



From Vacancy to Vitality: Bringing California's Downtown Revitalization Playbook to Life

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With support from Wells Fargo, the Downtown Revitalization Playbook reflects a collaborative effort to help rural communities strengthen their downtowns, build local leadership capacity, and create opportunities for long-term economic growth and community vitality.



Core Objectives



Remove barriers that prevent local governments from taking action on vacant or blighted downtown properties.



Provide actionable tools (policies, scripts, templates, and incentives) that cities and counties can immediately apply.



Train local champions who can sustain revitalization momentum beyond the project's duration.

How We Got Here



Stakeholder interviews and focus groups

Downtown property/building inventories and data collection

In-person downtown assessments

Research of strategies, tools, and comparable approaches





REVIVING

RURAL DOWNTOWNS: A RURAL CALIFORNIA DOWNTOWN PLAYBOOK



SUPPORTING

SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH AND INVESTMENT

ALIGNING

POLICY AND ZONING WITH DOWNTOWN VISION

REACTIVATING

DOWNTOWN PROPERTIES AND PLACES





Our Focus Areas

Community	County	Population
Alturas	Modoc	2,626
Corning	Tehama	8,260
Eureka	Humboldt	25,304
Garberville	Humboldt	1,719
Live Oak	Sutter	9,558
Oroville	Butte	20,451
Weaverville	Trinity	3,105
Wheatland	Yuba	4,369



Focus Area

- Each community identified specific focus areas
- Corridor or small multi-block locations
- Primary locations for supporting actions and assistance



Data Collection and Inventory

- Goal was to parallel the [MSA BOOMS tracker](#) format, to facilitate future information transfer.
- Parcel level data collection.
- Information that will be available for future update and use.

*Basic
Identification,
Use and
Productivity,
Classifications,
Characteristics,
On-Site Features
Some items will
require local
assistance.
Some items may
be unknown and
unknowable!*



Datasheet Example

**NorDown**
Oroville, Butte Co
Focus Area Property Inventory

116 Parcels
25 parcels with no address

How to use this sheet:
Properties within the selected focus area and address retrieved from tax assessor's website by street name and by property number

Bird St. Downer St.

1859 BIRD ST 1330 DOWNER ST

1870 BIRD ST 1453 DOWNER ST

1876 BIRD ST 1459 DOWNER ST

1880 BIRD ST

1898 BIRD ST

1909 BIRD ST

1910 BIRD ST

1933 BIRD ST

1944 BIRD ST

1945 BIRD ST

1950 BIRD ST

1954 BIRD ST

1960 BIRD ST

1965 BIRD ST

2040 HIGH ST
Oroville
Butte County

Last Update Date:


Back to Index Sheet

Catalyst Potential
Opp. Category
Next Step

Follow Up Party
Confidence Level

Notes

APN 012-097-010-000

Survey Status

Address 2040 HIGH ST City Oroville State CA Zip 11111

Map Link

Property Contact Phone

1. Occupancy and Current Use

Parcel Type

Is the parcel a valid address/property

Is there a building on this parcel

How many floors are above ground

Ground floor occupancy status

Upper floor occupancy status

What is the property used for

Zoning Classification

Opportunity Zone

Parcel Size (Ac.)

Approximate square footage

Number of operating businesses

Number of housing units?

Is off street parking available?

Products/ Services

Hours of Operation

Estimated FTE

Primary Customer Base

2. Ownership and Contact

Owner known?

Ownership Type?

Owner Location

Owner Name

Property Manager/Broker Identified?

Known Owner Interest

Prior Owner Outreach Conducted?

Ownership or Title Issues Suspected?

3. History and Utility

Culturally or historically significant?

Known environmental risks?

Building Age

Power Supply

4. Physical Condition

Overall exterior condition

Storefront/façade condition

Entrance/sidewalk condition

Visible safety concern

Deferred maintenance level

5. Reuse Readiness/ Rehabilitation Needs

Apparent reuse readiness

Visible structural concerns

ADA/code barriers apparent

Environmental concerns

Est. investment needed

6. Housing and Mixed Use Potential

Upper floors suitable

Estimated units possible

Upper floor access

Barrier to housing conv.

7. Marketability and Economic Potential

Visibility

Parking availability

Likely best fit future use

Suitable for temp. activation

Marketable near term

8. Public Realm/ Block Context

Adjacent sidewalk cond.

Ped. Lighting adequate

Adj. to vacant property

Near anchor bus./civic use

Block face strength

9. Regulatory/ Implementation Barriers

Zoning/land use concern

Complex permitting likely

Code enforcement concern

Tax delinquent/lein issue

Enf./nuisance priority

2150 Bird St. 2170 Bird St. 1330 Downer St. 1453 Downer St. 1459 Downer St. 2040 High St. 2044 High St. 2060 High St. 1230 Huntton St. 1330 Huntton St. 1337 Huntton St. +

1580 HUNTOON ST 1933 MONTGOMERY ST 1440 MYERS ST 012-094-003-000

1941 MONTGOMERY ST 1445 MYERS ST 012-094-010-000

1955 MONTGOMERY ST 1450 MYERS ST 012-094-011-000



Focus Groups - Questions

- Assets/strengths in the downtown
- Barriers/challenges
- Businesses, services, spaces needed
- Downtowns you admire... what is different?
- Who is downtown serving or not serving?
- What would success look like to you in five years? How would you know revitalization worked?
- What do you think would help with downtown revitalization?



