



*City of Ludlow, Kentucky*

CHARTING THE COURSE:

*A STRATEGIC PLAN* for  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
*and* COMMUNICATIONS

NOVEMBER 2012

*Prepared by:*

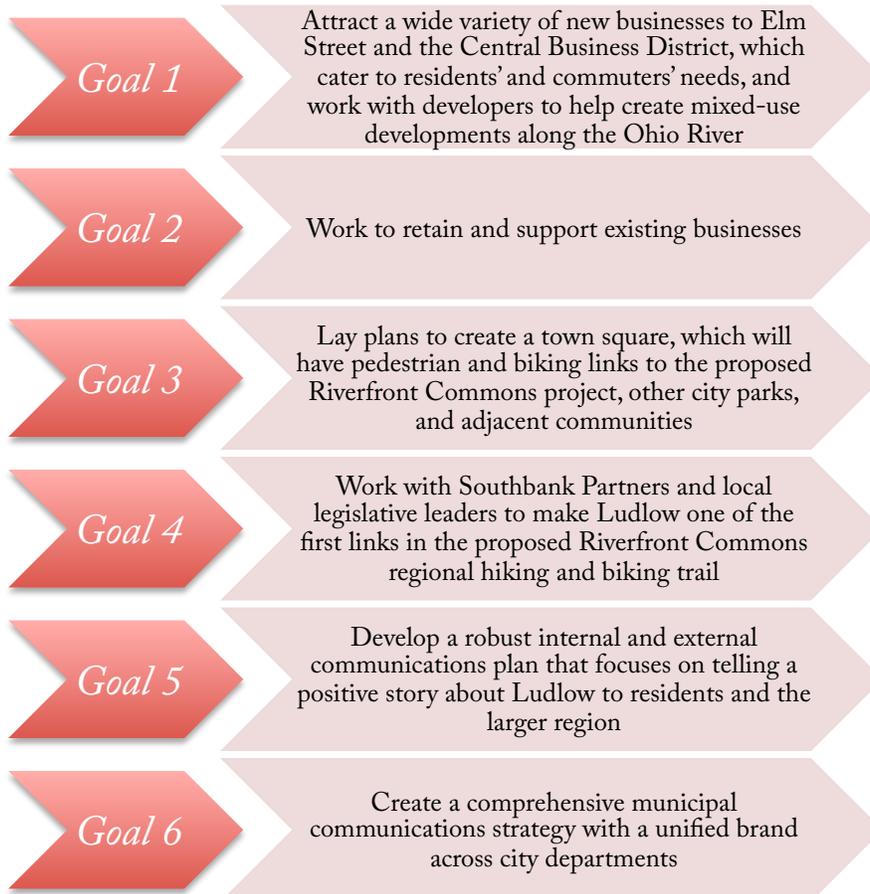


## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A community of just over 4,400 people, Ludlow, Kentucky, is located only four miles away from Fountain Square, the heart of downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. Recognizing the need for strategic goals to guide efforts and investments in economic development, this report outlines Ludlow's priorities over the next five years, 2013-2017.

Building on key strengths and opportunities, including location, a historic building stock, and planned regional riverfront development, Ludlow's goals for its future are rooted in attracting new business to its Central Business District core—Elm Street—by taking the necessary steps to improve internal and external city communications and marketing, as well as other economic development executions, including being sure to support existing businesses.

Ludlow is ready to tackle the challenges it faces in reaching these goals and will combat environmental threats by working with public- and private-sector agents, including Southbank Partners and local legislators, and employing a proactive strategy for attracting the types of new business the community wants to see. This report delves into the actionable steps for the following goals that will help Ludlow chart a course for a promising future in the next five years.



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## BACKGROUND & PLAN PURPOSE

Accessible. Clean. Historic. These are the words one citizen uses to describe Ludlow. A host of other strengths and challenges—coupled with opportunities and threats in the broader environment—confront business and community growth in Ludlow, Kentucky, a small city in Kenton County located west of Covington, Kentucky and south of Cincinnati, Ohio. To date, however, the city has not undertaken a high-level, strategic effort to chart a course forward for its economic development future.

In July 2012, at the direction of Mayor Ken Wynn and City Administrator Brian Richmond, Strategic Advisers, LLC, a Fort Mitchell-based communications and management consulting firm proposed the creation of a strategic plan for economic development and communications efforts in the city.

The purpose of this plan is to highlight Ludlow's vision for its future—especially for potential new businesses to the city as well for the broader Northern Kentucky region. While this report includes research background and best practices for economic development in smaller towns, it is designed to recommend several key goals, with proposed action steps, for the city to consider and to implement in its effort to diversify its business base and grow the local economy.

