



CITY OF
WEST MONROE, LOUISIANA

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN



This plan was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development and the City of West Monroe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Atlas Community Studios would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their participation in the strategic planning process:

CITY OF WEST MONROE

Mayor Staci Albritton Mitchell
James D. “Polk” Brian, Board of Alderman
Morgan Lowe Buxton, Board of Alderman
Thom Hamilton, Board of Alderman
Trevor Land, Board of Alderman
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STEERING COMMITTEE

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| Thom Hamilton | Robby Compton | Michael Wood |
| Nathan Pierot | Karen Laban | |

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Downtown West Monroe Revitalization Group
Antique Alley Merchants Association
Monroe-West Monroe Convention and Visitors Bureau
West Monroe-West Ouachita Chamber of Commerce
Louisiana Delta Community College
West Monroe High School

And special thanks to every individual and organization that lent their time and input in supporting the development of the downtown master plan.



LETTER FROM

MAYOR STACI ALBRITTON MITCHELL

The Downtown West Monroe Master Plan is the result of many meetings, visioning sessions and input from a variety of people in our community as City of West Monroe administrators and Atlas Community Studios, a creative placemaking firm, listened to how people wanted Downtown West Monroe to grow for our future. You must have goals and a desired end result to identify the actions needed to achieve those results. This plan does just that. Based on community input, Atlas took the things people want to see in Downtown West Monroe and designed a plan to accomplish those things.

In 2019, Downtown West Monroe was named a Louisiana Lagniappe Community and this spring, the district received the designation of a Louisiana Main Street Community. This is a huge honor. It has been many years since Louisiana has named a new Main Street Community. We are also proud to note that Downtown West Monroe is home to a Louisiana Cultural District and a National Register Historic District.

Why invest in downtown? A vibrant downtown signifies a healthy economy in a community. Downtowns are economic opportunities for small businesses. We know that small business is the backbone of a community. More money is recirculated within a community when spent with locally-owned small businesses. Small business

owners are our neighbors, family and friends. They sponsor youth sports teams, donate to school carnivals and have a vested interest in seeing our community thrive and grow. Downtowns help small businesses succeed, while balancing historic preservation with new infill and creating a welcoming district for all to enjoy.

This plan could not have happened without tremendous community involvement. Many people gave their time and ideas. Thank you to everyone who participated in this planning process. Thank you to the Steering Committee, Downtown West Monroe Revitalization Group, downtown merchants and property owners, interested community leaders and citizens, students at West Monroe High School, Mayor's Youth Council and many more.

The completion of the Downtown West Monroe Master Plan is a true example of community-based economic development and placemaking. This plan provides the needed direction to make Downtown West Monroe an even more vibrant place for the community to gather and a true destination for visitors.



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PROJECT **BACKGROUND**

In July 2019, the City of West Monroe was awarded a \$99,000 Rural Business Development Grant by the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development. The purpose of the program is to provide economic development training and technical assistance to communities with a population of 50,000 or less. The City of West Monroe leveraged this federal grant program to develop a downtown master plan by engaging Atlas Community Studios.





COMMUNITY VISIONING

Each strategic planning process varies by community, but the most critical component is public input. The foundation of the downtown master plan is based on the opinions of those who know and understand the community best: West Monroe residents. To ensure West Monroe's Downtown Master Plan resonated with those who reside in the area, Atlas engaged local stakeholders in a variety of ways.

Public input collection included:

STEERING COMMITTEE, VISIONING, AND PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS

To begin the strategic planning process, Atlas conducted its first 90-minute visioning session with the Steering Committee followed by two public visioning sessions with a diverse group of local residents in September 2019. The Steering Committee consists of a group of 20 community leaders representing public, private, faith-based, and non-profit organizations. The two public visioning sessions were attended by more than 100 residents who provided their input and feedback about the opportunities and challenges facing their community, with emphasis on the downtown and riverfront areas.

The key topics discussed during the visioning sessions and public input meetings included:

- Transportation & Infrastructure
- Retail & Nightlife
- Arts & Culture
- Business Development & Entrepreneurship
- Workforce Development & Education
- Housing
- Parks & Recreation

A complete record of visioning session results is available for review in **Appendix A**.

Additionally, Atlas met with the Steering Committee and presented findings/progress at public input meetings in November 2019 and January 2020. During the life of the project, Atlas and public officials met with the Steering Committee at least four times and solicited feedback from residents and businesses at public input meetings no less than six times.

ONLINE SURVEY ASSESSMENTS

In addition to the visioning sessions and public input meetings, Atlas published an online survey to collect anonymous feedback from local and regional residents. The survey used similar questions posed at the public visioning sessions but was also designed to solicit targeted feedback about public infrastructure and streetscape design, cultural amenities and social attractions, downtown housing, and riverfront redevelopment. The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions. During the planning process, 508 individuals participated in the online survey assessment.

A complete record of online survey results is available for review in **Appendix B**.





KEY INSIGHTS

- When asked about streetscape design, survey participants responded that preference should be given to:



50%
EQUAL BALANCE



20%
PEDESTRIANS



17%
VEHICLE PARKING



8%
MULTI-MODAL



6%
DRIVE LANES

- When asked if enhancing wayfinding/signage is important to downtown, **79% of survey participants responded 'Yes'**
- When asked what could be added to downtown that would encourage residents to visit and shop local more frequently, survey participants responded:



79%
RESTAURANTS



53%
RETAIL



52%
LIVE MUSIC



50%
BREWERY/DISTILLERY/
WINE BAR

- When asked about their consideration of living downtown, **51% of survey participants responded 'Yes' or 'Maybe'**
- When asked about the kind of housing should be built in downtown West Monroe, **56% of survey participants responded '2nd-Story Condos/Apartments'**

FOCUS GROUPS

Atlas facilitated discussions with the Steering Committee, public officials, downtown businesses, and high school students to learn more about the city, but more importantly, to help clarify and validate the input collected during the visioning sessions, online survey assessment, and other stakeholder outreach.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

More than 35 one-on-one interviews were held in person or over the phone during the strategic planning process. These interviews with community leaders, small business owners, restaurateurs, higher education faculty/staff, entrepreneurs, and prospective project partners (and more) were designed to provide Atlas with diverse perspectives on the opportunities and challenges faced by West Monroe but also helped hone the project priorities and strategies in the downtown master plan.

EXISTING PLANS

Since the City of West Monroe lacks strategic planning documents developed in recent years, Atlas reviewed North Delta Regional Planning and Development District's [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\) 2015-2020](#) to ensure West Monroe's Downtown Master Plan pursued and implemented goals, strategies, and catalytic projects consistent with local and regional partners. To complement the wayfinding program managed by the Monroe-West Monroe Convention and Visitors Bureau, Atlas also reviewed their design development drawings completed in April 2014 to help inform the branding and wayfinding strategies recommended for downtown.

Collectively, the stakeholder input and previous/ongoing planning and development efforts helped inform the projects and strategies that emerged as priorities for West Monroe's Downtown Master Plan.



DOWNTOWN **MASTER PLAN**

As a result of the full breadth of stakeholder engagement, Steering Committee feedback and quantitative assessment conducted for the City of West Monroe, Atlas discovered numerous opportunities to enhance downtown and riverfront development through catalytic projects. Building on the foundation of previous and existing revitalization efforts, these priority projects are designed to incentivize redevelopment and capital investment, modernize aging infrastructure and beautify streetscapes, attract and retain a talented workforce, and make West Monroe a better place to live so residents and businesses alike can grow and thrive.

The priority projects included in the downtown master plan are as follows:

- Public Infrastructure & Downtown Streetscape
- Multi-purpose Hood hall
- Distillery
- Downtown Housing
- Branding & Wayfinding

Additionally, the plan includes certain project cost estimates, information about public and private funding opportunities, and an implementation timeline to help guide the execution of these priority projects in downtown West Monroe.





PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & **DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Much has been written about the historical character and vibrancy of downtown West Monroe, a historical destination for the community and the region with a transitioning mix of new and older retailers, regionally recognized special events and festivals, and a burgeoning art culture. At its heart, the newly created, iconic Alley Park is becoming recognized and celebrated as a place where people of all ages and demographics come together.

The Study Area for this plan generally extends from Pine Street to Wood Street and from the Riverfront to Cotton Street. The full project limits for the streetscape design generally extended east to west between Commerce Street and Cotton Street and north and south between Bridge Street and Wood Street. The streetscapes and public spaces throughout the study area developed at different times and under independent plans. As a result, the condition and character of the streetscapes vary considerably. And, as a simple byproduct of time, some of the public spaces and streetscape amenities are showing visible signs of deterioration. Patchwork repairs necessary for infrastructure improvements and maintenance work and redevelopment of buildings added to the feeling of a disjointed streetscape within the study area. The intent of the current study is to prepare an updated master plan that will focus on the components necessary for a successful, contemporary streetscape that reflects the evolving social, cultural, and commercial needs of the community. The resultant master plan report, The West Monroe Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, builds on existing strengths and provides key recommendations that will refresh and unify the downtown district.

The Plan seeks to balance the needs of varied user groups and reflects the understanding that streets play a multifaceted role in the character of downtown areas. 'Good streets' have meaning for people, are accessible to all, are well maintained, and are engaging; they are an important part of everyday life in the public realm and the vibrancy and growth of downtown spaces. If fully and thoughtfully realized, this Plan will bring a number of benefits to downtown West Monroe for years to come.

BENEFITS TO DOWNTOWN WEST MONROE

Distinctive and unified streetscape design: A consistent palette of unique and quality streetscape components including street and sidewalk dimensions, parking configurations, hardscape elements, light fixtures, seating, litter receptacles, bike racks, and landscape plantings will create a cohesive downtown identity.

An updated and inspired wayfinding and identity framework: New gateway elements and wayfinding signage will improve the identification and branding of the Downtown District and provide a means of orientation for visitors and guests.

Improved pedestrian safety, comfort, and accessibility: Enhanced crosswalks, bump-outs, and pedestrian refuge islands along select streets will improve downtown's walkability. New paving, seating, and pedestrian scale lighting will improve the sense of safety and facilitate use.

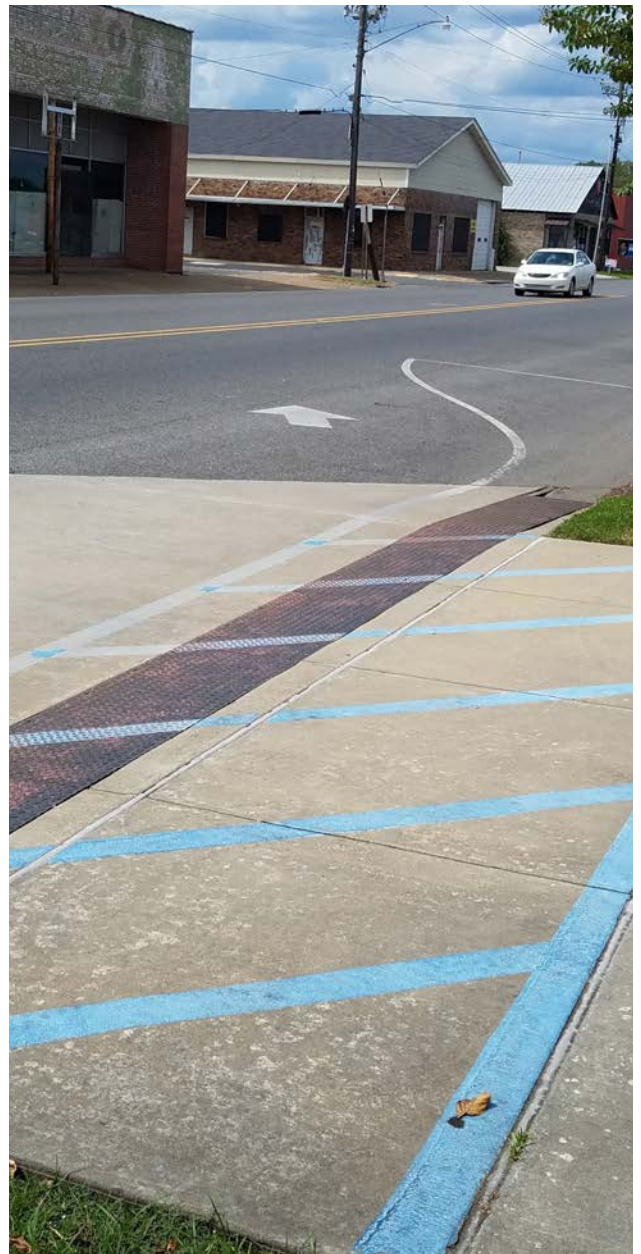
New and improved public gathering spaces: The Plan creates a series of secondary destinations across the study area that will appeal to the range of user groups and will build upon the current momentum of the Alley Park area.

Replacement of aging infrastructure: The existing sanitary sewer, potable water, gas, electrical, and storm sewer systems were reviewed to make high-level future infrastructure improvements recommendations. Further detailed study should be undertaken by the City Engineer and City Staff.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The West Monroe Downtown Streetscape Master Plan consists of the following sections. An explanation of each section and its contents are noted below to assist users in finding content.

- Executive Summary
- Existing Conditions Inventory, Opportunities & Constraints
- Stakeholder Input
- Preliminary Design Concepts
- Selected Design Concept + Streetscape Components
- Implementation/Pricing



Executive Summary: Section 1 gives a brief introduction to the project, highlights the organization of the plan, and concludes with master plan goals and objectives.

Existing Conditions: Section 2 of the plan summarizes the site assessment process which included a combination of field inventory, stakeholder engagement, and review of information and mapping provided by the City of West Monroe. As part of this process, the existing context, accessibility, and streetscape components were reviewed. To better understand the existing infrastructure, a high-level analysis examined the underground and overhead utilities in the study area. The utility analyses also included interviews with key representatives from the City. The information gathered during the site assessment phase informed key recommendations for each of the streets and the pedestrian mall.

Stakeholder Input and Refinement of Project: Within Section 3, the West Monroe Downtown Streetscape Master Plan reflects the dedicated participation and input of the project steering and technical committee and an invested public. The steering committee was composed of City of West Monroe community champions, local business leaders, and members of local schools. To ensure the resulting plan reflects the needs of the larger community, the Plan was developed with significant public input. Three public input meetings took place over the course of a nine-month planning process and over 100 persons participated in the meetings. Additionally, throughout the entire master plan process, the public was able to submit feedback and comments online via polling programs on SurveyMonkey for this project, resulting in an additional number of over 500 participants along the way.

Preliminary Design Concepts: In response to the “stakeholder input and refinement of project” section of the report, the design team focused on identifying key framework recommendations and project goals. A reflection of this framework and goal items can be found in Section 4, through initial design concepts and proposed streetscape sections for two unique visions of the downtown streetscape.

Selected Design Concept and Streetscape Planning: Providing an overview of each street and the key improvement recommendations that were identified for it, this section offers design narrative, street vision plans, renderings, and sections within the plan to outline how and where these recommendations should be implemented. Key planning recommendations for each street were categorized per the following:

- Transportation Enhancements address how and where to improve vehicular, bicyclist, and pedestrian movement.
- Lighting opportunities identify and locate the type of light(s) proposed for each street.
- Sustainable Enhancements identify opportunities for green infrastructure strategies such as bioretention planting areas, infill trees, recycling stations, and permeable pavement systems.
- Wayfinding and Identity elements create gateways and inform use along select streets.
- Utility recommendations address aging infrastructure and the undergrounding of any existing overhead utility lines.
- Other improvements such as landscaping, seating, and paving improvements are identified.

Implementation and Pricing: In order to move the planning from vision to reality, the master plan report concludes with the identification and prioritization of recommended projects, as well as a cost summary for improvements associated with each street and other identified improvements. The prioritization of projects includes phasing recommendations for quick start (sudden impact or critical maintenance / safety projects), short term (1-3 years) and long term projects (5-15 years) to assist the City of West Monroe in fiscal planning, grant pursuit and decision-making for the next 10-15 years.

EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

Site Assessment

Downtown West Monroe has many strengths including: an adequate amount of space between building facades to allow for creative design approaches to the pedestrian and vehicular realms, an eclectic and ever diverse mix of retail and restaurant options, historical building architecture and inventory, an invested and dedicated business community, a burgeoning arts culture, unique and recognizable art murals, proximity to the Ouachita River and regionally significant special events that attract visitors to Downtown. Landmark destinations such as the Alley Park, are used and enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. Thanks to the recent designation as a Louisiana Main Street and naming a portion of downtown as a National Register Historic District, the downtown's rich history has resulted in approximately 62 national registry eligible structures within or directly adjacent to the study area. In short, the site assessment reveals a strong and diverse starting point for the creation of a new streetscape master plan.

As a simple by-product of time, some aspects and components of the downtown streetscape are in a state of decline. There has not been significant investment and cohesive design within the downtown streetscape in the recent past. Additionally, as the City has grown and evolved, the downtown boundaries have shifted and expanded, though the recent designations and this plan will help to ensure a focus area within the downtown district for targeted improvements.

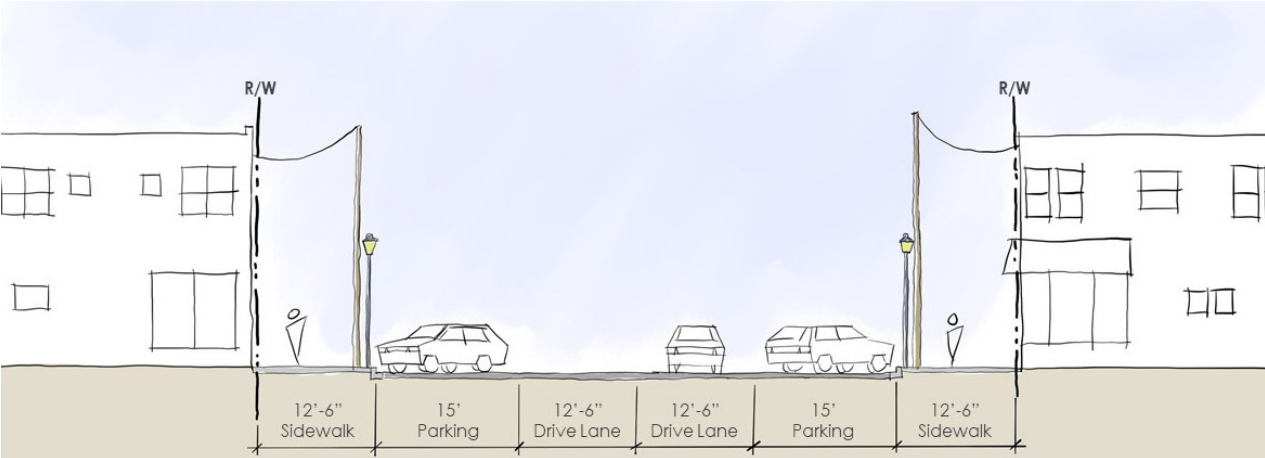
A summary of key observations related to the existing conditions are as follows:

There are inconsistencies in the basic streetscape 'kit of parts' (hardscape design and layout, landscaping, lighting, signage etc.) throughout the downtown area. Since there have not been any infrastructure or streetscape guiding documents created to date, various parts of the study area have evolved without a cohesive long-term vision. As a result, basic streetscape deficiencies include inconsistent sidewalk paving, various lighting, varying parking configuration and lack of plantings. Encouraging continuity across the basic streetscape components will improve downtown's identity by providing a cohesive look and provide more opportunities for beautification to downtown.

