



# DDA Main Street District Plan (Draft)

2019



## 2019 Bath Charter Township DDA Main Street District Plan

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
a. Study Purpose	Page 4
b. Background/History	Page 4
c. Study Update Process	Page 5
<b>2. Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
a. Overview	Page 6
b. Existing Conditions	Page 6
<b>3. Recommendations</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
a. Recent and Future Improvements	Page 8
b. Couzens Park	Page 8
c. Goals and Objectives	Page 9
<b>Appendix One – Survey Results</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Appendix Two – Façade Improvement Program</b>	<b>Page 16</b>

## Chapter One – Introduction

### Study Purpose

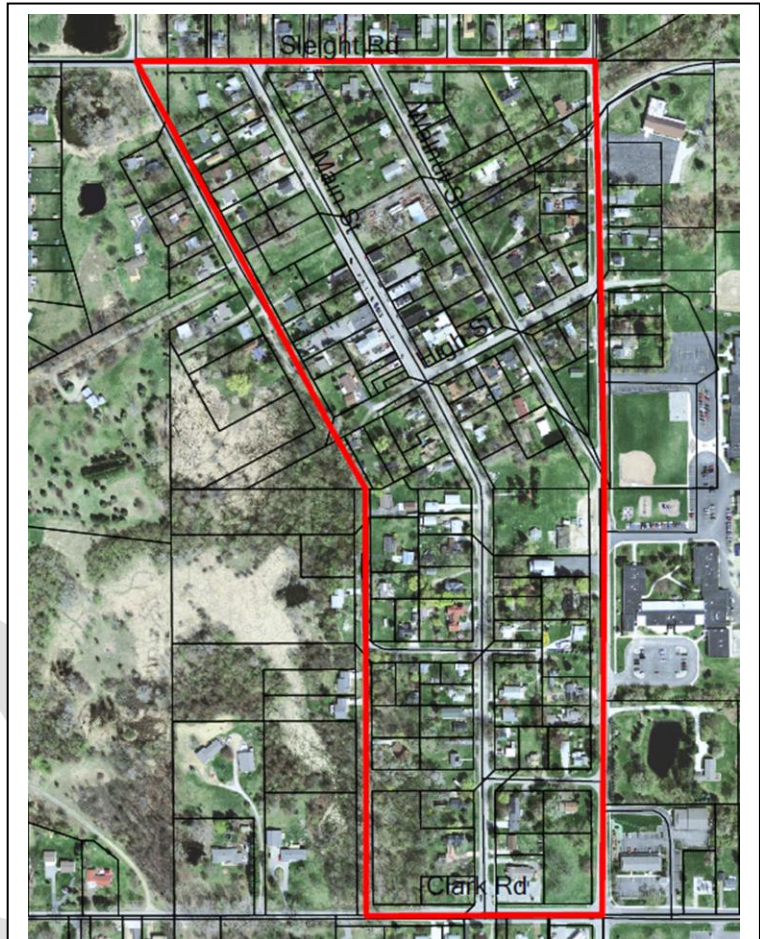
In 2017, the Bath Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) decided to study the historic downtown area known as downtown Bath. According to the DDA Plan, the primary goal and purpose of the DDA is to create a positive economic environment for residents and businesses, to create a “sense of place” and focal point for community activities within the DDA District, and to encourage private investment through planned public infrastructure funding.

The northern area of the DDA district is bound by Clark Road and Sleight Road and includes the historical downtown Bath, the Main Street area. The Main Street area is composed of limited commercial and office services, single-family residential (mainly on the southern portion of the Study Area), and multiple-family residential.

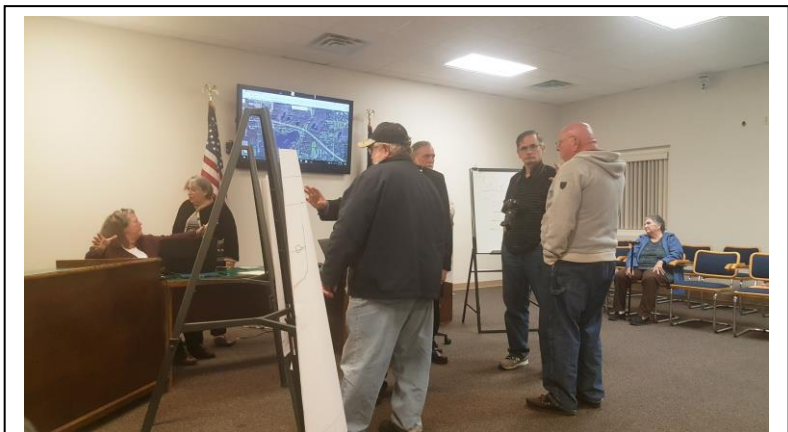
The DDA decided to concentrate on the Main Street area in order to improve it. The first step was the completion of a Main Street Study, which is called for in the DDA Plan. The study area was defined as shown in Figure 1.1.

