



Mighty

MOUNT STERLING

STRATEGIC PLAN



JANUARY KICK-OFF SUMMARY

Executive Summary

EVENTS



JANUARY 11
STEERING COMMITTEE
KICK-OFF MEETING



JANUARY 11-12
STAKEHOLDER
INTERVIEWS

(ongoing)



JANUARY 12
POP-UP EVENT AT
BREWS COFFEE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The consultant team visited Mount Sterling on January 11 and 12 to kickoff the strategic planning process. Feedback received from the Steering Committee, stakeholders, residents and community is the foundation from which the plan will be based. Input here will help us to build a vision for the future and ensure such reflects Mount Sterling's needs and goals, actionable aspirations and essential qualities that should be preserved and celebrated.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Mount Sterling has considerable **momentum** fueled by recent investments in Uptown and new/renovated community institutions. The overarching theme from feedback to date is to build on these successes:*

- *diversify affordable housing, dining and service options*
- *attract and retain residents*
- *broaden day-to-evening, seasonal and cultural experiences*
- *improve quality of life, wellbeing and social connectedness*
- *fuel positive local economy*



STEERING COMMITTEE

Rob Akright

Resident

Bill Burge

City of Mount Sterling

Paula Burge

Dot Foods

Dusty Buss

City of Mount Sterling

Nichole Croxton

Simply Shiloh

Megan Costigan

Tracy Family Foundation

Alex Geisler

Action Brown County/YMCA

Emery Gronewold

Dot Foods

Nick Hendricker

Hendricker Funeral Home

Dan Teefey

Tracy Family Foundation

Bob Willis

Brown County

Vada Yingling

City of Mount Sterling



COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

What are Mount Sterling's biggest **accomplishments** over the past 5-10 years?

New open space and recreation offerings

Dot Clinic

New seasonal events

Constructing
new housing

Employment growth

Main Street improvements

New restaurants
& businesses

Early Learning Center

Dorothy's Market

Improved healthcare offerings

Meeting residents' needs

Uptown facades program

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

What are Mount Sterling's biggest **priorities** over the next 5-10 years?

A word cloud of community priorities for Mount Sterling over the next 5-10 years. The words are arranged in various sizes and colors (teal, blue, purple, green) on a white background. The largest word is 'Housing options for all'. Other prominent words include 'Expanding the business district', 'Dining options', 'Entertainment', and 'Recreation'. Smaller words include 'Growing Mount Sterling's population', 'Attracting + supporting small businesses', 'Diversity', 'Retail options', 'Affordability', 'Trails', 'New housing', 'Events', 'Street improvements', 'Unique experiences', 'Arts', and 'Capacity building'.

Growing Mount Sterling's population

Attracting + supporting small businesses

Diversity

Retail options

Affordability

Expanding the business district

Trails

Entertainment

Recreation

Housing options for all

New housing

Events

Dining options

Arts

Street improvements

Unique experiences

Capacity building

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

What are the biggest **challenges** facing Mount Sterling over the next decade?

Community buy in

Business district space

Enough scale to attract a broader populace

The geographical area where we plan to grow and expand.

Senior housing. Where and how to find it?
There by possibly creating more affordable housing.

Keeping new people in the area

Larger appetite than population can sometimes support

Fear of too much growth

Housing; available commercial properties; volunteer fatigue; leadership fatigue

Diversity. Housing. Retention.

Housing, commercial properties, keeping community small, attracting commuters to live in community

Need for growth through diversity and lack of comfort with changing look of community

Reliance on Dot and external resources

Resistance to growth / change - folks love the way things are.

