



Unlike other towns that have successfully revitalized their historic downtowns - Frankfort has approached downtown revitalization on an ineffective ad hoc basis, rather than having a Downtown Revitalization Plan.

Here are a few examples of towns that have successfully revitalized their downtowns:

1. Aiken, South Carolina

It is said that in the mid-80s you could have fired a cannon down Aiken's Main Street and not hit anyone.

Today, though, not only is every storefront occupied, there is a waiting list of merchants and restaurateurs who want to be in downtown Aiken – and Aiken has been given the All-American City Award by the National Civic League.

2. Franklin, Tennessee

Concerned about economic decline and disinvestments in its downtown area, Franklin, Tennessee became a Main Street Program in 1984.

In May of 1995, Franklin was honored as one of the best downtown areas in the nation when it received one of five "Great American Main Street" awards in the first year of an annual competition held by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Since then, accolades have included the “Best Small Town in Tennessee,” “America’s Most Romantic Main Street” and “One of America’s Greatest Antique Destinations,” among others. In May 2012, Franklin was ranked #4 on Livability.com’s Best Places to Visit for Historic Preservation.

Recently *Travel + Leisure* Magazine named Franklin 8th best town in the nation. In 2014, *Garden & Gun* magazine named Franklin the “Best Southern Town” following an online readers’ poll.

### 3. Asheville, North Carolina

Asheville, North Carolina was recently ranked the No. 1 coolest city to visit in the country, with the following commentary:

Visitors strolling around the cool art deco buildings or finding farm-to-table cuisine and craft beer everywhere they turn presume Asheville has long been an affluent place.

In reality, Asheville suffered decades of shuttered buildings, area with full-on “ghost town” feel. But starting in the mid-80s, a group of visionary citizens led one of the most amazing economic transformations in the U.S.

Fwd to today: Calendars full of next-level music/arts/culture festivals, boutique hotels popping up all over downtown and pound for pound the most thriving craft beer and local food scene in the country.

4. Covington, Kentucky

After adopting and implementing a Strategic Plan for Downtown Revitalization - Covington earned a 2017 Great American Main Street Award from the National Main Street Program.

5. Frankfort, Kentucky

Frankfort started its downtown revitalization efforts in the 80s - just like Covington, Franklin, TN, Aiken, SC and Asheville, NC.

But, whereas Covington, Franklin, Aiken, and Asheville have gone on to become award winning downtowns, Frankfort [after 35 years and the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of tax payer dollars] is still without a Plan for downtown revitalization - and as a result is with signage, traffic flow, and parking problems and is with too many empty buildings, too many empty storefronts, too few good restaurants, too few specialty shops and too few shoppers and visitors.

Here's what the National Main Street Program says about downtown revitalization:

Downtown commercial areas have declined over the past few decades because of a complexity of factors. Over built commercial areas, increasing competition from shopping centers and malls, and resistance to change on the part of downtown retailers have all played a role in the economic decay of downtowns all across America.

Reversing this decay and establishing a new direction for the downtown's economic growth is central to the revitalization

process and is the true measure of a Main Street Program's success.

Many design and promotion activities are interrelated with those in economic restructuring and, therefore, will also affect the downtown's economic health. For instance, façade improvement projects that may enhance the value of downtown real estate are often conducted by the Main Street Program's design committee. The promotion committee may sponsor a series of activities and events designed to increase the numbers of people shopping downtown, thereby improving downtown commercial activity. But without **an overall goal and plan** for the downtown's economic growth, these efforts will only be temporary.

Additionally, a study conducted by the University of Georgia's Fanning Institute found that:

To be viable, critical masses need to live in or near downtown before it can become a sustainable place in which people also work and play. For this to happen, downtowns must be attractive and safe and must provide desired amenities and services. To successfully attract residents, workers, visitors, and private investment, downtowns need a vision, a plan, and leadership.

Unfortunately, not every downtown has its own vision or plan. Many downtowns with formal paper plans lack a commitment to implement them. There needs to be a clear expectation that every downtown . . . will plan for itself and will attempt to develop a strategy that builds on its unique assets. For good planning to have a chance to work, cities must be ready to make **the investment** necessary to give hope for prosperity well into the future.

Finally, according to Robert Brooks International Consultants - after 30 years of working around the world helping communities become outstanding destinations for investment, new business opportunities, and places to live and visit, they found that successful downtowns all have in common the fact that **they began with a plan.**

Yogi Berra is supposed to have once said: If you don't know where you are going you might end up somewhere else – which is where Frankfort finds itself today, without an honest assessment of where it is now; without a vision of where it wants to go; and without a plan to help get us there.