Highlights

- Businesses reported the greatest benefits of being located in Cheviot as: character of the community, small city feel, loyalty of customers, and helpfulness of City staff. Other benefits reported included: visibility, proximity to market area, and long history in the community. The greatest obstacles reported included: changing demographics, public safety/crime (loitering, theft in particular), and parking in certain areas of the business district. Other responses included: lack of foot traffic in the business district, lack of a business association, and negative perception of the west side in greater Cincinnati.

- Sixty-four percent of businesses surveyed reported stable or increased sales during the past year.

- HCDC’s business coach conducted 29 one-on-one coaching sessions. Areas of support included start-up assistance, marketing, community relations, operational issues, and financial management.

- HCDC provided resource information regarding formation of a farmers’ market in the central business district, which is contained in this report.
HCDC’s mission is to be a driving force behind business development. The organization does this through financing business expansions, supporting community investment, and assisting entrepreneurs. The Economic Development Office, Business Center, and Business Lending foster business growth through financing business expansions, supporting further community investment, and assisting entrepreneurs. HCDC has been growing the local economy since 1983 through its three program areas: the Hamilton County Economic Development Office, the Business Center, and Small Business Lending.

HCDC began the Small Business Assistance Program in Cheviot in March 2016, with funding support from Duke Energy. The program is designed to support local small businesses through the following three components:

**Business Retention & Expansion:** This component focuses on encouraging the continued success of existing businesses in Cheviot through business retention meetings/discussions, obtaining feedback on the current area business climate, and responding to business requests for resources.

**Education & Outreach:** HCDC offers support to community organizations involved in economic development. The City of Cheviot is considering establishing a farmers’ market in the central business district and HCDC provided resource information and best practices.

**Business Coaching & Mentoring:** This part of the program provides one-on-one, confidential coaching services to small businesses in areas such as operations, marketing, and finances.
Background

Cheviot

The City of Cheviot has a long history and was named and platted in 1818 and incorporated as a Village in 1901. Once a farming community, it is now a suburb of Cincinnati, located about 7 miles northwest of downtown. Cheviot prides itself as having “big city spirit and small town charm.” The City has its own police, fire and public service departments. An elected Mayor and seven-member Council serve the City residents.

Cheviot has a large downtown, running on Harrison Avenue and its side streets. There are a number of long-standing, independently-owned businesses such as Cappel’s and Kroner Dry Cleaners, dating back to 1939.

The City of Cheviot has taken an active role in making the City an attractive destination for businesses and residents. The City partnered with First Financial Bank to offer a microloan program. They also established a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) to encourage investment in the housing stock.

The Cheviot Westwood Community Association (CWCA) has been active since 1925. It also has a number of church festivals and attracts people from throughout the region for the Harvest Home festival (held since 1806) and Westfest.

“Working with HCDC to assist Cheviot businesses has been another rung on the ladder towards creating a more vibrant business district.”

~Caroline Statkus, Economic Development Director, City of Cheviot
A business retention program typically involves relationship-building and obtaining input on the local business climate. From the survey process, information is gathered to strengthen existing businesses, establish early warning systems to flag at-risk businesses that require assistance, and ensure that public programs meet local business needs.

Nineteen business retention meetings were conducted in Cheviot during the course of the HCDC contract. The complete business retention report is contained in Appendix A. Key findings include:

- Businesses reported the greatest benefits of being located in Cheviot as: character of the community, small city feel, loyalty of customers, and helpfulness of City staff.
- The greatest obstacles reported included: changing demographics, public safety/crime (loitering, theft in particular), and parking in certain areas of the business district. Other responses included: lack of foot traffic in the business district, lack of a business association, and negative perception of the west side in greater Cincinnati.
- Business coaching was listed first in terms of HCDC assistance that would support business growth. HCDC’s business coach met with all businesses requesting assistance.
- Sixty-four percent of businesses reported stable or increased sales during the past year, while 36% of businesses had sales which declined for the same period.
- Many of the Cheviot businesses surveyed are destination businesses, with 38% reporting primary market areas that were regional or national, while 62% of businesses reported customers primarily located within six miles.
The City of Cheviot is working with a group of business leaders to start a farmers’ market in the central business district with a dual purpose of adding foot-traffic to the district while also providing fresh produce to residents and visitors and requested support from HCDC. Farmers’ markets are a proven strategy for increasing foot traffic and enlivening public areas, achievements that often benefit nearby brick and mortar retailers. Purposefully-managed farmers’ markets also benefit communities by increasing access to healthy, fresh food, supporting local agriculture, fostering economic opportunity and entrepreneurship, recirculating consumer spending within communities, and bringing neighbors together in diverse, socially interactive environments. In short, farmers’ markets strengthen the sense of community among neighbors and become strong shopping destinations for nearby residents.

