



# **City of Defiance Strategic Plan And 2030 Land Use Plan**

**Printed March 2011**



**The following report is a summary of the planning efforts of the Strategic Planning Committee who met over the past two years and updated the City's Strategic plan originally developed in 2003. The Downtown portion of the document which was also originally developed in 2003 was updated and approved by City Council in 2007.**

**In an effort to keep the Strategic Plan a vital focus, timelines were developed for both the Downtown and City portions of the documents. These timelines immediately following their respective section of the plan. It is the intent of the Committee that quarterly updates be provided which will address the progress made on each of the plan goals outlined in the document.**

**The City of Defiance would like to thank the following Strategic Planning Committee members for their time, effort and input:**

**Jeff Leonard, City Administrator**

**Lee Rausch, P.E., City Engineer**

**Mike McCann, Planning Commission Chairman**

**Cindy Mack, Director, Defiance Development and Visitors Bureau**

**Tim Whetstone, Community Leader**

**Rita Kissner, Community Leader**

**Tim Small, Past Chamber of Commerce Director**

**Jerry Hayes, Executive Director, Defiance County Economic Development**

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## Downtown Revitalization Plan

The Downtown Steering Committee, one of two steering committees established by the City to participate in the planning process, met several times with PDG and City officials to discuss and develop recommendations for the revitalization of the Downtown District.

The intent of the Downtown Strategic Plan is two-fold: To develop a plan for the revitalization of the Downtown District, and to prepare the community for the submittal of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) --Downtown (DT) Revitalization Tier 2 application, which is a program administered through the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), Office of Housing and Community Partnerships (OHCP). The next deadline is September 2003. If approved, this would be the third grant through this program received by the City of Defiance.

It should be noted that this Strategic Plan is being produced at what is probably the worst economic downturn that the City, State, and Country have experienced in several decades. This makes it difficult to see how the vision and goals expressed within this Plan can be implemented. However, it is a pretty well-accepted theory that greater planning, education, and marketing efforts are needed in slow times to successfully work out of the economic slump. The community needs to develop the vision and pursue that vision to ensure a better quality of life for the future. Local leaders need to educate the community and convince them that we must look beyond today's economic problems to propose and achieve a brighter future.

### **Target Area**

For the purposes of this study, the Downtown District was defined as the area between the rivers to approximately Deatrick Street on the south and the railroad tracks on the north (north of the Maumee River). The *primary* target area for the Downtown, however, ends at the CSX Railroad to the south. Residential areas within this target area may be discussed, but they are not part of the primary focus. If/when a CDBG-Downtown program and participants in the program are identified; the target area may be modified specifically for grant application purposes.



Based on all aspects of the community input during this planning process, including the Steering Committee brainstorming sessions, the community visioning session, the merchant and consumer surveys, the parking survey, and other research, the following recommendations are made for the Downtown District. These recommendations, which are generally illustrated on **Plate DT-1**, are divided into two major goals or categories:

- ***Capitalizing on the Rivers, and***
- ***Preparing and Implementing the Downtown Revitalization Strategic Plan***

The *Downtown Revitalization Plan* encompasses many subjects of importance to Downtown planning. Recommendations in this plan are grouped into several key Downtown planning elements:

- Image and Theme
- Parking
- Streetscaping
- Focal Points
- Traffic Circulation
- Gateways
- Signage
- Land Uses
- Buildings and Historic Resources
- Management and Organization
- Marketing and Promotion
- Technical and Financing Assistance

Recommendations for each planning element are summarized within the Strategic Plan. It should be noted that recommendations may be made for parcels of property for which neither the City nor the Chamber of Commerce has site control. The assumption is made that, if consensus is reached for implementation of a specific element of the Plan, negotiations and discussions would begin with the owner of the property in question to determine their interest in participating in the proposed project and/or selling their property to an interested party.

Assignments are made to each of the recommendations in the Strategic Plan. However, a key recommendation within the Management and Organization planning element is that the City pursue Main Street designation for the Downtown District. The Main Street approach recommends the appointment of four subcommittees, one for each of the four points in Main Street's recommended approach to revitalization of downtowns. Thus, many of the tasks assigned to "the Chamber of Commerce" should be reassigned to one of the four subcommittees once they are in place.

Heritage Ohio, Inc. is the Ohio organization which manages the Main Street program. Technical assistance is available from that group, once a community is a member. DOI and the Chamber should work closely, initially, to assign the recommended tasks to the appropriate subcommittee in order to begin the implementation process.

## **Capitalizing on the Rivers**

The City of Defiance is blessed with the presence of three rivers: The Maumee, the Auglaize, and the Tiffin. Both the Maumee and the Auglaize Rivers border the Downtown District. Many opportunities exist for emphasizing and capitalizing on the Rivers, and this was a key issue raised in all the citizen input sessions conducted as part of this process. Past plans for the Downtown, and the 2010 Plan also included the goal of capitalizing on the Rivers as a fundamental aspect of Downtown revitalization. The following recommendations are made and are referenced in **Plate DT-1**.

- First and foremost, the City must pursue programs and funding for **cleaning out the Rivers**. This is the first priority because the Rivers must be safe to be suitable for the recreational activities conducted on them. Boulders and other debris are located throughout the river beds, creating obstacles for navigating the rivers and posing serious health and safety problems for boaters.
- Coordination with ODNR and other State and Federal regulatory organizations will be required.
- Responsibility: The City should take the lead, coordinating with ODNR throughout the entire process. ODNR may have some funds available to assist with this project.
- Time Frame: 1-2 years
- **Shoreline protection measures should be investigated** and constructed in areas that require it. Several areas along the Rivers have not been reinforced and should be studied, with appropriate measures implemented, prior to investing in walkways or other improvements along them. Coordination with ODNR is required and funds may be available through that agency to assist.
- Responsibility: The City should spearhead this project, although a committee could be appointed to pursue it on the City's behalf.
- Time Frame: 1-3 years.



- The community should **emphasize the confluence of the Maumee and Auglaize Rivers as a focal point** in the community and in the Downtown District. This triangular area presents many opportunities for various riverfront activities. Improvements to Pontiac Park, the library, the Fort, and Kingsbury Park are steps in this direction; however, many more opportunities exist.



- Consideration should be given to enhancing the historical attributes of **Fort Defiance**.
- The potential relocation of the Library so that it could expand outside the flood plain provides an opportunity for an **alternative use for the current library building**, such as a museum, visitor center, cultural arts center, or a combination of these. Public restrooms in the building would also serve a community need, especially due to its proximity to the Rivers.
- The City should **provide public access to the Rivers at Kingsbury Park**. The park would benefit from having access to the Rivers, although parking is limited and would have to be expanded.
  - **Responsibility:** The City should appoint a committee to spearhead this effort. The Park District should assist.
  - **Time Frame:** 1-3 years.
- **A marina and/or restaurant should be built** on the Maumee or Auglaize River. An appropriate location should be identified, and developers should be recruited to construct and operate the facility. A boathouse similar to the one recently constructed in the City of Huron, which was partially funded with a Coastal Management Grant, should be considered. Potential locations discussed for the marina and/or restaurant are listed below. A feasibility study, however, should be undertaken to analyze potential sites and select the best one.
- The City should consider purchasing property on Auglaize Street south of Second Street to develop as park area and boat ramp.



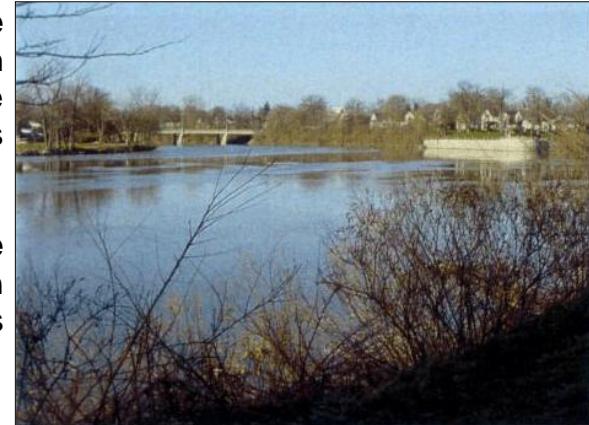
The Pastor & Bielharz (P&B) study completed in 1987 identified a location on the **Maumee River south of the River and east of the Clinton Street bridge**. It is believed that there may not be enough room in this location to provide adequate parking for a marina. However, south of the river and west of the bridge is an excellent site for courtesy docks to access downtown. ODNR has funding programs that should be pursued.



- **The current location of the ball fields at Kingsbury Park** was identified as a potential site, provided that if the ball fields were removed, they would be replaced elsewhere. It is also possible that there may be adequate room available without relocating the ball field. Public access to the water from this park is desirable. This should be studied further.
- Restroom facilities must be part of all Riverfront development projects.
- **Riverside Park** may be a potential site, although the water may be too shallow.



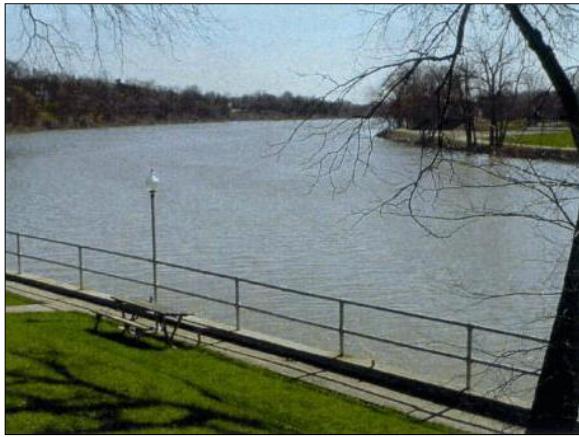
- The **land just northeast of the Fifth St./Hopkins Rd. bridge** on Auglaize Street could have potential. The land there is vacated and available for sale.
- Land on the **west side of the River across from the Fifth St./Hopkins Rd. site** has potential.
- **Pontiac Park** could be an attractive option.
- The **site of the old hospital off East Second Street** should be considered as it is owned by the City and has River access via an inlet. The site has adequate existing parking, as well as an existing retaining wall, and it looks out on the island in the middle of the River. There is some historic significance to this site, as it was the original country club in the City.
- Responsibility: The Chamber of Commerce or CIC should appoint a committee to lead this effort.
- Time Frame: 1-5 years.
- The community should **study the feasibility of developing an amphitheater** along the River. The small amphitheater at the lock in Downtown was discussed, and most people felt that this amphitheater is too small for most activities, and that a larger amphitheater could be successful. **See Plate DT-2.** Potential sites include:
  - The site identified in the P&B 1987 study **southeast of the bridge and west of the library** would be a great location, although there is concern that there may be inadequate land available for the amphitheater, a marina, and the required parking.
  - The **ball field site at Kingsbury Park** would be a good location from a water perspective, but parking would have to be addressed. Again, if the ball field is removed, it would have to be relocated. Having an amphitheater that faced the confluence of the Rivers, with activities at Pontiac Park and the Fort, would have significant aesthetic advantages.
  - **Pontiac Park** is a potential site, as it already has the river frontage and the terrain. Also, it faces the Downtown, which would be a plus. However, parking would have to be addressed.



