



Historic Preservation & Revitalization in Old Town Peoria

ASU
Sustainable Cities Network
Arizona State University

Project Cities

A Fall 2021 Collaborative Project with Arizona State University's Project Cities & the City of Peoria



PART 1:

Project and Community Introduction

GET TO KNOW THE PROJECT

ABOUT ASU PROJECT CITIES

ABOUT THE CITY OF PEORIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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This report represents original work prepared for the City of Peoria by students participating in courses aligned with Arizona State University's Project Cities program. Findings, information, and recommendations are those of students and are not necessarily of Arizona State University. Student reports are not peer reviewed for statistical or computational accuracy, or comprehensively fact-checked, in the same fashion as academic journal articles. Editor's notes are provided throughout the report to highlight instances where Project Cities staff, ASU faculty, municipal staff, or any other reviewer felt the need to further clarify information or comment on student conclusions. Project partners should use care when using student reports as justification for future actions. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from Project Cities.

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**City of Peoria &
Project Cities**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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On behalf of the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory, the Global Institute of Sustainability and Innovation, and the School of Sustainability, we extend a heartfelt thank you to the City of Peoria for enthusiastically engaging with students and faculty throughout the semester. These projects provide valuable real-world experience for our students and we hope that their perspectives shine light on opportunities to continuously improve Peoria's future livelihood and community well-being.

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To access the original student reports, additional materials, and resources, visit:

links.asu.edu/PCPeoriaHistoricPreservation21F

ABOUT PROJECT CITIES

The ASU Project Cities program uses an innovative, new approach to traditional university-community partnerships. Through a curated relationship over the course of an academic year, selected Community Partners work with Project Cities faculty and students to co-create strategies for better environmental, economic, and social balance in the places we call home. Students from multiple disciplines research difficult challenges chosen by the city and propose innovative sustainable solutions in consultation with city staff. This is a win-win partnership, which also allows students to reinforce classroom learning and practice professional skills in a real-world client-based project. Project Cities is a member of Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), a growing coalition of more than 35 educational institutions partnering with local government agencies across the United States and around the world.

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE CITIES NETWORK

Project Cities is a program of ASU's Sustainable Cities Network. This network was founded in 2008 to support communities in sharing knowledge and coordinating efforts to understand and solve sustainability problems. It is designed to foster partnerships, identify best practices, provide training and information, and connect ASU's research to front-line challenges facing local communities. Network members come from Arizona cities, towns, counties, and Native American communities, and cover a broad range of professional disciplines. Together, these members work to create a more sustainable region and state. In 2012, the network was awarded the Pacific Southwest Region's 2012 Green Government Award by the U.S. EPA for its efforts. For more information, visit sustainablecities.asu.edu.

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Project Cities



ABOUT PEORIA

Ranked as the No. 1 place to live in Arizona by Money Magazine, the City of Peoria is currently home to over 191,000 residents. The City enjoys a reputation as a family-oriented, active community with an exceptional quality of life. Peoria entertainment and recreational amenities include attractions such as Lake Pleasant, trails, and community parks.

The City has also demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability, as evidenced by its incorporation of LEED building design standards, a council-adopted Sustainability Action Plan, and the "Green Team" staff dedicated to managing organization-wide sustainability initiatives.

PEORIA TEAM

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Peoria is the place
World class ▪ Sustainable ▪ Future Ready
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February 28, 2022

Dear Peoria community members,

On behalf of the City of Peoria, we would like to express our appreciation to all who have been involved with Arizona State University's (ASU) Project Cities program. Over the last year, our staff has had the opportunity to collaborate with faculty and students across several academic programs, benefitting from their insights, ingenuity, and diverse perspectives on a number of projects. Many of these entailed public participation, and you may have met some of these engaging students at a community event, or completed a community survey.

Project Cities is one of several partnerships we enjoy with ASU, and part of our ongoing strategy to connect with community partners to leverage our resources as we address the many challenges facing local governments. Working with students at an undergraduate, graduate and capstone project level brings a fresh perspective and resourcefulness to complex issues. This partnership has resulted in extensive research, recommendations, and deliverables that take several key initiatives to the next level. These include our efforts around increasing transit ridership, community engagement strategies, historic preservation and innovative recycling methods. Through this partnership, we have developed an understanding of the feasibility of each initiative much more quickly than we could have without their collaboration.

The results provided on each project position us to serve our community with cost-effective and innovative programs in the interest of continuous improvement. The city has already begun to incorporate the students' deliverables into next steps in advancing these projects. We look forward to continuing this work on additional projects in the coming year with such talented students and faculty.

The City of Peoria appreciates the ongoing and growing relationship with Arizona State University and the many ways in which the alliance provides mutual value.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Carrat".

Cathy Carrat, Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Tyne".

Jeff Tyne, City Manager

Peoria, Arizona



Proud partner of
ASU Sustainable Cities
Network
Arizona State University

Project Cities

Rio Vista Recreation Center

Demographics

total population: **190,985**

median age: **35**

**highly skilled and educated workforce
of 85,252**

11,997 veterans live in Peoria

78% of residents are homeowners

median property value: **\$399,025**

**33% of residents hold a Bachelor's
degree or higher**

median household income: **\$79,700**

Schools

#3 of 131 Best School Districts for Athletes in Arizona

#5 of 40 Best School Districts in Phoenix Metro Area

#7 of 130 Best School Districts in Arizona

The Peoria Unified School District consistently receives high ratings and offers signature programs such as the Career and Technical Education programs. Deer Valley Unified School District has two highly-rated K-8 schools within the city, including an Academy of Arts.

Peoria is also home to Huntington University, a liberal arts college offering digital media education in animation, broadcasting, film, graphic design and other digital media arts.

Leading industries

Peoria, Arizona is not just a scenic suburb of Phoenix, but also a thriving economic development hub with an educated workforce and high-end residential living. There are over 4,000 employers and more than 75,000 people employed within Peoria. Leading industries include health care and social assistance, retail trade, and finance and insurance. Highest-paying industries include utilities, manufacturing and public administration. Beyond these industries, Peoria works actively to attract businesses from aerospace and defense, film and digital media, technology and innovation, hospitality and tourism, and research and development. Peoria is the place for business owners, developers and investors.



Health Care & Social Work

10,905 employees



Retail Trade

10,628 employees



Finance & Insurance

6,574 employees



History

Founded in 1886 by Midwestern settlers, Peoria is nestled in the Salt River Valley and extends North into the foothills around Lake Pleasant. Beginning as a small agricultural town, the economy received a major boost when a railroad spur line was built along Grand Avenue. The construction of the Roosevelt Dam in 1910 secured a reliable water supply, attracting more settlers to the area and business endeavors to the town center. Peoria's economy continued to have an agricultural focus for decades. Continually growing, Peoria assumed city status in 1971 with a population of 4,792. It has since grown into a city with a population over 190,000, and is renowned for its high quality of life and recreational amenities.

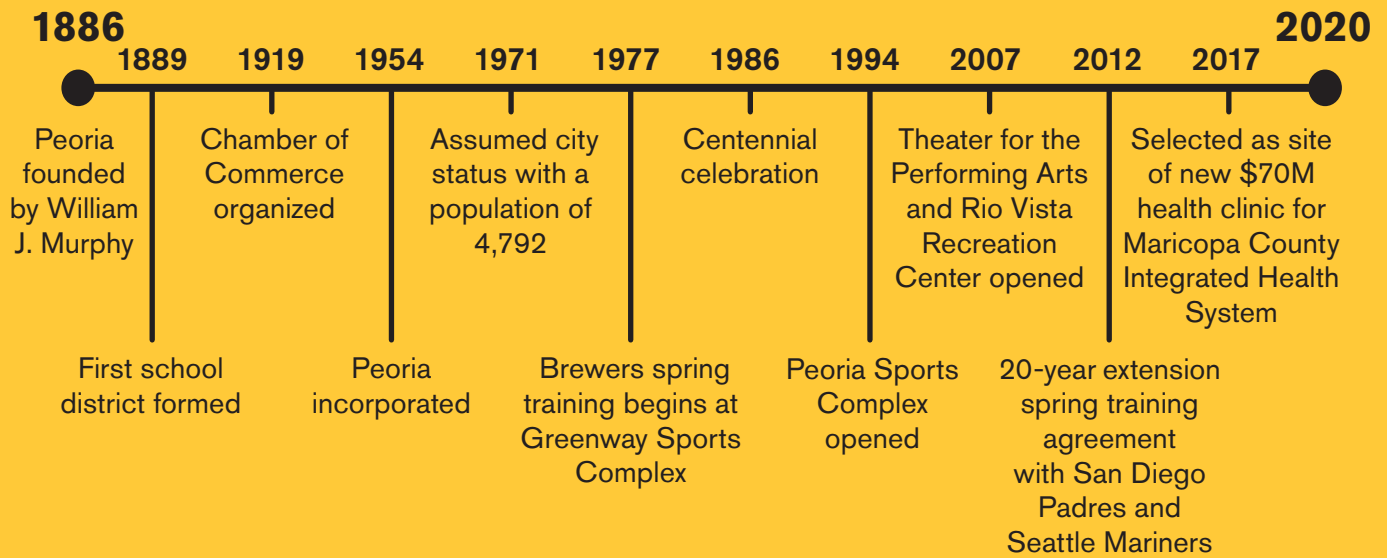
Sustainability

Peoria has demonstrated leadership in municipal sustainability efforts through a wide range of actions. Listed below are some of the City's sustainability accomplishments.

