Historic Downtown Muncie:
Infill Development Proposal

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

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Signed

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The following document is a response to research regarding the historic development and certain demographic, economic, and physical conditions of Muncie, IN. Observations of Muncie's assets and history have led to conclusions about its needs, especially within the older, central part of the city. A particular interest of the physical conditions of Downtown Muncie bound by Liberty St on the west, Wysoer St on the north, Monroe St on the east, and the RR tracks on the south led to a project proposal meant to supplement this community. This infill development project will certainly complement current municipal goals to revitalize the center city, creating an attractive, destination downtown. A block bound by Main St, High St, Jackson St, and Franklin St was selected as the most suitable site for the next downtown development for several reasons regarding its location and context. Attention to preliminary research ensures a comprehensive addition, one which will harmonize with current physical structures while honoring the historical and cultural context of the area.
AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

For the past four years, I have been honing my skills in research, analyzation, and presentation through my undergraduate studies in Urban Planning and Development. The purpose of this skill building is to become an urban planner with the capability of solving real world problems, and presenting solutions in such a way that is comprehensible to the general public. For this project, I decided I would compose a comprehensive plan, something many planners are a part of at some point or another in their careers. I also wanted to incorporate my secondary interests and minor in Historic Preservation. This particular plan focuses on a single project proposal, which is an infill development project in Downtown Muncie, IN. I have definitely used my planning skills through completing this research and project proposal, while challenging myself to be more design oriented in order to reflect my interests in historic preservation.
WORKS CITED


Muncie Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation Commission. Muncie Indiana Historic Districts Map. 2007. http://static1.squarespace.com/static/534c00cee4b092d7f2cc797f/t/54bd47cae4b0c2c1fa4ef1b/1421690826870/Historical+Districts.pdf


***GIS maps composed by Alexis Busselberg
***Sketchup Model made by Alexis Busselberg
DOWNTOWN MUNCIE INFILL DEVELOPMENT

A Comprehensive Plan
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following document is a response to research regarding the historic development and certain demographic, economic, and physical conditions of Muncie, IN. Observations of Muncie’s assets and history have led to conclusions about its needs, especially within the older, central part of the city. A particular interest of the physical conditions of Downtown Muncie bound by Liberty St on the west, Wysor St on the north, Monroe St on the east, and the RR tracks on the south led to a project proposal meant to supplement this community. This infill development project will certainly complement current municipal goals to revitalize the center city, creating an attractive, destination downtown. A block bound by Main St, High St, Jackson St, and Franklin St was selected as the most suitable site for the next downtown development for several reasons regarding its location and context. Attention to preliminary research ensures a comprehensive addition, one which will harmonize with current physical structures while honoring the historical and cultural context of the area.
Muncie, IN is a mid-sized city which lies in the center of Delaware County in Central Indiana. A tribe of Native Americans known as the Delaware were among the first to settle around the White River and present-day Muncie, contributing inspiration for the county’s name when it was organized in 1827.

When Muncie was established as a city in 1865, it was a largely agricultural settlement, but that would soon change. By this time, it already had railroad access, the first passenger train arriving the last day in May, 1852. Its place in the Industrial Revolution along the American timeline and its proximity to a thriving natural gas field nearby put Muncie in the right place at the right time. The natural gas discovery in 1886 and access to several railroad lines made manufacturing conditions ideal, attracting several businesses to the city.

By 1915, only 50 years after its establishment, Muncie boasted six railroad lines, establishing direct connections with other major manufacturing cities including, but not limited to, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New York, Buffalo, Louisville, Peoria, and Chicago. An streetcar system conveniently connected Muncie neighborhoods with each other. Industry flourished in Muncie, resulting in the development of neighborhoods composed of businesses and housing built in the romantic styles of the era.
It is imperative to note the railroad’s impact. Not surprisingly, Muncie’s growth correlated directly with the expansion of the railroad. Improved access allowed people and businesses to reach Muncie and its bountiful resources, while remaining connected to surrounding significant cities.

