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Executive Summary

The Overall Goal
The primary purpose for creating this plan is to prioritize economic development efforts in Ackley. As a small, rural Iowa community, Ackley faces many challenges, which span across many fronts; with limited resources, and an urgency to see more results, the objective of this project is to develop a clear set of goals, and to describe how each goal can be met. Moreover, this project is about implementation. This plan has been created to be used as a guide; it is a dynamic document and it must be acted upon.

The Need
In July 2015, the Ackley Development Commission hired their first full-time Economic Development Director. Prior to this, the position was shared with the City Administrator role. As the ADC worked to make a clearer distinction between themselves and the City of Ackley, there quickly became a need for re-visioning, and the establishment of a new identity. This plan acts as a tool to aid in this transition, and should assist in giving the ADC a more defined direction, moving forward.

The Knowledge
The community of Ackley, Iowa is a town located across both Hardin and Franklin Counties. According to the 2010 Census, Ackley has about 1,550 residents in the community, and it is projected to grow by approximately 150 people by 2020 (Data Access, 2010). Ackley is at an exciting and opportunistic time to take action in the community, and to take a strategic leap forward. Recently, many important steps have been taken for Ackley that will inform the strategic planning and implementation processes. The following documents have all been completed for Ackley by various entities in the past two years alone:

- Ackley Housing Study (2016)
- Ackley Urban Revitalization Plan (2017)
- Ackley Community Survey (2017)
- Ackley Needs Assessment (2017)

The New Ackley Strategic Plan

Administration
Action 1 | ADC Subcommittees and Succession Plan
Action 2 | Builders Association
Action 3 | Draft Urban Renewal Plan Amendment: Housing Grant Fund

Housing
Action 1 | Independent Living
Action 2 | Subdivision
Action 3 | Downtown Upper-Story Apartments

Commercial
Action 1 | Coffee Shop
Action 2 | Bowling Alley
Action 3 | Four County Market

Industry
Action 1 | Industrial Park Spec Building
Action 2 | Flyover Video of Industrial Park and Spec Building
Action 3 | Recruit an Aquaculture Firm

Community Development
Action 1 | Public Art Initiative
Action 2 | Octoberfest
Action 3 | Property Beautification Awards Program
ADMINISTRATION
Renewing Ackley’s processes to renew Ackley’s future

At the heart of our economic development efforts are the people who participate in countless community organizations, and the invaluable leadership they impart on a daily basis. While this section of the plan does not result in large, tangible deliverables, it is a crucial factor in making sure our dedicated community volunteers are prepared to implement this plan to the fullest extent possible.
**ACTION 1 | ADC SUBCOMMITTEES**

**Strategies**

- Identify certain components and tasks from the body of ADC Director responsibilities that are non-technical, and may be completed by the volunteer ADC board members.

- Utilize the expertise of board members to create subcommittees for each category of task; these board members should be able to offer supplemental insight into certain aspects of the job that the director may not have.

- Once subcommittees are formed, build out a reporting procedure so that each group can be held accountable, on a per month basis. Ideally, each subcommittee will meet either in person, or electronically, once outside of regular meetings.

- It is important to note that the ADC is only limited by the amount of time and energy that the commission is willing to put forward. When everyone is engaged and involved, the commission has a higher capacity for making improvements to the community.
• Identify categories of task or job responsibilities that ADC board members could be involved with, and choose subcommittees based on those categories of tasks.
  ◊ Examples of subcommittees:
    • Finance - to help with budgeting and the invest in Ackley campaign
    • Marketing - to help with ideas for website promotions, Facebook campaigns, and any newspaper ads the ADC wants to pursue
    • Housing; Commercial; Industrial; Community Development - once the Strategic Plan is finalized and implemented, it may help to have a group of two or three people from the ADC board to help keep projects on track.
    • City Administration - goes to City Council meetings, and keeps the ADC updated on other things city related
  ◊ This is not an all-encompassing list; based on what projects and initiatives are relevant at the time, the ADC Director will know where to best point the board members’ efforts.
  ◊ NOTE: A subcommittee does not have to be a long-term group. Feel free to create task forces, which will only be maintained for the duration of a specific, short-term project (the branding committee is a good example of this).

• Once a final list of subcommittees is chosen, create a list of specific tasks and resources related to each subcommittee.
  ◊ Do not share the list of subcommittees with the ADC board until the list of tasks and resources is created. It is important to make sure that a subcommittee’s responsibilities are clearly defined before delegating out tasks. Everyone on the board is busy, so it will be crucial to be economical during this step.

• Create a reporting procedure for each subcommittee to follow at the regular monthly ADC meetings.
  ◊ This will be highly dependent on which subcommittees are chosen, and what tasks are delegated to them.
  ◊ This could involve the creation of a template progress report that is filled out by each subcommittee, for each meeting.
  ◊ If data and figures are involved, a formal agenda, or physical handouts are encouraged.
  ◊ If minimal progress happens from month to month, or a simple oral update is given from a subcommittee, the ADC Director should make sure to take note of it in the minutes.
  ◊ Lastly, there should be a procedure for monthly follow-up. Each subcommittee should be given direction by the rest of the board, at each monthly meeting, and updates will be expected at each meeting thereafter.

• Present the final list of subcommittees, along with their respective agendas, at a regular ADC meeting.
  ◊ This could simply be a new business agenda item.
  ◊ It does not have to come up for a vote at that first meeting. Perhaps, let the board take a month to think about the committees on which they’d like to serve, and set the date for finalizing committees at a later meeting.

• Appoint members to each subcommittee.
  ◊ Once the board members have been given enough time to consider on which subcommittee they’d like to serve, execute an official appointment during a monthly meeting.

• Subcommittees should appoint a chairperson for their group.
  ◊ Suggestion: Make this the first month’s assignment for each subcommittee.
Strategies

• With housing initiatives being the ADC’s top priority as an economic development commission, there is a significant need to solidify the region’s community of contractors, financial institutions, and utility providers.

• A builder’s association will create a platform for builders and public officials to come together and mutually benefit from housing projects, and other development efforts. The association’s structure should allow for the ADC to utilize builders’ expertise and resources, while leveraging public and private dollars to fund initiatives.

• The association will need to be clearly defined and well put together. Accountability is key. If this group does not take themselves seriously, it may be short lived.

• Recruitment of members will require an air tight cost-benefit analysis, and simple, practical reasons as to why a business would want to become a partner.

• Integrate this group directly into the Strategic Plan by getting them involved in the action points where they are a prerequisite.
Goals

- Define the Association’s structure and responsibilities.
  - **Structure**
    - NOTE: If the group intends to become a 501(c)3 at any point, they will need to have official bylaws and articles of incorporation drawn up. It is recommended by the authors of this plan that these steps not be taken until a viable list of members is secured.
    - Suggestion: Ideally, this group would be formed as a 501(c)3. This would allow them to accept monetary gifts, as well as donations of interests in real property.
    - From its members, the association should appoint a chairperson, a vice chairperson, a treasurer and a secretary to its executive board. Term limits on these positions should be two years.
    - Members should meet on a quarterly basis, at minimum; if projects are being pursued, more frequent meetings may be needed. Formal agendas should be created for these meetings, and minutes should be recorded.
    - A quarterly report is to be submitted to the ADC’s housing committee (if there is one), or the ADC Director, to be presented at the corresponding regular ADC meeting that month. This report outlines how much business resulted due to the association, what projects the association pursued, and more.
  - **Responsibilities**
    - The builder’s association will be formed for the advancement of residential development efforts, and initiatives related to the same.
    - Members will pay dues to the association, which will allow them to sufficiently promote the organization, and to take on projects that an individual member business may not otherwise pursue.
    - Duties to the association should not hinder, or be impacted by, a member’s duties to their private business. For the association to take on a project, it will be a collective decision by the association; from there, duties and responsibilities will be outlined for each member business involved.
  - **How it Works**
    - Members pay dues to the organization to cover marketing and administrative fees for the group. This could include the legal fees to become incorporated as a non-profit, newspaper ads, online marketing materials, etc.
    - The members that have paid dues will then have voting rights for which projects they feel the association should pursue, and on what initiatives the group’s funding should be spent.
    - The incentive to being a part of the group is that, when the association is awarded a project, all of their member businesses get awarded a component of the project.
    - In other words, under the association’s umbrella, the member businesses should be able to bid on projects as one all encompassing entity. Having each member business benefit from the revenues gained by each project is the key factor in making this organization work.
    - The membership businesses can also pitch in dollars to the organization in order to buy and sell real property, and to bid on projects of their own; this group is not confined to doing publicly supplemented projects.
    - Tax increment financing dollars are the last component to making this organization successful. The City of Ackley will benefit from each of these projects due to an increase in tax base. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the city can finance projects up front, using TIF revenues.
      - This means that each project would need to take place in an Urban Renewal Area.
      - For each project, the City of Ackley can issue a GO Bond, or internal loan, to be paid back using TIF (with economic development purpose).
    - Once the project is completed, the increased tax base of the property goes toward paying back the note. Once the note is paid off, the increment turns into increased revenue for the city.
  - When TIF dollars are used for residential development, there is a low to moderate income requirement that must be met. This will be covered in the next section of this plan: the URP Amendment.
  - **NOTE:** The city will not always need to step in with up front financing. The potential profits gained by each member business of the association may be enough for the association to get involved, without having to supplement any costs up front.