- Incorporation of LEED building design standards
- Appointment of a full-time city staff member who manages and coordinates sustainability initiatives
- Sustainable urban planning practices including open space planning and water management principles
- Sustain and Gain: Facebook page and brochures keep residents up to date on city sustainability efforts and ways to get involved
- Water Conservation Program: free public classes, public outreach at city events, and water rebate incentives for residents
- Council-Adopted Sustainability Action Plan: this strategic planning document, in its second iteration, ensures city departments are developing sustainability-oriented goals, tracking success metrics, and encouraging cross-communication in the preparation of Sustainability Update presentations made to the Peoria City Council on an annual basis
- Sustainable University: courses and workshops to empower residents to make small changes that make Peoria a better place to live; topics covered include residential solar, gardening, composting and recycling

Awards and recognition

- Number One City to Live, Work and Play in 2021 (*Ranking Arizona*)
- Received three Crescordia awards by Arizona Forward at the annual Environmental Excellence Awards in 2016
- 12th City for Green Space in the U.S. in 2019 (*Wallethub*)
- Top 15 Safest Cities in the U.S. 2017-2019 (*Wallethub*)
- 6th Wealthiest ZIP Code in 2020 (*Phoenix Business Journal*)
- Top 50 Hottest Hoods in 2018 (*Phoenix Business Journal*)
- 10th Best City to Raise a Family in 2018 (*Wallethub*)
- Top 100 Golf Course in U.S. 2017-2019 (*Golf Digest*)



Livability

Peoria is renowned as a great place to raise a family and start a career. A plethora of

local amenities and attractions contribute to Peoria's livability. Beyond the tourist attractions of Spring Training and Lake Pleasant, the City offers many community facilities and recreational opportunities for all ages and interests such as an extensive public park system and annual community events. Peoria's dedication toward livability is also evident in the City's latest General Plan which addresses sustainable water use, housing, public services and more.

Ranked as the No. 1 place to live in Arizona and one of the best cities in the United States.

-Money Magazine and Yahoo! Finance

Peoria strives to uphold these six major livability priorities in order to maintain an exceptional quality of life for its citizens:

	Arts, Cultural and Recreational Enrichment		Economic Prosperity
	Smart Growth		Superior Public Services
	Healthy Neighborhoods		Integrated Transportation

Community Facilities

- Peoria Community Center
- Rio Vista Recreation Center
- Peoria Sports Complex
- Peoria Center for the Performing Arts
- 39 neighborhood parks
- 2 libraries
- 3 swimming pools
- 5 golf courses
- 9 lighted multi-purpose ball fields
- 15 tennis courts

Peoria Sports Complex



Lake Pleasant

Urban ecology, ecotourism and recreation

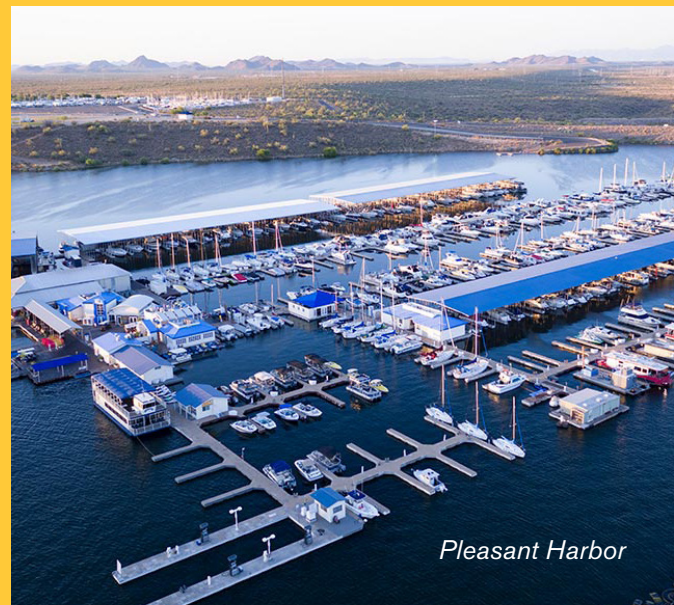
Peoria is surrounded by the natural beauty of the Sonoran Desert and is home to Lake Pleasant, a 23,000-acre park and major recreational asset to the North Valley. The transient Agua Fria River and New River flow through Peoria, as do a multitude of washes and creeks. Most notable perhaps is Skunk Creek — known for the recreational trails running alongside it — which forges a connection between Peoria and Glendale. Northern Peoria is home to beautiful mountains and buttes including Sunrise Mountain, Calderwood Butte and Cholla Mountain.

Boasting over 300 days of sunshine annually, Peoria's ecotourism opportunities are a steady industry for residents and visitors. The City features over 60 miles of trails for walking, biking and horseback riding, as well as 570 total acres of accessible park land.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park contains a full-service marina, providing opportunities for water-oriented recreation such as kayaking, water skiing and even scuba diving. Visitors can also go horseback riding, take gliding lessons, hike, camp and more.

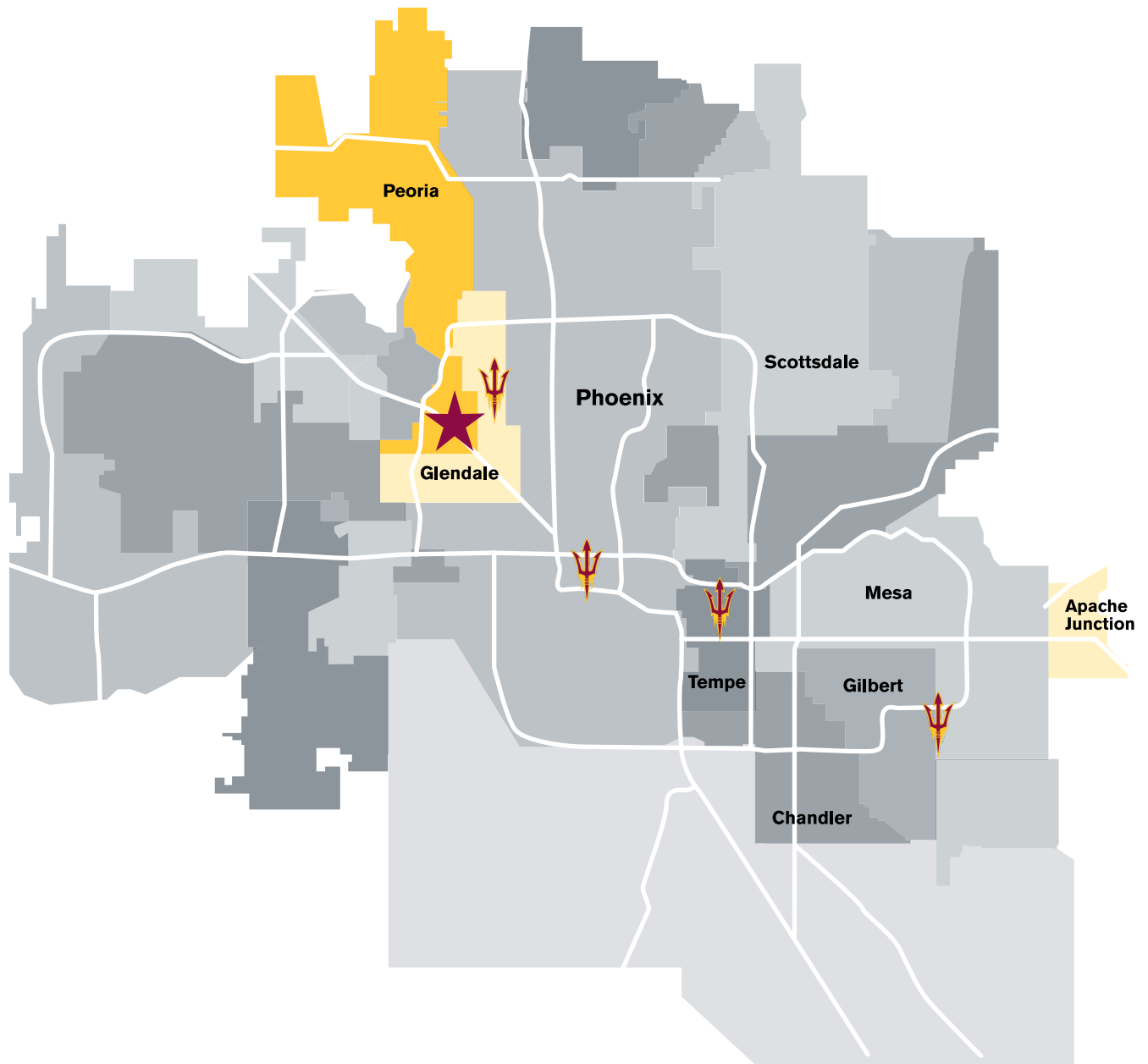


Skunk Creek



Pleasant Harbor

MAP OF PROJECT CITIES PARTNER COMMUNITIES IN THE GREATER PHOENIX METROPOLITAN AREA



 Peoria City Hall

 ASU campus



The following report summarizes and draws highlights from work and research conducted by capstone students Melissa Oister, Charmaine Turner, and Anna Loseke in PAF 509 Public Affairs Capstone, for the Fall 2021 partnership between ASU's Project Cities and the City of Peoria.

To access the original student reports, additional materials, and resources, visit:

links.asu.edu/PCPeoriaHistoricPreservation21F

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Peoria's Old Town area is a significant historical site in the community. Similar to many historic districts and downtown areas throughout the United States, Old Town could benefit from reinvestment in the form of historic preservation and revitalization efforts. These types of projects aim to highlight regional history while creating new community attractions that can boost the local economy and provide new entertainment and connection opportunities for residents and visitors.

Three graduate students in Daniel Schugurensky's **PAF 509: Public Affairs Capstone** course were tasked with assisting Peoria city staff in developing new methods and ideas for reinvigorating the Old Town district. Throughout the project, the student team investigated strategies and initiatives implemented by six peer cities that have faced similar challenges as Old Town. The main lessons taken from these case studies are organized into four categories: branding, processes and participation, placemaking through activities and events, and adaptive reuse.