Above: This section of a Sanborn Map dated 1887 shows Muncie in its infancy. The shaded blocks represent those which are generally developed at this time. A description advertises a population of 7500. Three railroads are marked at the southern end of the city, including the Lake Erie and Western RR, the Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis RR, and the Fort Wayne, Muncie, and Louisville RR.


Below: A postcard depicts Muncie’s Terminal Station c. 1913.

Above: A closer look at the map shows number 7, the Indianapolis and Bellefontaine Railroad, is the first to reach Muncie in 1852. It establishes connections between Indianapolis, Muncie, and Cleveland, OH.

Left: This map dated 1852 labels 15 railroads in Indiana.
No historic study of Muncie would be complete without examining the industries which are accountable for putting Muncie on the map. Heavy manufacturing facilities primarily produced glass goods, steel members, and automobile parts. These industries benefited from abundantly available resources like natural gas, water power, and railroad transportation; they fed into the economy, and shaped the lives of the citizens who proudly produced things for a living.

These generations prized a factory job, despite the hours and the hard work, because they sufficiently provided for their families. More importantly, they created for themselves an identity that was admirable, even noble. Every blue-collar worker represented vital vertebrae in Muncie’s economic backbone; they were the lifeblood of Muncie’s industrial heart.

Various companies and organizations produced souvenir booklets, which are relatively short publications packed with information about the city. In these booklets, one would find basic information about the city’s history, demographics, and architecture. Perhaps more importantly, the booklets described various community leaders, businesses, and impressive stats on Muncie’s various industries.
Above: Ball Brothers Manufacturing Co. facility.
Below: Hemingray Glass Co. facility.

Above Left: An advertisement depicts a Hemingray product.
Above Right: An actual photo of the glass insulator.

Above: Ball Brothers Glass Mfg Co. mason jars became a trademark product made in Muncie.
HISTORIC CONTEXT

Above: Indiana Steel and Wire Co. facility.
Left: Steel from Indiana Bridge was known for its strength and quality.
Below: Kitselman Bros. facility.

Below: An ad for Kitselman wire fencing.
Above: Borg Warner facility.
Below: Durant Motor Co. facility.

Above: Warner Gear produces these various auto parts c. 1915 and transmissions c. 1917.

Below Left: A 1923 Durant.
Below Right: Feeny Mfg produces this radiator c. 1917.
While Muncie's economic worth increased, the city itself grew up in reflection of the integrity of the industrial era and the working class. During the end of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth century, Downtown Muncie saw the construction of hundreds of buildings and structures. Their uses and styles varied tremendously. Downtown was home to retail shops, community buildings, government offices, and homes. Governmental and institutional buildings were built in classic styles, demanding respect for their perceived value and high class. Commercial buildings were composed of fine masonry in symmetrical forms, mimicking the nature of the factory, repetitive, sturdy, and built-to-last.

Top Left: Downtown Muncie bird's eye view in 1872.
Bottom Left: Downtown Muncie bird's eye view c. 1900s.
Bottom Right: Courthouse.
Left: This section of the 1911 Sanborn Key Map illustrates the drastic growth that occurred during Muncie’s industrial period. A faint red line used to show the fire limits also recalls the original municipal boundary, of which the city has outgrown tremendously. The Central Indiana RR, Muncie Belt RR, and Chesapeake and Ohio RR are present. A map description (not shown) proclaims a population of 35,000, an impressive 4 1/2 times increase in less than a quarter of a century.

Below: Railroad construction at the Patterson Block.
HISTORIC CONTEXT

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The following buildings no longer exist, but at one time they helped complete the urban fabric of the downtown district. These forms and materials are noteworthy examples of Muncie's architectural and cultural history. While they are no longer present to admire, they may be remembered and recognized for their beauty and quality of design and construction. They could (and should) also inspire future developments.