Key considerations during the planning stages include:

**Location** - A highly visible, stable location with adequate parking and restrooms for vendors and the public. A location where other shopping and activities take place is ideal.

**Vendors** - A diverse group of vendors selling a broad mix of high quality products.

**Layout** - A well-designed, welcoming market layout that supports an enjoyable shopping experience.

**Collaboration** - Collaborations and partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and stakeholders.

**Programming** - A regular program of engaging activities (such as music, food demonstrations, and children’s programming) that enhance the shopping experience and provide a public relations platform for promoting the market.

**Management, management, management!**
The USDA reports that there are more than 8,200 farmers markets in the U.S. today, up from 3,706 in 2004. One 2016 survey counted 35 farmers markets in the Cincinnati area. These include thriving business district farmers markets in Northside, Hyde Park, College Hill, Loveland, Madeira, Milford, and Wyoming to name just a few. Cincinnati also boasts a historic public market in its urban core that includes large weekend farmers’ markets, and a long established Saturday farmers market at Lunken Airport that is a remnant of the city’s wholesale farmers market.

**Vendors** - The growing number of farmers’ markets means every start-up farmers market competes with existing markets to recruit farmers and attract shoppers. Because farmers’ markets draw shoppers very locally, recruiting high quality vendors is typically a greater challenge than attracting a dependable base of regular customers. Farmers with an abundance of perishable products are attracted to markets with established crowds of shoppers while shoppers are attracted to markets with abundant product selections. These two fundamental challenges – attracting vendors and shoppers – are together the “chicken and egg” dilemma every new farmers market must navigate.

New farmers markets are well advised to focus on recruiting a diverse group of vendors selling the broadest possible mix of high quality products. A new market must persuade vendors to take a chance based on the potential of the new market to quickly attract regular customers. New markets sell themselves and compete with established markets by touting their strong locations, plans for marketing and promotion, lower (or initially free) stall fees, and so on. For a vendor, the significant risk of joining an unproven market is reduced if it’s an opportunity to add a new day of business and increased if it requires leaving an established market. Therefore, new markets should choose days and times of operation that don’t conflict with those of nearby strong, established farmers markets. This is why many of Cincinnati’s business district farmers markets have weekday drive-time hours (3:00 to 7:00 pm is typical) – to avoid competing directly for vendors with the city’s larger, older weekend markets.
Layout

An inviting market layout and environment will be attractive to both vendors and shoppers. Modest parking lots can be configured to enhance the shopping experience. Below are layout considerations for transforming an area into an attractive market space.

➔ Shade, natural or provided
➔ Colorful flags, banners, tents, signs
➔ Strong emphasis on attractive, colorful product displays
➔ Clearly marked pricing at every stall
➔ Seating, preferably configurable
➔ Restrooms for vendors and the public
➔ Food and water
➔ Ample trash and recycling containers
➔ Music and other entertainment (simple is better)
➔ A stall layout that draws shoppers through the space, with lots of room for browsing and no blind alleys
➔ Visible, identifiable management staff
➔ An information table
➔ Discrete but visible police presence
Collaboration