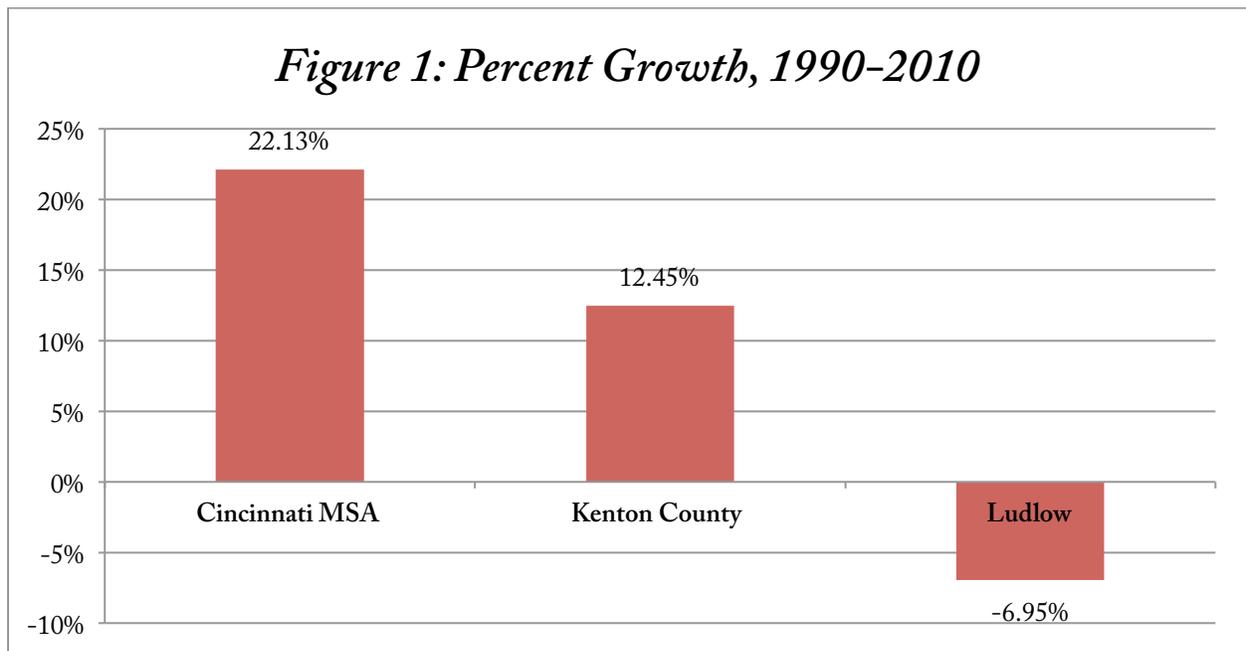
## COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC PROFILE

### *Basic Information*

Ludlow, Kentucky, is a Class IV city of just over 4,400 people located only four miles away from Fountain Square, the heart of downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. As of 2010, the median household income for the 1,830 households in Ludlow was \$47,439. Unemployment was fixed at 5.4%. The following data, primarily from the U.S. Census Bureau, outline key facts about the population of Ludlow and the business environment in the community.

### POPULATION, HOUSEHOLDS, AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Over the past 20 years, Ludlow has seen its population decline from 4,736 in 1990 to 4,407 in 2010 (Figure 1). This modest negative growth has not paced with more rapid population increases in the larger community—Kenton County and the metropolitan Cincinnati area. Further, while Ludlow’s population size is too small to project population growth, Kenton County is on track to grow by an additional 5.5% by 2020, largely based on growth in the more suburban areas of the county. Due to Ludlow’s statistical no-growth population figure between 2000 and 2010 (4,409 to 4,407, respectively), it is reasonable to assume that most population growth in Kenton County, at least in the near future, will happen outside of Ludlow.



Household income data, on the 1,830 households in Ludlow in 2010, suggest a moderate-income, middle-class community. Figure 2 shows how Ludlow’s households fare against those in the larger Kenton County area, metro Cincinnati area, Kentucky, and national averages. While Ludlow’s median household income—\$47,439—registers below the national and regional averages, it outperforms the state median income level. The average household income, while not

necessarily a good measure of wealth when compared to median household income, tracks similarly to the latter.

Further, homeownership stands at 65% in 2010, which is on par with the national average but is a bit lower when compared to the region. Finally, the household unemployment rate in Ludlow, at least in 2010, was highest of all compared geographic areas.

These statistics show a city that has much room for community improvement, surrounded by a region in the midst of growth and better-than-average national median income and unemployment levels.

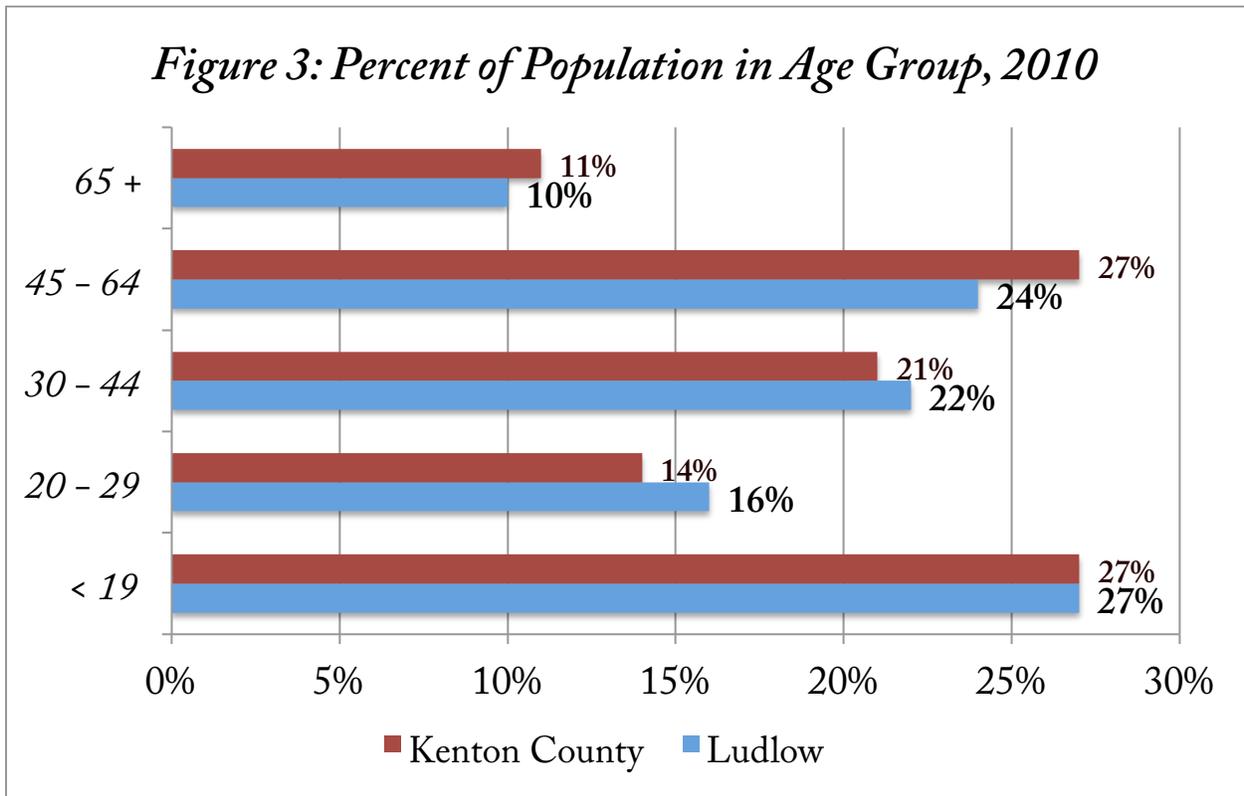
*Figure 2: Key Household Statistics for Key Geographic Areas*

