

PART FOUR - RECOMENDATIONS

The following list of recommendations represents tasks that should be undertaken to implement the “vision statement” and “objectives” of the Walton Main Street Strategic Plan. Some items are small in nature and short-term, while others are more involved, long-term tasks. Some recommendations appear multiple times as they may help to meet several needs. Much of the responsibility for implementing these recommendations rests with the City of Walton as well as the BACE group. To accomplish the recommendations, they will need to be prioritized. Many put responsibilities on the City of Walton and will have to be evaluated in terms of fiscal resources and timing. Creative funding for some of these improvements will also be needed. This plan recommends that Walton City Council prioritize the entire list of recommendations in a way that could lead to a future capital improvements program as well as identify what agency/agencies would be heading up the specific recommendations.

Improved Business Climate

- Utilize and maintain the database of available properties and buildings included as part of this plan as a way to connect prospective tenants with property or building owners. As the survey results showed, most businesses located here because of the availability of space. The promotion of these opportunities is paramount to the attraction of new businesses;
- Have the Boone County Planning Commission GIS Services Division create a mapping application based on the features of the database of properties and buildings so as to make for easier and more comprehensive access to the latest and most accurate data in hopes of connecting prospective businesses with the appropriate owners;
- Make an effort to attract appropriate businesses that have been identified by the survey as desirable to add to historic Walton Main Street including restaurants and coffee shops;
- Have a dedicated economic development professional who will work to attract businesses to Main Street. Ideally, this person would be a City of Walton employee, who could readily connect potential businesses with prospective properties based on the needs and availability of buildings, building spaces, and/or vacant land;
- Ensure that Walton has a strong business advocacy group that will serve as a liaison between the City and any existing and potential businesses. This group could be assisted by the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce;
- Aggressively promote existing historic Main Street businesses in mailings (both physical and electronic) as well as via social media. Occasionally spotlight a Main Street business in the Walton column featured in *The Boone County Recorder*;
- The City of Walton should consider applying to become a Designated or Nationally Certified Main Street program. As of 2015, there are 39 Main Street communities in Kentucky, including 11 designated programs and 28 accredited programs (accredited programs must meet somewhat more stringent requirements). However, even if such designation is not sought and/or received, the Main Street Four Point approach should be implemented for Walton Main Street. The Four Point approach is a preservation-oriented tool for economic development. The points and their key components are as follows: (1) Organization: Main

Street board and director coordinating volunteers & partners; (2) Promotion: communicating a positive image of the area's unique characteristics; (3) Design: creating/maintaining a safe & appealing historic built environment; (4) Economic Restructuring: making a successful commercial district without compromising historic character.

Improve the Pedestrian Experience

- Continuously identify and track segments of sidewalk along Main Street that are in need of repair and work with the State Transportation Cabinet to facilitate repairs in a timely manner;
- Develop an inspection schedule and response procedure for problems which may deter pedestrians, such as dangerous/fallen trees, debris, or garbage on or near sidewalks;
- Improve the safety and visibility of Main Street pedestrian crossing(s) by restriping them as well as adding scale-appropriate signage or textured pavement alerting motorists to the potential of people crossing the street at designated locations;
- Encourage evening pedestrian activity by adding streetlights where needed. These lamps should be of an historic design and be placed at strategic locations to promote existing businesses as well as enhance the sense of safety for pedestrians;
- Develop pedestrian-friendly activities such as historic walking tours or install additional sidewalk furniture that encourages people to walk around as well as sit down outside along the Main Street corridor;
- As property develops or redevelops, be sensitive in design to the pedestrian environment by incorporating benches, flower boxes, and other street furniture where possible and practical.

Main Street as a Destination

- Assess the visual streetscape aesthetics of power lines, landscaping, fencing, etc. along Main Street and strive to improve upon any negative impacts they may have on the historic character of Main Street as redevelopment opportunities arise;
- Create an 'Historic Walton Main Street' walking tour brochure to better connect people with the rich tradition that exists as well as to promote the study area as a place to come experience and see;
- Improve signage (informational and directional) by having it more uniform and consistent;
- Install entrance or "Gateway" signage at both north and south end of the Main Street core.