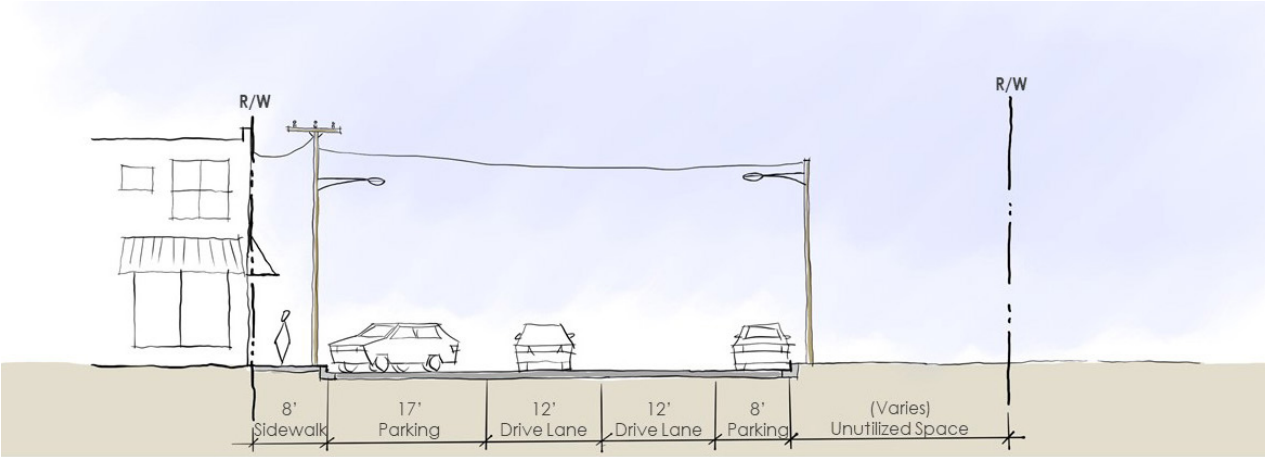


Examples: Inconsistent basic streetscape 'kit of parts'

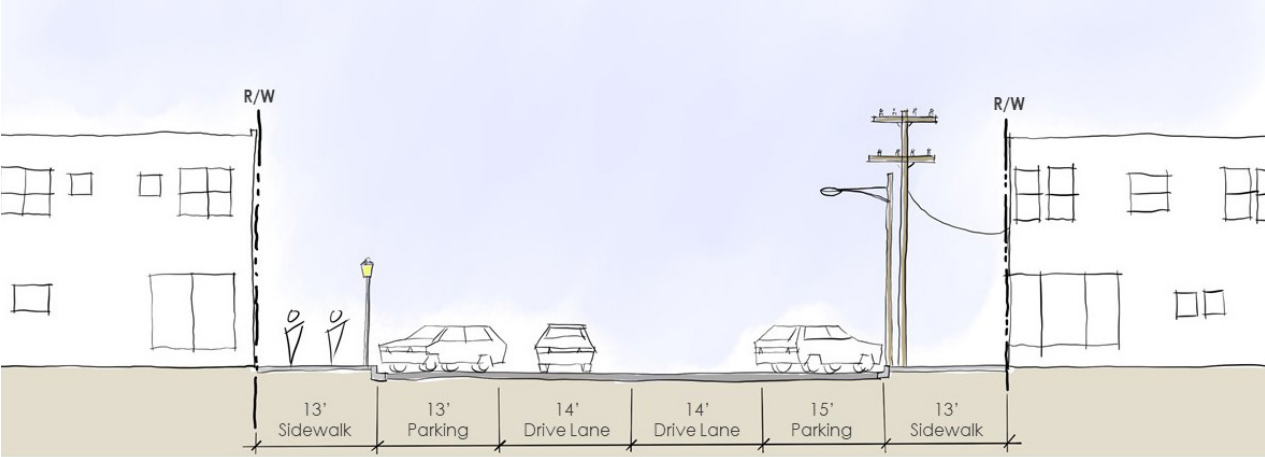
Existing Street Section - Trenton Street



Existing Street Section - Commerce Street



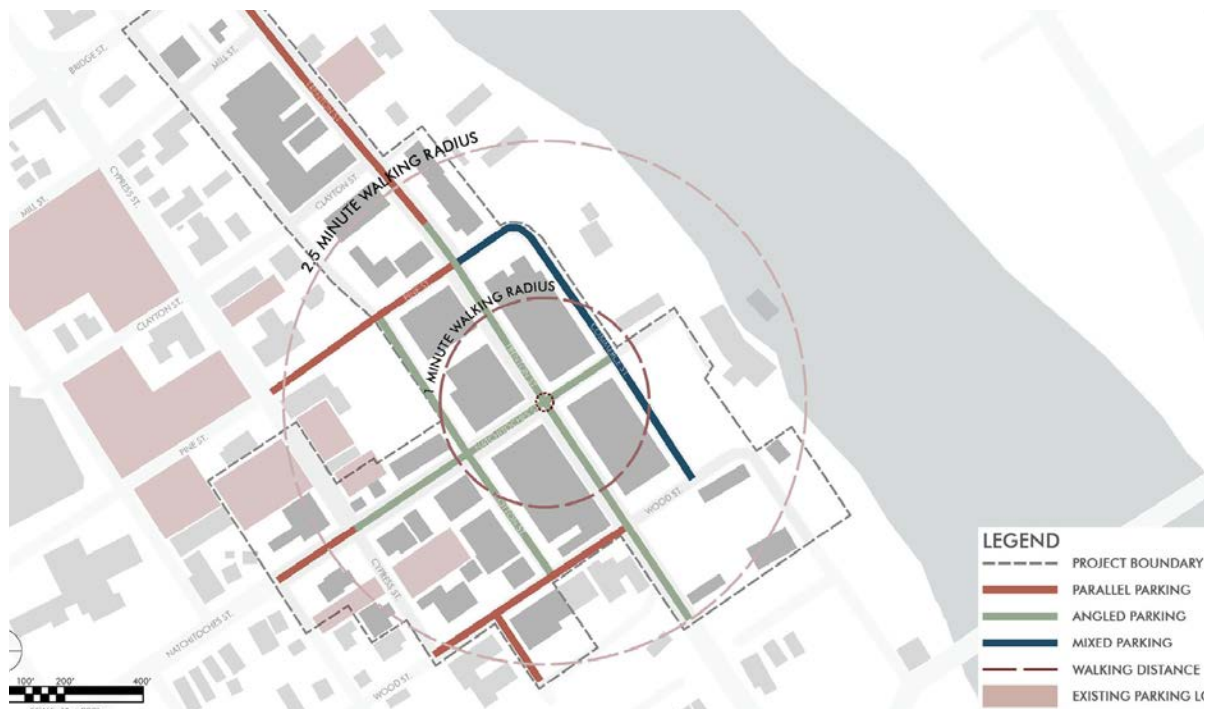
Existing Street Section - Cotton Street



Existing Conditions, continued:

Traffic speeds along Trenton Street are a particular concern, especially given the current head-in parking configuration. Backing out can present a difficult challenge at certain times of the day.

Parking capacity across the downtown area is adequate with enough on-street parking and surface lots available to the public at both ends of Trenton Street within the study area.

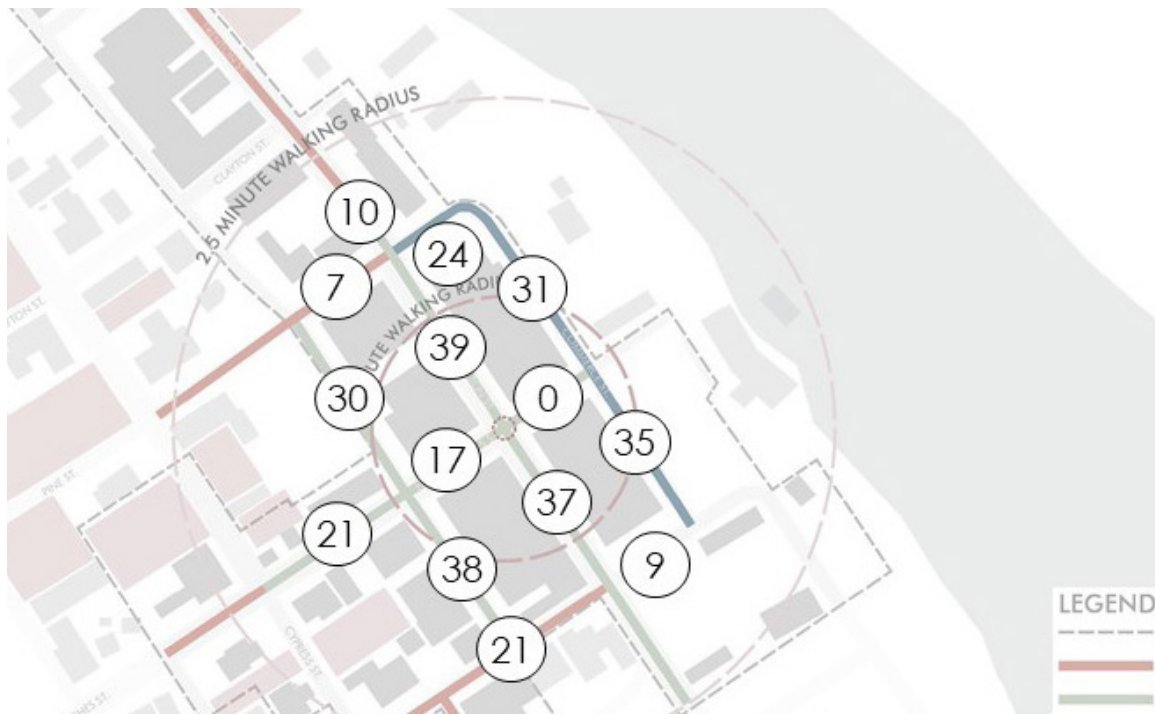


Downtown West Monroe parking with 1 minute and 2.5 minute walking radius



Comparison: 2.5 minute walking radius in Walmart parking lot

Existing Parking Counts



Existing Conditions, continued:

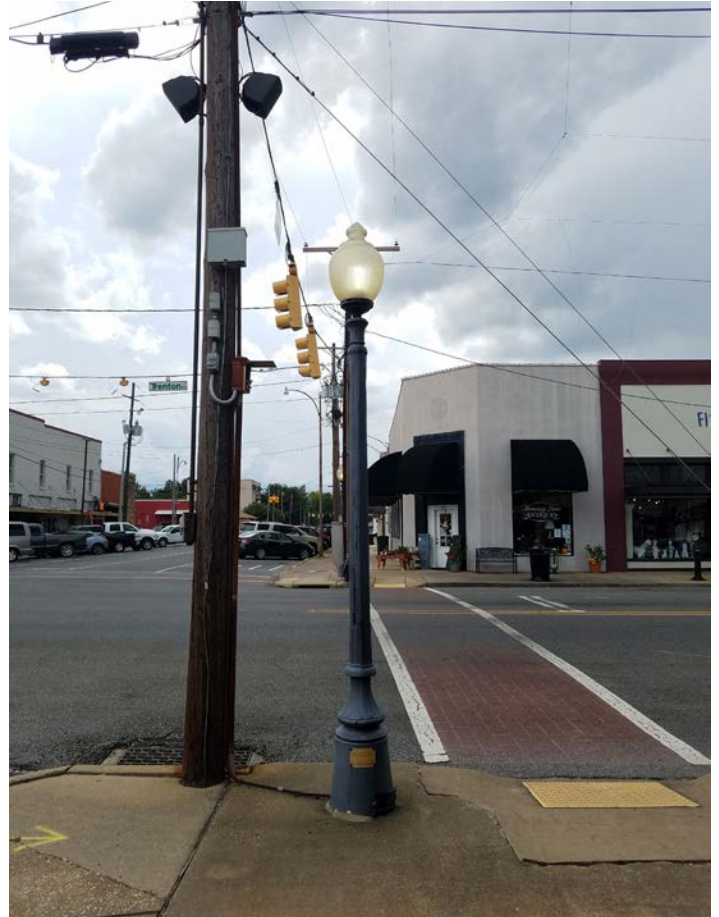
Enhancements are needed at the public realm to better accommodate existing and future uses. For example, during the public engagement it was identified that there is a desire for a more permanent gathering space for community events with seating elements that can build upon the current momentum of Alley Park.



Existing conditions: Alley Park

Existing Conditions, continued:

Much of the downtown utility infrastructure is aging and either 1) not in use in the case of many overhead elements, or 2) will be a hindrance to downtown development for things such as water and sanitary sewer services. The burying of overhead electrical lines should be studied further for detailed costs analysis but should be a priority in the final plan due to the visual clutter the overhead utilities cause to the streetscape realm. Additional electrical capacity and access points are needed throughout downtown to support special events and holiday lighting. While storm sewer capacity was not an identified concern, any future designs modifications as part of this plan should ensure that where infrastructure upgrades are justifiable, the improvements are made while the street is being reconstructed.



Existing conditions: utility infrastructure

Existing Conditions, continued:

Improving the pedestrian and bicycle experience throughout the district is a high priority. In particular, emphasis needs to be directed toward reducing traffic speeds and considering a reconfigured traffic pattern to help bring additional emphasis and “eye” traffic to Cotton and Commerce Streets to support businesses not currently located on Trenton Street. While adequate sidewalk widths are currently present in some downtown locations, consistency within the streetscape and the introduction of plant materials will help provide a more comfortable and enjoyable environment.



Existing conditions: pedestrian experience



Existing conditions: intersections/ADA requirements

Existing Conditions, continued:

Existing intersection treatments will need to be improved, as many intersections don't meet current ADA requirements or best practices for equal mobility of all users. Any street reconfiguration work should include bringing these locations up to current design requirements to correct this deficiency.

UTILITY ANALYSIS INTRODUCTION

Electrical

Entergy's electrical infrastructure is generally above ground in the Downtown District throughout the study area. The aboveground infrastructure contributes significantly to the visual clutter of the district and will limit the ability for vertical features to occur downtown, such as a healthy and robust tree canopy. The design team was told that there are no known plans for major infrastructure improvements in the next ten years unless they receive additional customer requests. However, additional electrical capacity may be needed as more businesses open up throughout downtown, specifically along Cotton and Commerce Streets, and in any future permanent gathering plazas for special events and vendors. No electric utility mapping was provided during this study and all recommendations are based on visible infrastructure features for the study area.

Fiber Optic/IT/Communication

Contact was made with the City of West Monroe Public Works Department and City Engineer to gain an understanding of possible future needs for conduit in the study area. The information received will require further study and contact with the overhead utility pole providers to ensure a shared utility trench can be coordinated and installed as part of the streetscape improvements. A general recommendation for this infrastructure consists of a conduit bank of (3) 2-inch SDR11 HDPE conduit throughout the study area with associated hand holes. Additional conduit may need to be considered for private utilities as fiber optic is limited in the area.



Downtown Sewer Map

Sanitary Sewer

The sanitary sewer analysis was limited due to lack of available drawings and information of the existing system or any general CIP recommendations that would have helped inform the design team's recommendations. It is recommended that a future flow estimate be performed prior to beginning any infrastructure improvements related to the sanitary sewer system. Flows should be estimated on future buildings that may occur on available green space sites and compared to existing system capacities. It was generally noted in one-on-one interviews with developers of projects downtown that the sanitary sewer system's age is a hindrance and unknown cost for developers.

Water

Similar to the sanitary sewers, the water services analysis was limited due to lack of available drawings and information of the existing system or any general CIP recommendations that would have helped inform the design team's recommendations. It is recommended that the static pressures be evaluated in multiple locations throughout downtown to help identify a maximum structure height possible without the need for booster pump systems to help meet domestic and fire flow requirements for new structures, something that can also be a hindrance to future development projects.



Downtown Water Map

Storm Sewer

Analysis of the storm sewer was similarly limited due to lack of available drawings and information of the existing system or any general CIP recommendations that would have helped to inform the design team's recommendations. Prior to any roadway improvement tied to the streetscape, a thorough field survey should be completed to document pipe sizes, structure conditions, and rim and invert elevations throughout the system. Capacity should be evaluated for a future build out scenario throughout downtown so that increased impervious areas do not cause future flooding conditions. The City's Engineer could begin this capacity analysis now to help the city anticipate future budgetary needs for construction phasing of the streetscape.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

Project Framework & Goals Identification

The planning team took the feedback from the steering committee, in-person, and online public information sources and read through the information to distill the feedback into several key Framework Recommendations and Project Goals. The Framework Recommendation items are intended to guide the more intangible goals of the Streetscape Master Plan and become part of the long-term vision that should drive decision making for the future of the Downtown area, and in particular, any improvements within the streetscape realm or public spaces such as Alley Park. The Project Goals list is focused on the more immediate and short-term goals that will make this plan a success and incorporate the feedback received from the public to deliver the desired product.

Identified Framework Recommendations:

- “Hometown Feel” of the District should be maintained and celebrated.
- Preserve existing businesses while increasing diversity.
 - Streetscape should compliment uses by current vendors but allow for additional opportunities to support new vendors.
- Encourage increased usage (new businesses and visitors) along Commerce & Cotton Streets.
 - Consider new approach to traffic and parking concepts to support.
- Building upon current momentum of downtown rehabilitation work currently underway.
 - Alley Park
 - PARK(ing) Day activities that occurred on September 20, 2019

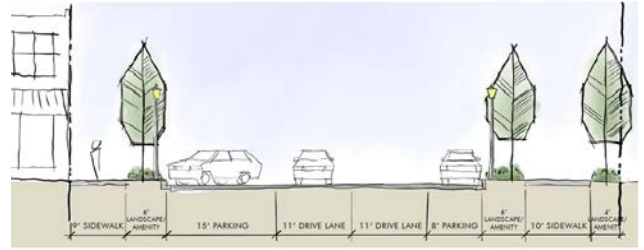
Identified Project Goals:

- Provide an equal balance between pedestrian and vehicular needs while maintaining wide and walkable sidewalks within key corridors and nodes.
- Plan for additional public gathering spaces or green spaces.
- Increase the “permanence” of Alley Park.
- Improve connectivity (visual or physical) to the Ouachita River.
- Incorporate additional plantings and shade trees to improve the pedestrian experience.
- Increase the opportunity for art to be incorporated into the District.

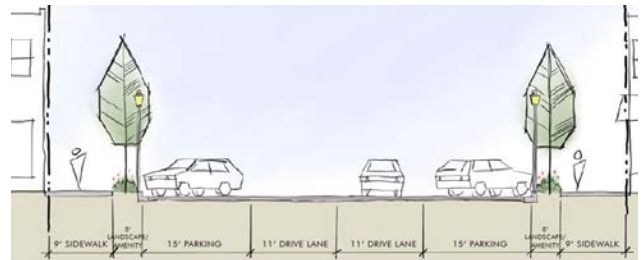
Design Concept #1 – Subtle Adjustments

As identified during the Existing Conditions Assessment & Analysis section of this study, one of the underlying issues to a cohesive streetscape within the downtown area is consistency across the various streets in the area. Currently, Trenton is the focus street within downtown. This plan focused on making subtle changes to the existing street dimensions to meet the identified project goals. Creating consistency within the drive lanes, parking stalls, and sidewalk dimensions of Commerce, Trenton, and Cotton streets will create a unified feel to all major streets in the downtown area. Small adjustments to critical streetscape dimensions, such as narrowing of existing lanes, will enable the introduction of more green space and help to reduce traffic speeds through downtown. The plan also offers an opportunity for increased parking counts within downtown. Vehicular circulation patterns through downtown are maintained as-is with no change to current patterns. In order to enhance the pedestrian experience throughout downtown, curb extensions should be extended at all pedestrian crossings to help shorten crossing distances while defining and protecting the parking areas. The massaging of the streetscape dimensions will also allow the City to introduce additional at-grade planters and tree canopy within downtown to provide a softening of the harsh concrete-centric environment that currently exists and create a nicer pedestrian experience and help beautify downtown.