- The **land further east of the DMP property, the old hospital site**, as mentioned earlier as a site for the marina/restaurant. The primary disadvantage is that it is further away from the core of the Downtown District.
- The **land north and east of the Auglaize River and Hopkins Street bridge**, which is currently available.
- Responsibility: The City, the County, Park District, and/or the CIC should appoint a Waterways committee to take the lead on this project.
- Time Frame: 1-3 years.



- **The City and Park District should pursue extension of the walkways along the Rivers.**
- The Rotary walkway along the west side of the Auglaize River, just south of the confluence, should be extended as far to the south as possible, preferably to Riverside Park.



- Walkways along other sections of the Rivers should be investigated and pursued.
- Responsibility: The City, the Park District, and civic groups should work together to achieve this goal.
- Time Frame: 1-3 years.
- **Riverfront properties should be improved and/or enhanced** for public purposes and access to the Rivers. Properties with potential, which should be

the subject of further investigation include:

- **The DMP property.** If the property cannot be developed for public access, then possibly a private facility could be constructed that would enhance the activities on the Rivers.
- **The Fifth St./Hopkins St.** area along the Auglaize River and Auglaize Street. This site appears to have a lot of potential as it has water frontage and is available. The owners are willing to sell it. As mentioned earlier, it could serve as an amphitheater or marina site. Or it could have potential for private development such as a restaurant or yacht club.
- The site of a potential River crossing at **Holgate Ave. and Deatrick Street.** If a bridge were to be constructed in this area, the wide flood plain would provide an opportunity for public access and riverfront property development. If the ball fields from Kingsbury Park were relocated, they could be located here. Also of concern is the final location for the rerouted US 24 and where it connects in this area.
- The **old hospital site on East Second Street.** This site has been recommended for several alternative uses, but if none of these happen, the property should still be improved.
  - Responsibility: The City, Chamber, Park District, or CIC could assume leadership of this task by designating a special committee.
  - Time Frame: 1-5 years.
- Once the Rivers are cleaned, emphasis should be placed on **recruiting more organizations to use the Rivers.** This will bring more consumer dollars into the Defiance area, including the Downtown District. Consideration should be given to designating the Maumee River as the skiing and boating river and the Auglaize River as the canoeing river, so as to prioritize cleaning and dredging operations. Suggestions for activities on the Rivers include:
  - **Canoe races** (10 mile and 2 mile) have been held here for the last nine years. The Ski Club tries to clean up and mark the River for safety before these events. More and similar events could be recruited.
  - **The National Kayak Championship**, which has inquired about holding its competition in Defiance but can't because of the River conditions.
  - **Other competitions on the Rivers**, the sponsors of which have contacted the Visitors Center in the past, and did not occur due to this issue with safety.
    - Responsibility: DDVB. The support of the community is critical to the success of any existing or future events on the

Rivers.

- Time Frame: After the Rivers are cleaned.
- After the boat ramp improvements are made to Pontiac Park (which should be in 2003), the Park District should **study the need for additional boat ramps or public access** to the Rivers.

ODNR is installing 30-40 rental docks at Independence Dam in 2008. ODNR would provide 100% grant funding for "Courtesy Docks" in Downtown if there is no charge for their use. Owners of the south east river bank are interested in this dock project as well as enhancement of the canal historical site.

- Other potential boat ramp areas that were discussed include the DMP ramp, Riverside Park, and Kingsbury Park, but the latter two have issues regarding the shallowness of the river.
- Responsibility: The Park District, DDVB, City and County.
- Time Frame: 2008
- The community should **address flood plain building code issues** that affect properties along the Rivers. Lack of understanding, and possibly inconsistent past enforcement, have confused property owners as to what they can and cannot do in the flood plains. Workshops should be held, brochures should be prepared, and efforts should be made through the media to educate the public about this issue.
  - Responsibility: City code enforcement officials, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, should pursue this task.
  - Time Frame: 2008 and 2009.

## ***Preparing and Implementing the Downtown Revitalization Strategic Plan***

The completion and implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Strategic Plan was a key goal that resulted from the planning process. The subject of downtown planning is so vast that the recommendations have been divided into twelve planning elements or categories to simplify the process. The recommendations under **Management and Organization** are critical to the successful implementation of this Plan, and should be seriously considered early in the plan implementation process.

It is the intent of the City and the DDVB to pursue a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) through the Downtown (DT) Revitalization Tier 2 program to fund many of the activities evolving from this Strategic Plan. A maximum of \$400,000 can be requested to fund a variety of plan elements, including both public and private projects. After approval of this Plan, the DDVB and City should meet to identify a specific project, various plan elements, and a funding mechanism to begin the application preparation process. The application is due October 2, 2007 and threshold information was submitted by May 22, 2007.

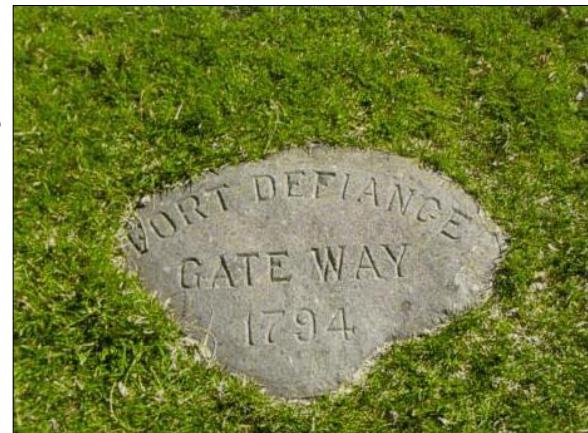
Recommendations resulting from the planning process that should be considered for a part of the CDBG-DT grant program, as well as for future projects and efforts in the Downtown District, are as follows:

### **I. Image and Theme**

In any downtown planning effort, a very interesting topic of discussion is always the concept of adopting a theme or image for the area. The Downtown District contains much of the history of the City of Defiance: the Erie Canal and its locks, Fort Defiance, the old Opera House, the railroad depot, etc., all of which provide an historic glance into the development of the City.

The Downtown District must identify and develop a theme that is distinctive to the Downtown District and provides an opportunity for implementing design elements that unify the District, provide distinct gateways into the Downtown, and convey a sense of place. The theme should emphasize and preserve the history of the City that is so dominant in the Downtown. A theme such as "Historic Downtown Defiance" was suggested by many people. Recommendations include:

- An **image must be developed** for the Downtown District and should emphasize and incorporate historic sites and buildings, including the Holgate historic neighborhood, just west of the Downtown District, Fort Defiance, the library, etc.
- **Responsibility:** The DDVB should take the lead. .
- **Time Frame:** Summer and Fall 2007.



## **II. Parking**

As in most downtowns, the general consensus when this planning process began was that there were parking problems in the Downtown District. There are generally two types of parking problems in downtowns, real and perceived. Real problems are the result of an inadequate number of spaces for the volume of consumers visiting the downtown. Perceived problems are those that result in people feeling that there are inadequate parking opportunities in the downtown, whether there are or not.

However, perceived problems become real when shoppers no longer visit the downtown to shop and do business because they feel there is inadequate parking. Thus, it is in the best interests of the Downtown District to verify whether or not there is a shortage of parking in the Downtown District (or whether it pertains to only certain sections of the Downtown) and if so, how to resolve the problems. Recommendations include:

- **Complete a parking analysis** of the Downtown District. This includes inventorying all existing parking spaces (public, private, on-street, off-street, metered, and handicapped); calculating square footage of land uses within the Downtown District; and applying generally accepted parking standards to them, as follows: 1 parking space per:
  - 250 SF of general retail
  - 200 sf of government buildings
  - 200-750 sf of office space (use 350)
  - 200-300 sf of service business (use 250)
  - 300 sf of library space
  - 300 sf of civic organization space

The City, DDVB and Chamber will conduct a parking study and after an appropriate analysis is completed, will provide recommendations on how to address the resulting parking problems.

- Responsibility: City, Chamber and DDVB (Design Subcommittee).
- Time Frame: Spring 2008
- **The DDVB will work with Johns Manville officials to resolve issues with employee parking.** Employees park in City lots on the east side of the building as opposed to private lots on the west side of the building owned by Manville. This creates an unnecessary strain on the parking situation in the center of the Downtown District.
  - Responsibility: DDVB (Design Subcommittee).
  - Time Frame: Spring 2008
- **The County should continue to investigate the feasibility of a small underground parking garage** for employees associated with planned

improvements at the Court House. The Court House was one facility cited in the consumer survey as having inadequate parking available. If County employees were provided an alternative parking location, additional parking spaces would be available for shoppers throughout the area around the Court House, as well as for Court House visitors.

- Responsibility: City of Defiance.
- Time Frame: 2008-2009.
- If the parking analysis indicates that additional parking spaces are required, the City and DDVB should **investigate opportunities for improving private parking areas behind buildings** and converting them to common, public, paved, landscaped, and lighted parking areas. Often spaces that currently providing private parking for 2 or 3 vehicles per building can be combined and designed to provide twice the number of spaces or more. This project could be funded through the CDBG Downtown Tier 2 grant.
  - Responsibility: The City, Chamber and DDVB
  - Time Frame: 2008-2009



- The merchant and consumer surveys indicated that insufficient signage about parking could be part of the perceived problem of inadequate parking. The parking analysis may confirm this. A **simple, uniform signage system**, indicating locations of parking lots and directing visitors to those lots, can resolve a lot of issues about parking and **should be designed and implemented**. Also, signage must indicate whether the lots are private or public, and public lots should invite and encourage visitors to park there. Unmarked parking lots tend to confuse visitors, and may turn them away. See sample Signage Systems on **Plates DT-3, DT-4, and DT-5**.
  - Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce and DDVB (Design Subcommittee). Existing parking lots should be better maintained

and well-lighted to provide a safe and inviting with the cooperation of the City.

- Time Frame: 2008-2009.
- **Existing parking lots should be better maintained** and well-lighted to provide a safe and inviting place for visitors to park their vehicles. Parking lots should be landscaped. Trees and shrubbery should be trimmed, mulch should be applied where appropriate, street lighting should be adequate, pavement should be appropriately marked, etc. This can be an activity to include in the next CDBG-DT grant program.
  - Responsibility: City of Defiance.
  - Time Frame: 2008-2010.

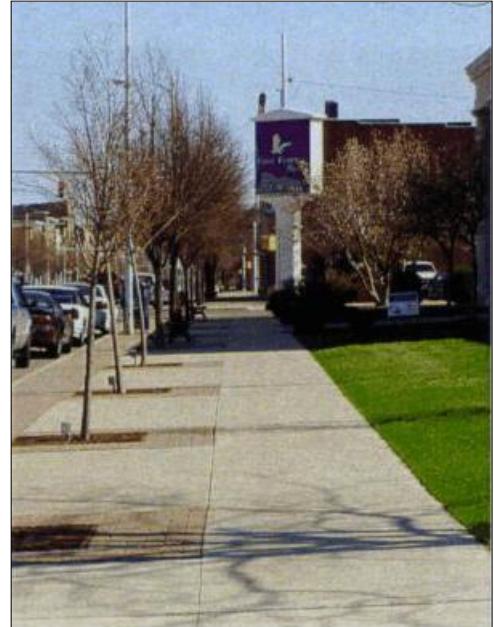
### **III. Streetscaping**

Streetscaping is the key design element that ties the entire downtown area together. The theme selected for the Downtown District should include a streetscaping element that enhances the current design used by the City, as well as historic elements.

