



HISTORIC MAIN STREET DISTRICT Belle Plaine, Iowa

MARKET STUDY AND STRATEGIES 2017



Working To Make Belle Plaine EVEN Better!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	1
Introduction.....	2
Community Profile.....	3
Downtown Belle Plaine Market Snapshot.....	9
Community Insights.....	12
Business Insights.....	18
Opportunities	21
First Steps Implementation Strategy	25
Conclusion	28

This report was created by Belle Plaine Community Development with technical assistance provided by Main Street Iowa, under contract by the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA).

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INTRODUCTION

PUTTING A PLAN ON THE FUTURE

The economic landscape of traditional downtown and neighborhood commercial districts continues to change and evolve. Expanding retail competition, life-altering technologies, and shifting lifestyle trends will continue to affect business opportunities and the ways in which people interact within the traditional downtown environment.

The key to improving the economic performance of the Belle Plaine business district ultimately lies in the development and implementation of market-driven business development and marketing strategies that capitalize on our community's assets and emerging opportunities.

Belle Plaine Community Development spearheaded the downtown market analysis process to promote an in-depth understanding of local and regional market conditions and trends impacting the downtown district's current economic performance and opportunities for the future. Information and direction gained throughout the market analysis process will provide a sound basis for local decision-making processes and strategies aimed at enhancing the Belle Plaine business district.

Belle Plaine was one of eight Main Street Iowa communities selected to receive 2015 market analysis training and technical assistance. The self-help process is engaging local leaders, business persons, residents and stakeholders. Key steps in the process include:

- Site visits and work sessions with the Main Street Iowa team.
- The collection and review of background information.
- The analysis and summary of trade area demographic and economic data provided by Main Street Iowa.
- The performance of consumer and business surveys.

An extensive amount of information and data was compiled and analyzed throughout the course of the market analysis process. This report has been prepared to highlight key information and findings that could be particularly relevant to our community's ongoing downtown enhancement efforts.

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This market study report was completed with assistance from Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and Main Street Iowa. United States Department of Agriculture Rural Community Development Initiative funding and Community Development Block Grant funding were procured by IEDA to underwrite market analysis training and technical assistance furnished to select Main Street Iowa communities in 2015.

The mission of the IEDA is to engender and promote economic development policies and practices which stimulate and sustain Iowa's economic growth and climate that integrate efforts across public and private sectors. The IEDA conducts training and provides technical assistance to designated Main Street programs, including market analysis. These services include capacity building on understanding the regional marketplace and how to develop and proceed locally with an implementation plan.

Downtown Professionals Network, a planning and research firm, was hired by IEDA and worked with Main Street Iowa to provide training, technical assistance and support to local Main Street organization leaders and volunteers.



Limitations and Disclaimers

Retail market analyses, their components (such as retail sales gap analyses) and derivative business development plans provide important guidance on how a commercial area should, theoretically, be able to perform and on the sales levels businesses should be able to achieve. However, a number of factors affect the actual performance of businesses and commercial areas, including the skills of the business operator, level of business capitalization, the quality of the physical environment, changes in overall economic conditions, the effectiveness of business and district marketing programs, and many other factors. The information in this document is intended to provide a foundation of information for making business development decisions, but it does not and cannot ensure business success.

As is true of all demographic, economic and market studies, our analysis' reliability is limited to the reliability and quality of the data available. Our research assumes that all data made available by and procured from federal, state, county, city, primary and third party sources is accurate and reliable.

Because market conditions change rapidly and sometimes without warning, the information and opinions expressed here represent a snapshot in time and cannot predict or gauge future changes or results.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Situated along the Iowa Scenic Byway, Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway and the Iowa River Corridor, Belle Plaine is Benton County's second largest community. Just seven miles south of U.S. Highway 30, and on Iowa Highway 21, Belle Plaine is conveniently located within 50 miles of Waterloo, Cedar Rapids and Iowa City.

The Main Street District lies along the Union Pacific Railroad route that has intersected the city for more than a century. Within the Main Street district is the two-block long Belle Plaine Historic District, home to 40 businesses and 18 upper-story apartments.

The Belle Plaine Historic District was transformed from a blighted area to one of pride and renewal several years ago with the completion of a \$4.6 million streetscape and façade project. Thirty-six storefronts received major facelifts at the same time new street, sidewalk, water main and a green stormwater system were installed. These simultaneous projects were the first of their kind in the state and together were selected for several prestigious awards, including Main Street Iowa's 2013 Signature Project of the Year.

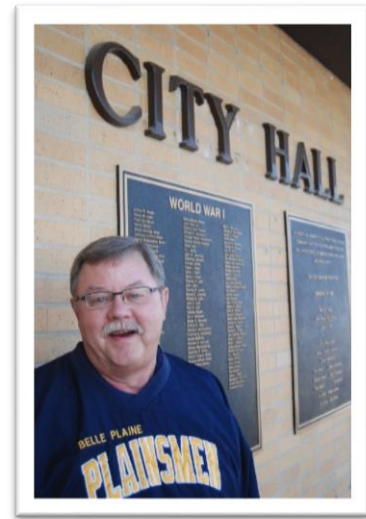
The downtown area boasts a variety of retailers offering goods and services ranging from home furnishings and flooring, gifts, appliances, automobiles, apparel and more. Two pharmacies, a dentist, eye doctor, physical therapist center, chiropractor and massage therapist are located within the district. A family-friendly café offers a wide menu. Three pubs are located in the area.

Housed in or near the historic district are City Hall, the Belle Plaine Community Center, Belle Plaine Fire Department, a movie theatre, two financial institutions, the Belle Plaine Area Museum and Belle Plaine Community Library.

Historic structures in the Main Street area include the former Herring Hotel, Preston's Corner, F.L. Sankot Case Implement, and the 1894 railroad depot. A brick sculpted mural and four painted murals of local historic interest are on permanent display throughout the area.

Rotary Park, a green space located on Main Street, is the newest of seven parks. Two blocks from the district is the 28-acre Franklin Park, site of the community's annual Old Fashioned Fourth of July celebration. Within easy walking distance is the site of Jumbo Well, an artesian well that in the 1800s flowed uncontrollably for more than a year.

Points of historic interest beyond the area's borders include Oak Hill Cemetery, with its oldest sections laid out in a wagon-wheel design. This is the final resting place of Ladimir Klacel, a Czech philosopher, teacher and contemporary of Gregor Mendel, who died in Belle Plaine in 1882.



“Main Street is the heart and soul of every small town in America. Unlike our bigger counterparts, small town America realizes that your Main Street probably reflects the economic health of your community.

It is where people gather and shop, but it is also where visitors check out your city. Small town government cannot ignore the other parts of their community, but they must work with their Main Street partners to see that it survives and attracts more people to your community.

For that reason, the City of Belle Plaine has partnered with Belle Plaine Community Development and Main Street Iowa to help our heart and soul keep that upbeat mood that we know attracts visitors and hopefully future residents to Belle Plaine.

**— Dave Fish, Mayor
City of Belle Plaine**

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Development Patterns

Plans are underway for the addition of way-finding signs in the downtown district and throughout the community to direct visitors to significant sites and other points of interest.

Permanently placed benches, seasonal hanging flower baskets, native plants and grasses and welcome banners on light posts provide a pleasant pedestrian-friendly environment.

Free parking exists throughout the downtown district with a generally concentric pattern of availability on and near the Main Street retail corridor. One 24-hour lot is located adjacent to Main Street. Parking is a combination of on street parking and lot parking.

The district's close proximity to the city's largest park makes this area a focal point for community activities. Shopping, services and seasonal events such as Taste of Belle Plaine, Trunk or Treat and a Holiday Homecoming in Belle Plaine occur a stone's throw from the city ball diamonds, aquatic center and disc golf course.

Aesthetics and Appearances

The buildings in the downtown area range in age from the mid-19th century structures to contemporary. Great examples of Arts and Crafts, Italianate, Queen Anne, Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, and Anglo-Italianate styles are evident everywhere. Thirty six buildings in the historic district underwent complete or partial façade renovations as part of the downtown revitalization project. These are examples of true historic restoration. Other buildings in the area have been renovated or remodeled to reflect a more contemporary look.

Public art enhances the downtown district. The "Legacy Mural" depicting the evolution of life locally is a brick mural integrated onto the west side of the Belle Plaine Area Museum. The district also boasts four "Walldog" murals that depict locally historic events and places. An additional "Walldog" mural, considered one-of-a-kind, is housed on a grain bin located northeast of Belle Plaine directing U.S. Highway 30 travelers to visit the downtown historic district.