### Background/History

The Bath Charter Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was created by the Township Board on April 4, 2011. The creation



**Figure 1.1 – Main Street Study Area**



**Figure 1.2 – Community Engagement Extravaganza**

of the DDA was followed by the of the DDA's Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan (TIFP), which was adopted on January 7, 2013. The TIFP states that the primary goal and purpose of the DDA is to, "create a positive economic environment for residents and businesses, to create a "sense of place" and focal point for community activities within the DDA District, and to encourage private investment through planned public infrastructure funding." The TIFP identified four objectives that support the primary goal and purpose, which are economic, public facilities and infrastructure, public studies and policy initiatives, and "Sense of Place."

Under the public study objective, one of the activities called for is a study for the Main Street corridor. This is within the area in the TIFP recognizes as the Northern Area.

The DDA district as a whole extends from the Webster Road/I-69 interchange north to Sleight Road and encompasses the Main Street study area. The DDA includes a total of 295 acres of land.

#### Study Update Process

The Study was officially kicked off with a survey. The survey was launched both online and in hard copy forms on June 20, 2017. The results of the survey are found in Appendix One. Two community engagement workshops were held at the Township offices on October 25, 2017 (Figure 1.2). Residents were able to give comments to staff and write on maps. Additional follow-up was available at the DDA meetings that followed.

## Chapter Two – Existing Conditions

### Overview

The study area contains a mixture of single-family residential and commercial land uses. With the exception of Couzens Park and the commercial property on the northeast corner of Main Street and Clark Road, all of the study area south of high street is single-family residential. The area north of high street is the core downtown area and consists of a mix of residential and commercial, along with a small number of vacant parcels. This transitions to single-family residential again on the north end of the study area on Sleight Road. The study area will be broken down and discussed in greater detail.

### Existing Conditions

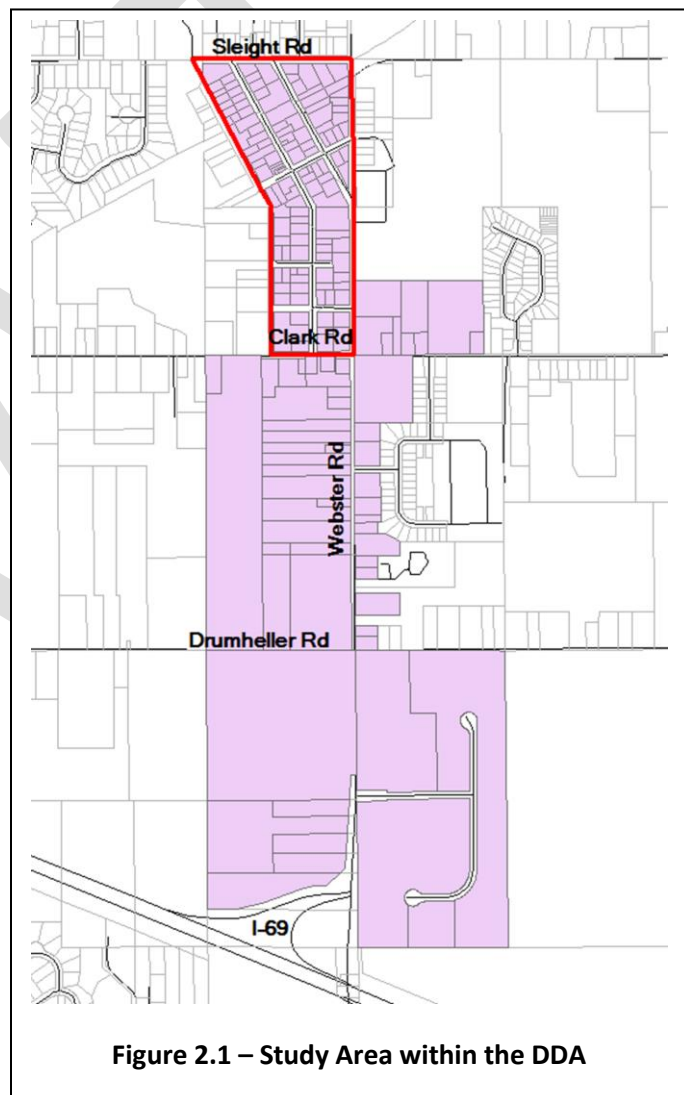
#### 1. Location

The Main Street Study Area is the northern section of the Bath Township DDA district and located approximately one mile north of the I-69/Webster Road interchange (Figure 2.1). The Study Area is bound by Clark Road in the south and Sleight Road in the north and contains approximately 55 acres of land.

#### 2. Existing Land Uses

The Study Area is mostly composed of single-family residential surrounding the historic downtown Bath core. Downtown Bath is a mixture of commercial, office, single-family, and multiple-family land uses. There is an old railroad corridor in the northern portion of the Study Area, although it is now in private hands. In 2017, the DDA became the owner of a quarter acre parcel adjacent to the rail corridor.