The streetscaping plan should include trees, decorative street lighting, safe and interesting walkways, shrubbery and flowers, street furniture (benches, trash receptacles, etc.), and signage.

- Streetscaping has been implemented along both sides of Clinton Street, between the Maumee River bridge and Juliet Street. In addition, Second Street between Clinton and Wayne Streets has been streetscaped. Streetscaping in the Downtown District to date includes brick pavers and street trees, as well as improvements to the concrete sidewalks, as needed.
- The DDVB should review the current streetscaping design scheme, make any modifications or changes to it, and officially approve the plan, with input from property owners and the Chamber of Commerce and present to the City.
- **The plan should be adopted and implemented by the DDVB Board and City Council.**
- The City should apply for ODOT Enhancement Grant Funding for the Streetscape project. Likewise annual funding should be in place for maintenance and upkeep.
- The streetscaping should start at the triangle created when Clinton Street veers to the west at the Junior High. The green space existing at the triangle provides an excellent point. Future streetscaping could expand outward from this area.

- The goal would be to add streetscaping in the entire area defined as “the Downtown District,” so that the Downtown has a unique identity.



- The streetscaping plan should include: **burying electric lines, replacing lighting fixtures with period lighting, replacing traffic signal poles** with poles to match the lighting fixtures, **trimming and/or pleaching the trees** to create a more desirable ambiance while maintaining a canopy cover. The plan should strategically place trees and other plantings to compliment buildings and not hide business signage.
- Projects of this magnitude should be **divided into phases** so that the community can plan for, and finance the cost of, the improvements.
  - Responsibility: City and DDVB
  - Time Frame: 2007-2008
- When the original streetscaping project was implemented, the administration set aside a line item of \$25,000 per year for maintenance of the streetscaping. It is unclear if these funds were ever used for such purpose. **The City should reconfirm an annual budget to maintain the streetscaping**, and develop a program to do so. The City's brick replacement project should be a part of this annual budget.
  - Responsibility: City of Defiance.
  - Time Frame: 2008 and then ongoing.
- The City should **investigate the potential use of pressed brick treatment** for side streets, parking areas, and other unique areas that could benefit from a more historic approach to design. This involves the traditional asphalt pavement with a pressed brick treatment and/or the addition of color to simulate real brick

streets. Although the useful life of this treatment on very busy streets has not been documented, it is believed that this treatment is ideal for less traveled side streets. The City of Maumee is currently using this treatment on all side streets in the Uptown, as part of its CDBG-DT program. This treatment allows cities to duplicate the original character of their streets without the maintenance and capital costs associated with brick streets. Consideration should be given to starting with the streets around the triangle.

• Responsibility: City of Defiance, working with the DDVB Design Committee

• Time Frame: 1-5 Years



- The City should **install pedestrian crosswalks at all major intersections** in the Downtown District to provide a safe place for pedestrians to walk and to differentiate the area for vehicular traffic. Often these crosswalks are constructed of a different material (pavers, pressed brick, etc.) or are outlined in a different material to alert vehicular traffic to the presence of pedestrians, and to slow traffic down. The need for such improvements should be considered as part of the City's future streetscaping projects, as well as a part of all road improvement projects in the Downtown District. Crosswalks could be part of a CDBG-DT funding program.
  - Responsibility: City of Defiance.
  - Time Frame: 2003, then continue.

#### **IV. Focal Points**

A focal point is vital to every community and to every downtown. The focal point should serve as the gathering area for the community, and provide an area for social events, displays, concerts, and other activities that draw people to the area.

Downtown Defiance contains many focal points of historic and public interest, such as the Junior High and Middle Schools at the south end, the Canal Lock and small amphitheater, the Court House, the Municipal Building, the grounds of Fort Defiance, the Community Auditorium, Triangle Park, and the Library. However there are many elements of the Downtown District that have been ignored and should be emphasized as focal points. In addition, the focal points should be connected to encourage walking and touring of the Downtown District. The following recommendations are made regarding focal points:

- The community should **develop a canal walkway** along the former Erie Canal through the Downtown District. This could include enhancing appropriate locks, identifying the original location of the canal path with markers, renovating backs of buildings that abut the canal path, providing signage to provide information on the history of the canal, and otherwise identifying the canal path and providing opportunities for the public to walk the path and learn more about the history of the canal. This concept is illustrated on **Plate DT-6**.
- The **existing lock area** in the Downtown with the small amphitheater was a great start, but it **needs to be expanded** to have a much greater impact on the Downtown District and the community. It could be the central element of an overall canal walkway.
- The **existing lock at Davidson and Perry Streets** should be **investigated** to determine its potential for restoration. Restoring this lock and maintaining this area as a park or public space is something that should be pursued.



- As part of this analysis, **other sections of the canal should be investigated** to determine the feasibility of restoring them as well.

- The **canal path should be marked** with signage, markers, painting, pavers or street treatment, and/or as a walkway, bike trail, jogging path, etc. If there is no potential for public access, then appropriate signage or markers should be erected as close to the path as possible.
- **Backs of buildings along the canal path should be restored** with public access, decks, rear entrances, awnings, landscaping, seating areas, and green spaces, to complement the canal path and to tie the canal path into the businesses along Clinton Street.



- The **signage system** used to identify the canal path should be a part of an overall signage system for the Downtown District.
  - Responsibility: The City and DDVB.
  - Time Frame: 1-5 years.
- **Green spaces** in the community and especially in the Downtown District **should be connected**, to provide for a walkable environment and a walking tour. Extending the Rotary Riverwalk further south to Riverside Park, and tying the Buckeye Trail into the proposed downtown canal pathway should be considered. Potential green spaces to be connected include:
  - Pontiac Park
  - The walkway along the River in front of Fort Defiance
  - Kingsbury Park
  - Holgate Avenue Park
  - Riverside Park
  - Riverside Cemetery
  - Tecumseh Park

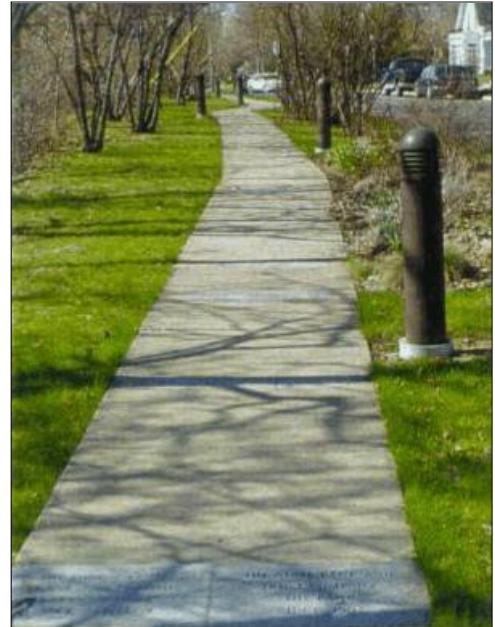


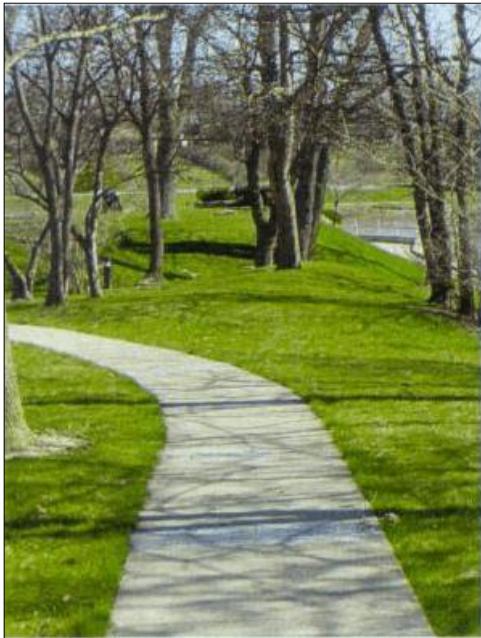
The employ lot at 122 Clinton Street should be developed into a mini-park. Santa's house could be used there in the winter and a gazebo and picnic tables could be used in warmer months.

Once the canal path through the Downtown District is completed, consideration should be given to **extending the canal walkway southwest along the canal to Junction, Ohio** to connect with the existing toe-path that runs to Delphos, Ohio.

- The community should seek funding from the Canal Lands Fund, which is administered by the ODNR.
- In addition, the Pontiac Park walkway should be extended to Independence, Ohio.
- Responsibility: A special interest committee selected by the City and appointed by Council.
- Time Frame: 1-5 years.
- **The Downtown District should be connected to historic sites and parks** with the Downtown, as well as points of interest throughout the community, through paths and signage. Points of interest could include:

- Grounds of Fort Defiance
- Defiance Public Library
- Dey Road Bridge
- East Side Fire Station—Douglas & Hopkins Streets
- Holgate Avenue Historic District
- Judge Alexander Latty House- 718 Perry St.
- Riverside Chapel in Riverside Cemetery
- Sauer-Watson House- 530 Washington St.
- The Junior High School





- The Armory
- The old opera house
- The locks on the canal
- Defiance College

Responsibility: The same special interest committee assigned above should work on this task.

- Time Frame: 1-3 years.

## **V.Traffic Circulation**

Viable downtowns require a good traffic circulation system for vehicular and truck traffic, pedestrians, and bicycles. Downtown Defiance has several State highways running through it, which brings a lot of truck and non-essential traffic into and through the heart of the community. Other sections of this Strategic Plan address the issue of alternative roads around the City, which would provide an alternate route for trucks and other non-essential traffic not doing business in the Downtown District.

For the Downtown District to prosper, vehicular traffic should be encouraged to travel slowly through the area, so that consumers have the opportunity to stop and shop conveniently and so that pedestrians do not feel threatened. A pedestrian-friendly environment is critical to the revitalization of the Downtown District. To accomplish this, the following recommendations are made:

- The City, Chamber, DBA and other agencies associated with the Downtown District should **support the development of an alternate route around the Downtown** for trucks and non-essential traffic. (Refer to the Transportation goals section and **Plate SP-1**.)
- A **pedestrian connector to Defiance College** should be investigated. The Land Use Plan Steering Committee has discussed a pedestrian connector between the College and the Downtown, which would extend south along Webster Street to Pontiac Park. This will be especially important when other riverfront activities are implemented.
- Responsibility: City, Chamber, DDVB (Economic Restructuring Traffic Subcommittee).
- Time Frame: 1-3 years.

- The community should **capitalize on the Buckeye Trail**, which runs through Defiance. The location of the Buckeye Trail through the Downtown District is: Starting at the Clinton Street bridge, it proceeds south to Fort Street; then proceeds east on Fort Street to Jefferson Street; then proceeds south on Jefferson Street to Downs Street; then west on Downs Street to Clinton Street (SR 111); and then south on Clinton Street/SR 111 and out of the Downtown District. (Refer to **Plate DT-1**.)
- Consideration should be given to diverting the Buckeye Trail to a path or loop along the canal through the Downtown District or adding a link to the Downtown and other local points of interest. Better marking and identification of the Trail should also be considered.
  - Responsibility: City Parks Department and DDVB
  - Time Frame: 2003-2005.

