



**SMALL
NATION™**

Circleville, Ohio

Downtown Development Report

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3  **EVENT
CENTERS**

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DOWNTOWN
EATERIES**

56+
**HISTORIC BUILDINGS &
STOREFRONTS RENOVATED**

34+
**UPPER FLOOR
APARTMENTS**

17  **NEW SPECIALTY RETAIL STORES**



**70% OF THE NEW
ENTREPRENEURS
ARE UNDER THE
AGE OF 40**



**75% OF THE NEW
BUSINESS OWNERS
ARE WOMEN**

\$30M+ **IN NEW PRIVATE
INVESTMENT**

**SMALL
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OVER 180 NEW DOWNTOWN JOBS

Downtown Bellefontaine, Ohio

46.14 acres

614 parking spots

14,115 people (citywide)

\$43,000 median income



The success of a downtown revolves around every piece and component of development working together – public spaces, historic buildings, private business and enterprise, arts & culture, infrastructure – all seamlessly dancing to the same tune.

These elements must complement, support, promote, and live with each other in a delicate balancing act. One of the most difficult components to develop of these is a thriving, successful business climate in a downtown district.

Challenges of globalization, e-commerce, economic and population demographics in rural communities make retail and service-oriented businesses in downtown districts particularly exposed to headwinds and difficulties.



Recent trends indicate a renewed interest in small and rural communities, with towns like Bellefontaine and Circleville experiencing increased attention. People are favoring less dense and more affordable towns that can support a socially active lifestyle similar to larger cities. The rise of remote work has facilitated this shift, enabling individuals to prioritize quality of life, affordability, proximity to family, and increased living space over traditional job locations. Notably, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that in 2020–21, more people moved from urban to rural areas than in the opposite direction, resulting in a 0.43% population gain for rural areas due to net domestic migration.¹

This migration trend has also led to increased rural tourism through day trips, a heightened desire for community belonging, and stronger support for local businesses over national chains. Communities like Circleville are well-positioned to capitalize on these trends by enhancing existing assets with new amenities to attract and retain residents.

¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2024/february/net-migration-spurs-renewed-growth-in-rural-areas-of-the-united-states>



Recently, JobsOhio extended the Vibrant Communities Program focused on generating reinvestments in distressed communities that have experience chronic disinvestment.² The goal of this program is to reduce risk and remove barriers the community may face in moving investments forward. By investing in catalytic projects and leveraging outside funds and public-private partnerships, this funding is perfect for communities like Circleville who have the people willing to make it successful.

The Vibrant Communities Program funds up to \$1 million per project. We believe Circleville is an excellent candidate for funding through this program and by leveraging local JobsOhio and OneColumbus relationships and partners, Circleville tap into these funds.

² <https://www.jobsohio.com/incentives-programs/support-for-communities/vibrant-communities>



Entrepreneurship is experiencing a significant surge. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 saw a record-breaking 5.5 million new business applications, marking the third consecutive year of historic small business growth.³ This entrepreneurial boom presents an opportune moment for communities to support and attract new businesses.

Highlighting successful revitalization efforts in similar communities provides valuable inspiration and credibility for Circleville's growth strategy. Small Nation's work in Bellefontaine, Ohio⁴, is a prime example, where investments in historic building renovations, mixed-use spaces, and vibrant public areas have transformed the downtown into a thriving destination. Similar rural towns across the country have achieved success by embracing adaptive reuse of historic buildings, integrating modern amenities, and fostering public-private collaboration. These examples demonstrate that with a clear vision and strategic investments, small towns can revitalize their downtowns, boost economic growth, and foster a stronger sense of community.

³ <https://www.sba.gov/article/2024/01/11/new-business-applications-reach-record-16-million-under-biden-harris-administration>

⁴ https://smallnationstrong.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2023-CASESTUDY_BELLEFONTAINE_e.pdf



HOW WE DID IT

Six Hundred Downtown

Award Winning Pizza Restaurant



KEY PLAYER
Brittany Saxton



Six Hundred Downtown: Before and After

HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$140,000

Renovation Costs: \$250,000

Monthly Rent: \$8,150

Jobs Created: 38

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/six-hundred-downtown/



Brewfontaine

Award Winning Craft Brew Bar



KEY PLAYERS

**Adam Rammel,
Jeramy Fitzpatrick and Brian Wall**



Brewfontaine: Before and After



HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$27,000

Renovation Costs: \$295,000

Monthly Rent: \$3,500

Jobs Created: 34

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/brewfontaine-2/



The Syndicate

Restaurant and Event Space



KEY PLAYERS

**Adam Rammel,
Jeramy Fitzpatrick and Brian Wall**

HOW IT WORKS

New Downtown Build
Build Cost: \$2,000,000
Monthly Rent: \$8,700
Jobs Created: 25

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/the-syndicate/



Main Street Marketplace

Small Business Incubator



KEY PLAYERS
Small Nation

the Marketplace



Main Street Marketplace: Before and After



HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$50,000

Renovation Costs: \$250,000

Monthly Rent: \$16,700

Jobs Created: 24

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/main-street-marketplace/



The Loft Above

Luxury Airbnb



KEY PLAYERS

Norm and Julz Green



EPICUREAN
PROPERTIES®



HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$17,000

Renovation Costs: \$40,000

Monthly Rent: \$1,300

Info: <http://theloftabove.com/>



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Lofts110

Downtown Living



KEY PLAYERS

Small Nation

LOFTS110



HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$140,000
(with Six Hundred)

Renovation Costs: \$1,000,000

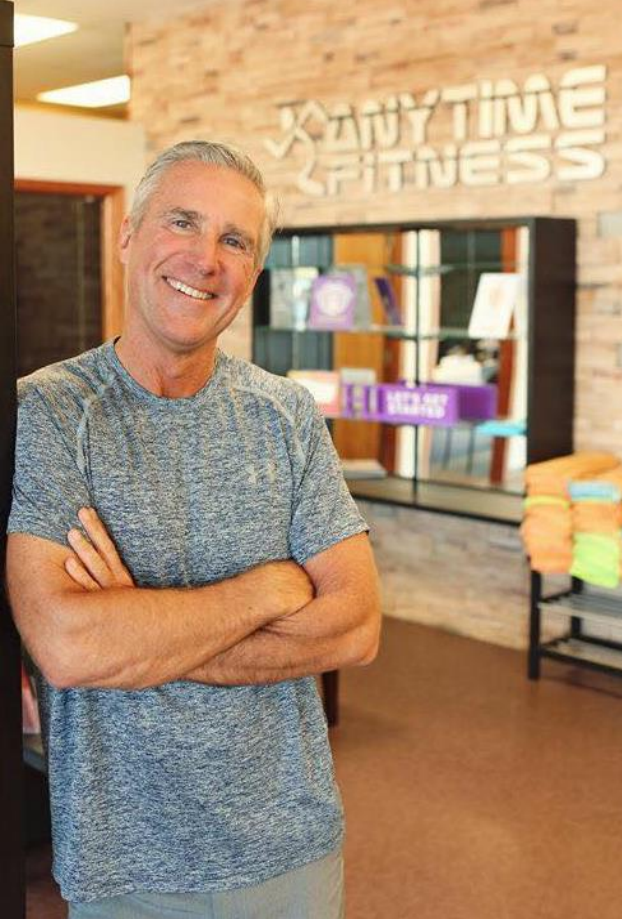
Monthly Rents: \$6,500

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/lofts-110/



Anytime Fitness LoCo Depot

Gym / Health



KEY PLAYERS

Lyle Endsley and Chris Short



Anytime Fitness/LoCo Depot: Before and After

HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$20,000

Renovation Costs: \$1,650,000

Monthly Rent: \$11,700

Jobs Created: 12

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/anytime-fitness/



City Sweets & Creamery

Local Bakery and Sweets Shop



KEY PLAYER
Angie Hall



City Sweets & Creamery: Before and After



HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$35,000

Renovation Costs: \$160,000*

Monthly Rent: \$2,100 *Includes second floor loft

Jobs Created: 12

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/city-sweets-creamery/



BUILD Cowork + Space

Small Town Coworking



KEY PLAYERS
Small Nation

BUILD.

