



Downtown in View

Blissfield, a Michigan Main Street Community, is exploring and pursuing exciting opportunities for the Downtown Blissfield business district.

The Blissfield DDA/Main Street Program, in conjunction with technical services and support provided by Michigan Main Street Center, spearheaded the Downtown Blissfield Market Study and Business Development Strategies project to identify opportunities and establish meaningful direction for current and future economic development and redevelopment strategies. Findings from the study provide a solid, market-driven basis for Downtown Blissfield business development and marketing initiatives based on demographic, socioeconomic and economic conditions and trends.

Stakeholders from a broad cross-section of the Blissfield community participated in the process. The findings and results provide a solid basis upon which local leaders, and stakeholders can make sound business decisions about the future of Downtown Blissfield.

This summary serves to highlight only a small sample of the knowledge and direction synthesized from analysis of data collected during the market study process. The diligent efforts undertaken by Blissfield DDA/Main Street Program leaders and volunteers to gather input, to study the data, and to initiate the development of a market-driven implementation strategy have prepared the organization and the community well by providing a public framework and a strong basis upon which the community can plan and act for the future.



Downtown Blissfield

Blissfield, Michigan

Market Study

And Business Development Strategies

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -

Prepared for

Blissfield DDA/Main Street Program

www.BlissfieldMainStreet.com



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in association with

Michigan Main Street Center

Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Lansing, Michigan



Blissfield on Display

Blissfield, Michigan is located along Highway 223 in the southeast corner of the state, within an approximate hour drive to either Ann Arbor or Detroit, but closer still – at about a thirty minute drive – to Toledo, Ohio. This geographic position allows Blissfield to benefit greatly from “day-trip” type tourism.

Blissfield’s Main Street Area is bordered to the west by the River Raisin, extends just beyond Highway 223 to the north, Giles Avenue to the east, and Union Street to the south. Most of the traditional downtown retail uses are situated along Lane Street from Highway 223 to Union, with some of the more visitor-oriented retail offerings facing Highway 223 west of Lane. Beyond this “core of the core,” Blissfield’s downtown is also home to several businesses, from auto shops to museums that are less retail oriented and that are housed in a mix of buildings, ranging from traditional two-story commercial storefronts to industrial buildings.

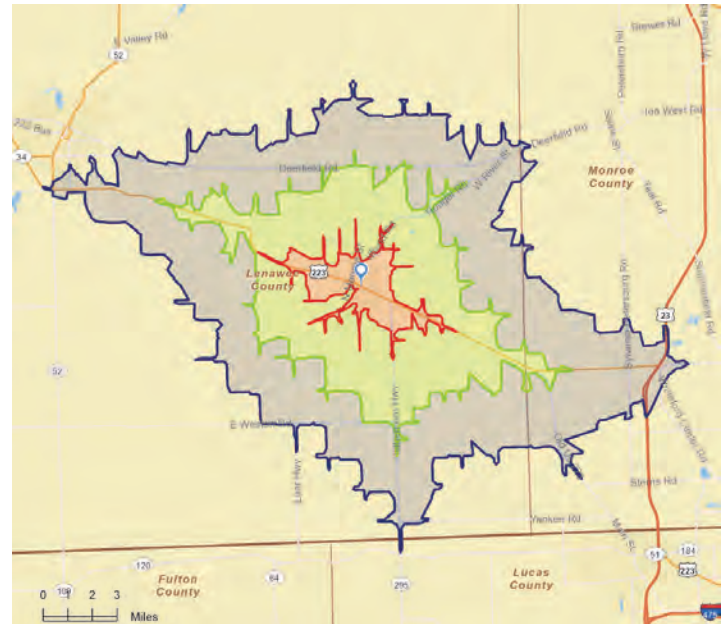
Downtown Blissfield is home to excellent building stock, featuring some exceptional traditional commercial architecture. and the downtown’s adjacent residential neighborhoods are equally endowed, with architectural styles, features and details reflecting the community’s rich heritage and evolution.

Downtown is home to a significant antiques cluster, along with some attention-getting gift and home interior retail businesses. These businesses, in combination with the quaint historic charm of the downtown district, provide an excellent day-trip destination for larger populations residing in the nearby communities of Ann Arbor, Detroit and Toledo. The Main Street area is also home to a handful of popular eateries, and many professional and service businesses that generate consistent traffic and serve the needs of local residents.

Traffic in the district is enhanced by governmental services, museums, and a very active promotional calendar, including excursion trains from the Village of Blissfield, car show and cruise-in events, River Raisin Festival, Railroad Day and arts-related events which serve to both celebrate Blissfield’s storied history, and to inject an air of contemporary, new era flair, fun and excitement in the district.

Downtown Blissfield Drive Time Markets

Fast Facts



Population	5 MIN	10 MIN	15 MIN
2010 Census	3,312	5,055	10,840
2011 Estimate	3,245	4,972	10,726
2016 Projection	3,145	4,858	10,570
Change: 2011 – 2016	-3.1%	-2.3%	-1.5%

Households	5 MIN	10 MIN	15 MIN
2010 Census	1,338	1,979	4,213
2011 Estimate	1,311	1,947	4,171
2016 Projection	1,275	1,908	4,135
Change: 2011 – 2016	-2.7%	-2.0%	-0.9%

Median HH Income	5 MIN	10 MIN	15 MIN
2011 Estimate	\$44,012	\$47,817	\$50,034
2016 Projection	\$51,686	\$53,904	\$54,991
Change: 2011 – 2016	+17.4%	+12.7%	+9.9%

Source: ESRI – Compiled from Census 2010 Summary Profile; and Demographic and Income Profile (2011 Data) Report.