<i>2010 Data</i>	Ludlow	Kenton County	Cincinnati Metro	Kentucky	United States
Median household income:	\$47,439	\$53,213	\$53,651	\$41,576	\$51,914
Average household income:	\$59,780	\$68,247	\$70,452	\$56,009	\$70,883
Homeownership rate:	65%	68%	67%	69%	65%
Unemployment rate:	5.4%	4.6%	5%	4.9%	5.1%

Age is another key economic statistic to consider in this type of analysis. While Figure 3 shows that Ludlow’s population very closely mirrors that of the larger Kenton County, the age group figures provide a basis upon which assumptions can be built.

In 2010, the majority of Ludlow’s population was either under age 19 or between 45 and 64 years old. These data suggest that the population is mostly nearing retirement or quite young. A significant portion of these figures might include families. While population is traditionally seen as a pyramid, with the majority of the population being young and thinning out in higher age brackets, Ludlow’s two spikes—the young or those nearing retirement—point to the fact that younger families and/or young, single professionals have either not yet discovered the community, or for some reason, find no reason to live in Ludlow.

These data point to growth opportunities for the city. Ludlow has room to improve in attracting new residents, but it should also be careful to attract a greater mix of residents: those in higher income brackets as well as young professionals and younger families.



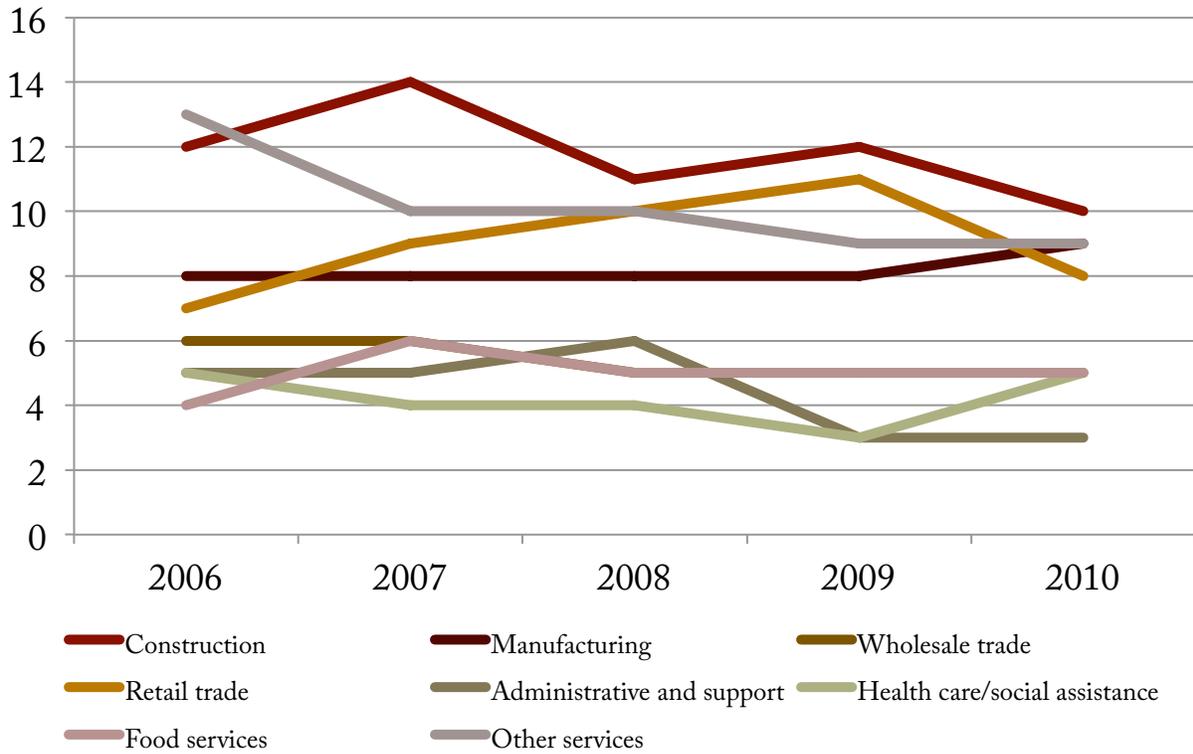
### LUDLOW'S BUSINESS PROFILE

While data are not available from the U.S. Census Bureau on business and industry patterns in Ludlow proper (as defined by municipal boundaries), industry data were available for the ZIP code 41016 in 2010. ZIP code 41016 includes all of Ludlow as well as sections of nearby Bromley, Covington, and West Covington.