Students used a variety of research methods over the course of the capstone project, including interviews with city staff, academic literature review, and municipal document review. This variety of information helped the team develop relevant and feasible recommendations intended to help boost Old Town Peoria into a popular, bustling downtown area. Much of the student work focuses on ways to build community connections while finding new, innovative ways to utilize existing vacant or underutilized infrastructure. Some key highlights include developing new media campaigns, installing new identifying signage, hosting regular community events, and building a project website to detail Old Town plans and collect public feedback.

Many of this project's suggested recommendations are inspired by the best practices and common pitfalls of the six analyzed case studies. The primary intent of this project is to provide main takeaways and lessons learned from the six studied cities to make a valuable contribution to Peoria's process of revitalizing Old Town. Through their research, students aim to support Peoria's goals toward strengthening its community assets while keeping its rich history preserved.

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for community branding	Read more
Build on the existing local art scene by hosting art-centric local events and spaces.	pp.29, 32, 36, 38-39, 43-44, 46-47, 51-55
Consider adding a gateway treatment to a key Old Town intersection, to strengthen the area’s identity while recalling its heritage in the design.	pp.29, 36, 44-47, 54
Install plaques and informational markers at significant historic locations. Consider coordinating an interpretive walking or biking trail alongside the plaques to act as a tour of significant sights.	pp.38-39, 44-45, 51-52
Develop a “Faces of Peoria” media campaign to showcase the community and build local pride while sharing Peoria’s rich history.	pp.39-40, 46-47, 52
Expand the “Somos Peoria” event into a year-long branding campaign, which can be kicked off with a grand opening event of the first renovated building.	pp.38-40, 52

Recommendations for adaptive reuse	Read more
Consider adaptive reuse of Central School buildings as cafes, bookstores, co-working spaces, or other attractions. The larger school building could be subdivided into multiple spaces, while the smaller outbuildings could house local businesses or startups.	pp.32-33, 42, 46-53
Adapt the Peoria Jail House to function as pop-up food and retail space for outdoor events at Osuna Park.	pp.32-33, 38, 42-43, 46-53

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for placemaking	Read more
Utilize the Central School lawn to host a bi-weekly farmer’s market, as well as other community events such as concerts or outdoor movie nights when the market is not operating. Installing recreation amenities such as horseshoe pits could also attract more people to stay the area.	pp.28, 38-41, 43-51, 53-54
Install interesting and creative outdoor seating in key public spaces.	pp.29, 44-47, 53
Utilize the “lots of little” engagement approach to make continued, small impacts throughout the year rather than focusing on one large project.	pp.46-47, 54
Develop a signature annual event, such as reinstating Pioneer Days, that highlights local history while attracting new visitors and strengthening community engagement.	pp.38-40, 46-47, 54

Recommendations for planning and public participation	Read more
Develop a dedicated Old Town project website to streamline the gathering of public feedback and relay of information.	pp.38, 41-43, 51, 55
Utilize a variety of mediums for conveying information to the public, such as high-level presentations, focused workshops, and public surveys.	pp.41-43, 46-47, 55

CITY OF PEORIA PROJECTS: ALIGNMENT WITH THE UNITED NATIONS'

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As the leading international framework for sustainable decision-making, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lay out a path for partnerships toward global peace and prosperity. The SDGs provide a set of goals and metrics for project impact to be measured, offering an illustration of the benefits experienced by the cities, towns, and students who participate in a Project Cities partnership. For details on the SDGs, visit sdgs.un.org/goals.



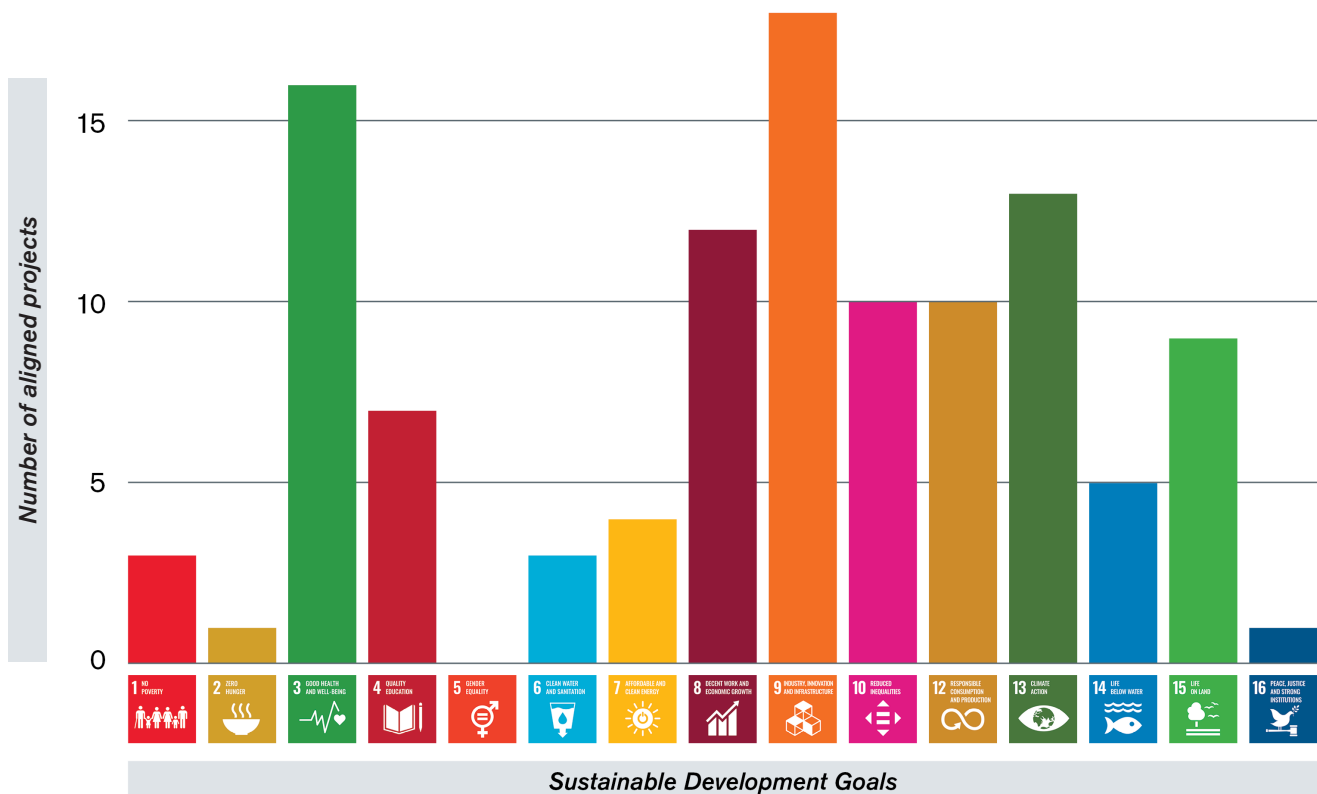
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Every project in the PC program aligns with SDGs 11 and 17.

The figure below illustrates SDG project alignment throughout the City of Peoria's partnership with Project Cities, through the Fall 2021 semester.



TOP THREE GOALS ADDRESSED IN THE FOLLOWING REPORT

This project identifies historic preservation and revitalization goals and suggestions to assist the City of Peoria in its efforts to boost engagement and economic opportunity in its Old Town district. This research aims to assist municipal decision makers in prioritizing beneficial actions for this historic neighborhood.



Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

"Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation."

Adaptive reuse and historic preservation practices can help cities maintain critical infrastructure while promoting new, unique uses for existing spaces.



Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

"Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable."

Community focused initiatives such as placemaking projects can strengthen local inclusivity and connection while also providing economic growth opportunities.



Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

"Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development."

Many goals in this project are best executed with assistance from partnerships with historical societies or related parties.

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PART 2:

Old Town Peoria: Preservation & Revitalization

EXPLORING SIX SUCCESSFUL PEER COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

PAF 509: PUBLIC AFFAIRS CAPSTONE

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FACULTY: DANIEL SCHUGURENSKY

**CAPSTONE STUDENTS: MELISSA OISTER,
CHARMAINE TURNER & ANNA LOSEKE**

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INTRODUCTION

Historical background

In the late 1800s, Peoria, Arizona was known for its fertile land and natural resources. As Kathleen Gilbert, author of *More Than a Century of Peoria People, Progress, and Pride*, noted, it was clear to many settlers that if Peoria was to become a bustling city, it needed a reliable water source for farmers to maintain their crops. Long before settlers arrived in Peoria, the Hohokam Native American tribe occupied the land and channeled the Salt River to irrigate their fields. Much of their canal system remained after the Hohokam people abandoned the area in the 1400's (Whitley & Ledbetter, 2011). This existing canal infrastructure gave hope to the new settlers as it demonstrated that agriculture with irrigation was possible in the area. In that period, the land that became Peoria was owned by two settlers: Joseph B. Greenhut and Deloss S. Brown (Gilbert, 2004). After Greenhut and Brown promised to irrigate the area within the first three years and pay a fee, Peoria became a designated town with the Maricopa County Recorder on March 24th, 1897, with a population of 27 (City of Peoria, 2020 and Gilbert, 2004). Four families traveled from Peoria, Illinois to settle the newly irrigated space and decided to name the town after their home in the Midwest (American Heritage Publishing Co, n.d.).