COWORK | SPACE



BUILD Cowork + Space: Before and After



HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$160,000

Renovation Costs: \$1,200,000

Monthly Memberships: \$10,000

Jobs Created: Dynamic

Info: <https://buildcowork.com/>



The Flying Pepper Cantina

Authentic Taco and Tequila Bar



KEY PLAYERS

**Humberto Nieto and
Laura Haverkos**



HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$160,000 (with BUILD)

Renovation Costs: \$350,000

Monthly Rent: \$3,000

Jobs Created: 25

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/the-flying-pepper/



Nest 1896

Vintage and Handmade Booth Rent Retail



KEY PLAYERS

**Robert Hamel &
Ronnie Rhoades**



HOW IT WORKS

Purchase Price: \$24,500

Renovation Costs: \$150,000

Monthly Rent: \$2,500

Jobs Created: 4

Case Study: https://smallnationstrong.com/case_study/nest-1896/



BUILDING BLOCKS

Small Nation has developed a deep understanding of Main Street economies through our experience as the primary developer in Downtown Bellefontaine, Ohio. Bellefontaine's demographics closely resemble those of many rural communities across Ohio, making the lessons we've learned highly transferable to similar towns, including Circleville.

Recent economic and population trends have presented rural communities with unprecedented opportunities for growth. According to the USDA study, rural areas have experienced a net population increase due to urban out-migration, as people seek affordable housing, greater living space, and a higher quality of life. This shift is largely driven by the rise of remote work and lifestyle flexibility, with employees now choosing where to live based on amenities, experiences, and community dynamics rather than proximity to a workplace.

Rural communities like Circleville are uniquely positioned to capitalize on this trend due to lower barriers to entry, affordable real estate, and available building stock. However, the challenge remains: how do you catalyze population growth and business development without over-relying on subsidies for each new downtown entity? The solution lies in identifying business sectors that act as natural anchors, planting seeds for other businesses to grow around them.



We continue to believe that there are four key building blocks for revitalizing rural downtowns, each serving as a catalyst for foot traffic, economic activity, and overall downtown vitality:

1. **Flagship Restaurants with Complementary Event/Outdoor Space:** Restaurants are the primary drivers of foot traffic in any downtown. A well-run restaurant can bring hundreds of guests to a downtown district each evening, far surpassing other types of businesses in consumer volume. People are increasingly seeking authentic, unique dining experiences, making this a critical anchor business for downtown revitalization.
2. **Neighborhood Coffee Shops:** Coffee shops serve as steady drivers of foot traffic throughout the day, creating a reliable flow of customers for nearby retail businesses. With the right ambiance, they also become informal community gathering places that enhance social life and contribute to the overall downtown experience. Multiple coffee shops, with different niches or styles, can further diversify and enhance downtown appeal.



3. **Fitness Facilities:** Gyms, yoga studios, and group workout spaces provide consistent traffic across all hours of the day, making them an ideal complement to downtown businesses. Fitness centers attract a loyal customer base that supports not only health-related retail but also fashion, food, and other local businesses.
4. **Co-Working and Flexible Office Space:** The demand for co-working spaces continues to rise as remote work becomes the norm for many industries. Major corporations such as Nationwide Insurance, Amazon, and Microsoft have recognized that a remote workforce can remain productive without large, centralized office spaces.⁵ This has freed employees to choose where they live, and many are opting for smaller communities with better quality of life. However, these professionals still seek professional-grade office space for focused work, meetings, and networking opportunities. Offering well-designed shared office space can attract these individuals, adding a new dynamic to the local economy and supporting a more mobile, highly skilled workforce.

⁵ <https://tech.co/news/companies-offer-remote-work>



These four building blocks are critical to creating a thriving downtown ecosystem, where businesses complement one another and generate a constant flow of customers. By focusing on these core sectors, Circleville can establish a foundation for long-term, sustainable growth.

This report will explore these building blocks and additional opportunities in greater detail, offering a comprehensive strategy for revitalizing Circleville's downtown and positioning the community as an attractive destination for both residents and businesses.



CIRCLEVILLE EXISTING CONDITIONS

Circleville, Ohio is the county seat of Pickaway County and is located within commuting distance of Columbus. The city's identity is strongly anchored by the Circleville Pumpkin Show, a multi-day fall festival that draws large regional crowds, showcases local agriculture, and serves as a major platform for promoting local businesses and community pride. While the Pumpkin Show provides exceptional visibility and foot traffic, much of this energy is concentrated into a single week each October. This creates a clear opportunity to translate seasonal recognition into year-round economic activity, downtown visitation, and destination appeal.

Circleville benefits from a strong sense of local pride rooted in agriculture, manufacturing, education, and civic leadership. Historic legacy businesses, combined with a growing mix of entrepreneurial ventures, give downtown a solid foundation. As Pickaway County continues to experience residential growth and new investment, Circleville is well positioned to strengthen its role as a place where residents choose to live, work, and spend time. Strategic investment in public spaces, signage, business support, cultural assets, and consistent branding can help the downtown keep pace with growth while retaining its small-city character.



DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AND BUSINESS MIX

Uptown Circleville is characterized by historic commercial buildings, long-standing local businesses, and emerging restaurants, retailers, and service providers. Wittich's Candy Shop, established in 1840, remains one of the city's most recognizable heritage assets. Its handcrafted chocolates and soda fountain experience demonstrate the power of authenticity and storytelling in driving visitation and community pride.

Newer anchors such as JoyHouse Coffee, the recently opened Rost Coffee, and Black Diamond Brewery & Distillery add diversity to the downtown mix and extend activity beyond traditional retail hours. At the same time, many building facades, upper floors, and several vacant or underutilized properties represent unrealized opportunity for housing, office, entertainment, and experience-driven uses.



COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACES AND KEY ANCHORS

JoyHouse Coffee is just one central gathering place within downtown. The interior space is well executed and already functions as a community meeting point, while the surrounding outdoor area and adjacent lot present an opportunity to expand its role through intentional design and programming. With flexibility from the property owner and modest event rental rates already in place, JoyHouse has the potential to function as a consistent outdoor event and gathering location with improved visibility, seating, and seasonal activation.

Other downtown businesses also play an important role in shaping the experience. Richie's New York Corner Deli demonstrates how wall-scale murals and exterior investment can increase photo sharing, time spent downtown, and overall awareness. Ink My Logo reinforces downtown's role as the physical expression of the Circleville Pumpkin Show through its licensed merchandise and visible storefront presence.



PUBLIC REALM, STREETSCAPE, AND WAYFINDING

Public realm elements such as benches, outdoor seating, alleyways, signage, and lighting are present throughout downtown, but continuity are inconsistent. Assets like the alley with decorative lighting, historic building stock, and the dormant theater provide strong structural foundations for a more active downtown environment.

Circleville has an established Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA), which supports outdoor gathering and event-based activity. However, wayfinding, coordinated streetscape design, public art, pedestrian comfort, and consistent signage remain areas for improvement. These elements are essential to helping visitors navigate downtown confidently and encouraging exploration beyond Main Street.

UPPER-FLOOR USES, WORKSPACES, AND HOUSING

Upper-floor uses remain limited relative to peer communities experiencing growth. While the Circleville Business Center offers co-working and small office space downtown, its presence and purpose are not immediately clear from the street. Residential units above storefronts, flexible office space, fitness, and family-oriented indoor entertainment remain underrepresented despite demographic trends that suggest growing demand.



CULTURAL ASSETS AND LOCAL STORYTELLING

Culturally, Circleville has a deep and distinctive story. The city's agricultural legacy, original circular plan, and influential figures such as John Maxwell and Caleb Atwater provide strong material for heritage-based storytelling.

The Ted Lewis Museum adds an important cultural layer downtown, though current foot traffic and visibility appear limited. These narratives exist, but they are not yet fully integrated into a cohesive, year-round identity that connects history, culture, and the Pumpkin Show into a unified downtown experience.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND GROWTH PRESSURES

Demographically, Circleville skews slightly younger than the state average, with a median age of approximately 36, and has experienced population growth since 2020. As Pickaway County continues to attract new residents and investment, the importance of a strong, active downtown increases.