The Study Area also encompasses Couzens Park. Couzens Park will be discussed in more detail later in the Study.



**Figure 2.1 – Study Area within the DDA**

### 3. Zoning

The wide range of land uses found within the study area are all allowed by right or by special use under the zoning classification High Density Development (HDD), which applies to the entire study area (Figure 2.2). Uses allowed by right in the HDD district include single-family and multifamily dwellings, offices, professional services, retail, and food services. For specific information on the Study Area's zoning, see Article IX of the Bath Township Zoning Ordinance.

### 4. Future Land Uses

The properties fronting on Main Street, from Couzens Park in the south to Sleight Road in the north, are shown on the Bath Township Future Land Use Map as Mixed Land Use. According to the Comprehensive Plan, this is characterized by medium to high density residential development, offices, and commercial land uses that serve the community. It is worth noting that this future land use designation includes Couzens Park. It may be worth removing Couzens Park from the Mixed Use future land use designation to something more appropriate, such as Community Facilities, in future updates of the Township Comprehensive Plan.

The remainders of the properties within the Study Area are shown as High Density Residential. This is characterized by high density residential development, typically 7 to 12 dwelling units per acre, which is characteristic of the single-family residential development in the Study Area.

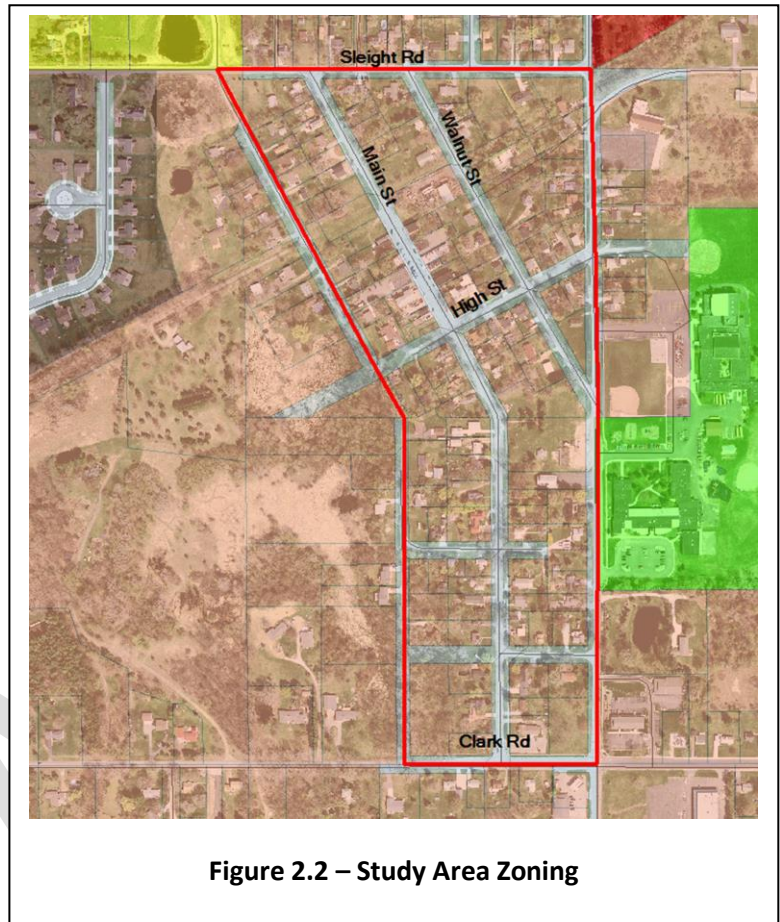


Figure 2.2 – Study Area Zoning

## Chapter Three – Recommendations

### Recent and Future Improvements

In 2017 and 2018, the DDA sponsored a sidewalk cleanup in advance of Bath Days. This cleanup included the uncovering of sidewalks and removal of dead branches on Main Street. Years of neglect led to the uncovering of overgrown sections of sidewalk (Figure 3.1).

In 2018, the DDA approved the installation of signs to inform motorists of when they enter the DDA. The signs were installed in 2019. Two of the signs were placed on Slight Road and within the Main Street Study Area.



**Figure 3.1 – Overgrown Sidewalk**

In 2019, the DDA approved a façade improvement program for commercial and office properties in the study areas. Under the program, a business or building owner can apply for a 50% matching grant for a project to improve the façade of their building. The minimum cost for such a project must be at least \$2,000. The complete program can be found in Appendix Two.