Collaborations and partnerships between the farmers market and public and private community organizations are highly valuable, if not essential. Working closely with community stakeholders will amplify the market’s marketing and promotion, provide revenue and other resources, generate volunteers, help with problem resolution, and assure the farmers market becomes a valued community asset. Community collaboration should begin at the earliest planning stages for a new market. The articulated vision and purpose for the farmers market should emerge from discussions involving as many stakeholders as possible. Plans and assumptions should be shared widely and be responsive to feedback. At all times, the tendency for organizers and leaders to feel personal ownership of the farmers market should be tempered with robust public process and vigorous collaboration. Elements of such a strategy may include the following:

➔ Regular public meetings
➔ Shared vision and goals, explicitly articulated
➔ A board of directors with diverse community representation
➔ Open financial records and annual financial reports
➔ Sponsorship program for local businesses
➔ Volunteer program that engages community organizations
➔ Written rules and policies

A farmers’ market is a somewhat complicated enterprise involving many personalities, unavoidable conflicts of interest, and much need for coordination. Successful farmers markets are actively managed, beginning with the organizing stages and evolving to day-to-day operation of the market. Day-to-day management of a small farmers’ market might be provided by a volunteer but most successful markets pay a part-time manager.
The manager is responsible for supervising all of the following tasks:

➔ Recruiting and retaining vendors
➔ Assigning vendors to spaces
➔ Collecting, recording, and depositing vendor rents/fees
➔ Enforcing the market’s rules
➔ Ensuring product quality and honest trade
➔ Resolving conflicts and problems
➔ Setting the market space up on market days (signs, stalls, tables, trash containers, seating, event props, etc.)
➔ Shutting the market space down after market days and cleaning up
➔ Recruiting and managing volunteers
➔ Working with the health department and other regulatory officials
➔ Complying with local, state, and federal laws, obtaining necessary permits
➔ Working with the owner of the market space
➔ Securing sponsorships, doing fundraising
➔ Paying the market’s bills
➔ Assuring the market is properly insured
➔ Spearheading customer and public relations
➔ Publicizing and promoting the market (speaking engagements, earned media, e-newsletters, pamphlets, social media, advertising)
➔ Coordinating events and entertainment at the market
➔ Record-keeping (attendance, finances, vendor licenses, certifications, and proofs of insurance)
➔ Assuring the production of financial reports
➔ Preparing for and attending board meetings
➔ Being prepared for and responding to emergencies
Cheviot has made excellent progress planning for a new farmers market in its business district. From the start, it engaged business leaders and other community stakeholders in the planning process and generated enthusiasm for the project. It obtained permission to use a highly visible city owned parking lot in the heart of the business district with good access for both vendors and shoppers. It prepared a well considered site plan for the use of that space as a market. It generated a very good target product and vendor list for the market. It developed preliminary revenue and expense projections for the market’s first season. HCDC shared farmers market organizing materials, including sample market rules, and referred Cheviot to a local expert in farmers market organizing and operations. Cheviot’s next steps will include the following.

- Establishing a day of the week and hours of operation for the market
- Determining the market’s seasonal opening and closing dates
- Adopting basic market rules
- Finalizing a vendor fee structure and, perhaps, a recruiting strategy
- Raising start-up funds
- Identifying a farmers market manager
- Recruiting growers and vendors by visiting other farmers markets to identify potential participants and following up with calls and farm visits
- Promoting the market to the public.
Business Coaching & Mentoring

Business coaching includes a wide range of support that is individualized for each client based on the client’s priorities and an assessment of the key challenges, opportunities, and issues confronting the business. Coaching can address broad, strategic challenges or opportunities but, more often, focuses on a project/single issue/next step. Coaching also includes referrals to people and resources that provide specialty knowledge, such as legal, architectural, marketing, social media, or industry-related expertise. Business coaching is best described as a resource for the client. It can bring perspective, experience, and critical thinking to the sometimes chaotic and isolated experience of managing a small business.