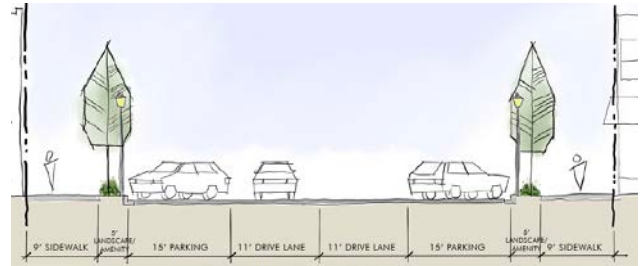
Commerce Street: Proposed



Trenton Street: Proposed



Cotton Street: Proposed



Streetscape Design #1

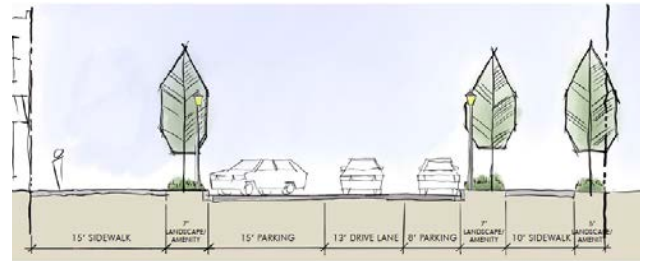


Design Concept #2 – Major Facelift

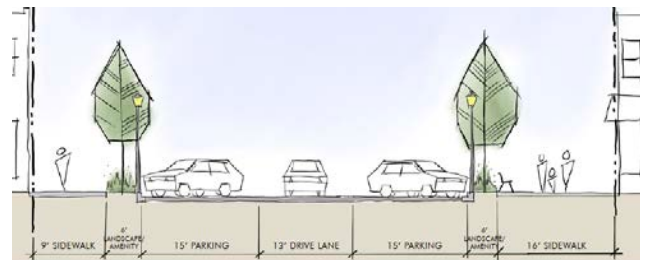
This concept is a dramatic re-imagination of Downtown West Monroe, designed to inspire a newfound interest in the downtown area. Suggested public investments will drive interest to the downtown from new and varied business, which can utilize these public spaces as direct support to their businesses. Similar to Design Concept #1, this plan also focused on creating consistency across the existing street dimensions, including drive lanes, parking stalls, and sidewalks throughout downtown.

Of the traffic crossing the Ouachita River between Monroe and West Monroe, nearly 70% of the total volume goes across the Lea Joyner Bridge and the remaining 30% across the Endom Bridge to the south of downtown. Due to the large split in traffic origins, the concept of a one-way loop for a small area of Trenton St and Commerce street between Pine and Wood Streets was proposed. To achieve the long-term Framework Recommendation to increase usage of both Cotton and Commerce streets, the planning team felt this concept of a forced traffic pattern change would help to drive more usage to get the “eyes” of vehicular traffic on the storefronts along Commerce Street, while also encouraging parking in this area to access existing businesses along Trenton Street.

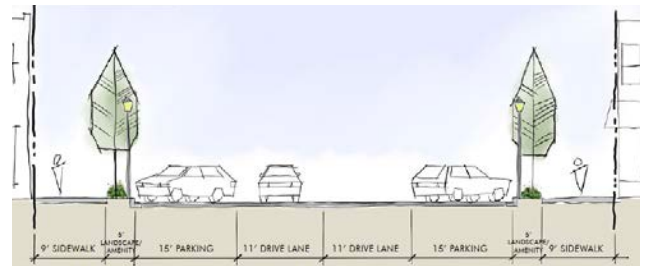
Commerce Street: Proposed



Trenton Street: Proposed



Cotton Street: Proposed



Streetscape Design #2



Design Concept #2 – Major Facelift, continued

The major benefit to this proposed concept is that by removing a lane width from the street dimensions on both Trenton and Commerce Street, significant areas can be dedicated to the pedestrian space through four blocks of downtown. This will allow for new businesses to have the opportunity for outdoor seating or dining spaces to help support new restaurant or coffee shops on these streets. By appealing to businesses that operate beyond the 8-5 retail cycle, more morning and evening activities can be brought to downtown. There will also be more space available for seating and gathering and increased space for plantings and trees through the downtown. To support future residential uses, and as a result of the traffic rerouting being proposed with Concept #2, an opportunity exists to convert the block of Natchitoches Street between Cotton and Trenton Street to pedestrian only use, with further study being needed at a later date.

SELECTED DESIGN CONCEPT + STREETScape COMPONENTS

Streetscape Planning

The final streetscape plan reflects community desires and input expressed at the three public meetings and input sessions, results from the questionnaire, as well as input from the Steering Community and City Staff. The final streetscape plan, when implemented, will result in a safer and more attractive streetscape throughout downtown West Monroe that improves the walking experience, entices businesses to relocate to downtown, and enhanced gathering spaces for future community events.

The Master Plan includes the following specific recommendations:

- A consistent street section throughout the downtown that focuses on improving walkability and beautification opportunities.
- Reduce traffic speeds to allow for on-street bike lanes and safer pedestrian crossings.
- Conversion of two blocks of traffic on Commerce and Trenton Streets into one-way traffic patterns to help push more visibility for businesses not located on Trenton Street.
- High-visibility crosswalks with bump-outs at intersections to reduce traffic speeds and shorten crossing distances.
- Pedestrian lighting consistency through downtown.
- Gateway and wayfinding signage with public art inclusion.
- Enhanced plaza spaces including shade trees, benches, and bike racks.
- Overhead utility undergrounding.

Overall, the proposed streetscape improvements meet the desires of the community and will be an important foundation for future detailed design work, leading towards eventual implementation of the Downtown West Monroe Streetscape Master Plan.

The following pages summarize the proposed improvements for streets in the study area. Categories of improvement include: parking and travel lane recommendations, lighting, landscape enhancements, utility recommendations, wayfinding and identity, and information related to miscellaneous improvement. An excerpt of the overall plan is provided and depicts the proposed improvements typical for the entire street.

Final Plan Rendering



Downtown Streetscape (Overall Study Area)



Downtown Streetscape (Vehicular Circulation Enlargement)

Streetscape Conceptual Perspectives



Conceptual Alley Park Improvements from Spring 2019 (Image Courtesy of TBA Studio)



Trenton Street Looking South towards Natchitoches

Streetscape Conceptual Perspectives



Commerce Street Looking North towards Alley Park



Cotton Street Looking North from Wood Street

Pedestrian Improvements

In accordance with community desires, the existing sidewalk widths will be maintained or widened where appropriate to accommodate pedestrian flow. Bulb-outs provide a reduced crossing distance between corners, provide opportunities for stormwater collection if desired, additional planting areas, and assist in traffic calming. Bulb-outs, which offer a refuge area for pedestrians, are proposed at multiple intersections as follows:

- Trenton Street and Pine Street
- Trenton Street and Natchitoches Street
- Trenton Street and Wood Street
- Commerce Street and Natchitoches Street
- Commerce Street and Wood Street
- Cotton Street and Pine Street
- Cotton Street and Natchitoches Street
- Cotton Street and Wood Street



Bulb-out examples



Amenity Zone examples



A consistent sidewalk pattern that will allow the ground plane to read as one continuous public space and not a series of spaces associated with individual streets is recommended. This will allow the public artwork, vegetation, and other furnishings to become the focus for the street.

- Portland cement concrete (PCC) paving is the recommended sidewalk paving material due to its durability as well as its ease of maintenance and replacement. The PCC paving recommendations include a standard grey color with a broom finish, and integral colored concrete with a broom finish or light sand blast in select locations. All areas should receive saw cut control joints.
- Within Alley Park, the proposed paving includes a combination of PCC paving at the primary walkway along the buildings and unit pavers or integrally colored concrete in select locations. The proposed unit paver colors will include a range of red or brown brick shapes and colors and will appear 'speckled' in an attempt to minimize the impacts of spills and stains typical to urban settings. The recommended unit paver size is 12" x 18" or smaller. If pavers are too expensive for the project budget at time of construction, integrally colored concrete can be substituted.

New pedestrian-scaled lighting, street trees and understory planting will be included in the landscape/amenity zone areas adjacent to the sidewalk spaces. This area can also be utilized for trash cans or store signage boards to maintain a clear flow in the sidewalk path. The new and improved landscape planting area provides a further separation between pedestrians and the parking areas and vehicular traffic.

Integral to the plan are small plaza areas within the public right-of-way, typically located at intersections, that provide seating, shade, and opportunities for interpretive elements. Additionally, the wider sidewalks along Trenton will provide additional space for dining and outdoor seating areas tied to businesses.

All proposed crosswalks would be high-visibility crosswalks built with a high-contrast paving treatment. This reflects the community's desire for improved and new crosswalks, which can provide a safer crossing for pedestrians as well as a traffic calming effect. The Master Plan proposes new high-visibility crosswalks on all legs of intersections in the study area. In nearly all instances, curb ramps need to be updated to conform to the most recent standards published in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Cast Iron textured curb ramp panels are recommended.



Amenity Zone examples

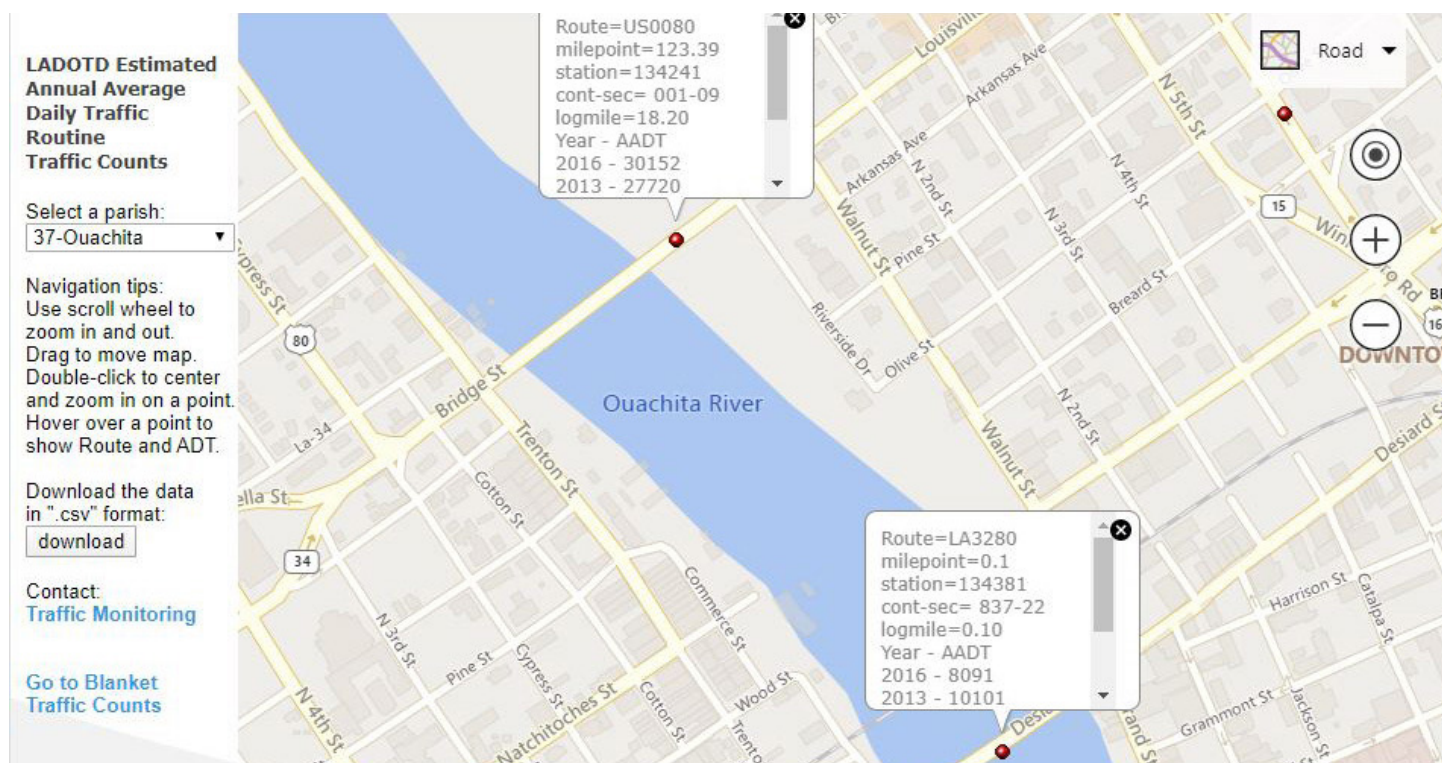
Vehicular Improvements

Generally, across the entire study, is the planning team's recommendation to standardize the width of the travel lanes. The intent is to create uniformity through the downtown district, but also to reduce traffic speeds to ensure pedestrian safety and comfort as downtown traffic increases over time. The reduction in lane width affords the project space to introduce wider sidewalks where appropriate and landscape/tree plantings throughout the downtown area.

For modifications to Trenton Street between Bridge Street and Pine Street, curb lines should be relocated to reduce travel lane width to 11' in either direction, for a total lane width of 26' for two-way traffic. The constraining of the roadway width will help to control what is currently excessive rates of speeds through the portion of

Trenton Street. While there are minimal recommendations to this stretch of roadway, it will require further study to make design recommendations related to sidewalk widths and access control for driveways if major future redevelopment is to occur.

The downtown blocks of Trenton Street between Pine and Wood Streets and Commerce Street between Pine and Wood Streets should be converted to one-way traffic with drive lane widths dropped to 13'. The primary reason for this recommendation is again to help reduce traffic speeds through downtown along Trenton Street. As noted previously, during a review of DOTD traffic counts available on the states website there is approximately split in the direction most traffic approaches the study area. Of the traffic crossing the Ouachita River between Monroe and West Monroe nearly 70% of the total volume goes across the Lea Joyner Bridge and the remaining 30% across the Endom Bridge to the south of downtown. Due to the large split in traffic origins the concept of a one-way loop for a small area of Trenton St and Commerce street between Pine and Wood Streets was proposed. To achieve the long-term Framework Recommendation to increase usage of both Cotton and Commerce streets, the planning team felt this concept of a forced traffic pattern change would help to drive more usage to get the “eyes” of vehicular traffic on the storefronts along Commerce Street, while also encouraging parking in this area to access existing businesses along Trenton Street.



LADOTD North and South Counts

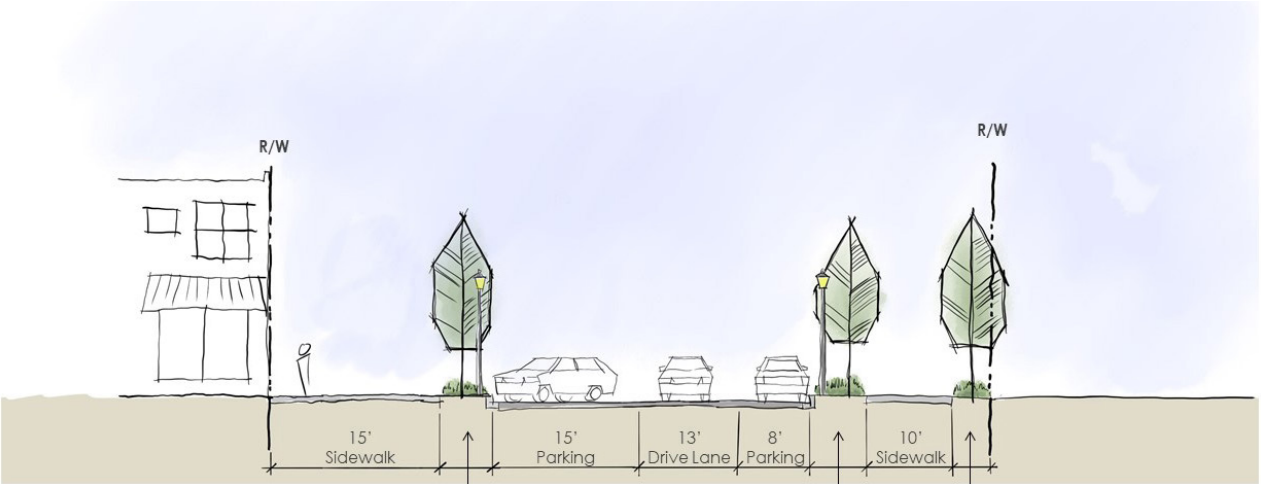
Along Cotton Street, two-way traffic has been maintained to allow traffic coming towards downtown on Natchitoches to have the ability to head southbound on Trenton. Lane widths have been proposed at 11' for travel lanes to help encourage slower speeds in downtown.

A warrant analysis would be required in the future to confirm the ability to remove the existing traffic signal at the intersection of Natchitoches Street and Trenton Street. It is our proposal to turn this intersection into a two-way controlled stop. All other intersections would remain in their current form with the exception being to replace all traffic signals with new poles, preferably without mast arms, at current signalized intersections in the study area.

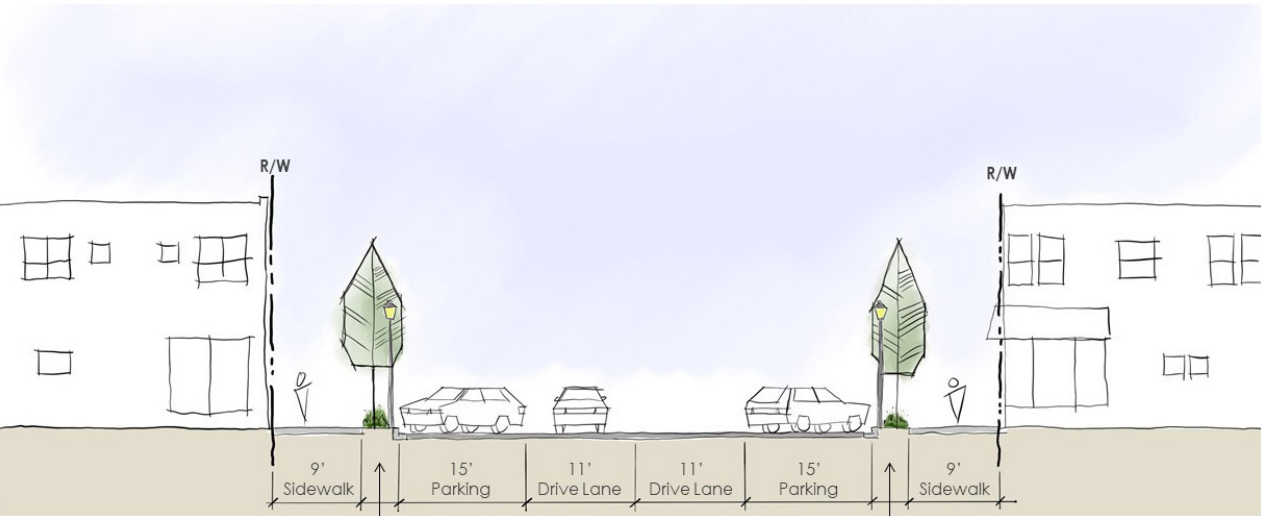
Proposed Street Section - Trenton Street



Proposed Street Section - Commerce Street



Proposed Street Section - Cotton Street



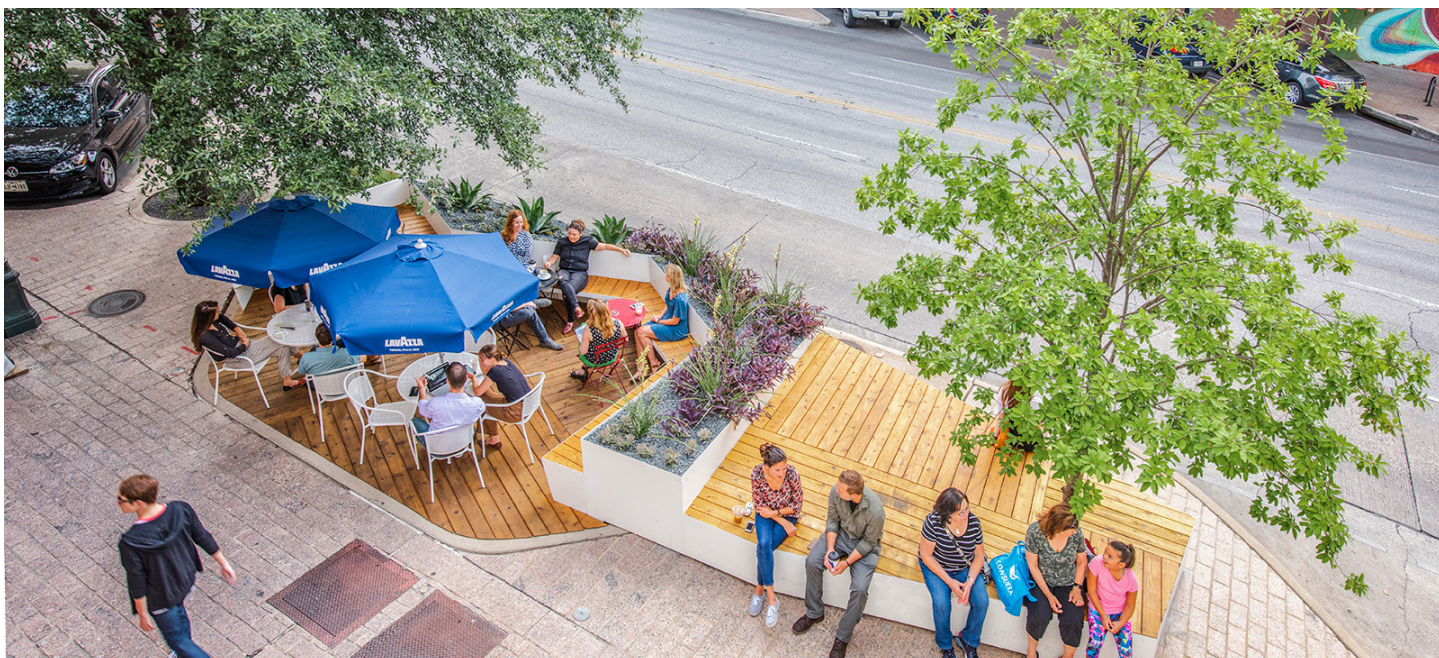
Parking Improvements

After receiving many comments during the public meetings and in one-on-one meetings with private business owners, the planning team took this feedback into considerations when laying out new parking configurations for downtown to maintain parking counts throughout all blocks. In order to fit all of the other desired elements there is a need to reduce the size of parking stall dimensions to help accommodate all features in the limited space available in the streetscape. These tighter dimensions will help reduce traffic speeds throughout the downtown area, another issue that was a commonly undesirable trait from public feedback.

| | Existing Stall Size 10'x20' | Proposed Stall Size 9'x18' |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Block | Existing Counts | Proposed Counts |
| Trenton Street (Pine and Bridge) | 10 | 15 |
| Trenton Street (Pine and Natchitoches) | 39 | 50 |
| Trenton Street (Natchitoches and Wood) | 37 | 44 |
| Commerce Street (Pine and Natchitoches) | 31 | 32 |
| Commerce Street (Natchitoches and Wood) | 35 | 38 |
| Cotton Street (Pine and Natchitoches) | 30 | 43 |
| Cotton Street (Natchitoches and Wood) | 38 | 42 |
| Pine Street (Cotton and Trenton) | 7 | 7 |
| City Lot on Pine Street (Trenton to Commerce) | 24 | 24 |
| Natchitoches Street (Cotton to Trenton) | 17 | 18 |
| Wood Street (Cotton to Trenton) | 12 | 14 |
| Wood Street (Trenton to Commerce) | 9 | 12 |
| Total in Downtown | 289 | 339 |

**Proposed stall counts do not account for reductions for accessible parking to be provided*

Due to the increased quantity of parking, and based on favorable public feedback to introducing parklets during the public feedback sessions, it is recommended that the downtown manager help interested businesses work with City staff to establish design criteria to implement semi-permanent parklets after the streetscape construction is completed. Parklets are generally executed through some form of public-private partnership, with funding from an adjacent business or businesses. Parklets can be installed in current conditions if desirable for businesses while permanent improvements for the streetscape are planned. A parklet is a fun opportunity to transform a parking stall into a small public space, which could be temporary, seasonal, or permanent.