## **VI. Gateways**

In order to define and identify the “Downtown District” as a special place within the City of Defiance, **gateways or entry portals into the Downtown should be designed and constructed** at key locations. These gateways should contain signage, landscaping, lighting, and other design elements that make a statement about entering the Downtown District and give visitors a sense of being in a special place. These Downtown gateways should be coordinated with and complement any existing or proposed gateway entrances to the City itself.



Recommendations regarding gateways into the Downtown District include:

- The City and Chamber should **develop a gateway design and identify locations** for placement of these gateways. Potential locations include:
  - The Clinton Street bridge
  - The Second Street bridge

- Near the viaduct on Clinton Street
- Near the Hopkins Street bridge
- Jefferson Avenue at the Auglaize River
- Holgate Avenue at Linden Street (although possibly this gateway should emphasize the Holgate Historic District)
- To assist with financing these gateways, **donations from corporate sponsors**, which would be allowed to add a company logo to the signage, **could be sought**.
  - Responsibility: The City Planning Commission should designate a committee to coordinate this task and the committee should coordinate with the appropriate City department, DDVB, Chamber and Economic Development.
  - Time Frame: 2008 and beyond.

## **VII. Signage**

A major element to the success of any downtown, or any retail or commercial center for that matter, is the ability of consumers to identify and locate the businesses or sites that they wish to patronize. In addition to identifying names and locations of businesses and sites, signs also provide directional information, which is key to the flow of traffic through the community and the downtown. Signage is a critical element in the design and revitalization of the Downtown District of Defiance.

Unregulated or poorly regulated signage, however, can be one of the greatest contributors to visual clutter in a community. We are all familiar with commercial strips where the varying sizes and heights, number, color, and lighting of signs are distracting and aesthetically unappealing. Unregulated or poorly regulated signage can be detrimental to the economic viability and the visual quality of the Downtown District.

The following recommendations are made regarding signage in the Downtown District:

- The DDVB should **establish a downtown signage system** that could be coordinated with a City-wide signage system in the future. The Downtown District signage system should address:
  - A **coordinated signage system for business and building identification**. This is not to say that all signs have to look alike. However, the placement, size, mounting, materials, lighting, and design of the signs should be coordinated so that each sign complements, rather than detracts, from the others.
  - **Each business or building** should have proper identification. Street numbers should be visible from the street and sidewalk.

- **Historic buildings** should display markers identifying the building as being historic and including the date of construction.
- **Historical markers** should be established and displayed to identify sites or events of historical significance, as well as buildings of historic significance that no longer exist.
- The **gateways** discussed above should include signage that is coordinated with an overall downtown signage system. The gateway signs should welcome visitors into the Downtown District.
- **Directional signage** directing traffic to the municipal building, library, schools, grounds of Fort Defiance, Defiance College, the hospital, and other points of interest should be designed to provide the needed information in an unobtrusive manner.
- **Signage identifying parking areas** as public and private is critical to resolving any perceived parking problem in the Downtown District.
- The City should **update and amend its signage code** to reflect current generally-accepted standards for sign control.
- The City must assure that the signage code is **enforced uniformly and consistently**.
- As part of this signage code update, **new signage regulations should be adopted** (after much property and business owner involvement) **for the Downtown District**.
  - Responsibility: The DDVB Design Committee with assistance of City Staff assigned to signage regulations.
  - Time Frame: 2007-2008.

## **VIII. Business and Activity Mix**

Viable downtowns contain a mix of land uses, including primarily commercial retail, office, government, civic organizations, housing, and professional services. The Downtown District has a good mix of these types of land uses. The key to maintaining the viability of the Downtown District is to maintain the viability of each of these types of businesses.

Competition from the Northtown District requires that the Downtown be a unique environment, a walkable, pedestrian-friendly place that is safe and accessible. Maintaining a solid mix of strong businesses in the Downtown District is critical. Recommendations include:

- Downtown Defiance needs to recruit businesses that will attract a wider range of age groups to the Downtown District. The consumer survey results indicate that residents under 18 years of age, college students, and seniors seldom shop at

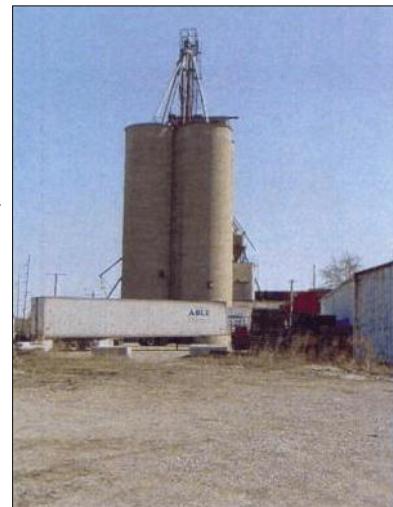
their places of business. These groups of residents provide an excellent untapped market to target for additional business in the Downtown District.

- Responsibility: DDVB (Economic Restructuring Committee)
- Time Frame: 2007 and ongoing
- Many downtown merchants own their own buildings, which indicates possibly a greater commitment to the Downtown District on the part of owners than renters. Efforts should be undertaken to encourage and facilitate more building ownership among local merchants. Local financing programs and incentives should be used as an enticement.
- **Property owners should be recruited for participation** in the downtown planning process.
  - Responsibility: DDVB (Economic Restructuring Committee) working with local banks.
  - Time Frame: Next 2-5 years
- Business clustering is the geographic grouping of a mix of businesses that enable each to benefit from each other's sales, customers and markets. It is a technique long used by shopping centers. Based on the "niche product categories" identified in the 2007 Market Analysis, a number of geographic clusters might be suitable for businesses expansion and recruitment. These potential clusters are:
  - **Dining/Specialty Food Services:** fine dining to enhance existing family dining; coffee shops, ice cream, gourmet candies, and other specialties within renovated buildings in a safe pedestrian environment. New eateries should be developed and marketed in tandem with existing restaurants and taverns.
  - **Specialty Retail:** Books, antiques, art gallery, specialty apparel, and florists that compliment and/or contained within the dining and specialty food services described above. This retail would help the district become a destination with a mix of interesting businesses.
- **Business Service Center/Retail:** Computers, office supply, coffee shop/internet café, newsstand etc. with a variety of tenants.
  - Responsibility: DDVB
  - Time Frame: Ongoing
- **Several buildings** within the Downtown District **should be converted to**

**alternative land uses** that attract people to the Downtown for goods or services, or for entertainment.

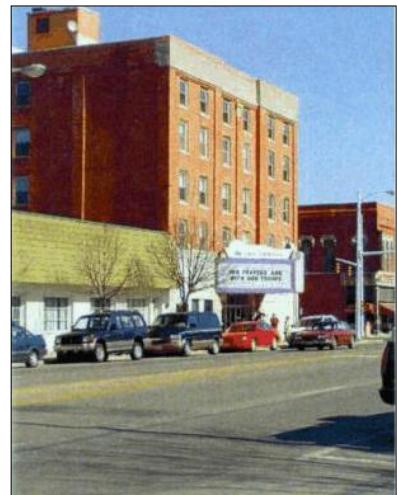
Suggestions include:

- The **grain elevator area**. This privately owned property is in need of demolition and reuse. It is between the historic area of Holgate Ave. and the Downtown and could have some potential for exciting reuses.



- The **old fire house** at Douglas and Second Streets.

- The **Valentine Theater/old opera house**. The church now using/owning is considering sale of the building. The time is now to regain control of this historic building. Its proximity to the old canal path lends an exciting possibility for its potential reuses. Also of interest is its proximity to the Junior High and Middle Schools, and the community auditorium. This could be a viable location for the relocated library, or for a conference center, theater, cultural arts center, etc.



- If the Library relocates to a different facility outside the flood plain, the **current library building**, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, could be used as a museum and/or visitor center. The availability of public restrooms at this site would also be convenient and meet a community need.



- The **house at the lock at Davidson and Perry Streets**. If the lock were renovated and preserved as a local park and historic site, the house that currently sits on this property could be acquired and used as a museum, public restrooms, an office for historic organizations or park personnel, etc. Once again, its location along the old canal path provides opportunities dealing with tourism, bicycling, hiking, etc.



- Four older existing school buildings will be vacated as a new elementary school is completed. Key school buildings in the City, and especially in or near the Downtown District, should be aggressively pursued for compatible alternative uses.
  - Responsibility: DDVB, DCCC and City (Economic Restructuring Subcommittee).
  - Time Frame: Next 1-5 years.

- The **old Mueller Bldg. site**, a brownfield site on Perry Street south of Thurston and north of Davidson, adjacent to the old canal bed. (This would be an ideal site for a Senior Center, as well as a park, with the library.)



- Possibly the **grain elevator property**. The owner is willing to sell this property.
  - Responsibility: The City
  - Time Frame: 1-3 Years
- The Consumer and Merchant Survey as well as the Market Analysis survey completed in 2007 indicate that the following additional stores or businesses are needed in the Downtown District:

- Upscale restaurant
- Clothing store (specialty)
- Family restaurant
- Antique/gift shop
- Specialty gift shop
- Shoe store
- Book store
- Convenience store

It should be noted that considerable discussion has taken place about a restaurant on the River in the Downtown District. Both surveys and all the research conducted as part of this planning process indicate that such a venture could be viable. **A restaurant should be recruited to investigate the feasibility of such an endeavor more carefully.**

- Responsibility: DDVB, City, Chamber and Economic Restructuring Subcommittee
- Time Frame: 2008-2009
- The Chamber and City should **pursue increasing the housing stock** in the Downtown District through facilitating and encouraging the renovation of vacant upper floors of buildings and through rehabilitating other vacant buildings in appropriate locations in or near the Downtown District for housing.
- The City should assure that its Community Housing Improvement Strategy (**CHIS**) **targets rental rehabilitation** for the Downtown District as a community need and identifies potential solutions to address the need.
- Work with Defiance College to develop agreements with Downtown Building owners to provide student housing.
- The City should assure that future Community Housing Improvement Programs (**CHIPs**) **address rental rehabilitation** as an eligible activity and actively recruits building owners to participate in the program. The City should also pursue HUD grants for rental properties for Defiance College students.
- The City should make sure that housing rehabilitation in the Downtown District is **eligible for tax abatement** through the CRA.
- If/when housing opportunities in the Downtown District are increased, **carry-out or convenience stores** to service the needs of these residents will also be required and should be pursued.
- Responsibility: City, DDVB and Defiance College with the assistance of the Maumee Valley Planning Organization,

which administers the City's CHIS and CHIP, and HUD HOPE VI programs.

- Time Frame: 2007 and ongoing

## **IX. Buildings and Historic Resources**

The buildings in any downtown are a major asset to the sense of place that is felt when one enters the downtown. Their proximity to the street and to each other, their architectural styles, and their historic integrity necessitate that special interest be paid to them. Buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places provide a special interest to the Downtown District, and should be preserved and enhanced.

There are many buildings in the Downtown District that are underutilized or that have vacant upper floors. Many need restoration to the facades (including front, rear, and side facades), and most need some sort of upgrade to comply with local and State codes. The time to concentrate on building preservation and restoration is before they deteriorate to a point that renovation is cost prohibitive.