Marketing & Promotion

Marketing and promotion activities will play a key role as part of Blissfield’s long-term downtown enhancement program. The ability to appeal to targeted consumer segments through high quality marketing and promotional activities, orchestrated to expound upon downtown Blissfield’s features, assets and attractions, can effectively help to build a positive image and, in essence, affect positive changes in the market.

Festivals and special events that enhance and maintain a strong sense of “local flavor” can deliver powerful messages and indelible, long-lasting images and impressions that provide emotional links to the past and nurture new traditions – and customers. Market study findings point to messages, activities and events oriented to married families with or without children, and couples at or nearing retirement age that:

- ▶ Celebrate Blissfield’s unique history
- ▶ Capitalize on downtown’s historic charm and ambience
- ▶ Emphasize a nostalgic experience in a historic small town
- ▶ Include hands-on activities and live entertainment for all ages
- ▶ Provide opportunities for diverse groups to interact
- ▶ Create a heightened sense of activity and energy within the Downtown Bloomfield district

Blissfield’s Railroad Days and Car Show events, harkening back to the history of the downtown and the days when life was simpler, are great examples of festivals and events highlighting the district’s heritage and nostalgic charm.

Beyond festivals and events, the market study provides direction for Blissfield DDA/Main Street Program in its continuing work with downtown and area visitor attractions, and the downtown business community, to expand regional and tourism-oriented marketing programs and advertising campaigns that feature the downtown area as a prominent visitor attraction.

Cooperative advertising programs and cross-marketing efforts offer another means toward image enhancement efforts designed to convey a quality image of the downtown and to broaden the community’s awareness as to the full range of products and services available from downtown businesses.



Downtown Housing

Consumer survey results lend support for the development, redevelopment or adaptive reuse of downtown housing of various styles in Downtown Blissfield. A relatively impressive 28% of consumer survey participants answered “Yes” or “Maybe” when asked if they would consider living in downtown Blissfield.

Q. Would you consider living in downtown Blissfield?

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	54	12.4%
Maybe	67	15.4%
No	313	72.2%

Downtown Blissfield Market Study | 2012

The best prospects for new downtown housing might be directed toward the development of units that are quite different from the current inventory of housing options available in the broader community – including styles that might take advantage of the unordinary dimensions, layouts and materials found in the upper levels of downtown commercial buildings to create distinguishable and even “funky” living and live/work spaces; and for higher-density mixed-use development at potential redevelopment sites in the downtown district and immediate surrounding area.





Historic Preservation and Design

Historic preservation is a key element of most, if not all, successful downtown enhancement programs in the United States. Communities across the country have come to recognize that their historic resources are integral to maintaining a strong sense of place and a distinguishable identity in the market place.

The community's desire to see quality building improvements is bolstered by business survey returns showing 52% of respondents indicating plans to start or complete building improvements within the next year or two, and 33% indicating an interest in free or low-cost building improvement design services. The results suggest that guiding individual building improvements in order to achieve the desired effect for the district as a whole should be a high priority for the Blissfield DDA/Main Street Program Design Committee over the next few years.

Relatively simple projects designed to enhance and enliven downtown Blissfield's streetscape and public spaces, such as attention to plantings and the deployment of banners, help to improve the district's appearance and enhance the pedestrian experience. Continuing efforts to place "finishing touches" on these elements might include additional flowers and plantings, rotating seasonal and event banners, flags and other decorative and interpretive elements that add color and help to tell the "downtown Blissfield story." Placing elements at the district boundaries, particularly on Highway 223, might help to announce to visitors that they have "arrived" at a special place; and streetscape furnishings and way-finding signage that extend design elements throughout the district could help to reinforce a sense of downtown as a unified district and special place.

Eighty four percent of consumer survey respondents rated parking in downtown Blissfield as "Stronger" or "Equal" to other shopping areas they frequent. Current parking supply appears to be adequate to meet demand, but must be monitored as development occurs and conditions change to best accommodate the short- and long-term parking needs of downtown Blissfield customers, residents and employees.

Business Development

Retail Targets

Market Study findings provide direction for various business types showing potential for expansion and recruitment. The implementation of business development strategies is part of a comprehensive, long-term downtown enhancement program that emphasizes business retention efforts and a series of initiatives that will make the downtown area an even more attractive place to do business and invest.

Retail expansion and recruitment targets capitalize and expand upon the downtown area's retail sector strengths and traffic generated by existing businesses. Examples of business types and merchandise lines showing potential for expansion and recruitment in Downtown Blissfield include:

- ▶ **Food Services and Drinking Places**
 - Full – Service Restaurants
 - Limited-Service Eating Places
 - Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)
- ▶ **Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores**
 - Kitchenware, home gifts and gadgets
 - Garden boutiques
 - Specialty food pairings
- ▶ **Specialty Food Stores**
 - Bakery and gourmet coffees
 - Meat market/deli. wines and cheeses
 - Locally grown and produced specialty foods
- ▶ **Miscellaneous and Specialty Store Retailers**
 - Gifts and stationery
 - Custom art and handcrafted gifts
 - Resale boutiques

Downtown Office and Service Uses

Office and services uses in downtown Blissfield already play an important role in generating consistent traffic to support the district's economy and sense of vitality. Predictably, office and service uses will continue to be important to downtown in the future, and these uses should continue to be encouraged to locate within the downtown area and, where appropriate and applicable, the Blissfield DDA/Main Street Program and community development partners should work to locate these uses in buildings and spaces that are conducive to creating and maintaining a strong sense of retail vibrancy throughout the downtown district.



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