- Gather a list of contractors, builders, painters, utility providers, insurance agencies, financial institutions and suppliers to join the association, and extend an invitation.
  - This group should also include professional service providers, such as lawyers, architects and engineers.
  - Again, each invitation needs to be clear and concise so as to not lose the attention of potential players.

- Supervise the association throughout the beginning stages.
  - As the group is being formed, it will be important for the ADC Director to keep the members accountable, and to inform them of their responsibilities and potential benefits, as a member of the group.
  - Coordinate the appointing of executive board members.

- Share with the group the action points spelled out in the housing section of the Strategic Plan. Use these points as an opportunity to educate members on their role and potentially impact residential development.
Strategies

• With a low to moderate income housing focus, create a funding source that would make small, yet unaffordable, home improvement projects a feasible option for low income families.

• Cosmetic projects such as siding, roofing and windows, along with energy efficiency projects such as furnace expenses, may make all the difference in the life expectancy of a home. The enhanced curb appeal of the participating properties will go toward an improved quality of life.

• If the residential development projects outlined in the housing section of this plan require TIF revenues, in order to be completed, there will be an LMI requirement, which could finance this housing grant fund.
• **NOTE: TIF and residential development (for a city with a population of less than 5,000 people)**

  ◊ When TIF is used for residential development, the taxing entity is mandated to set aside a certain percentage of the TIF revenue created by the project to go towards low to moderate income housing assistance.

  ◊ Then, a housing assessment must be conducted for the region, which will define the need for LMI housing in the region (the City of Ackley has completed a housing study, and it does specify that we are in need of LMI housing).

    • Assistance to the LMI community must be equal to or greater than the percentage of LMI housing in the county applied to the original project cost. In other words:

      • If the LMI community is 20% of the county, and the original project cost is $100,000, the assistance to the LMI community that is required is equal to or greater than $20,000.

    OR

    • Another amount, given an approved variance from the IEDA. To accomplish this, you must prove to the IEDA that the LMI requirement would otherwise make the project infeasible.

  NEVERTHELESS

    • When a housing needs assessment comes back showing that there is a need for LMI housing, the amount of LMI assistance will not be less than 10%.

• **When TIF is used for one of the projects outlined in the housing section of the plan, inform the Ackley City Council of the LMI restrictions, and offer the suggestion of creating a housing grant fund.**

  ◊ This will require an education component, as well as a quality of life improvement campaign.

• **The structure of the fund**

  ◊ TIF revenues would be allocated toward the Housing Grant Fund in the amount of the LMI requirement, mandated by the state.

  ◊ Much like the Revolving Loan Fund, this allocation would be stewarded by the ADC.

  ◊ An application procedure should be created for residents to request dollars from this fund.

    • Eligibility should be based on household income, current condition of the home, basic need standards, and the impact that the project will have on the overall viability and curb appeal of the property.

    • Funding should only be used for a finite list of project types, and a maximum amount should be defined.

  ◊ The authors of this plan suggest limiting the project types to windows, siding, sidewalks, roofing and furnace improvements.

• **If one of the projects outlined in the housing section of the plan needs TIF to be completed, there will be an LMI requirement, which is the best possibility for this fund to be created.**

  ◊ If the city is mandated to comply with such a regulation, it gives the possibility of this fund a much greater chance.
Projects Already in Progress

- Creating a Subdivision in the Industrial Park
  ◊ In order to sell more ground in the industrial park, the remaining empty lots must be recorded as an official subdivision plat, as per county requirements.
  ◊ The timing on this objective is entirely up to how quickly Mike Smith can get the paperwork to us.
  ◊ NOTE: we cannot sell/transfer any more ground in the industrial park until we have the subdivision plat completed.

- Revolving Loan Fund Process Review
  ◊ After having two loans default in the past 3 years, there has been a call to action, by the ADC, to revisit the process by which we loan out dollars through the RLF program.
  ◊ This review will include:
    • Explore the procedures that the RLF committee goes through with each loan application submission they receive. Ask them questions about how in depth they vet every business that requests a loan, and see how much background information they require of a businesses before they approve a loan.
    • Revising the RLF application document itself. The application that is used is most likely the original, from when the fund was first started. There are probably some irrelevant items that can be omitted, as well as some newly relevant ideas that need to be added.
    • Finally, there needs to be a strategy going forward, which outlines the questions that the RLF committee and the ADC need to be asking these businesses that are requesting funds. If we are hesitant, even in the slightest, what information do we need to know in order to be sure that the loans we are approving are legitimate.

- ADC Budget Work
  ◊ Now that the ADC has hired a full-time employee, it is becoming clear that there is a greater need for a formal budget, than there ever was when the ADC did not employ the director.
  ◊ Together with the banking professionals on our board, there needs to be an analysis of the past two years’ expenses vs. revenues; we need to create an annual budget as a financial guideline from year to year.
HOUSING

Improving neighborhoods and creating a place for many to live.
According to the recent community survey conducted by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and the Ackley Development Commission, Ackley, Iowa is in need of new housing. While there is a lot of existing housing in Ackley, it is not currently viable for all members of the current or possible population. With industrial growth and development occurring in neighboring towns and cities, Ackley must look to the future to accommodate an influx in population. Communities must first become a place to live, and then over time they become a place to work as well as play. Results from Ackley public input, including survey and focus group data, provide evidence that more independent living, more single family homes, and downtown revitalization are all important to the community. New housing generates new population and new people. New people bring culture, experiences, and money to a city. Attracting people to the area eventually leads to new opportunities for cities, and the residents living within them.
**Strategies**

- Identify lots for potential development.
- Create a solid marketing framework before land is purchased to promote the development.
- Hold public input sessions for the development.
- Decide on a specific method for land acquisition, including option agreements.
- Request specific quotes from the builder on all components of the project.
- Use a cost/benefit analysis upfront.
- Merge the efforts of all infrastructure professionals, so that communication is more fluid. The builder’s association would be a target for this.
- Find a local builder who is invested in the community to take on the project.
- Address seniors already living in Ackley to gauge interest. Market using renderings of the completed projects.
• Create a public/private partnership with a local business in residential development.
  ◊ As noted in the Ackley Housing Assessment (2016), there is already a strong need and interest for more independent housing. Reach out to gauge interest and potentially receive commitments from future residents to live in the development.
  ◊ Create a mutual budget plan to accommodate the private business as well as the public good. Do this by creating a development agreement with the City using tax increment financing, forming a business coalition that generates investment and return going back and forth, gathering price quotes for the entire wish list of the project, and finding the programs and investors that generate the right amount for the project.

• Work out incentives with the city to help all invested parties benefit. Possibilities include tax breaks and help with building costs.