Parklet example

LANDSCAPE & PLANTING RECOMMENDATIONS

The West Monroe Downtown Streetscape Master Plan will include a variety of plant material that meets important planting design objectives:

- Provide shade and overhead canopy (trees)
- Reinforce key intersections and gateways (trees)
- Material selection appropriate to the size of the planting area (all plants)
- Utilize a combination of deciduous and evergreen trees
- Maintain sight lines at intersections (all plants)
- Provide year-round flowering and seasonal interest (all plants)
- Attract pollinator insects such as butterflies and moths (shrubs)
- Utilize drought-tolerant and low-maintenance plants (all plants)
- Preserve existing trees where possible
- Utilize stormwater plants that can sustain water inundation and assist in cleansing stormwater if desired for any green infrastructure practices

The final streetscape plan, the enlargement plans, and street sections illustrate how plant material will contribute to the overall beautification of the downtown Streetscape. Any proposed plantings should follow these best practices.

Best Practices

- **Infill plantings and tree selections by street:** Following review of the existing tree palette by a certified arborist, the planning team recommends that an 'approved tree species list' be created for each street. Parks and Recreation staff should have the most input on this list as they are likely to be responsible for all long-term maintenance. As existing trees die or are removed, they should be replaced by the chosen tree(s) for the street. The tree selection process will consider local performance, disease resistance, canopy size, overall shape and form, leaf shape and color, ability to grow within confined areas (overhead utilities, facades, and limited root zones), impacts to existing building structures via root growth, microclimate, lighting, parking, underground sewers and vaults, and typical root character. A root barrier should be considered in key locations to protect sensitive older buildings that may be susceptible to root intrusion or damage to building foundations.
- **Tree diversity:** There are aesthetic advantages to planting a single tree species or cultivars along a streetscape and great impact can be achieved. But lessons learned with monoculture planting, the American elms as an example, are reminders that tree diversity is "a community's best hedge against potential disaster". Per Iowa State University Extension, for maximum protection against insects, disease, or environmental stress, the urban tree population should reflect:
 - No more than 10% of any single tree species.
 - No more than 20% of species in any tree genus.
 - No more than 30% of species in any tree family.
- **Thinning and pruning of high value trees** - Street trees should offer a rich canopy that covers the majority of the sidewalk and extends into the street. Shade should be offered, but it should not be so thick as to prevent filtered sunshine. Trees should be pruned to limit the amount of branches overhanging building roofs to limit potential for water damage due to gutter backup caused by falling leaves. Thinning and pruning of those trees ranked 'high value' by the arborist is recommended.
- **Proposed street tree size** - Infill trees to be canopy trees that will provide shade, but are limbed high enough to prevent obstruction of views of passing motorists and allow for safe pedestrian passage along sidewalks. To minimize conflicts of lower tree limbs with vehicular and pedestrian zones, bottom tree branches shall be at least 8' above adjacent sidewalk grade at the time of tree planting. All new street trees shall be a minimum 2"-2.5" caliper size (the diameter of the trunk measured one foot above grade) at the time of tree installation.
- **Infill tree standards** - All future street trees must meet the requirements of the American Standard for Nursery Stock (latest edition), as published by the American Association of Nurserymen.
- **Proposed street tree placement** - Where there are significant gaps in the existing tree planting program, such as Trenton Street between Bridge Street and Pine Street, or when full streetscape and sidewalk improvements are implemented, new tree spacing will respond to street light locations which, in turn, relate to locations of on-street parking spaces.

At-grade landscaping in planters is a key component of greening and softening the streetscapes. Plantings along the sidewalk buffers pedestrians from traffic and parked cars and provides a memorable visual impact to the street. The understory plantings are visualized as multi-dimensional with shrub, ornamental grass,

ground- cover, and seasonal plantings. The proposed palette can be replicated throughout the study area to unify and provide meaningful visual impact. The Parks and Recreation department has a valuable resource in their staff horticulturalist and City-owned greenhouses to help grow materials for all future projects and plant replacements in the long-term.

To reduce City maintenance requirements and to ensure healthy tree growth, irrigation at new planting areas is recommended where full streetscape improvements are proposed. System specifics and feasibility across each of the individual streets will be considered during subsequent design phases.



STREET FURNISHINGS RECOMMENDATIONS

Benches are an important component of a pedestrian friendly streetscape and should be generally abundant throughout the study area, in particular at intersections and within Alley Park. Seating recommendations follow.

- Consider selecting a standard bench for downtown.
- Center arms to be included in new benches 72" in length or longer.
- Consider using the primary material as metal to prevent vandalism issues in the long-term. In more secure locations a bench with a tropical hardwood such as Ipe should be considered for seating comfort.
- Benches should be securely anchored into the paving with fasteners that allow for periodic removal for cleaning or replacement purposes.



Trash receptacles should be easily found throughout the study area and it is recommended to locate at least 2 receptacles at every intersection. Their character should complement the selected benches. Recycling stations should be considered at high-use areas such as Alley Park. Prior to making a final selection, further coordination is needed with the City representatives to understand pick-up and sorting options.

The standard inverted 'u' bicycle rack is proposed as the standard bike rack across the study area. Embedded mounting is preferred to eliminate tripping hazards. The 'BOLA' rack by Landscape Forms as shown here represents the general desired style. These racks are cost-effective and practical allowing for two points of contact for any locked bicycles. Bike racks should be located in Alley Park and at key touchpoints where the future bike master plan interacts with the streets included in this study.

LIGHTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Quality lighting is essential to the success and comfort of urban areas. It is a key organizing element that defines the nighttime visual environment and helps create a downtown identity. Visitors and residents should recognize they are within downtown West Monroe by the character of the streetscape lighting. The lighting contributes to a safe, attractive environment and encourages and supports night-time use.



BRANDING AND WAYFINDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown West Monroe Master Plan includes several recommendations for branding and wayfinding. Branding and wayfinding is an important component to the streetscape plan that will provide an important sense of identity and recognition to the Downtown district. The branding and wayfinding elements will incorporate the themes of Downtown West Monroe history and City branding.

Key design objectives of the branding and wayfinding elements include:

- Provide visual interest that works in conjunction with the design of the landscape, paving, and seating areas
- Create a family of related branding and wayfinding elements throughout the corridor that provide an overall identity to the Downtown West Monroe area. This can include things such as planter edging, sidewalk paving patterns or colors in hardscape materials in Alley Park
- Celebrate local history and nature in gateway and neighborhood monuments, street banners, and interpretive panels
- Engage local artists in the design of art integrated into the branding and wayfinding elements, in particular a rotating blend of themed seasonal banners can bring a constant rotating “street gallery” feel to the district
- Provide specific directional wayfinding information to landmarks such as Alley Park and city parking
- Refresh and update the special pavement treatment such as paint or paving materials such as those previously implemented at Natchitoches and Trenton Streets

Specific branding and wayfinding element examples are illustrated on pages 68-74 and include the following:

- Large monument gateway entry arch (15 feet to 18 feet high) that utilizes internal lighting with artist design mosaic bases located at Bridge Street and Trenton Street as shown on the plan. The major north entrance to the district.
- Medium monument neighborhood columns (8 feet to 12 feet high) with artist design mosaic bases located on the intersection of Trenton and Wood Street.
- Small monument neighborhood columns (4 feet to 6 feet high) located at Natchitoches & Cotton Street.
- Pole-Mounted Street Banners located on all new site lighting in the district.
- Interpretive signage and art elements located at Alley Park and Natchitoches & Trenton Street Intersection.

IMPLEMENTATION, PHASING AND NEXT STEPS

Implementation & Construction Phasing

Following adoption of the Downtown West Monroe Streetscape Master Plan by the West Monroe City Council in July 2020, the City should begin to assemble funding for a selected design consultant to move into preliminary design documents. This stage will advance the master plan to approximately 30% complete construction documents.

Completion of the preliminary design documents following City Council approval of the Master Plan will provide a greater sense of the extent and costs and phasing of improvements that are provided as general ranges of estimated costs for this study. During preparation of the preliminary design documents, the City of West Monroe can make additional arrangements for funding of the final design, engineering and construction of the streetscape improvements.

During the preliminary design phase, the design team should review and determine recommendations for the following items:

- Specific areas of curb and underground utility relocation required to implement the Master Plan
- Extent and phasing of the undergrounding of overhead utilities
- Multi-use path pedestrian and bicycle pavement materials, textures, and finishes
- Relocation of small surface appurtenances within the right-of-way (generally between back of existing sidewalks and property line) including irrigation heads and valve boxes, electrical, water, and communication utility boxes, backflow preventers, fire hydrants, fences, signs, low walls, etc.
- Extent of existing trees within the right-of-way to be removed, replaced and /or transplanted
- Alternatives for phasing of construction improvements
- Recommended location of new street trees including size and species
- Recommended location of parkway planting areas and identification of understory planting mix
- Specific areas and sizes of stormwater planters within the parkway planting areas and new in-street storm water planters
- Specific locations and quantities of new pedestrian light poles
- Specific locations and quantities of gateway monuments, banner poles, interpretive signage, and directional signage
- Specific locations and quantities of benches, bike racks and trash receptacles

All proposed improvements will be noted on set of base plan sheets and include improvement notes directly on the plans. Preliminary construction details for paving and planting improvements, furnishings matrix including identification of specific products and quantity, and plant list should be provided as part of preliminary design. An estimated probable cost of construction should also be included based on the preliminary design drawings and discussions with local contractors and previous bid tabs received by the City on other recently bid projects.

The Downtown West Monroe Streetscape Master Plan serves as the first step in creating an implementation mechanism of improvements. Additional implementation mechanisms for the City to consider include funding and phasing and further utility investigations.



Through the development and completion of preliminary construction documents for Downtown West Monroe, the City should identify viable phasing of construction of the project. For example, the phasing of construction can coincide with capital improvement projects related to Trenton Street, such as the undergrounding of overhead utilities. Utility relocation and timing will be the primary driver for full phasing strategy discussions and should be examined further. The preliminary design phase will provide further opportunity to determine pertinent phasing of construction based on this challenge.

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify and pursue grant funding source opportunities

WHO: City Staff

HOW: Pursue funding available from EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs, CARES Act funding, or LA DOTD Urban Systems Program.

WHEN: Q3/Q4 2020

2. Begin site programming and master planning process for Alley Park future design

WHO: City Staff/Selected Design Consultant Team

HOW: Engage through existing on-call agreements or RFQ for site programming, master planning and public engagement to further define the future design plans for Alley Park. Utilize future shade structure to be installed in Fall 2020 by Downtown Merchants Association as part of future design plans.

WHEN: Q4 2020 - Q1 2021

3. Conduct site survey and preliminary site engineering studies of the proposed design/improvement areas, including but not limited to stormwater management, utilities relocation, and geotechnical studies

WHO: City Engineer/Selected Design Consultant Team

HOW: Engage through existing on-call agreements or RFQ for survey and engineering studies to further define the costs required for infrastructure work related to the streetscape design by advancing plans to a 30% construction document level.

WHEN: Q4 2020 - Q1 2021

4. Conduct detailed project design and construction documentation studies of the proposed design/improvement areas, including but not limited to stormwater management, utilities relocation, and geotechnical studies

WHO: City Engineer/Selected Design Consultant Team

HOW: Engage through existing on-call agreements or RFQ for final design and engineering work to produce construction drawings suitable for bidding and construction for the funds available as identified in the previous action step.

WHEN: Q4 2020 - Q1 2021

5. Budget for long-term funding for maintenance of all downtown streetscape improvements

WHO: City Staff/Board of Aldermen

HOW: Provide funding to ensure upkeep and maintenance of all new streetscape features in downtown, including but not limited to, landscape improvements, street lighting, signage/banners, and hardscape.

WHEN: Q1 2021

6. Secure funds for streetscape improvements

WHO: City Staff/Board of Aldermen

HOW: Decide which financial structure makes sense for the city to utilize for a funding source, then secure funds for future fiscal years to begin detailed design and construction.

WHEN: Q1 2021 - Q2 2021



THE LAGNIAPPE FOOD HALL

OVERVIEW

When asked, “if you could add anything to downtown that would encourage you to visit and shop local more often, what would that be,” 79% of the 508 respondents answered restaurants. Within the Cotton Port Historic District, downtown is home to four restaurants including Miss Kay’s Sweets & Eats, Luna Piena Italian Bistro, For His Temple Family Foods, and Kayla’s Kitchen. Nearby restaurants – Trapp’s and West Monroe Coney Island – are located outside of the district’s boundaries but are widely viewed as downtown dining establishments. During the public input process, people of all ages expressed the desire for more evening activities to entice them to stay downtown for longer periods of time. However, only two of the six restaurants mentioned are open in the evenings for dinner service. Moreover, downtown businesses do not experience enough foot traffic from buyers to remain open past 5:00 pm.

Combined, the lack of dining options open for dinner service and limited operating hours at local businesses has hindered downtown from becoming a nightlife destination for families, young people and children, alike. But to keep their doors open for extended hours, restaurateurs and local businesses need residents to frequent them regularly during the week and on the weekends.

In response to these realities and public input, the consultancy team recommends The Lagniappe (working name) “food hall” – a family-friendly food, drink, and entertainment center.



Map of existing restaurants



EXPERIENCE

Although there is no standard industry definition for the modern food hall, the food hall concept is a sprawling market that showcases a variety of local food vendors, specialty food-focused shops, and drinks all under one roof. Nearly all food halls operate as “celebrations of foodie culture” by focusing on farm-to-fork rather than mass production, with emphasis on quality and authenticity. A recent National Restaurant Association survey reported 72% of consumers say they seek restaurant food that provides tastes and flavors they cannot duplicate at home. To meet this expectation, food halls typically source regionally and/or locally fresh ingredients and have a loose theme that ties the various food vendors together. Many food halls rent stands or spaces to various food purveyors who are then individually responsible for taking customer orders, cooking food within their designated space, ordering ingredients/supplies from wholesale food suppliers and providing table service and bussing (if applicable), among other things. For the purposes of The Lagniappe, the consultancy team recommends a virtual food hall consumer experience to ensure consistency and to enhance financial viability.

Here’s how it works for customers:

- When entering the building, patrons will interact with electronic menus from various vendors – each distinguished by their own logo and branding – then use their smartphones or self-order kiosks to place an order from their vendor(s) of choice.
 - A hostess will be available for anyone who is initially intimidated by the electronic ordering system.
- At this point, patrons will elect to receive a pager or text message alert to notify them when their food is ready to be picked up at the counter. Once the food is ordered patrons can find a table, order a drink at the bar, or explore the space, etc. while waiting for their food to be ready.
- Once the party is seated at their table, servers will take drink orders and provide refills (upon request) for the duration of their stay.
 - Additionally, alcoholic drinks can be ordered at the bar for patrons who do not want to sit at a table or do not want to wait for their server to take their drink order.

The Lagniappe goes beyond the traditional restaurant model by providing the community with a family-friendly gathering space filled with board games, TVs, and lawn games to accommodate guests who want to eat, drink, and play during the daytime and evening hours. The space is designed for patrons to stay as long as they'd like – for a quick lunch meal, to watch the Saints play, to enjoy cocktails during happy hour, or dinner with the family before or after the West Monroe Rebels game. The Lagniappe will offer the full “eatertainment” experience providing residents and visitors with more reasons to eat, drink, and shop in downtown West Monroe.