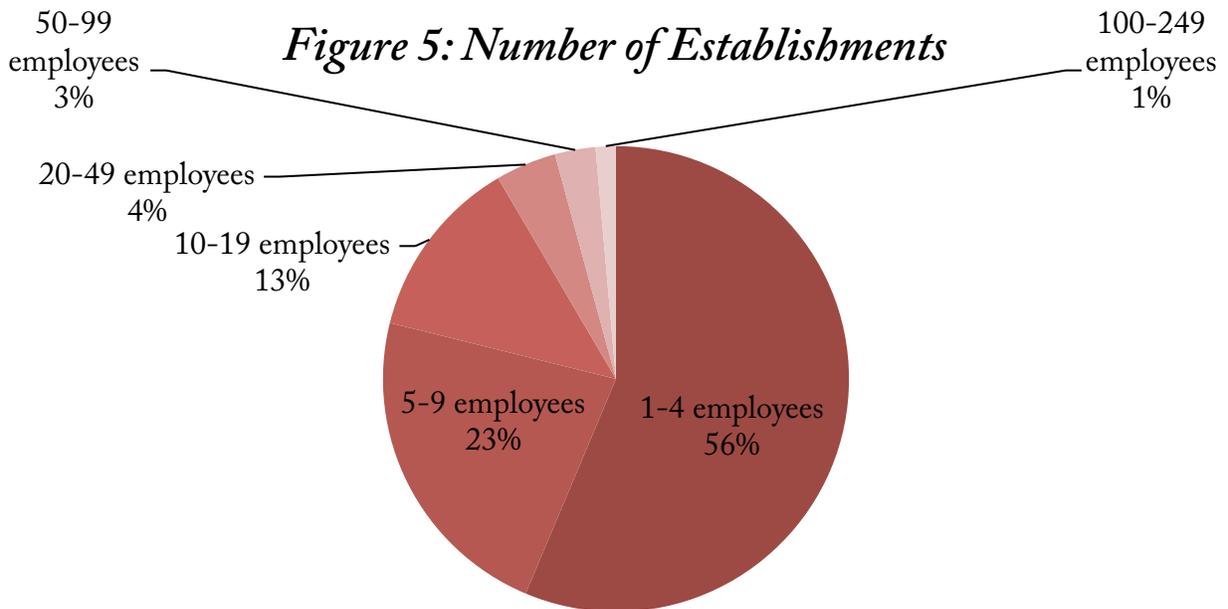
Construction and manufacturing account for most businesses in this area, followed by services such as dry cleaning, launderers, religious organizations, and retail trade. Between 2006 and 2010, the number of establishments per each of these industries remained relatively stable, except for construction, the decline in which was almost certainly due to the economic recession of 2008 (Figure 4). While that recession affected the total raw number of establishments in this ZIP code area, by 2010, 71 total establishments were identified in eight different categories. Figure 5 shows the size of each of these 71 establishments in terms of employees. It is worth noting that 79% of establishments have between 1-9 employees. Ludlow is a small business town with few of its biggest historical industrial or major commercial industries remaining in operation.

These Census figures paint the picture of a city, like many others, which was negatively impacted by the 2008 recession. Although Ludlow has taken a hit, like many small communities, core small businesses remain in operation, and the local economy is fairly diversified, with room for improvement.

*Figure 4: Number of Establishments per Industry, 2006-2010*



*Figure 5: Number of Establishments*



### *Commercial Space & Current Businesses*

Staff at the city completed a commercial space inventory in August 2012. Of note, most vacant commercial properties are found within the city's Central Business District, which runs along Elm Street. Several of these available properties are currently for sale or lease and boast prime storefront space.

At the ground level, the city is home to several businesses considered essential for the "livability" of residential communities as well as for a robust and diversified local economy. In no particular order, these businesses include:

- An independently-owned grocery store;
- Two funeral parlors;
- A pharmacy;
- Several local/community banks;
- A handful of law offices;
- A dry goods store;
- A performing arts/circus company;
- Several churches of various denominations;
- An independent K-12 school system; and
- Only a few sit-down/dine-in restaurants and bars, among others.

### *Municipal Finances*

The following tax rates are currently in effect:

- Property tax: \$0.260/\$100 of assessed value;
- Tangible property: \$0.624/\$100 of assessed value;
- Fire/EMS special property assessment: \$0.175/\$100 of assessed value;
- Payroll tax: 1.5%; and
- Insurance premium: 10%.

The city has no net profits or gross receipts tax. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012, the city closed its books with a modest surplus. While the collection of insurance premium taxes brought in most revenue, ad valorem and payroll taxes also comprised the most substantial sources of income for the city.

Most expenses were devoted to police, fire/EMS, and public works' operating costs and capital equipment. The city's capital improvement fund, with most funds being expended on Elm Street sidewalk and streetscape improvements, also consumed a few hundred thousand in public money. The city also made continued payments on the debt service of its municipal building as well as on a CDBG loan it accepted as part of the development of the Riverside Marketplace.