To achieve a level of building preservation and restoration that would enhance the viability of the Downtown District, the following recommendations are made:

- The community should **adopt design guidelines** that address historic buildings and sites, and these should be implemented and enforced consistently throughout the Downtown District and/or other historic areas. The guidelines should be based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Structures and should be realistic from both a historic preservation and an economic perspective. It should be noted that adoption and enforcement of design guidelines are requirements of the CDBG-DT grant. The City had design guidelines in place for past CDBG-DT grants, but failed to enforce them after the grant programs were completed. The guidelines should be in place and enforced regardless of the CDBG-DT grant.
  - Responsibility: The Planning Commission and City Council should designate a special Design Review Board (DRB) for the Downtown District. Local architects and historians should be included on the DRB, as should Downtown property owners.
  - Time Frame: September 2007.
- **Training should be provided to the DRB** about what the design guidelines are and how they should be implemented. Professional assistance to the DRB is critical to it remaining an apolitical board that has the best design and historic interests of the community at heart. The cost effectiveness of the design recommendations is an issue that needs to be addressed and taken seriously in this design review process.
  - Responsibility: DDVB

- Time Frame: 2007
- The Downtown District should **initiate a facade and building renovation program** that will provide financial assistance to property owners and/or merchants who want to improve their buildings. To be eligible for CDBG-DT funds, building improvements (other than facades) must address code compliance issues, which include ADA accessibility improvements.
- A grant and/or loan program should be initiated, with CDBG-DT grant funds used as leverage.
- A Lender Commitment Program through local banks should also be developed.
  - Responsibility: the Economic Restructuring Subcommittee of DDVB working with the City, which would be the CDBG-DT applicant.
  - Time Frame: October 2007.

## **X. Management and Organization**

In order to maintain a vibrant downtown, a solid management approach and management team are required. The State of Ohio and the National Trust for Historic Preservation established a National Main Street Program in Ohio in 1997. This program utilizes a four-point approach to downtown revitalization that is worthy of consideration by all downtowns. The Main Street program promotes establishing subcommittees to address each of the four elements. These four elements are:

***Organization.*** This element builds a Main Street framework that is well represented by civic groups, merchants, bankers, property owners, citizens, public officials and chambers of commerce. A strong organization provides the stability to build and maintain a long-term revitalization effort.

***Design.*** This element enhances the attractiveness of the business district. Historic building rehabilitation, appropriate in-fill construction, street and alley clean-ups, colorful banners, landscaping, and lighting all improve the physical appearance of the downtown as a quality place to shop, work, and live.

***Economic Restructuring.*** This element analyzes market forces to develop long-term solutions for revitalization. Municipal infrastructure investment and business expansion, retention of existing and recruitment of new businesses, and creative conversion of unused space for new uses, sharpen the competitiveness of Main Street's traditional retail merchants and service businesses.

***Promotion.*** This element markets the downtown as a destination, to entice shoppers, investors, and visitors. Street festivals, retail events, heritage tourism and image development campaigns are some of the ways that a local revitalization organization encourages consumer traffic downtown.

Based on these four elements of the Main Street approach, the following recommendations are made for the Downtown District:

- **DDVB should pursue Main Street designation and adopt this four-point Main Street approach, designating subcommittees** for each of the four points, and assigning tasks accordingly. A mission statement should be developed to guide the community through the revitalization process.
- DDVB should **maintain membership and be active in Heritage Ohio, Inc. (DOI)**, as this organization can provide technical assistance for all downtown planning activities. (The Chamber is currently a member.) Also, membership in DOI is a requirement of the CDBG-DT program.
- DDVB should **hire a Downtown Manager** to implement the Main Street program. This person could also assist in the implementation of the CDBG-DT grant, if it is awarded, and the recommendations made in this Plan.

**A Merchants Association or Downtown Business Association should be created to address the Downtown District specifically**

- Responsibility: DDVB
- Time Frame: 2008

## **XI. Marketing and Promotion**

As part of this downtown planning process, surveys were created and distributed to local merchants and to consumers to acquire some insight into the market potential of the Downtown District and to gather ideas about improvements that are needed to make the Downtown more successful.

The Merchant Survey was distributed to 150 merchants in the District. Although only eighteen merchants responded, the results are interesting. (A separate report is available with specific results.) The Consumer Survey was provided to various businesses in the Downtown District to distribute to their customers. A total of 2,000 surveys were distributed and 97 were returned. (A separate report is available with specific survey results.) Both of these surveys shed some interesting light on the marketing potential for the Downtown District.

- The Consumer Survey results indicate that the majority of people who visit the Downtown do so to conduct banking business. Given this, **marketing efforts should identify ways to capitalize upon the foot traffic at the banks** and entice them into other businesses. The banks could consider kiosks or bulletin boards on which merchants can advertise specials and provide information and/or coupons on their goods and services.
- The Merchant Survey indicated that few, if any of the customers at the responding merchants' businesses were under 18 years of age, college students, or senior citizens. Here are **three critical markets that should be**

**targeted** in future business recruitment efforts, as well as in marketing and promotional efforts.

- Most downtown merchants fear local shopping centers and malls as their greatest competitors. Recently however, more and more merchants are finding that their newest competitor is the Internet. Local merchants should **organize and develop a local web site** that connects to each of their shops' or businesses' web sites and provides the opportunity to shop for goods and services on-line. There are three computer stores in the Downtown District that should be able to help orchestrate this effort.
- The 2007 Market Analysis surveys indicate the most people like the personal service and the quality of goods and services offered in the Downtown. The Downtown must, however, complete with the big boxes being constructed on the north side of town, and must be able to offer something unique and service-oriented. Consideration should be given to **developing a shared delivery system** among merchants and businesses in the Downtown. The new cab service could be a delivery source during non-peak service time.
- The Downtown District should strive to **coordinate hours of all businesses** in the Downtown. **One evening a week should include late store hours. Joint advertising** in the newspaper that day, emphasizing the late hours, and offering specials and coupons should become a routine part of doing business in the Downtown District.
- The Merchant Survey indicated that merchants spend between \$1,000 and \$5,000 annually on advertising. If there are 100 businesses in the Downtown District, and they joined together to do **combined advertising**, \$100,000 to \$500,000 could be available for an advertising budget!! The impact of such a unified marketing strategy would be tremendous.
  - Responsibility: DDVB Promotion Committee
  - Time Frame: 2007 and ongoing.

## **XII. Technical and Financing Assistance**

For any downtown program to succeed, technical and financial assistance and incentives must be available to encourage and entice property owners to invest further in their properties. There are several programs available, and many initiatives that the City and/or the Chamber could take to provide assistance to merchants and building owners. Recommendations include:

- The City should **pursue a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - Downtown (DT) Revitalization Tier 2 Grant** from the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), Office of Housing and Community Partnerships (OHCP). The City could request up to \$400,000 to leverage other private and public funds to complete public infrastructure projects, and/or private facade and building improvements that address code issues. Almost all public improvements would be eligible.

Some requirements of the program include the following:

- A City-approved Downtown Plan must be completed and adopted by the City.
- Design Review Standards must be adopted and a Design Review Board appointed.
- A lead downtown organization must exist and be at least two years old.
- A downtown market study must be completed.
- A local person must be designated to manage the downtown program.
- A minimum of \$1:\$1 leverage of other funds must be committed. [Please note this will make the City eligible, but not competitive. Funded programs in the past have had \$4:\$1 and higher leverage ratios.]
- The City must commit to a minimum of 10% of the CDBG amount in cash. (Once again, more committed funds would increase the application's competitiveness.)
- A promotional strategy for the downtown must be prepared and adopted.
- A minimum of 20% of the buildings in the target area must commit to physical improvements. [Once again, this makes the City eligible, but not competitive. At least 50% should be committed.]
- Targeted activities can be in a portion of the central business district provided that the area is cohesive and well-defined.

This is a very complex application to prepare and submit. The sooner the City , DDVB and Maumee Valley Planning agree to submit, the sooner the process can be started.

- The City should also **consider submittal of a CDBG-DT "Tier 3" grant for a special project** of significant impact to the Downtown District, but which does not meet the requirements of any of the other CDBG programs. For example, if the Valentine Theater/old Opera House had a new tenant and required renovation, funds could be requested to assist with a portion of that cost. The same is true for the railroad depot, the elevator site (where funds could potentially be used for site clean-up), and other historic buildings with unique issues.
- The City **should better advertise the Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA)** in the Downtown District. The CRA would allow property owners to request abatement of the increased new real property taxes resulting from physical improvements to their buildings. The City has had very few property owners take

advantage of this program, possibly because they are not aware of it.

- The DDVB should work with local banks within the City to **establish a Lender Commitment Program**, whereby the banks would loan funds to property owners and businesses in the Downtown to renovate or expand their facilities, provided that they meet the requirements of the downtown program. The banks are able to meet some of their Community Reinvestment Act requirements through programs such as these. In some cities, the bank writes-down 1% interest for its CRA requirements and the City pays the bank 1% of the interest, so that the property owners receive a 2% reduction in the interest amount.
- The **CDBG-Economic Development (ED) program should be pursued for any specific project** in the downtown that will result in 10 or more new jobs being created. The City can request up to \$400,000 in grant funds for infrastructure (to be increased to \$500,000 in FY 2004) or up to \$500,000 to loan to a business. In the loan program, up to \$25,000/new job can be requested, and 51% of those jobs must be targeted to persons from low and moderate income households. Construction of a restaurant on the River would be an interesting project for this program, as restaurants create a lot of jobs.
- The City could **establish a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for facade and building improvement projects** from either its CDBG-RLF or from local funds. Program requirements could be set up to assure that recipients comply with the downtown plan and design standards, etc.
- **Architects could be retained** to assist building owners or merchants with the design of facade improvements or building renovations. Often, individuals cannot visualize how a building could look, or what it might look like if it were converted back to its original design. Providing architectural services at low or no cost to the property owner can help entice individuals to properly upgrade their buildings. The City can propose to use CDBG-DT Tier 2 grant funds to pay for these architectural services, as part of its larger program.
- **Design seminars** could be sponsored by the DDVB to assist property and building owners with understanding **how to work with zoning and building codes, as well as architectural design standards**. Explaining the processes and requirements to property owners up-front can make compliance with the regulations less strenuous and formidable.
- The DDVB could request assistance from the **Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) and its Building Doctor Program** to educate building owners on the proper methods of renovating historic structures. Once again, understanding the concepts behind the regulations can make compliance with them less onerous.
- OHPO representatives could also discuss the **historic preservation tax credit program** to interested parties. People investing large sums of money on renovating historic structures may be more willing to do so if they were aware of

the tax credit program.