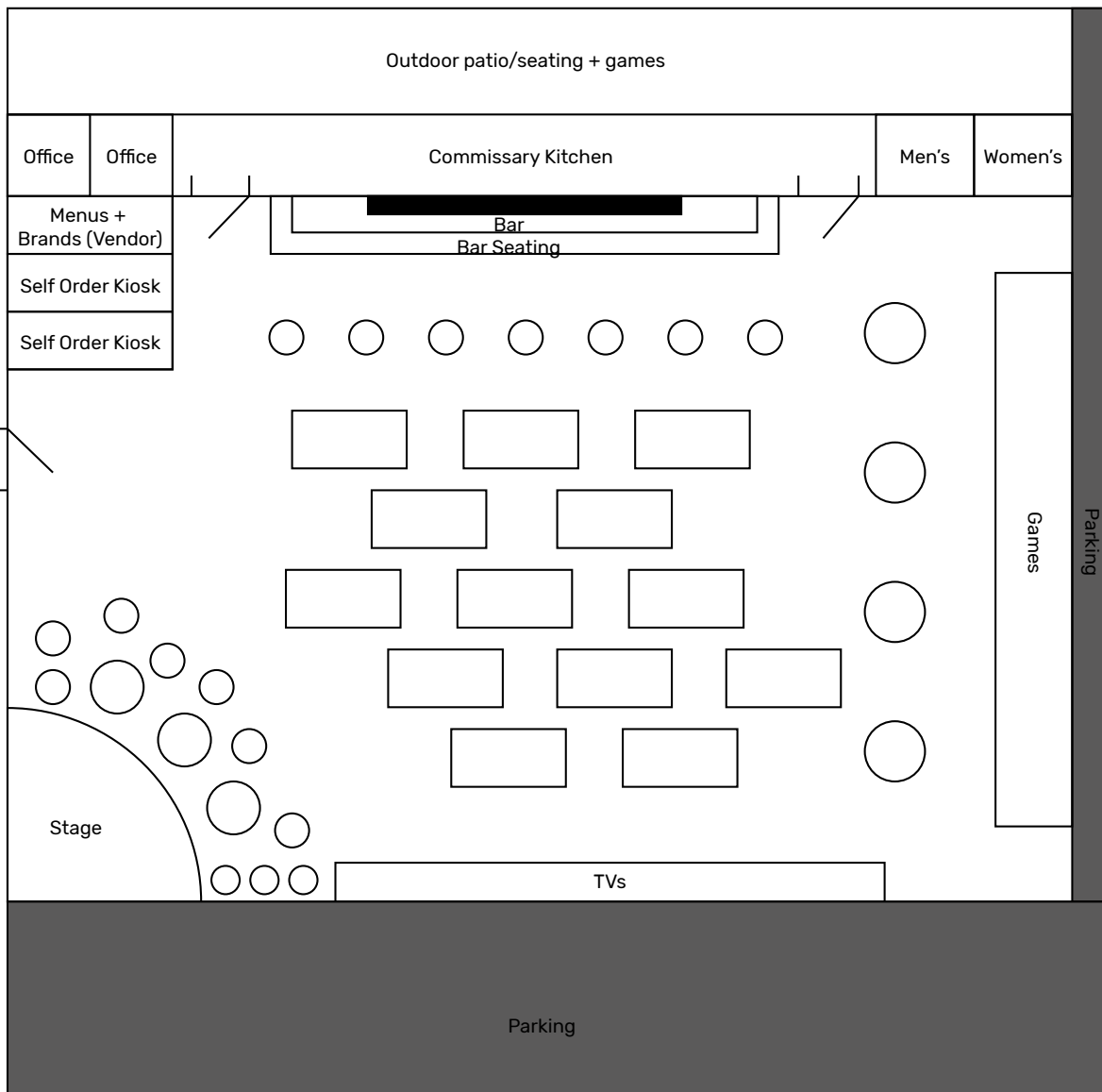
LOCATION & LAYOUT

After reviewing the list of vacant properties located downtown, the consultancy team determined the building located at 411 Trenton Street (near Miss Kay’s Sweets & Eats) to be the best fit for The Lagniappe food hall. However, this project concept can be easily adapted to several other properties or locations. Ultimately, the building on 411 Trenton Street was identified to have the most prime location being near the eventual gateway into downtown West Monroe and, once open, will likely entice more foot traffic if buzzing with activity during most hours of the day. The proposed design and layout for inside and outside the building is shown below and on the following page.

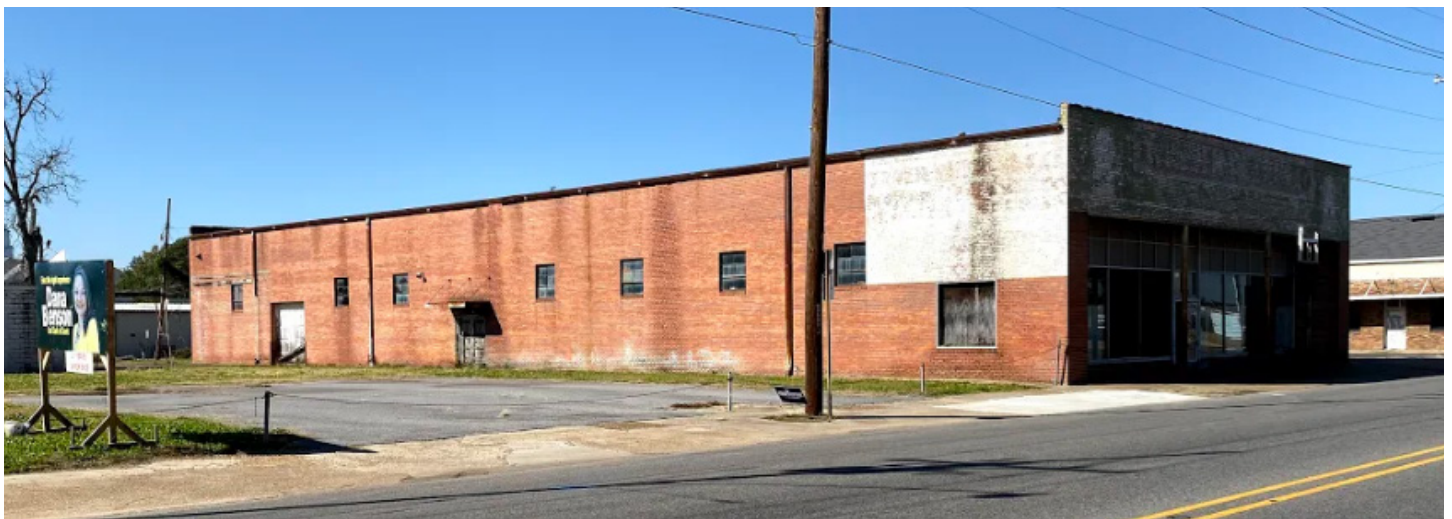
| Space Requirements | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Total sq-ft | 5,200 |
| Kitchen sq-ft | 1,525 |
| Kitchen (% of overall) | 40.0% |
| Total # of seats | 190 |
| Sq-ft per seat | 36 |



Exterior: 411 Trenton Street



Proposed interior layout: 411 Trenton Street



Exterior: 411 Trenton Street



Exterior Before: 411 Trenton Street



Proposed exterior layout: 411 Trenton Street

OPERATIONS

The owner(s) and operator of The Lagniappe food hall will likely not be one in the same. The consultancy team strongly recommends a group of investors to own the food hall then hire a professional manager to operationalize the day-to-day business. The person hired to manage the food hall should have a working knowledge of food, people and entertainment, but expertise in business operations, contract negotiation/purchasing/logistics, and marketing to oversee the multi-purpose facility.

Here's how it works for food vendor tenants:

- Individual food vendors will lease food preparation space, storage, and operational time at The Lagniappe
- Recommendation: \$1,500-\$2,000/month per food vendor and 20% food revenue
- Each food vendor will operate independently including having their own staff, menu, and profit and loss statements
- Food vendors will collaborate with each other in key areas for cost savings (i.e. The Lagniappe will manage food purveyor relationships and work through a master account to drive down costs)
- Although each food vendor will operate independently, The Lagniappe's manager will oversee several key food-related processes including price range for all food offerings and order delivery times. Additionally, The Lagniappe's manager will oversee and pay for collective expenditures such as front of house (service) staff and bartenders, signage, marketing, and advertising.

For the facility to sustain financial solvency, the consultancy team recommends the following hours of operation:

| Hours of Operation | |
|---|--------------|
| Monday | 7am – 10pm |
| Tuesday | 7am – 10pm |
| Wednesday | 7am – 10pm |
| Thursday | 7am – 10pm |
| Friday | 7am – 12am |
| Saturday | 8am – 12am |
| Sunday | 10am – 10pm* |
| *Brunch from 10am – 2pm then open until 10pm for regular service. | |

Ultimately, The Lagniappe should serve as a community gathering space with food, drinks, social activities and events. However, the purpose of the facility is to incubate new food concepts without the risk of investing in a brick-and-mortar, provide space to existing local restaurants to increase their sales revenue, and train local residents to become part of the hospitality industry's workforce pipeline. The consultancy team recommends a partnership with Louisiana Delta Community College to provide credentialed education/training (i.e. ServSafe), and eventually, an industry-recognized apprenticeship program to train local residents while working (and getting paid) on-the-job.

A concept business plan is available for review in **Appendix C.**

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify investor(s) and recruit experienced operator/manager

WHO: City of West Monroe, Steering Committee

HOW: Share the downtown master plan and food hall concept with developers, hospitality industry leaders, and relevant investors to generate interest in being part of the potential development

WHEN: Q1 2021

2. Secure property ownership or negotiate lease structure

WHO: Existing property owner, investor(s), operator/manager

HOW: Determine who will own the property. If the existing owner elects to keep the property, develop a financially-feasible lease structure to allow the food hall investors/operator to make improvements to the building and occupy the space until the property owner decides to sell.

WHEN: Q2 2021

3. Conduct a site reuse assessment on the building

WHO: Owner(s), operator/manager

HOW: In collaboration with Atlas (or firms with relevant experience), conduct a site reuse assessment to determine structural feasibility of the proposed project concept.

WHEN: Q3 2021

4. Establish organizational structure (for-profit and nonprofit)

WHO: Owner(s), operator/manager

HOW: To support business incubation (food establishments) and workforce training (hospitality industry), the food hall should establish a 501c3 nonprofit organization to make it easier to secure federal/state funding and charitable donations to cover those expenses. At a minimum the for-profit arm of the food hall should own the bar and the building (eventually) to generate revenue via alcohol sales, food vendor tenant leases, events, facility rentals, etc.

WHEN: Q4 2021

5. Identify funding and secure capital for building rehabilitation

WHO: Owner(s), operator/manager

HOW: Identify various sources of funding to secure capital required for building rehabilitation including, but not limited to private equity, historic tax credits (federal and state), federal/state grants, bank financing, charitable donations, etc.

WHEN: Q1 2022 - Q2 2023



WEST MONROE **DISTILLERY**

OVERVIEW

In 2014, the American Craft Spirits Association estimated there were 906 active distillers in the United States. Since then, the craft distilling market has ballooned to more than 2,046 active producers realizing major increases in sales and market share in a multi-billion dollar industry. During the era of COVID-19, many people previously unfamiliar with the distilling industry learned about distilleries of all sizes reorienting their operations to produce hand sanitizer, instead of spirits, to meet the demand of consumers across the country — especially in their own communities. More times than not, breweries and distilleries are classified as the same type of business but there are major differences. Simply put, a brewery produces beer and a distillery produces alcoholic spirits.

When asked what could be added to downtown that would encourage residents to visit and shop local more frequently, half of all survey participants responded 'brewery/distillery/wine bar.' Fortunately, during the visioning and public input process, Atlas identified entrepreneurs with industry experience who are aiming to develop and open their family-owned distillery in the next few years.

EXPERIENCE

During the visioning and public input process, people of all ages expressed their desire for more things to do downtown to encourage them to stay for longer periods of time. Increased foot traffic would not only be good for restaurants and retail stores but will create a greater sense of vibrancy making downtown the place to be, especially during the evenings and on weekends. Although Alley Park has provided a periodic gathering place for events and activities, residents and visitors also need gathering spaces that can be frequented daily and provide experiences for the whole family. Initially, most people would not think about a distillery (or even a brewery) being that community gathering space. However, there are many examples of family-friendly breweries and distilleries across the country. For example, Flying Heart Brewing & Pub in Bossier City has designed a kid-friendly brewpub which allows families to enjoy a meal, outdoor games and activities, and -- for the adults -- craft beer produced by the local brewery. Another example is locally-owned Landry Vineyards

which hosts regularly-scheduled concerts and events for people of all ages to enjoy. The new distillery should provide residents and visitors with the opportunity to taste locally-produced spirits providing a tasting room indoors and an outdoor patio with space for seating, lawn games, and small stage for performances. If the identified entrepreneurs want to incentivize more families to visit the distillery's tasting room, they should also consider building a fenced-in playground for children to play under their supervision of their parents/guardians while sitting outside on the patio.

Even in Ouachita Parish, it is evident that the market for breweries, distilleries, wineries, and meaderies is growing. This provides Northeast Louisiana an even greater opportunity for developing themed events and “crawls” which feature locally-produced food, drinks, and goods putting more money in the local economy.



West Monroe breweries, wineries, meaderies, etc.

LOCATION & LAYOUT

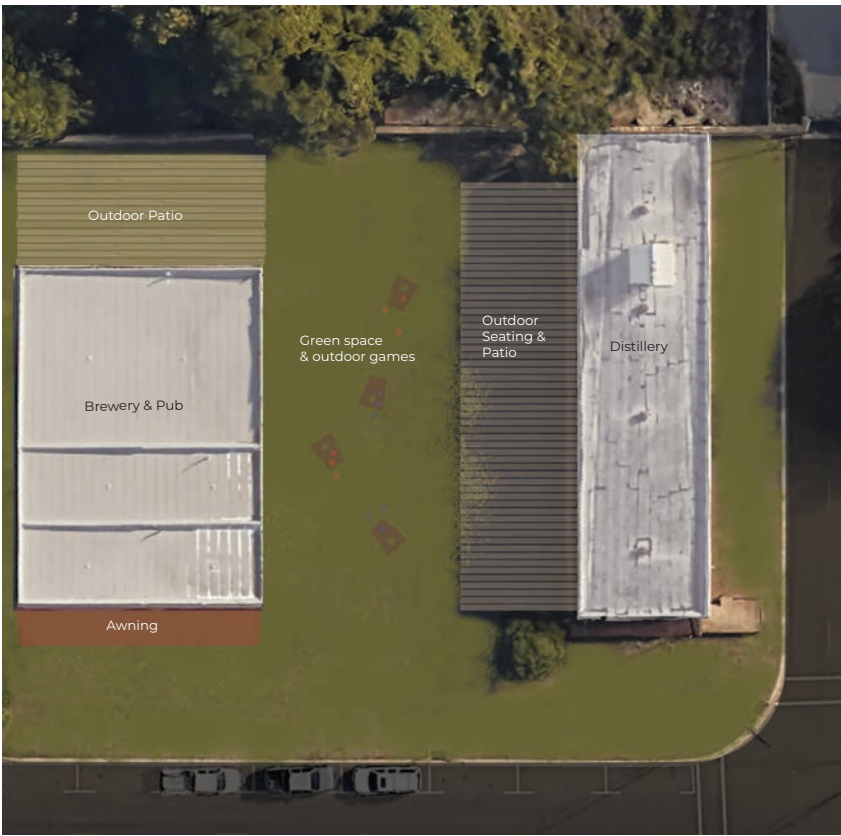
After reviewing the list of vacant properties located downtown, Atlas determined the building located at 200 Commerce Street (near Alley Park) to be the best fit for the new distillery. However, this project concept can be easily adapted to several other properties or locations. Ultimately, the building on 200 Commerce Street was identified to have the most prime location being on the riverfront and near lots recently purchased by Flying Heart Brewing & Pub for their new location in downtown West Monroe. Currently located in Bossier

City, Flying Heart Brewing & Pub provides a family-friendly environment for people to enjoy their craft beers, cocktails, and New York style pizzas. Once constructed, a brewpub and distillery with outdoor seating, lawn games, performance stage, and other social attractions will likely entice more foot traffic in an area that has lacked significant commercial activity for many years. A potential design for the outside of the distillery as well as the layout for the forthcoming Flying Heart Brewing & Pub is shown below and on the following page.*

**These designs and layout are not drawn to scale and will likely be adjusted to meet the needs of both Flying Heart Brewing & Pub and the distillery. These images are shown to display the potential for the area to become a more central location for commercial and social activity. All final renderings and collaboration between Flying Heart Brewing & Pub, the distillery, and current property owner will need to be negotiated at a future date.*



Distillery mock-up: front view, side view, lawn games



Aerial view of brewpub and distillery layout, photos of Flying Heart Brewery: outside, entry, inside

OPERATIONS

As previously mentioned, craft distilleries are booming right now as are breweries. Most of the distilleries in Louisiana are located in the southern region and the closest to West Monroe is in Shreveport, Louisiana and Jackson, Mississippi. A preliminary analysis of the market indicates a competitive advantage for the new distillery to locate to downtown West Monroe making it a unique attraction for residents and visitors alike.

There are many aspects of the industry that should be considered when starting a craft distillery including, but not limited to, the following:

Location

- Consider a site downtown (such as the existing building located on 200 Commerce Street) as a showcase facility and tasting room.
- Eventually, as the distillery grows, consider another facility for off-site production.

Licensing

- Distilleries are the second most regulated business in the country besides pharmaceuticals so federal license applications typically take 18-24 months to obtain.
 - Licensure is controlled under the Tax & Trade Bureau which is a division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.
- Additionally, local and state licensure requirements must be adhered to in addition to federal licensing.

Production

- What products will be distilled? Vodka, rum, whiskey, etc.
 - Un-aged spirits (i.e. vodka and gin) can be sold in most states immediately after being produced and should be considered as the launch product(s) for the distillery.
 - Bourbon and other whiskeys require aging in barrels for their flavor profile and color and may need to age for a minimum of 2-5 years before bottling, selling and distributing.
- Will products be made grain-to-glass (spirits made from scratch) or via grain-neutral spirits (refinement of existing spirits)?
 - This will be important to consider when deciding what types of stills and fermentation equipment is needed as well as their size and shape.
- How will the supply chain be organized?
 - This should be considered when identifying a location for storage of raw materials and the finished product as well as the waste disposal plan.
 - There are typically local, state, and federal bodies regulating the storage of finished products on-site as well as the disposal of waste materials.
 - Where will the raw materials be sourced from (i.e. grains such as corn, barley, wheat, and rye)?
 - Additionally, the owner/operator will need to consider the sourcing of materials for bottling of the product(s) and barrels for aged spirits.



Sales and Marketing

- What is the distillery's brand?
 - Selling the “story” of the distillery will be key when defining the brand before pushing products to the market.
 - Creating a website and social media accounts with a defined brand and consistent messaging will be crucial to developing the distillery's market and reputation in the industry.
- Who will produce the product(s) and who will sell?
 - It is highly recommended that the distiller(s) and sales people not be one-in-the-same to generate the best results.
- What type of bottles and labels will be used?
 - Each label for every bottle will require federal approval from the Tax & Trade Bureau.
 - This process usually takes a minimum of 6-12 months per label to get approval from inception to print.
 - This process not only requires an approval for the product but also a separate approval for every size that is offered (i.e. 750ml, 375ml, and 50ml all require separate approvals).



Financial Structure

There are several options for capitalization and cash flow of the new distillery, each with unique pros and cons, including:

- Self-funded
 - Pro: This is typically the easiest for the entrepreneur (if/when funding is available) in terms of decision-making
 - Con: All of the risk falls on the owner
- Bank-funded
 - Pro: Generally, traditional financing can provide long-term, low interest financing
 - Con: It is usually difficult to acquire traditional financing due to the uniqueness of the distilling industry
 - Banks are generally risk adverse when financing distilleries due to unfamiliarity
 - Distilleries generally produce negative cash flow for 2-5 years, especially when aged products such as bourbon and whiskeys are being produced
- Investor-funded
 - Pro: Investors/stakeholders are typically excited about the idea of a distillery which makes raising money easier but more expensive in the long-term
 - Con: Investors/stakeholders must understand this is a long-term investment that may take 6-10 years before positive cash flow is realized
- Hybrid (of the above)
 - Pro: Identifying experts in investing and banking that are already familiar with distilleries provides a diversifying capitalization strategy for the entrepreneur
 - Con: There will be more stakeholders involved in the startup and growth of the business which creates more complexity but is generally necessary for most craft distilleries to become successful

In a presentation on behalf of the American Distilling Institute, Elliot Davis of Mine Hill Distillery in Roxbury, Connecticut identified the following as key milestones for business development of a new craft distillery:

| Pre-Launch | Years 1-2 | Years 3-4 | Year 5 |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Business plan | Master distiller | Expand still staff | 2nd offering |
| Capitalization | Still staff | Expand sales force | Refinance mortgage |
| Site Selection | Equipment order | Add distributor | Pay off investors |
| Licenses/approvals | Source goods | New markets | |
| Trademarks | Build out | On-site events | |
| Pre-marketing | Marketing roll out | International (if applicable) | |

These milestones will be important for the identified entrepreneurs to consider when developing their business plan to achieve financial success and meet key objectives during the startup and growth phases of the business so investors can exit in 4-5 years or continue to own a portion of the business long-term.

Ultimately, a business plan customized for the startup and growth of the new distillery will be the key to success to move this project forward.



ACTION STEPS

1. Participate in brownfield assessment through Ouachita Parish, City of West Monroe, and PPM Consultants

WHO: Property owner (200 Commerce Street)

HOW: Complete the participation form provided by the City of West Monroe which will then be submitted to PPM Consultants to conduct the assessment.

WHEN: Q3 2020

2. Conduct a site reuse assessment on the building

WHO: Property owner, Distillery entrepreneur, PPM Consultants

HOW: By participating in the brownfield assessment through Ouachita Parish, City of West Monroe and PPM Consultants, inquire about the possibility of the property being considered for a site reuse assessment to determine structural feasibility of the proposed project concept (distillery).