Unique to the historic district are multiple bio-cell planters, a component of the green storm water system. Volunteers dedicate many hours to improving and maintaining these cells, which along with the hanging flower baskets add to the aesthetic appeal of the district during summer months.

The Main Street District is active 16 to 19 hours each day and is considered to be a safe place with individuals comfortably engaged in the area at all hours.

Residential areas surrounding the downtown district are generally of the same era as the downtown structures. Many have been modernized and are well-maintained, while others require attention. The city has begun a program to address derelict residences, some of which are located within the area.



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Business Mix and Climate

The downtown district is fortunate to have an established mix of businesses ranging from retail, personal and business services, to office environments, eating and entertainment establishments and cultural activity centers. The business profile of downtown is as follows:

Retail – The retail segment of Main Street is mostly comprised of small, independently owned businesses. Many offer a variety of products and services within one store. Ownership is local and generally not chain-affiliated:

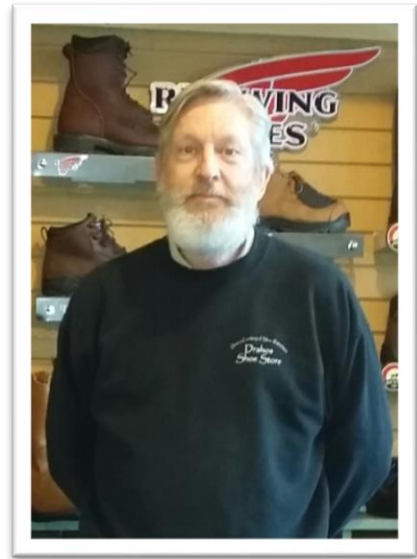
- ▶ **Fabric** – One store featuring fabric for clothing and quilting and offering alterations, hemming, custom quilts and sewing projects.
- ▶ **Apparel and Accessories** – One store offering pre-owned clothing and accessories and one shoe store also offering gifts and repair services.
- ▶ **Home Furnishings** – Three stores, including one offering appliances and new furniture, and an interior design store offering flooring, home décor and interior design services.
- ▶ **Flowers** – One store provides plants, fresh flowers, wedding, funeral and everyday arrangements, wine and gifts. One nursery and one greenhouse/garden center are located outside of the Main Street District.
- ▶ **Automotive** – The Main Street district is home to one car dealer, one automotive gas/auto service business, two auto parts businesses and two automotive gas businesses. One additional car dealer, three additional automotive service businesses, two automotive washing facilities and two automotive body shops are located outside the Main Street District.
- ▶ **Hardware/Lumber** – One multifaceted hardware store featuring paint, a lumber yard and furniture.
- ▶ **Pharmacy** – Two pharmacies are located in the Main Street district. Both offer gifts, décor and everyday necessities.
- ▶ **Food & Beverages** – A grocery store providing a full line of groceries as well as a deli and wine and beer sales. There are also two liquor retailers in the Main Street District.

Lodging – One, single-room facility and two apartment-style lodgings are located in the district while two other bed and breakfast style accommodations can be found outside the district.

Personal Services – Seventeen different businesses focus on providing personal care services, ranging from a food pantry, caterer, and hair salons, to dance, massage and fitness services. Communications, newspaper/advertising and two banks round out the offerings.

Business Services – Twelve business service establishments are located in the district including accounting, fundraising, information technology, real estate services, photography, higher education, lawyers, insurance, investments, counseling and various other health services. Outside the district, farmers enjoy the convenience of two multi-faceted equipment, crop and farm supply stores.

Culture & Arts – The Belle Plaine Area Museum/Belle Plaine Historical Society with its Henry B. Tippie Annex is the hub of culture and arts in the downtown district. The Belle Plaine Community School District has an excellent Fine Arts program which is located outside of the Main Street District and has partnered many times with the Belle Plaine Community Band at local events.



“My family has been in the shoe business in Belle Plaine ever since my grandfather was “booted” (pun intended), off the Chicago-NorthWestern train headed for Omaha.

In order for family businesses like ours to remain a part of the downtown business community, we must continue working to make Belle Plaine attractive to our young people.”

**— Don Drahos, Owner
Drahos Shoe Store**

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Community Services – The U.S. Post Office is located in the district along with other governmental services, such as Benton County Veterans Affairs, Department of Correctional Services, Benton County Volunteer Program, the Driver's License Station and Belle Plaine Community Library. Social and civic organizations also make up the district. They are Belle Plaine Community Center / Senior Dining, Belle Plaine American Legion and Belle Plaine Community Development.

Entertainment – The King Theatre is the entertainment highlight in the downtown district showing the latest released box office hits. A six-lane bowling alley is located outside the Main Street District.

Dining – Three eating establishments range from family dining, to pizza, to sub sandwiches. Lunch specials, sandwiches and side orders can be found at the local deli, gas stations, bowling alley and bars. Ice cream is also available seasonally.

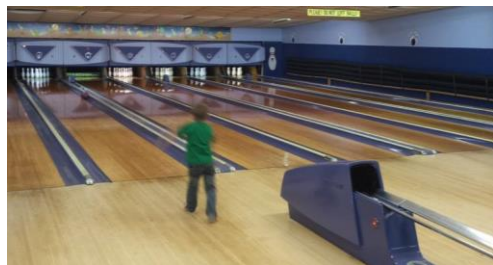
A typical day sees multiple phases of activities which blend together to create the character of the district:

- ▶ **Early Morning** – Early risers meet for coffee and socialization. Runners and walkers enjoy various destinations. Students get a head start to their day and store owners and employees get a jump on their day.
- ▶ **Mid-Morning** – Retailers open shop; service businesses have full offices and are well into their day.
- ▶ **Lunchtime** – The lunchtime crowd arrives from inside and outside of the district. Several eating locations cater to this crowd with success.
- ▶ **Afternoon** – Shoppers stroll along the streets, patrons visit the library, hair is tamed, and errands are completed.
- ▶ **Early Evening** – Workers heading home take advantage of happy hour and early diners browse their supper choices.
- ▶ **Mid-Evening** – Early entertainment choices can be found at the theater, restaurants and a few of the bars. Summer ball games at Franklin Park draw visitors to the area.
- ▶ **Late Evening** – Crowds accumulate at bars, centering their focus perhaps on sporting events, live band/performer, pool tournament or cards. Some bars pour until 2 a.m., then the streets quite down for a few hours and the cycle starts again.

Since completion of the downtown revitalization project, investors have acquired vacant buildings or moved their businesses to the district. Some of these properties have been rehabilitated and now house commercial enterprises. The upper stories of two of these buildings have been converted to apartments.

Several buildings are available for rent or purchase. The city recently completed a project to stabilize and ready the Hansen Building, a landmark downtown property, setting the stage to make this Belle Plaine's latest rehabilitation success. A few other properties are also opportunities-in-the-waiting.

Because of the desirable character of the district, several non-retail businesses have located here due to affordability. Many upper floors in the district sit empty but could be converted to residential living. Vacancy rates in the developed upper floors are very low.



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Competitive Analysis

The Belle Plaine Main Street district is unique in many ways, but direct competition is still a factor.

Within Belle Plaine:

- ▶ Belle Plaine is a smaller, rural populated community, and any business considered “outside” of the Main Street District is not necessarily seen as a threat, but an asset to the community as a whole.

Outside Belle Plaine:

- ▶ A number of Belle Plaine’s residents are employed in other cities within a 50 mile radius of Belle Plaine, including Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Waterloo.

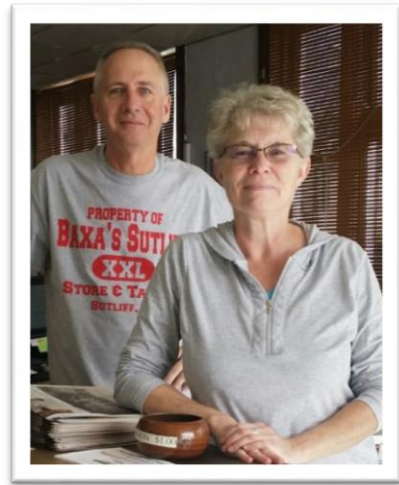
There are many positive actions that have been taken in the last decade to position downtown Belle Plaine as a vital, growing, desirable place to be. Assets and features to be capitalized upon include:

Keeping the unique character of the district by retaining locally-owned businesses with unique origins.