The DDA plans the following improvements in Couzens Park:

1. Early in 2020, the DDA will be planting lilac trees. The trees are planned along Main Street between existing landscaping and along the northeastern property line.
2. Later in 2020, the DDA plans to elevate the historic cupola off the ground and place it on a permanent masonry pedestal. Benches and wrought iron fencing is planned around the cupola.
3. After 2020, **the DDA will further study non-motorized connectivity through Couzens Park, including potentially constructing a sidewalk on the west side of Webster Road.**

### Couzens Park

This two-acre park located on Main Street is the site of a 1927 Bath School Memorial and State Historical Marker, as well as a Veterans Memorial. Couzens Park has been the site of festivals, reunions and outdoor concerts, and currently is the site for the Bath Farmers Market and the annual Bath Days Festival. The park includes a picnic pavilion and benches.

In 2018, the DDA created a subcommittee to study future improvements in Couzens Park. The subcommittee met twice and came to the conclusion that the DDA could improve Couzens Park by constructing a concrete base for the historic cupola and turn the cupola area into a gathering space with benches, wrought iron fences, and public art pieces. The subcommittee's recommendations were adopted by the DDA and approved by both Bath Schools and the



Township Board. The first phase of the cupola project, which was the construction of the base and the raising of the cupola off the ground, will be completed in 2020.

### Goals and Objectives

Thanks to the community feedback at the community engagements sessions on October 25, 2017 and survey feedback, Township staff was able to update the goals for the Main Street Plan. Further public engagement was received at the 2019 Bath Days festival where DDA Board members and Staff spoke to residents.

The following goals and objectives were put together based on comments and survey data.

#### **Goal 1:** Revitalize the Main Street commercial area.

Objective 1: Improve facades of preexisting businesses along Main Street through encouraging businesses to take advantage of the DDA's Façade Improvement Program.

Objective 2: Improve and expand on the sidewalk system in the study area. New sidewalks should be considered north on Main Street to Sleigh Road, Sleigh Road west to the border of the DDA, and northwest along Walnut Street to Sleigh Road.

Objective 3: **Create conditions that will attract** restaurants and other new businesses to occupy preexisting storefronts in downtown.

Objective 4: Support and encourage downtown events that measurably contribute to the improvement of businesses.

Objective 5: **Investigate the feasibility of installing water lines and high-speed internet into the Main Street District.**

#### **Goal 2:** Collaboratively work to improve Couzens Park.

Objective 1: Plant shrubs and foliage throughout park, specifically along northern border to separate property lines.

Objective 2: Complete the cupola project as approved with the construction of benches, wrought iron fences, and public art.

#### **Goal 3:** Oversee maintenance of personal and commercial properties located within the Downtown District.

Objective 1: Contribute to "beautification" of Downtown through confirming all properties are in compliance of Chapter 14, Article III – Property Maintenance Code of the Bath Township General Ordinance.

Objective 2: Provide downtown maintenance/enhancement services.

#### **Goal 4:** Promote Downtown Bath to garner local and commercial attention.

Objective 1: Hold monthly DDA board meetings **to continue discussing future Main Street issues.**

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Objective 2: Establish and maintain a continuous, viable online presence to better communicate with members of the community and inform them of current events and business listings in downtown.

Objective 3: Create event management strategy.

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## Appendix One – Survey Results

### Survey

The DDA’s Main Street study was launched with a survey. The survey was available through multiple outlets, including online and in hard copy. Overall, the survey had 212 responses, although not every respondent answered every question.

#### 1. What is your age category?

The survey asked how old the respondent was within age categories (Table A.1). All 212 respondents answered this question.

The greatest number of the respondents, almost 33%, were in the 46-59 year old category. Only three respondents were under 18 years old.

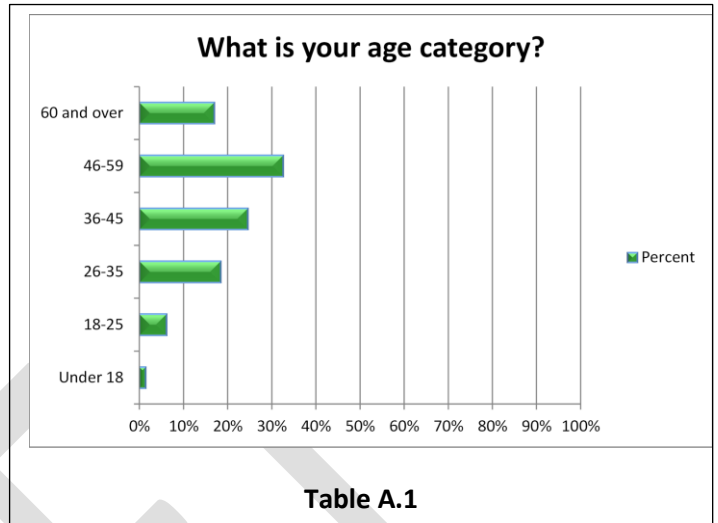


Table A.1

#### 2. How long have you lived in Bath Township?

The survey asked how long the respondent lived in Bath Township. 211 of 212 respondents answered this question.

The greatest number (42.18%) of the respondents have lived in Bath Township for over 21 years. 13 respondents (6.16%) reported that they did not reside in Bath Township.