FUNCTIONS AND NAMES

COMMERCIAL
1. American Laundry c. 1927
2. Jewel Tea Co c. 1921-5
3. Hotel Kirby c. 1910s
4. 415-423 E Main 1920s-30s

INSTITUTIONAL/GOVERNMENT/
PUBLIC
5. Court House
6. Jefferson School
HISTORIC CONTEXT

RECREATIONAL/PUBLIC
7. Masonic Temple 1923
8. BPOE Building c. 1923-4

RELIGIOUS
9. St. John’s Universalist Church c. 1930s
10. First Presbyterian Church c. 1930s
11. First Baptist Church c. 1902
Muncie is also now predominantly supported by the presence of Ball State University, an institution which draws vital populations and financial resources to the city every year. Perhaps Muncie's native population hopes that the manufacturing industries will eventually return, bringing jobs and wealth with them. However, a focus on building up existing resources such as Ball State University may be a more plausible solution. The presence of Ball State University brings up to well over 20,000 students and professors to Muncie for at least 9 months of the year. These young and upper middle class adults are no doubt looking for universities located where they may experience a high quality of life. Ball State and Muncie must consider the competition with several other Indiana educational institutions located within cities that do not struggle with such significant economic weaknesses and the poor conditions that they produce. There is currently an emphasis on promoting arts and entertainment as economic drivers. The prominent demographic group connected to Ball State University certainly makes the arts and entertainment industry a viable one for making Muncie's future.
Architecture Profile

While much of Muncie's original historic sites and structures have been lost, many fortunately have been preserved whether by chance or through historic designation and stewardship through local efforts. Several Muncie neighborhoods are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, created by the National Park Service under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Walnut Street and Old West End are National Historic Districts within a few blocks of the site. This federal list identifies and honors structures, buildings, or places that exemplify historic architecture or culture. Benefits of being on the National Register include recognition and opportunities for investment tax credits where rehabilitation efforts meet certain standards. Some other downtown neighborhoods are designated Local Historic Districts by the Muncie Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation Commission, established in 1976. Their standards for designation closely follow those of the National Register of Historic Places. Boyce Block and Old Federal Building are Local Historic Districts in Downtown Muncie, also only a few blocks from the site. Because of the significance of these neighborhoods, new developments would do well to honor the historic architecture in their own designs.

The following buildings may still be found in Muncie, providing noteworthy context for future developments.
**INFILL DEVELOPMENT**

**DEFINITION AND PURPOSE**

Infill development refers to construction within an existing community, especially for the purpose of community development or growth management. These developments essentially fill in gaps within existing built environments, adding value to vacant lots. It is a particularly well-suited practice in rustbelt cities where industry has waned so severely that it has caused significant economic and physical blight in the older, central parts of cities.

In addition to restoring consistency to urban street walls, infill projects make use of established infrastructure and city services which eliminate the need and associated cost of adding infrastructure and services to properties outside city limits. Building out existing urban environments can also greatly reduce the loss of natural landscapes and greenfields. This sustainable building practice is more than a trend, as cities across the nation are turning their attention back to their inner cities to revitalise as they rebuild their post-industrial cities.

**SUITEMBILITY IN MUNCIE**

Unfortunately, Muncie is no exception to the ruthless rustbelt rule. No longer a dominant manufacturing center, it experiences economic losses similar to other midwestern cities. Leading industries, along with the enormously significant corresponding businesses and employers, have been leaving the city consistently since the latter half of the 20th century. Downtown has since been declining, following the slow death of manufacturing. The adverse effects reveal themselves in a blatantly physical way. Now, a majority of downtown blocks are composed of asphalt parking lots, serving the few businesses that remain. Most lots remain underutilised, even during prime business hours. Abandoned factories and commercial buildings blight the geography throughout the inner city and along the increasingly inactive railroads. Neighborhoods fall apart as families struggle to afford home upkeep and city departments struggle to generate enough tax revenue for infrastructure and other services. Muncie has clung to its status, if for no other reason than being the epitome of a midwestern average; its high exposure as being the subject of a famous, in-depth study of American urbanity known as the Middletown studies has likely contributed to its longevity.

