

1.0 Introduction

In January 2000, the City of Oshkosh, the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, and the Oshkosh Chamber retained LDR International, Inc., of Columbia, Maryland, to help the community prepare for the turn of the century by assisting in the creation of a Downtown Design and Development Plan. City leadership recognized that a re-examination of downtown was necessary in light of the economic and physical changes taking place along Highway 41 to the west of downtown. These changes would certainly influence the future of the downtown area and hopefully create a sense of energy and momentum that would spin-off economic development and other needed physical improvements. The goal of this increased level of investment is enhanced property values, a higher quality of life for area residents and business owners, and new uses for underutilized parcels throughout the downtown area.

LDR International, Inc. was hired not only to develop a Downtown Design and Development Plan for the future of Oshkosh's downtown, but also to craft that vision from a thorough consensus building process that involved the representatives of the community, the key stakeholders in downtown Oshkosh, and the city/downtown leadership.

LDR was also asked to conduct a cursory review of the city's zoning ordinance and provide a Strategic Assessment Report and Downtown Action Plan that would document the planning process and outline a variety of projects and programs that can serve to rejuvenate Downtown Oshkosh. The resulting products are this report and a companion Strategic Assessment Report that can be used to promote and market the planning effort to a broader audience.

1.1 Background

When LDR International was retained to create a Downtown Design and Development Plan, the area had not experienced significant investment in a number of years. However, several initiatives are setting the stage for future investment: the development of the Bridgeview Center, six tax increment finance districts, a business improvement district, and two historic districts; the 1993 Comprehensive Plan update; redevelopment potential of the 100 block of N. Main Street; proposed convention center expansion; and the Marion Road redevelopment project. The city has augmented these improvements through its governing committees and general funds.

1.2 Study Area Boundary

The boundaries of the Downtown Design and Development Plan study area were determined by the Oshkosh Partnership Committee and staff. From this initial assessment of the area, the Plan's boundaries are defined by Irving Avenue to the north and Broad Street to the east with South Park Avenue defining the southern limits and western limits defined by Ohio and Wisconsin Streets. As the planning process got underway, the focus shifted to the immediate development and redevelopment efforts of the historic downtown area. The study area was reduced slightly by shifting the northern boundary south to Parkway Avenue.