- ▶ Further developing the assets of Franklin Park and the aquatic center through continued and additional outdoor recreation opportunities.
- ▶ Strong community support of projects such as the aquatic center, school expansion/remodel, museum and downtown revitalization have yielded great results and must continue to accomplish positive growth and change.
- ▶ Continued, conscious planning of events and activities that center the city’s population in the downtown will maintain connection and ongoing support of improvement programs. Calling upon our large population of retirees as volunteers will be a tool for success.

Strategies which build upon the downtown’s strengths are aimed at mitigating weaknesses and threats which include:

- ▶ Involving our industry partners more in the downtown district will have immediate and ongoing benefits as they encourage and support employees to visit, resulting in enhanced recruitment efforts.
- ▶ Being by-passed in the retail sphere by technology. Main Street businesses must be tech-savvy in their marketing and advertising. They cannot be stuck in old-time methods, but must adapt to their customers’ habits while retaining the best of the brick and mortar.
- ▶ Competition with Internet-based retailing threatens every small business owner. Technology education for our current retailers is a must.
- ▶ The potential for higher energy costs challenges small business owners’ margins. Ongoing steps toward efficiency and alternative energy resources have become increasingly important.
- ▶ A weak “shop local” mentality could be strengthened through a community-wide campaign to raise awareness of businesses in the Main Street District.
- ▶ Providing grant opportunities to help defray the cost of upkeep of historic downtown properties, providing an incentive for redevelopment for the right property owner. Through a partnership between the City of Belle Plaine and Belle Plaine Community Development, several grant programs are available to owners or renters of commercial property.



“After 12 years, we moved back to our previous location on Main Street when the opportunity presented itself.

In that time, Main Street has seen so many improvements and it’s great to be a part of it again.

It’s easier for our customers, closer to our business partners and walking distance to taverns, restaurants, convenience stores, city hall, library and museum.

It’s where we were meant to be. And we like the sound of the trains.”

**— Jim Magdefrau, Editor
with Susan Svoboda, Office Manager
The Star Press Union**

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Belle Plaine Business Incentive Grant Programs:

- **Design Assistance:** Commercial properties may be eligible for design assistance in cooperation with Main Street Iowa.
 - **Awning Program:** This program helps area commercial properties wishing to install, repair or replace awnings.
 - **Commercial Interior:** This program is for expanding or remodeling commercial interior spaces.
 - **HVAC Program:** This program helps with installation or replacement of heating and/or cooling units.
 - **Façade Grant:** This program helps with restoration or rehabilitation of facades on commercial buildings.
 - **Acquisition Assistance:** Designed to assist owner-operators with costs associated in acquiring commercial property.
 - **Supplies Program:** Assists approved grant applicants in purchasing products locally by receiving a discount on all qualifying project supplies and materials at participating local businesses.
 - **Education Program:** This program assists with educational, trade and self-improvement courses or classes for business owners or employees. Classes must be through a credited college or development course.
- Several other business development priorities were identified in the Strengthening Communities Program report conducted in 2010, and include:
- ✓ Retention and Creation of Jobs and Retail Businesses with a:
 - Variety of goods and services
 - Robust business activity
 - Consistent opening/closing schedules
 - ✓ Promote existing businesses
 - ✓ Increase tax base
 - ✓ Improved resources for local businesses
 - ✓ Preserve downtown's historic character

The Downtown Revitalization project has affected the character of the downtown particularly with aesthetics and community pride. It has helped give the downtown area a fresh, clean look, while preserving and restoring the unique character of each of the historic buildings that participated in the project. A snowball effect of restoration and a “reawakening” of the downtown was hoped for, and has been promising.

- “Beautification” of Belle Plaine continues to be an attribute with the Belle Plaine Partners for Beautification taking the lead on many projects, including watering and fertilizing the hanging flower baskets on Main Street provided annually by Belle Plaine Community Development.
- Maintenance of the native plants and grasses in the biocells on Main Street is led by a group of dedicated volunteers in the community who have personally taken on the job of keeping the plants alive and the cells weed free. “Adoption” of the biocells is a concept that could become a way to get more people involved.



DOWNTOWN BELLE PLAINE MARKET SNAPSHOT

Belle Plaine Community Development Corporation (BPCDC), the non-profit corporation spearheading the community's Main Street program, is taking a pro-active and catalytic approach to planning for the future prosperity of Belle Plaine's traditional downtown business district.

The efforts of BPCDC and its partners, along with investments made by the public and private sectors in Belle Plaine, are working to heighten the appeal of the traditional business district among consumers, investors and entrepreneurs. Moving forward, it will be critical for the community to capitalize upon and leverage these investments and ongoing BPCDC marketing efforts to position Belle Plaine as a local and regional attraction, economic engine, and center for commerce.

This Market Snapshot document highlights and summarizes important demographic, lifestyle and retail data, characteristics and trends in the marketplace. The information, along with market insights to be explored during the project's ensuing phases, provides groundwork and a basis for important decision-making process that will guide future enhancement and redevelopment strategies.

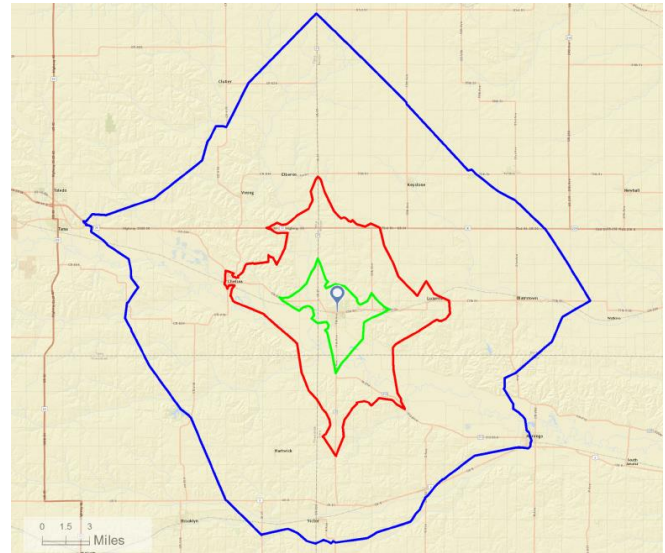
Demographic Snapshot

The demographic snapshot compiled for the Belle Plaine Drive Time Markets benchmarks and tracks changes in the marketplace. Analysis and comparison of data for the three drive time areas reveal:

- Trends and projections for all drive time areas anticipate five-year decreases in population and households through 2021. Persons of Hispanic origin represent 3.3% of the population in the identified area.
- Average household size is anticipated to decrease slightly across the drive time areas dropping below 1,000 in the five- and ten-minute drive times. Median age for the drive times is comparatively older than that of the Iowa population, estimated at 44.1 years in 2016 and expected to reach 45.1 years by 2021.
- Median household, average household and per capita income estimates for the five- and ten-minute drive times are considerably lower than those estimated for the twenty-minute drive time and for the state. Median household income is expected to decrease across the 5 and 10-minute drive times by about 2% through 2021. Overall, projected five-year growth rates for the twenty-minute drive time area are up slightly at 1.43%.

Iowa Income	2014	2019	+ %
Median HH	\$52.4K	\$61.3K	16.9%
Average HH	\$65.7K	\$76.7K	16.8%
Per Capita	\$26.7K	\$31.3K	17.1%

Note: The complete Downtown Belle Plaine Market Snapshot is available as a supplemental document to this report.



Downtown Belle Plaine Drive Time Market

Fast Facts

Population	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2000 Census	2,648	3,408	9,299
2010 Census	2,358	3,072	8,703
2016 Estimate	2,272	2,989	8,699
2021 Projection	2,216	2,933	8,685
Change: 2016 - 2021	-0.50%	-0.38%	-0.03%
Households	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2000 Census	1,107	1,403	3,753
2010 Census	1,024	1,310	3,655
2016 Estimate	990	1,278	3,666
2021 Projection	968	1,257	3,665
Change: 2016 - 2021	-0.45%	-0.33%	-0.01%
Median HH Income	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2016 Estimate	\$38,614	\$41,106	\$50,115
2021 Projection	\$34,883	\$38,261	\$53,802
Change: 2016 - 2021	-2.01%	-1.42%	1.43%

Source: Esri Market Profile.

DOWNTOWN BELLE PLAINE MARKET SNAPSHOT



Lifestyle Profile

The Esri Community Tapestry consumer segmentation system adds color to the “black & white” demographic description of residents and households within drive time areas.

The Tapestry Household Distribution Report identifies prevalent segments and describes the population’s likes, dislikes, lifestyles and purchase behaviors for households within the defined geographies. The information can be particularly helpful for assessing opportunities for business growth and for designing marketing strategies and messages to reach targeted consumer segments.

