

TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

Coon Rapids Transformation Strategies

This document summarizes market information and community insights to provide direction for potential projects, actions, and initiatives that support and align with the community's vision for Coon Rapids and the pursuit of the following Transformation Strategies:

1. **Improve the Housing Options in Coon Rapids**
2. **Create a Healthy Business Climate**
3. **Improve the Physical Appearance & Infrastructure Downtown**



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Transformation Strategies Explained

A *Transformation Strategy* articulates a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown or commercial district's economy. Grounded by both an understanding of the underlying drivers of the local and regional economy, as well as community feedback and engagement, a Transformation Strategy should describe a market position that the commercial district can successfully fulfill.

An effective Transformation Strategy serves a particular customer segment, responds to an underserved market demand, or creates a differentiated destination.

Simply stated, a *Transformation Strategy* is a comprehensive strategy that guides the direction of the revitalization initiative and, over time, transforms the district. Each Transformation Strategy has several important characteristics:

- ▶ It is **rooted in the community's vision** for the district.
- ▶ It is **based on a solid analysis and understanding** of the district's economy and its best economic opportunities.
- ▶ It is **comprehensive**, in that it is implemented through a broad range of activities that span the four broad areas of work represented by the Four Points.
- ▶ It is **measurable**, making it possible to track progress.
- ▶ It **provides guidance for program activities for a two- to five-year period**, after which the revitalization program should examine progress and make adjustments, as needed.

In general, a revitalization organization should work with one or two Transformation Strategies at a time. In some exceptional circumstances, it might consider tackling three Transformation Strategies—but more than three would be challenging.



COON RAPIDS—STRATEGY #1

At-a-Glance: Current and Potential Transformation Strategy Activities

Current Economic Vitality Activities:

- Downtown Market Analysis
- Business and Building Inventory

Potential Activities:

- Create public housing needs list
- Publicize survey results
- Share pros of 2nd story housing with business owners
- Work to keep an eye on problematic or derelict properties
- Research available funding sources and share with investors/developers
- Create taskforce to work with homeowners needing assistance
- Create materials to share survey data with developers/investors to show housing needs
- Work to recruit more daycare options for Coon Rapids
- Work to enhance relationship with development group for housing programs—share survey results with them

Current Promotion Activities:

- Holiday Events
- Small Business Saturday

Potential Activities:

- Collaborative Marketing Campaign
- Share survey results on Facebook and in monthly newsletter
- Host vacant property tour/Upper story tour
- Share progress updates on former Hardware Hank building as work progresses
- Partner with Design on upper story building tours



MAIN STREET COON RAPIDS TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

IMPROVE HOUSING OPTIONS

IMPROVE THE EXISTING HOUSING MARKET TO PROVIDE QUALITY UPPER STORY HOUSING OPTIONS TO ADDRESS THE CURRENT VOID IN HOUSING OPTIONS AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY.



Current Design Activities:

- Upper Story Housing education
- MSI Design visits
- Monitor current Challenge grant project
- Monitor current Catalyst grant project

Potential Activities:

- Review codes and ordinances related to parking for housing in the downtown area
- Create FAQ sheets related to housing funding opportunities
- Review Building guidelines and codes
- Host upper story and vacant building tours

Current Organization Activities:

- Social media, digital communication
- Monthly Newsletter
- Volunteer development/recruitment
- Annual report with progress updates

Potential Activities:

- Research Ameri-Corp VISTA possibilities
- Research possible intern opportunities with ISU/Drake/DMACC
- Support board members and volunteers to attend training workshops related to housing development
- Visit another Main Street that has been successful in upper-story housing projects
- Share survey results with elected officials

COON RAPIDS—STRATEGY #2

At-a-Glance: Current and Potential Transformation Strategy Activities

Current Economic Vitality Activities:

- Downtown Market Analysis
- Business Visits
- Building & Business Inventory Database
- Host quarterly “Business After Hours” events
- Succession Planning support
- Host 3 business-oriented trainings

Potential Activities:

- Recruit businesses to fill vacancies
- Share survey results with businesses
- Incentives for buildings and new/expanding businesses
- Maintain properties for sale/lease
- Business training series (social media, online sales, etc.)
- Website/eCommerce training
- Create incentive package
- Business Succession Planning
- Open 4 Business application
- Trainings to re-energize businesses

Current Promotion Activities:

- Movies on Main
- Treats on the Street
- Shop Sooner Night
- Small Business Saturday
- Christmas in a Small Town
- Ladies Night
- Shop Local. Shop Late.

