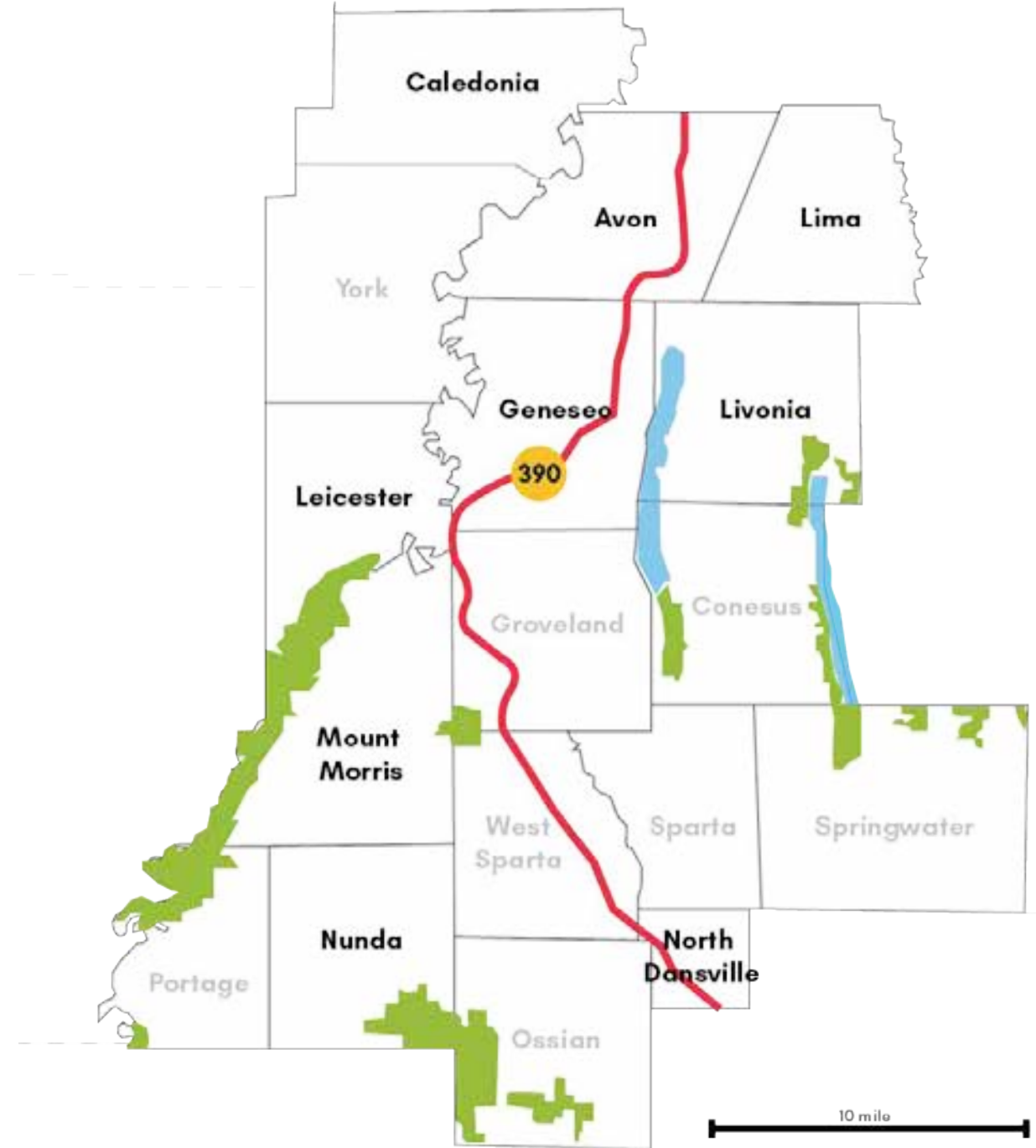
**MARKET DEMAND + DEMOGRAPHICS**

**ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY**

The analysis considered the region's nine downtowns:

- |                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Caledonia       | Avon      |
| Lima            | Geneseo   |
| Livonia         | Leicester |
| Mount Morris    | Nunda     |
| North Dansville |           |

## Livingston County







## The comprehensive diagnostic approach

enabled the team to develop an action plan comprised of both strategic and tactical interventions rooted in shared challenges that can either be adopted county-wide or focused on a particular downtown.



### FOR EXAMPLE

Nearly every downtown shared rear parking lots accessible to Main Street by narrow alleys, resulting in an uncomfortable "path to purchase". The lack of accessibility and visibility of these rear parking lots also created significant barrier to success across all districts. The County is now pursuing a set of county-led public art and placemaking strategies to enhance these critical pedestrian connections between Main Street and existing parking facilities.



# Transferability/ Replicability

The framework applied to develop Downtown 2.0 can (and has been) replicated in other urban and rural communities and across strong and weak markets. It offers communities a tool that small towns and cities need to adopt in order to better diagnose the challenges and opportunities of local retail given the complex shifts happening in the industry.





In addition, the actual strategies being employed by the county are replicable to other communities...

**SUCH AS:**

- Undertaking a community branding initiative to use in promoting each downtown individually and collectively within the region
- Out of the box thinking such as the First Impressions Program which goes beyond facade improvement and funds projects that promote a lasting and genuine first impression of Livingston County's downtown districts and businesses
- Attracting new entrepreneurs and fill vacant ground spaces through a micro enterprise grant program and competition ([Dream-O-Vate](#))

Did you know that 70% of first time sales are the result of **curb appeal**?