The following tables show concentrations of the three most prevalent Tapestry household segments found within downtown Belle Plaine 5, 10 and 20-minute drive time areas.

5 Minute Drive Time Households	Count	Pct.
Small Town Simplicity	431	43.5%
Salt of the Earth	251	25.4%
Heartland Communities	308	31.1%
Count/Pct. of 5 Minute Drive Time	990	100%
10 Minute Drive Time Households	Count	Pct.
Small Town Simplicity	472	36.9%
Salt of the Earth	396	31.0%
Heartland Communities	330	25.8%
Green Acres	72	5.6%
Prairie Living	8	0.6%
Count/Pct. of 10 Minute Drive Time	1,278	100%
20 Minute Drive Time Households	Count	Pct.
Salt of the Earth	1,200	32.7%
Prairie Living	743	20.3%
Heartland Communities	812	22.1%
Green Acres	410	11.2%
Small Town Simplicity	474	12.9%
Count/Pct. of 20 Minute Drive Time	3,666	99.3%

Information on Esri Tapestry methodology and descriptions for prevalent Belle Plaine Drive Time Market Tapestry segments is available in the complete Belle Plaine Market Snapshot—a supplemental document to this report; and at the Esri website at: <http://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation.htm>.

Top Consumer Lifestyle Segments | Esri 2014

Small Town Simplicity (#1 in 5- and 10-Minute Drive Times)

Includes young families and senior householders that are bound by community ties. Lifestyle is down-to-earth and semirural, with television for entertainment and news, and emphasis on convenience for both young parents and senior citizens. Residents embark on pursuits including online computer games, scrapbooking, and rural activities like hunting and fishing. Since almost 1 in 4 households is below poverty level, residents keep their finances simple—paying bills in person and avoiding debt.

Market Profile

- Small Town Simplicity features a semirural lifestyle complete with trucks (domestic, of course), ATVs, and vegetable gardens.
- Hunting, fishing, and target shooting are favorite pastimes.
- A large senior population visit doctors and health practitioners regularly.
- However, a largely single population favors convenience over cooking—frozen meals and fast food.
- Home improvement is not a priority, but vehicle maintenance is.

Salt of the Earth (#1 in 20-Minute Drive Time)

Salt of the Earth residents are entrenched in their traditional, rural lifestyles. Citizens here are older, and many have grown children that have moved away. They still cherish family time and also tending to their vegetable gardens and preparing homemade meals. Residents embrace the outdoors; they spend most of their free time preparing for their next fishing, boating, or camping trip. The majority has at least a high school diploma or some college education; many have expanded their skill set during their years of employment in the manufacturing and related industries. They may be experts with DIY projects, but the latest technology is not their forte. They use it when absolutely necessary, but seek face-to-face contact in their routine activities.

Market Profile

- Outdoor sports and activities, such as fishing, boating, hunting, and overnight camping trips are popular.
- To support their pastimes, truck ownership is high; many also own an ATV.
- They own the equipment to maintain their lawns and tend to their vegetable gardens.
- Residents often tackle home remodeling and improvement jobs themselves.
- Due to their locale, they own satellite dishes, and many still require dial-up modems to access the Internet.
- These conservative consumers prefer to conduct their business in person rather than online. They use an agent to purchase insurance.



DOWNTOWN BELLE PLAINE MARKET SNAPSHOT

Retail Market Performance

Esri's Retail MarketPlace data provides a direct comparison between retail sales and consumer spending by industry. To capture a snapshot of an area's retail market place, the leakage and surplus factor summarizes the relationship between supply (retail sales by businesses) and demand (consumer spending by household). Deviations from potential sales may reveal areas of opportunity in the trade area's retail sectors, keeping in mind any extenuating circumstances that may be driving the results.

All estimates of actual sales (supply) reflect current dollars derived from receipts of businesses primarily engaged in selling merchandise. Potential sales (demand) is estimated by using Esri's consumer spending data which provides estimated expenditures for more than 700 products and services that are consumed by U.S. households. The estimate of a trade area's demand is based upon estimated expenditures by households within the trade area.

Leakage within a specified trade area represents a condition where supply is less than demand. Retailers outside of the trade area are fulfilling demand for retail products. Surplus within a specified trade area represents a condition where supply exceeds demand. Thus retailers are attracting customers that reside outside the trade area.

Sales Surplus and Leakage Estimates

Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink demand versus sales estimates show a sales surplus estimate of \$79,000 for the five-minute drive time area; and sales leakage estimated at \$8.5 million and \$78.7 million at the ten- and twenty-minute drive time geography levels, respectively.

Sales Surplus & Leakage (\$MM)	5 Minutes	10 Minutes	20 Minutes
	Surplus/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ (Leakage)
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink (NAICS 44 – 45, 722)	\$0.1	(\$8.5)	(\$78.7)
Total Retail Trade (NAICS 44 – 45)	\$0.6	(\$7.2)	(\$70.7)
Total Food & Drink (NAICS 722)	(\$0.5)	(\$1.3)	(\$7.9)

Retail Trade patterns are consistent with overall figures, with a sales surplus estimate of \$644,000 for the five-minute drive time area; and sales leakage ranging from about \$7.2 million to \$70.7 million in the ten- and twenty-minute drive times, respectively. Notably, the Retail Trade sales surplus reported for the five-minute drive time is largely driven by a substantial sales surplus in the Automobile dealers subcategory which, in essence, helps to offset leakage occurring in the majority of other retail categories and subcategories.

Estimates for Food & Drink sector sales in comparison to projected demand show sales leakage at all drive time area levels ranging from an estimated \$0.5 million in the five-minute drive time area to nearly \$7.9 million in the twenty-minute drive time area.

Retail Sales

Drive Time Market (\$MM)

5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
\$28.8	\$30.5	\$63.1

Source: Esri Retail MarketPlace Report 2014

Totals shown for all North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) Retail categories (NAICS 441–454) and Foodservice and Drinking Places (NAICS 722).

Retail Pull

Categories and subcategories with some of the highest and lowest pull factors—an indication of relative strength or possible opportunities in the market—include:

Category/Subcategory	Factor*
▲ Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply	96.3
▲ Florists	51.3
▲ Health & Personal Care Stores	28.3
▲ Florists	52.9
▲ Used Merchandise Stores	22.9
▲ Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order	20.7
▲ Automobile Dealers	6.2
▼ Furniture Stores	(100.0)
▼ Home Furnishing Stores	(100.0)
▼ Specialty Food Stores	(100.0)
▼ Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	(100.0)
▼ Gasoline Stations	(100.0)
▼ Clothing Stores	(100.0)
▼ Jewelry, Luggage, & Leather Goods	(100.0)
▼ Book, Periodical & Music Stores	(100.0)
▼ Full Service Restaurants	(100.0)
▼ Grocery Stores	(67.9)

* Factor shown for five minute drive time area

Source: Esri

The factor is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total surplus) to -100 (total leakage). A positive value represents a surplus of retail sales (often indicative of a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area).

Referring back to Belle Plaine's Business Mix, we have multiple businesses that cover some of these areas. Please contact us for more information.

OPPORTUNITIES

The process behind the completion of this study and the resulting strategies consider findings from background research, current market data and stakeholder input provided via:

- ▶ A business survey completed by 101 downtown Belle Plaine area businesses
- ▶ Consumer online and intercept surveys completed by 473 participants

Following are examples of key findings which provide insights and a sound basis for proposed strategies outlined in this document.

The Downtown Market

Comparison of consumer intercept and online survey data reflects strong local support within five minutes of downtown Belle Plaine across a broader geographic region.

Esri Retail MarketPlace data shows strong retail sales surpluses in the five-minute drive time geographies, which suggest that, overall, local retail and foodservice sector establishments are effectively capturing the local market. Growth strategies should seek to build upon retail sector strengths and Belle Plaine's presence as a retail hub or destination for certain retail and foodservice sector lines.



Traffic Generators and Visit Frequency

Overall visit rates indicated by consumer intercept survey respondents show that over 70.1% visit downtown on a daily or weekly basis to do errands, for appointments, to shop, or for eating and drinking. The results demonstrate the impacts and captive nature of the local market.

Consumer online survey results show that 78.1% of participants visit the downtown most frequently to do errands (i.e. City Hall, Post Office, banks, etc.). Visitor frequency for those shopping in the downtown area on a daily or weekly basis, measured at 8% more than intercept respondents is comparatively high and likely impacted by the presence of a full-service grocer in the downtown area.

Marketing strategies designed to increase visit frequency across the various business sectors should serve to heighten awareness for the full range of products and services available, while cross-marketing and promotion strategies should consider opportunities to intercept visitors, and for the delivery or placement of messages and collateral (i.e., posters, banners, brochures, etc.) at street level, and at both retail and non-retail traffic-generating attractions.