Limitations on space to grow

Residential offerings

Higher property values, thus taxes, as community becomes more attractive

Investment mentality

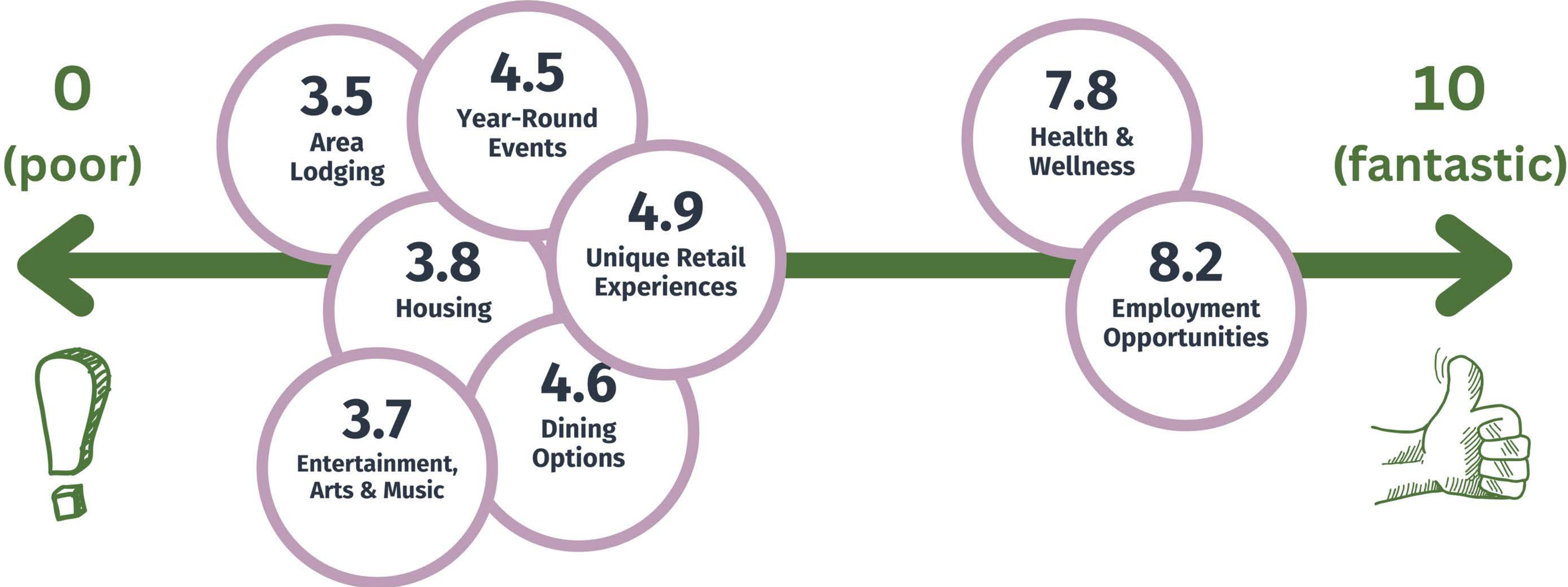
Starting a new business in Illinois with current government requirements!! Taxes regulations etc

Diversity of opportunities for families

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the following in Mount Sterling?

Results indicate the Steering Committee's average response score for each category.



COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

What types of dining options would benefit Mount Sterling?

Pizza

Casual family friendly

Fast casual

More vegetarian, natural, healthy options

Pizza
Pub
Drive though option

Delivery

Bowling, skating, movie theater old fashion but made new and cool

Pizza place

Wood fired pizza

Pizza, bar and grill (sports bar)

Sports bar

Fast food

Another Fast food option

Affordable night family restaurant

Pizza; casual dining; family dining; Sunday brunch

Pizza

Family, pizza, sports bar

Pizza, bar/grill, middle of road restaurant, microbrewery w/food

Outdoor seating

Casual dining. Pizza place. More affordable upscale restaurant

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

What types of **experiences and entertainment** would benefit Mount Sterling?

Family friendly

Digital / Gaming hunting experiences - VR

Art installations

Theater, bowling alley, golf assimilator, bike/walking trails, teens gathering place

Comedy

Traveling theatre, concert, comedian, magician

Farm to table or hunt to table - local food experience

Music, art

Small game plex

Bowling alley; theatre (movie and performance); arcade; axe throwing; driving range more outfitted for casual entertainment

Putt putt golf

Go kart mini golf

Wine bar

Pickleball

Bowling alley
Movie theater
Kids activity center

Outdoor recreation

Lake activities

Open mic night at Legion, Sportsman's ,
Hagel

Recreation. Entertainment

Brewery

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

What types of **housing and lodging options** would benefit Mount Sterling?

