



# DEFINING A MISSION & VISION



## ABOUT THE SOLUTION CENTER

The Main Street Solution Center is a free access portal to resources for communities and organizations working to revitalize and strengthen their local economies. The Solution Center's curated resources are designed to help guide and inspire local leaders and advocates as they navigate the complexities of downtown and neighborhood business district revitalization and economic growth.

## ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

This Main Street Solution Center publication was underwritten by Michigan Main Street and Main Street Iowa. Their generous support demonstrates a shared vision and ongoing commitment to freely share knowledge, experience, tools, and best practices to fuel revitalization and economic growth in their own communities, and in locales spanning the nation.



## ABOUT THE CREATORS

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF VISION

A community's vision for a downtown or neighborhood commercial district describes its ideal state or environment in the future – the way it looks, businesses and places to visit, things to do, important economic drivers, distinguishing features, unordinary experiences, and other aspirational assets and traits.

An effective vision statement – one rooted in the ideas and values shared by a broad spectrum of community stakeholders – captures the essence of a future place and serves as a compass to help guide strategic planning processes and to shape an organization's mission and goals, and the scope and nature of its work.

## The Vision Statement | Examples

Vision statements, like the examples appearing below, might be presented in two formats that can be adapted to different collateral materials and uses: 1) a one- or two-sentence summary or capsule version; and 2) a narrative version.

### Example One: Capsule

Downtown Foley, the place where the Gulf Coast begins, is a lively and vibrant destination, home, and workplace teeming with activities, sights, sounds, and flavors that celebrate and invigorate our forward-thinking community.

### Example One: Narrative

Nestled at the intersection of history, beauty, fun, and innovation, Downtown Foley has emerged as a lively and vibrant destination teeming with activities, sights, sounds, and flavors that celebrate and invigorate the place where the Gulf Coast begins. Locals and visitors of all ages are naturally attracted to an authentic downtown experience that is safe, familiar, comfortable, whimsical, and energetic all at the same time. Inviting tree- and garden-lined pathways lead to new discoveries, prominent civic facilities, beautiful parks, and an eclectic mix of local retail establishments and eateries offering a warm southern greeting to friends both old and new. The downtown's growing ranks of residents and workplace members fuel a diverse and robust economy, and heighten levels of daytime activity and entertainment that spill into evenings. The award-winning and inclusive efforts behind Downtown Foley's recent evolution provide solid footings upon which this forward-thinking community continues to move boldly toward a compelling, exciting, and prosperous future.

### Example Two: Capsule

We are dedicated to creating a vibrant district where friends gather, businesses thrive, memories are made, and communities grow stronger. This is the place to go to feel connected.

### Example Two: Narrative

Our vision is to see the district transform into a thriving hub of community life and economic activity, setting a benchmark for historic preservation and modern innovation. We envision a vibrant, bustling center that attracts residents and visitors alike, offering a unique blend of locally owned businesses, cultural attractions, and community spaces. We aspire to create an environment where the district's historical charm is seamlessly integrated with contemporary amenities, making it a model for sustainable, inclusive urban living. Our vision extends to fostering a sense of pride and belonging among all community members, where the spirit of collaboration and creativity drives the continuous growth and prosperity of our downtown area.



## CRAFTING A VISION STATEMENT

A process that invites participation and interaction, encourages creativity and big ideas, and makes it fun and easy to be involved will almost always yield the best results. Examples of steps common to many successful visioning processes include:

- ❑ Organizing and publicizing opportunities for community members to participate, and extending special invitations to key stakeholders and partners.
- ❑ Pursuing outreach opportunities to gather ideas and create interest in the weeks leading up to a public visioning forum (e.g. using three or four single-question social media polls, posing a single question atop whiteboards or chalkboards placed at different locations or events).
- ❑ Hosting a facilitated, open invitation public visioning forum or open house event to gather input and ideas, and to help generate consensus around prevalent ideas, values, themes, and elements.
- ❑ Using the results to wordsmith a compelling vision statement that encapsulates ideas, identifies key features, inspires, and paints a picture of the district in the future. For example, a vision statement might point to a thriving, vibrant district that attracts residents and visitors alike, preserves its historical heritage, and serves as a hub for local businesses and cultural activities. Identify specific, distinguishing features and incorporate adjectives and terms commonly offered by participants to make the statement distinct and resonate with the community.
- ❑ Presenting a draft version of the statement to the board for review, making any necessary refinements, and formally adopting the vision statement.





## VISIONING QUESTIONS

Examples for questions designed to spur creativity and conversation relevant to a place's future appear below. It may seem odd to find questions asking about current day conditions on the list. But recognizing existing conditions can often prompt ideas for changes and improvements, can help set priorities, and can provide a means for evaluating the magnitude of commitment, collaboration, and investment likely to be required on the journey to achieving the vision.