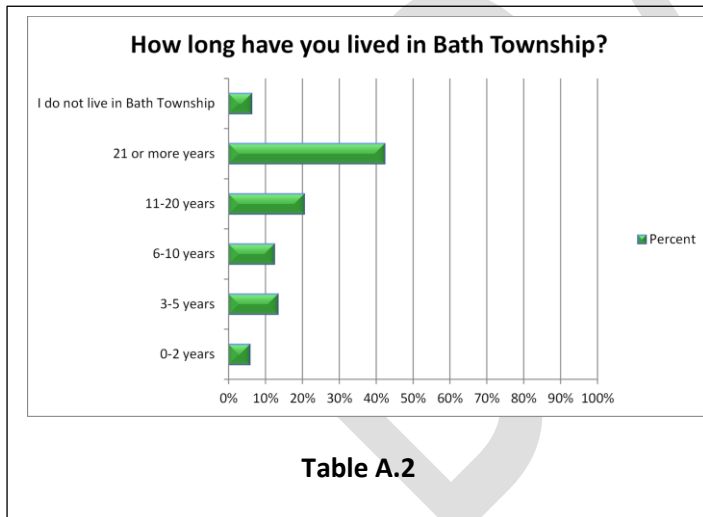


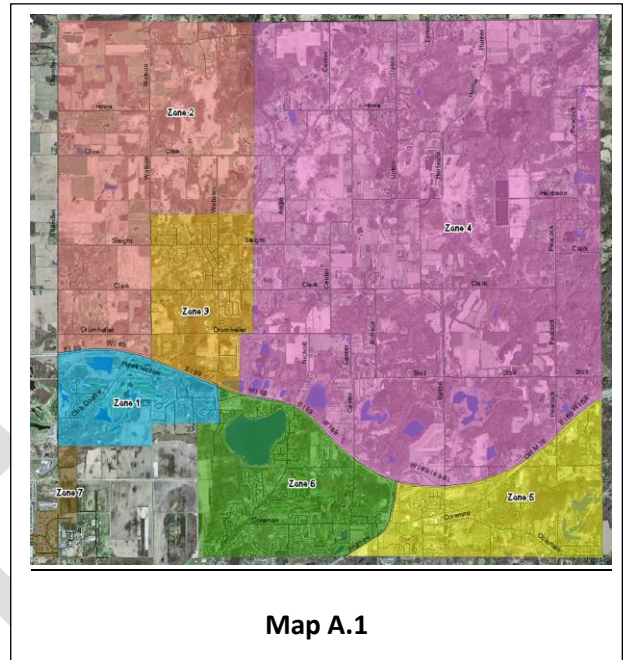
Table A.2

3. According to the map to the right of Bath Charter Township, where do you live in Bath?

The survey included a colorized map that showed the subareas and asked respondents to tell what subarea they lived in (Map A.1).

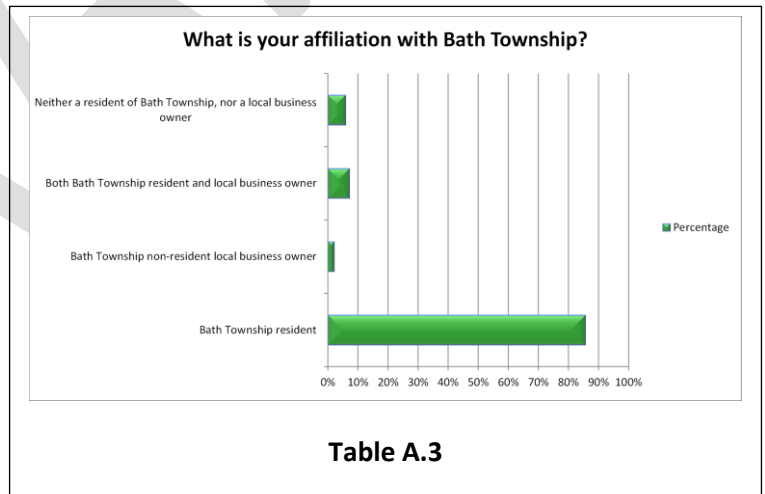
A total of 145 respondents answered this question. Many of the respondents that did not answer this question may have been non-residents from question 2 (Table A.2).

The greatest number of the respondents came from Subarea three, the downtown subarea. Almost equal numbers came from Subarea four, the Rose Lake subarea. These two subareas accounted for nearly 60% of the total respondents. Only three respondents reported living in Subarea Seven, the Chandler subarea.



4. What is your affiliation with Bath Township?

The survey asked how respondents were affiliated with Bath Township, in which 158 answered (Table A.3). A vast majority answered that they were a Bath Township resident (85.44%). The second most common answer was Both Bath Township resident and local business owner (6.96%).