Shortly after becoming a town, one of the first institutions that helped Peoria gain stability was the Presbyterian Church. Jennie Mann, the founder of the Presbyterian Church, came to Peoria to help the founders manage a ranch property. According to Gilbert, Mann was an active Christian who wanted to bring religious services and activities to the new settlement (2004). While managing the ranch property, Mann started a Presbyterian Sunday School in her home, teaching Christian values to local children. Soon after, she wanted to expand the program and turned the Presbyterian Sunday School into the First Presbyterian Church in Peoria. As the congregation grew, Mann realized she needed a more prominent building. Along with others, she raised money and built the First Presbyterian Church building in what is now Old Town Peoria. The first service was held in March 1899 and the building was formally dedicated in 1900 (Gilbert, 2004). The First Presbyterian Church is the oldest continually operated church in the state of Arizona and continues to hold services every Sunday (City of Peoria, 2020).

With the Presbyterian Church becoming a foundation for the community, Peoria was still trying to establish itself as a reliable and dependable place for both settlers and farmers to move to. It was not until the construction of the Roosevelt Dam in 1910 that Peoria had a dependable water source, and this attracted more settlers and farmers to live, buy, and ship goods in the town (Gilbert, 2004). Eventually, the success of this federal reclamation project resulted in more families and businesses moving to Peoria.



Figure 1 The Peoria Presbyterian Church today

The influx of new settlers also quickly increased the student population, which the local school district needed more infrastructure to accommodate. As a result, the Central School was built in 1906 and used for the next 70 years (Gilbert, 2004). Altogether there were three school buildings built, though they were built at three separate times. The Central School, the first building, was a two-room building where the school operated. After another increase in enrollment, an additional building next to the Central School was constructed and housed three more classrooms (Gilbert, 2004). Finally, in 1918, the last building was completed and housed four more classrooms as well as an auditorium. Combined, the three buildings held up to 190 students with six instructors.



Figure 2 The larger main Peoria Central School building

After the three school buildings were completed in 1918, Peoria continued to flourish due to crop diversification. “Wheat, corn, oats, rye, and barley were found to be profitable along with squash, watermelon, beans, and potatoes,” (Gilbert, 2004, p.34). During the Great Depression, Peoria was able to maintain its economy due to the massive demand for cotton. Following the Great Depression, the town kept expanding and the local jail system was created. The jail building was valuable to the community, as it was used for various purposes, such as a police and jail station, location for city council meetings, and office space for the Chamber of Commerce (Gilbert, 2004).”



Figure 3 Peoria historical jailhouse structure

The present: Problem and solution statement

Peoria was incorporated in 1954, and by the 1970's boasted a population of just under 5,000 (City of Peoria, 2020). By this time, community-wide mail delivery service had been implemented, citizens elected a town council, and more buildings and infrastructure were constructed to meet the needs of the growing population (Gilbert, 2004, p.44). Today, all the buildings constructed in the early 1900s are located in the area known as Old Town Peoria. As a city, Peoria has grown and developed significantly, but like many other downtown areas, Old Town still has ample opportunities to grow and develop to continue meeting the needs of its residents.

Many original, historical structures are still standing, but are currently vacant. It is unknown how many people visit Old Town Peoria, but those who do may notice a lack of activity compared to a typical downtown district. Some small businesses are still operating in the area, but there is clearly an opportunity to increase entertainment, host family-friendly events, and create gathering places. The remainder of this project provides suggestions for Old Town revitalization through adaptive reuse, branding techniques, and incorporation of placemaking strategies, with the intent of helping Peoria boost the Old Town area back into a thriving city center.



Figure 4 Aerial view of Old Town Peoria with select historical building locations highlighted, by Google Earth

Partnership with Project Cities

This research project is part of Arizona State University's Project Cities, an initiative that connects university students to local municipal governments and groups. Cities collaborate with ASU students and faculty to "co-create strategies for better environmental, economic and social balance in the places we live," (ASU, 2021). Students act as consultants, conducting research, investigating solutions, and providing recommendations to partner communities through reports and presentations. Peoria has been a partner City for this program since 2019 and has requested this research project focus on the revitalization and historic preservation of Old Town Peoria.

RESEARCH METHODS

In the early stages of the project, the student team interviewed several City of Peoria staff, including John Sefton, Director of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities; Chris Jacques, Planning Director; and Lorie Dever, Planning Manager. Based on this conversation, students outlined a set of six principles to guide the group in establishing recommendations (J. Sefton, L. Dever, C. Jacques, personal communication, October 18, 2021). Following this preliminary step, students conducted case studies on six other cities with similar historic preservation and revitalization goals as Peoria. Research was gathered through academic sources such as journal articles, as well as directly from city resources such as websites and public municipal documents. Upon compiling this information, students developed a guiding framework from the established principles and key term definitions to help direct the project and keep the research focused on Peoria's highest priorities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Principles

Principle 1 Ensure any new businesses in Old Town reflect community values and history.

Small, locally-owned businesses should take precedence over large corporations and chains. Small businesses can contribute to the character of Old Town and better reflect the people of Peoria. Though the City cannot dictate what specific companies occupy Old Town, incentivizing and encouraging small businesses to establish in the area would allow for more specialized stores and create a unique shopping experience for residents and visitors. Small businesses can also attract more foot traffic, supporting local economic activity while building on the current historical character of Old Town Peoria.

Principle 2 Utilize mixed-use buildings to promote economic growth and activity.

Old Town Peoria is limited in the amount of space available for development. Mixed-use buildings provide space for multiple types of businesses, which could help diversify offerings in Old Town. Most commonly, mixed-use buildings bring together retail spaces on the ground floor with living spaces in the upper floors. Mixed-use buildings can address multiple challenges and reduce competition for space.

Principle 3 Increase opportunities for ongoing activity in Old Town at all times of day.

A primary goal of this project is to revitalize Old Town and attract more visitors to the area during all seasons and times of day. Peoria city staff informed students that Old Town activity tends to decline after regular business hours. The City would like to bring in businesses that can also attract visitors outside of regular daytime hours and on weekends (J. Sefton, L. Dever, C. Jacques, personal communication, October 18, 2021). Examples provided by Peoria staff include implementing a variety of business types and including flexibility in building use. For example, if a restaurant is using a building and then leaves, the next tenant should be able to move in with minor modifications to the building, keeping the flow of businesses operating and customers visiting.

Principle 4 Ensure outdoor and indoor facilities can still be used for a wide variety of activities.

A key strategy for revitalization and increasing traffic to an area is to host pop-up, or one-time events. This requires flexible use of space for all facilities. For example, a particular space could be used for yoga classes during weekdays and transition to a music venue on weekends. Alternatively, another space could be a co-working office during the workday and a community meeting space in the evening. This arrangement further expands opportunities for local economic growth.

Principle 5 Reflect Old Town history in the aesthetic of any new development, and preserve existing historical structures.

As new buildings are constructed, it is important to preserve Old Town's architectural character, and create an appearance that highlights Peoria's history. This can be achieved in many ways, such as incorporating modern art displays within current structures or repurposing historic artifacts in new constructions (J. Sefton, L. Dever, C. Jacques, personal communication, October 18, 2021).

The ultimate goal is to modernize Old Town while still incorporating buildings, signage, and other features that highlight the historical components. Additionally, new and necessary infrastructure must retain the historic aesthetics. For example, parking should be available, but to maintain curb appeal it would be best located behind buildings.

Principle 6 Continue featuring art and local artists throughout Old Town to enhance public spaces.

Peoria can utilize placemaking strategies and promote local artists through public art to create welcoming spaces where people want to congregate and socialize. Old Town could rely on a variety of arts to attract visitors (visual arts, performing arts, etc.) and the City could invite local artists to create an interactive and engaging public space (J. Sefton, L. Dever, C. Jacques, personal communication, October 18, 2021). Placemaking strategies can be large or small in scale, with emphasis on establishing characterizing details to everyday items. For example, bike racks and seating areas can be intentionally designed to seamlessly integrate with the existing style of the area.

Definitions

Students use several key terms throughout this study and define them as follows. This overview is meant to facilitate greater understanding of the concepts presented throughout the literature review and recommendations sections.

Downtown

Downtowns are centralized areas within cities that often contain concentrations of businesses, transit hubs, and historic landmarks. They tend to be considered the “hotbed of business creativity, neighborhood activism, non-profit entrepreneurs, economic diversity, and an attraction for visitors” (Kitsinger, 2021). Downtowns in many American cities have unfortunately experienced many years of abandonment and misuse, and over the past two decades many cities across the United States are investing in revitalization efforts.

Suburbanization

Suburbanization is the process of decentralizing jobs and housing within a city. This process became particularly prominent in the mid-twentieth century and was driven primarily by the middle-class push to leave urban areas for lower-density developments outside of larger cities (Clapson et al., 2010).

Adaptive reuse

Adaptive reuse is the process of repurposing a building to fulfill a new use outside of its original design intent. This allows buildings to remain viable assets to their communities for an indefinite period of time. Adaptive reuse encourages sustainable practices that enhance community character and encourage more investment and revitalization (Chester County Planning Commission, 2012). **Successful adaptive reuse projects require intentional coordination between municipalities and developers,** and the flexibility to restore a building while maintaining its historic integrity.

Historic preservation

Historic preservation can be defined as “placemaking through identification, evaluation, and conservation of components of the built environment that convey historic significance for the enjoyment and education of the community now and in the future,” (City of Tempe, n.d.). The process includes identifying, protecting, and enhancing elements of historical and cultural significance. It seeks to capture the essence of spirit and resilience within the built environment.

Revitalization

Revitalization refers to the enhancement of the built environment through community-centered investments (Harries, 2018). It involves reinforcing social networks, maintaining the neighborhood’s character, and supporting local businesses. Revitalized neighborhoods make improvements without displacing existing residents.

Placemaking

Placemaking is an approach to developing public spaces that emphasizes the creative use of community assets to create spaces that are meaningful. Its community-based participation approach is meant to inspire people to imagine public spaces as the heart of every community (Project for Public Spaces, 2007). Placemaking reforms the rigid planning process of the 20th century into one that welcomes collaboration and holistic consideration.