Circleville's opportunity lies in aligning downtown investment with these growth trends by expanding year-round experiences, strengthening physical connections, and supporting uses that appeal to young professionals, families, and entrepreneurs. A well-functioning downtown will be essential to workforce retention, community pride, and long-term economic stability.



UPTOWN ORGANIZATION AND LOCAL CAPACITY

Uptown Circleville benefits from the presence of the Uptown Circleville group,⁶ a nonprofit organization formed in 2018 with a mission focused on beautification, promotion, and economic growth in the downtown district. Uptown Circleville provides important local capacity by coordinating projects, supporting small businesses, and serving as a convener around downtown improvement efforts. Its work reflects a community that understands the importance of place-based investment and collaborative action in strengthening the downtown core.

Uptown Circleville has led or supported several visible initiatives that contribute to downtown vitality. These include implementation of the city's Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA), installation of decorative flower pots throughout downtown, organization of the annual Uptown Classic 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament, pursuit of revitalization district designation, and the addition of placemaking elements such as the City Clock and Circleville Sculpture. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate a focus on improving aesthetics, encouraging activity, and reinforcing a sense of place within the district.

Beyond Uptown Circleville, the community is supported by other established partners that recognize the role of economic development and tourism in Circleville's future. The Pickaway County Chamber of Commerce supports local businesses and workforce development, while the Pickaway County Visitors Bureau promotes the region as a destination. The Circleville Pumpkin Show Corporation further strengthens this ecosystem through stewardship of a nationally recognized festival that reinvests proceeds back into the community.

While these organizations provide a strong foundation, many initiatives still operate independently rather than as part of a unified long-term strategy. Strengthening alignment among Uptown Circleville, the City, downtown businesses, and regional partners will be key to scaling impact and sustaining momentum. Uptown Circleville's current effort to hire a full-time Executive Director⁷ signals growing organizational maturity and strong support from the downtown business community, positioning the organization to play an even more central role in coordinating future revitalization efforts.

⁶ <https://www.uptowncircleville.org/about>

⁷ <https://www.uptowncircleville.org/post/we-re-hiring-an-executive-director>



EDUCATION ASSETS AND UNIVERSITY TALENT PIPELINE

Ohio Christian University is a major educational asset for Circleville and an important contributor to the community's long-term workforce and leadership pipeline. With more than 2,000 students enrolled and approximately 350 students living on campus in the residential undergraduate program,⁸ OCU brings a steady presence of young people to the area. The university is known for strong academic programs in business, biology, chemistry, education, psychology, and related fields, aligning well with the needs of employers across healthcare, manufacturing, professional services, education, and emerging technology sectors. This concentration of students and faculty represents both immediate economic activity and long-term potential for talent retention.

Circleville has an opportunity to more intentionally cultivate and retain this talent by strengthening connections between the university, local employers, and community organizations. Expanded internships, applied learning projects, and part-time employment opportunities can help students gain real-world experience while supporting local businesses and institutions. Collaborative initiatives such as downtown-based projects, research partnerships, business support, and community programming can further integrate students into the fabric of the city. By positioning Circleville as a place where students can study, work, and build meaningful connections, the community can increase the likelihood that graduates choose to remain locally, reinforcing workforce stability, entrepreneurship, and civic leadership over time.

⁸ <https://ohiochristian.edu/about/about-ocu/>



REGIONAL GROWTH PRESSURE AND THE ANDURIL ARSENAL-1 OPPORTUNITY

The announcement of the Anduril Industries Arsenal-1 manufacturing facility in northern Pickaway County represents a major economic shift for the region. Over the next decade, the project is expected to directly create approximately 4,000 new jobs and indirectly support an additional 4,500 jobs through suppliers, contractors, and related services.⁹ This scale of employment growth will place immediate and sustained pressure on the local housing market. Given its proximity to the site and its lower cost of living compared to Columbus, Circleville is well positioned to attract a meaningful share of this new workforce.

For many incoming employees, Circleville offers a compelling value proposition. It is as close to the Arsenal-1 site as much of the Columbus metro area, while providing more affordable housing, a historic downtown, and a strong sense of community. As demand increases, Circleville is likely to see heightened interest from engineers, analysts, managers, and other professionals seeking quality housing options within a reasonable commute. This presents an opportunity to capture population growth and investment, but only if the community moves quickly and intentionally to expand its housing supply.

A key challenge will be addressing a growing housing mismatch. Recent residential development in the region has largely focused on single-family, car-dependent subdivisions. While these homes meet part of the market, they do not fully align with the preferences of many Anduril employees and other in-migrating workers, who may seek walkable neighborhoods, proximity to amenities, and housing options that support flexible lifestyles. Currently, there is limited supply of “missing middle” housing types such as loft apartments, townhomes, small multifamily buildings, and live-work units, particularly in or near uptown Circleville.

This gap underscores the importance of downtown and infill housing strategies as part of Circleville’s broader growth response. Expanding upper-floor residential units, encouraging mixed-use development, and supporting smaller-scale multifamily projects can help meet demand while reinforcing downtown vitality. By aligning housing development with walkability, amenities, and character, Circleville can position itself as a preferred residential option for the region’s growing workforce and ensure that the economic benefits of the Arsenal-1 project translate into long-term community strength rather than missed opportunity.

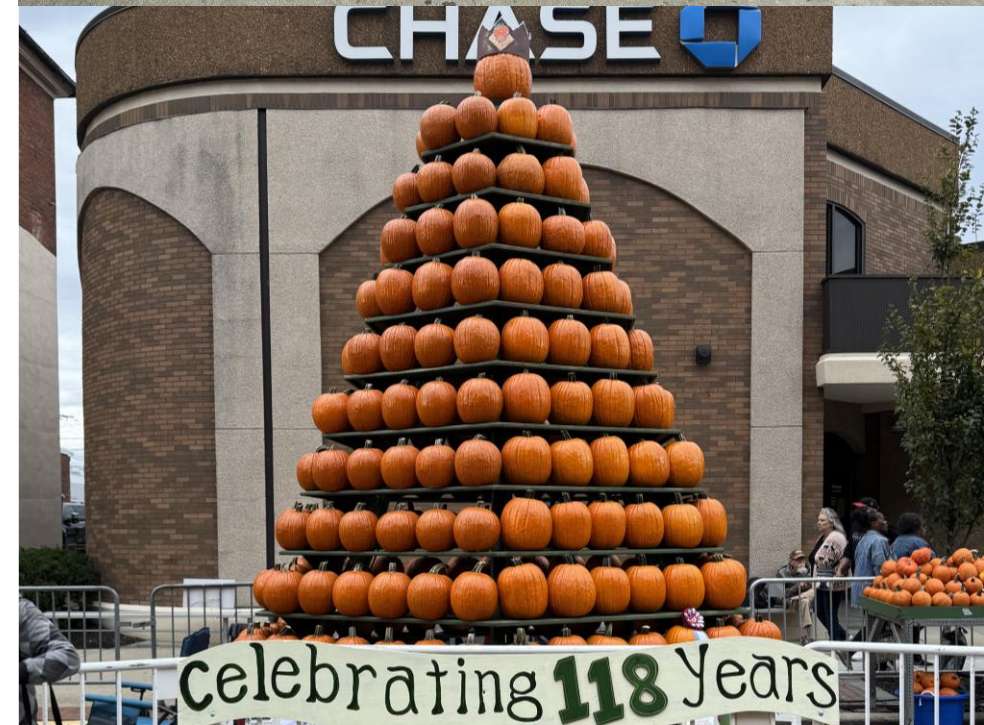
⁹ <https://www.jobsohio.com/newsroom/news-press/anduril-ohio-partner-together-to-rebuild-the-arsenal-for-essential-national-security-needs>



THE CIRCLEVILLE PUMPKIN SHOW

The Circleville Pumpkin Show is Circleville's most significant economic and branding driver. Each October, the multi-day festival draws hundreds of thousands of visitors into downtown,¹⁰ generating a substantial boost in spending for restaurants, retailers, vendors, lodging, and service businesses throughout the community and region. The Pumpkin Show elevates local agriculture, food, and tradition at a scale uncommon for a city of Circleville's size, delivering statewide recognition and reinforcing strong civic pride.