Table 1

Question

How far is your residence located from Downtown Belle Plaine?

Consumer Responses	Online	Intercept
Within city limits	69.3%	70.5%
2 to 5 miles	11.6%	12.2%
5 to 10 miles	8.8%	7.5%
More than 10 miles	10.2%	9.8%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Surveys.

Table 2

Question

How often do you visit downtown Belle Plaine...

Frequency—Daily or Weekly	Online	Intercept
To do errands or for office and service-related purposes??	78.1%	70.4%
For eating, drinking and/or entertainment?	34.7%	42.8%
To shop?	70.7%	62.2%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Surveys.



OPPORTUNITIES

Media Preferences and Effectiveness

Consumer rankings of media preferences demonstrate the growing influence of the Internet and social media applications and the exceptionally strong presence of the Star Press Union / 4-County Market as a resource for news, for researching products and services, and for businesses, the preferred way to communicate with clients.

The Internet can be a particularly valuable resource for businesses because it provides the potential for businesses to expand their trade area well beyond local or regional geographies. Businesses with collectible, specialty, and custom merchandise lines, in particular, can use the Internet, and sites such as Amazon, eBay and Etsy, to market to the entire United States or even globally. Even traditional retailers and businesses carrying “staple” products are reaping benefits as, more and more, consumers use the Internet to “shop and compare” products and services, and then use it – in much the same way previous generations of consumers used the Yellow Pages – as a resource to find a local outlet or vendor where they can make their purchase.

Downtown Belle Plaine’s promotion and collaborative marketing efforts should continue to consider how the Internet and various social media applications might be most effectively used to communicate with consumers and to further downtown promotional goals. The growing popularity of Facebook, Pinterest, and other social media applications is evident in consumer survey results that show 53% of all respondents selected Social Media and 23% selected Internet Websites as one of their top two sources for news and information.

Strategies and applications designed to use the Belle Plaine Community Development and Belle Plaine Sesquicentennial Facebook pages to feature and easily share postings highlighting new and unique products, local personalities, special offers, events and other features which reinforce downtown Belle Plaine. Facebook advertising applications should continue to be employed and experimented with to build traffic to these sites, and businesses should be encouraged to maintain fresh content and to share links and posts to leverage traffic generated.

Businesses should also be encouraged to experiment with other social media applications, where appropriate. For example, more than 62% of consumers surveyed indicated they regularly use Facebook, Pinterest and YouTube.



Table 3

Question | Consumer Survey

Of the following, which two (2) media and information sources do you most rely on for Belle Plaine area news and information?

Top Consumer Survey Responses

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	52.8%
Star Press Union / 4-County Market	46.3%
Television	26.5%
Internet Website(s)	22.8%
Email Marketing and/or News Feeds	6.5%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Surveys.



Table 4

Question

Which of the following social media networks or online applications do you regularly use?

Top Consumer Survey Responses

Facebook	74.6%
You Tube	33.5%
Pinterest	30.9%
Instagram	19.8%
eBay	19.3%
None	14.8%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Surveys.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities Ahead?

Suggestions revolving around Eating & Drinking Places and Specialty Foods were popular with consumer survey participants and could lend support for new and expanded eating, drinking and specialty foods entries in downtown Belle Plaine.

Other business types and attractions frequently identified as candidates for expansion or recruitment in consumer survey responses included entries in Clothing Stores, Sporting Goods/Hunting Stores, and Home Improvement / Farm Store along with a Bike Trail System and place for kids such as a recreation center and mini golf.

Products frequently purchased online by consumer survey participants could also provide queues for the potential expansion of merchandise lines and complementary product lines for new and existing Belle Plaine businesses so they too can capture online sales.

Table 5		
Question		
What type(s) of products have you purchased on the Internet within the last three months?		
Products	Count	Percent
Electronics	142	30.9%
Gifts	140	30.5%
Women's Clothing	131	28.5%
Books	125	27.2%
Sporting Goods	123	26.8%
Men's Clothing	97	21.1%
Beauty Supplies	91	19.8%
Children's Clothing	82	17.9%
Hobbies and Crafts	71	15.5%
Home Furnishings	69	15.0%
Pharmacy	56	12.2%
Jewelry	44	9.6%
Specialty Foods	31	6.8%
Flowers	28	6.1%
Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Surveys.		

Surveys were among a number of tools used to help identify and gauge the potential for possible business expansion and recruitment prospects in downtown Belle Plaine. The information is helpful in assessing business opportunities and in identifying possible gaps in the Belle Plaine business mix. Consumer survey responses could provide additional insight and help to gauge how the trade area might respond to various types of new and expanded businesses.



Table 6

Opportunities?

What types of new businesses or attractions would make you visit downtown more often.

Top Responses—Categorized

Restaurants	44.1%
Recreation/Entertainment	8.7%
Clothing and Clothing Accessories	6.0%
Home Improvement/Farm Store	3.8%
Sporting Goods	3.7%
Youth Facilities/Activities	3.5%
Arts, Crafts, Toys and Hobbies	2.7%
Overnight Lodging	2.3%
Antiques	2.0%
Drinking Places – Alcoholic Beverages	1.3%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Surveys.



OPPORTUNITIES

Leveraging Assets

Consumer survey participants gave Belle Plaine high marks for a variety of identifiable—and marketable—qualities and traits which provide a solid foundation for images and messages to be reinforced as part of a downtown branding strategy and system.

Table 8

Question

How does Downtown Belle Plaine compare to other places you frequently shop and do business in terms of:

Consumers Rating	A. Stronger	B. Equal	A + B
Customer Service	25.3%	54.6%	79.9%
Cleanliness	23.3%	62.6%	85.9%
Attractiveness	23.1%	54.9%	78.0%
Quality of Festivals and Events	15.1%	36.4%	51.5%
Quality of Products and Services	11.0%	56.4%	67.4%
Quality of Dining	6.7%	42.5%	49.2%
Variety of Dining	2.4%	13.4%	15.8%
Variety of Selection of Shopping	2.8%	12.7%	15.5%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Surveys.

Downtown Belle Plaine marketing and branding strategies should emphasize images and messages which capitalize on “known” qualities and assets to deliver a powerful statement and resonating impressions. Leveraging assets already identified as strengths in the marketplace provides opportunities to make natural connections with consumers, and enhances the ability for the Downtown Belle Plaine brand to readily gain traction through repeated and consistent applications and extensions.

A Work in Progress

Consumer and business survey participants place a high priority on creating incentives for new and expanding businesses and improving the downtown’s streets, sidewalks, lighting, furnishing, green spaces, trails, etc. in Belle Plaine. Consumers provided a significantly higher ranking on creating incentives for new and expanding downtown businesses, while businesses placed a higher priority on staging additional festivals and special events in the downtown area.

The ranking of priorities provides direction for new and ongoing downtown enhancement initiatives. In some cases, a divergence in the opinions of consumers and businesses regarding possible enhancement efforts could suggest a need to share information and perspectives with businesses as a means of more closely aligning with, or responding to, the market.



Table 9

Question

Would you place a high, moderate or low priority on possible Downtown Belle Plaine enhancement efforts to:

Consumers (C) and Businesses (B) Rating as a “High Priority”

Enhancement Efforts	(C)	(B)
Create incentives for new and expanding downtown businesses	61% (1)	63% (1)
Restore and preserve the downtown's historic character	38% (2)	34% (4)
Improve the downtown's streets, sidewalks, lighting, furnishings, green spaces, trails, etc.	37% (3)	41% (3)
Stage additional festivals and special events in the downtown area	36% (4)	46% (2)
Improve and/or create more housing in the downtown area	12% (5)	16% (5)

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer and Business Surveys.



OPPORTUNITIES

First Things

Input regarding priorities for the downtown district generally aligns with suggestions offered by consumer and business survey respondents when asked, “What is the first thing you would do to improve Downtown Belle Plaine?” Economic restructuring initiatives, dominated by business recruitment, business enhancement and efforts to diversify the business mix, ranked highly, followed closely by design-oriented subjects and topics.

Table 10

Question

What is the first thing you would do to improve Downtown Belle Plaine?

Categorized Topics	Consumers	Businesses
Add/Recruit Businesses	48.2%	41.8%
Streetscape and Public Spaces	14.0%	16.4%
Business Operations/Mix	9.2%	11.9%
Buildings and Appearances	8.0%	3.0%
Parking, Traffic and Transportation	6.3%	7.5%
Festivals and Events	3.0%	1.5%
Development/Redevelopment	2.7%	4.5%
Public Relations	1.0%	—
Marketing	1.0%	4.5%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer and Business Surveys. Most frequent categorized responses shown.