Participatory decision making

Participatory decision making is a creative process in which whole groups are given ownership of decisions and collaboration is encouraged to find solutions that work for everybody. It involves compromise and finding common ground, while seeking to avoid the isolation of minority groups (People and Planet, n.d.). This process requires good facilitation, active and encouraged participation, and personal agendas must be challenged to bring everyone to a consensus.

SUCCESSFUL REVITALIZATION CASE STUDIES OF PEER CITIES

Introduction

Students investigated the unique historic district redevelopment efforts in the following six cities:

- Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Mesa, Arizona
- Tempe, Arizona
- Tucson, Arizona
- Willmar, Minnesota
- Ybor City, Florida

The revitalization efforts in these cities revolved around four key areas:

- Branding
- Adaptive reuse of historic buildings
- Public participation processes
- Placemaking activities and events

The following sections describe the main features of each studied city, and discusses key insights and lessons learned from their respective revitalization processes. Students paid close attention to the branding, public participation, adaptive reuse, and placemaking aspects utilized in each community.

Main community features

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Downtown and Old Town Historic Albuquerque are unique as they both contain many historic buildings. Old Town Historic Albuquerque particularly, is a landmark as “Old Town was established in 1706, when a group of Spanish families settled there, not far from the Rio Grande,” (Visit Albuquerque, n.d.). Old Town is a cultural center where individuals come together to visit multiple museums, and over 100 shopping places, galleries, and restaurants (Visit Albuquerque, n.d.). Similarly, Downtown Albuquerque itself is not a historic landmark but houses many historical buildings such as the Skinner Building, Old Main Library, Highland/Hudson Hotel Building, and the Old Albuquerque High School. Currently, neither region hosts many vacant buildings. However, both places are similar to Old Town Peoria due to adaptive reuse, revitalization efforts, and the preservation of historical sites.



Figure 5 Old Town Albuquerque, featuring shops and restaurants

Historic Old Town Albuquerque has established its place in New Mexico as an adobe Pueblo-Spanish style city that welcomes families to have fun embracing history, culture, and shopping. Currently, the main visitors of Historic Old Town are tourists, however, the area’s revitalization efforts aim to attract more local residents. According to local Albuquerque reporter Jami Seymore, the City hopes introducing new businesses such as wineries and breweries will increase local visits to Old Town (2021). Flying Roadrunner Bakery is one new business that came to Historic Old Town to help attract more locals. Other existing businesses are **inviting artists to adorn their spaces with murals or custom pieces to lend a greater sense of community and local pride to the area** (Seymore, 2021).

Mesa, Arizona

Mesa is Arizona's third largest city with a population of around 500,000, and is situated in central Arizona between Phoenix and the Superstition Mountains. This area was once inhabited by the Hohokam people, who dug irrigation canals that still exist today, which were essential in the founding of Mesa as a modern city in the late 19th century (DOT Physical Phoenix, 2017). This area is also the ancestral home of the Akimel O'odham people. Early on, Mesa boasted robust agriculture, electrical generation, and tourist industries. Today, Mesa continues to thrive in technology and tourism, housing Boeing and General Motors among other large companies (Mesa Historical Museum, 2021).

Like many other cities, Mesa's downtown has experienced disuse following suburbanization in the 1960s and 1970s. Many existing buildings in downtown Mesa have their roots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and have seen countless occupants and uses over the years (Malloy, 2021). In the last decade particularly, **Mesa has begun efforts to revitalize its downtown through incentives and partnerships with key stakeholders.**

In 2012, Mesa city planners developed and began implementation of the Central Main Street Area Plan, a supplement to the city's general plan focused on revitalizing Downtown Mesa over the course of 30 years (City of Mesa, 2021). The light rail extension through the downtown area is a key factor in allowing the plan to come to fruition, easing the commute and connecting Mesa to other metropolitan hubs in the Valley (Malloy, 2021). Downtown Mesa is much larger than downtown Peoria but shares many similarities. For example, both cities aim to celebrate the strong agricultural history of the community, and intend to utilize mixed-use developments to address housing shortages while strengthening the local economy. **Mesa has successfully utilized adaptive reuse strategies in several large-scale projects and provides an excellent model for revitalizing historical buildings through key partnerships.**



Figure 6 Aerial view of downtown Mesa, overlooking Main Street

Tempe, Arizona

Before the incorporation of the City of Tempe in 1894, the area was occupied by the Hohokam people who built irrigation canals to support their agriculture. Tempe was named after the Vale of Tempe near Mount Olympus in Greece, due to some visual similarities with the Salt River valley near the 300 foot butte known today as “A Mountain.” In 1885, Tempe became the site of the Territorial Normal School, which would eventually become Arizona State University. The Maricopa and Phoenix Railroad was built in 1887 and its crossing of the Salt River at Tempe linked the city to the nation’s growing transportation network. Tempe continued to grow and become an economic hub for the surrounding agricultural area. Today, Tempe boasts a lively downtown area with diverse economic opportunities, arts and entertainment, celebrations of culture and history.



Figure 7 Aerial view of downtown Tempe, overlooking Mill Avenue

Tucson, Arizona

The history of Downtown Tucson is rooted in Native American and Spanish culture. Tucson has been inhabited for more than 4,000 years, occupied first by the Tohono O’odham (Downtown Tucson Partnership, n.d.). The name Tucson stems from the word Chukshon, translated as “at the base of the black mountain” (Downtown Tucson Partnership, n.d.). After the Spanish arrived, they pronounced Chukshon as Tucson, which became the common name used even after the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 by the United States. The Southern Pacific Railroad helped Downtown Tucson develop into a vibrant community, causing a population boom. Since the 1980s, the downtown area has been known for its arts and culture. Through a “surge of investment” and help from local residents, Downtown Tucson is being restored to an urban renaissance atmosphere (Downtown Tucson Partnership, n.d.).



Figure 8 Aerial view of downtown Tucson, overlooking Congress Street

Broadway Boulevard and Congress Street are two main roads in Downtown Tucson. Similar to Old Town Peoria, Congress Street has many historical buildings that are currently vacant. To address this issue, Peach Properties and Dabdoub Investments, through a Public Private Partnership (P3) project, are revitalizing empty storefronts on Congress Street from the 98 E. to 108 E. block.

Willmar, Minnesota

Willmar, Minnesota is a small rural community in central Minnesota. Though the population is currently only 21,000, Willmar is rapidly growing and feels the pressures of an expanding population. Willmar is the historical home of the Dakota and Sioux (Cooper, 2019). In the mid- to late-19th century, Scandinavian settlers established a settlement and later the city of Willmar. The community is currently a hub for several large railways, which continue to serve as a major employer in the county (Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, 2021). Other important industries in the area include medicine, agriculture, and most recently tech startups. It is also a popular destination for outdoor activities, with local lakes, 37 public parks, and many other natural attractions within driving distance. Tourism is a growing part of its local economy and increasing tourist activity is a primary goal outlined in the Willmar's Master Plan (City of Willmar & The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, 2007).

As the city grows, the demand for affordable, family-friendly housing and programming has dramatically increased. Similar to the other communities studied in this project, Willmar's downtown area is in need of revitalization. Lack of investment, vacant buildings, and little community activity led the Willmar city council to implement a multifaceted revitalization effort in 2018 (Willmar Main Street, n.d.). The plan includes several key strategies involving strong intergovernmental and community partnerships. Specifically, these partnerships include incentives for beautification and development projects, placemaking initiatives centered around local artists, community input through public surveys and forums, and education opportunities for small retail businesses owners. Revitalization efforts began three years ago and have made great strides, however, Willmar city officials are aiming for long-term investment and have set the expectation that efforts will continue throughout the next decade and beyond (City of Willmar & The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, 2007).



Figure 9 Downtown Main Street in Willmar, Minnesota

Willmar shares many similarities with Peoria. Both cities have a strong agricultural history that city planners hope to celebrate and preserve. Downtown Willmar is slightly larger than Peoria's Old Town but has a similar mix of small businesses and residential areas. Willmar is also aiming to harness the character of old buildings and incentivize new businesses and entrepreneurs to come into the area and build new structures. Both cities aim to collaborate with local artists to foster placemaking activities, creating a stronger sense of community and providing more opportunities for family engagement in the downtown areas.

Ybor City, Florida

Ybor City is a historic neighborhood located in Tampa, Florida and boasts nearly 1,000 historical resources. It was named after Vicente Martinez-Ybor, a well-known and wildly successful Cuban cigar factory owner. The community's population in the late 1800s consisted of mostly Cuban and Spanish immigrants who worked in the cigar factories. Due to its proximity to Cuba, Ybor City became home to many Cuban exiles and was an epicenter for political activity.



Figure 10 Downtown Ybor City, Florida

The Great Depression resulted in a sudden decrease in demand for cigars, and the local economy suffered as workers sought job opportunities in New York (Yglesias, 1996). Revitalization efforts began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and by the 1990s and early 2000s the area's older buildings had been renovated for new uses. Since these revitalization efforts, the area has attracted visitors and new residents with its newly diversified economy. Ybor City was chosen for this study primarily for its use of effective branding strategies and public participatory process.

Key insights from case studies

Branding

Marketing efforts such as rebranding an area or developing a unique community attraction were found to boost engagement from both residents and new visitors in historic neighborhoods. Branding efforts can also help support local businesses and artists when involved directly in the process.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

To promote historic neighborhoods along Route 66, New Mexico announced a new marketing campaign in Summer 2021 to attract new visitors to its towns. Strategies include “fresh branding, special events, light pole banners, a website, videos, and digital and traditional media placements” (Nob Hill Main Street, 2021). This campaign aims for tourists to drive, walk, or take public transit on Route 66 and experience its significant historic neighborhoods. At the time this project was conducted, the campaign was still fairly young and its level of success is not yet clear.