WHEN: Q4 2020 - Q1 2021

3. Finalize negotiations for property ownership or lease structure

WHO: Property owner and Distillery entrepreneur

HOW: Determine who will own the property. If the existing owner elects to keep the property, develop a financially-feasible lease structure to allow the Distillery entrepreneur to make improvements to the building and occupy the space until the property owner decides to sell.

WHEN: Q1 2021

4. Develop business plan

WHO: Owner(s), operator/manager

HOW: Continue working with industry-experts and distillery owners to develop a business plan customized for the new craft distillery, based on regional market supply and demand.

WHEN: Q2 2021

5. Secure funds for capitalization

WHO: Distillery owner

HOW: Decide which financial structure makes sense for the business (i.e. self-funded, traditional bank financing, investor partnerships, or hybrid) then secure funds for capitalization and cash flow of the new craft distillery.

WHEN: Q3-Q4 2021



WEST MONROE HOUSING

OVERVIEW

During the past three decades, many families have chosen to leave densely populated cities to live in suburban neighborhoods that offer spacious homes with backyards, quality schools and – above all – a peaceful environment absent of the constant noise of sirens, car horns, and people. Millennials and Generation Z are beginning to find themselves priced out of the housing market in urban centers, creating a greater demand for housing in suburbs and micropolitan areas. Baby Boomers are selling their homes so they can downsize. What all of these groups have in common is the desire to live in appropriately-sized houses, apartments or condos near the amenities they regularly frequent and those they enjoy socially for entertainment. Small cities, like West Monroe, have the opportunity to build the housing stock and amenities that will attract these people to live in and around the downtown area.

As the data will demonstrate, many of these people already live in the region but they need more options – homes/condos for sale, apartments for rent, upper story housing, housing with a riverfront view, etc. To address the housing market in downtown West Monroe, Atlas assessed existing conditions, identified development challenges, and created potential development strategies to strengthen local housing stock.

BACKGROUND

To better understand the housing market in West Monroe, Atlas collected and analyzed data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau to identify trends and challenges. Based on this information, Atlas identified strategies to support development of new housing options and blight remediation in and around downtown West Monroe.

Population

Since hitting its peak in 1960, the city's population has experienced steady decline. Since 1990, West Monroe's population has decreased by 1,665 people or a loss of nearly 12%.

| CENSUS YEAR | POPULATION | PERCENT CHANGE |
|--|------------|----------------|
| 1950 | 10,302 | - |
| 1960 | 15,215 | 47.7% |
| 1970 | 14,868 | -2.3% |
| 1980 | 14,993 | 0.8% |
| 1990 | 14,096 | -6.0% |
| 2000 | 13,250 | -6.0% |
| 2010 | 13,065 | -1.4% |
| Est. 2018* | 12,431 | -4.9% |
| *Population estimate provided by US Census | | |
| SOURCE: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census | | |



Age of Housing Units

Compared to Ouachita Parish and the State of Louisiana, West Monroe’s housing growth has fallen short with new housing starts. “Housing starts” is an economic indicator that reflects the number of privately owned new houses on which construction has been started during a specified period. Since 1990, approximately 1,192 new housing units were constructed in West Monroe accounting for 18.4% of all housing units in the community. During the same period, 20,579 new housing units were constructed in Ouachita Parish accounting for 30.7% of all housing units in the parish. Similarly, the new housing units constructed throughout the state during the same 30-year period accounts for 32.8% of all housing units.

Moreover, the City of Monroe experienced similar growth as West Monroe with 3,134 new housing units accounting for 15.2% of all housing units. Overall, only 21% of new housing units built over the past 30 years in Ouachita Parish were located in the cities of West Monroe or Monroe. This data point indicates the majority of new housing development in Ouachita Parish has occurred outside the parish’s two major cities in suburbs, census-designated communities, or unincorporated areas such as Claiborne, Bawcomville, Cheniere, Calhoun, and Sterlington, etc.

| | West Monroe | | Ouachita Parish | | State of Louisiana |
|---------------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|---------|--------------------|
| YEAR BUILT | NUMBER | PERCENT | NUMBER | PERCENT | NUMBER |
| 2010 or later | 137 | 2.1% | 3,093 | 4.6% | 91,440 |
| 2000 to 2009 | 309 | 4.8% | 8,480 | 12.6% | 314,963 |
| 1990 to 1999 | 746 | 11.5% | 9,006 | 13.4% | 259,920 |
| 1980 to 1989 | 686 | 10.6% | 10,152 | 15.1% | 298,700 |
| 1970 to 1979 | 1,321 | 20.3% | 14,135 | 21.1% | 375,217 |
| 1960 to 1969 | 1,148 | 17.7% | 10,838 | 16.2% | 262,495 |
| 1950 to 1959 | 1,452 | 22.3% | 6,513 | 9.7% | 198,557 |
| 1940 to 1949 | 418 | 6.4% | 2,490 | 3.7% | 90,870 |
| 1939 or earlier | 280 | 4.3% | 2,385 | 3.6% | 138,902 |
| TOTAL HOUSING UNITS | 6,497 | | 67,092 | | 2,031,064 |

SOURCE: US Census via American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2017)

Housing Tenure & Occupancy

Considering the ratio of owner-occupied versus renter-occupied housing units within the specified geographic regions, the State of Louisiana (65.5% owner-occupied to 34.5% renter-occupied) and Ouachita Parish (59.3% owner-occupied to 40.7% renter-occupied) maintain comparable housing occupancy rates when compared to the United States as a whole (65% owner-occupied to 35% renter-occupied units). On the contrary, the City of West Monroe's housing occupancy rates are reversed with 40.9% owner-occupied units and 59.1% renter-occupied units.

There are many factors likely contributing to this trend, but some of the most common include lower availability of affordable housing units for sale and financial barriers to home ownership (i.e. higher poverty rate, lower median household income, college students choosing rentals vs. for-sale properties, etc.). Currently, the national vacancy rate of owner-occupied housing is 1.5%. Although Ouachita Parish (1.6%) and the State of Louisiana (1.7%) maintain comparable vacancy rates, the City of West Monroe's rate is substantially higher at 3.4%. This indicates there are homes available in the area, but these properties remain vacant at higher rates than the parish and the state for various reasons.

Median & Mean Household Income

Median Household Income is the middle of a set of household income data to reduce outliers or extremes when assessing the purchase power of a specified region. For instance, if 100 people lived in the City of West Monroe and Coach Ed Orgeron was a resident, his \$7 million annual salary would not be indicative of the income-level in most households which would drastically skew the Mean Household Income. To adjust for this outlier, household incomes are tallied, sorted in ascending order, and then – in this case – the 50th household income would be selected for the Median Household Income in this hypothetical scenario.

According to the American Community Survey, West Monroe's Median Household Income is nearly \$8,000 less than Ouachita Parish and more than \$14,500 – or nearly 45% - less than the State of Louisiana overall.

Although the Mean Household Income is skewed positively for all three areas/regions, West Monroe residents still have considerably less purchasing power when compared to Ouachita Parish and the state. As a result, some residents who would otherwise want to purchase a home in West Monroe might lack funds to make a down payment or are priced out of the market entirely with the housing stock currently available.

| | West Monroe | Ouachita Parish | State of Louisiana |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Median Household Income | \$32,182 | \$40,081 | \$46,710 |
| Mean Household Income | \$45,860 | \$59,528 | \$66,861 |



CHALLENGES

Available Housing Supply Does Not Meet Demand

According to feedback from locals and insight from realtors, existing housing stock in and around downtown is in limited supply due to low vacancy rates and a lack of housing options. Riverfront condos and downtown apartments typically house singles, young couples (without children), and seniors who downsized from single-family homes. Recent housing developments downtown include The Hatchell Lofts (work-live lofts) and Myrtlewood Cottages (small homes) which have diversified available offerings both in price and design, but are almost fully occupied at any given time. This is true of most of the housing options in the downtown area which demonstrates the demand for more housing development, especially as more restaurants, retail, and other cultural amenities begin to emerge in West Monroe.

Deteriorating Infrastructure

Since public infrastructure in downtown West Monroe is approximately 80-100(+) years old, developers seeking to revitalize existing buildings or invest in new construction might be financially inhibited from proceeding with their proposed projects with the added expense of improving public infrastructure for the benefit of their commercial or residential development. Additionally, the average age of the buildings located downtown is 85 years old which requires a more substantial capital investment to rehabilitate, upgrade, preserve, and maintain these buildings.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy and Research, "neighborhood blight and the presence of abandoned properties have profound negative impacts on afflicted communities. Blighted properties decrease surrounding property values, erode the health of local housing markets, pose safety hazards, and reduce local tax revenue." Blighted properties are more than an eyesore and make people feel less safe whether or not crime actually occurs more frequently in these neighborhoods. Additionally, when neighborhoods become less attractive and are perceived to be unsafe, prospective buyers are less likely to purchase homes in these areas fueling further population loss and economic disinvestment. For West Monroe, blighted and/or abandoned properties in and around downtown are reducing local tax revenue making it more costly for the city to provide public services and other functions such as code enforcement, waste cleanup, police, and fire.

Buyers' Financing Challenges

An analysis of West Monroe's demographic and economic indicators demonstrates deep-rooted challenges for some residents who want to purchase a home. In some cases, prospective buyers have insufficient resources to afford a down payment or have difficulty qualifying for traditional financing from a bank. In other cases, home owners become so cost-burdened by their mortgage payments that they are paying more than 30% of their monthly income for a singular fixed expense. In West Monroe, the median household income (\$32,182) is substantially lower than Ouachita Parish (\$40,081) and the state (\$46,710) creating a barrier to homeownership for many without quality, high-paying jobs and making it more difficult for West Monroe to transition residents from rental units to owner-occupied housing.

OPPORTUNITIES

Modernize and Increase Housing Stock to Incentivize Target Populations

Within 30 miles of West Monroe is the University of Louisiana Monroe, Louisiana Tech University, Grambling University, and Louisiana Delta Community College. Tens of thousands of young adults and non-traditional students residing in the region need housing they can afford during their time in college, graduate school, and once they graduate if they can find a job and afford to stay. Northeast Louisiana is predominantly rural and experiences "brain drain" when college-educated talent finds work elsewhere in Louisiana or out-of-state. But with job opportunities available in Ouachita Parish and nearby communities, West Monroe should continue developing modern housing options in and around downtown to lure recent college graduates and young singles/couples to live downtown near retail storefronts, local restaurants, and the Ouachita River. Sometimes this requires additional incentives such as cash to be used for rent/down payment and free gym membership or subsidized office space (for remote workers).

Examples of incentive programs like these include:

- [Newton Housing Initiative](#) | Newton, Iowa
- [Remote Shoals](#) | Colbert and Lauderdale counties, Alabama
- [Tulsa Remote](#) | Tulsa, Oklahoma



Offer More Short-term Rentals

Although the development of owner-occupied units will undoubtedly increase foot traffic downtown, offering more locally-owned short-term rentals for business people, students, remote workers, and visitors needing a place to stay with more amenities and flexibility than a hotel will help local businesses and restaurants sustain extended operating hours and create the perception that downtown is the place to be during the weekdays, weekends, and all hours in between. Nowadays, people are staying in short-term rental units all over the world booking through companies such as Airbnb, VRBO, and HomeAway. While the goal is not to make downtown a destination for tourists and visitors alone, short-term rental units can provide a more unique experience than the alternative (i.e. a standard hotel) and can be modified for long-term renters and tourists passing through the area.

State & Federal Programs

There are several programs at the state and federal levels that provide resources to help finance the construction of new and rehabilitation of existing housing developments as well as mortgage/rental assistance and other community housing projects. For example, through the State Community Development Block Grant Program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides funding for each state to allocate to non-entitlement areas (cities with populations of less than 50,000 and counties/parishes less than 200,000) to support rehabilitation of residential and non-residential structures, relocation and demolition, acquisition of real property and construction of or improvements to public facilities, among other things. Additionally, the Louisiana Housing Corporation administers a number of programs such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program and Multifamily Revenue Bonds to assist developers and home seekers alike in building/rehabilitating and maintaining quality places to live in Louisiana communities.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Upper Story Housing

As previously mentioned, more than half of the online survey participants responded favorably ('yes' or 'maybe') when asked if they would consider living in downtown West Monroe. Additionally, 56% of these survey respondents believe more '2nd-Story Condos/Apartments' should be built downtown. Upper story housing in downtowns across the country has become more and more popular over the years and appeals to a variety of age groups -- young singles and couples, middle-aged, and seniors -- and is inclusive for people with varying levels of income. Downtown living is attractive for a number of reasons but many consider relocating due to the proximity to restaurants, retail stores, coffee shops, churches, and other amenities -- especially if these amenities and services exist in a revitalized, walkable downtown. Recent upper story housing development in downtown has already proven to be successful with minimal vacancies, not to mention the affordability of living in West Monroe.

To incentivize more development in downtown, there are a few programs that property owners and prospective developers can use to rehabilitate existing buildings to increase the supply of upper story housing including, but not limited to, the following:

Restoration Tax Abatement

The Restoration Tax Abatement (RTA) program provides an up-to-ten-year abatement of property taxes (ad valorem) on renovations and improvements of existing commercial structures and owner-occupied residences located within economic development districts, downtown development districts, historic districts, and opportunity zones. RTA is available to all Louisiana businesses and homeowners with existing structures to be expanded, restored, improved or developed in qualifying locations and as approved by the local governing authority.

- Eligible expenses:
 - Building and materials
 - Machinery and equipment (only that which becomes an integral part of the structure)
 - Labor and engineering
- Non-eligible expenses:
 - Acquisition cost of the structure or land
 - Movable and personal property

For more information about the RTA program, visit www.opportunitylouisiana.com.

Historic Tax Credits

Created in 2002 by the Louisiana Legislature, the State Commercial Tax Credit program is designed to encourage the redevelopment of income-producing historic buildings located in Downtown Development Districts or certified Cultural Districts. Rehabilitation projects must exceed \$10,000 in qualified rehabilitation expenses and must be completed according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Once earned, credits are fully transferable and may be carried forward for up to five years. Although, the State Commercial Tax Credit program sunsets December 31, 2021, the credit is equal to 20% of eligible costs and expenses incurred January 1, 2018 or later, regardless of the year in which the property is placed in service.

For more information about the State Commercial Tax Credit program, visit www.crt.state.la.us.

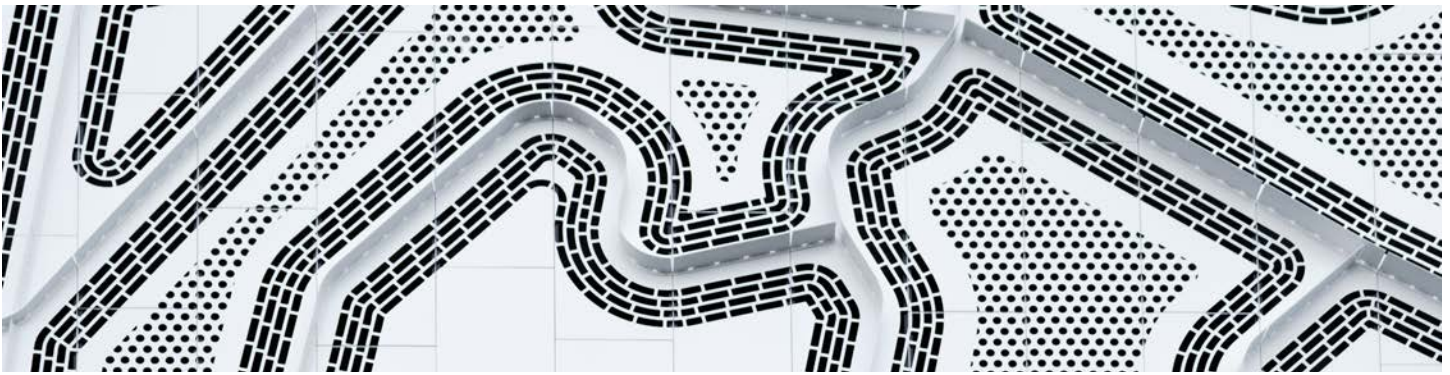
Additionally, the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program offers a 20% income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that are determined by the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, to be "certified historic structures." The tax credit is only available to properties rehabilitated for income-producing purposes including commercial, industrial, agricultural, rental residential or apartment use. In general, only those [costs](#) that are directly related to the repair or improvement of structural and architectural features of the historic building will qualify.

For more information about the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program, visit www.nps.gov.

Combined, property owners and prospective developers seeking to rehabilitate historic, income-producing buildings downtown can combine state and federal tax credits to realize up to 40% of the total project development costs.

Communities across the country are creating innovative programs to support the rehabilitation of existing buildings and/or new development to increase the supply of housing in downtowns and on main streets. Some of these programs can be used as models to implement in West Monroe, such as:

| City, State | Population (2010) | Program | Description |
|----------------|-------------------|---|--|
| Seymour, IN | 18,130 | Main Street Loan & Grant Program | Seymour Main Street, in collaboration with the City of Seymour and the Community Foundation of Jackson County, provides financial loans to property owners in downtown Seymour to assist them in restoring and rehabilitating their property. Loans up to \$10,000 are provided to encourage occupancy of vacant commercial buildings, provide financial assistance to avoid the occurrence of vacancy of commercial buildings, and to encourage renovation and rehabilitation of commercial buildings - especially storefronts. Examples of eligible projects include: signage (additional or removal), awnings, exterior painting, tuckpointing, roof repairs, upper story interior rehabilitation, replacement of architectural detail, electrical work, interior improvements, window repair and replacement, improvements to structural integrity of building, alleyway lighting, security gates or fencing, etc. |
| Winchester, KY | 18,355 | Downtown Development Investment Fund | Main Street Winchester, in partnership with the City of Winchester and Blue Grass Community Foundation, provides financial resources for the development of new upper story residential units and/or the refurbishment of existing residential units in buildings located in their Historic Downtown District. Eligible applicants can qualify for grants equal to 25% of eligible costs not to exceed \$3,000 per unit as long as the investment complies with all applicable building codes and the Winchester Zoning Ordinance. |
| Paducah, KY | 25,002 | Upper Story Residential Grant Program | Administered by the City of Paducah and Paducah Main Street, the Upper Story Residential Grant Program is designed to encourage upper story residential rental units in the city's historic downtown. Property owners and developers within a specified area in downtown are eligible to apply for financial assistance to create new upper story living spaces in new or existing buildings. The grant cannot exceed 20% of the construction costs or a maximum of \$15,000 per upper story residential unit. For a residential owner-occupied unit, the grant is either 15 percent of the construction costs or a maximum of \$15,000 per unit. For projects that exceed an allocation of \$60,000, the project must be approved by the City Commission. |



Blight Remediation

In a paper written by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, “blight” is defined as the proliferation of vacant, abandoned, or poorly maintained properties. Blight is a critical issue all communities face, regardless of size or location, and is associated with social, economic, environmental and public health effects on neighborhoods. Although the Great Recession of 2008 led to a surge of abandoned and bank-owned properties -- especially in poor and unstable neighborhoods -- many cities experience blight as a result of some combination of population decline, job losses, foreclosures, and natural events that render structures or lots unusable or too expensive to redevelop. Blighted properties have profound negative impacts on communities because they decrease surrounding property values, erode the health of local housing markets, pose safety hazards, and reduce local tax revenue. In the neighborhoods adjacent to downtown West Monroe, the presence of blighted properties exists for both owner-occupied and rental housing units that can be addressed with the creation of a revolving loan fund to target housing development/rehabilitation.

Revolving Loan Fund

The Council of Development and Finance Agencies defines a revolving loan fund (RLF) as a gap financing measure primarily used for development and expansion of small businesses. It is a self-replenishing pool of money, utilizing interest and principal payments on old loans to issue new ones. While the majority of RLFs support local businesses, some target specific areas such as healthcare, housing, and environmental cleanup.