• Choose from potential plots of land.
  ◊ Identify the potential plots of land. The selected area of land for the new subdivision should be close to existing roads and infrastructure. This will provide the city, the builder, and the eventual owner with the lowest possible beginning development cost. Using a generated rubric, “grade” the properties in order to choose the west land. The three example lots below are not the only viable options, but Ackley Development Commission has identified them as ideal.
  ◊ Initial recommendations include at least 130 foot wide lot for one duplex, this gives each unit approximately 65 feet across for their yard. This could also be equated to the size of two lots.

• Apply for grants for small town development, like the “Rural Community Development Initiative” grant offered through the USDA, or the “Strong Cities, Strong Communities Visioning Challenge” grant offered through the EDA, using the services of the Region 6 Planning Commission. Many grants will be available to Ackley, and professionals at Region 6 will be able to aid in researching grants, deciding which ones are feasible to apply for, and crafting and writing proposals.

• Assess the current state of the land to be developed, and then acquire it.
  ◊ Determine Ackley’s budget or borrowing capacity and establish your repayment capacity. Outline potential investors, and determine how public and private entities will help fund this project.
  ◊ Inquire what price point each seller from all properties would be interested in selling. Using the rubric described above with the newly discovered price points, choose which land to make an offer for. Make an offer based on farm prices and proximity to infrastructure. Make a purchase offer directly to the Seller. You may choose to pay the asking price or negotiate a different price and terms with the seller. To aid this negotiation Ackley should explain the intent of the land, and explain how much it will benefit the town.
  ◊ ADC suggests drafting an option agreement between the seller and the buyer. During this phase, be sure to explain to landowners the intended use of the land, and the value it may bring to Ackley. This would give the buyer the option to exercise any right to buy or use the land as they choose when it is feasible, but the seller may still use the unused land as they were before until the buyer wants to use the entirety of the land. The agreement may spell out the amount of years the buyer has to make the purchase, what the eventual price per acre will be, and what the land may be used for while the buyer waits to exercise the option.

○ Finalize negotiations. Using the option agreement described above, ADC recommends the agreement last up to five years. Be sure to keep records of all money that has been paid. This may include attorney fees, engineer fees, and recording fees.

○ ADC suggests to use a temporary budget to create a financial spending plan. Gather all price quotes for the entire wish list of the project, and find the programs and investors that will help arrive at the total number. There must be public/private buy in.

○ This may include percents of total cost that will be spent on various tasks.

○ Using the option agreement, make a purchase offer directly to the Seller of the land. You may choose to pay the asking price or negotiate a different price and terms with the seller.

○ Finalize negotiations and be sure to keep records of all money that has been paid.

○ The city attorney may help both parties sign a Transfer of Land document and on the date of settlement, Ackley will become the legal owner of the property.

○ Apply for grants for small town development, like the “Rural Community Development Initiative” grant offered through the USDA, or the “Strong Cities, Strong Communities Visioning Challenge” grant offered through the EDA, using the services of the Region 6 Planning Commission. Many grants will be available to Ackley, and professionals at Region 6 will be able to aid in researching grants, deciding which ones are feasible to apply for, and crafting and writing proposals.

○ Assess the current state of the land to be developed, and then acquire it.

○ Determine Ackley’s budget or borrowing capacity and establish your repayment capacity. Outline potential investors, and determine how public and private entities will help fund this project.

○ Inquire what price point each seller from all properties would be interested in selling. Using the rubric described above with the newly discovered price points, choose which land to make an offer for. Make an offer based on farm prices and proximity to infrastructure. Make a purchase offer directly to the Seller. You may choose to pay the asking price or negotiate a different price and terms with the seller. To aid this negotiation Ackley should explain the intent of the land, and explain how much it will benefit the town.

○ ADC suggests drafting an option agreement between the seller and the buyer. During this phase, be sure to explain to landowners the intended use of the land, and the value it may bring to Ackley. This would give the buyer the option to exercise any right to buy or use the land as they choose when it is feasible, but the seller may still use the unused land as they were before until the buyer wants to use the entirety of the land. The agreement may spell out the amount of years the buyer has to make the purchase, what the eventual price per acre will be, and what the land may be used for while the buyer waits to exercise the option.
Goals (cont.)

• Market the development to Ackley citizens. This could be as simple as a sign on the property, announcements on the website, in the newspaper, and at events where community members gather. Accommodate any public or private partnerships that have been created in the process. Citizens will notice progress being made on the property as well.

• Reach out to the Region 6 Planning Commission or other local professionals, such as architects, to generate a site development plan. The initial recommendation for the development is one duplex with each unit being 1100 square foot and two bedrooms. The cost of similar homes at Grand JiVante is around $100,000 (DeBerg, 2017).

• Use the builder’s association, outlined in the Administration chapter, as a resource for professionals in this project. This group will function similar to a committee. Uniting them together will create easy communication and transitions.

• Using the site development plan, and any plans generated by the builder’s association, reach out to interested seniors in Ackley to pre-lease or pre-sell the properties. This could be done through individual meetings or larger public presentations.
  ◊ Initial recommendations for the duplex is to sell each unit. Buying the unit is a much more attractive proposal for interested parties. Many will sell their home, and then use the money from the sell to purchase a smaller, newer property. Renting is often interpreted as burdensome. This option could also be left open with price points generated for each scenario. This would give the interested parties more freedom and choice.

• Develop the lots using money from the city, low-interest loans, previous investments from businesses, donors, and grant money. Keep in mind the recent Urban Revitalization Plan that outlines TIF procedures.
  ◊ If the duplex units are pre-sold or pre-leased, use money from down-payments or deposits to help fund the project.
ACTION 2 | SUBDIVISION

**Strategies**

- Identify lots for potential development.
- Create a solid marketing framework before land is purchased to promote the development.
- Hold public input sessions for the development.
- Decide on a specific method for land acquisition.
- Find a local builder who is invested in the community to take on the project.
- Request specific quotes from the builder on all components of the project.
- Use a cost/benefit analysis upfront.
- Merge the efforts of all infrastructure professionals, so that communication is more fluid. The builder’s association would be a target for this.
- Keep prices for lots and the infrastructure on them moderate. Do a total cost assessment for the cities and the individual buyers as well. Private-public partnerships may aid in this.
- Reach out to new homeowners to make them feel welcome in Ackley.
• Survey the different lots to choose from. Typically available lots inside of the town will be considered first.

• Create relationships with each property owner, and gather information for each different property.

• Identify the potential plots of land. The selected area of land for the new subdivision should be close to existing roads and infrastructure. This will provide the city, the builder, and the eventual owner with the lowest possible beginning development cost. Using a generated rubric, “grade” the properties in order to choose the best land. The three example lots to the right are not the only viable options, but Ackley Development Commission has identified them as ideal. Maps throughout this publication were created using ArcGIS® software by Esri. ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ are the intellectual property of Esri and are used herein under license. Copyright © Esri. All rights reserved. For more information about Esri® software, please visit www.esri.com.

• Apply for grants for small town development, like the “Rural Community Development Initiative” grant offered through the USDA, or the “Strong Cities, Strong Communities Visioning Challenge” grant offered through the EDA, using the services of the Region 6 Planning Commission. Many grants will be available to Ackley, and professionals at Region 6 will be able to aid in researching grants, deciding which ones are feasible to apply for, and crafting and writing proposals.