Businesses offered suggestions in the higher ranking Add/Recruiting Businesses, Streetscape and Business Operations/Mix. Both businesses and consumers suggested adding incentives as a priority.



Utilizing funding committed annually by the City of Belle Plaine, the Belle Plaine Business Incentive Program was created in 2008, and is administered by Belle Plaine Community Development’s Design Committee.

The purpose of the Business Incentive Program is to encourage business and commercial property owners to enhance their buildings’ appearance and usage with the goal of attracting customers, tenants and investors to the business district and creating an overall positive image for our community.

Since the Business Incentive Programs’ inception, 40 Businesses have participated and have received \$114,237 in reimbursement grants.



What is the first thing you would do to improve Downtown Belle Plaine?

Economic restructuring initiatives, dominated by business recruitment, business enhancement and efforts to diversify the business mix, ranked highly, followed closely by design- and promotion-oriented subjects and topics.

OPPORTUNITIES

Most Loved

Businesses overwhelmingly identified features associated with the downtown's environment, character, feel and appearance as the things they love most or would never change, showing a great affection for the small town atmosphere and friendly nature of downtown.

Consumers divided their affections between environment, character, feel and appearance with business(es) and business mix as the things they love most or would never change.

Either way, the findings can lend direction for marketing and branding strategies which connect with the downtown's tangible and intangible features most loved by both consumers and businesses, and help to distinguish Downtown Belle Plaine in the regional marketplace.

Table 11

Question

What is the one thing that you love most, or that you would never change, about Downtown Belle Plaine?

Categorized Responses	Consumers	Businesses
Environment; Character, Feel and Appearances	37.1%	67.8%
Business(es); Business Mix	33.4%	15.3%
History and Historic Character; Buildings	15.2%	13.6%
Sidewalks/Streets and One-Way	3.3%	—
Festivals and Events	1.8%	—

Source: 2015 Downtown Belle Plaine Consumer and Business Surveys. Most frequent categorized responses shown.



The King Theatre was mentioned often as a Most Loved business.

Built in 1930, the Mansfield Building is a three story structure that is home to the King Theatre which opened its doors on October 17, 1930, and is still owned and operated by the Mansfield family.



In 2011, Belle Plaine Community Development's Business Improvement Committee presented owner Steve Mansfield, with a plaque to commemorate and congratulate the King Theatre on 80 years of business in Belle Plaine.



Not only does the King Theatre show the latest released movies, the theatre is the venue for other events in the community such as the annual, Belle Plaine High School Senior Awards Night.



OPPORTUNITIES

Business Tenure and Climate

Sixty-eight percent of business survey participants indicated their business has been located in Belle Plaine for ten or more years. The figure could be viewed as an indicator of stability in the downtown business mix, but it could also suggest the need for a certain level of succession planning given that 44 businesses (44%) indicated they have been located in Belle Plaine for 21 or more years.

The business climate also appears to be conducive to business start-up and entrepreneurial activity with 13% of the business survey sample indicating they have been located in Belle Plaine for 4 years or less.

Customer Base

More than 87% of businesses surveyed identified Local/Regional residents as their primary customer base. The findings are consistent with the overall consumer survey sample showing that 90% of all respondents live within ten miles of downtown. Findings are also consistent with a market that tends to be loyal to local brands and businesses, and that values customer service, reputation and quality.

Table 12	
Question	
Which of the following best describes your primary customer base?	
Responses	
Local/Regional Residents	87.6%
Other	11.34%
Visitors and Tourists	1.03%
Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.	

Connections

A majority of Belle Plaine businesses appear to recognize the value and importance of the Internet and social media trends. Fifty-six percent of business survey participants have an Internet website and 19% indicated they engage in sales over the Internet. Almost 33% of businesses indicated their business has a Facebook page.

Given the relatively high Internet presence of Belle Plaine businesses, and high levels of interest in marketing topics and potential programs, Internet and social media applications could be an obvious—and important—component of Belle Plaine's collaborative marketing programs and campaigns.

Table 13	
Question	
Do you transact sales on your website or through another website?	
Responses	
Yes	19%
No	81%
Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.	

Table 14	
Question	
How long has your business been located in Belle Plaine?	
Responses	
21+ years	44.4%
10 to 20 years	24.2%
5 to 9 years	18.2%
1 to 4 years	10.1%
Less than 1 year	3.0%
Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.	

Table 15	
Question	
Which of the following best describes the main reason for customers to do business with you?	
Responses	
Customer service	33.3%
Reputation	24.0%
Convenience	14.6%
Other	11.5%
Selection and variety	9.4%
Price of goods and services	7.3%
Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.	

Table 16	
Question	
Would you consider participating in a collaborative marketing campaign for Downtown Belle Plaine?	
Responses	
Yes	25.8%
Maybe	54.6%
No	19.6%
Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.	

OPPORTUNITIES

Changes Ahead?

More than 33% of business survey respondents indicated the likelihood for their business to expand within the next one or two years as being moderate, high or very high. Other business survey results provide insight on the nature of potential changes that could occur within the downtown area and the business mix based on affirmative responses to a list of possible modifications.

Table 17

Question

In the next year or two, do you plan to change or modify your business in any of the following ways?

Responses

Expand services or product lines	33.7%
Increase number of employees	30.1%
Start and/or complete building improvements	27.7%
Increase marketing	26.5%
Expand Hours of Operation	8.4%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey. Most frequent responses shown.

The nature of changes being considered by downtown businesses, along with interest expressed in possible business assistance and training programs, suggests that the timing could be opportune for Belle Plaine Community Development to introduce or escalate efforts to:

- Facilitate collaborative marketing programs, possibly including a social media-based “meet your neighbor” campaign that focuses on the downtown’s personalities and/or a cooperative advertising program designed to extend and reinforce the Downtown Belle Plaine brand.
- Share market study data and findings regarding product lines showing potential for expansion.
- Explore interest in, and identify resources for, marketing and clientele development for small businesses, business succession planning, and employee management topics.
- Work with Belle Plaine Community Development’s Design Committee, the Main Street Iowa Design Specialists, City of Belle Plaine and other partners to:
 - Promote Main Street Iowa design assistance and technical training services
 - Review and fine tune design guidelines that are already in place to assist downtown revitalization
 - Explore and pursue opportunities for financial and technical assistance to promote high quality building and business improvements, and to catalyze business expansion opportunities



Table 18

Question

Of the following business seminar topics, which two would be of most interest and/or most useful to you?

Responses

Social Media for Small Businesses	43.4%
Finding and Keeping Customers	38.2%
Marketing for Small Businesses	35.5%
Finding and Keeping Employees	30.3%
Business Succession Planning	17.1%
Employee Benefits	7.9%
Ecommerce for Small Businesses	6.6%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.

Table 19

Question

Would you be inclined to use any of the following Building Assistance programs and incentives?

Responses

Low-interest building improvement loans	63.0%
Free/low-cost building improvement design services	54.4%
Assistance to sell your building and/or business	23.9%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.

OPPORTUNITIES

Benchmarks

Certain data collected and compiled as part of the business survey provides valuable insights on Downtown Belle Plaine today and can be used to benchmark, track and measure changes and progress stemming from Belle Plaine downtown enhancement and economic development initiatives. The information can also be valuable to prospective businesses, investors, developers and entrepreneurs as they consider opportunities in Belle Plaine.



Downtown Sales and Revenues Trends

Survey results show that 51% of Belle Plaine business survey respondents reported an increase in gross sales or revenues in 2014 as compared to 2013, and 41% reported gross sales or revenues stayed about the same.

Table 20

Question

Which of the following describes the change in your business' gross sales or revenues in 2014 as compared to 2013?

Responses

Increased by 1% to 5%	20.7%
Increased by 6% to 10%	13.0%
Increased by 11% to 15%	10.9%
Increased by 16% to 20%	1.1%
Increased by more than 20%	5.4%
Decreased by 1% to 5%	4.4%
Decreased by 6% to 10%	2.2%
Decreased by 11% to 15%	0.0%
Decreased by 16% to 20%	0.0%
Decreased by more than 20%	1.1%
Stayed about the same	41.3%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.

Business survey participants expect the positive trends in sales and revenues reported by business survey participants for 2013 to 2014 to continue in 2015. All told, 31% of business survey respondents indicated they expect gross sales or revenues to increase in 2015 as compared to 2014, with most (19%) anticipating increases within a range of 1% to 10%. 41% anticipate sales or revenue figures will stay about the same.