Typical uses for RLF loans include:

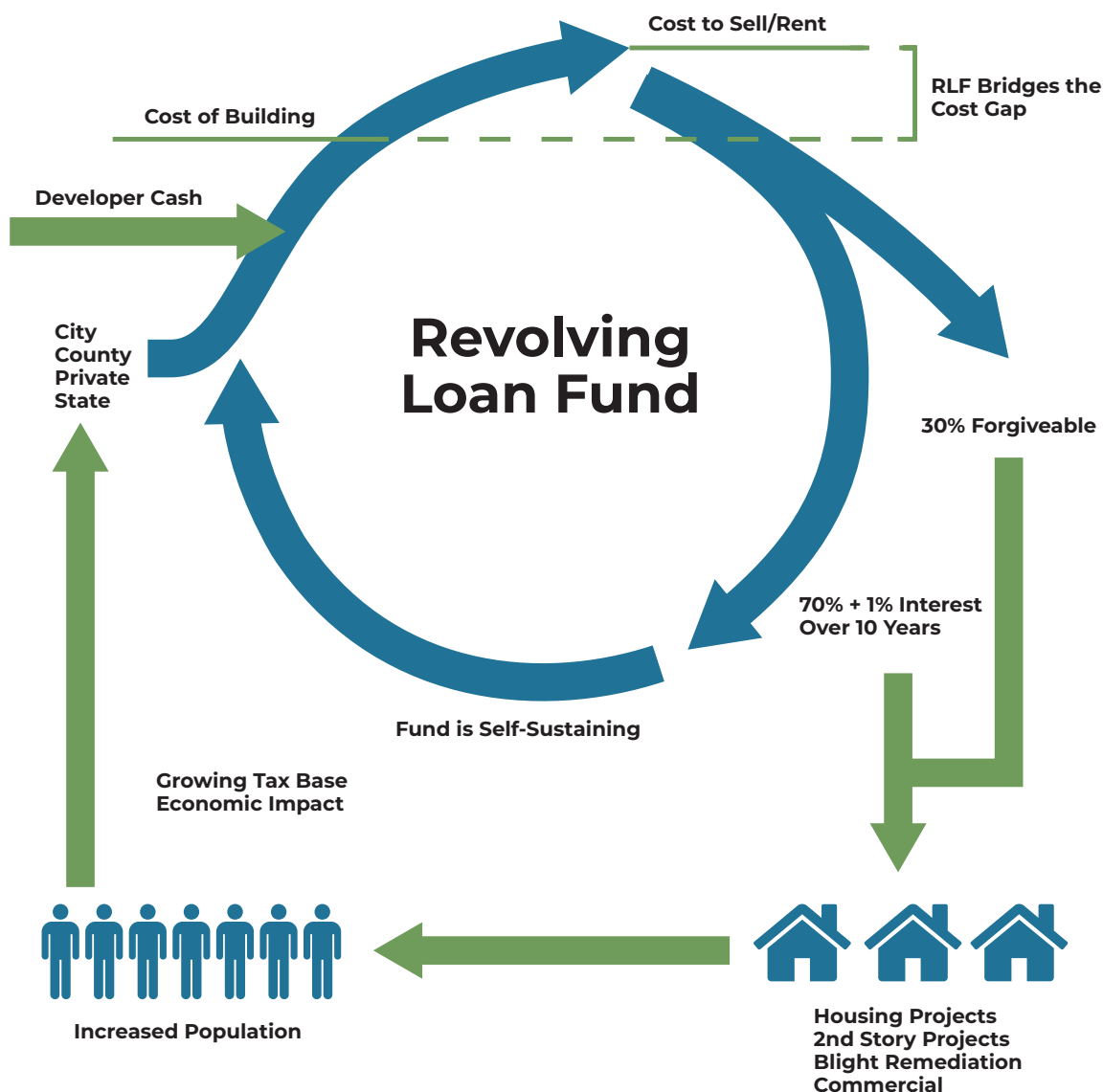
- Operating capital
- Acquisition of land and buildings
- New construction
- Facade and building renovation
- Landscape property improvements
- Machinery and equipment

Quality RLFs issue loans at market or otherwise competitive and attractive rates. That said, RLF programs should be built on sound interest rate practices and not perceived as free or easy sources of financing. RLFs must be able to generate enough of an interest rate return to replenish the fund for future loan allocations. Loan terms vary according to the use of funds. A loan used for working capital, for instance, may range from 3 to 5 years, while loans for equipment are up to 10 years and real estate loans may last 15 to 20 years. It is

important that terms are fixed to the useful life of the asset financed. Additionally, loan amounts range from small (\$1,000 to \$10,000) to mid-sized (\$25,000 to \$75,000), with larger (\$100,000 to \$250,000 and up) amounts available when the borrower has secured a substantial sum from private lenders.

Initial funding, or capitalization, of a revolving loan fund usually comes from a combination of public sources, such as the local, state, and federal governments, and private ones like financial institutions and philanthropic organizations. Funding acquired for capitalization is usually the equivalent of a grant – it does not need to be paid back. Most revolving loan funds have at least one local public source for capitalization combined with other sources. If capitalization is exclusively local, the RLF may have greater flexibility in lending, as state and federal involvement tend to include restrictions that may not fit local business needs.

To incentivize new housing development and rehabilitation of existing housing units, the City of West Monroe (or another public or private entity) can establish an RLF using both public and private monies. Here's how (and why) it can work:



Here's an example scenario assuming an RLF total of \$1 million:

- “Developer ABC” determines the cost to build new housing units is more expensive than the cost to sell, with a gap of \$20,000 per unit for five (5) new housing units
- “Developer ABC” meets the pre-determined eligibility criteria to submit an application for RLF gap financing and requests \$100,000 (\$20k/unit for 5 new units)
- If “Developer ABC” agrees to begin construction within 6 months of receiving the RLF funding and commits to the project for a 10-year period, then:
 - 70% of the funds will be a traditional loan with a 1% interest rate over 10 years
 - 30% of the funds will become a forgivable loan (not repaid)
 - If the housing development is sold before the 10-year period ends, “Developer ABC” will be responsible for paying back this portion of the loan with a 1% interest rate

| RLF Funding Availability | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| RLF Total | Traditional Loan (70%) | Forgivable Loan (30%) |
| \$1,000,000 | \$700,000 | \$300,000 |

| Developer ABC: RLF Loan Request | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Total Request | Traditional Loan (70%) | Forgivable Loan (30%) |
| \$100,000 | \$70,000 | \$30,000 |

| Developer ABC: RLF Loan Repayment | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Total Loan | Traditional Loan (70%) | Interest Rate (1%) for 10 years | Loan + Interest | Forgivable Loan (30%) | Total Repayment |
| \$100,000 | \$70,000 | \$7,000 | \$77,000 | \$30,000 | \$77,000 |

Based on this example, the RLF provided “Developer ABC” with \$100,000 to build five (5) new housing units. After the housing units were built and the developer remained with the project for 10 years, 30% (\$30,000) of the initial loan was forgiven and 70% (\$70,000) plus 1% interest (\$7,000) was recouped to replenish the RLF. With this new development of five (5) new units, the rest of the loan (\$23,000) will be recouped many more times over with the additional collection of property taxes and sales tax revenue generated by the new residents.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- [West Monroe Housing Authority](#)
- [Louisiana Housing Corporation](#)

ACTION STEPS

1. Create awareness of available tools and resources for housing development/rehabilitation

WHO: City of West Monroe, West Monroe Housing Authority, Main Street, Downtown West Monroe Revitalization Group

HOW: For homebuyers and renters, promote programs and resources provided by local service providers to create better awareness of existing tools and financing assistance for new and existing housing units. Additionally, for developers and existing landlords, promote programs, resources and incentives to encourage investment in new housing development and proper maintenance for existing housing units.

WHEN: Q3 2020

2. Establish Housing Development & Financing task force

WHO: City of West Monroe

HOW: Identify relevant stakeholders to join the Housing Development & Financing task force, such as local/regional developers, real estate professionals, local service providers (i.e. West Monroe Housing Authority) and bank executives. In collaboration with the subject matter experts serving on the task force, the City of West Monroe should develop priorities for housing development in and around downtown, such as the development of more upper story housing and blight remediation in nearby neighborhoods. Additionally, the City of West Monroe and task force members should determine what new programs, resources and incentives should be offered to homebuyers, renters and developers to strengthen the existing housing market.

WHEN: Q3 2020

3. Conduct inventory of upper story housing and blighted properties

WHO: City of West Monroe, Housing Development & Financing Task Force, Main Street

HOW: Using existing data and in-person canvassing, determine which buildings in the downtown area are fit for redevelopment into new housing units (both for sale and for rent) as well as homes in nearby neighborhoods in need of rehabilitation. Based on the number of new housing units desired downtown and the average cost of rehabilitation of nearby homes, determine the amount of funding needed to bridge the gap for developers to build new units as well as existing homeowners and landlords to rehabilitate existing units.

WHEN: Q4 2020

4. Create a revolving loan fund for housing development/rehabilitation

WHO: City of West Monroe, West Monroe Housing Authority, local/regional banking institution(s)

HOW: Based on the amount of funding needed (see step 3), establish a revolving loan fund to prioritize new housing development and rehabilitation of aged housing stock in and around the downtown area. To achieve a realistic capitalization goal, the RLF should initially be limited to a reasonable number of new housing units and rehabilitation for existing units (i.e. 5-8 new units and 6-10 rehabilitated units). At a minimum, to establish an RLF, the City of West Monroe will need to identify what organization will serve as the fiscal agent (if not managed by the municipality). Additionally, the managing organization should work with potential lenders and borrowers to participate in the program design process. At a minimum, the RLF eligibility requirements, minimum/maximum amounts for loans and application process will need to be developed before proceeding with program implementation.

WHEN: Q1 2021

5. Secure seed funding to capitalize revolving loan fund

WHO: City of West Monroe, West Monroe Housing Authority, local/regional banking institution(s)

HOW: Funding for an RLF does not have to be furnished by a singular source. The City of West Monroe should leverage both public and private resources to capitalize the RLF, but it is important to consider that most federal and state programs will provide more restrictions for what their funding can support. Ideally, the RLF will have commitments from a variety of sources to allow more flexibility with how the funds are invested. For example, if a local company commits \$10,000/year to the RLF for five years, that funding will likely have far less restrictions than the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarding the city \$100,000 for rehabilitation of affordable housing units. Diversifying the funds secured for the RLF will allow the city to invest strategically, based on the priorities and intent of the overarching program.

WHEN: Q2 - Q3 2021



WEST MONROE

BRANDING & WAYFINDING

OVERVIEW

The public recognizes the need for a cohesive brand for downtown West Monroe, both to unify shops, restaurants, and public spaces as part of one “Downtown” and to direct consumers—specifically, out-of-town tourists looking to spend dollars—toward the area with gateway and directional signage.

EXISTING BRANDING

City of West Monroe

The City has a brand that is clean and modern with a strong, recognizable color scheme. The ligature combining “WM” within the visual element of squares is an excellent foundation for a downtown-specific brand without borrowing too much.



“WM”



Antique Alley

The Cotton Port Historic District of Downtown West Monroe has long been known as “Antique Alley” due to its history of antique shops. In terms of branding, downtown West Monroe is well positioned for growth since it is already recognized by visitors as “Antique Alley,” especially when compared to similarly-sized tourist destinations across the United States.

However, West Monroe residents have recognized that antique shops are less appealing to younger generations, and that downtown has and continues to diversify its commercial and residential offerings, evolving beyond being known only as “Antique Alley.”

But in West Monroe, tradition is important so Atlas does not recommend abandoning the moniker “Antique Alley” entirely. To pay homage to the antique merchants who made a huge impact on development and commercial activity in the Historic District, Atlas recommends adopting “Home of Antique Alley” as a slogan for the downtown brand.

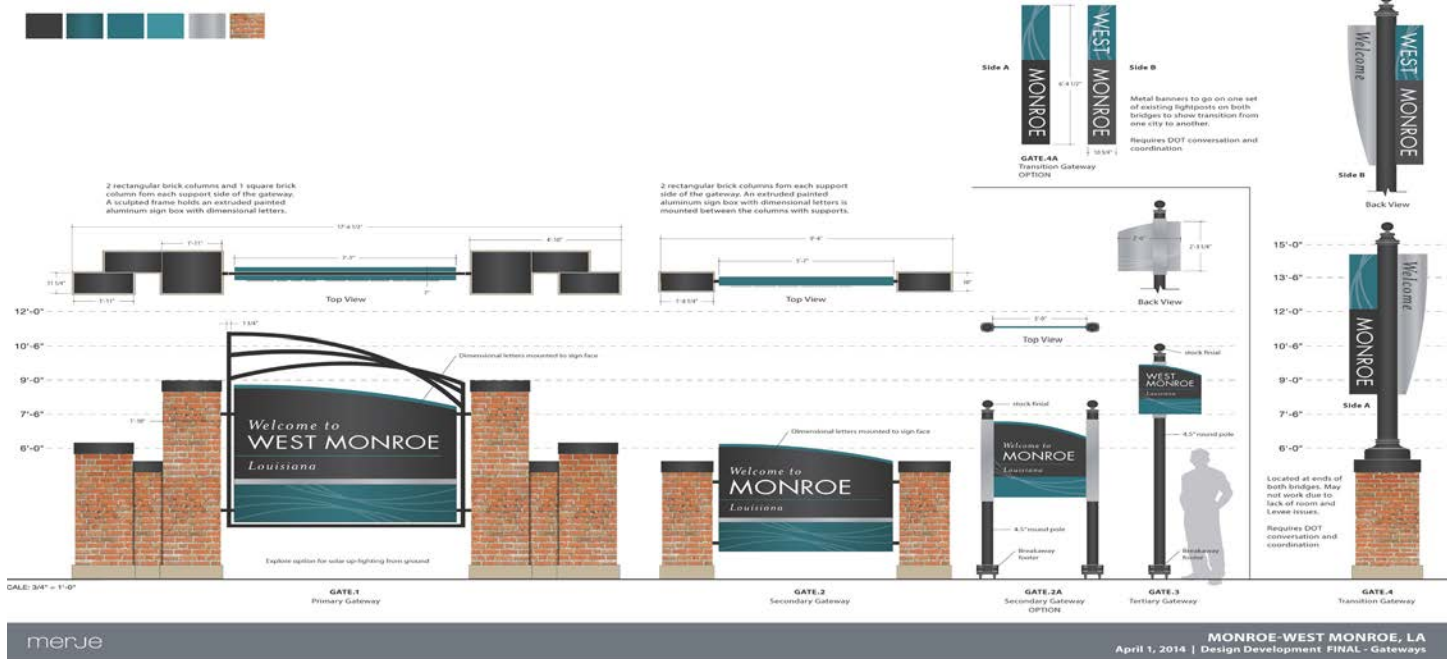


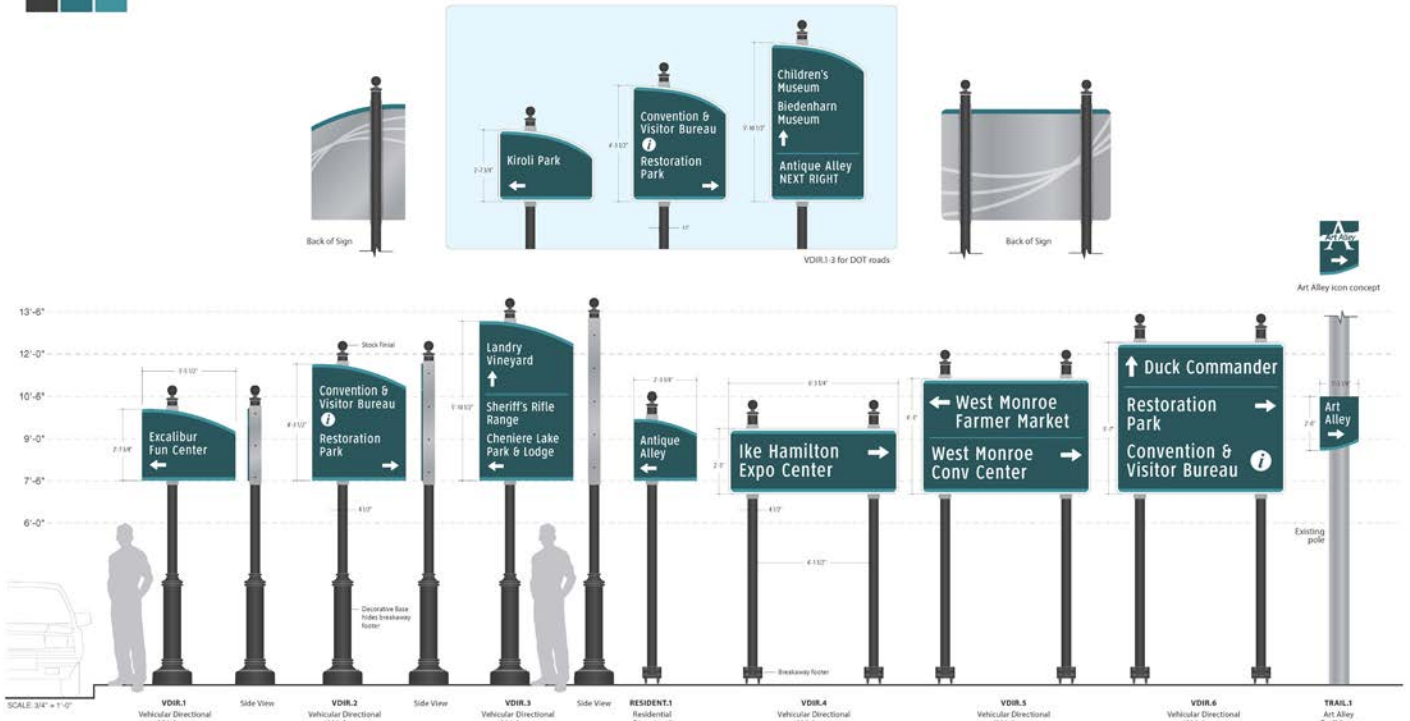
Official logo and non-branded sign

Although the name “Antique Alley” has strong name recognition, there is no clear indication of cohesive signage or logomark in the downtown area. Many merchants located in “Antique Alley” display a wide variety of window signage in different fonts and colors.

Existing Wayfinding Design

In 2004, experiential design firm MERJE was contracted to design wayfinding signage for Monroe and West Monroe, organized and funded by the Monroe-West Monroe Convention and Visitors Bureau. Below is a snapshot of some of the signage already incorporated or coming soon to West Monroe.





Feedback

Upon presenting the initial branding and signage mockups, the City requested the incorporation of river iconography and the inclusion of both “Antique Alley” and “Cotton Port Historic District.” Additionally, the City and Atlas agreed to develop complementary branding and signage to coincide with the wayfinding campaign being implemented by the Monroe-West Monroe Convention and Visitors Bureau. Lastly, the incorporation of the City’s color scheme into the proposed branding for downtown was met with positive feedback.

BRANDING & WAYFINDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Atlas recommends incorporating “Cotton Port Historic District,” “A Main Street Community” and “Home of Antique Alley” into the new branding and wayfinding signage for Downtown West Monroe, to inform residents and tourists about the significance of area they are visiting. Since Downtown West Monroe is located on the Ouachita River, Atlas also recommends incorporating the river, bridge, and steamboat iconography.