5. What are the best things about downtown Bath?

Respondents were asked what the best things about downtown Bath are. The most common answers were Bath’s small town feel, Couzens Park, Bath Diner, and the Honey Hole. Since this survey’s been conducted both Bath Diner and the Honey Hole have closed, indicating room for potential in the downtown

6. What are the worst things about downtown Bath

Respondents were asked what the worst things about downtown Bath are. The Most Common answers were sidewalks, having nothing downtown, lack of businesses, and appearance. Appearance was by far the most popular response, with having nothing downtown being second, with only have the response rate of appearance.

7. What types of financing tools would you support to fund the improvement of sidewalks in downtown Bath? Please check all that apply

The survey asked respondents what financing options they would support for the improvement of sidewalks in downtown Bath (Table A.4). The most common response was to use existing township funds (70.27%). The second most common response was to use grants (65.54%). The most uncommon response was to use personal user or registration fees (8.11%).

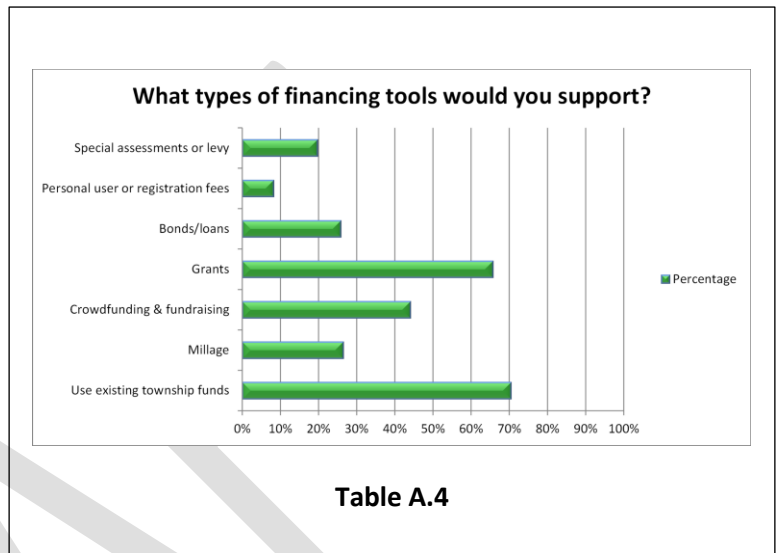


Table A.4

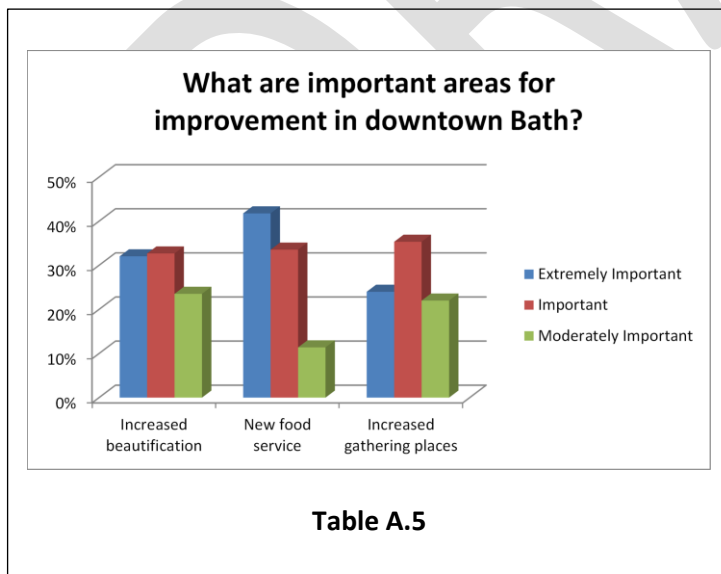


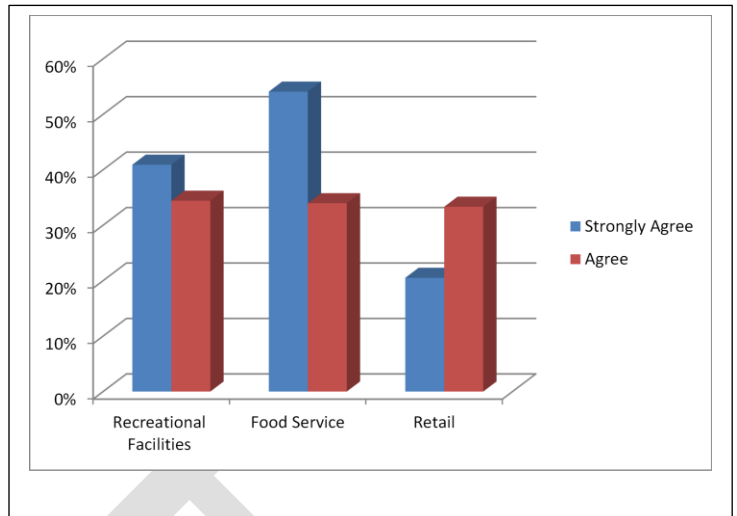
Table A.5

8. What are important areas for improvement in downtown Bath?

Respondents were asked what improvements were important for downtown Bath (Table A.5). 159 out of the 212 respondents answered. 88.24% of respondents indicated that increased beautification was at least moderately important 86.7% of respondents indicated that new food service was at least moderately important. 56.17% of respondents identified increased housing as unimportant or extremely unimportant.