While the city ended the previous fiscal year in a good condition, the recommendations of this plan should be balanced against the fact that the city is operating with existing debt obligations.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section reviews the high-level findings of several months of research, consisting of (1) interviews and focus groups with municipal leaders, city staff, and external stakeholders, (2) best practice research into small-town community economic development practices, and (3) other general findings on Ludlow's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

### *Community Input*

As part of the strategic planning process, more than 25 individuals and groups were invited to share their thoughts on Ludlow's future, especially concerning economic development. Between August and October 2012, council members, municipal staff, citizens, business owners, and others outside the community with an interest in Ludlow's planning process were invited to share their thoughts on the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

### COUNCIL

- Ken Wynn, Mayor
- Denny Allen
- Tom Amann
- Josh Boone
- C.J. Kleier
- Charlie Manning
- Joyce McMullin

### MUNICIPAL STAFF

- Rob Himes, Code Enforcement Citation Officer
- Benny Johnson, Chief of Police
- Alice Margolen, City Treasurer
- Brian Richmond, City Administrator
- Laurie Sparks, City Clerk

### CITIZENS & BUSINESS OWNERS

- Bro. Paul Anglin, Jr.
- Steve Chapman
- Wayne Chapman
- Amy Clary
- Karen Collins
- Van Collins
- David Egbers
- Paul Miller
- Chris Moore
- Rev. Larry Schaeper
- Ed Schroeder
- Dr. Patrick Snadon
- Randy Wofford

### EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS/RESOURCES

- Andrew Baker, Senior Community Development Specialist, NKADD
- Karen Finan, Senior Vice President, Northern Kentucky Tri-ED

- Brian Houillion, former City Administrator
- Jack Moreland, President, Southbank Partners

These individuals provided key research data that is included in the SWOT Analysis & General Findings on page 11.

### *Best Practices for Economic Development*

Research into other cities of similar size and characteristics provide external ideas about strategies that may yield economic benefits in Ludlow. The communities examined were either around 4,000-5,000 in population, of similar size, close to a major metropolitan area, near or on a riverfront (or similar natural asset), and/or in close proximity to interstate highway access. The following “big ideas”—or best practices for small-town economic development—include:

- **Carefully plan waterfront development to incorporate elements that are in keeping with a community’s character**

While many cities with waterfront development opportunities have been eager to redevelop those spaces with a variety of projects, including restaurants, riverboat casinos, office buildings, hotels, and walking/biking paths, experience advises moving forward with such projects with caution and ample planning. These projects can be extremely costly, and, unless they align well to a community’s personality, they can be deemed unpopular and a waste of tax dollar expenditure or debt incurrence. Smart use of waterfront space includes careful planning, citizen and stakeholder buy-in, and a long-term approach as to how a community’s entire riverfront should be developed.

- **Employ smart-growth strategies**

Many small cities have aimed high and sought to transform themselves into something new—a suburb, a college town, etc. One small North Carolina city outside of Charlotte made a pointed effort to stay small. This town focused on smart-growth strategies where the types of development and businesses coming in town were carefully picked, through comprehensive zoning and planning standards. Additionally, citizens were (and continue to be) heavily involved in major community decisions, and the town has made a concerted effort to preserve open and green space as it has developed. The key to economic success in this town was its balanced and careful approach to managing growth.

- **Coordinate marketing and incentives to attract new businesses**

One small town saw great success in its overall effort to increase economic growth by creating a strong brand and marketing campaign. The careful selection of a logo and tagline, done through a citizen committee, allowed the town to meet success in public relations executions—both online and in print. A unified brand and message, coupled with a variety of new business incentives, allowed the town to send a strategic message to very targeted business audiences.

- **Support local business, both existing and prospective, with a diverse incentive package**

Many smaller cities have seen economic success when they have diversified the types of incentive packages they offer to existing and new businesses. Successful municipal programs include façade improvement grants or loans to businesses (or citizens), in-kind staff support to assist in business planning, and 50/50 matching grant programs to help offset the full cost of new business storefront signage, to name only a few. Even small dollar programs show business owners that a city is serious about helping them succeed in that community.

- **Coordinate growth and projects with neighbors and private-sector partners**

Collaboration has become a buzzword in today's public administration and economic development world, and for good reason. If done right, collaboration can go a long way to bringing economic development projects to fruition. Whether planning specific projects or coordinating general, long-term strategies, collaborating with private-sector partners within the city or with adjacent neighbors increases projected funding sources and allows for bigger projects, especially where smaller or rural towns are concerned.

### *SWOT Analysis & General Findings*

Given these best practices, community interviews, and economic profiling, a key step that must precede creating an effective strategic plan for economic development and communications efforts is conducting a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. A listing of the general findings is included after the analysis but, framing all of this, are certain facts and/or assets unique to Ludlow. While these are included as strength, they are so substantial and differentiate Ludlow so much from other cities, even nearby river cities, that they are worth identifying separately.

- **Location:** Ludlow is situated on and has direct access to the Ohio River. It has nearby access to both I-275 and I-71/75. In addition, it is only seven miles from the gates of the nearby Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) and four miles from the heart of downtown Cincinnati, Ohio—Fountain Square.
- **Existing Business Incentive:** Ludlow is the only city in Kenton County that lacks a net profits or gross receipts tax. This is a built-in economic development incentive for prospective businesses, provided no new tax is levied in the future.
- **River Access:** Ludlow boasts the only public boat ramp to the Ohio River in the three-county Northern Kentucky region.

The following chart outlines the SWOT analysis that will frame the strategic goals of this plan.