The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is a large local attraction, gathering thousands of residents and visitors since the 1970s to watch unique hot air balloons be released into the air. In 2021, the event was held over the course of a week and boasted 588 balloons, over 800,000 attendees, and 671 balloon pilots (Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, n.d.). The Fiesta attracts individuals from all over the United States to participate and watch the hot air balloons, as well as experience local cultural activities.



Figure 11 The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in 2014

Ybor City, Florida

Ybor City recently launched a new campaign, “Heart of Tampa,” to celebrate its strong history, diversity, and economic impact (Ybor City Development Corporation, 2020). As part of this campaign, the Ybor City Community Advisory Committee hosted the inaugural Heart of Tampa Community Art Contest, “heART of Ybor,” inviting local artists of many mediums to demonstrate what the National Historic Landmark District means to them.



Figure 12 Ybor City "Heart of Tampa" logo

Ybor City Ambassadors are knowledgeable, friendly guides that work in Ybor City's Historic District and provide general information to visitors about local amenities, activities, events, shops, restaurants, and parking options. The “Faces of Ybor” video series showcases testimonials from Ybor City stakeholders, sharing unique and inspiring stories of success from real people who live and work in Ybor City (Ybor City Development Corporation, 2020). The series includes topics on history, business, redevelopment, education, and cultural diversity. Additionally, the community offers a wide variety of tours centered around the Historic Landmark District, including Cigar Industry History Tours, Ghost Party Haunted History Tours, Havana Arts, and the Mafia Tour.

Summary: Branding

Both Ybor City and Albuquerque provide excellent branding examples for Peoria to consider. Similar to Ybor City's "Heart of Tampa," Peoria could launch a marketing campaign centered around celebrating and sharing its history. Plugging into already existing events, Peoria's Hispanic heritage celebration event, "Somos Peoria," could serve as a signature event for Old Town, and this branding could be expanded to include the entire revitalization effort. Mesa and Tucson also provide examples of using branding to attract businesses and consumers to downtown areas. Peoria could likewise adopt a slogan in any new branding that reflects the vibrancy of Old Town to bring in new people and businesses.

Process and participants

Providing transparency throughout planning and development processes, as well as facilitating simple methods for the public to leave feedback, can help avoid barriers to development and gain critical community insights on projects.

Tempe, Arizona

The City of Tempe's *General Plan* is the overarching policy document that holds the community's vision and goals for growth over the next several decades. For two years, the City of Tempe worked to develop the *Urban Core Master Plan* and *Urban Code District* to plan for the next 20 years of growth in the city's central core, including Downtown Tempe, Arizona State University, Apache Boulevard, Tempe Town Lake, the Rio Salado corridor, and more. The purpose of this master plan is to promote strategic and cohesive growth, preservation of historic buildings, affordable housing, and the maintained character of Downtown Tempe. At the time of this project, the plan had been tabled due to lack of community consensus (Urban Core Master Plan, 2020).

Tempe hosted over 30 public meetings during a two-year public planning process. Resources to educate the public and gather community input were available online through targeted meetings, focus groups, and visioning workshops. Public meetings were conducted in an open-house format with 30-minute presentations, followed by time for questions. Attendees then submitted written or oral comments and were given the option to take a survey. One cited reason the project came to a halt is that it became confusing to find a cohesive theme in the plethora of gathered information.

“Residents and historic preservationists feared urbanization would creep into the surrounding neighborhood, damage the area’s character and threaten historic buildings. Some developers thought the plan created too many hoops” (Pineda, 2020). Residents also mentioned they felt detached from the planning process and that the information was too cumbersome to understand. The plan would have also required a major *General Plan* amendment, which the council would have needed to approve. Some residents thought this scale of amendment would be better suited to be approved by voters as part of the next *General Plan* (Pineda, 2020). Developers were also unhappy with the stricter guidelines they would need to follow to build bigger projects, and the added red tape would make it more difficult for projects to be approved. Using the lessons learned from this planning process, Tempe city staff are working on simplifying the policy plan for Downtown Tempe, with the intent to resume the planning process when possible.

Ybor City, Florida

In 2019, the Ybor City Development Corporation, in conjunction with the development firm VHB, the Hillsborough County Planning Commission, the architecture firm OWA, and Landwise Advisors, developed a long-term action plan for the Historic Ybor City District (VHB, 2019). The plan, *Vision 2020*, outlines amenities needed in the community based on local sentiment and organic growth.

Ybor City utilized innovative public engagement methods to involve residents, businesses, and community organizations through topic education and informal communication. The engagement process included organizational meeting events to solicit and update community leaders. These took place digitally, in-person, and through community workshop forums. Stakeholder organizations such as the Ybor City Development Corporation, Historic East Ybor and Gary Neighborhood Association, Ybor City Saturday Market, Tampa-Hillsborough Expressway Authority, and City of Tampa Barrio Latino Commission were engaged regularly to discuss issues surrounding *Vision 2020* and ways to improve the plan. Property and business owners interested in the plan were also approached to discuss challenges and opportunities.

Digital outreach was conducted through a variety of mediums. The plan had a designated website that served as a platform for project information, schedule updates, and surveys. The community survey included a variety of questions used to gauge participants’ interest on multiple topics.

As Peoria works to engage the community and solicit feedback, it is key to be as transparent as possible. One suggestion is to invest in developing a project website with revitalization plan information, schedule updates, and ways to easily submit comments and feedback. Students believe it is critical for Peoria to go beyond presentations, focus groups and surveys when soliciting public feedback, and include opportunities for residents to be involved in the planning and implementation process. The City of Mesa also demonstrated that revitalization can be a community event with their Neighbors Helping Neighbors organization which beautifies public spaces. Peoria could also strive to engage community members in similar projects.

Placemaking

Many of the studied revitalization projects incorporated some form of placemaking through local art projects, community events, and the general enhancement of public spaces to encourage interaction throughout the community.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Civic Plaza in Downtown Albuquerque was awarded a \$200,000 Heart of the Community grant from Southwest Airlines. The City chose to update this plaza because the area was empty, considered uninviting to the public, and was uncomfortably hot in the summer months (Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet, n.d.). As a result, multiple groups with public input brainstormed ideas of what new developments could help revitalize the area. Upon completion of the plaza, it has successfully hosted many community events, such as ABQ Food Fridays, Movies on the Plaza, and local festivals (Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet, n.d.).



Figure 14 *View of Albuquerque Civic Plaza, surrounded by downtown office and municipal buildings*

Mesa, Arizona

Placemaking in Mesa takes a two-pronged approach, creating both interesting experiences and places where people want to live and socialize with one another. Experiences like the “I Love Mesa” block party celebration, or the Love Your Block initiative help create a sense of community and collective space. In this first year of these events, free, family-friendly activities began at 8:00 a.m. and stretched until 10:00 p.m., hosting musical artists at local venues, opening art displays in local shops, and offering free admission to Mesa’s museums. Food, arts and crafts, and other entertainment brought local and visiting crowds to Center Street (City of Mesa, 2021).

Love Your Block is an initiative through Mesa’s Neighbors Helping Neighbors chapter which connects community members through service projects that help beautify and revitalize neighborhoods around Mesa. Projects vary from graffiti removal, landscaping assistance for elderly residents, painting or cleaning of common areas like community parks, and more (City of Mesa, n.d.). The program aims to beautify public spaces and neighborhoods, creating a more welcoming atmosphere for people to congregate and socialize.

Another strategy Mesa has embraced in placemaking revitalization efforts is using public art to create spaces that people enjoy spending time in. Public art and murals exist along the downtown corridor, providing unique photo opportunities. Sculptures designed by local artists capture moments reminiscent of historical life in Mesa, such as a statue of a paperboy peddling the Tribune. Other artwork attracts foot traffic toward businesses, like the dinosaur statue outside of the Arizona Museum of Natural History (Visit Mesa, 2020). Mesa has also utilized creative seating options throughout its downtown area to bring art and functionality together to create welcoming outdoor spaces.

Tucson, Arizona

Tucson has concrete placemaking strategies it is planning to implement in its downtown area. Key updates will focus on gateway treatments, busy corridors, street corners, infill structures, and civic parks and plazas (City of Tucson, n.d., p.39). Figure 15 illustrates Tucson’s gateway plans to highlight major and minor intersections that welcome visitors to the downtown district (City of Tucson, n.d., p.4). Gateway treatments help attract individuals toward a desired area. Gateways do not have to be a sign featuring the city name, as they can also be an artistic representation of significant symbols or even a special lighting treatment.