More Air b&b

Boutique hotel

Duplex, triplex etc.
Apartments
Mid range housing
Senior housing

Apartments
Hotel
BNB
Small family

Senior loving

Lake glamping

Small cabin at lake to rent

Move some existing rentals to owner occupied

Apartments

Duplex or quadplex construction

Old school Roadhouse

Apartments

Senior housing
Hotels
Rental properties

Town house or condosnot a fan of 30 unit apartments complex

Senior housing apartment complex

Houses from \$80,000 to \$140,000

Senior living

Larger hotel; conference center hotel; rentals; townhomes/duplexes; single family homes;

Independent senior living

Senior housing/apartments, workforce housing, mid price 2-3 bedroom homes

New build subdivision - annexed in city

Prefab ranch with basement in open town lots.

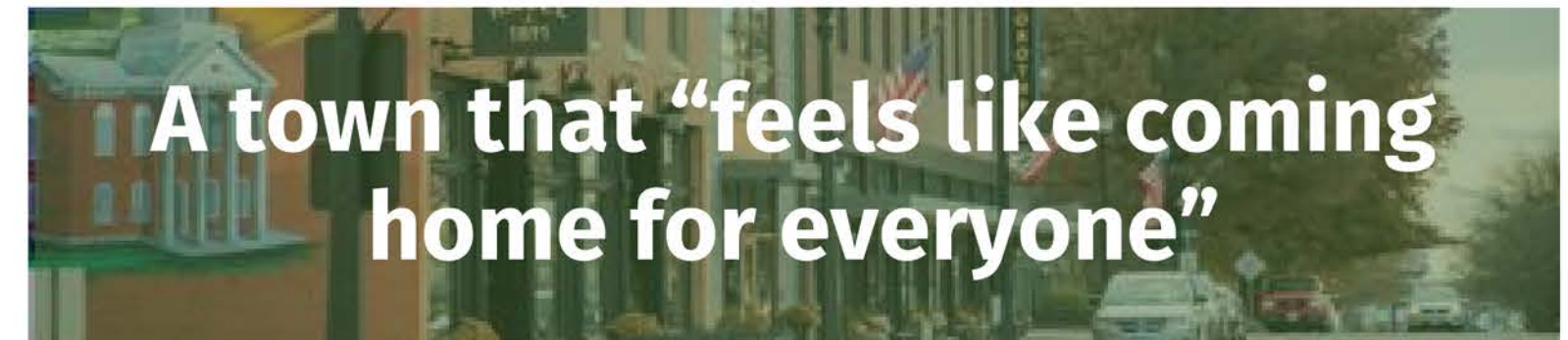
COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Mount Sterling's Strengths



COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Wishes for Mount Sterling:



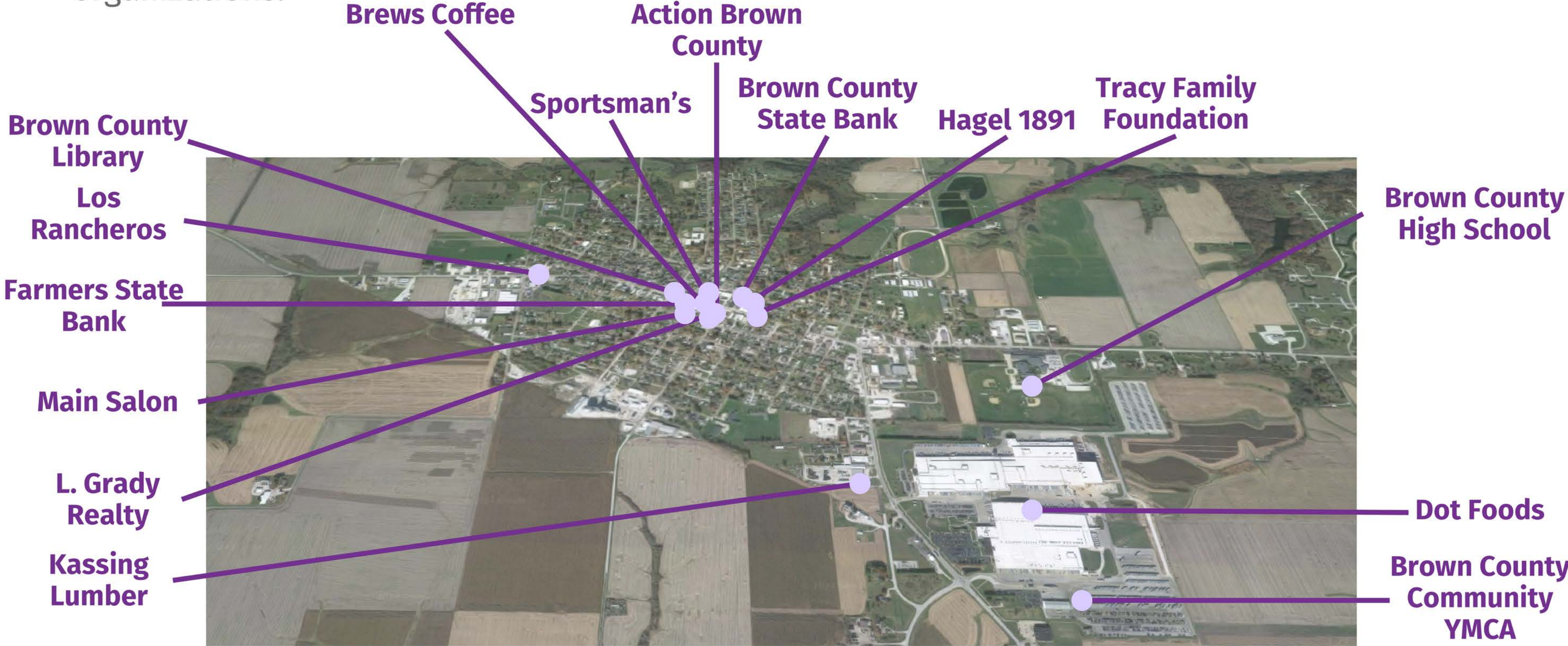
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

In-person and virtual stakeholder interviews were conducted with various business owners, community organizations, and residents to better understand opportunities and challenges in Mount Sterling.



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder interviews tapped owners and/or representatives of the following businesses and organizations:



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Stakeholders touted many of the same positive attributes about Mount Sterling as the Steering Committee. These include its high level of amenities, plentiful employment options, good schools, and the town's people who contribute to a unique sense of community. Interviewees pointed to the Rink, the revitalization of Uptown, and new trails as recent successes in the City.



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Stakeholders echoed the same visions for Mount Sterling, including housing of all types for all life stages, family dining, and more recreation and entertainment options that keep residents in town and encourage workers and visitors to spend more time in the City. Business owners we spoke with are looking for more recognition of the value they add and recommended more support to help more small businesses launch.



POP-UP

The team set up shop in Brews Coffee on Friday morning to gather feedback from residents. In addition to discussing residents' vision for the future, the event solicited feedback about local legends, Brown County trivia, and qualities of Mount Sterling that residents hold dear.



POP-UP

Importantly, the pop-up was also a strategy to get the word out about the plan. While chatting over warm coffee, the team passed out numerous postcards to get the word out about the project. With Brews gift cards as an incentive, a number of visitors signed up to receive emails regarding events and milestones of the planning process.

Here's what we heard...