While the economic and promotional value of the Pumpkin Show is clear, much of its impact remains concentrated into a short period each year. The big question for Circleville is: **how to build upon this yearly event and turn it into year-round momentum?** Extending pumpkin-themed branding, experiences, and storytelling beyond October, and aligning downtown businesses, public spaces, and cultural assets around that identity, can help transform the Pumpkin Show from a highly successful annual event into a lasting engine for consistent visitation, business growth, and downtown activity throughout the year.



¹⁰ <https://www.pumpkinshow.com/pdf/factsheet.pdf>



RECOMMENDATIONS

BUILD JOYHOUSE COFFEE INTO A SIGNATURE COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACE

JoyHouse Coffee already functions as one of uptown Circleville's most important informal gathering places, serving not only as a café but as a space for connection, conversation, and community activity. Building on this role presents an opportunity to strengthen downtown's social infrastructure and establish a reliable, highly visible gathering space that supports both everyday use and programmed activity throughout the year. As illustrated in the exterior rendering developed as part of this study, the greatest opportunity lies in activating the rear outdoor area to extend the JoyHouse experience beyond the building and into the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed design focuses on transforming the backyard space into an intentional, flexible outdoor venue. Key elements shown in the rendering include enhanced lighting, Adirondack chairs and varied seating options, a modest pavilion, and open space suitable for yard games and casual gatherings. This layout would support live music, acoustic performances, storytelling, faith-based events, and collaborative programming with nearby businesses, while remaining welcoming for everyday coffee drinkers and passersby. The goal is to create a space that feels active and inviting without requiring constant formal programming.

Seasonality is a critical component of the concept. During warmer months, the backyard can host live music, games, and informal social activity. In the winter, the same space can transition into a festive destination with a large Christmas tree, decorative lighting, and dining igloos that allow JoyHouse to maintain outdoor activation during colder weather. This adaptability reinforces JoyHouse as a year-round anchor rather than a seasonal amenity.

To strengthen its role as a downtown focal point, the outdoor improvements should be paired with clear sidewalk signage, a landmark visual element such as a mural or blade sign, and coordinated seasonal décor. Together, these elements would improve visibility, signal activity from surrounding streets, and clearly communicate that JoyHouse is more than a coffee stop. With these enhancements, JoyHouse can function as a true "front porch" for uptown Circleville, supporting increased foot traffic, longer dwell times, and stronger connections among residents, visitors, and nearby businesses.













REPURPOSE FORMER RESTAURANT INTO A COMMUNITY DINER & INCUBATOR KITCHEN

The vacant former restaurant represents a highly visible opportunity to activate an underutilized downtown property while supporting local entrepreneurship and expanding Circleville's food economy. Repositioning the space as a community diner with a complementary incubator kitchen model would provide approachable, everyday dining for residents while creating a low-barrier entry point for emerging food businesses. This type of concept aligns well with Circleville's agricultural heritage and the community's strong connection to food-centered traditions.

A shared commercial kitchen with flexible, short-term leasing could support bakers, pop-up chefs, specialty food producers, and Pumpkin Show-inspired concepts that may not yet be ready for a full standalone restaurant. Incorporating a takeout or walk-up window would further expand reach, support delivery platforms, and increase convenience for both downtown workers and visitors. Over time, the space could serve as a testing ground for new food concepts that may later graduate into permanent downtown storefronts.

Operating hours should be intentionally aligned with lunchtime, evenings, and weekends to complement existing restaurants and support consistent downtown activity. With the right branding and operational model, this space can function as both a dependable neighborhood diner and an entrepreneurial launchpad, reinforcing uptown Circleville as a place where small businesses can start, grow, and succeed while contributing to an active, welcoming street environment.



LAUNCH A COORDINATED FACADE AND SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

A coordinated facade and signage improvement program would be a high-impact tool for strengthening uptown Circleville's visual appeal, reinforcing its historic character, and supporting local businesses. Focusing first on highly visible and well-loved establishments such as Wittich's Candy Shop, Watt Street Tavern, Lindsey's Bakery, Christopher's Boutique, and JoyHouse Coffee would help establish momentum and set a clear standard for quality and consistency. Even modest exterior upgrades can significantly influence first impressions, pedestrian comfort, and the willingness of visitors to explore downtown beyond a single destination.

The program should combine clear design guidance with small matching grants to support improvements such as exterior paint, storefront lighting, awnings, blade signs, window enhancements, and building-mounted or wall-scale signage. Consistent standards for materials, scale, and placement would ensure that individual investments contribute to a cohesive Main Street environment rather than isolated upgrades. Emphasis should be placed on lighting and signage that improve nighttime visibility and extend the sense of activity beyond daytime hours, helping downtown feel active and welcoming in the evenings.

Successful examples of similar programs can be found in Ohio communities such as Hilliard¹¹ and Tiffin,¹² where targeted facade initiatives have led to improved aesthetics, increased private investment, and renewed community pride. Circleville can adapt lessons from these models to fit its own historic context and scale, potentially pairing grant funding with local incentives or redevelopment tools over time. By extending the Pumpkin Show's sense of color, celebration, and identity into everyday storefronts, a coordinated facade and signage program can help translate seasonal excitement into a more consistently attractive and economically resilient downtown.

¹¹ <https://hilliardohio.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Facade-Program-Guidelines-2021.pdf>

¹² <https://www.tiffinohio.gov/sites/default/files/docs/Revised%2012.9.22%20-%202023%20Facade%20Enhancement%20Program.pdf>



ESTABLISH A DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING AND PARKING SIGNAGE SYSTEM

A coordinated wayfinding and parking signage system is essential to improving how residents and visitors experience uptown Circleville, as signage is the oldest and most effective form of marketing.¹³ While the downtown core contains a strong mix of dining, shopping, cultural attractions, and event spaces, many destinations are not immediately obvious to first-time visitors or those attending large events such as the Pumpkin Show. A clear, consistent system of directional and identity signage would make downtown easier to navigate and encourage exploration beyond a single stop.

Wayfinding should guide visitors from key gateways and parking areas into the historic core, clearly pointing to restaurants, shops, services, the historic theater, the Ted Lewis Museum, and Pumpkin Show–related attractions. Pedestrian-scale signs with simple maps and walking times can help visitors understand how close destinations are to one another, reducing the tendency to move cars between stops. A strong model for this approach is the Logan County Visitors Bureau signage system, which features a downtown map on one side, a full county map on the reverse, and a listing of major events for the year. This format provides both immediate orientation and broader context, helping visitors plan not just where they are, but what else they can experience nearby.

Effective wayfinding also supports economic activity by prompting visitors to spend more time downtown. By clearly answering the question of “what’s nearby” and “where to go next,” Circleville can improve visitor comfort, reduce congestion during peak events, and strengthen year-round visitation. Over time, a well-designed wayfinding system can become a subtle but powerful tool for extending the impact of major events, supporting local businesses, and reinforcing downtown as a welcoming, walkable destination.



¹³ https://smallnationstrong.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/SN_CS-SIGNS-2023-FINAL_e.pdf



Logan County Tourism Kiosks



CREATE A HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

Circleville's historic architecture, cultural institutions, and influential local figures present an opportunity to create a self-guided walking tour that brings the city's story to life in an accessible and engaging way. Partnering with local historical and genealogical societies, the library, the Ted Lewis Museum, and local historians would allow Circleville to curate a clear, walkable route through downtown. Key stops could include Wittich's Candy Shop, the historic theater, notable civic buildings, and sites tied to the city's early development and agricultural roots.

Interpretive plaques or markers placed at each stop should provide concise narratives, while QR codes can link to short videos, audio clips, archival photos, and oral histories. This layered approach keeps the streetscape clean while offering deeper storytelling for those who want it.

A strong model for this approach is the Downtown Bellefontaine Historic Walking Tour,¹⁴ which has proven effective in encouraging foot traffic, increasing dwell time, and supporting downtown businesses through heritage-based exploration. That experience shows how well-designed signage, clear storytelling, and digital enhancements can turn existing buildings and streets into an engaging, self-guided attraction that works year-round without requiring ongoing staffing.