- The DDVB and Chamber should **continue to pursue fund-raising programs for specific projects** such as “Adopt a streetlight (bench, planter, etc.)”, buy a brick programs, and other interesting methods of raising funds for local programs. These local funds can be used as leverage to acquire some of the State grants mentioned above.
- The City and Chamber, at some point in the future, should consider the **establishment of a Special Improvement District (SID)** for generating funds to support infrastructure, planning, marketing, maintenance, economic development, management, and other activities in the downtown. The SID, if agreed upon by the majority of the property owners, would place a tax on properties within the SID and these funds would be placed in a special account to finance specified downtown projects. Some communities are even considering using SID funds to construct elevators that would make a series of building handicapped accessible on their second and third floors.
- **The City should work closely with the Chamber, DDVB, Economic Development Office and MVPO** to provide current and related information on proposed City projects that affect the Downtown District, such as developments on the north side of town and progress with US 24 improvements. Constant coordination and communication is necessary to make sure that everyone is on the same page. First hand information provided by the City to the Chamber and other local groups on a continuous basis will go a long ways toward reducing misunderstanding between downtown stakeholders and “City Hall.”
  - Responsibility: DDVB, Chamber and Planning Commission.
  - Time Frame: 2007 and ongoing

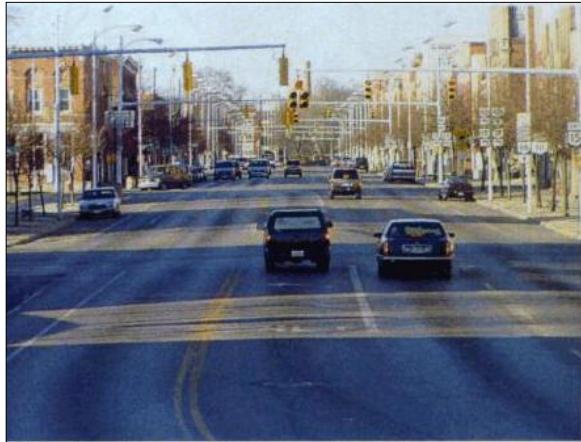
## **Conclusion**

In summary, this City of Defiance Downtown Revitalization Strategic Plan includes numerous implementation steps. **Adoption of the Plan by City Council** is imperative to achieving consensus among the stakeholders and the community.

Once the plan is adopted, a **strong public-private partnership is needed** to begin step-by-step implementation of the recommendations. Design professionals will have to be retained to prepare the actual streetscape design plans and bidding documents. Negotiations with property owners are paramount to implementing many of the ideas expressed within this Plan, including the canal pathway, the additional parking lot, the amphitheater, the marina, restoration of the depot, etc.

The **DDVB should spearhead the Downtown planning process**, including the **four-point Main Street approach**, must continue to strengthen its organization and gain greater stakeholder support for the Plan. A **Downtown Manager must be hired** to coordinate and oversee all of these activities. Funding and technical assistance must be pursued.

However, none of this will happen without a **strong working relationship between the City, the County, the Chamber of Commerce, the CIC, DDVB stakeholders and property owners** in the Downtown District, as well as a strong spirit of cooperation and a shared willingness to achieve this vision for Downtown Defiance. Defiance Development and Visitors Bureau has been formed to spearhead this cooperative effort and they must take responsibility for its ongoing progress.



- *Plate DT-1 Downtown Defiance Proposed Improvements*
- *Plate DT-2 Proposed Amphitheater*
- *Plate DT-3 Sample Signage System*
- *Plate DT-4 Sample Signage System*
- *Plate DT-5 Sample Signage System*
- *Plate DT-6 Proposed Canal Walkway*

# CITY STRATEGIC PLAN

In order to build collaborative partnerships among a broad range of organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals, an array of community input was compiled and prioritized into the following five key goals for the future of Defiance. These include the following in no particular order:

- Improve of Overall Community Access
- Expansion and Improvement of Infrastructure to Support and Direct Growth
- Protection, Development, and Expansion of Commercial Areas
- Protection, Development and Expansion of Industrial Areas
- Enhancement of Quality of Life Factors

It should be noted that many recommendations are made for properties that the City does not own or control. The assumption is made that, if consensus is reached for implementation of a specific element of the Plan, negotiations and discussions would begin with the owner of the property to determine their interest in participating in the proposed project and/or selling their property to an interested party.

## IMPROVEMENT OF OVERALL COMMUNITY ACCESS

### *Roadways*

The goal of improving overall access to the City was determined to be the highest priority issue by the Defiance Land Use Planning Steering Committee and the public. Increased access throughout the City of Defiance is needed in order to encourage balanced development, reduce traffic congestion, and improve safety in the community. Creation of a “Seamless Transportation System: (roadways and rail) would improve the condition of existing infrastructure and add connectivity to the system.

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has rerouted U.S. 24 from Fort Wayne, IN to Toledo, OH and will be completed in 2012. This route is the main highway through Defiance and the proposed improvements will have a significant impact on the City's access. These improvements should be monitored and augmented by the City of Defiance. Recommendations include:



- **Prepare a City Thoroughfare Plan and integrate it with the County's Thoroughfare Plan** should reflect the goals and recommendations of this Strategic Plan. (Refer to [Figure 4](#))

**Responsibility:** The City should be responsible for the preparation of the thoroughfare plan. Both the City and County, in a joint venture, should work to develop the Southern bypass.

Time Frame: Continuing

- Facilitate the Access Management Plan developed in 2009:

**Authority** - The authority to adopt and enforce an Access Management Ordinance is granted by the State of Ohio to the City of Defiance to regulate the design and construction of streets within their jurisdiction.

**What Is Access Management?** Access Management is the process that provides access to land development while simultaneously preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding system in terms of safety, capacity and speed. In practical terms, it means managing the number of driveways that a vehicle may encounter without hampering reasonable access to a property and removing slower, turning vehicles from the arterial as efficiently as possible.

- Access management deals with the traffic problems caused by unmanaged development before they occur.
- Access management addresses how land is accessed along arterials.
- Access management focuses on mitigating traffic problems arising from the development and increased traffic volume attempting to utilize these developments.
- Access management calls upon local planning and zoning to address overall patterns of growth and the aesthetic issues arising from development.

An effective, local access management plan can play an important role in preserving highway capacity, reducing crashes, and avoiding or minimizing costly remedial roadway improvements. The traveling public will benefit from faster and safer travel. Businesses will benefit from increased business vitality along a well-managed corridor. Taxpayers will benefit from more efficient use of existing facilities. Public agencies will benefit from the relatively low cost of access management and use their resources for other needs.

**Purpose and Objectives** - The purpose of this document is to define the principles and policies for access management on all roads maintained by the City of Defiance. Administration of the regulations considers traffic safety and capacity including many variables, such as the functional classification of the public roadway, nature of the access point, volumes of traffic, and the impact on signal systems, etc.

The City of Defiance is committed to an Access Management Program that:

- Improves public safety by reducing crashes.
- Provides fewer access points with vehicle/pedestrian conflicts.
- Provides fewer traffic conflicts between vehicle and bicycles.
- Preserves the useful life of the highway system by maintaining highway capacity.
- Facilitates the movement of people and goods by reducing travel delay and congestion.
- Supports orderly economic development by providing appropriate access to property consistent with the operation and safety of the highway.
- Minimizes transportation costs by making the highway more efficient.
- Encourages closer cooperation between ODOT, Defiance County, neighboring townships and the City of Defiance in land use and transportation decisions.

• **Initiate a bypass route at State Route 281.**  
(Refer to [Figure 4](#), Proposed Transportation Improvements.)

- **The Tier II Feasibility Study** has been completed. The City should apply for funding for an overpass at the CSX railroad at Hire Road. This project needs to be amended to reflect a plan to extend Domersville Road South to Standley Road and have it connect to the South. This project is imperative in the development of the Southern bypass for the City and future economic development of the Eastern part of Defiance. The proposed grade separation at Florence Road should be moved West to this new proposed road. These changes not only facilitate the Southern bypass route, but also provide greater access to both U.S. 24 and the Southeastern area of the City.
- **Vacate, construct and promote roadways to provide better access for a Southern route.**
- **Finalize the feasibility of the adopted route** in the recommended Thoroughfare Plan ([Figure 4](#)).
- **Consider extending the Southern bypass from State Route 66 to West U.S. 24 based on growth patterns.**



Responsibility: This should be a joint project between the City, the County and ODOT.

Time Frame: 3-5 years

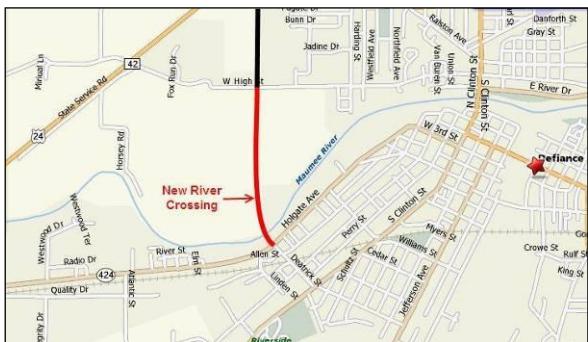
- **Widen State Route 66 to four lanes from Elliott North to Jewell/Breckler Road** to accommodate growing traffic volumes and projected development along this corridor.



- **Install turn lanes** at key intersections or at major commercial industrial uses.
- **Work with developers** to provide new access/service roads where needed tying in to East and West Elliott Road.
- **Work with developers and planners** to optimize use plan.

Responsibility: Both City and County should share the responsibility and funding for these improvements. Developers need to work/partnering with City and County officials.

Time Frame: 2010 -2015



- **Conduct feasibility studies to pursue a new Maumee River crossing.**

Responsibility: This would be a joint project between the City and County, and ODOT may get involved as well. Funding should be acquired from the responsible parties.

Time Frame: 7-10 years.

- **Investigate an alternative truck route/business route** to address the congestion caused by commercial truck traffic through Downtown.

Responsibility: The City should collaborate with both the County and ODOT to determine the best route along existing roadways.

Time Frame: In 2010



- **Plan for land use benefits of the four interchanges along U.S. 24 (St. Rts. 281, 66, 15/18 and Baltimore Street).**

Responsibility: This is the responsibility of Planning Commission.

Time Frame: 2010

- **Initiate the development of Commerce Drive** both East of Carpenter Road to State Route 281 and West of Carpenter Road to open up more land for commercial and light industrial development.

Responsibility: The City will work with property owners.



Time Frame: 1-3 years.

- **Improve Elliott Road** in anticipation of future development westward between State Route 66 and Christy Road and eastward between State Route 66 and Domersville Road.

Responsibility: This should be a joint project between the City, the County, Noble Township and property owners.

Time Frame: Westward 1-3 years (turn lane development  
Eastward 3-5 years

### Railways

**Advocate for improvements** that will ensure that the **City's rail system** is adequate for economic development purposes.

- Support efforts to renovate and improve the entire 51 mile length of the Maumee and Western railroad from New Haven, Indiana to Liberty Center, Ohio.

Support the **repair** of the Maumee and Western rail line section **between Krouse Road and Cecil Road**. This will improve access from the Southwest and increase marketability of the 700-acre Defiance Enterprise Industrial park site. (Figure 4)



Responsibility: This should be a joint advocacy effort between the City and County Economic Development Agency. Even though the Maumee and Western Railroad is ultimately responsible for the improvements, local governmental support can at times speed up the timetable. Additionally, assistance should be sought from ODOT and the Ohio Rail Development Commission.

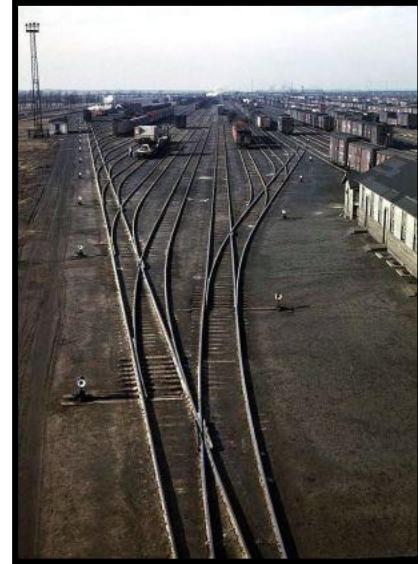
Time Frame: 1-3 years

- Continue to evaluate the affect of increasing railroad traffic on the flow of vehicle traffic for emergency vehicles.