- What is the most positive thing about the district today – or the thing you are most proud of?
- What is the district's greatest liability today – or the thing you are least proud of?
- What is the greatest challenge or barrier to overcome on the way to making the district truly great?
- What idea or possibility for the district gets you most excited?
- Why is the district important to the future of the community?
- What will be the district's most distinguishing or defining feature in [future year]?
- What three, single words will best describe the ultimate version of the district in [future year]?
- What are three things that will be part of the "right mix" for the district in [future year]?
- In one short sentence, what will the district be "known for" in [future year]?
- What is one thing about the district that you hope children will remember or experience in [future year]?
- What will be some of the most popular things for people to do in the district in [future year]?



## DEFINING YOUR MISSION

A mission statement defines an organization's core purpose and function. It answers the questions of what the organization does, who it serves, and how it does so. For organizations formed to advance downtown or district revitalization initiatives, this could involve promoting economic development, preserving historical character, and fostering community engagement. The mission statement also helps to allocate limited resources and guide the organization's daily operations and decision-making processes in ways that align with its fundamental purpose and goals, and the community's vision for the district.



### The Mission Statement | Examples

#### Mission Statement - Example One

Our mission is to actively revitalize and sustain the district as the vibrant heart of our community. We are dedicated to preserving its unique historical character while fostering economic growth and development. We aim to create a welcoming, dynamic environment that supports local businesses, encourages community engagement, and enhances the quality of life for all residents and visitors. Through collaborative efforts, strategic partnerships, and community-driven initiatives, we strive to make the district a thriving, inclusive, and culturally rich destination that honors our past, celebrates our present, and embraces our future.

#### Mission Statement - Example Two

We are a volunteer-driven nonprofit organization engaging the community in local initiatives to make our city center a truly distinct destination that embraces its heritage,

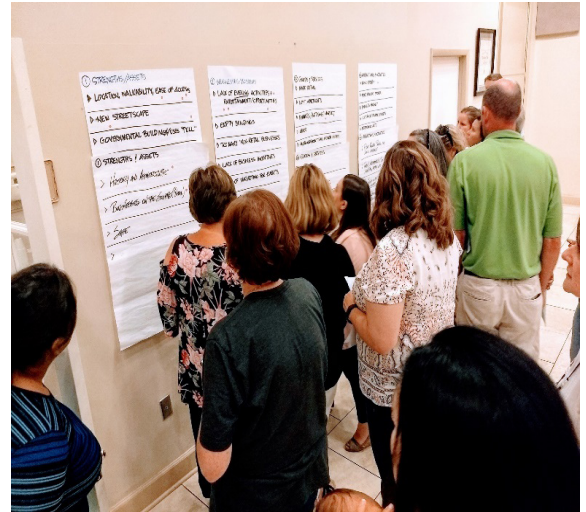


fosters a center of activity, stimulates economic health and vitality, and welcomes residents and visitors of all cultures.

## CREATING A MISSION STATEMENT

The effort behind creating a mission statement should be intentional and thoughtful, but it doesn't need to be made overly complicated. The process is largely internal, involving the board of directors and key staff. In some cases, a few key partners or stakeholders may also be invited to participate in the discussion. Steps common to different approaches might include:

- Devoting time – perhaps an hour or more – at a board work session or retreat to create a rough draft of the mission statement (Note: Organizations with an existing mission statement should take some time each year to review the statement for affirmation and to ensure alignment with the organization's operations and the scope of its work.)
- Using the work session to discuss the organization's primary purpose and to create a rough draft of a mission statement based on common threads identified in board member responses to questions like the following:
  - Why does the organization exist? (what is the primary purpose, or what needs are being addressed)
  - Who does the organization serve? (who benefits from the work of the organization)



- How does the organization do it? (how the organization carries out its purpose)
- Fine-tuning the rough draft for presentation to the board..
- Presenting a draft version of the statement to the board for review, making any final refinements, and formally adopting the vision statement.

## USING VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

A defined vision and mission are powerful tools for:

**Motivating and Unifying.** Use the statements as motivational tools for unifying the organization’s members, volunteers, investors, and others around a common cause and goal.

**Planning and Decision-Making.** Use the vision statement and an assessment of current conditions to identify different ways to fill the gap between now and then, and to guide important decision-making processes. Use it as a litmus test for each action and project proposed by asking, “Does it align with, and will it help us ultimately achieve, the vision for the district?”



**Communicating and Marketing.** Vision and mission statements provide the underpinnings for messages and images conveying the organization’s purpose, values, and goals to the full cadre of district stakeholders, including residents, businesses, government and economic development partners, and potential investors. Use the statements to frame even the smallest successes and achievements as important steps toward a shared vision.

**Evaluating and Adapting:** The statements provide a basis upon which to evaluate the organization’s performance, the effectiveness of district enhancement initiatives, and proposals for changes or new strategies designed to fuel and keep efforts on track.