## *Strengths*

- Small-town character
- Engaged and invested residents
- Historic housing and commercial property stock, as well as relatively inexpensive prices
- Strong independent K-12 school system
- Hilltop views of Cincinnati
- A "livable" of community (access to needs, i.e. grocery, etc.)
- Improved downtown streetscape
- Strong core of existing businesses, and citizens' loyalty to these businesses

## *Weaknesses*

- Lack of sufficient, nearby parking to core area of the Central Business District on Elm Street
- Indirect access to I-275 and I-71/75
- Limited remaining available land
- Loitering and pre-existing negative stereotypes
- Limited debt capacity
- Significantly blighted rental properties/absentee landlords
- Unsafe pedestrian riverfront access
- Aging commercial and residential properties and infrastructure

## *Opportunities*

- Morning and afternoon traffic flow in and out of Ludlow on Route 8 on motorists' commute to and from Cincinnati
- Development of the proposed Ludlow Lagoon, linked to Devou Park and the Ohio River via the Riverfront Commons walking/bike trail
- Undeveloped and available riverfront
- Use of riverfront and water access as means of transportation
- Improving economy and better-than-average regional economic growth

## *Threats*

- Uncertain economic outlook
- Competition for commuter business (from business in Cresecent Springs, Ft. Wright, etc.)
- Asking price for some residential and commercial properties

Given these SWOT findings, the following general comments reflect major highlights from interviews related to each economic development or communications topic area. This research frames the five proposed goals of the strategic plan.

### **BUSINESS ATTRACTION, RETENTION, AND SUPPORT**

- Try to attract the following types of businesses, which would appeal to residents and commuters alike:
  - Bed and breakfast (cater to airport and corporate clientele)
  - Bakery/coffee shop
  - Upscale dining establishments or taverns/bars
  - Ice cream or yogurt parlor
  - Dry cleaning service

- Craft/arts businesses
- Bike shop
- Support (but refrain from actively seeking) industrial development on a project-by-project basis, ensuring that any new business aligns with the city's long-term plans and goals
- Create more green space and pocket parks
- Create a pedestrian- and bike-oriented Central Business District, anchored by a town square as the hub of town
  - Link the CBD to the riverfront
- Address lack of parking in the core of Elm Street, and consider financing a municipally-owned parking lot or garage
- Encourage mixed use of riverfront (including residential, walking/bike trails, restaurants, etc.)
- Encourage more ownership in the look of the city (motivate citizens to clean it up and landlords to better maintain their properties)
- Incentivize buying and repairing historic housing and commercial property stock
  - Ensure review of proposed architectural changes for a core area of the CBD
- Better support (from municipality) existing business owners and provide key support to new businesses to ensure or increase odds of success

### PHYSICAL GROWTH AREAS

- Focus on increasing business on Elm Street in CBD
- Work on developing the riverfront in tandem with or after Elm Street redevelopment
- Create new green spaces and improve existing parks
- Do not prioritize industrial development anywhere in town
- Consider parking solutions in CBD in conjunction with substantial new business growth there
- Work to make River's Breeze residents, other hillside residents, and others living outside central Ludlow feel part of the community

### PUBLIC RELATIONS & MARKETING

- Engage citizens and others with a more robust online presence (website and social media)
- Place positive media stories about Ludlow in the local news media to combat persistent negative perceptions
- Better promote existing businesses and do more to court prospective businesses
- Coordinate with local leaders on timing of events and marketing in advance of events
- Create printed marketing collaterals, which may appeal more to older residents
- Upgrade and unify physical brand elements and city's marketing collaterals
- Capitalize on Ludlow's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014
- Create more community events (e.g. Ludlow clean up) and signature annual events and then keep them on the same day every year

## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC PLAN

Based on the aforementioned research and findings, Strategic Advisers is pleased to make the following recommendations as the City of Ludlow's first economic development and communications strategic plan. Each goal is accompanied by recommended objectives and action steps necessary that will help achieve the goal.

Strategic Advisers will create evaluation metrics and assist in early implementation of the goals once City Council considers and approves the goals and action steps set forth in this plan.

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### *Vision Statement*

The City of Ludlow, Kentucky, envisions the next five years to be marked by steady economic and community growth. In adopting goals to transform Elm Street and better market the city to external stakeholders and prospective new businesses and residents, the city will create a more livable community with a variety of amenities and expand the economic vitality of the city. This growth will provide the basis for riverfront development, redevelopment of the Central Business District, and continued development beyond this plan.

*Goal 1: Attract a wide variety of new businesses to Elm Street and the Central Business District, which cater to residents' and commuters' needs, and work with developers to help create mixed-use developments along the Ohio River*

By focusing attention primarily on the Central Business District and Elm Street, the city can retain its small-town character by attracting businesses that will complement current residents and regular visitors—including commuters to and from Cincinnati. Rather than seeking to attract heavy industry, Ludlow should seek to attract businesses that are consistent with its residential character and small-town feel, such as coffee shops, bakeries, restaurants, arts/crafts stores, bike shops, and other light commercial entities. In addition, the city's riverfront is a prime opportunity for new mixed-use developments (residential/commercial/park uses).

### POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS GOAL

Listed below are the objectives and action steps, related to each, that will help the city achieve this goal in the next five years.

- Ensure that the city's Urban Design Review Board protects the unique character of the historic properties located in the CBD along Elm Street. Being careful not to hinder the attraction of new business, we believe it is important for the city to retain the historic character of this corridor. New or modified buildings on Elm Street should be consistent with the period and style of existing buildings. While an historic overlay district might be considered in Ludlow in a few years, we believe the Urban Design Review Board will

appropriately review proposed alterations and new construction in the CBD that will protect the character of the city's central core.