Responsibility: This should be a joint project between the City and the applicable railroad. Additionally, assistance should be sought from the Ohio Rail Development Commission and/or ODOT. Depending on jurisdictional authority, Richland Township and/or Defiance County should also be involved. Grants should be sought to help offset local costs.

Time Frame: 1-3 years

- **Aggressively advocate for having a main train stop and connection point in Defiance** along the newly proposed rapid rail route connecting Chicago and Cleveland. The proposed Southern route would include a new train terminal for the rapid rail line and a new bus terminal, bringing in travelers from other Northwestern Ohio cities and the region to the train depot. This project has the potential to provide significant economic benefits to the City.



Responsibility: This should be a strong point of interest for locally elected officials and it should be lobbied for intensely. The City, the County, the County Economic Development Agency, and the Chamber of Commerce should pursue this goal. Funding sources could include: ODOT, INDOT, NICTD, M & W, CSX, the Ohio Rail Development Commission, and/or Amtrak.

Time Frame: 5-10 years.

### ***Expansion and Improvement of Infrastructure to Support and Direct Growth***

In the interest of providing adequate utility services to the residents of Defiance, and to facilitate economic development throughout the City, the existing infrastructure network needs to be expanded/extended and/or improved in key areas. Such improvements and extensions should be undertaken after careful consideration in regards to their fiscal impact on economic development activities and to urban sprawl. Extension of City services such as water and sewer outside current City limits should occur with annexation agreements in place. Whenever possible, the City should promote smart growth principles such as infill development to minimize urban sprawl and to maximize existing infrastructure capacity. Recommendations include:

- **Adopt smart growth principles and urban design standards** regarding expansion of infrastructure. To protect the health, safety, and welfare of the

citizens of Defiance in new areas of development, buffers should be placed around unsightly and unsafe electrical substations and the like, utility lines should be buried, and antiquated water and sewer lines replaced. Other requirements imposed by the applicable zoning and/or overlay district(s) should also be enforced.

**Responsibility:** City, County Economic Development Agency, Noble Township, and/or Richland Township should all be involved in the planning for infrastructure in this area. The appropriate stakeholders should partner with the proper utility company and/or PUCO.

**Time Frame:** 1-2 years and continuously thereafter.

- **Promote annexation and work to eliminate all islands and irregular shaped borders within the City area.** Clearly defined parcels of property for annexation petitioning. Identify private property responsibilities for improved infrastructure such as water, sewer and roadways.

**Responsibility:** Planning Commission, City Administration and City Council, should adopt a strategy concerning the criteria used in permitting or not permitting annexation to occur.

**Time Frame:** Ongoing

- **Extend water services North along Elliott Road Eastward** from State Route 66 to Domersville Road and State Route 66 Westward to Christy Road. Currently, water and sewer services are adequate; however, this area has been identified for future commercial and industrial development and as growth occurs, utilities should be in place. Jurisdictional authority should be established along this corridor before services are extended. Additional infrastructure improvements, such as electrical service and/or telecommunications, could become issues later regarding capacity and reliability. Assessment of these issues is recommended to facilitate development and ensure greater marketability of developable sites. (Refer to [Figure 8](#), [Figure 13](#)).



**Responsibility:** The City and County Economic Development Agency should all be involved in planning for infrastructure in this area. The appropriate stakeholders should partner with the proper utility company and/or PUCO. OWDA, CDBG-ED, State Roadway Development Funds, and annexation agreements should be pursued to finance projects.

**Time Frame:** 1-3 years.

- **Work closely and aggressively with the property owner to extend electric service assess needs and extend service of the 700-acre Defiance Enterprise Park.** This is a key growth area in terms of industrial development for the City. (Refer to [Figure 8](#)).



Responsibility: Both the City and the County Economic Development Agency should work to secure funding from the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), EDA (if eligible), and other appropriate stakeholders. Work with First Energy and AEP to improve electrical infrastructure needs.

Time Frame: 1-3 years and continuously through build-out of the entire site.

- **Evaluate the economic impact of having a wireless communication system for the community (like bubbling the community).**

Responsibility: Both the City, Defiance County, and Economic Development

Time Frame: 3-5 Years

- **Extend water and sewer service in the U.S. 24/Domersville Road Interchange Area.** (Refer to [Figure 8](#) and [13](#)).

Responsibility: The City and the County Economic Development Agency and property owners should work to extend the infrastructure and acquire funding from the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) and EDA (if eligible). This should be carried out in partnership with Richland Township. Enterprise Zone and annexation agreements should be considered.



Time Frame: 2-4 years.

## **Protection, Development, and Expansion of Commercial Areas**

Providing a variety of convenient, aesthetically pleasing, and accessible commercial services to residents is a main goal for the City. There is concern regarding the proliferation of high intensity commercial development at the edges of the City, while many large commercial buildings remain unoccupied closer in. This makes shopping inconvenient for residents living across town and contributes to traffic congestion and urban sprawl. Defiance needs to ensure that appropriate commercial uses and densities are developed in suitable locations in accordance with appropriate land use principles and adhere to application zoning requirements and a corridor plan. Recommendations include:

- **Establish hospital overlay zones for access management and aesthetics.** This could provide a mechanism to better manage the speed and volume of traffic and circulation, and could provide measures to improve the overall aesthetics of commercial corridors. The City should adopt design standards similar to the college overlay district. Areas for consideration should be the State Route 15/18 corridor running to the Gibson Street boundary which ties into the college overlay district. The second area for consideration should be East Second Street from State Route 281 West to the intersection of Ottawa and State Route 15 near the former Brickel School site.
- Define and develop gateways in various areas that identify access points in the City.
  - **Refer to the Access Management Program established in August 2009.**
  - **Institute signage controls** for aesthetic purposes. These controls could regulate the size, height, material, placement, lighting, and number of signs within the overlay zone.
  - **Require screening and landscaping** to reduce the adverse impact of non-compatible uses (e.g. adjacent residential and industrial uses), including moundings and plantings.
  - **Require restrictions on outdoor storage and display.**
  - **Require pedestrian and bicycle** connections and access.
  - **Establish design standards** for development within the overlay zone separate from existing design standards (Chapter 1147 in the Planning and Zoning Code). These standards would address architectural design and site development standards for desired layout of lots, streets,



driveways, location of buildings, lot sizes, setbacks, and densities that will promote appropriate uses for the area.

- **Control land use densities** to promote appropriate development that will be compatible with adjacent uses.
- **Relax other requirements** such as number of parking spaces.
- **Institute gateways** that set forth the desired development elements and criteria stipulated in the overlay zones. These plans should also identify and complement the established gateways of the City.

Responsibility: Both the City Planning Commission and the City of Defiance should partner with the County Economic Development Agency to form a consensus on the types of development standards desired for the overlay zones.

Time Frame: 1-3 years.

- **Review and update the current zoning code** to reflect the type of desired development for Defiance and to assure that recommendations in this Strategic Plan can be implemented.
  - The City should **create a mixed-use commercial/residential district** to encourage a compatible mix of both commercial and residential development. This would encourage redevelopment of underutilized commercial sites and areas, as well as potentially increase the community's housing stock (by promoting development of residential apartments in the upper floors of commercial buildings).
  - Additionally, **design standards** that encourage aesthetic compatibility and conformity **should be established in commercially zoned districts.**

Responsibility: Both the City Planning Commission and the City of Defiance should partner with the County Economic Development Agency, Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and DDVB to carry out these initiatives.

Time Frame: 1 - 3 years

**The City should encourage redevelopment of existing vacant big box retail sites by offering incentives such as Community Reinvestment Areas, Tax Increment Financing, and Job Incentive Programs for redevelopment of existing vacant shopping centers to entice developers there, as opposed to green field sites.**

Responsibility: The City Planning Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, and the County Economic Development Agency should address this goal.

Time Frame: 1-4 years.

**Recruit brand-name stores and anchors** for the retail market and commercial development. Public input indicated a market demand for high-end retail shopping opportunities. The City should recruit development of high-end department stores for clothes, shoes and other items and should encourage development of other upscale retail stores in the City, including:

- More restaurants and sports bars.
- Book stores such as Barnes & Noble or Borders
- High-end dining opportunities.
- Locate and establish commercial corridors.

Responsibility: The City and Chamber of Commerce.

Time Frame: 1-4 years

**Pursue heavy commercial development for the State Route 66/U.S. 24 interchange area.** The focus should be along the North Clinton Street corridor from Downtown Defiance North to Jewell/Breckler Road, which is the main intersection of U.S. 24. Because of the corridor's access to U.S. 24, this area has been identified as the Northern Gateway of Defiance. Existing land uses along this corridor are consistent with its current commercial zoning status. Some big box retail exists with additional projects underway. Presently, the zoning is a mix of Highway and General Business (B-3), Community Shopping Center (B-4), and Restricted Industrial (M-1). This zoning has been determined to be adequate for the future land uses proposed along this corridor. (Refer to [Figure 13](#)).

- Emphasize and maintain CRA #2 along State Route 66 from the Maumee River to U.S. 24.

Responsibility: City and the County Economic Development Agency

Time Frame: Ongoing

**Pursue a mixture of commercial, office and service business with some light industrial uses (M-1) along the Elliot Road corridors (East and West).** Developing industrial uses through an industrial park or as individual light industrial sites, such as warehousing is recommended. Additional retail, as well as other commercial uses permitted in B-3 or B-4 districts, is recommended for the area closely surrounding the Route 66/U.S. 24 interchange. Automotive dealerships, office parks, and service industries are recommended for the area to the East of State Route 66. (Refer to [Figure 8](#) and [Figure 13](#))

- More highway oriented commercial uses like motels, convenience stores, gas stations, and truck stops should be encouraged for the U.S. 24/Baltimore Street interchange.
- City Planning Commission should evaluate and promote unique commercial businesses within the Domersville Road interchange area. The City should adopt growth and expansion strategies for the interchange area.



Responsibility: City and the County Economic Development Agency

Time Frame: Ongoing

Develop commercial uses (A-O), such as business and medical offices, office parks, and office complexes in the State Route 15/18, Latchaw Drive and U.S. 24 interchange area. Some mixed-use commercial/residential uses are commended in this area. Senior housing or multi-family apartment-style housing would be appropriate for this area and would be compatible with existing uses (Refer to [Figure 13](#)).



- **Apply recommended hospital overlay zone** to this corridor from Gibson Street to the State Route 15/18 interchange including Latchaw Drive to West High Street.
- **Establish a Northwest gateway** into the City.

Responsibility: The City, Chamber of Commerce and the County Economic Development Agency partnering with respective hospital. Incentives such as CRA, CDGB-ED should be pursued.

Time Frame: 1-3 years.