• Assess the current state of the land to be developed, and then acquire it.
  ◊ Determine Ackley’s budget or borrowing capacity and establish your repayment capacity. Outline potential investors, and determine how public and private entities will help fund this project.
  ◊ Inquire what price point each seller from all properties would be interested in selling. Using the rubric described above with the newly discovered price points, choose which land to make an offer for. Make an offer based on farm prices and proximity to infrastructure. ADC suggests keeping all costs on purchasing and developing land as low as possible. You may choose to pay the asking price or negotiate a different price and terms with the seller. To aid this negotiation Ackley should explain the intent of the land, and explain how much it will benefit the town.
  ◊ ADC suggests drafting an option agreement between the seller and the buyer, very similar to the agreement outlined in Action 1. The agreement may spell out the amount of years the buyer has to make the purchase, what the eventual price per acre will be, and what the land may be used for while the buyer waits to exercise the option.
  ◊ Finalize negotiations. Using the option agreement described above, ADC recommends the agreement last up to five years. Be sure to keep records of all money that has been paid. This may include attorney fees, engineer fees, and recording fees.
  ◊ The city attorney may help both parties sign a Transfer of Land document and on the date of settlement, Ackley will become the legal owner of the property.
• Reach out to the Region 6 Planning Commission or other local professionals to generate a site development plan. Initial recommendations for the development are four full acre lots already connected to outside streets.

• Market the development to Ackley citizens. Ask individuals if they would be willing to build a home in the new development. This could be as simple as a sign on the land, announcements on the website, in the newspaper, and at events where community members gather. Citizens will notice progress being made on the property as well.

• Contact plumbers, heating and cooling installators, gas professionals, and electricians. Ackley Development suggest to request per foot quotes from Black Hills Energy and MidAmerican Energy These will help with the future installation of infrastructure for the land before structures are built. After this, the projects will go through a public bidding process.

• Ackley Development suggests contacting Brandt Construction Co., HH Construction, and any other local builders to gauge interest in the project. More than one builder may partner on this project. Notify them of a possible contract agreement wherein they provide an assessment and a conceptual design that leads to guaranteed hire for the project.

• Use the builder’s association that is referenced from the Administration chapter. Be sure to include the entities from the above two bullet points in the association. This group will function similar to a committee. Uniting them together will create easy communication and transitions for the subdivision development as well as future projects.

• ADC suggests generating a list of covenants, drafted by the city attorney that are similar to Montezuma’s for the South Diamond development, shown to the right. Along with this, incentives in partnership with infrastructure identities can also be created. For example, “Purchasing by June 1st, 2020 will ensure a 10% discount on building costs”.

• Develop the lots using money from the city, low-interest loans, donors, and grant money. Keep in mind the recent Urban Revitalization plan that outlines TIF procedures.

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**City of Montezuma South Diamond Addition**

General Use Restrictions & Building Specifications

The Lots in SOUTH DIAMOND ADDITION shall be held, occupied, sold and conveyed subject to the following use restrictions and building specifications, as well as those restrictions set forth elsewhere in this Declaration:

**Uses:**

(a) **Single-Family Residences.** Lots A-U (1-21) shall be reserved for Single-Family Lots. The use of Single-Family Lots in SOUTH DIAMOND ADDITION shall be limited to Single-Family residential dwellings and shall be developed with not more than one single-family dwelling on each Single-Family Lot in the final applicable plat or replat and may be developed only with such other uses of land or structures customarily incidental and subordinate to the single-family residential use unless such uses or structures are otherwise regulated or prohibited by this Declaration. Construction on all Single-Family Lots must begin within twenty-four (24) months of purchase and closing from Declarant and must be completed within 36 months. In the event construction does not commence within said period, Declarant may, at its option, repurchase the applicable Single-Family Lot at 90% of the previous sales price.

(b) **Multi-Family Residences.** Lots V-DD (22-31) are limited to duplex or townhouse construction. Site plan for construction of these lots must be approved by the City prior to construction. Townhouses may be built over several lots but only with the permission of the City and approval of site plan. All other provisions of this section apply to these lots except minimum duplex and townhouse size which shall be as follows:

- All duplexes must have a minimum of 1100 square feet of finished area directly under one roof.
- All townhouses must have a minimum of 1100 square feet of finished area directly under one roof for 2 story.

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Strategies

• Investigate Main Street Iowa designation opportunities.
• Inventory all buildings on Main Street.
• Apply for grants and other funding like Community Development Block Group funding.
• Use Conrad, Iowa and any other examples of communities completing successful downtown renovation projects.
• Incentive renovations in downtown using tax increment financing money outlined in the recent Urban Revitalization Plan.
• Talk to financial institutions and insurance agencies to find referrals who are looking for downtown apartment living.
• Generate a building inventory for Ackley.
  ◊ ADC suggests that the inventory may include who the owners are, which buildings have liveable apartments, which buildings already have tenants, if buildings are for sale, and what their purchase prices are.

• Generate buy-in from local business owners as well as the city, and advertise possible TIF funding and grant funding as an opportunity.
  ◊ Suggested points to address:
    • Surrounding community testimony
    • 4:1 renovation funding
    • “Build it and they will come” phenomenon

• Referring to the Retail section of the report, ADC suggests that before progress on this action can take place, more downtown storefronts will need to be filled.

• Create or use tax incentives to help business owners see a long term value in renovation and rehabilitation.

• Listed below is the Main Street Iowa Process, and how to become a Main Street Iowa Community. Before moving forward with the project it will be best to complete the Main Street Iowa Process. The information appears in a brochure from 2016.
  ◊ “Review the Main Street Iowa and National Main Street Center websites to access basic program information and materials. Main Street Iowa: iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/IDRC/MainStreetIowa National Main Street Center: preservationnation.org/main-street
  ◊ Contact Main Street Iowa for additional information pertaining to the program, next scheduled application cycle, process, etc.
  ◊ Convene a core group of local downtown stakeholders, community leaders, city representatives and development groups to discuss a desired focus on downtown revitalization.
  ◊ Invite Main Street Iowa to your community to discuss the program requirements and other downtown revitalization strategies.
  ◊ Discuss the Main Street Iowa program and opportunities with downtown business and property owners.
  ◊ Visit existing designated Main Street Iowa communities to explore their downtown districts and talk to local leaders about their experiences.
  ◊ Re-convene core group to discuss the outcomes and lessons learned from those visits. A consensus should be gained before you move forward.
  ◊ Host a town meeting to discuss the Main Street Iowa program. Objectives should be to describe the Main Street Iowa program, discuss its benefits and expectations and gain consensus to move forward with the Main Street Iowa application process.
  ◊ Begin a public outreach effort to market the Main Street Iowa opportunity and build a broader base of public support and understanding.
  ◊ Stay in touch with Main Street Iowa throughout process,” (Iowa Economic Development, 2016).

Conrad, Iowa is a Main Street Iowa Community that is similar in size and location to Ackley. They have also received numerous grants, including CDBG, to help in the revitalization of their downtown. According to Conrad, Iowa city officials, the application process outline hereafter took two years, but the Main Street Iowa designation and CDBG grant funding were an essential step to downtown renovation for their community. ADC official Jefferson Fosbender conducted an interview with Conrad officials, and included below is a synopsis of the interview.

“After the project was over, the business owners in the downtown district invested an additional $100,000 of their own money into the overall project area. The excitement of the project created an urgency within property owners and businesses to do more for their community, which led to a large amount of investment in properties. After the project was over, 10 new businesses came to town to either swap into the now renovated buildings, or add to the district. You certainly cannot put a dollar amount on this, or even speculate as to the possibility of this happening in your community. However, an effort like this would absolutely show that your community is progressive and business-friendly.

This “build it and they will come” factor is hard to calculate into ROI, but it is something that we must consider as we go forward,” (Hoy and Ubben, 2016).
ADC suggests to apply for the CDBG Downtown Revitalization Grant totaling $500,000. Many similar cities and towns have received this grant. Many of these towns provided a 30% match from the city, and a 20% investment from current building or business owners. Keep in mind that the match amounts may not have to be upfront costs, and TIF dollars can be used for this purpose.

The CDBG DTR grant applications are due February of every year.

An architect will be needed.

Commitment letters from businesses or building owners will be required.

Three year timeline

Photos must be documented of active buildings

The items below are from the following electronic document: https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/userdocs/documents/ieda/2017CDBGAppWorkshopDTRslides.pdf. This can be used a resource with much more information than is listed about the CDBG application process.