For Circleville, a historic walking tour would provide a turnkey activity outside of Pumpkin Show dates while complementing dining, retail, and downtown events. It would encourage visitors to slow down, explore side streets, and engage more meaningfully with the community's history. Over time, the tour could be expanded or refreshed with seasonal content, school partnerships, or themed routes, making it a flexible and durable tool for heritage tourism and downtown economic activity.



¹⁴ <https://downtownbellefontaine.com/historictour/>

ACTIVATE ALLEYS AND SIDE STREETS WITH LIGHTING, PUBLIC ART, AND SEATING

Circleville's existing alley with decorative string lighting demonstrates the potential of secondary spaces to contribute meaningfully to the downtown experience. Building on this success, the city can pilot a broader "Circleville Alley Network" that intentionally activates additional alleys and side streets through improved lighting, public art, planters, and flexible seating. These improvements would transform underutilized corridors into welcoming, well-lit connections between parking areas, dining, retail, and entertainment destinations.

Thoughtful alley activation improves both perception and function. Enhanced lighting and visibility increase safety and comfort, while murals and creative installations provide visual interest and encourage exploration beyond primary streets. Seating and small gathering areas allow visitors to pause, socialize, and engage with the environment rather than simply pass through. These spaces also offer highly shareable, photo-ready backdrops that support downtown branding and organic promotion through social media.

Over time, activated alleys can serve as adaptable venues for small-scale programming, including pop-up markets, buskers, art displays, or seasonal installations during festivals and weekends. By treating alleys as intentional public spaces rather than leftover infrastructure, Circleville can expand its downtown footprint, improve walkability, and create a more layered, engaging environment that supports both everyday use and special events throughout the year.





POSITION WITTICH'S CANDY SHOP AS A HERITAGE ATTRACTION

Wittich's Candy Shop, established in 1840, is one of Circleville's most distinctive and authentic assets and has the potential to function as a signature heritage attraction for the downtown. Its longevity, handcrafted chocolates, and classic soda fountain experience resonate strongly with both residents and visitors, making it a natural anchor for storytelling-based tourism. Formalizing this role would elevate Wittich's from a beloved local business into a "must-visit" destination that represents Circleville's history and character year-round.

Targeted physical improvements can reinforce this positioning. Upgraded storefront lighting, modest outdoor seating, and interpretive signage that shares the shop's history and legacy would enhance visibility and encourage visitors to linger. Exterior elements such as wall-mounted signage or public art celebrating chocolate-making and craftsmanship could further communicate Wittich's significance from the street, particularly during evenings and off-peak seasons when visibility matters most.

Cross-marketing with Circleville Pumpkin Show channels and local tourism efforts can extend Wittich's reach beyond downtown foot traffic. Featuring the shop in event materials, visitor itineraries, and regional promotions helps tie Circleville's strongest brand asset to a tangible, year-round experience. Creative merchandise, seasonal offerings, or limited-edition products tied to Circleville's identity can also reinforce community pride while generating additional revenue and media interest. Strategically placed billboard promoting Wittich's around the central and southern Ohio regions, working with the outdoor advertising team at COMSTOR Outdoor,¹⁵ would also draw more visitors to the downtown.

By intentionally positioning Wittich's Candy Shop as a heritage attraction, Circleville can drive increased off-season visitation, strengthen its downtown narrative, and showcase the type of authentic, locally rooted experience that differentiates the community from larger retail centers. This approach leverages an existing strength rather than creating something new, maximizing return on investment while preserving the character that makes uptown Circleville unique.



¹⁵ <http://comstoroutdoor.com/>







Examples of Downtown Bellefontaine Billboard Campaigns

STILL MAKING
CANDY THE
HARD WAY.



WITTICH'S CANDY SHOP
DOWNTOWN CIRCLEVILLE



DEVELOP A YEAR-ROUND “PUMPKIN CITY” BRAND PLATFORM

The Circleville Pumpkin Show is one of the city’s most valuable brand assets, but its identity is currently concentrated within a short window each fall. Expanding this recognition into a year-round “Pumpkin City” or “Home of the Pumpkin Show” brand would allow Circleville to carry the energy, familiarity, and goodwill of the festival into everyday downtown life. This platform should blend agriculture, family fun, and small-town pride with modern, flexible visuals that can be easily adopted by businesses, organizations, and the city.

A consistent brand system can be deployed across downtown through signage, window decals, banners, merchandise, and digital campaigns. Branded elements should feel celebratory but not seasonal, allowing pumpkin imagery and language to remain relevant beyond October. This approach helps visitors immediately understand what makes Circleville distinctive while reinforcing a shared identity across storefronts, public spaces, and promotional materials.

To activate the brand at the business level, downtown retailers and restaurants should be encouraged to offer at least one pumpkin-themed product or experience year-round. This could include menu items, specialty drinks, baked goods, retail products, or small interactive experiences tied to Circleville’s agricultural heritage. Even subtle, consistent references help maintain continuity between the Pumpkin Show and everyday visitation.



STRENGTHEN PUBLIC REALM COMFORT WITH BENCHES AND PARKLETS

Improving public seating is a simple but high-impact way to make uptown Circleville more comfortable, welcoming, and pedestrian-friendly. Increasing the quantity and quality of benches, Adirondack chairs, and small parklet installations encourages people to slow down, rest, and spend more time downtown. Strategic placement near JoyHouse Coffee, outside key restaurants and bakeries, and around civic or gathering spaces can directly support existing foot traffic and reinforce areas where people naturally linger.

Durable, coordinated furniture paired with planters and shade elements can create small, intentional gathering spaces that feel inviting rather than incidental. These micro-gathering areas support casual conversation, people-watching, and family-friendly use, while also improving accessibility for older adults and visitors who need places to pause between destinations. Consistency in materials and design helps these elements feel like part of a cohesive streetscape rather than temporary add-ons.

Well-placed seating also supports downtown programming and events by providing informal viewing and rest areas during festivals, markets, and performances. By signaling that uptown Circleville is designed for people rather than just vehicles, investments in benches and parklets can increase dwell time, support local businesses, and contribute to a more active and comfortable downtown experience throughout the year.



EXPAND FAMILY-FRIENDLY INDOOR RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Expanding family-friendly indoor recreation options would help uptown Circleville attract a wider range of visitors and create consistent activity during evenings, weekends, and shoulder seasons. While downtown offers strong dining and gathering places, there are limited options specifically designed for families, teens, and young adults to spend time together outside of restaurants. Introducing indoor entertainment uses would fill this gap and strengthen downtown as a social destination rather than a place people visit only for meals or events.

Concepts such as duck-pin bowling, safely managed ax-throwing, indoor mini-golf, arcade or retro game lounges, karaoke spaces, and escape rooms are well suited to downtown environments. These uses can operate successfully in upper floors or larger vacant spaces and are compatible with historic buildings that offer flexible layouts. Many of these models require modest buildout compared to traditional retail and can adapt to irregular floorplates common in older structures.

Family-friendly entertainment also complements existing restaurants, breweries, and cafés by extending visits and encouraging group outings. These venues create reasons to come downtown after dinner or during slower months, supporting nearby businesses rather than competing with them. Over time, a mix of indoor recreation options can help retain young residents, provide safe and engaging spaces for teens, and reinforce uptown Circleville as an active, inclusive place to gather throughout the year.



GROW CO-WORKING, SMALL OFFICE, AND ENTREPRENEUR SPACE DOWNTOWN

As remote and hybrid work become a permanent part of the economy, uptown Circleville has an opportunity to attract professionals who are seeking flexible, affordable workspace with strong quality-of-life amenities. Formalizing and clearly marketing existing office hubs, such as the Circleville Business Center, as part of a broader “Downtown Work Hub” strategy would help make these spaces more visible and accessible. Improved signage, branding, and coordinated promotion can ensure that people walking or driving downtown immediately understand that professional workspace is available above street-level storefronts.

Positioning Circleville as a lower-cost alternative to larger metro areas, while still offering walkable dining, coffee shops, and community amenities, can appeal to remote workers, freelancers, and small professional firms. A strong model for this approach is BUILD Cowork + Space,¹⁶ which demonstrates how well-designed coworking environments in historic downtown buildings can support entrepreneurship, collaboration, and consistent daytime activity. BUILD’s success shows that coworking is not only about desk space, but about creating a professional community that integrates with surrounding businesses.