- Approve an ordinance based on amended KRS Chapter 426, from HB 396 in Kentucky's 2012 General Assembly (Appendix B), to redefine vacant properties to remove perpetually blighted properties in the city. The city should also work to step up code enforcement in the CBD and residential neighborhoods surrounding this district.
- Reinvest recycled CDBG funds, when they begin to become available in 2013, to create a municipal façade/storefront/signage rehabilitation grant program for existing and new businesses.
- Review the city zoning ordinance to require historically appropriate signs in the CBD and prohibit inappropriate signs; the character of Ludlow's downtown business district necessitates attention to the form, quality, and character of signs; the following guidelines should be followed for signs in Ludlow's CBD:
  - A sign should preserve, complement, and enhance the architectural composition and features of the building;
  - Sign design should be considered as an integral part of the building façade;
  - A sign should be designed to be in proportion and scale with the building and should not obscure or conflict with architectural features of the building;
  - Signs should have a human scale and be pedestrian oriented;
  - Sign attachment parts should be reused in their original location (holes in the façade or fixing positions) to protect the original building materials;
  - Illumination of a sign should be done with the objective of achieving a balance between the architecture, the historic nature of Elm Street, and the sign; and
  - Sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic building, using materials characteristic of the building's period and style.
- Actively recruit businesses that appeal to both residents and commuters: bakery/coffee shop; dry cleaning store; upscale restaurant/tavern, etc. Use city incentives and staff and/or contractors to secure at least two new business commitments per year. In our experience, business attraction generally only occurs when a city employee or contractor is working full-time on this endeavor.

### *Goal 2: Work to retain and support existing businesses*

In attracting new business, the city must not neglect to support and showcase its corps of existing businesses. The city should focus on creating relationships with new and existing business owners as well as being responsive to the needs of our business community.

### **POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS GOAL**

Listed below are the objectives and action steps, related to each, that will help the city achieve this goal in the next five years.

- Establish a formal relationship with the Northern Kentucky SCORE Chapter and/or Northern Kentucky E-Zone to provide mentoring services to new or existing business

owners. Strategic Advisers does *not* recommend creating a business council at this time because, based on our qualitative research, not enough business owners are interested in making an organization like that work.

- Work with Riverside Marketplace, the Ludlow Pharmacy, and the Family Dollar to create signage that patrons of other businesses in the CBD may park in their parking lot. Strategic Advisers does *not* recommend that the city consider debt financing at this time for construction of a parking lot or garage in the CBD. We think the city should revisit this issue after a few years of success securing new downtown businesses.
- Build on the success of Circus Mojo to create a unique environment that fosters success of the arts and arts-related businesses.
- Build upon existing efforts to develop more community events and general annual events to encourage residents and residents of the greater region to visit the city and to patronize Ludlow businesses.

*Goal 3: Lay plans to create a town square, which will have a pedestrian and biking link to the proposed Riverfront Commons project and other city parks*

With historical roots in cultures all over the world, the public or town square is being rediscovered as an effective tool for bringing people together. Public squares are important to cities' social and economic future because they are where people experience their neighborhoods and each other. The benefits go far beyond just making better spaces for people:

- *Economic and community development:* Public squares can catalyze private investment and small-scale entrepreneurial activities.
- *Community identity:* Squares nurture and define community identity by providing a sense of identity, encouraging volunteerism, and highlighting the values within the community.
- *Bridge building:* Squares draw a diverse population, including more women, elderly, and children, as well as a greater ethnic and cultural mix; they encourage people to get involved and take pride in the area. Public squares are a “common ground.”

To be successful, public squares should have activities and amenities that attract individuals as well as groups of people. The way to do this is to develop an understanding about how different ages, sizes of groups, and different cultures will use a public square and what activities will draw them there. The best approach to developing a successful town square is employing a place-making process in which the community articulates its vision for how its residents want to use the square and then translate this information into a square with these uses, activities, and destinations incorporated into it. Successful squares have a series of dynamic destinations that attract different kinds of people, each of which offers many choices of things to do—socializing, eating, reading, playing a game, interacting with art, etc.

Strategic Advisers envision a pedestrian-friendly town square, linked to parks and the proposed Riverfront Commons regional walking/bike trail that will make Ludlow a more livable community and serve as an incubator for increased downtown and riverfront economic

development. We believe that a public square will entice new businesses, citizens in River's Breeze (many of whom have a tendency to turn mainly right, not left into town, at the end of River's Breeze Drive), residents of nearby communities, and prospective new residents to the city, who will, in turn, patronize existing businesses and new businesses located near the town square.

## POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS GOAL

Listed below are the objectives and action steps, related to each, that will help the city achieve this goal in the next five years.

- Hire a firm to conduct the place-making exercise for Ludlow's public square and to ultimately design a square that achieves the vision gleaned from this process. One of the most accomplished organizations in providing these services to communities is the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a nonprofit planning, design, and educational firm based in New York City. PPS, which has designed and improved public spaces throughout the United States and the world, was hired by the City of Covington in 2006 to conduct a place-making exercise and design a public square in downtown Covington.
- Consider pursuing state and federal (and grant) funding to finance this effort. If there is one item to expend significant funding on—besides creating a city grant program to help local businesses improve façades or other business incentives—it is to create a town square. This type of development, which is fitting to Ludlow's character, will benefit from ancillary development on the riverfront already being planned and will be a major attraction for new businesses and visitors to come to Ludlow.
- Pitch to TANK to begin Southbank Shuttle service to Ludlow so as to create a transit path into the town square and CBD.