9. Do you agree that the following types of development should exist in downtown Bath?

160 respondents replied to this question (Table A.6). 88.05% of respondents agree or strongly agree that food services should exist in downtown Bath. 75.33% also agree or strongly agree that recreational facilities should exist within downtown Bath. 29.41% Disagree or strongly disagree that residential housing should exist in downtown Bath.



10. How important would you rate the following infrastructure elements as pertaining to the improvement of downtown Bath?

At least 88% of the 159 respondents indicated that all of the categories outlined in Table A.7 were at least moderately important infrastructure improvements. This indicates that all of these categories should be of focus in some capacity. The most important infrastructure improvement needed in downtown Bath, according to the residents, is Roads. 95% of respondents indicated that improving roads is at least moderately important.

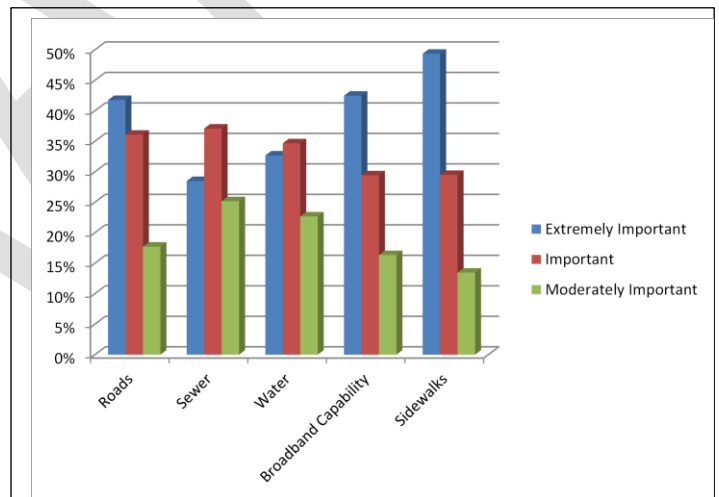


Table A.7

11. How important are the following suggestions for improving downtown Bath?

Respondents were asked how important given suggestions were for improving downtown Bath. At least 88% of the 158 respondents identified improving facades, additional events, and sidewalks as moderately important (Table A.8). Façade improvements were indicated as being of the utmost importance with 90.26% of respondents believing façade improvements for businesses as being at least moderately important. 34.26% of respondents outlined that way-finding (directional) signs were unimportant or extremely unimportant.

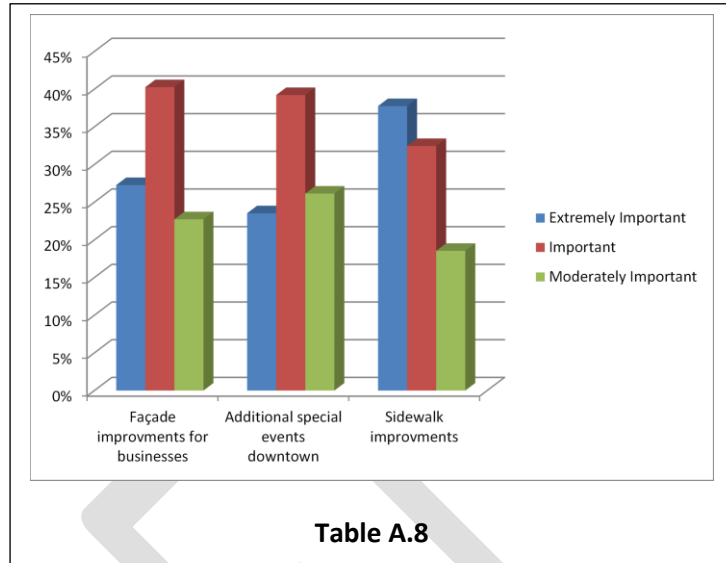


Table A.8

12. What improvements do you believe should be made to James Couzens Memorial Park in downtown Bath?

Respondents were asked what improvements they believe should be made to James Couzens memorial park. At least 74% of respondents agree or strongly agree that facilitates, beautification, and infrastructure should be improved in James Couzens memorial park. Beautification was the most prominent with 78.81% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that James Couzens Park needs beautification improvements.