Over time, growing co-working and small office uses downtown can significantly increase weekday foot traffic, supporting cafés, lunch spots, and service businesses that rely on daytime customers. These spaces also help attract and retain talent by giving residents the option to work locally rather than commute, while still remaining connected to regional and national markets. With modest investment and coordinated messaging, Circleville can leverage its existing building stock to support a new generation of downtown workers and entrepreneurs.



¹⁶ https://smallnationstrong.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/SN_CASESTUDY_BUILD_e.pdf

INVEST IN A DOWNTOWN FITNESS AND WELLNESS CLUSTER

Investing in a downtown fitness and wellness cluster would create consistent, daily activity that supports both resident health and downtown economic performance. A centrally located fitness center or wellness hub, potentially combining traditional gym equipment with yoga, Pilates, and small-group training, would introduce a reliable stream of users throughout the week. Upper-floor or larger vacant spaces are well suited for these uses and allow fitness operators to coexist alongside retail and dining without competing for prime ground-floor storefronts.

A strong example of this model is Anytime Fitness/LoCo Depot Training Station¹⁷ in Bellefontaine, which demonstrates how 24/7 fitness facilities can act as economic drivers in a downtown environment. These gyms are busiest early in the morning before normal business hours and again in the evenings after work. That activity creates ripple effects, as members often grab coffee, smoothies, or breakfast items after morning workouts and place takeout orders from nearby restaurants following evening sessions. This pattern extends downtown activity beyond traditional hours and supports businesses that might otherwise struggle during off-peak times.

By attracting young adults, families, and professionals who value convenience and wellness, a downtown fitness hub can help Circleville build a more balanced, all-day downtown ecosystem. Partnerships with local health systems, employers, or wellness providers could further stabilize membership and programming, while complementary services such as nutrition, recovery, or wellness coaching strengthen the cluster. Over time, fitness-driven foot traffic can support cafés, restaurants, and retail while reinforcing uptown Circleville as a place people visit regularly, not just for events or special occasions.

¹⁷ https://smallnationstrong.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SN_CS_ANYTIME-FITNESS-2023-FINALe.pdf



COORDINATE RETAIL HOURS AND RESTAURANT-SHOP CROSS-PROMOTION

Improving coordination between retail and dining businesses is essential to maximizing uptown Circleville's existing foot traffic, particularly during evenings, weekends, and major events. Establishing more consistent core retail hours, especially Thursday through Saturday, would better align shops with peak restaurant activity and reduce visitor frustration caused by closed storefronts. Consistency builds trust with residents and visitors, making downtown feel dependable and worth exploring beyond a single destination.

Downtown businesses should be encouraged to collaborate on simple, low-cost cross-promotional tools that move customers from one business to another. Concepts such as "Dine and Shop Nights," receipt-based discounts, or stamped passport cards can incentivize visitors to extend their stay. Restaurants can play a key role by offering short "where to go next" guides or small promotional cards at host stands, encouraging diners to explore nearby shops before or after their meal or while waiting for a table.

Comparable communities have demonstrated how effective this approach can be. In Downtown Bellefontaine, Queen of Hearts Fine Chocolates & Gifts¹⁸ provides a complimentary chocolate tasting coupon to guests waiting at nearby restaurants, a simple tactic that consistently drives first-time retail visits and builds long-term customer relationships. Circleville retailers could adopt similar strategies, pairing dining with experiential retail to extend dwell time and spending.

During the Circleville Pumpkin Show and other large events, coordinated extended hours and shared promotional materials become even more important. Clear messaging about which businesses are open, what experiences are available, and where visitors should go next helps distribute crowds more evenly and increases overall economic impact.



¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/queenofheartsdowntown>

ELEVATE THE HISTORIC MOVIE HOUSE AS A PRIORITY CULTURAL PROJECT

The historic downtown movie house, built in the 1920's, represents one of Circleville's most significant untapped cultural and economic assets. Elevating this building as a priority project begins with clarifying a feasible and flexible redevelopment concept that responds to market demand and community interest. Potential uses include a performance venue, film house, event and rental space, or a hybrid model that accommodates concerts, films, private events, and community programming. The rendering developed as part of this study illustrates how targeted exterior and interior improvements could reintroduce the theater as a visible, active destination while preserving its historic character.

A central focus of revitalization should be the restoration of the historic marquee. A functioning marquee is both a branding and wayfinding tool, signaling activity, arts, and energy from a distance. Restored marquees in peer Ohio communities have proven effective at re-establishing theaters as downtown anchors and improving nighttime visibility. The report will highlight examples of successful marquee restorations and identify experienced firms such as Wagner Sign Company, which has completed numerous historic marquee projects across the state. A restored marquee, paired with upgraded exterior lighting, would immediately communicate momentum even before full interior redevelopment is complete.

From a funding perspective, the theater is well positioned for a layered capital stack. In addition to historic tax credits and state cultural facilities funding, Circleville could pursue heritage-based capital grants from organizations such as the Jeffris Family Foundation,¹⁹ which focuses on historic theater revitalization in the Midwest. These funds could support improvements to seating, lighting, sound, accessibility, or lobby amenities, enhancing the audience experience while maintaining architectural integrity. Even phased investment can demonstrate progress and strengthen future fundraising efforts.

¹⁹ <https://www.jeffrisfoundation.org/preservation/>





Holland Theatre Before and After with Jeffris Grant









DEPLOY MICRO-MUSEUMS AND “HERITAGE MOMENTS” IN HIGH-TRAFFIC SPACES

Circleville has a rich collection of stories, but many of its cultural assets require intentional discovery. Deploying small, highly visible “micro-museums” or heritage displays in high-traffic downtown locations would allow these stories to reach a broader audience in a casual, accessible way. Piloting a Ted Lewis mini-museum in a busy storefront, civic building, or shared public space would introduce visitors and residents to Circleville’s Jazz Age legacy and spark interest in visiting the full museum.

This approach can be replicated for other core narratives, including the history of the Circleville Pumpkin Show, the legacy of Caleb Atwater and public education, and the region’s agricultural roots. Compact, well-designed displays with strong visuals and concise storytelling allow people to engage with history in just a few minutes, making them ideal for visitors passing through downtown, waiting for a table, or attending events. QR codes can extend the experience digitally, linking to short videos, audio clips, or deeper archival content.

Micro-museums also complement downtown retail, dining, and events by adding layers of meaning to everyday spaces. By embedding heritage moments throughout the district, Circleville can encourage longer dwell times, reinforce civic pride, and create multiple entry points into its cultural institutions. Over time, this strategy helps transform history from a destination into an experience woven throughout downtown, supporting tourism, education, and economic vitality year-round.



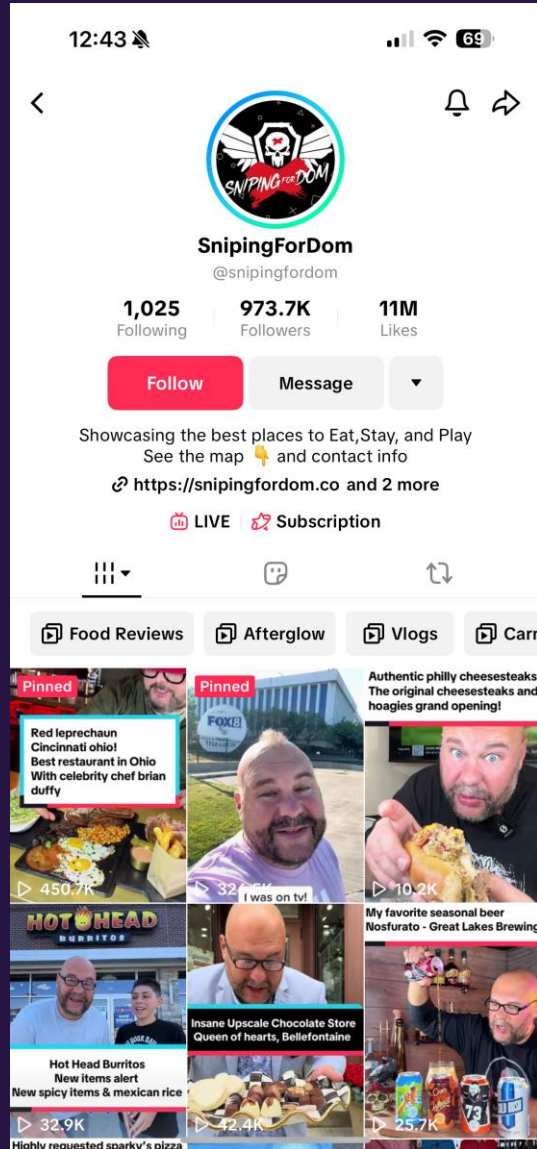
USE INFLUENCER AND REGIONAL MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE ALL-SEASON CIRCLEVILLE

Circleville can strengthen its visibility and attract repeat visitation by expanding how it tells its story online and through regional media. Rather than focusing marketing efforts primarily on the Pumpkin Show, the city should highlight everyday downtown experiences that are available throughout the year. Content that features places such as JoyHouse Coffee, Wittich's Candy Shop, Black Diamond Brewery & Distillery, Lindsey's Bakery, local delis, boutiques, and public art helps communicate that Circleville is an active destination beyond a single seasonal event.

