

DOWNTOWN WHEELING

WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA

2021 MAIN STREET WEST VIRGINIA HOUSING STUDY SERVICES

NEXT STEPS | ACTION AGENDA PLANNING GUIDE



Moving Forward

Market data and 2021 Live It Up! Survey findings provide a market-driven basis and foundation to evaluate opportunities and to fine-tune housing development, business growth, and district enhancement strategies aimed at enhancing Downtown Wheeling as a vibrant place to visit, work, live, play and invest. Other data points can be used to benchmark and track activities, progress, and changes in the marketplace.

Next steps presented in this document are posed as potential strategies and actions, and are framed in a quick-look format to serve as a good starting point and guide for discussion, planning, and moving forward. The list of ideas and proposed actions is not prescriptive nor exhaustive. In the short term, other ideas and activities are likely to grow out of the study's findings as local team members and community, housing and economic development partners take time to interpret and discuss the full breadth of the study's findings and implications for Downtown Wheeling. So, too, the scope and nature of local downtown enhancement and development efforts will undoubtedly change over time as implementation steps are taken, and as new opportunities emerge.



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NEXT STEPS

1,324 Survey Respondents

Those who completed the Live It Up! Survey, and others, will be genuinely interested in learning of the results. Survey findings can be especially valuable in advancing discussions with property owners and prospective developers.

- Share survey results with the public:
 - Make the at-a-glance version available for download and distribution.
 - Post snippets and factoids using social media, newsletter features, and other channels, and invite potential developers, investors and business prospects to learn more about downtown opportunities and resources.
- Share survey results with property owners, developers and investors:
 - Make business and property owner visits to share survey results, with special attention directed toward business expansion candidates, and property rehabilitation and development targets.
 - Take advantage of opportunities to share results with, and invite inquiries from, local government, economic development partners, community housing leaders, real estate professionals, business groups, civic organizations, and others who share a special interest and play a role in promoting downtown housing, business and investment opportunities.



50% Would or might be interested in living downtown.

A populated downtown is a more vibrant downtown. Work with partners to promote and catalyze downtown housing development opportunities.

- Share survey findings on residential interest with property owners, real estate professionals, and potential investors.
- Maintain an inventory of existing and potential downtown housing units and gather information on occupancy, size, square foot rental rates, etc.
- Continue to monitor and track occupancy trends, with special attention directed to the Wheeling-Pitt Lofts Development's absorption.
- Work with local government and building officials to interpret codes and identify adaptive measures for the rehabilitation of historic buildings' upper levels to accommodate a variety of housing styles.
- Research, pursue, and promote programs, resources, incentives (e.g. historic tax credits, tax increment financing, community development block grants, etc.), and technical assistance that might be needed to catalyze and enhance the feasibility of downtown housing rehabilitation and development projects.
- Engage with local government, community housing organizations, and other housing interests to explore, target and promote opportunities for housing rehabilitation and infill development in neighborhoods surrounding the core downtown district.

DOWNTOWN WHEELING

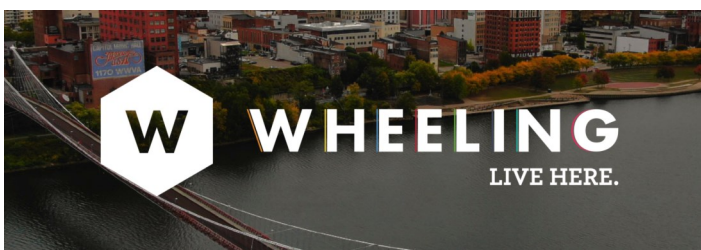
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Elevate the View of Downtown Housing, Downtown Living, and the Downtown Lifestyle.

In many or even most communities, historically, downtown was a place to live because it was cheap. Today, growing segments of the market that choose to live in a downtown setting are driving a more upscale notion of downtown living. Continue to build upon the Wheeling: Live Here initiative, and continue working with property owners, brokers, agents, property managers, and other interests to showcase an exciting image of downtown living today, and to promote interest in housing, property and investment opportunities using traditional and on the street marketing techniques.

- Maintain a current list of available properties and investment opportunities.
- Feature a "Property of the Month" in social media, newsletters, etc.
- Use window treatments to highlight opportunities and to promote an active and more upscale or "hip" version of downtown living.
- Host an annual downtown housing tour to showcase a variety of existing downtown housing styles, projects in progress, and opportunities for housing rehabilitation and development.
- Gather and incorporate downtown images and testimonials from existing downtown area residents in marketing efforts aimed at depicting a lively, or a new or evolving version, of downtown living.



Sixty-eight percent of current downtown residents said they would be very or somewhat likely to **recommend Downtown Wheeling as a good place to live.**



Collaborate with community, economic, and housing development partners to explore creative options.

Exploring the full range of possibilities for downtown housing requires continued collaboration among the various interests and players, and might enlist new partners or engage existing partners in new ways. For example:

- Engage large employers and corporations to identify possible needs and solutions for affordable, temporary, and extended stay housing, and possible interests and roles in development projects to meet needs.
- Work with area arts organizations to explore possible interest in, and resources for, art space and/or artist in residence programs.
- Discuss plans regarding remote working trends with existing office tenants and explore interest in, and possibilities for, conversions to co-working and live-work spaces.



41% Described trends in Downtown Wheeling as "Improving or Making Progress."

Local perspectives on trends in Downtown Wheeling can influence—good, bad or otherwise—business, developer and investor recruitment efforts. So, too, efforts to create an environment conducive to investment and to enhance the district's livability extend well beyond a simple housing market equation.

- Conduct simple, periodic (e.g. semi-annual or annual) social media polls to track public sentiment and the level of community awareness surrounding downtown initiatives and trends.
- Gather images and testimonials that highlight successes, positive changes, investments, progress, and reasons to do business, live, and invest in Downtown Wheeling.
- Focus messaging on, and make connections to, initiatives and progress revolving around assets and high-priority enhancements that survey respondents identified as being most meaningful including:
 - Restoring and preserving the downtown's historic buildings and character, and maintaining a special vibe in downtown
 - Promoting and working to expand retail and eating & drinking options in the downtown
 - Improving the walking environment and related efforts to improve streets, sidewalks, lighting, parks, trails, etc.

Wheeling is a Main Street West Virginia community.

Main Street West Virginia and West Virginia ON TRAC are downtown revitalization programs that follow the National Main Street Center's community-based approach to preservation and development. A subsidiary of The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Main Street is a successful community development model used in thousands of communities across the country.