“The most competitive applications will have:

• First Tier Environmental Review Complete
• Signed agreements with business owners with portion of match in escrow
• Architect conditionally procured through final design and construction
• Work activities addressing vast majority of FAIR & POOR buildings in target area, as well as individual blighting factors on those buildings
• Matching funds equaling 50% or more of total project
• Line item bid estimates including deductible alternatives
• Agreement on all program cost totals between: architect; overall budget line item figures; and as reported on signed property owner agreements
• A clear administrative plan outlining management responsibilities
• Evidence of both past and future downtown revitalization efforts” (IEDA, 2016).

Lastly, apply for grants for small town development using the services of the Region 6 Planning Commission. Many grants, such as Keep Iowa Beautiful grants, Main Street Iowa, and CDBG grants will be available to Ackley after the above steps are completed, and professionals at Region 6 will be able to aid in crafting proposals.
SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING FROM ADC
In Priority Order

- Overall education on Ackley’s Urban Revitalization Plan (2017)
- Utilize tax abatement strategies from Ackley’s Urban Revitalization Plan (2017)
- Create a builder’s association
- Update building permit code
- Develop a new subdivision
- Build one new independent living duplex
- Revitalize downtown upper-story apartments
- Create a private investment vehicle through which local businesses and individuals can financially contribute to these projects.
- Use the Housing Study, Community survey, and focus groups to make the promotional phases of these projects as credible as possible
- Approach ISU again for the design phase help of all projects.
- Look at TIF on a long-term scale, to make sure we are budgeting our TIF dollars correctly, and not running too thin.
COMMERCIAL

Investing in the Investors
In rural Iowa, retail districts are facing more challenges today than ever before. More efficient modes of transportation, "big box" stores, and the growing focus on regional economies have left many small town, Iowa residents to go without the diverse shopping opportunities that they grew up enjoying. According to the ISU Regional Economics and Community Analysis Program, reports for Ackley show a retail leakage in virtually every sector of commercial business (with the exception of Auto Sales and Repairs); in other words, significant amounts of disposable income leave our community every year, due to our lack of retail opportunities. As we begin to turn our economic development focus toward providing a greater quality of life, commercial development is the next step in building up our local economy, while enhancing the overall appeal of our community.
ACTION 1 | COFFEE SHOP

**Strategies**

- Create relationships between business ideas, real estate owners, appropriate investors/funding sources, and qualified management/workforce.

- Use the of the Community Survey and the Focus Groups to educate and persuade parties as to the demand of this amenity.

- According to these two studies, a restaurant or a coffee shop is at the top of the list of retail demand in Ackley.

- These two amenities are what draw Ackley residents out of the community most frequently.

- Research what other restaurants in the area do well, in order to be successful. Also research where Ackley residents go to eat/for coffee.

- Identify buildings in the community that would support a project like this, or that could be renovated for a reasonable cost.

- Find an entrepreneur that already has the idea for this type of establishment, or find someone who would be willing to manage a project with a business plan made by someone else.

- Identify potential investors from both the private and public sectors to give grants or loans to the start up of this project. These people will have a significant authority to decide on properties and managers.

- Once a business plan is made, engage the public with samples, or one-time events, in order to establish a proof of concept.
• Build out a business model for an establishment open 3 or 4 days a week that serves as a coffee shop during the day/afternoon, and a lunch/dinner restaurant during the afternoon/evenings [a hybrid between Rustic Brew in Hampton, and Three Nights in Owasa].
  ◊ Being open for a partial week cuts down on inventory and overhead costs, making the project a lower risk for start up. However, there is always the option of expanding hours if there is demand for it.
  ◊ Novelty, and lower accessibility, will hopefully create a higher demand than a restaurant that is open 7 days a week.
  ◊ The business model will include (but not limited to):
    • Menu items: cost and retail prices
    • Equipment needs; insurance needs; renovation costs;
    • Workforce needs; payroll estimates
  ◊ Identify potential food and beverage suppliers
  ◊ Identify restaurant equipment dealers
  ◊ Identify contractors to do the renovations and upgrades to the building.
  ◊ NOTE: As you will see throughout the rest of this project description, the business plan will be a living document, and will need to be updated regularly. Still, at this stage, you should be able to put together a document that can be used to illustrate a proof of concept to potential investors.

• Find an entrepreneur, or steering partnership, that will make decisions during the planning phase, and ultimately take ownership of the establishment upon completion.

• This process needs to be headed by an entrepreneur with experience in the field, with advice and assistance coming from the ADC. This entrepreneur will eventually be the owner/managing entity, but will benefit from the planning ability of the ADC.

• This is absolutely the hardest part of this process. ADC is not in the business of restaurant management, so the project does not continue unless this step is fulfilled.

• Alternatively, the ADC can find someone that is interested in this type of project, and when presented with the business plan and the ADC support, will have the confidence to take it on.

• Identify a viable location on Main Street.
  • Cougar’s Lair
  • Ackley Youth Center
  • 626 Main Street
  ◊ We know the owners of each of these buildings, and what the approximate purchase price would be.
  ◊ Acquire estimates on renovation and upgrade costs. Depending on which location you chose, these costs will differ drastically.
  ◊ Factor the purchase price and the renovation costs into the overhead portion of the business model.
  ◊ Each Main Street storefront has upper story residential units, which will also contribute to the cash flow of the building.

NOTE: Startup capital will be a combination of raised equity and conventional debt financing; once the business plan is created, and quotes for the building are procured, the debt/equity balance can be better defined.
• **Approach potential investors to raise startup capital.**
  ◊ Now that the community has spoken, and these amenities were consistently at the top of the list of wanted retail presences, we need to rely on them to raise the necessary startup funding.
  ◊ With a clearly defined business plan, you can show potential investors what impact their investment will make, and illustrate to them the growth path you expect the establishment to take.
  ◊ This funding should come from all types of organizations:
    • Public: City, County, USDA, IVCCD
    • Private: GNB, GBBT, Grand JiVante, Ryken, Triple T, Tri Rinse, Iowa Steel Masters, Flores Construction, Cougar Fitness, Ackley Medical Center, Community Orgs: ADC, Chamber, Rotary, Sororities, Prairie Bridges

• **At this time, any formal partnerships that are needed should be formed.**
  ◊ Whether they are entrepreneur to investor, entrepreneur to property owner, property owner to investor, investor to investor, public to private, etc., this is where each party involved commits to their role in the project.
  ◊ Any conventional debt financing from a financial institution, or contributions from private investors will require proof of partnerships among the project stakeholders, for security purposes.
  ◊ Formal partnerships will also be worthwhile, due to the large amount of asset acquisition that will be required throughout the project.

• **Once the adequate amount of funding is secured, and the entrepreneurial entity is comfortable with the business plan, they should begin acquiring the building that has been chosen, hiring contractors/carpenters to make any needed renovations, buying equipment, and recruiting employees.**
  ◊ **NOTE:** First impressions can make or break a project like this, so make sure this stage is done right, and in no hurry, so as not to sabotage your success before you even start.
  ◊ After this point, the only other thing that the ADC can really assist with is in helping with advertising and promotion.
ACTION 2 | FOUR COUNTY MARKET

**Strategies**

- Create a business model that brings together local producers of food and beverage goods, clothing, and general merchandise items, for the sake of operating out of, and maintaining a shared retail space, all year long. [Essentially creating a year-round farmers market]

- Research the four county area to learn more about already existing, seasonal farmers markets, and roadside produce stands.

- Create a for-profit entity to purchase and renovate a Main Street building, and to manage the shared retail space with a membership based, economies of scale benefits model.

- Build out a buy local campaign that focuses on supporting local producers, year-round.

- Emphasize the importance of creating a community among our local producers and artisans.