Developing clear, itinerary-based storytelling can make Circleville easier for potential visitors to imagine and plan. Concepts such as "24 Hours in Circleville," "Off-Season Pumpkin City," or "A Weekend Downtown" provide simple narratives that bundle dining, shopping, culture, and experiences into shareable formats. These itineraries can be distributed through social media, tourism websites, and partner channels, giving visitors a reason to explore multiple businesses in one trip.

Strategic partnerships with Ohio and Midwest travel influencers, food writers, and regional media outlets can significantly extend reach at a relatively low cost. Collaborating with creators who already speak to target audiences allows Circleville to tap into established followings and trusted voices. When combined with consistent use of branded hashtags and encouragement of user-generated content from residents and business owners, these partnerships help build a steady stream of authentic storytelling that reinforces Circleville's identity as a welcoming, year-round destination.





PLAN FOR UPPER-FLOOR RESIDENTIAL AND “LIVE ABOVE THE SHOP” OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding residential housing within uptown Circleville is essential to building long-term economic stability and sustaining activity beyond peak events and weekends. Residents who live above storefronts provide consistent foot traffic throughout the day and evening, supporting restaurants, coffee shops, retail, and service businesses on a daily basis. A stronger residential presence also improves safety and comfort by increasing regular activity and “eyes on the street,” helping downtown feel lived-in rather than event-driven.

Circleville has significant opportunity to convert underutilized second- and third-floor spaces into modern apartments or live-work units. These spaces are often located in historic buildings with character that appeals to young professionals, empty nesters, and remote workers seeking walkable amenities. A strong local example is Lofts 110,²⁰ which demonstrates how adaptive reuse of upper floors can create high-quality housing that complements downtown retail and dining while preserving architectural integrity.

To encourage this type of development, the City should provide clear guidance on code requirements, design standards, and available incentives. Tools such as small rehabilitation grants, targeted tax abatements, or assistance navigating historic preservation requirements can help make upper-floor conversions financially feasible for property owners. By supporting a mix of unit sizes and price points, Circleville can attract a diverse range of residents and build a stronger, more resilient downtown that functions as a neighborhood, not just a destination.

²⁰ <https://smallnationstrong.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SN-CS-LOFTS110-2023-FINALe.pdf>



DEVELOP A SIMPLE, ACTIONABLE DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

To move from ideas to implementation, Circleville should organize these recommendations into a concise, three- to five-year downtown strategic framework that is easy to understand, communicate, and execute. Rather than pursuing projects in isolation, the framework should group initiatives under a small number of clear themes that reflect Circleville's identity and priorities, such as a year-round Pumpkin City brand, great streets and public spaces, heritage, arts and culture, and living, working, and playing downtown. This structure helps stakeholders see how individual projects fit into a larger, coordinated vision.

Each theme should be paired with a limited set of measurable goals that track real progress. Examples include the number of façades improved through a grant program, square footage of upper-floor housing or office space activated, additional public seating or alley projects completed, and new cultural or programming initiatives launched. Clear metrics allow the City, Uptown Circleville, the Chamber, and other partners to monitor outcomes, adjust priorities as needed, and demonstrate momentum to funders and the public.

A streamlined framework also strengthens Circleville's ability to pursue grants, leverage public and private investment, and align partners around shared objectives. By clearly defining priorities, responsibilities, and timelines, the community can move forward with confidence while maintaining flexibility to respond to market conditions. Most importantly, a simple and actionable strategy provides residents and business owners with a transparent roadmap for downtown progress, reinforcing trust and shared ownership in Circleville's long-term success.



UTILIZE LIND SIGNSPRING SYSTEMS FOR FLEXIBLE MURALS AND PUBLIC ART

Circleville should consider using modular mural and banner systems, such as Lind SignSpring,²¹ to activate underutilized side walls and open building façades throughout downtown, like on the side of Circleville Nutrition. These systems provide an affordable, low-risk way to introduce large-scale public art, branding, and storytelling without the permanence or cost of traditional painted murals. By using framed tension systems mounted to building walls, the city and property owners can quickly transform blank or overlooked spaces into visual assets that add color, interest, and identity to the downtown environment.

One of the primary advantages of this approach is flexibility. SignSpring-style systems allow graphics to be easily swapped out, making them ideal for seasonal themes, special events, and evolving community priorities. Murals could celebrate Circleville's heritage during the fall, highlight the Pumpkin Show, shift to holiday and Christmas imagery in winter, feature local artists or students in spring and summer, or promote downtown events and cultural programming. This adaptability keeps downtown feeling fresh and intentional year-round while avoiding the challenge of outdated or overly permanent imagery.

These installations can also serve multiple purposes beyond aesthetics. They can function as wayfinding elements, highlight points of pride, support arts organizations, or provide highly visible platforms for community storytelling. Strategically placing systems on side walls near alleys, parking areas, or high-traffic pedestrian routes can help define gateways and create photo-friendly moments that encourage social media sharing. By adopting a modular public art strategy, Circleville can expand its visual impact quickly, support local creativity, and enhance the downtown experience in a cost-effective and scalable way.



²¹ <https://lindsignspring.com/bannerframeclassic-with-or-without-covers>



**CIRCLEVILLE
NUTRITION**

PROTEIN

AÇAÍ BOWLS

ENERGY



CREATE INSTAGRAMMABLE DISPLAYS AND PHOTO MOMENTS

As a tourism-driven community, Circleville would benefit from intentionally designed, Instagrammable photo installations that encourage visitors to stop, take pictures, and share their experience online. Oversized or playful displays, such as sculptural seating, seasonal props, or bold branded elements, create memorable moments that extend a visitor's experience beyond shopping and dining. A strong local example is the large photo installations used in Bellefontaine's downtown, which consistently generate user-generated content and organic visibility across social media platforms.

These photo opportunities can be designed to reflect Circleville's identity, drawing inspiration from pumpkins, agriculture, heritage, or downtown pride. Installations can be temporary or seasonal, rotating throughout the year to align with festivals, holidays, or special events. Placement near high-traffic areas, alleyways, public spaces, or key gateways ensures strong visibility and encourages spontaneous engagement from visitors and residents alike.

To maximize impact, Circleville should pair these installations with a clear, fun, and easy-to-use community hashtag promoted through signage and local businesses. When visitors post photos using the hashtag, they effectively become ambassadors for the community, generating free, authentic marketing content that reaches audiences well beyond Pickaway County. Over time, these Instagrammable moments can strengthen Circleville's brand recognition, increase online visibility, and reinforce the downtown as a place designed for experience, not just transactions.



REIMAGINE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE TED LEWIS MUSEUM

The Ted Lewis Museum has an opportunity to broaden its reach by adopting new, audience-centered engagement strategies that resonate with younger generations while still honoring its cultural mission. Recent coverage by the Wall Street Journal²² highlights how small-town museums across the country are successfully reframing their collections through humor, short-form video, music, and contemporary storytelling, particularly on platforms like TikTok. These approaches help dispel the perception that museums are static or inaccessible, instead presenting them as relatable, human, and culturally relevant.