With an abundance of vacant or unbuilt property located within its downtown district, Muncie is an example of a city where infill developments may significantly improve the appearance and economy of the area. At the beginning of the 20th century, Muncie's city center was full of bustling business and lively entertainment, all housed in beautifully constructed commercial buildings. Downtown Muncie was once very compact; nearly every block was completely built.

On the other hand, the remaining buildings are all nearly full. Very few storefronts remain empty, and residential units are constantly at capacity. Between the obvious evidence that Downtown Muncie has more parking than it needs, and not nearly enough retail or residential space, it seems Muncie is at a pivotal point in its existence. Muncie now has the potential to redevelop itself by restoring the downtown district to its former glory. While the railroads and the heavy manufacturing industries will most likely never return, they have no doubt left a lasting impression.

Providing ready-to-fill retail and residential units will encourage new businesses and citizens to locate themselves within the heart of the city. Muncie is already working toward this goal. In 2015, the city saw the completion of two large projects downtown. A senior living community called Walnut Commons filled in the northeast corner of Wysor St and Walnut St. A hotel and hospitality training center opened north of the railroad tracks, continuing the urban streetwall of High St while buffering the downtown from the tracks. With Muncie's proud manufacturing background in mind, new developments are provided with a rich history and existing architectural context on which to build. The future of Muncie may depend on the present generation's ability to create an environment for new makers.
Below: A section of a 1911 Sanborn map shows Muncie’s downtown building footprints. Note the density along Walnut St and Main St. Colors refer to building materials.

Below: A GIS map shows current building footprints. Pink footprints mark buildings within the downtown focus area.
IN Fill Development

Demolished Downtown

Right: An airview c. 1950s shows Downtown Muncie still fairly dense.

Below middle: An airview c. 1988 shows a drastic difference in density.

Below right: An airview c. 2005 reveals the major loss in building stock.

Left: This streetview c. 1960s shows Walnut St, looking north from the Charles St intersection.

Below left: This current streetview shows that same intersection, minus the corner buildings with much less traffic.
The following projects have been considered for various reasons. Some are infill projects while others have been noted for some other characteristic believed to hold value in this study. All of them added economic value and respected the existing context, making them viable case studies.

**Winona, MN**

**Winona County History Center**

The Winona County History center houses offices and a museum in two structures. Listed on National Register, the old Armory was built in 1915 and has long been considered a historic gem by the community. In 2010, the Laird Norton addition was opened, complementing the old Armory with a contemporary, yet contextually conscious design by celebrated Minnesota architect Joan Soranno and her engineering partner John Cook.

Despite their nearly one hundred year age difference, the buildings stand in perfect harmony today, thanks to Soranno’s and Cook’s careful designs. Soranno said in an interview about their concepts, “What we wanted to do with the project was create an addition that very much respected and honored the architecture of the existing Armory building...and create something very much for the 21st century.” The addition has won four AIA MN Awards for Design Excellence.

One way the designers balanced the addition's stark contrast in design was through appropriate scale. They were careful to make them similar in size, their entrances and main facades on walls nearly the same width. The height of the addition respects its elder by keeping its roofline just below the highest point of the Armory and even allowing some air space between them with a cutout in the addition's second story.

Soranno and Cook knew they would use brick extensively throughout the first story facade of the building, honoring the neighboring old materials with directness. They chose a darker color, however, to give the addition its rightful individuality. Copper on the second story blatantly demands attention. As it naturally patinas with age, its boldness recedes and it takes on a rustic quality like that of its neighbor.

Interior walls contain lightly abstract cutout designs inspired by the cross section of lumber stacked on freight trucks. Lumber was once a significant industry in the region's economy, adding a cultural significance to the interior design. Exterior walls contain repetitive vertical members which mimic the Armory's narrow windows and symmetry.
CASE STUDIES

Philadelphia, PA
Locust Street Addition

An addition to a quaint cafe in historic Philly makes the most of a tiny 9.5 ft wide site by adding some much needed and well-lit seating. The contemporary design joins a community garden with 19th century row home, since repurposed for commercial uses. It maintains connections to both through use of color and proportions as well as decorative features. Distinctly contrasting elements add attitude to the tiny add-on, demanding its respect despite being the new guy on the block.