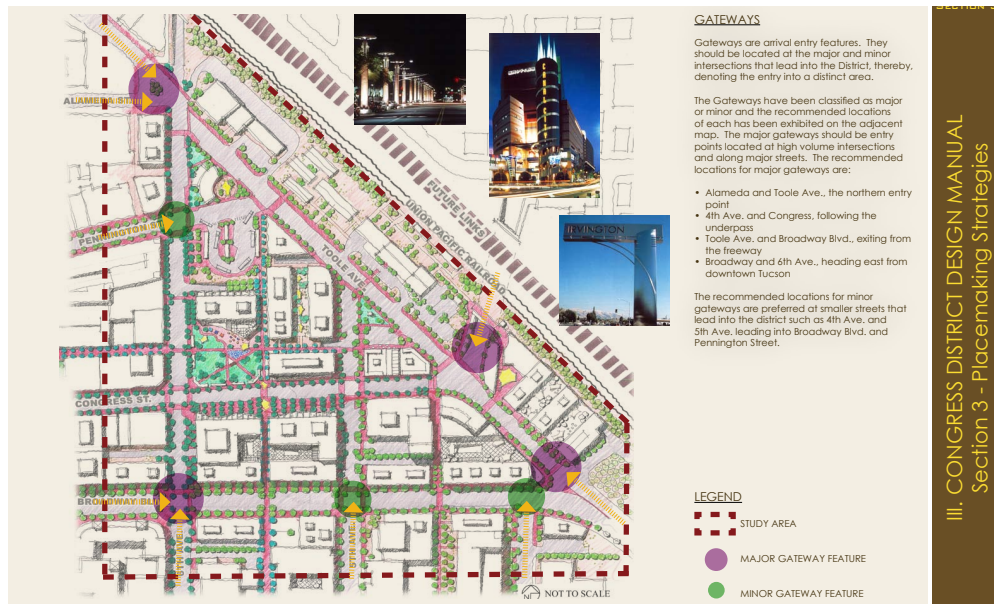


Figure 15 Downtown Tucson placemaking strategies, from the *Downtown Urban Design Reference Manual*, by City of Tucson

Downtown Tucson's Congress Street is the focus location for new arts, entertainment, and retail features, because the Rialto Theatre and Hotel Congress are already in the area (City of Tucson, n.d., p.45). To help keep Congress Street active all hours of the day, mixed use buildings (Figure 16) are planned for commercial and residential areas. Unique signage will also be used on all corridor buildings to help build a strong sense of place. According to the City of Tucson (n.d.), Broadway Boulevard is "recommended to be a residential mixed-use corridor and will transition from the vibrant entertainment corridor along Congress Street" (p.45). However, residents and visitors are still engaged with this area through small shops located beneath the residential spaces above.



Figure 16 Examples of mixed use buildings recommended for Tucson's primary downtown corridors, showing retail (left) and office (right) space below residential space, from the *Downtown Urban Design Reference Manual*, by City of Tucson

Willmar, Minnesota

Willmar has seen great success in placemaking strategies through the incorporation of art installations and interactive projects. **Both Main Street America and Springboard for the Arts have played major roles in Willmar's placemaking efforts.** Main Street America is a nationwide program that provides resources and training for municipalities, small business associations, and nonprofit groups to help revitalize downtown spaces (Main Street America, 2021). Willmar has been partnering with Main Street America since 2018, with the current focus of collecting resident input about their goals for the program and spaces they would like to see. In February of this year, Willmar City sent out a community-wide survey to all residents, seeking input and collecting suggestions and feedback about downtown. The surveys were available in multiple languages and distributed through social media and local newspapers (Lindrud, 2021). Feedback was used to create both short- and long-term initiatives.

Springboard for the Arts is a Midwestern nonprofit organization that aims to support artists and build just and equitable communities by providing tools for connection, collaboration, and celebration of art (Springboard for the Arts, 2021). They have partnered with municipalities across the Midwest to help revitalize communities and provide artists with sustainable livelihoods. In Willmar, Springboard for the Arts has completed 13 placemaking projects to date in the downtown area (Springboard for the Arts, 2021). These projects are part of the “lots of little” strategy, to create many small projects throughout the year that engage the community rather than a singular major project.

Project highlights include Heritage Day, which in 2019 brought a local band, Los Lobos Norteños, to play at a local restaurant and music venue to cap off a miniature block party. Traffic for the event was directed past a Mother's Day glass mural by a local artist and community members. Amazing Masks is another community art event where participants created papier maché masks during a 3-day workshop done over Labor Day Weekend (Figure 17) (Willmar Main Street, n.d.). Masks were then hung in the lobby of the local theater and rotated, being displayed in other local businesses over the course of a year. Another key project is titled, “Willmar - What comes to Mind?” (Figure 17). This was a series of photographs displayed in a local coffee shop that featured Willmar residents in their daily lives. Photos highlighted the diverse assortment of people and activities taking place throughout Willmar, and the installation was seen by over 5,850 people during its 45-day display (Willmar Main Street, n.d.).



Figure 17 Willmar's "Amazing Masks" display (left) and "Willmar — What Comes to Mind?" display (right), by Willmar Main Street

Pop-up events like those held in Willmar provide a great template for community engagement ideas in Peoria. **The “lots of little” strategy is ideal for smaller communities when designing placemaking activities.** Through a mix of interactive, representational art exhibits, community members can contribute to and see themselves in key community locations. Students believe similar activities would work well in the open outdoor spaces around Old Town Peoria.

Summary: Placemaking

Many of the cities examined hold art contests and exhibitions throughout the year to promote a sense of community and belonging in downtown areas. Peoria could commission local artists to create public displays that celebrate local residents and culture. Peoria could also create an experience like Willmar's “What Comes to Mind” exhibition that features the faces of local residents in businesses around downtown. Similarly, a video series in the same vein as the “Faces of Ybor” could encourage residents who have thrived in Peoria for years to share their unique stories.

Adaptive reuse

Adaptive reuse can be a significant undertaking for any community, as historical buildings often require highly skilled work to restore them for a particular use without compromising important original features. The practice, however, can be very impactful for the local community by providing new business space opportunities while creating new social and entertainment hubs.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

505 Central Food Hall used to be a department store building before it was purchased by Mark Baker in 2016. 505 Central's new owner repurposed the building with the core concept for more individuals to "eat, work, play, and live in the downtown area," (Hood, 2017). It is now a mixed-use building, with the first floor deemed commercial and the upper two floors used for residential apartments. This downtown revitalization project is considered successful as just a few days after being granted occupancy status, 21 of 34 apartments were already filled (Hood, 2017). It is unclear to students exactly how much of the building was extensively renovated, but it seems the brick was repainted, and some physical dimensions were changed to accommodate its new uses.

Historic Albuquerque High School is another local feature transformed into a mixed-use development. Because the high school is considered a historic landmark, much of the building's original parts were used in its renovation. Figure 18 illustrates the gym renovation, which was transformed into 54 loft apartments of various sizes (New Mexico Architectural Foundation, 2018). To attract young residents, the developers of this project made sure to include live and work areas in the building along with modern features.

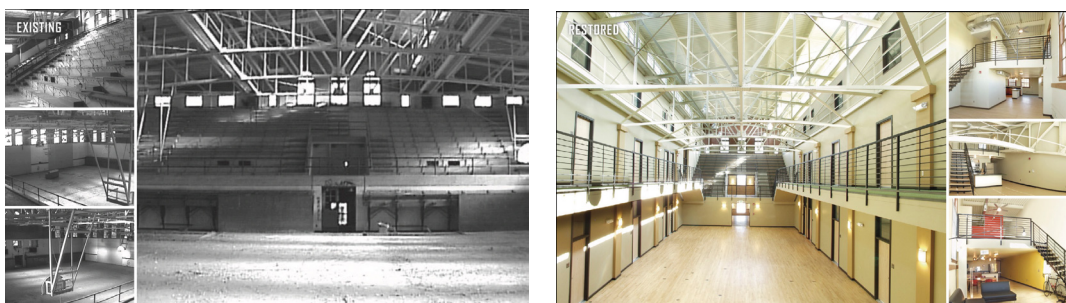


Figure 18 Albuquerque High School gym renovation, showing original conditions (left) and restored conditions (right), by the New Mexico Architectural Foundation

In addition to the living quarters, FatPipe ABQ, a co-working company, was integrated into the plan to "attract entrepreneurs and startups seeking modern and collaborative work environments" (New Mexico Architectural Foundation, 2018). This revitalization project successfully attracted younger and older individuals as 36 out of 54 units were sold within one month of completion, and the location has already held several community events (New Mexico Architectural Foundation, 2018). Albuquerque's adaptive reuse projects can help provide ideas for Old Town Peoria, particularly for future uses of the local schoolhouses.

Mesa, Arizona

Mesa has many examples of creative adaptive reuse projects, especially with large historic buildings. The City has a partnership with Benedictine University and completed two large-scale adaptive reuse projects through this partnership. In 2017, Benedictine University completed renovations to the historical downtown Alhambra Hotel, transforming it into a student residence hall (Malloy, 2021 and Harvey, 2019). In a similar transformation, the University purchased the old Southside Hospital building from Mesa and transformed it into a major campus building featuring nine classrooms, a nutrition lab, and a spirit store.



Figure 19 *Mesa's historical Southside Hospital in the 1960s (left) and its modern adaptation by Benedictine University (right), by City of Mesa*

Southside Hospital was built in the 1920s and closed after a larger hospital was built nearby. Mesa began an initiative to expand higher education opportunities for residents in the early 2010s and marketed the vacant but valuable hospital building to universities around the country. Fourteen colleges and universities visited Mesa, and five ultimately established campuses in the area. Ultimately, Benedictine University agreed to work with Mesa to renovate it as previously detailed for educational use (Harvey, 2019; and Nelson, 2021).

Tempe, Arizona

The Tempe Hardware Building was originally constructed as the Odd Fellows Hall in 1899 and served as a home to various fraternities, churches, and civic groups. From 1906-1976, it was the Tempe Hardware Company, one of the oldest continually operating businesses in Tempe. It now serves as a multi-use retail and office building, hosting a salon and boutique on the first floor, and a print studio and architecture office on the second floor. Additionally, the Valley Art Theater, or College Theater, is the only depression-era theater in the area. It is now a mixed-use building with a bar and restaurant, and still operates as a theater venue.



Figure 20 Tempe Hardware Building historical photograph (left) from the Sharlott Hall Collection, and modern image (right) from Google Maps

Tucson, Arizona

Downtown Tucson's historic Chicago Music Store was home to J.C. Penny's from the 1920s to the 1950s (Figure 21). After J.C. Penny's closed, Chicago Music Store moved into the building in the late 1960s, and sold the building in 2016. Krystal Popov, owner of L Offices, turned the second floor of the building into a co-working space (Wincher, 2021). The first floor however, remains empty, but is occasionally used as a temporary pop-up retail location for events.