Walton Identity/Brand

- Establish a better identity/brand for Walton (e.g., family-friendly, sports, trains, or school) and promote it via social media, articles, signs, marketing, etc.;
- Create an 'Historic Walton Main Street' walking tour brochure to reinforce the historic character of Main Street;
- Utilize vacant storefronts, such as the former Maintenance Garage building, as an information center which promotes Walton's rich downtown heritage and helps connect visitors to it;

- Use vacant storefronts and business spaces as small, local business incubators providing startup businesses a way to become stable and poised for continued growth with a commitment to the City and the historic downtown Main Street specifically;
- Capitalize on and actively promote Walton’s strong railroad presence and heritage. Dedicate and promote a site for public viewing of passing trains, which have played (and continue to play) an important role in the development of the City of Walton. There is a large community of train enthusiasts who seek out and frequent such spots. One such example is the small train-themed park on Dixie Highway in Erlanger, KY where kids can play on train-themed equipment, view an actual caboose, visit a small train museum in the former depot station, and also watch trains in the adjoining rail yard as they roll by. There are several locations on or near Walton’s Main Street where this could be incorporated including the park on the north side of the City Building. This park could offer views of both rail lines (CSX and Norfolk & Southern) that pass through town. The Gaines Tavern History Center is another ideal location for training viewing and interpretation with ready access to programming space in the tavern;
- Coordinate multiple events to maximize regional exposure and encourage return visits. For example, schedule events at the Towne Center (carnival area, rides, Touch-a-Truck, etc.) and Gaines Tavern History Center (Railroad theme or the like) simultaneously with the existing and established Walton Old Fashioned Days and/or Pig Fest. Offer parking and shuttle transportation between the three sites as necessary. It could be stretched into a 2 or 3-day event, include a 5K race, etc.

Parking Issues

- Maximize existing public parking, both on-street and off-street, by installing directional signage and restriping in order to make it more visible;
- Explore collaborative parking agreements between the City of Walton and private parking lots of churches, businesses, and other establishments along Main Street;
- Business owners and employees should make it a general policy of taking the least desirable parking spaces in an effort to preserve the best spots for potential customers.

Transportation

- Investigate the viability of having a shuttle bus that runs between the Walton Towne Center and the historic town center along Main Street as part of a cross-promotion that would benefit both areas as well as cut down on the number of vehicles in town and save on parking spaces. This operation could be run by the City or by a church in town;
- Promote the forthcoming pedestrian bridge on High Street over the Norfolk & Southern rail road as an opportunity to reconnect and welcome back pedestrians to Main Street who were “cut off” when the vehicular bridge was closed down several years ago;
- Incorporate traffic calming features into any improvements the State makes along Main Street in order to slow traffic down. Take advantage of this as a way to expose existing businesses to the through traffic who may otherwise miss seeing them;

- Use signage to direct cars to available parking spots and/or lots. Just the identification of available parking will suggest to the driver that there is something on Main Street worth checking out whether it is a business or historic feature.

Signage

- Use signage to “announce” the arrival into the historic business or residential areas along Main Street. This signage must be modest and have an historic theme to it;
- Aggressively announce any and all events occurring on historic Main Street. Work with a banner company to monthly cycle, or change out, the banners which can be designed in two ways. One type would be draped across Main Street announcing major events such as ‘Old Fashioned Days’ while the other type could be incorporated onto telephone or light poles located along the road such as the signage seen along Mall Road or in Burlington.

Zoning Regulations/Zoning Map

- The current zoning in the study area offers enough flexibility to accommodate the goals of this plan and may not need updating at this time. The City should periodically examine the uses permitted to ensure that they still align with the business types desired for the historic Main Street study area. The City might want to consider adopting architectural design guidelines within the WD district if concerns about appropriate construction and redevelopment continue. However, this step can only be pursued with vocal support from property owners;
- A closer look should be taken at the Commercial Two (C-2) zoning designation for the abandoned cement plant on both sides of Park Avenue just west of the CSX tracks to see if the uses in that district are appropriate or if another Commercial district would be more appropriate. This is the largest vacant parcel/property in the study area and should be studied a bit further.

Comprehensive Plan/Land Use Map

- It is recommended that the Boone County Planning Commission strengthen language in the Comprehensive Plan during the next update regarding the importance of historic Walton Main Street and refer to this planning document. The Future Land Use Map would not need to be modified as a part of the next Comprehensive Plan update;

Official Adoption

- The BACE group prefers that this plan be officially adopted by the City of Walton Council and serve as a valuable resource and guide to future development and redevelopment along the historic Main Street corridor through Walton. In this way, an added emphasis on commitment and priority will be given to the recommendations contained within this document;
- This plan needs a “champion” to use it as a tool to accomplish the vision statement which aims to “energize the Walton downtown district into a healthy business and residential center by utilizing and enhancing the public services, special events activities, and historical character of the town as a foundation.”