Table 21

Question

Do you rent or own your business location?

Responses

Own	77.6%
Rent	22.5%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Business Survey.

Three-quarters of downtown business survey participants indicated they own their business location—a relatively high renter-to-owner ratio. Business assistance programs should consider special needs of owners versus renter-occupied businesses; and development strategies should monitor, consider and promote investments and opportunities for mixed-use development to accommodate future demand by commercial tenants.



OPPORTUNITIES

Retail Uses

Business types and merchandise lines that might be considered primary targets and candidates for expansion and recruitment, based on the downtown area's existing business mix, trends in the marketplace and related findings from local input, consumer and business surveys, Esri retail data, and the sales surplus & leakage analysis performed as part of this study include:

Foodservices & Drinking Places (NAICS 722)

Subcategories:

- 7221 Full-Service Restaurants
- 7222 Limited-Service Eating Places
- 7224 Drinking Places—Alcoholic Beverages

Notes: Input from consumer and business surveys suggest high demand for additional Eating & Drinking Places. Expansion opportunities and new entries would be compatible and complementary to existing category entries and might include additional limited service food options, with coffee house, bakery and deli/sandwich concepts and product lines all scoring high in surveys. Additional opportunities and concepts for both full service and limited-service eating establishments could feature adult beverages and full bar options, along with order-ahead, pick-up, delivery, catering and take-out services; and limited-service entries.

Sporting Goods, Hobby, Books and Music (NAICS 451)

Subcategories:

- 4511 Sporting Goods/Hobby

Notes: The most immediate opportunities in the sporting goods category would likely capitalize on the recreation, health and fitness movement, and on market characteristics favoring outdoor recreation and activities. Concepts and product lines might package and feature high levels of service and local expertise (i.e., bicycle repairs, fitness training programs, outfitter and guide services, etc.) and capitalize on traffic generated by walking and hiking trails, and other recreational attractions. Expressed demand for arts, hobbies, and crafts-related businesses and lines might provide opportunities for new entries, or opportunities for existing businesses to expand or add complementary merchandise lines. Certain hobby and craft lines might be packaged with demonstrations and classes, a possible partnership with Kirkwood Community College's Tippie-Mansfield Center, for hands-on experiences that also serve to enhance the downtown's reputation as a place for recreation and entertainment. Consumers also expressed a great desire for more opportunities for the kids in the community.



Table 22

Opportunities?

Please list one or two specific types of businesses or attractions that might make you visit Downtown Belle Plaine more often.

Top Responses—Categorized

Restaurants—All	42.8%
Clothing and Clothing Accessories	7.2%
Recreation / Entertainment	7.2%
Food Choices / Specialty	6.0%
Arts, Crafts, Toys and Hobbies	3.6%
Youth Facility / Activities	3.6%
Overnight Lodging	3.2%
Sporting Goods	1.2%
Drinking Places – Alcoholic Beverages	.08%

Source: 2015 Downtown Belle Plaine Consumer Surveys



OPPORTUNITIES

Miscellaneous Store Retailers (NAICS 453)

Subcategories:

- 45322 Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores
- 4533 Used Merchandise Stores
- 4539 Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers

Notes: Sales surplus & leakage analysis, the existing downtown business mix, and consumer survey results lend support for certain subcategories; and generalized responses indicating a preference for general retail and/or unspecified “boutique” and “specialty” shops, suggest this category could be targeted for expansion and recruitment. Well merchandised resale boutiques featuring quality home furnishings; used and rare books (possibly in tandem with a limited-service eating concept and book exchange); and lightly worn clothing resale and consignment boutiques specializing in lines such as maternity wear, children’s wear, antiques, etc., might offer an opportunity to take advantage of “green” re-wearing/recycling trends and also help, via more well-defined niches, to fill demand and/or expand upon existing entries in the Books, Clothing & Clothing Accessories and Home Furnishings categories. Gift, novelty and souvenir lines might include specialty and art-inspired lines catering to the gift shopping needs of local and visitor markets seeking the unusual or one-of-a-kind gift; and also incorporate handcrafted products and art, select home furnishings, Belle Plaine-branded products and apparel, and educational toys and games.

Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores (NAICS 448)

Subcategories:

- 4481 Clothing Stores
- 4482 Shoe Stores
- 4483 Jewelry, Luggage and Leather Goods Stores

Notes: Concepts and product lines would complement and offer expansion opportunities for the downtown area’s growing cluster of women’s and children’s clothing and accessories specialty retailers. Entries would feature a high-level of personal services (i.e., custom design/tailoring, VIP trunk showings, in-home consultations, etc.) and might be packaged with salon, health & beauty services. Special accessories collections might feature local fashion designers, custom-made products and “wearable art.” Collaborative efforts and events, such as downtown fashion/style showcases and/or downtown diva or ladies’ night out events that package VIP shopping, food, art, entertainment, salon services and product demonstrations or unveilings, could be important to efforts to position Downtown Belle Plaine as a destination for fashion and further serve to enhance the downtown’s arts-based economy and “entertainment factor.”

The retail business targets listed and described here serve as a starting point. Downtown Belle Plaine stakeholders must infuse local knowledge and expertise into the process of analyzing market information contained in this study to further develop profiles for business types and uses which are a good fit for Downtown Belle Plaine, and which appear to have the very best chance to succeed.



Business types targeted for expansion and recruitment consider consumer demand and potential gaps in the business mix, capitalize on existing strengths, and build on existing or evolving niches in the downtown business mix to solidify Downtown Belle Plaine’s market position and enhance its destination-oriented appeal.

OPPORTUNITIES

Office and Service Uses

Trends and projections pointing to continued growth in the market area's population and number of households through 2019 suggests demand for new service and office uses in the downtown area could increase, accordingly. Other trends could also serve to essentially change the behavior of the market and generate demand for additional office and service uses including:

- Continued transition to a service-oriented society.
- Increasing demand for personal care and medical services related to the "Graying of America" phenomenon.
- The downtown's appeal to office, service and residential uses that will continue to grow as success is realized from Belle Plaine Community Development and community downtown enhancement efforts – and the possibility that existing office and service businesses currently located in other parts of the region will seek to relocate in or within close proximity to the Downtown Belle Plaine district.

The importance of, and opportunities for, new and expanding office and service uses in Downtown Belle Plaine may best be demonstrated by:

- 74% of consumer online survey respondents indicated they visit Downtown Belle Plaine at least once or twice a week for office and service-related purposes.
- When asked what type of new businesses or attractions, located in Downtown Belle Plaine, would help your business and/or have the best chance to succeed, seventeen percent of business survey responses fell within the services category.
- Interest expressed on the part of consumers in new housing that could be developed in the downtown area, and the close proximity of potential redevelopment sites which could be ideally suited for mixed-use development.

Office and services uses in Downtown Belle Plaine already play an important role in generating consistent traffic to support the district's economy and sense of vitality. Predictably, office and service uses will continue to be important to downtown in the future. These uses should continue to be encouraged to locate within the downtown district and, where appropriate and applicable, Belle Plaine Community Development and community development partners should work to locate these uses in buildings and spaces that are conducive to creating and maintaining a strong sense of retail vibrancy throughout the district.



Office and services uses in Downtown Belle Plaine already play an important role in generating consistent traffic to support the district's economy and sense of vitality.

Table 23

Question

How often do you visit Downtown Belle Plaine for office and service-related purposes?

(Examples: library, city hall, salon/barbershop, dentist, doctor, chiropractor, attorney, accountant, dry cleaning, auto repair, etc.)

Top Responses—Categorized

1 or 2 times a week	73.9%
Once or twice a month	15.4%
A few times a year	6.8%
Seldom or never	3.8%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Survey.

OPPORTUNITIES

Housing

Consumer online survey results show minimal interest in potential downtown housing options. The findings could lend support for the rehabilitation of existing housing and the development of new, mixed-use concepts in Downtown Belle Plaine.

Demographic data for those indicating interest in downtown housing options reveal a market which would likely demand more upscale downtown housing styles and options.

Table 24
Potential Downtown Housing Market | Demographic Profile
For Consumer Survey participants indicating interest in new or renovated Downtown Belle Plaine housing.

Age	Percent
24 or younger	6.6%
25 to 34	11.7%
35 to 44	31.0%
45 to 54	23.4%
55 to 64	16.8%
65 or older	11.2%

Household Size	Percent
1	8.6%
2	24.4%
3	20.3%
4	28.4%
5 or more	18.3%

Household Income	Percent
Less than \$35,000	11.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	25.4%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	22.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	23.3%
\$150,000 and greater	5.3%

Source: 2015 Downtown Belle Plaine Consumer Online Survey.