Figure 21 Tucson Chicago Music Store Building as a J.C. Penney's in 1955 (left) by Wong and Sheaffer Photography, and modern image from same intersection (right)

The First Hittinger Block building was constructed in 1901 and featured a west and east space. In 1903, the building was relocated to S. Scott Avenue and Congress Street, then relocated again to 118 E. Congress Street, where it remains today. According to the United States Department of Interior (2003), the building was occupied by multiple tenants before the current owner (p.5). The First Hittinger Block building has been updated through the Downtown Tucson Facade Improvement Program, which is run by the City of Tucson and the Downtown Tucson Partnership (City of Tucson, n.d., p.19).

Overall, Tucson's historic preservation efforts encourage rehabilitation of existing buildings by operating an adaptive reuse program. It is unclear to students if Tucson installs physical markers on its refurbished buildings, indicating to occupants that it is an historical structure as part of its preservation plan. However, the city website does host a map detailing all the local historic buildings.

Summary: Adaptive reuse

When planning the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, it is important to consider multi-use buildings that can be utilized for a variety of occasions. Mesa's Center for Higher Education, an adaptation of an old courthouse, provides an excellent example of how Peoria could transform an historic building to house multiple businesses. For outdoor spaces, Albuquerque's Civic Plaza hosts numerous events throughout the year. Peoria's multiple vacant outdoor spaces in Old Town lend themselves well to multiple uses such as farmers markets, community movie nights, pop-up art galleries, and more.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Combining key insights from the six case study cities with input from the Planning Department's vision for Old Town, students developed the following recommendations for the City of Peoria.

Branding

Continue supporting local public art initiatives

Old Town Peoria already has phenomenal examples of local art being showcased in public places. It is recommended to build on that strong foundation by creating art-centered events and spaces to draw more people to the area. While Old Town is distinctive to residents, it could be further set apart from surrounding areas by an archway spanning over Washington Street or Jefferson Street, notifying visitors that they are entering Old Town. This gateway treatment could be designed by local architects and artists, and include visual elements of Peoria's rich heritage with Spanish architecture and agricultural references. The archway and other corresponding signs would be reflective of Peoria's history, thus meeting the project expectations described in Principle 5.

Install informational plaques at key sites

Throughout Old Town, informational plaques can be installed around historic buildings and sites to commemorate important locations and events. An interpretive walking/biking trail could also follow the plaques and lead a clear path through the district, so visitors can easily navigate the significant sites. These informational pieces contribute to Principle 1 of Peoria's project goals and help celebrate the history of the community. They can also spark interest and foster a sense of community pride.

Consider expanding the Somos Peoria event into a year-long branding campaign

Old Town Peoria takes part in the annual "Somos Peoria" event. Students recommend the City adopt "Somos Peoria" as a brand to be used throughout the year, not just during the annual event. Prior to a grand opening of the school building renovations, the City could host a contest for mural proposals with the theme "Somos Peoria." The winner of the contest can paint their mural on the outside of the first small school building, and act as a guest of honor at the ribbon cutting ceremony. Grand opening events were considered successful in the case studies, and often consisted of a celebration with food, games, and music. These community events and branding can help Peoria fulfill Principle 3, by hosting ongoing activities for residents and visitors.

Develop a community video series to share local stories and history

Peoria can also create a video series similar to "Faces of Ybor" to encourage individuals who do business and reside in the area to share their stories and express what Downtown Peoria means to them. The video series could be made available on a project webpage and eventually on Peoria's History webpage to make a strong connection between residents and local history.

Adaptive reuse

Old Town Peoria currently hosts five vacant historic buildings that are city property, including the old jailhouse in Osuna Park, and four Peoria Central School buildings. Peoria aims to plan flexible, multi-use spaces for each of these locations. Students suggest each building can be decorated in part with artifacts and antiques from what was once to be Peoria's historic museum collection. All buildings are considered to have the ability to function well as mixed-use spaces, fulfilling Peoria's goals described in Principles 2 and 4.

Old Jailhouse

It is recommended to renovate the old jailhouse to allow for pop-up food and retail space. Since the jailhouse is located within Osuna Park, the surrounding space offers the perfect opportunity to host mobile food vendors for regular outdoor events, like Second Saturday events that occur monthly. According to Peoria city code, pre-prepared or reheated food, also known as Mobile Food Type II, can be sold with fewer restrictions than other forms of dining (Maricopa County, Environmental Services Department, 2021). Similar to pop-up food tents at the Albuquerque Balloon Festival, vendors could easily rotate between events and introduce new flavors to Peoria.

Peoria Central School

Peoria Central School is made up of four buildings: a large main school room and three smaller outbuildings. For the main building, students propose dividing the space into two separate areas along the hallway that currently exists. In one half of the building, a local business could run up a bookstore or cafe with casual dining and regular, small events. This space could also display local art celebrating Peoria's rich heritage and culture.

The other half of the main building could be further divided into two smaller suites. One suite can function as a co-working, collaborative space that can be rented on a short-term basis to small businesses or teleworkers. The other suite could serve as a rented studio space for local artists. The studio space would be an ideal venue for art exhibitions and other small events. Studios can also be utilized as venues for exhibitions and concerts, which would fulfill the goals outlined in Principle 3 to host activities throughout the days and evenings.

The smaller school outbuildings could each house a unique business. For instance, one outbuilding could be a bar with both walk-up and sit-down service, utilizing the beautiful outdoor space for seating. Another outbuilding could serve as a small boutique or consignment store, bringing character and economic growth to the space. These smaller buildings would be ideal for local businesses or small startups, catering toward the goals in Principle 1.

Placemaking through events and activities

Strengthen municipal relationships with local artists

The 6th guiding principle for Old Town Peoria's revitalization focused on utilizing art and local artists to create welcoming public spaces. Bearing this in mind, students recommend building the City of Peoria's relationship with local artists to expand public art displays and partner with local business initiatives on regular and pop-up events.

Host a local farmer's market

A bi-weekly farmer's market on Saturdays or Sundays in the outdoor space around the Central School buildings could be a great foundational event to highlight local artists, creators, and farmers. The concrete slabs in the outdoor space provide a good space for booth setups and seating where patrons can relax and enjoy food and live music. On weekdays or evenings, the same space could be utilized for small concerts, family movie nights in the park, or as the finish line for fun run events. Students also recommend installing recreational amenities such as horseshoe pits or cornhole equipment in the space to encourage people to spend time in the area.

Adopt the "lots of little" strategy

Willmar's "lots of little" community engagement strategy is focused on creating small-scale, participatory events that people can enjoy as part of their regular day. Examples include a community mural painting event, a pop-up snack bar, or an exhibition of community photographs. Events can take a variety of forms but should utilize the repurposed spaces discussed in previous sections, and outdoor venues throughout Old Town to draw traffic to new and existing businesses.

Revive the Pioneer Days celebration

During student conversations with a member of Peoria's Historic Preservation Commission, the past Pioneer Days event was discussed. The event began in the 1960s, but no longer occurs. Students recommend that Pioneer Days return to Old Town as a signature cultural celebration event. Pioneer Days can bring the community together to celebrate pioneer heritage and acknowledge the beautiful history of Old Town Peoria. In previous iterations, Pioneer Days had a parade and block party; both of which should return. This would also be an excellent opportunity to support local bands and performing artists, further strengthening the partnership between the City and its local talent.

Public participation and gathering input

Adequately share information on redevelopment plans with the community

Adopting a strategic system for sharing information about redevelopment plans with residents and gathering public input can help projects run successfully. A dedicated project webpage on the city website would help provide a simple way for anyone to access general information about the project. The webpage can include a section for project updates, details about upcoming public meetings and workshops, a place to access surveys and other means of gathering input, and the contact information for a designated community liaison.

Use multiple communication channels to share project information

Regarding community meetings, a variety of mediums should be considered for relaying information to the public. Peoria could host traditional presentations, as well as smaller, focused visioning workshops. Traditional presentations can be used to relay high-level information and function as an opportunity for the public to ask questions and submit comments.

These presentations can also be made available in a virtual format to increase accessibility. Visioning workshop sessions can be geared toward specific groups of people such as residents, business owners, and community organizations around Downtown Peoria. These workshops can be co-hosted by developers and ideally provide visuals of potential project outcomes. Developers and city staff members should be available at these sessions to answer questions, and participants should have the opportunity to comment on specific portions of the project.

Develop surveys to measure project interest and public preferences

Surveys are a popular way to gather public input and Peoria could use surveys in its revitalization efforts in a more curated fashion. General surveys can be provided to the public to gauge interest on various topics. Additionally, there could be an option to provide more input through surveys that are focused on specific interests, such as placement of art installations or opinions on uses for the schoolhouse buildings. This structure of surveys can help to organize public comments and ensure that participants have multiple options for providing input.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, Peoria residents, staff, and government officials have continued to make progress toward the revitalization and preservation of Old Town Peoria. Examples such as Driftwood Coffee Co., a locally-owned coffee shop offering a family-friendly area for the community to gather, has helped bring more attention and activity to the Old Town area (Figure 22). Other projects like the community garden help residents feel connected to their agricultural history and one other. Still, there is room for continued revitalization efforts by using the outlined branding, placemaking, participation, and adaptive reuse suggestions. By considering the proposed recommendations outlined in this report, Old Town Peoria can continue to attract new businesses and patrons while preserving its rich heritage.



Figure 22 Old Town's Driftwood Coffee Co. location in 2011 (top) and following revitalization efforts (bottom), by Google Maps

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