Focus Groups - Assets

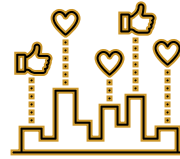
Across the eight communities



Historic Character
& Authentic 'Bones'



Compact, Walkable
Downtown Cores



Strong Sense of
Place & Identity



Arts, Culture &
Creative Energy



Parks, Waterfronts
& Outdoor Rec.



Events, Festivals &
Traditions



Leaders &
Champions



Strategic Location &
Access



Buildings &
Opportunity Sites

Focus Groups – Key Challenges

Across the eight communities.

Vacant,
deteriorating &
underutilized
buildings

Misalignment
between zoning,
policy, & desired
downtown use.

Cost & risk
barriers for small
businesses

Weak evening &
everyday activity

Transportation,
highway &
physical barriers

Overreliance on
events without
spillover

Fragmented
leadership,
capacity, &
ownership

Limited visitor
orientation &
marketing

Economic leakage
to nearby cities

Key Principles

1. Asset-based approach
2. Keeping wealth local
3. Collaboration is key.
4. Start small with quick wins
5. Focus on a growth mindset.



Reactivating Downtown Properties and Places



Assess Vacant and Underutilized Properties



Create Supportive Programming and Assistance



Bolster Enforcement and Compliance Processes



Pursue Creative Methods for Property Activation

Aligning Policy and Zoning with Downtown Vision

01

Assess the challenges identified by property owners, developers, municipal staff, and other downtown stakeholders.

02

Examine requests for variances, special use permits, and other variations from standard zoning or permitting policy and procedures.

03

Examine the status of connections between local planning efforts and zoning policies.

04

Perform a periodic zoning code audit for timely updates that might reflect changes in the local environment.

05

Maximize the use of enacted enforcement policies and available enforcement actions.



Supporting Small Business Growth and Investment

Pop-up Retail

Micro-Grants and
facade grants

Community Benefit
District or Business
Improvement
District Models

One-Stop
Permitting Centers

Fee Waivers or
Deferrals

Experiential Retail
and Community
Events



Building a Consistently Vibrant Downtown



Form a Downtown Activation Team



Secure Commitments from Businesses



Business Integration

Turning Events into Lasting Economic Impact



Passport Program

Extend business hours
beyond event days

Redesign event layouts to
drive movement



Enhancing Visitor Experience and Destination Awareness



Make downtown
more accessible

Create a strong
downtown identity

Improving Connectivity, Access, and Mobility

Assess	Evaluate	Experiment	Build
Assess conditions and areas of greatest concern	Evaluate potential solutions of all sizes	Experiment with temporary or short-term implementations	Build support for larger or longer-term efforts



Partnerships, Capacity, Community Leadership

Assess the network of partners

Assess the status of current or past efforts

Examine alignment with current needs and goals.

Initiate or re-initiate efforts based on learnings.

Form a regional hub

Identify the host or lead organization of the hub.

Identify large anchors as regional leaders.

Identify mid-size communities as operational hubs.

Identify small communities as tactical strategy hubs.



Assess

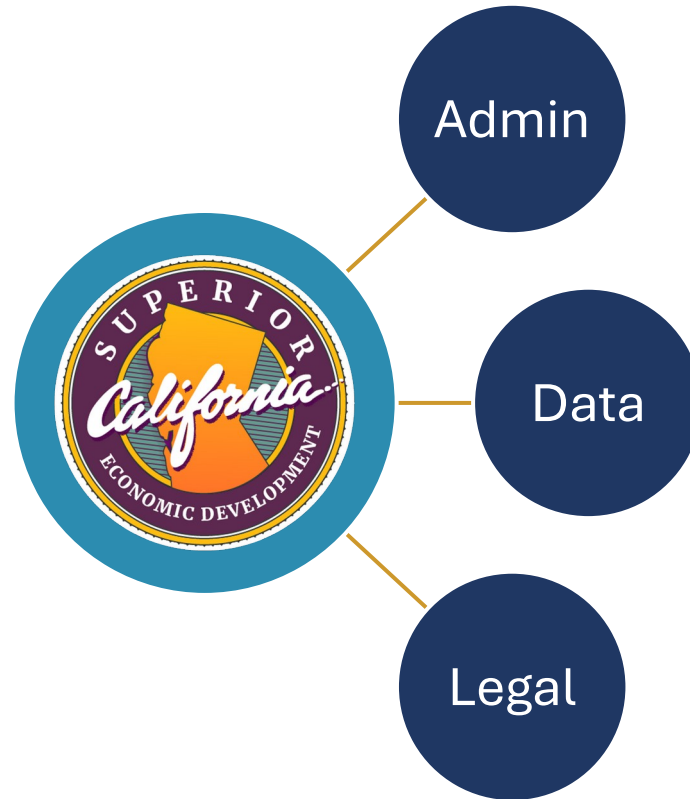
Partner Network

Past Efforts

Alignment with
Needs and Goals

Anchors, Hosts,
Hubs

Overall Regional Hub



Regional Leader



Local Spending and Economic Opportunity

1

Assess local market conditions and competing locations

2

Survey consumers and visitors

3

Fill retail and service gaps where possible with existing businesses and local orgs

4

Strengthen the downtown experience as a community's primary gathering place.