- **Encourage mixed-use development along the East Second Street corridor, which will require rezoning.** This new mixed-use zoning would open up the area to higher density redevelopment, and rehabilitation of vacant and aging commercial sites. It will also provide appropriate transitions between residential and commercial uses. Because it is the most direct Eastbound route to and from the City, this area has been identified as the **Eastern Gateway** to Defiance.
  - Apply recommended hospital corridor overlay district to this area which is defined as East Second Street from Domersville Road to Douglas Street.

Responsibility: The Planning Commission and the Chamber should partner with respective hospitals utilizing Enterprise Zone, Community Reinvestment Area and/or CDBG-ED.

Time Frame: 2-4 years

- **Add neighborhood retail (B-1) along State Route 111** and/or in other areas of significant residential development. Because the North end of the City has become the big box commercial center, neighborhoods in the Southern half of the City need closer access to neighborhood retail uses.
- **Add appropriate B zoning to State Route 66 South** near the public school complex. Because the North end of the City has become the big box commercial center, neighborhoods in the Southern half of the City need closer access to neighborhood retail uses.

Responsibility: The City, Chamber of Commerce and the County Economic Development Agency utilizing CRA, and CDBG-ED where possible.

Time Frame: 1-5 years

### ***Protection, Development, and Expansion of Industrial Areas***

The City of Defiance has a strong industrial base, but expansion is needed to provide additional employment opportunities for residents and to develop additional revenue sources for the City. There are various economic incentives available to attract new development to the City. Defiance County, in its entirety, is an Enterprise Zone. The City has three Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs) and is working on a fourth, along with a Job Creation Incentive program.

Development of old industrial/brownfield sites within the City limits should be aggressively pursued to generate jobs, increase tax revenue and to eliminate neighborhood eyesores. Given that the City has many older industrial plants that are still in operation and that expansion of them would necessitate their relocation to larger sites with more acreage, planning for the reuse of these existing sites should be taking place now with the appropriate interested parties.

The City's primary focus on industrial development is the following areas:

- **Defiance Industrial Enterprise Industrial Park** is a 550 acre site located in the Western section of Defiance at U.S. 24 and Krouse Road. There is a rail spur in place for park access.

- **Promote the Site's development** through enterprise zone agreement and consider establishment of a Tax Increment Financing area and Job Creation Incentive programs.
- **Monitor and improve**, if needed, rail lines and spurs.
- **Coordinate workforce development initiatives** with businesses and other appropriate stakeholders.
- **Coordinate marketing and recruitment efforts** with appropriate parties.



Responsibility: Both the City and County Economic Development agency.

Time Frame: 1-3 years.

**Develop the area South of Jewell Road between Carpenter Road and Domersville Road to create a light to medium industrial area.** Large tract development and/or industrial parks should be encouraged. Since most of this area is outside the City limits, any coordinated development initiatives will have to be carried out in partnership with all appropriate stakeholders. (Refer to [Figure 8](#)).

- Acquire site control through option, purchase, and lease or landowner agreement.
- Conduct the appropriate environmental studies (Phase I, II, III Audits, Assessments, Archeological Survey)
- Additional industrial sites to benefit General Motors.
- Elliott Road, Domersville Road, U.S. 24 area.
- **Develop Commerce Drive for industrial purposes.** Commerce Drive was developed in response to a request from Johns-Manville for a roadway

extension. It was further extended to provide access to existing parcels because of the U.S. 24 highway project. Johns-Manville and First Energy would like the roadway to connect with Domersville Road which will then become their main access to U.S. 24.

- Extend Commerce Drive across the Maumee & Western railway and connect to Domersville Road.
  - Appropriate grant or loan assistance should be investigated.
  - Extend City infrastructure on Commerce Drive to accommodate development.
  - Coordinate marketing and business recruitment efforts.



Responsibility: City, Chamber, Economic Development partnering with Noble or Richland township and appropriate school district.

Time Frame: 2010-2013

- **Develop additional industrial sites surrounding the General Motors plant.**



- Grade Separation. Initiate further discussions with ODOT on grade separation.
- Coordinate marketing and business recruitment efforts.
- Water and sewer infrastructure is already on site. Promote the sixteen inch waterline and the express sewer system as economic advantages to industrial users.
- Rail road advantages. There is a major rail line and yard with a yard locomotive on duty.

Responsibility: The City and the County Economic Development Agency should partner with CSX.

Time Frame: 3-5 years

## Enhancement of Quality of Life Factors

Several initiatives were discussed and are recommended to improve the overall quality of life in the City of Defiance. These include:

- **Provide adequate housing opportunities for all residents.** The City of Defiance's housing stock is 70% owner-occupied and 30% renter-occupied. The City should pursue the following issues:
  - Continue preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock within the existing neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown and throughout the City.



- Encourage the development of new high-end housing similar to the Kettnering Hills Development to balance the development of the high-end housing market occurring outside the City.

- Provide additional rental housing in the Downtown in the upper floors of mixed-use buildings for empty nesters and college students.
- Encourage senior housing, congregate care facilities, and/or assisted living units.

Responsibility: City, MVPO, Defiance College and the Ohio Department of Development

Time Frame: 2010 and continuously thereafter

- **Balance future City development and protection of unique environmental attributes.** From a development perspective, the City is constrained by Rivers, flood plains, and wetlands. Accessibility in and around the City is also impacted, given that the Rivers have to be crossed. On the flip side, however, these environmental conditions that can be constraints and obstacles to development are also unique physical features that are significant attributes of the City. These attributes should be protected and enhanced. (Refer to [Figure 14](#), and [Figures 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19](#))
  - Protect rivers and flood plain areas and connect them with existing parks, walkways, bikepaths, and water-related uses.

- Pursue technical and financial assistance through appropriate State and Federal agencies, such as Ohio Department of Natural Resources.
- Implement conservation easements where necessary to ensure conservation of open space.
- Prepare a protected corridor plan for the Maumee, Tiffin and Auglaize Rivers to address shoreline protection, erosion control, and public access, and to maintain public ownership of key environmentally-sensitive areas along them.

Responsibility: The City and County Parks Departments, Defiance County Soil and Water Conservation and applicable townships with assistance of ODOT, FEMA and ODNR.

Time Frame: 1-3 Years for initial study and then continuously thereafter.

- Analyze the cemetery utilization and make a determination on whether the City should develop a plan for the purchase of additional land to expand Riverside Cemetery.

Responsibility: City of Defiance

Timeline: 1-3 Years

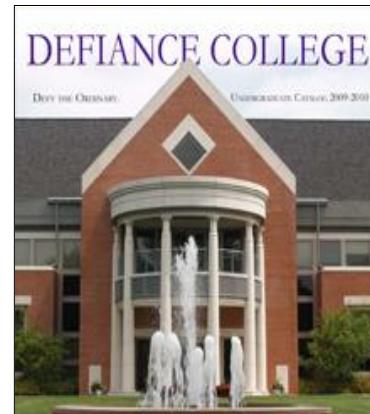


- Support the quality of the public school systems. The City is served by three public school districts, Defiance City (covering the south), Northeastern Local (serving the north), and Ayersville Local (serving the east).
  - The City and County Economic Development Agency should encourage and facilitate partnerships between companies and schools, especially when the companies are receiving tax abatement or other tax incentives.

Responsibility: The City, County, applicable School Districts, and the County Economic Development Agency.

Time Frame: Continuous

- Maintain a stronger City/College partnership. Colleges have a substantial economic impact on communities. The City, County, Economic Development Agency, and Chamber should work closely with Defiance College to capitalize on the investment of people and resources that the College expends in the community. The community and College should:



- Pursue joint economic development projects.
- Work on a walkway connector between the College and the Downtown District.
- Where applicable, work jointly on public infrastructure improvement projects that will impact or benefit both the City and the College.
- Maintain and promote cultural and civic events throughout the year.

Responsibility: The City and Defiance College

Time Frame: Continuous

- Maintain existing parks and recreational areas and expand services and facilities. Recreational quality of life issues such as park facilities, swimming pools, bike paths, aquatic parks, skateboard parks and related services play a key role in attracting residents and businesses to a community. The City has extensive recreational facilities and parks available for public use. (Refer to [Figure 14](#)) some of the recommendations to improve upon these facilities and services include:

- Expand, promote and connect a City-wide system of bike trails and walkways with key City landmarks and destination points (parks, Downtown, Defiance College).



- Maintain flood plain areas as parks, bike paths, walkways, marinas, boat launches, scenic overlooks, and other water-related uses.

- Capitalize on the Buckeye Trail, which runs through the City, by connecting it to parks and key points of interest in the community, including the Downtown District, the canal path, Defiance College, Diehl Park, and other community parks.
- Encourage private landowners to build and/or maintain sidewalks on existing properties, and mandate that new developments provide sidewalks via subdivision regulations.

Responsibility: The City and County Parks Departments.

Time Frame: Continuous

- Mitigate high nuisance noise areas throughout the City, especially along residential blocks that abut industrial land uses, commercial corridors, high-traffic areas, and rail lines.

- Institute appropriate buffering requirements such as mounding, fencing, and dense plantings through a landscaping ordinance or through overlay zoning
- Review existing City nuisance ordinances and propose more stringent measures and or penalties.
- Review the current enforcement system of the applicable nuisance laws and propose improvements where needed.

Additional maps prepared as part of this planning process and used in making future land use recommendations include:

- Figures 6, 9, 10, 12. Existing Land Use. Information for this map was acquired from the City's current zoning map and was then verified by the Steering Committee.
- Figures 8, 11, 13. Future Land Use. This map includes only those key areas identified as part of this planning process for future development.

Ordinance No. 7198

AN ORDINANCE ACCEPTING AND APPROVING AMENDMENTS TO  
THE STRATEGIC PLAN

**WHEREAS**, Council adopted a strategic plan for development of the City and adjacent townships in 2003; and,

**WHEREAS**, the strategic plan was most recently revised in 2007; and,

**WHEREAS**, a comprehensive review of the strategic plan to reflect the accomplishment of previously established priorities and better align the legislatively approved plan with development initiatives proposed by the Downtown Development and Visitors' Bureau, Defiance County Economic Development Director, Committees of City Council and other participants has been completed and presented to Council for review in study sessions conducted during regular public meetings of the City Council; and,

**WHEREAS**, proposed revisions to the Strategic Plan have been approved by the Planning Commission; and,

**WHEREAS**, Council concurs with the proposed Amendments;

**Now therefore**, be it enacted by the Council of the Municipality of Defiance, Ohio, that:

**Section 1:** The Strategic Plan as revised and amended by the draft document heretofore presented to Council and now on file with the Clerk of Council is hereby adopted.

**Section 2:** The City Administrator is authorized to arrange for publication of the revised Strategic Plan in a form suitable for distribution.

**Section 3:** It is found and determined that all legislative actions pertaining to the adoption of this Ordinance were taken in Public Session and that all deliberations that affected or influenced any such legislative act, including all deliberations in Committee, were conducted in Public Session duly convened in accordance with law.

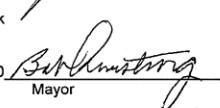
**Section 4:** This Ordinance shall be effective from and after the earliest date permitted by law.

Passed: October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010

  
President of Council

Attest: Diane Elders, Clerk

Approved: October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010

  
Mayor

Law Department  
City of Defiance  
631 Perry St.  
Defiance, Ohio  
419-784-2101