ONE WISH

more affordable housing

continued growth

more things to do

more dining options

become a destination

more senior housing

HIDDEN GEM

County Fairgrounds

Mt Sterling Lake

Ridgeview Winery

kayak vending & bike trail

Mt Sterling Airport

Brown County Fair

CLASSIC MT STERLING

People referring to their home as Brown County

Seeing a DOT Foods truck

Water Tower and music in Uptown

Every car waves at you

Hornet pride at every turn

Lights at DOT Foods at night

PEOPLE DON'T KNOW

The great parks nearby for kids

Booming hunting industry

Legend of Robert Earl Hughes

Bud Jones - the blind cowboy!

Simoniz Car Wax invented here

Per resident feedback,

MOUNT STERLING IS...

...the host of the oldest continuously-operating county fair in Illinois.

(Except for the COVID year, but let's not count that)

...a small town that has all of life's basic necessities.

(Plus a few fun things!)

...a destination for hunters, golfers, and camping.

(From back nines to ten-point bucks)

...a town built on a strong economic foundation.

(Dot, public jobs, and small businesses, oh my!)

...hometown of the world's largest hog

(Tip-Top Notcher was the name, don't wear it out)

...defined by the green checkerboard.

(Go Hornets!)

...a town that would benefit from more senior housing options and affordable for-sale housing.

(A "big tent" policy, but houses, not tents)

...a hidden gem.

(We agree)

...welcoming.

(Why, hello there!)

...a place that wants a pizzeria.

(mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm)

...ready to grow.

(Let's do it!)

Key Themes



MORE DIVERSE HOUSING STOCK

Options for seniors and quality homes that young families can afford.



MORE REASONS TO STAY IN TOWN

Shops, restaurants, and entertainment options to keep residents, employees, and visitors in town.



HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Athletic fields, trails and parks to enhance enviable natural features, camping, and fresh food options.



Key Themes



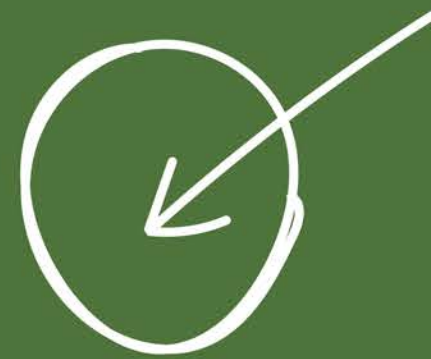
STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Maximizing the impact of finite resources to keep Mount Sterling going.



POLICIES THAT INVITE INVESTMENT

Examining zoning, programs, and regulations to reduce barriers for prospective businesses and residents.

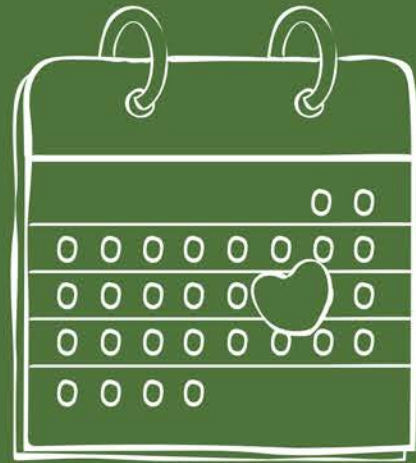


SELF-SUSTAINING CITY

Cultivating and maintaining a symbiotic relationship of residents and businesses that are here to stay.



Next Steps



COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE (3/14)

Turning visions into ideas, in-person and personal! Upstairs at Hagel 1891 from **5:30-7:30 pm.**



CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

Whether at the open house or with a computer mouse, we will look to the community for ideas.



DRAFTING GOALS AND ACTIONS

Distilling data and feedback, we begin to draft guiding principles and action items for the next 5-10 years.



Key questions

Where is the common ground of employee and resident needs?

Where does Mount Sterling grow, what does that look like?

How will we measure progress and build capacity?

Tapping into the needs of residents and local workforce economy is key for the success of new amenities and businesses. What investments will benefit the collective?

Mount Sterling's strong economy and impressive level of amenities chart a course for growth, but where and how does it happen?

Mount Sterling's goals are ambitious but achievable; what partnerships and quantitative benchmarks are needed to help implement and signify progress?