- Encourage home producers to consider producing for a commercial purpose.
Goals

• Build out a business model for an indoor, year-round farmers market, open weekday mornings and nights, and on weekends. [Still searching for a comparable example].
  ◊ We want to have limited hours, to cut down on overhead costs, and we also want to have it open when people are actually available; every other retail business in town is only open when people are at work.
  ◊ Hopefully this is a newer, and highly unique concept, so novelty, and concept of buying locally produced goods, should drive traffic.
  ◊ The business plan, in a nutshell, will define how many memberships from local producers we will need to have in order to payback monthly utilities and loan payments, and still afford to give a commission back to the producers who sell.
  ◊ Renovations, upgrades, and cosmetic work will need to be factored into startup costs.
  ◊ Equipment will be minimal, but certainly a factor:
    • Shelving, floor displays, signage, lighting, cash register, etc.
  ◊ Advertising will be a major component to this business because, again, it is based on quality vs. price; the buy local campaign is not a price competitive campaign.
  ◊ The Main Street storefront that this establishment is located in will have apartments on the upper story. Renting these units may be instrumental in the cash flow of the facility.
  ◊ NOTE: Again, the business plan will be a living document, and will need to be updated regularly. Still, at this stage, you should be able to put together a document that can be used to illustrate a proof of concept to potential investors.

“**This concept would also pair very well with a coffee shop or a microbrewery.**

• Find an entrepreneur, or steering partnership, that will make decisions during the planning phase, and ultimately take ownership of the establishment upon completion.
  ◊ Unlike the restaurant project, this undertaking will not necessarily require an entrepreneur, or partnership, with experience in the locally produced goods market, but an understanding of the network and the clientele would be a huge help. This individual or group should be connected to the local produce market, or should have some type of retail presence in the four county region.
  ◊ Again, finding this caliber of leadership for the project will be the hardest part of this process.
  ◊ Because there is already a local farmer’s market, it is possible that a group of interested local producers already exists and, once they are presented with the idea, would be open to pursuing it.

• Identify a viable location on Main Street. The locations for this could be at the location suggested above omitting Cougar’s Lair, and with the addition of:
  • Midwest Buggy
  • Harriet Cline’s
  ◊ Other than Midwest Buggy, we know the owners of each of these buildings, and what the approximate purchase price would be.
  ◊ Acquire estimates on renovation and upgrade costs. Depending on which location you chose, these costs will differ drastically.
  ◊ Factor the purchase price and the renovation costs into the overhead portion of the business model.
  ◊ Renovations of the apartments will need to be factored into the business plan.

**This concept would also pair very well with a coffee shop or a microbrewery.**

**This concept would also pair very well with a coffee shop or a microbrewery.**
Goals (cont.)

◊ This funding should come from all types of organizations:
  • Public: City, County, USDA, IVCCD
  • Private: GNB, GBBT, Grand JiVante, Ryken, Triple T, Tri Rinse, Iowa Steel Masters, Flores Construction, Cougar Fitness, Ackley Medical Center, Ackley Painting Company, etc.
  • Community Orgs: ADC, Chamber, Rotary, Sororities, Prairie Bridges

◊ NOTE: Startup capital will be a combination of raised equity and conventional debt financing; once the business plan is created, and quotes for the building are procured, the debt/equity balance can be better defined.

• At this time, any formal partnerships that are needed should be formed.
  ◊ Whether they are entrepreneur to investor, entrepreneur to property owner, property owner to investor, investor to investor, public to private, etc., this is where each party involved commits to their role in the project.
  ◊ Any conventional debt financing from a financial institution, or contributions from private investors will require proof of partnerships among the project stakeholders, for security purposes.
  ◊ Formal partnerships will also be worthwhile, due to the large amount of asset acquisition that will be required throughout the project.

• Once the adequate amount of funding is secured, and the entrepreneurial entity is comfortable with the business plan, they should begin acquiring the building that has been chosen, hiring contractors/carpenters to make any needed renovations, buying equipment, and recruiting employees.
  ◊ NOTE: First impressions can make or break a project like this, so make sure this stage is done right, and in no hurry, so as not to sabotage your success before you even start.
  ◊ After this point, the only other thing that the ADC can really assist with is in helping with advertising and promotion.
**Strategies**

- Create a business model for a bowling alley, making sure to take into account the community’s core demographics, and their habits/wants.

- Research the four county area to learn more about already existing bowling alleys, movie theaters, and other entertainment/recreation businesses.

- Identify a commercial building large enough for a bowling alley facility. This will most likely not be located on Main Street. In the event that there is not an already existing building for this project, utilizing the builder’s association may be a viable option.

- Coordinate a for-profit entity that will manage and run the facility from construction until full operation (the Ackley Rec Club is a good example of this).

- Integrate the facility into the existing programming for already founded community organizations and local businesses.

*Originally, this project was not in the plan. However, after receiving the Focus Group Response Summary, we discovered that four out of the six groups explicitly mentioned a desire for a bowling alley; the other two strongly agreed that there was a need for more entertainment/recreation opportunities in the community.*
• Build out a business model for a bowling alley.
  ◊ This concept should also start out with limited, but
    deliberate, hours in order to establish a proof of
    demand, and to cut down on overhead.
  ◊ Figure out how many customers the bowling alley
    will need per month in order to pay off construction
    and equipment costs.
  ◊ Can this business be paired with another service to
    help it cash flow?
  ◊ Set up ways to get community organizations and
    local businesses involved by doing group rates,
    event hosting, etc.
  ◊ In this setting, classic equipment and decor will be
    fitting; not all purchases have to be brand new.
  ◊ NOTE: Again, the business plan will be a living
    document, and will need to be updated regularly.
    Still, at this stage, you should be able to put
    together a document that can be used to illustrate a
    proof of concept to potential investors.

**Again, this concept would also pair very well with a coffee
shop or a microbrewery.**

• Find an entrepreneur, or steering partnership, that
  will make decisions during the planning phase, and
  ultimately take ownership of the establishment
  upon completion.
  ◊ The board of directors for the Ackley Rec Club
    would be a good starting point for research on a
    steering partnership.
  ◊ Ideally, this person, or someone in the group, would
    have experience in the entertainment services
    industry, or the restaurant industry. But it is certainly
    not required.
  ◊ Again, finding this caliber of leadership for the
    project will be the hardest part of this process.

• Identify a viable location
  ◊ In the past, a bowling alley existed within the Ackley
    community. The owner of this now vacant facility is
    Mike Nuss [195 Franklin Street].
  ◊ Outside of the suggestion mentioned above, decision
    makers will most likely need to build a new
    facility. There are not many existing structures in
    commercially zoned areas, that are large enough for
    this use.
  ◊ Acquire estimates on renovation, upgrade, or building
    costs. Depending on which location you chose, these
    costs will differ drastically.
  ◊ Factor the purchase price and the construction costs
    into the overhead portion of the business model.

• Approach potential investors to raise startup capital.
  ◊ This project was identified as a high-demand item by
    the focus groups, which will help when promoting this
    idea.
  ◊ Leverage public dollars by emphasizing the increase
    in tax base, and a stimulation of traffic to the
    community’s local economy (both local and from
    outside of the community).
  ◊ With a clearly defined business plan, you can show
    potential investors what impact their investment will
    make, and illustrate to them the growth path you
    expect the establishment to take.
  ◊ This funding should come from all types of
    organizations:
    • Public: City, County, USDA, IVCCD
    • Private: GNB, GBBT, Grand JiVante, Ryken,
      Triple T, Tri Rinse, Iowa Steel Masters, Flores
      Construction, Cougar Fitness, Ackley Medical
      Center, Ackley Painting Company, etc.
    • Community Orgs: ADC, Chamber, Rotary,
      Sororities, Prairie Bridges

◊ NOTE: Startup capital will be a combination of
  raised equity and conventional debt financing; once
  the business plan is created, and quotes for the
  building are procured, the debt/equity balance can
  be better defined.

• Formal partnerships that are needed should be
  formed.
  ◊ Whether they are entrepreneur to investor,
    entrepreneur to property owner, property owner to
    investor, investor to investor, public to private, etc.,
    this is where each party involved commits to their
    role in the project.
  ◊ Any conventional debt financing from a financial
    institution, or contributions from private investors
    will require proof of partnerships among the project
    stakeholders, for security purposes.
  ◊ Formal partnerships will also be worthwhile, due to
    the large amount of asset acquisition that will be
    required throughout the project.