Taking into account all of the feedback received, the following brand was created for Downtown West Monroe:



WAYFINDING CONCEPTS

Large Monument Gateway Entry Arch

- Utilize Internal Lighting with artist design mosaic bases
- Location: Bridge Street and Trenton Street (major north entrance to District)



Large monument gateway arch



Medium Monument Gateway Arch

- Artist design mosaic bases
- Location: Trenton Street and Wood Street
- Location: South Riverfront Street and Coleman Avenue (near Endom Bridge)

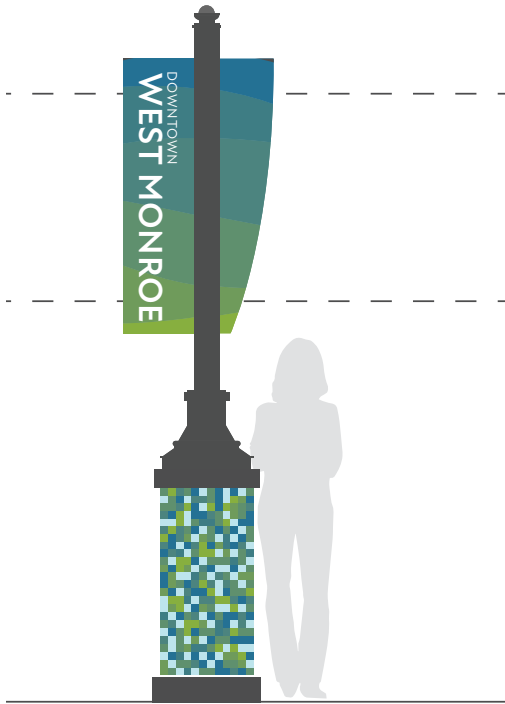
Small Monument Neighborhood Columns

- Location: Natchitoches and Cotton Street



Pole-mounted Street Banners

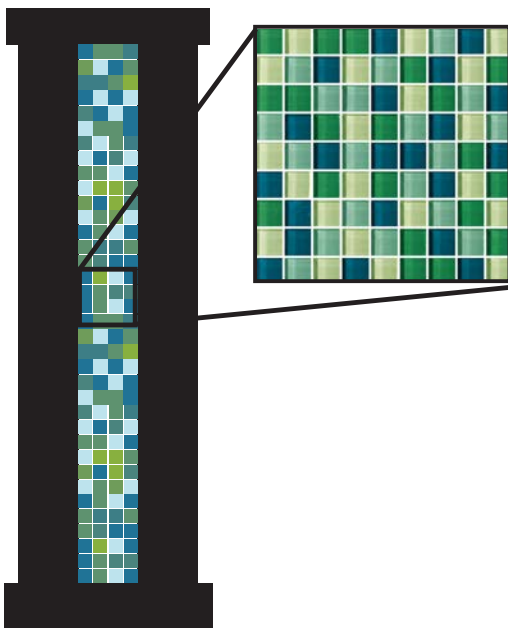
- Locations: All new site lighting in the district



Pole-mounted
street banners

Artist design mosaic bases

Using the color scheme of the West Monroe and Downtown West Monroe logos, artists can create mosaic bases for the wayfinding sign. Mosaics in the mockups are simple square inlays, but can be much more elaborate based on the artist.



More elaborate mosaic examples



ACTION STEPS

1. Adopt proposed branding and wayfinding for Downtown West Monroe

WHO: City of West Monroe, Main Street

HOW: Formally adopt the downtown master plan at the city council meeting on July 14, including the branding and wayfinding recommendations

WHEN: Q3 2020

2. Determine location for all signage

WHO: City of West Monroe, Main Street, Monroe-West Monroe Convention and Visitors Bureau

HOW: Review Atlas-recommended locations for large and medium gateway signage then determine exact location for signage placement. Incorporate pole-mounted street banners and small monument “neighborhood” columns into the implementation of the streetscape design and public infrastructure improvements.

WHEN: Q4 2020

3. Create and execute funding strategy

WHO: City of West Monroe, Main Street, Downtown West Monroe Revitalization Group

HOW: As long as these activities are eligible under target funding programs, incorporate branding and wayfinding into the applications for streetscape design and public infrastructure improvements. Depending on the extent to which local art or artists are involved in the process, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts will be a considerable option to implement this part of the downtown master plan.

WHEN: Q1 2021

4. Solicit services from a signage design/fabrication professional(s)

WHO: City of West Monroe

HOW: Following city procurement processes, solicit the services of a local/regional sign fabricator to create the final designs for the wayfinding signage and provide formal cost estimates to build and install the signage.

WHEN: Q3 2021

5. Build and install signage

WHO: City of West Monroe, Main Street

HOW: Once the signage has been designed, developed and built, the City of West Monroe can begin making placements at the predetermined sites. This process, however, must occur gradually while streetscape and public infrastructure improvements are being made throughout downtown. This project will likely occur in phases depending on the number of grants submitted and successfully awarded to the city.

WHEN: Q4 2021 - Q4 2023



IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

| PROJECT / ACTION STEP | Q3 2020 | Q4 2020 | Q1 2021 | Q2 2021 | Q3 2021 | Q4 2021 | Q1 2022 | Q2 2022 | Q3 2022 | Q4 2022 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & STREETScape | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify and pursue grant funding sources | | | | | | | | | | |
| Budget for long-term funding for maintenance of all downtown streetscape improvements | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct site survey and preliminary site engineering studies of the proposed design/improvement areas, including but not limited to stormwater management, utilities relocation, and geotechnical studies | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct detailed project design and construction documentation studies of the proposed design/improvement areas, including but not limited to stormwater management, utilities relocation, and geotechnical studies | | | | | | | | | | |
| Secure funds for streetscape improvements | | | | | | | | | | |
| FOOD HALL | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify investor(s) and recruit experienced operator/manager | | | | | | | | | | |
| Secure property ownership or negotiate lease structure | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct a site reuse assessment on the building | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish organizational structure (for-profit and nonprofit) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify funding and secure capital for building rehabilitation | | | | | | | Q1 2022 - Q2 2023 | | | |

| PROJECT / ACTION STEP | Q3 2020 | Q4 2020 | Q1 2021 | Q2 2021 | Q3 2021 | Q4 2021 | Q1 2022 | Q2 2022 | Q3 2022 | Q4 2022 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| DISTILLERY | | | | | | | | | | |
| Participate in brownfield assessment through Ouachita Parish, City of West Monroe, and PPM Consultants | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct a site reuse assessment on the building | | | | | | | | | | |
| Finalize negotiations for property ownership or lease structure | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop business plan | | | | | | | | | | |
| Secure funds for capitalization | | | | | | | | | | |
| HOUSING | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create awareness of available tools and resources for housing development/rehabilitation | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish Housing Development & Financing task force | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct inventory of upper story housing and blighted properties | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a revolving loan fund for housing development/rehabilitation | | | | | | | | | | |
| Build and install signage | | | | | | | | | | |
| BRANDING & WAYFINDING | | | | | | | | | | |
| Adopt proposed branding and wayfinding for Downtown West Monroe | | | | | | | | | | |
| Determine location for all signage | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create and execute funding strategy | | | | | | | | | | |
| Solicit services from a signage design/fabrication professional(s) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Build and install signage | | | | | | Q4 2021 – Q4 2023 | | | | |



OPPORTUNITIES FOR **FUNDING**

As a result of the strategic planning process, five priority projects were identified and confirmed by the City of West Monroe, Steering Committee, and public at-large. The identification of these projects was an important step in the process, but the downtown master plan cannot be implemented without significant public and private investment.

Based on the key elements of each project, Alchemy curated a list of funding programs and resources from federal, state and local sources to launch the fundraising process for Downtown West Monroe.

LOCAL INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

To implement and sustain the projects identified in the downtown master plan, the City of West Monroe will have to allocate some local funds each fiscal year to ensure adequate and timely deployment of resources. The commitment of local funds is essential, especially when applying for federal and state grants. In most cases, local funds are considered an eligibility requirement when applying for grant funding. In other cases, local funds greatly enhance the competitiveness of an application.

However, the end almost always justifies the means. For example, in 2018 the City of West Monroe was awarded \$1 million from the Delta Regional Authority to upgrade infrastructure at the West Monroe Commercial Park near Ike Hamilton Exposition Center. The City of West Monroe committed \$500,000 for a \$1 million grant to complete a \$1.5 million project that would not have happened otherwise. Not to mention, this local investment is supporting both existing businesses and jobs as well as new companies that will create even more jobs in the community.

The City of West Monroe is also fortunate to have three Economic Development Districts (EDD), including the Downtown Central Business Economic Development District. In Louisiana, an Economic Development District is a special taxing district established by a governmental body to provide funding for economic development projects within a well-defined geographical area. EDDs may collect funds either as incremental taxes or as “new” taxes. New Orleans-based firm, Fishman Haygood LLP, explains the difference between these two types of taxes as follows:

Incremental taxes are based on the increased or incremental amount the governing body (in this case, the City of West Monroe) receives from the property located within the EDD’s boundaries. The calculation of incremental taxes begins with the amount of sales and hotel occupancy taxes collected within the EDD’s

boundaries for the year prior to the establishment of the EDD. The governing body will continue to collect that base number after the establishment of the EDD. However, to the extent that future tax collections exceed this base number, the governing body will pay an agreed percentage of this increase to the EDD. If taxes collected in a given year do not meet or exceed the base number, the governing body will make no payment to the EDD.

An EDD may also receive funding through “new” taxes, rather than from a portion of existing taxes imposed by the governing body. An EDD has the authority to levy new sales and use, hospitality and/or property taxes within the EDD only. The maximum tax that an EDD may impose is 2% of the value of the good or service (sales or hotel occupancy tax) or 5 mills of ad valorem tax (5 mills = .005% or 5/1000). By way of illustration, if an item or hotel stay within the EDD costs \$100, additional taxes of \$10 (based on a 10% sales or use tax, common throughout most parishes) and \$2 (the maximum tax an EDD may impose) would be payable, with the \$2 going directly to the EDD.

EDD revenues can be used to reimburse the governing body or private developers for costs associated with an eligible project, such as for property acquisition; design and “soft” costs (including professional services); debt service (through conventional debt and/or bonds issued by the EDD); and construction and other “hard” costs. In addition to helping construct public and private buildings, parks and open areas, EDDs can help close the financing gap for streets, utilities, drainage, sewer lines and other necessary infrastructure -- all of which are included in the City of West Monroe’s Downtown Master Plan.

Ultimately, the City of West Monroe can use the Downtown Central Business EDD to strengthen the local economy by:

- Encouraging cooperative public-private development efforts
- Attracting new real estate investment
- Enhancing public infrastructure
- Creating new jobs
- Increasing the tax base

FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

| Agency | Division | Grant Program | Description | Funding Range | Application Cycle | To Apply | Project Tags |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|---|--|--|-----------------------------|--|--|
| U.S. Department of Agriculture | Rural Development | Rural Business Development Grant | A competitive grant designed to support targeted technical assistance, training, and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas that have fewer than 50 employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenues. Programmatic activities are separated into Enterprise or Opportunity type grant activities. | \$10,000 - 500,000 | January - April (typically) | Contact your USDA State or Area Office to request an application package | #FoodHall #Distillery |
| | | Business and Industry Loan Guarantees | This program bolsters the availability of private credit by guaranteeing loans for rural businesses. Eligible uses of the funds include but are not limited to: business conversion, enlargement, repair, modernization, or development; purchase and development of land, easements, rights-of-way, buildings, or facilities; purchase of equipment, leasehold improvements, machinery, supplies, or inventory; debt refinancing when refinancing improves cash flow and creates or saves jobs; and business and industrial acquisitions when the loan will create or save jobs. | 80% for loans up to \$5 million 70% for loans between \$5-10 million 60% for loans exceeding \$10 million (up to \$25 million) | Rolling | Contact your USDA State or Area Office to request an application package | #FoodHall #Distillery |
| | | Intermediary Relending Program Loans | This program provides 1 percent low-interest loans to local lenders or "intermediaries" that re-lend to businesses to improve economic conditions and create jobs in rural communities. Funds can be used to acquire, construct, convert, enlarge or repair a business or business facility, particularly when jobs will be created or retained; to purchase or develop land (easements, rights of way, buildings, facilities, leases, materials); to purchase equipment, machinery or supplies, or make leasehold improvements; for start-up costs and working capital; for pollution control and abatement; for transportation services; to cover feasibility studies and some fees; towards the building of hotels, motels, convention centers; for educational institutions; for aquaculture-based rural small business; and to establish revolving lines of credit. | \$0 - 2 million (initial) and up to \$1 million (thereafter) | Rolling | Contact your USDA State or Area Office to request an application package | #FoodHall #Distillery |
| | | Housing Preservation Grants | Funds are awarded to sponsoring organizations for the repair or rehabilitation of housing owned or occupied by low- and very-low-income rural citizens. Eligible expenses include: repairing or replacing electrical wiring, foundations, roofs, insulation, heating systems and water/waste disposal systems; handicap accessibility features; labor and materials; and administrative expenses. | Not specified | March - May (typically) | Applications are accepted on an annual basis through a Notice of Solicitation of Application (NOSA) in the Federal Register. For questions, contact your USDA State or Area Office . | #Housing |
| Delta Regional Authority | | States' Economic Development Assistance Program | A competitive grant program designed to support economic development activities by investing in basic public infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, workforce development, small business development and entrepreneurship projects in the 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state Mississippi River Delta Region including parts of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. | \$0 - 450,000 (generally) | March 2 - June 28, 2020 | Contact North Delta Regional Planning & Development District to discuss project(s) and visit funding.dra.gov to apply. | #Infrastructure #FoodHall |
| | | Community Infrastructure Fund | A competitive grant program designed to support economic development activities by investing in basic public infrastructure, transportation improvements, and flood control projects in the 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state Mississippi River Delta Region. | \$0 - 1.5 million (generally) | March 2 - June 28, 2020 | | #Infrastructure |
| | | Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance | A competitive grant program designed to support economic development activities by investing in basic public infrastructure, transportation improvements, flood control, workforce development, business development and entrepreneurship projects in the 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state Mississippi River Delta Region. | \$0 - 1.5 million (generally) | March 2 - June 28, 2020 | | #Infrastructure |

| Agency | Division | Grant Program | Description | Funding Range | Application Cycle | To Apply | Project Tags |
|--|---|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| U.S. Department of Commerce | Economic Development Administration | Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance | The Public Works Program provides catalytic investments to help distressed communities build, design, or engineer critical infrastructure and facilities that will help implement regional development strategies and advance bottom-up economic development goals to promote regional prosperity. Investments made through this program must clearly lead to the creation or retention of long-term high-quality jobs. The Economic Adjustment Assistance Program provides investments that support a wide range of construction and non-construction activities including infrastructure, design and engineering, technical assistance, economic recovery strategies, and capitalization or re-capitalization of Revolving Loan Funds (RLF) in regions experiencing severe economic dislocations that may occur suddenly or over time. Additionally, this program provides resources for communities experiencing or anticipating economic dislocations to plan and implement specific solutions to leverage their existing regional economic advantages to support economic development and job creation. These investments are designed to help communities catalyze public-private partnerships to foster collaboration, attract investment, create jobs, and foster economic resiliency and prosperity. | \$0 - 30 million | Rolling | Contact Louisiana's EDA Economic Development Representative : Jason Wilson Austin Regional Office jwilson1@eda.gov (512) 420-7738 to discuss your proposed project to ensure it is eligible and aligns with EDA investment priorities . Visit grants.gov for the application package . | #Infrastructure #FoodHall |
| U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | Office of Land and Emergency Management | Multipurpose Grant | Funding to carry out a range of eligible assessment and cleanup activities with a proposed target area, such as a neighborhood, a number of neighboring towns, a district, a corridor, a shared planning area or a census tract. | \$0 - 800,000 | Opens August 2020 | Visit grants.gov . PPM Consultants can provide extensive guidance about the application process. | #Distillery |
| | | Revolving Loan Fund Grant | Funding for a grant recipient to capitalize a revolving loan fund and to provide subawards to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites. When loans are repaid, the loan amount is returned into the fund and re-lent to other borrowers, providing an ongoing source of capital within a community. | \$0 - 1 million | Opens August 2020 | | #Distillery |
| U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development | | Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program | Funds are awarded to eligible national and regional non-profit organizations and consortia to purchase home sites and develop or improve the infrastructure needed to set the stage for sweat equity and volunteer-based homeownership programs for low-income persons and families. Land acquisition, infrastructure improvements, and reasonable and necessary planning and administration costs (not to exceed 20 percent) are the only eligible uses for SHOP grant funds. The SHOP units must be sold to homebuyers at prices below the prevailing market price. Homebuyers must be low-income and must contribute a significant amount of sweat equity towards the development of the SHOP units. | \$1.14 million - 10 million | June 18 - August 18, 2020 | Visit grants.gov | #Housing |
| U.S. Department of Interior | National Park Service | Save America's Treasures | Funding to help preserve nationally significant historic properties and collections that convey the country's rich heritage to future generations. Funds can be used for the preservation, rehabilitation, and conservation of nationally significant historic properties and collections. | \$125,000 - 500,000 | Opens Fall 2020 | Visit grants.gov | #FoodHall #Distillery |
| | | Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program | Funding supports subgrant programs that enable the rehabilitation of historic properties and rehabilitate, protect, and foster economic development of rural communities. This program funds preservation projects for historic sites, including architectural and engineering services and physical building preservation through subgrants to communities determined rural by the U.S. Census Bureau. | \$250,000 - 750,000 | Opens Fall 2020 | | #FoodHall #Distillery #Housing |
| U.S. Department of Labor | | National Dislocated Worker Grants | Funds support projects that provide employment-related services for dislocated workers. The Department of Labor funds two types of DWGs: Disaster Recovery and Employment Recovery. Employment Recovery DWGs temporarily expand capacity to serve dislocated workers and to meet the increased demand for employment and training services following a qualifying event. Qualifying events include major economic dislocations, such as plant closures, mass layoffs, or higher-than-average demand for employment and training activities for dislocated members of the Armed Forces and their spouses. | \$150,000 - 100 million | Rolling | Visit grants.gov | #FoodHall |

| Agency | Division | Grant Program | Description | Funding Range | Application Cycle | To Apply | Project Tags |
|-----------------------------------|----------|---|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| National Endowment for the Arts | | Our Town | Funding to support projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. These projects require a partnership between a local government entity and nonprofit organization, one of which must be a cultural organization; and should engage in partnership with other sectors (such as agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development). | \$25,000 - 150,000 | May 6 - August 6, 2020 | Part 1: Visit grants.gov Part 2: Complete the Grant Application Form in NEA's Applicant Portal | #Streetscape #Branding& Wayfinding |
| | | Grants for Arts | Funding to support public engagement with, and access to, various forms of excellent art across the nation, the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, learning in the arts at all stages of life, and the integration of the arts into the fabric of community life. Projects may be large or small, existing or new, and may take place in any part of the nation's 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. | \$10,000 - 100,000 | May 5 - July 9, 2020 | Part 1: Visit grants.gov Part 2: Complete the Grant Application Form in NEA's Applicant Portal | #Streetscape #Branding& Wayfinding |
| U.S. Department of Transportation | | BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grants | Funding to build and repair critical pieces of freight and passenger transportation networks. Eligible activities are surface transportation capital projects that include, but are not limited to: (1) highway, bridge, or other road projects; (2) public transportation projects; (3) passenger and freight rail transportation projects; (4) port infrastructure investments (including inland port infrastructure and land ports of entry); (5) intermodal projects; and (6) projects investing in surface transportation facilities that are located on tribal land. | \$1 million - 25 million | February - May (typically) | Visit grants.gov | #Streetscape #Infrastructure |

STATE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

| Agency | Division | Grant Program | Description | Funding Range | Application Cycle | To Apply | Project Tags |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------|-------------------|--|---|
| Louisiana Division of Administration | Office of Community Development | CDBG - Public Facilities | The Public Facilities funds are to be used to improve sewer systems primarily involving collection lines, sewer systems involving collection and treatment, sewer treatment only, water systems addressing potable water, and new construction of graveled residential streets, rehabilitation, and/or reconstruction of residential streets (no asphaltic surface treatment). Drainage improvements is an eligible activity but is allowed only within a streets improvements application. The State also allows funding for application preparation and program administration. | \$0 - 2 million | Varies annually | Contact the Office of Community Development to request an Economic Development Application | #Streetscape #Infrastructure |
| | | CDBG - Demonstrated Needs | The Demonstrated Needs funds to be used to provide grants to make improvements to existing sewer systems involving collection and treatment, existing water systems addressing potable water, and existing gas systems. | \$0 - 300,000 | Varies annually | Contact the Office of Community Development to request a Demonstrated Needs Application | #Streetscape #Infrastructure |
| | | CDBG - Economic Development | The Economic Development funds are to be used to provide grants to local governments for infrastructure improvements which will facilitate the location of a particular business. Examples include sewer, water, and street/road access on public property to the private industrial/business site boundaries. The State also allows funding for program administration. | \$0 - 1,039,000 | Varies annually | Contact the Office of Community Development to request an Economic Development Application | #Streetscape #Infrastructure |