One potential strategy for the Ted Lewis Museum is to experiment with short, playful digital content that connects Jazz Age artifacts, photographs, or quotes to modern audio clips, trends, or themes. Pairing historic imagery with popular music or lighthearted narration can spark curiosity and make early 20th-century history feel personal rather than distant. These “micro-stories” do not replace traditional interpretation but serve as an entry point, inviting new audiences to engage with Ted Lewis’s legacy through familiar digital language.

In addition to social media, the museum could expand its physical presence through off-site or hybrid experiences. Mini exhibits in high-traffic downtown spaces, rotating displays tied to events, or short behind-the-scenes videos featuring staff or community voices can increase visibility beyond the museum walls. Virtual clips and one-minute educational segments can also be shared by schools, tourism partners, and downtown businesses, reinforcing the museum as an active contributor to Circleville’s cultural life.

Importantly, success should not be measured solely by immediate visitation. As highlighted in the Wall Street Journal article, raising awareness, sparking interest, and building emotional connection are valuable outcomes on their own. Over time, these strategies can position the Ted Lewis Museum as approachable, relevant, and woven into daily community life, ultimately helping cultivate the next generation of museum supporters, visitors, and advocates.

²² <https://www.wsj.com/arts-culture/small-town-museums-are-killing-it-on-the-internet-6e550f3d>



EXPAND SHORT-TERM LODGING OPTIONS IN DOWNTOWN CIRCLEVILLE

Circleville would benefit from expanding short-term lodging options within or near the downtown core to better capture the economic value of visitors who currently leave after dining, events, or festivals. With strong draws such as the Pumpkin Show, weddings, live music, and regional tourism activity, there is clear demand for walkable, character-driven overnight accommodations. Activating upper floors of existing downtown buildings for short-term rentals would address this gap while supporting adaptive reuse and downtown reinvestment.

Comparable communities demonstrate the impact of this approach. The Flats at Rainbow Row²³ show how well-designed short-term rentals above active ground-floor businesses can transform a downtown into a true destination rather than a single-stop experience. These units appeal to festival-goers, couples, families, and business travelers who value proximity and authenticity over traditional highway hotels. Circleville's historic building stock is well suited for similar projects.

Short-term rentals also generate substantially higher visitor spending. Overnight guests typically spend an average of \$354 per day, compared to approximately \$121 per day for day-trip visitors.²⁴ This increased spending directly benefits restaurants, retail, entertainment venues, and local services. Even a modest number of high-quality units can significantly boost downtown foot traffic and revenue, particularly during evenings and weekends. Expanding short-term lodging capacity will help Circleville encourage longer stays, repeat visits, and deeper economic impact from tourism and events.

²³ <https://theflatsdowntown.com/>

²⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/credit-cards/travel-rewards/average-travel-vacation-costs/>

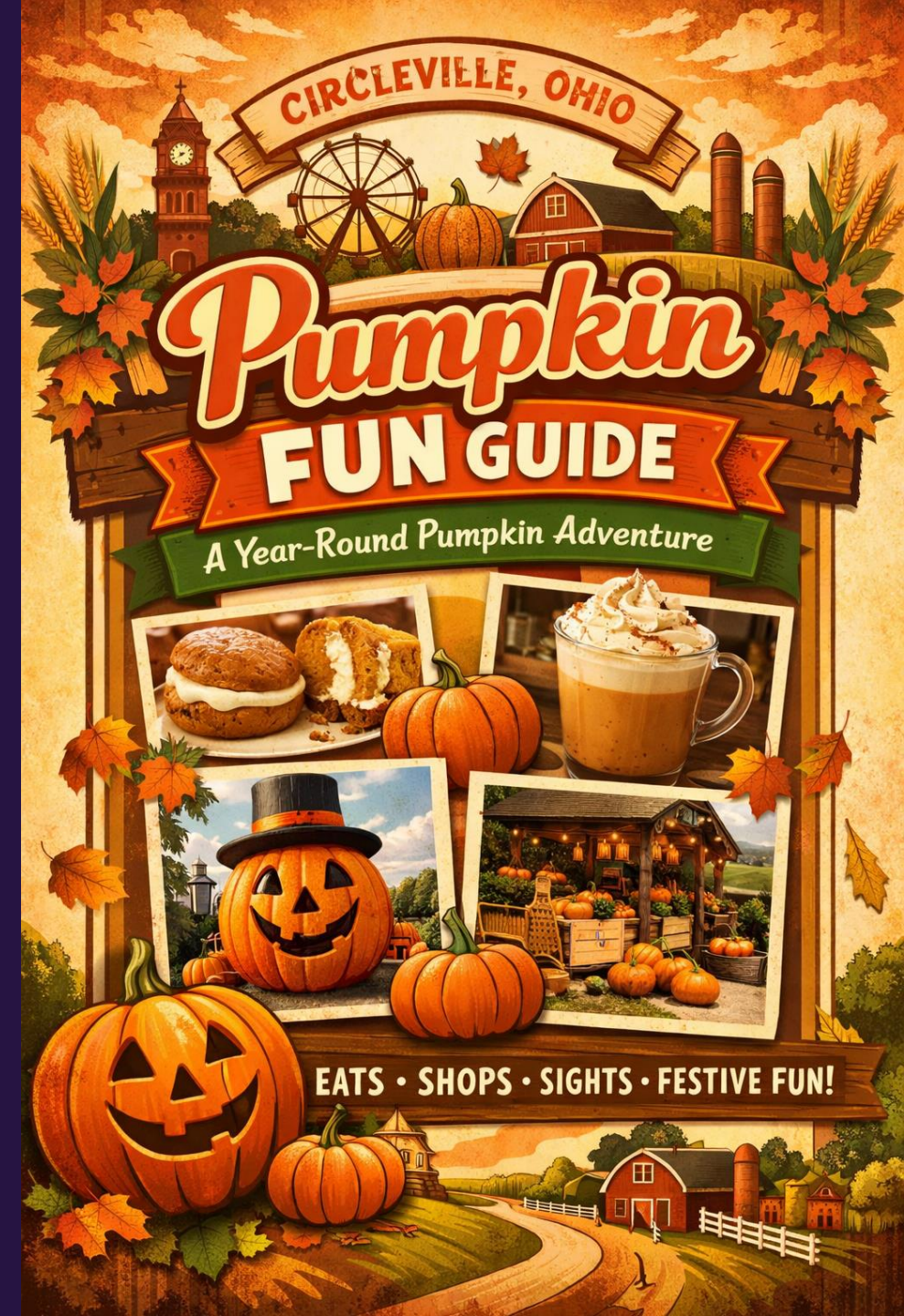


CREATE A YEAR-ROUND PUMPKIN- THEMED VISITOR GUIDE

Circleville should develop a dedicated visitor guide that highlights pumpkin-themed experiences available throughout the year, extending the community's identity beyond the single week of the Pumpkin Show. While the festival is the city's most visible draw, many pumpkin-related foods, products, stories, and experiences exist year-round but are not easily discoverable to visitors. A curated guide would help connect these offerings, reinforce Circleville's brand as the pumpkin destination, and encourage repeat visitation outside of peak event periods.

The guide could feature pumpkin-flavored menu items, specialty baked goods, seasonal drinks, retail products, public art, heritage sites, and photo opportunities tied to the Pumpkin Show and the region's agricultural history. It should intentionally highlight lesser-known businesses, pop-up experiences, and rotating offerings, giving visitors clear reasons to explore beyond the main corridors. Digital and print versions would allow the guide to be shared at hotels, restaurants, downtown shops, events, and online through tourism and social media channels.

By packaging these experiences into an easy-to-follow format, Circleville can create a year-round "pumpkin trail" that encourages longer stays and broader spending across downtown. The guide also provides a flexible marketing tool that can be refreshed seasonally, aligned with events, and promoted by local businesses and influencers. Over time, this approach helps maintain momentum from the Pumpkin Show, deepens community pride, and strengthens Circleville's reputation as the home of pumpkin culture all year long.





We're excited to continue to see
Circleville grow and prosper.

THANK YOU for allowing us to be
part of your success!

