

Executive Summary
Master Plan
Ashtabula Downtown Development Association

What is the purpose of this plan?

The purpose of this document is to illustrate an overall vision for Downtown Ashtabula and **set forth the role that the Ashtabula Downtown Development Association (ADDA) will play in helping to achieve that vision.**

What is the ADDA?

The Ashtabula Downtown Development Association (ADDA) is a seventy plus-member organization formed in 2006 to combine the efforts of business owners and concerned citizens to facilitate the growth and revitalization of Ashtabula's downtown.



The Main Street Four-Point structure, which the ADDA employs, will serve as the framework for the Master Plan, and goals will be presented in this context. The Main Street philosophy calls for four standing committees - Organization, Design, Economic Restructuring and Promotions.

What studies have been done previously?

There are a number of plans and studies that were revisited to see what remains relevant, including the 2002 Charette by the Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio & Cobalt Group; the Ohio State University 2004 Retail Analysis; the 2008 Downtown Assessment by the Heritage Ohio Downtown Assessment Resource Team; 2011 Brainmapping session; 2011 SWOT analysis by Kent State University; 2012 Community Survey; and 2013 Action Plan. The 2013 Streetscape Plan by McKnight and Associates plays a major role in the ADDA's Master Plan.

What is the role of placemaking?

A stroll through the downtown revitalization research illustrates that placemaking is a central concept. A Michigan State University study concluded that keeping and attracting people is the most important strategy in the new economic landscape¹ People are attracted to Main Streets where there are lots of things to do. It is important to make a place more than the sum of its parts. For example, a park should not only be a park, but a park with a fountain, playground, food vendor, nearby library, etc.² Small town

¹ How Your Community Can Thrive — Even in Tough Times. Project for Public Spaces, 2015.

² Barbara Porada. "Ten Ways to Transform Cities through Placemaking & Public Spaces" 21 Apr 2013. [ArchDaily](#).

revitalization expert Kent Robertson identifies eight key elements that are pivotal to a Main Street's sense of place:

1. Downtown is distinct from other commercial settings.
2. The downtown, and its sense of place, has evolved over time. A downtown's sense of place was not created at a single point in time. It has evolved to represent multiple generations.
3. Downtown represents the unique heritage of the community.
4. Downtown is multifunctional.
5. Downtown is pedestrian friendly.
6. Human activity is vital to a sense of place.
7. Downtown encourages people to linger.
8. The end result should be the idea that "Downtown is everybody's neighborhood!"

What is the vision for Downtown Ashtabula?

VISION: DOWNTOWN ASHTABULA

The vision for Downtown Ashtabula is: A thriving mixed-use central business and activity center that is attractive, safe, pedestrian-friendly, and economically vibrant. It will feature:

- The Civic Center.
- Entertainment, cultural, and arts attractions.
- Restaurants/pubs.
- Assorted retail establishments.
- Social gathering spots.
- Health care, personal care, legal, financial and other professional services.

Downtown will have a distinctive identity; an identity built from the best aspects of its past, but that clearly conveys its vision for the future.

What are the goals of the Master Plan?

Placemaking as Overarching Theme

ORGANIZATION

Short-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify at least two additional, simple fundraising activities. 2. Obtain administrative/clerical assistance. 3. Involve more merchants and other downtown stakeholders in the ADDA and its committees. 4. Continue to communicate the ADDA's work to the ADDA membership and to the community. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a permanent funding plan to sustain the work of the organization. 2. Increase the ADDA's membership. 3. Recruit and organize volunteers. 4. Seek partners and collaborative relationships that will strengthen the organization and its mission. 5. Continue to develop an effective communications strategy via website, newspaper, newsletters, social media.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Short-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reinvigorate the ER Committee with new members. 2. Continue to oversee the Security Program and recruit new participants. 3. Complete the property inventory for the Community Development Block Grant. 4. Revisit the idea of starting a business incubator. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a business incubator. 2. Develop a business retention plan. 3. Incorporate the concept of placemaking into economic restructuring activities. (A downtown Farmers Market is one idea) 4. Work with Ashtabula Cultural Trust on mutually beneficial projects. 5. Together with other partners, sponsor educational seminars for downtown merchants. 6. Identify and work to eliminate barriers to business start-ups. 7. Collect and summarize available economic/market data.

DESIGN

Short-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select the CDC-funded planters and benches. Pinpoint their placement. 2. Work with the City of Ashtabula to submit a Community Development Block Grant. 3. Install the "River of Many Fish" whirligigs and ground cover. 4. Complete the "Welcome to Ashtabula" mural. 5. Print Autumn street banners. 6. Continue "Shower Main Ave. with Flowers" program. 7. Make sure that Main Ave. is well-tended and well-groomed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the phased implementation of the Main Avenue Streetscape. 2. Implement Public Art Program. 3. Complete restoration of the North Park Fountain. 4. Partner with the City of Ashtabula to restore the Historic Downtown Clock. 5. Work with City Council to develop Façade Improvement Guidelines. 6. Establish recreational connections to the River and Gulf.

PROMOTIONS

Short-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate all special events. Decide which should continue. 2. Promote and support the Downtown Ashtabula Court. 3. Involve more merchants in staging downtown events. 4. Encourage community groups to use the downtown as a staging ground for their events. Especially make better use of North and South Parks. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a positive downtown image and identity that will rekindle community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence. 2. Strengthen successful events and create new events. 3. Develop a databank of event volunteers. 4. Develop a plan for better informing the community about the ADDA, its activities, and events.