5

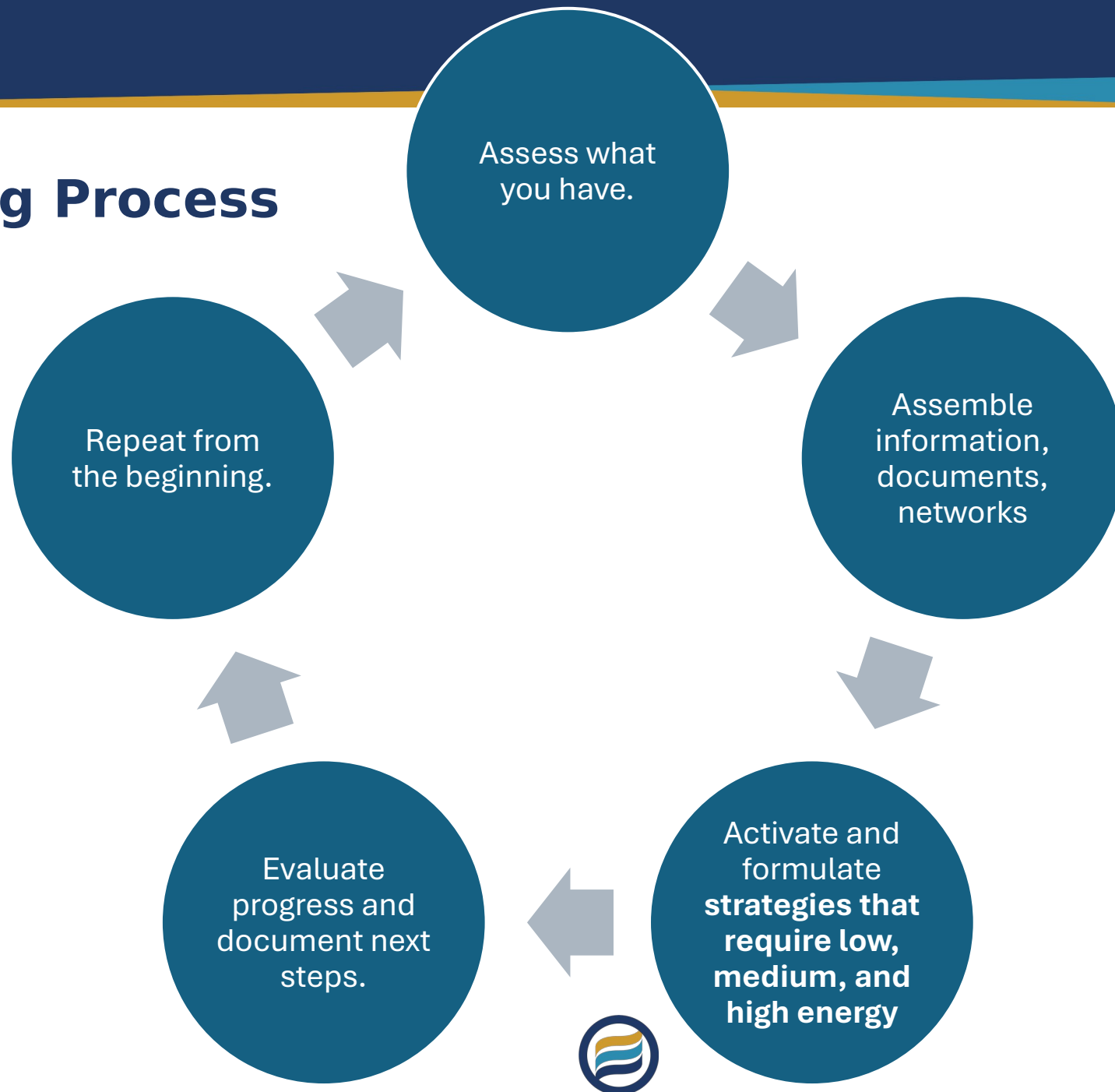
Support "Buy Local" campaigns and other efforts to prioritize local institutions

6

Cultivate a unique local identity



Overarching Process



How to Use the Playbook

- Assess the challenges.
- Understand capacity.
- Identify key partners to engage.
- Understand low, medium and high-energy strategies for each challenge.
- Identify low hanging fruit – what are some simple, no or low cost actions to take to show early progress and build momentum.
- Choose strategies at each level.
- Map out a plan.





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