Introducing the 2020 Livingston County **First Impressions Program**



**Attract new business ▶ Increase Sales ▶ Create a Destination!**

Awards up to \$5,000 for improvements to:

- Facade & Lighting
- Signage
- Public Art & Streetscape
- Digital First Impressions

**You never get a second chance to make a first impression!**

For more information, application & design guidelines, visit: [Livingstoncountydevelopment.com/downtownpartnership](http://Livingstoncountydevelopment.com/downtownpartnership) or contact Louise Wadsworth at 585-243-7124.

**INSPIRATIONS TRAIL** CALLING ALL BUSINESSES

Follow the art...  
MAY 01 through MAY 24

KEVIN • CALISSIMA • DANVILLE • GENESIO • LEICESTER • LIMA • LAVINA • HT. HOBBS • KUNDA

The Inspirations Trail is a self-guided art tour through all nine downtown villages featuring storefront installations of inspirational words or phrases.

**WE INVITE YOU TO BECOME PART OF THE TRAIL! WITH YOUR \$25 REGISTRATION FEE, YOUR BUSINESS WILL:**

- Be listed on the Inspirations Trail Map & marketing materials
- Be promoted regionally from April to May 2020

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN DISPLAYING PIECES OF ART MADE FOR THE INSPIRATIONS TRAIL IN YOUR DOWNTOWN BUSINESS STOREFRONT CONTACT:**

Louise Wadsworth, Downtown Coordinator  
(585) 243-7124 or [lwadsworth@livingstoncountydevelopment.com](mailto:lwadsworth@livingstoncountydevelopment.com)

**For More Information & To Register Online Go To**  
→ [www.InspirationsTrail.com](http://www.InspirationsTrail.com) ←

**Yes! I would like my business to be part of the Inspirations Trail from May 1st-May 24th.**

Business: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable and mail payment to:  
Livingston County Development, 8 Court Street, Room 306, Geneseo, NY 14454  
Deadline: Friday, February 21st 2020

I have a downtown storefront window where I can display artwork.

Left: Flyers advertising The First Impression Program



# Public Engagement + Role of Elected Officials

The strong relationship that the LCDC Downtown Partnership has built over the years with local civic leaders, property owners, and businesses led to robust participation from stakeholders throughout the planning process.

From the market analysis phase to final recommendations, LCDC and the Consultant engaged more than 400 community members across the county.

This involvement included one-on-one interviews and walking tours with the downtown mayors and local stakeholders to "enroll" them in the outcomes and ensure they serve as champions of the plan and of the LCDC's efforts throughout the implementation process.

A mix of community engagement strategies were used to ensure strong participation from both government leaders and customer segments of various age groups. An online survey crafted jointly by LCDC and the Consultant, and distributed in partnership with local anchor institution State University of New York Geneseo, gathered input from the younger, tech-savvy college and Millennial populations while individual community meetings facilitated by the Consultant were held in accessible downtown locations.

The final was adopted by the county and continues to build momentum for LCDC's work today.

# Implementation + Results

The recommendations have been instrumental in garnering consensus for action and in leveraging resources for downtown improvements, as is evident in the number of initiatives and programs that have come out of the effort, resulting in tangible impact now and for years to come.



## FOR EXAMPLE

**The First Impressions Program** offers awards of up to \$5,000 for improvements that promote a lasting first impression of the county's business districts, including facade & lighting, signage, public art, and digital first impressions.

**The Digital Training Series** provides free classes to local small business owners to help them better advertise and grow their business in the digital age.

**The Dream-O-Vate Competition** has been responsible for the opening of nine new businesses. This initiative was an effort to increase retail occupancy in the county's nine downtown districts. Thirty-eight applicants applied and winners were announced in May 2019. All new businesses benefited from press coverage and ribbon cuttings that helped raise awareness and drive sales.



## More importantly, Downtown 2.0 has strengthened LCDC's applications to several grants including

- New York Main Street Technical Assistance grants
- National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Placemaking grant
- New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative

The First Impressions Program helped expand the types of grants typically provided to similar towns by incorporating signage, the rehabilitation of business facades, street lighting, public art, and digital media.

The New York Main Street Technical Assistance grant will go toward updating design guidelines for the nine villages of the county to include a section on public spaces and public art, providing general guidance on the treatment of open spaces such as parks, plazas, alleys, and public parking areas to address visitor comfort and pedestrian connections.

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# Thank You

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congratulations  
**SWEET ARTS BAKERY**

winner of the DREAM-O-VATE business competition!



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CONTACT US TODAY FOR ASSISTANCE FINDING AND SECURING YOUR BUSINESS IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY  
WWW.WINNEBAGOCOUNTYILLINOIS.ORG | 815-244-7134

congratulations  
**WENDY'S PANTRY**

winner of the DREAM-O-VATE business competition!



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congratulations  
**THE BORIKÉN RESTAURANT**

winner of the DREAM-O-VATE business competition!



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congratulations  
**HONEYGIRL GOURMET**

winner of the DREAM-O-VATE business competition!



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Left: Marketing Flyers Highlight the Winners of the "Dream-O-Vate" Competition.

A county-wide business competition focused on filling persistent vacancies within the downtown catchment areas defined in the plans resulted in a diverse set of entrepreneurs who benefited from both funding and heightened brand awareness.