*Goal 4: Work with Southbank Partners and local legislative leaders to make Ludlow one of the first links in the proposed Riverfront Commons regional hiking and biking trail*

Riverfront Commons is a planned 11-mile, uninterrupted walkway/bikeway/pathway that would extend from Ludlow in the east to Fort Thomas in the west and link all six Southbank cities in between. The 20-foot wide path will feature open park space at strategic points along the river, accommodating walkers, runners, and bikers. A series of points of access, or nodes, will provide easy linkage to residential, business, entertainment, and historic districts.

Southbank Partners is spearheading this project and is currently seeking state and federal funding to make it a reality. Because Ludlow's riverfront remains largely undeveloped and large parts of it are owned by public entities, the city is well positioned to be an area where early construction of the trail can be started.

## POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS GOAL

Listed below are the objectives and action steps, related to each, that will help the city achieve this goal in the next five years.

- Work with Southbank Partners to make Ludlow’s riverfront the first phase of the Riverfront Commons construction.
- Work with local legislators to find state funding for construction of the trail in Ludlow.
- Work with local developers to incorporate the trail into future development plans.

*Goal 5: Develop a robust internal and external communications plan that focuses on telling a positive story about Ludlow to residents and the larger region*

The city should recognize that, while it needs to give residents and visitors a reason to come and stay in Ludlow, it also needs to excel at telling the city’s story, especially during the upcoming 150<sup>th</sup> municipal anniversary. Strategic Advisers can help the city create a comprehensive PR and communications plan, coordinating efforts across all departments, that will tell the community’s story both to internal (citizens) and external (visitors) audiences.

### POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS GOAL

Listed below are the objectives and action steps, related to each, that will help the city achieve this goal in the next five years.

- Use the city’s website and social media channels to penetrate new business networks to tell Ludlow’s story as a great place to live and work.
- Secure earned media placements at least once per quarter in local new media outlets to showcase Ludlow businesses or citizens, framed in a positive light.
- Use several print and online mediums to share community news and revisit publication schedule for the *Ludlow Community Connection*.
- Create a citizens academy to teach citizens about local government’s function and community history, as well as helping business owners understand city processes.
- Produce a monthly web video series on the Ludlow community and its business and individuals.

*Goal 6: Create a comprehensive municipal communications strategy with a unified brand across city departments*

The city should re-brand itself—both in general and in physical brand elements—to appear unified across departments and to better communicate messages to the general public. A comprehensive communications strategy will include the re-imagination and citizen participation in what the city’s key messages should be, who its audiences are, how the messages will look, and what images and feelings should be conveyed.

### POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS GOAL

Listed below are the objectives and action steps, related to each, that will help the city achieve this goal in the next five years.

- Completely rebrand the city's logo, tagline, seal, and all related marketing collaterals.
- Coordinate rebranding efforts with all municipal departments.
- Consider investing in digital signage to promote key messages, including supporting businesses and community events.
- Pursue efforts to incorporate Ludlow's brand in nearby communities and along the highway so as to give Ludlow a better sense of place.

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Undoubtedly, other items align with these goals and would help achieve any of them. Strategic Advisers believes, however, given the research we conducted and based on general economic development principles that the above-referenced objectives would best achieve the stated goals.

Our approach to economic growth is tempered: it seeks to make strategic investments in projects that will have a significant return on investment while understanding the budgetary constraints faced by the city. For instance, supporting local businesses through a façade improvement program and investing in the construction of a town square will likely yield increased benefits of additional business relocation. This success, then, could in turn support creating a municipal parking lot when increased business activity necessitates such a project.

Further, we can work with the city to court potential new businesses related to our research and begin to implement, with the Mayor's permission, the goals set forth in this report. We will also assist in engaging and collaborating with all public and private partners, which will be necessary to achieving the objectives of this strategic plan.

**APPENDIX A: AVAILABLE PROPERTIES IN LUDLOW CBD AS OF AUGUST 2012**

Site Address	Property Owner/Manager	Property Owner Contact Number	Note(s)
38 Elm Street	City of Ludlow	859-491-1233	(Designated Industrial Use); currently undergoing rehabilitation for reuse
105 Elm Street	Elm Street Town Center, LLC	859-341-2893	
214 Elm Street	Frisk Properties		(Designated Retail Use); for sale for \$140,000; for lease for \$1,500/month, plus utilities; includes restaurant equipment
222 Elm Street	Bonnie & Mark Hearndon	419-878-6801	Vacant storefront space
225 Elm Street	WHT Holding Company	859-331-6498	
230 Elm Street	Frank & June Rolfes		
233 Elm Street	Rail Town Properties, LLC	859-431-5015	(Designated Office Use); upstairs space and small street front office available
237 Elm Street	Fred & Carmelita Brook		Vacant storefront space
239 Elm Street	Harold & Rita Christy		Vacant storefront space
311 Elm Street	Daniel Whitley	859-331-4794	
325 Elm Street	Joseph Pieschel		(Designated Office Use); for sale for \$146,000

**APPENDIX B: LINK TO TEXT OF KENTUCKY HOUSE BILL 396, KY  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2012 ON VACANT PROPERTIES (*Goal 1*)**

<http://apps.sos.ky.gov/Executive/Journal/execjournalimages/2012-Reg-HB-0396-1535.pdf>