• Once the adequate amount of funding is secured, and
  the entrepreneurial entity is comfortable with
  the business plan, they should begin acquiring the
  building that has been chosen, or designing a new
  facility.
  ◊ If building a new facility is the route that is taken,
    approach the builder’s association for advice and a
    proposal.
  ◊ Begin hiring contractors/carpenters, buying
    equipment, and recruiting employees.
  ◊ NOTE: First impressions can make or break a
    project like this, so make sure this stage is done
    right, and in no hurry, so as not to sabotage your
    success before you even start.
  ◊ After this point, the only other thing that the ADC
    can really assist with is in helping with advertising
    and promotion.
**Projects Already in Progress**

**Mexican Restaurant**
- Members of the ADC have already identified a potential entrepreneur to take the former Cougar’s Lair location, and convert it into a Hispanic restaurant.
- The identified entrepreneur has already established a thriving restaurant in Grundy Center, Iowa.
- His main concerns today are the workforce and the market share of other local restaurant competition.

**Strategies:**
- Check in with Carllee frequently to monitor any progress, and to offer assistance.
- Continue to stay in touch with this entrepreneur and provide him with any supplemental materials he may request.
- Identify alternative options for potential real estate.
- Present to him information regarding the Revolving Loan Fund, any available ADC advertising dollars, and certain public incentives that can be offered by the City.

**GJ Coffee Shop**
- Currently, Grand JiVante is exploring the possibility of turning their Wellness Center into a coffee shop that would be open to the public.
- Products to offer, construction costs, and market share research are all questions that are being analyzed right now.
- GJ management is also searching for candidates that would manage and operate the store; they want it to be under the overall GJ umbrella, but they need someone with experience to run it.

**Strategies**
- Help them identify local individuals that may be good candidates as managers.
- Research area coffee shops to find out their menus, suppliers, staffing practices, etc.
- Keep this concept at the forefront of their minds; don’t let it become dormant and fade out.

**Dollar General**
- The current owners of the former Gus and Docs location (on Hwy 57) have signed a contract with the Dollar General franchise, to sell the property to be developed into a DG location.
- The necessary evaluations and inspections have been done to the property, and the company has approved going forward with the project.
- Today, steps are being taken to approve building permits for the project, and to vacate the city right-of-way that runs through the property.
- The engineering firm that is working on the project has given the following timeline:
  - Start building this Summer
  - Complete the exterior of the building by the end of 2017
  - Open the store in the Spring 2018

**Strategies:**
- Let the corporate entities play out this project; they will contact our office when they need answers/supplemental materials.

**Cougar Fitness**
- Local businessperson, and entrepreneur, John Enslin, operates a financial services company. He has recently proceeded to build a fitness center on Main Street.
- The target opening date for the fitness center is July 1st, 2017.

**Strategies:**
- Set up a development agreement with John under the new Urban Renewal Plan Amendment set to be adopted later this summer [Renovation Program: 5-years; 100%; not to exceed $25,000]
- Use the “Running Start on Development Fund” to help him with any signage he may want.
- Offer any ADC advertising dollars to help with a Spotlight on Business.
INDUSTRIAL

Building Ackley’s Economy
One of the most telling indicators of a community’s viability is their ability to sustain a healthy, and diverse, industrial presence. A city that maintains a diverse retail district and a stable workforce fosters an attractive environment for industrial growth and prosperity. Moreover, industrial growth is the source of the highest amount of private investment into a community, resulting in the largest contributors to a city’s tax base.
Strategies

• Develop an industrial-sized structure in the Ackley Industrial Park that can be used as a marketing tool for attracting potential new business.

• Create partnerships between public and private organizations to leverage a variety of funding sources.

• Outline an extensive marketing campaign that includes online, print and tradeshow materials, to highlight the structure.

• Recruit a temporary tenant for the structure to pay rent, resulting in a slight revenue stream for the building.
• Research communities in the surrounding areas that have had, or currently have, spec buildings in their industrial park.
  ◊ Is there an ideal location within a community?
  ◊ How large of a facility is recommended?
  ◊ With what kind of amenities/services does the building have to be equipped?
  ◊ How are their buildings marketed, and how long have their buildings been open (or how long were they open before they were sold)?

• Reach out to local contractors and begin putting together a design and a budget for the proposed project.
  ◊ Depending on what the research comes back with, an approximate design can be procured, and contractors can give per square foot estimates.
  ◊ For the purposes of this step, there should be no need to pay for a design; a rough concept should be enough to acquire estimates.

• Choose a location for the project, and assess the property.
  ◊ Ideally, the project will take place in the industrial park, so many variables will be eliminated.
  ◊ Consider where existing utility lines are, along with existing public infrastructure.
  ◊ Consider how much foundation work will be needed. Does the current condition of the property have large elevation changes, or is the grade relatively flat?
  ◊ Make sure any and all environmental assessments have been done.
  ◊ If the property that is chosen is not located in the industrial park, begin inquiring about the purchase price, with the landowner.

• Create a financing plan.
  ◊ Option 1
    • A contractor may be willing to build the structure, and fund the entire project, if there is evidence that they would have a tenant within a relatively short amount of time.
    • If this is the case, begin recruiting temporary or permanent tenants. There should be a number of businesses in the area that could use extra storage or workspace, on a temporary basis.
    • Either way, have the City enter into a development agreement with the contractor, and secure a TIF rebate program.
  ◊ Option 2
    • Coordinate a partnership of willing investors to contribute toward the upfront project costs. This partnership could be a mix of public and private parties.
    • Outline an ROI agreement for the group; this is essentially the payback structure for when the building is eventually purchased.
  ◊ Option 3
    • The City of Ackley funds the entire project by taking out a GO bond or internal loan.
    • Once the facility is finished, the loan is paid back using TIF revenues from the rest of the Urban Renewal Area.
  ◊ These options are suggested by the authors of this plan, but are not exclusive.

• Commence building, and begin developing a marketing plan
  ◊ Refer back to the research done at the beginning of this project period; what marketing materials were created in other communities, and to what extent were their facilities promoted.
  ◊ Build out a new page on the city website.
  ◊ Design a pamphlet or an information card with details on the site.
  ◊ If funding permits, create a sign to put at City limits.
  ◊ Update information on LOIS.

Goals
ACTION 2 | FLYOVER VIDEO OF INDUSTRIAL PARK AND SPEC BUILDING

Strategies

• Create a drone video to use as a marketing material for the available lots in the industrial park.
• Integrate the video into the city website, and share it on Facebook.

Goals

• Research firms in the area that use drones to make professional marketing materials at an affordable price.
• Choose a firm from the research list, and request a proposal.
  ◊ Depending on the amount of the proposal, procure a list of financial contributors to the project.
  ◊ It may be low enough to be covered by the ADC’s marketing dollars.
  ◊ Small contributions from local community organizations may be enough to add up to the total cost.
  ◊ If the price is out of reach a fundraising campaign may be needed.
• Once funding is secured, coordinate the date and time of the video shoot with the firm.
• Integrate the video into as many online forms of media as possible.
Strategies

• As aquaculture becomes an emerging industry in Iowa, capitalize on Ackley’s high capacity of water, and close proximity to multiple modes of transportation to attract an aquaculture firm to the industrial park.

• Utilize the marketing materials in place, and highlight available incentives to strengthen recruitment efforts.

• Reach out to leaders in the industry and inquire about their needs and location requirements as a firm.
Goals

• This action point is very open ended, so the following implementation scheme is more so a list of suggestions:
  ◊ Research aquaculture firms throughout the Midwest to see what their firms require in order to be successful.
  ◊ Identify viable locations and facilities within the community in which a firm of this nature could be located.
  ◊ Consider researching and attending conferences/events around the Midwest on the topic of aquaculture to see if there are networking opportunities to be had.
  ◊ Don’t be afraid to make cold calls to already existing firms.

• If at any point a firm is interested in locating in Ackley, further action will need to be taken.