While the addition uses brick in the way of the rest of the street's structures, the brick is nearly black in color. The use of metal is striking, boldly red on the roof and romantically carved in the panels on the front facing facade. The chic black facade with red roof reverses the scheme of the addition's neighbor, which is primarily red with black accents.

Careful to maintain the proportions of its neighbor, the addition strictly follows its neighbor in window height and spacing along the streetfront, adding balance and subtle symmetry. The addition does not mimic its neighbor's roofline with a lower pitch and no dormer.

Queens, NY
Hollis Greenhouse

This 60,000 sq ft rooftop greenhouse is located on top of the historic Ideal Toy Company building (http://gothamgreens.com/our-farms). This and three other rooftop greenhouses are owned and operated by a for profit company called Gotham Greens. While this building is not an infill project, it is an excellent example of a real estate redevelopment project which adds value to the community with more than office or residential space.

Initially a toy factory famous for producing Teddy Bears, Betsy Wetsy Dolls, and Rubik's Cubes, an addition of rooftop greenhouses contains aquaponic growing systems which grow crops efficiently in this urban neighborhood. The adaptive reuse of the existing structure's roof provides nutritious food and full time jobs to the area while saving on infrastructure costs and making the most of limited urban real estate.
LOCATION

The site of the proposed project has been carefully considered. A block bound by Franklin St, Main St, High St, and Jackson St provides a site with ample flexible space in an ideal location.

CURRENT CONDITION

Opportunity in the open space and vacancy:
One small office building on the SW corner and another empty structure on the NE corner are the only structures on the block, while the remaining area is asphalt parking lot.

Proximity and multimodal access:
Public transportation provided through the bus system known as MITS brings citizens to the main station conveniently located on the adjacent block. A bike lane on High St provides additional access for cyclists using Muncie's expanding bike lane network.

Current plans and conditions:
A recently constructed hotel and training facility has filled in an enormous section of lots on High St. The chosen block is one of the few remaining on High St with such a large amount of unbuilt property.
Several objectives guided the process behind this development. First, the new development had to fit within its context by being respectful of the materials and scale of current structures. Second, a reflection of the community’s past played a key role in the selection of materials and forms. Third, the development had to take responsibility for the current community with an addition of space for much needed new businesses and housing.

This new structure strives to fit in while it provides space for humans rather than cars with a strong connection to the sidewalk on all levels of the building.

**MIXED-USE**

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<tr>
<th>Commercial and Retail: First floor</th>
<th>approx. 10,800 square feet</th>
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<tr>
<td>(6 units @ 1800 sq ft; 1 corner unit @ 3600 sq ft)</td>
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<table>
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<th>Residential: Second and third floors</th>
<th>approx. 12,800 square feet</th>
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<tr>
<td>(12 1br units @ 500 sq ft; 8 2br units @ 1000 sq ft)</td>
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**KEY PLAYERS**

A partnership between public offices and private investors is crucial to the success of this project, as well as community input.

- Architects, planners, and engineers
- Mayor of Muncie and City Council
- Office of Community Development
- Economic Development Commission
- Redevelopment Commission
- Historic Preservation & Rehabilitation Commission
- Ball State University
- Muncie Neighborhoods
- Private Investors and Businesses
Right: Concrete and copper facade panels and steel colored metal roofing differ slightly from surrounding buildings, but maintains an appropriate color scheme. The building is generally symmetrical like those of its surroundings.

Below: The corner on Jackson St and High St is clipped, mimicking historic buildings and allowing extra space for a small plaza.

Below right: An offset, angular facade on the second and third stories adds surface area, making space for more windows and balconies to encourage interaction with public space from upper floors. Strong angles composed of metal and concrete subtly call back to the essence of factory facilities and equipment.