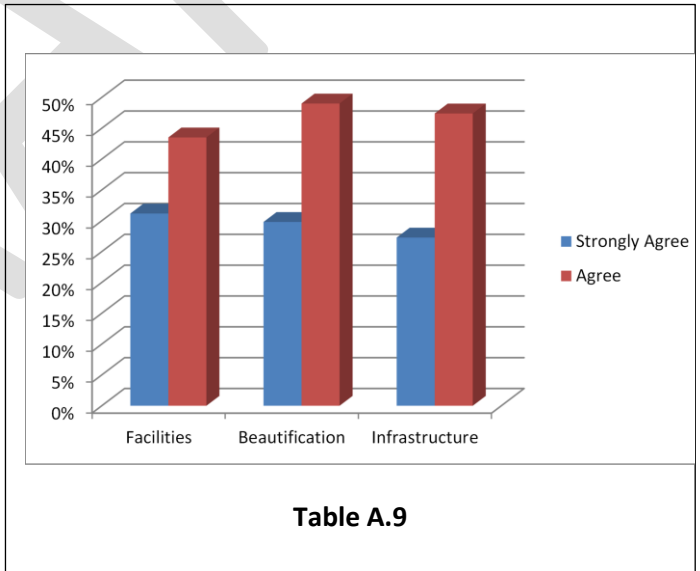


Table A.9

## Appendix Two – Façade Improvement Program

### **Bath Charter Township DDA Façade Improvement Program**

#### **Overview**

The Bath Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has created a Downtown Façade Improvement Program that is intended to directly stimulate façade design improvements to downtown buildings in a coordinated fashion, stressing overall compatibility with the historical significance and uniqueness of Downtown Bath’s structures.

#### **Program Eligibility and Requirements**

A property must be located within the boundaries of the Main Street Area of the Downtown Development District to be eligible. An owner or tenant with multiple buildings may apply once for each building. The following criteria will also apply:

- Only buildings with retail, commercial, or professional uses consistent with desired downtown land uses are eligible.
- Properties must be structurally sound, roof intact, and meet basic public safety codes. Proposed façade improvements must also comply with all applicable building and zoning codes.
- Any façades abutting public rights of way are eligible projects. This includes rear façades, as well as highly-visible façades. Side façades that do not abut public rights of way will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Building owners or tenants are eligible. If a tenant applies for assistance, he/she must provide written proof that the building owner has authorized proposed improvements.
- Applicants will be required to complete an application form provided by the DDA.
- To qualify for this program, the applicant must show that the cost of the façade improvement project is at least \$2,000.
- All required municipal / governmental permits must be obtained prior to the start of any construction.

#### **Applying**

- Applicants who wish to apply for the program will complete an application, which in turn will be reviewed by the DDA.
- Financial assistance is available in the form of a reimbursement matching grant to the property owner/applicant after work is completed. A single distribution of funds will occur per applicant once work is complete. Grants of up to \$5,000 per building are available for eligible activities and are limited to two per year or until the funds for the fiscal year have been expended. Applicants must provide at least 50% matching funds for their project, reviewable on a case by case basis. Program funding and grant amount will be reviewed annually.
- Applicants are eligible to receive one (1) grant per building each fiscal year. If during the



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course of a fiscal year there are no applications from an individual who has NOT received a grant, then special consideration to issue a grant would be considered to an individual property owner that has received a grant in the last granting period.

- Construction must commence within 60 days of approval for funding and be completed within 120 days after the construction start date.
- Requests for time extensions must be submitted in writing and will only be approved upon the express written consent of the DDA.

### **Project Review and Selection Process**

Planning Staff will work closely with property owners and/or tenants to determine initial eligibility under program guidelines. Once the initial scope of work has been determined, the applicant will present the project to the DDA. The DDA will meet as needed to provide input, make suggestions to the scope of work, and approve or deny individual projects.

### **Eligible Uses of Program Funds**

Eligible improvements must be a visible improvement to the exterior façade of the building and visible to the public. Such improvements may include, but are not limited to:

- Architectural assistance
- Painting as part of a larger façade project
- Masonry repairs or tuckpointing as a part of other façade improvement activities
- Restoration to stone or brick exterior finishes and materials
- Exterior lighting
- Awnings (if those features are compatible with the original building design and complement the buildings architectural features)
- Doors/Entryways
- Second floor entryways/exits and exterior stairs for residents
- Window repair/replacement
- Storefront rehabilitation
- Carpentry
- Handicap accessibility
- Non-historic façade removal
- Labor for the project
- Wall signs, awning signs, and projecting signs may be eligible on a case by case basis. Freestanding signs and re-facing nonconforming signs are not eligible for façade grants.

### **Ineligible Uses of Program Funds**

Program loan funds may not be utilized for any of the following uses:

- Refinancing existing debt
- Property acquisition
- Interior improvements and/or furnishings
- Site plan, building, or sign permit fees
- Property appraisal costs, legal fees, or loan origination fees

- Labor costs paid to the owner / applicant or relatives of the owner / applicant

**Rights Reserved**

The DDA reserves the right to reject any and all applications. The specific program guidelines detailed herein are subject to revisions or amendment by the DDA. The DDA reserves the right to refuse to honor any reimbursement for any completed project that does not comply with the application. The DDA may discontinue this program at any time, subject to the availability of program funding.

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