• Identify a location for their facility; if a new facility needs to be built, put them in contact with local contractors. If the firm is large enough, a third party will most likely do these steps.

• Make sure the firm is aware of the incentives Ackley has to offer. Again, with a larger firm, there will most likely be a requested incentive package up front.

• Keep in regular contact with key stakeholders throughout the project. The City, contractors, and the firm should all be on the same page at all times. In many cases, the ADC office will be seen as a contact point between the three parties.
Projects Already in Progress

• **Jeff Kurth Expansion - Chuy Flores Construction**
  ◊ Chuy Flores is an entrepreneur in the industrial park who, about three years ago, purchased industrial park ground, built a building there, and expanded his business to the site.
  ◊ Jeff Kurth is the owner and founder of SkyKone.
  ◊ Roughly 2 years ago, Chuy bought more ground in the industrial park, with the stipulations that he needed to build a structure there within 5-years.
  ◊ Today, Jeff Kurth is hoping to expand his SkyKone operations.

  **THUS**

  ◊ It would be ideal to have Chuy build a building, and fulfill the obligations in his agreement, and to lease it or sell it to Jeff in order to support his plans for growth.
  ◊ This project primarily needs to be monitored; each party involved needs to be contacted regularly to see what their status is.

• **Paul Williams Expansion**
  ◊ Paul Williams is another entrepreneur in the industrial park. His project is simple.
  ◊ To the north of the property he currently owns in the park, he would like to purchase a lot and build another facility.
  ◊ The only thing the ADC needs in order to complete this will be a subdivision plat, instated by the City. Lee Gallentine can provide more information on this matter.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Looking to Vibrant Futures
Community pride and connectedness are oftentimes viewed as the more abstract component of economic development, and community betterment as a whole. While these efforts rarely result in significant, monetary investment into a city or town, they can have large impacts on the attitudes and feelings of residents, toward their hometown.

*The following project descriptions will appear more as a list of suggestions, rather than the step-by-step implementation schemes that are seen in the other sections of this plan. Community Development is heavily dependent on creativity, and the volunteers involved; this plan could not possibly capture those variables, so feel free to make these projects your own, using the following pages as a guide.
ACTION 1 | PUBLIC ART INITIATIVE

**Strategies**

- Identify downtown exterior walls, open green spaces and walkways in the community that have the capacity to support a public art initiative.

- Engage the local artist community to brainstorm possible initiatives for the community to pursue.

- Reach out to local community groups and businesses to gauge their interest in supporting a local arts initiative.

- Pursue partnerships with AGWSR and Ellsworth Community College for design and creative advice.
Goals

• Identify possible locations for local public art initiatives.
  ◊ These locations should be in high trafficked, or regular recreational areas.
  ◊ Multiple Main Street buildings have open walls that would be ideal for murals.
    • Tommy Cline’s Warehouse
    • The Legion
    • Tommy Cline’s Cafe
    • Ackley Publishing Warehouse
    • Ackley Publishing upper story side wall
    • Ibeling Insurance Wall
  ◊ Sculptures in the landscaped areas at Main Street intersections
  ◊ Sculptures in City parks
  ◊ Art in vacant Main Street storefront windows

• Engage the artist community in Ackley and the surrounding areas.
  ◊ Present to AGWSR and Ellsworth Community College art programs to see what ideas they may have.
  ◊ Reach out to local artists through online and newspaper campaigns, to find out their willingness and ability.
  ◊ Tour other Iowa communities where public art is prominent and ask local leaders where their artists came from.

• Choose a feasible project from the list of suggestions
  ◊ Based on the ideas that come back from the local artists, there will be a number of factors that will need to be taken into account in order to figure out which is the most feasible:
    • Is the owner of the location for the project giving us permission to do the project?
    • Who will be doing the project? When are they available and willing to do the project?
    • How much will the project cost, and how likely are local community groups and businesses to donate to these efforts?

• Get a quote from the artist, and secure funding pledges (both monetary, and in-kind) from local private and public organizations.

• Secure any formal agreements that allow the artist to have access to the project location.

• Commence project, and develop a supplemental marketing campaign.

• Follow the progress of the artist, and build community support.

• Close out the project with a ‘ribbon cutting’ and ‘thanks’ to the artist.
ACTION 2 | OCTOBERFEST

Strategies

• Capitalize on the rich history and tradition of Ackley’s heritage, and coordinate an event that captures both the celebration of Ackley’s origins, and a general community pride.

• Highlight the underutilized resources that the Ackley Heritage Center and historic soda fountain have to offer.

• Form a steering committee to help with the coordination and implementation of the event. This committee should target the younger community members that are not already involved in other community organizations.

• Emphasize the need for more cultural and entertainment opportunities that was identified in both the community survey and the focus group report.
Goals

- **Form a steering committee**
  - This should be a group of creative individuals willing to think outside of the box, and create something entirely new. Suggestions:
    - Maggie Allen
    - Becky Schipper
    - Jessica Schipper
    - Erik Graham
    - Joan Frazier
    - John Enslin
  - It should be made clear from the beginning that this committee will be expected to plan and implement the event from start to finish.

- **Begin committee work**
  - Brainstorm an ideal Octoberfest: what all goes into making a successful Octoberfest event?
    - Create an online survey to send to community residents. Ask what activities and entertainment sources they would like to see in a community event.
    - Research other communities that have done similar events and gather information on how they structured their festival.
    - Decide on a time frame for when the event will be held, consider other events happening locally during that time frame, and decide on dates and times for when the event will take place.
    - Consider where in the community the event should take place.
    - Once the feedback on activities comes in from the community and other towns, begin researching suppliers/vendors that can provide those resources.
    - Finalize a list of ideal vendors/suppliers/entertainers for the event.
    - Once a list of desired vendors is procured, gather quotes from each and begin building out a proposed budget.

- **Once a rough budget is created, begin reaching out to possible financial contributors.**
  - This should be a mix of public and private investors.
  - Since this is a brand new idea, there will need to be a very clear outline of the finalized event that can be used as a marketing tool.
  - The authors of this Plan suggest that donations be pledged in the beginning, instead of actually collected. This way, if the event appears to not have enough support, refunds won’t have to be made. Still, keep a clear record of your contributors, and tell the community of your progress along the way.

- **When it appears that the event will have enough financial support, begin recruiting volunteers and marketing the final event.**

- **Eventual implementation of the event will depend on the extent of the festival and what activities are brought to the event.**
Strategies

- Create a low-cost, high-exposure program that gives recognition to Ackley residents for improving their properties.
- Leverage online and print medias to encourage all property owners in Ackley to participate.
- Collaborate with local community groups to raise funds for marketing and program incentives.
Goals

• Create a structure for the Program
  ◊ The Program should have a recurring, annual time frame during the spring and summer months, in order to gain consistency.

• Develop an application process and criteria for eligibility

• Build out an award package for program winners
  ◊ This could include a monetary component, public recognition, etc.

• Outline a marketing scheme for both getting the word out about the program, and creating exposure for when each winner is chosen.

• Design marketing materials
  ◊ The program should have some kind of Title, Logo and Tagline
  ◊ Media ads should be consistent so the community becomes familiar with the program
  ◊ Create flyers to post in businesses and community facilities

• Based on when the program will be held, and how many winners will be chosen during each program period, decide on a marketing strategy and begin encouraging participants to apply.

Projects Already in Progress

• Website
  ◊ Our web developer, Mark Hultgren, was hired during the early part of 2017 to help us rebuild and modernize our city website.
  ◊ The ADC remains the steward of the website; essentially, we field questions and requests from the public to add to and revise the site.
  ◊ We continue to work with Mark to create campaigns and other events that drive traffic to the site.

• Cultural Assessment with Zach Mannheimer
  ◊ Zachary Mannheimer is the Director of Creative Placemaking at McClure Engineering.
  ◊ His firm has been hired by Hardin County to assess the entire county for cultural and entertainment needs.
  ◊ Eventually, this assessment will lead to implementing project recommendations for cultural/entertainment opportunities we are lacking in Hardin County.
REFERENCES