The best prospects for new downtown housing might be directed toward the development of units that are quite different from the current inventory of housing options available in the broader community – including styles that might take advantage of the unique dimensions, layouts and materials found in the upper levels of downtown commercial buildings to create distinguishable living and/or live/work spaces; and for higher-density mixed-use development at potential redevelopment sites in the downtown district and immediate surrounding area.



Table 25
Q: Would you consider living in Downtown Belle Plaine?

Responses

Yes	3.9%
Maybe	13.5%
No	80.8%
I live downtown	1.9%

Table 26
Q: Would you prefer to own or rent housing in Belle Plaine?

Responses

Own	43.2%
Rent	56.8%

Table 27
Q: What kind of housing in Downtown Belle Plaine would you look for or consider?

Responses

Apartment	31.4%
Loft	45.7%
Condo	37.1%
Townhouse	37.1%
Senior Housing	11.4%

Source: 2015 Belle Plaine Consumer Online Survey.

FIRST STEPS IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Downtown Belle Plaine Market Study provides a snapshot of the downtown area today and explores opportunities for the future. The time frame for planning and implementing projects based on findings and opportunities identified as part of this study could extend up to ten years – or even more.

Because commercial business district redevelopment occurs within a dynamic environment, no set of specific implementation steps can remain valid for such a long time. Even in the short term, changing economic, social, political and cultural conditions may dictate a different sequence of events. Some projects might be implemented earlier if the right set of opportunities present themselves, or the community may determine that a project should be tabled as new opportunities emerge and others take priority. Because of these limitations, an implementation strategy can only be a general guide for implementing key aspects of the study.

The First Steps Implementation Strategy summarizes and prioritizes projects and activities that, undertaken as part of a comprehensive and incremental approach, will advance long-term goals for downtown Belle Plaine. Key market study findings and implications are summarized and potential Action Steps are organized in the areas of Business Improvement, Promotion, Design and Organization – a format consistent with Belle Plaine Community Development’s Main Street Organization structure and its 4-point approach. By the very nature of the market study, implementation strategy actions are primarily focused in the areas of business improvement and promotion.

The list of potential projects and actions contained in this summary report is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. The projects and actions proposed for implementation area considered a “starting point” for the development of a more comprehensive strategy that is the product of market analysis findings, local knowledge, and the ongoing work of Belle Plaine Community Development’s staff and volunteers, partners, local business persons, community leaders and residents working together.

Priority Action Steps – Organization

Action	Description	Priority Level
1	Continue to encourage participation in downtown Belle Plaine planning processes and use information and direction gained from the market study to refine policies, strategies and concepts, and to fine tune and prioritize organization operations and advocacy efforts.	0
2	Share the results of this study with elected officials and Belle Plaine businesses.	0
3	Work to involve residents, business persons, elected officials, community leaders and other community organizations in all phases of downtown planning, implementation and management	0
4	Maintain an aggressive, ongoing public relations program to publicize plans, projects and results stemming from the market study, the strategy plan, and the annual work plan.	0
5	Complete and distribute an informational brochure of all things: BPCDC. Include, services provided, grants available and other activities sponsored by BPCDC to local businesses.	1
6	Reimplementation of BPCDC monthly newsletter	1
7	Work with committees to review volunteer requirements, identify potential sources for volunteers, and assist the committees in the recruitment and training of volunteers necessary to implement projects adopted as a result of this study	1

Priority Level Key:

0 = Immediate and/or Ongoing	1 = Within 1 Year	2 = Within 2 Years	3 = Within 3 Years
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FIRST STEPS IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Priority Action Steps – Business Improvement

Action	Description	Priority Level
1	Continue to develop business promotional materials and to enhance the website as a tool for passive and active recruitment of targeted business prospects.	1
2	Continue to offer Business Workshops in partnership with Benton Development Group and Small Business Development Center utilizing the input identified in the market study	1
3	Organize and maintain the Business Visitation Program as part of an ongoing business assistance tool that engages downtown businesses, promotes available resources, facilitates the delivery of business assistance resources, and helps to identify business expansion candidates.	1
4	Identify and actively recruit specific business types and prospects based on business types identified in the market study and the availability of appropriate spaces.	2
5	Identify and assist businesses in succession planning by using resources and facilitating access to assistance available through Main Street Iowa and other local, regional and state resources.	3

Priority Level Key:

0 = Immediate and/or Ongoing 1 = Within 1 Year 2 = Within 2 Years 3 = Within 3 Years

Priority Action Steps – Promotion

Action	Description	Priority Level
1	Study promotion and marketing-related information and findings resulting from the market study and assess events and marketing activities for consistency and effectiveness. Incorporate “buzz words” in marketing headlines and messages and use images that capitalize on those features most liked and identifiable with the downtown district.	0
2	Review the existing events calendar. Work and support efforts to enhance and maintain existing downtown festivals and events and to introduce new events and activities – or new event components – which are consistent with downtown marketing strategies.	0
3	Continue to “freshen” and maintain feature content for the website and to share links and content with other community and visitor-oriented websites and social media applications.	0
4	Continue to work closely with local, regional and state tourism organizations to promote the downtown as a visitor attraction; work with the Economic Restructuring Committee to track tourism-related activity and trends.	0
5	Create/update and distribute print and online general and targeted business guides (i.e., Shopping & Dining Guide, Entertainment & Sights, etc.), to capitalize on existing and evolving business clusters and to enhance awareness of available products and services.	1
6	Support, promote and facilitate downtown district cooperative advertising, cross-marketing, and Internet and social media marketing efforts.	1

FIRST STEPS IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Priority Action Steps – Design

Action	Description	Priority Level
1	Distribute the four-page summary version of the market study to existing downtown business and property owners, and to potential business prospects and investors.	0
2	Update the downtown property and business inventory; maintain a current list of available properties and businesses and distribute the list to area realtors and brokers as changes occur.	0
3	Promote available incentives and downtown building improvement assistance programs. Continue to promote assistance available from and through Main Street Iowa, especially design assistance available to owners contemplating changes and improvements to downtown buildings.	0
4	Facilitate cooperative advertising and marketing efforts that involve property owners and agents to market available space and potential infill and redevelopment opportunities.	0
5	Maintain ongoing historic preservation education efforts designed to enhance the community's awareness of, and appreciation for, the preservation of downtown historic architecture and resources. Share results of surveys as a step toward aligning viewpoints and values related to the historic and cultural features of the downtown area.	1
6	Using information compiled as part of this market study, collect, maintain and track information on downtown real estate, market conditions and trends; and repeat the business survey on an annual or bi-annual basis and track economic trends in the Main Street district.	3
Priority Level Key:		
0 = Immediate and/or Ongoing	1 = Within 1 Year	2 = Within 2 Years
		3 = Within 3 Years

CONCLUSION

For Belle Plaine Main Street and the entire community of Belle Plaine, the completion of this market study is not an end but rather the beginning of a new phase in the community's downtown revitalization and enhancement initiative.

This summary report serves to highlight only a small sample of the knowledge and direction that can be synthesized from analysis of data collected during the market analysis process. Similarly, the implementation strategy outlined in the document is only a starting point for a more comprehensive slate of projects that is likely to emerge as local leaders and stakeholders work together and continue to study the market.

As Belle Plaine Community Development and Belle Plaine's Main Street program moves forward, we will continue to involve partners, community leaders, business persons and residents in efforts to analyze and interpret the information collected through the market analysis process in order to develop a complete understanding of the findings and results – and the implications for downtown. The ensuing process will “dig deep” into the results and their meanings and incorporate local knowledge into the analysis and interpretation of the study's findings. Such a process will serve to aid in the development and implementation of strategies that are both market-driven and intrinsic to our community's goals and aspirations for downtown Belle Plaine.

Indeed, the detailed market analysis process orchestrated to date may be, in and of itself, one of the most important “results” to emerge. While the process has served to help identify present-day priorities, existing challenges, and immediate and emerging opportunities, it cannot, and does not pretend to anticipate tomorrow's priorities, next year's unexpected challenges, or exciting and unanticipated opportunities still over the horizon.

Now, and in the future, Belle Plaine Community Development and the entire community will be able to use these results for the betterment of Belle Plaine. It will serve as a useful and flexible tool for business recruitment and retention, as well as remain a “living and breathing” document. It will be able to change along with the times and trends of the community, and remain very useful in aiding Belle Plaine Community Development's enhancement of the downtown area.