Potential Activities:

- Collaborative Market Campaigns—expand reach
- Highlight businesses on Facebook
- Expand special events held by businesses
- Social Media training for businesses
- Marketing materials at recreational sites
- Recognize and reward excellence
- School to Work programs with local school district
- Work with video class to produce business videos



Current Design Activities:

- MSI Design visits
- Quarterly downtown clean-ups
- Plan and implement small beautification projects
- Continue mini-grant program

Potential Activities:

- Research ways to help businesses with expansion and building improvements
- Share available grant programs with interested building owners
- Host design-related mini-workshops (window displays, interior store layout, merchandising)
- MSI Challenge grant application

Current Organization Activities:

- Monthly newsletter
- Regular updates to city, county, CRDG
- Annual meeting
- Share market analysis results with board and committee members
- Annual Report with progress updates

Potential Activities:

- Research Ameri-Corp Vista opportunities
- Collaborative marketing campaign
- Use survey data to tell Coon Rapids' story, testimonials, community pride, etc.
- List business opportunities in Coon Rapids

COON RAPIDS—STRATEGY #3

At-a-Glance: Current and Potential Transformation Strategy Activities

Current Economic Vitality Activities:

- Downtown Market Analysis
- Business Visits
- Update building & business inventory
- Monitor current Catalyst grant

Potential Activities:

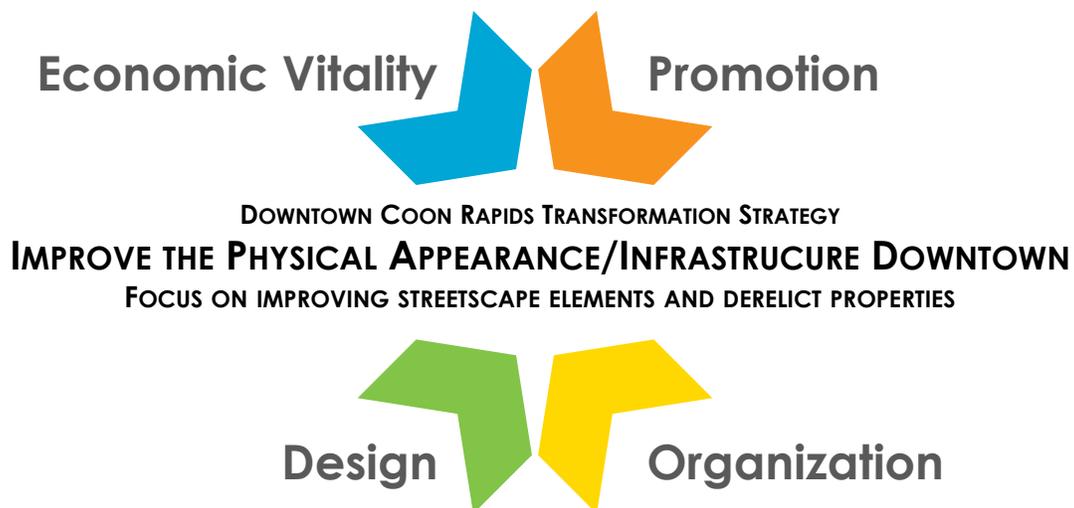
- Research funding opportunities
- Strengthen grant application for DTR—apply again
- Publicize recent survey results
- Share updates on Catalyst Grant project—regular updates, tours, social media posts
- Keep Iowa Beautiful grant for paint for building touch-ups

Current Promotion Activities:

- Christmas in a Small Town
- Shop Small Saturday
- Memorial Day Block Party
- Movies on Main
- Downtown Dash and Dine

Potential Activities:

- Collaborative Marketing Campaign
- Highlight businesses on Facebook
- Improve Business Signage
- Activate downtown vacant lots and greenspaces
- Create selfie spots in the downtown—maybe inside businesses as well as outside
- Window display training



Current Design Activities

- MSI Design Visits
- Downtown Lighting Plan
- Maintain new flower planters
- Maintain boulevard plantings
- DTR Façade program—revamp application
- Quarterly downtown cleanups
- Continue mini grant program

Potential Activities:

- Research stormwater issues related to streetscape
- Work with Northside owner to fix side of building
- Work with Lyons on empty lot
- Host design related educational events
- Historic preservation training
- Remove outdated business signage
- Create selfie spots in the downtown
- Grain bin Art project
- Historic building plaques
- Window display training

Current Organization Activities:

- Social media, digital communication
- Monthly Newsletter
- Downtown Dine and Dash event
- Website updates
- Annual fundraising
- Annual Report with progress updates

Potential Activities:

- Research Ameri-Corp VISTA opportunity
- Road trips to other communities to learn best practices

MOVING FORWARD

Transformation Strategy Activities

Activities proposed in this document and summarized on the previous pages serve as a good starting point and guide for moving forward. Still other ideas and activities are likely to grow out of this study's findings and those already contained in the Main Street Coon Rapids work plans and other city planning documents. To that end, the ultimate selection and implementation of activities must also consider the organization's capacity to take on new projects, with an understanding that implementation—and change—will occur over a period of time.

Supporting and Sustaining Activities

The ability to move forward on the ideas and opportunities advanced as part of this study, along with those already in motion or contained in other planning documents, will also hinge on a strong organizational foundation and supporting activities that, while not explicitly spelled out within the context of any market study, are absolutely essential to the success of Main Street Coon Rapids and the community's downtown revitalization efforts.

Main Street Coon Rapids' role as partnership builder, resource locator and publicity machine will become even more important in the months and years ahead. In some cases this role may require the organization to locate or develop entirely new sources of funding to execute a new project, or to find a new volunteer source to ensure that a new festival or event is adequately staffed. In other cases, it might require the organization to re-assess priorities and existing budget allocations as priorities may shift based on the findings of this study, and as new opportunities emerge and conditions change in the future.

Looking Ahead

The completion of this market study is not an end, but rather another milestone in the evolution of the community's downtown enhancement initiative. While the process has served to help identify today's priorities, challenges, and emerging opportunities, it can not, and does not pretend to, anticipate next year's challenges or exciting and unanticipated opportunities on the horizon.

The diligent efforts undertaken by Main Street Coon Rapids staff and volunteers to help gather the input, to study the data, and to guide the development of market-driven actions have prepared the organization and the community well by providing a framework and sound basis for future planning and decision making—processes—and activities that align with the community's vision for Coon Rapids.



Examples: Supporting and Sustaining Activities

Board of Directors/Organization

- ▶ Fundraising and fund development activities to sustain the organization and implement projects and activities.
- ▶ Volunteer development activities including the recruitment, retention and recognition of volunteers.
- ▶ Partnership and public participation efforts to involve a broad cross section of residents, business persons, elected officials, community leaders and representatives from other community organizations.
- ▶ Monitoring and tracking progress, evaluating processes, measuring results, and taking appropriate action, where and when necessary, to refine operations or implement changes.
- ▶ Public relations to enhance awareness of the Main Street Coon Rapids organization and the importance of its work to the community, and to publicize plans, projects and results.
- ▶ Monitoring and evaluating executive staff performance, needs for support staff, and budgeting accordingly.
- ▶ Leadership development, including the allocation of sufficient funds for board member, staff and volunteer leadership development and training.

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Building/Business Inventory to track occupancy, identify underutilized space, benchmark and track property values, develop a contacts database for building and business owners, create and update a downtown business directory, etc.