HCDC’s business coach conducted 30 one-on-one coaching sessions with the following small businesses and community-based enterprises in Cheviot:

- Ailie Wellness Center
- Avocados Mexican Restaurant & Bar
- BackStreet Studio Salon
- Burnett Fine Furnishings
- Cappel’s
- Cheviot Farmers Market Task Force
- Inner Blessings
- Lisa rose Alterations
- Maribelle Cakery
- Vineyard Westside
- West Side Venue
The HCDC coach provided assistance and support in the following areas:

| Planning                  | Start up assistance  
|                          | Establishing business and financial goals  
|                          | Organizational and board development, board engagement  
|                          | Marketing plan development  
|                          | Farmers market planning  
|                          | Formulating exit strategies  
| Marketing                | Interior/exterior signage  
|                          | Storefront curb appeal  
|                          | Value proposition development  
|                          | Brand development  
|                          | Customer referral/loyalty programs  
|                          | Marketing through community engagement  
|                          | Pricing and promotion  
|                          | Reputation/review management  
|                          | Earned media counseling  
|                          | Search engine optimization  
|                          | Social media marketing  
| Community Relations      | Marketing through community engagement  
|                          | City services/support  
| Operations               | Customer service  
|                          | Regulatory/health department compliance  
|                          | Inventory productivity improvement  
|                          | Liquor permitting/liquor sales preparation  
|                          | Regulatory/health department compliance  
|                          | Staffing, labor planning, and management structure  
|                          | Point of Sale (POS) systems  
|                          | Sales improvement  
|                          | Store hours counseling  
|                          | Time management  
|                          | Farmers market operations  
|                          | Landlord relations/leasing  
|                          | Financial management  
| Financial Management     | Accounting systems and procedures  
|                          | Debt restructuring  
|                          | Improving cash flow/cash management  
|                          | Producing and understanding financial statements  
|                          | Improving net earnings  
|                          | Budgeting and budgeting tools  
|                          | Financing proposal development  

The business coach referred clients to expert assistance in the following areas:

- Bookkeeping services
- Payroll services
- Farmers market management
- Social media marketing
- Storefront design/display windows
The following sampling of coaching clients served in Cheviot illustrates both the diversity of business types and the variety of services provided.

**Ailie Wellness Center and Ailie Bio**

Ailie Wellness Center offers transformational life coaching and classes in guided meditation, yoga, nutrition, and mixed martial arts. The Wellness Center also sells hand crafted, all natural Ailie SkinCare products formulated with botanically active ingredients and manufactured locally by Ailie BioDerma. Business coaching focused on development of a value proposition, time management, social media marketing, retail merchandising, and preparation for Morning Mentoring.

“Bob is a treasure-trove of experience and resources and I’m sad to see the business coaching end. He assisted us with new product key messaging, goal-setting, and connectivity to venture financing.” Dr. Gary Pekoe, Owner, Ailie Wellness Center and Ailie Bio

**Cappel’s**

Cappel’s is a family-owned costume, accessory and party supply business that’s been a Cincinnati tradition since 1945. Cappel’s has five retail locations in Greater Cincinnati and an inventory of over 50,000 items. Focus areas of business coaching included: succession planning, current business practices, and inventory management. HCDC also provided an SBA 504 loan to Cappel’s Anderson Township location.

“With Bob’s assistance, we made more progress in the past six months than the past four or five years. HCDC has been a vital asset to our business by reducing our monthly costs and providing invaluable business coaching assistance.” Rich Cappel
Q: What is the product or service provided at this establishment?
Of the 19 businesses surveyed, 13 are service-related or retail (non-food) businesses, 4 are food-related businesses, and 2 are non-profits.

Q: What is the nature of your establishment?
All of the businesses surveyed are locally owned and operated. This reflects the unique nature of the businesses located in Cheviot.

Q: In what year did your business begin operating at this site?
The businesses surveyed are a healthy mix of newer and long-established businesses, with six businesses that began operating before 2000, five businesses opening between 2000-2009, and seven businesses established in 2010 or later.
Q: Over the last year, have sales increased, decreased, or stayed about the same for your business?
Of the 14 businesses responding to this question, the vast majority reported sales were up in the past year (64%). Five businesses reported that sales had declined and no businesses reported that sales were the same.

Q: During the next two years, do you expect to expand your current facility, make any exterior upgrades or make any interior upgrades?
Three businesses reported that they are considering exterior upgrades. All businesses were provided with resource information including HCDC coaching services.

Q: What is the market area served by your company?
A number of the businesses surveyed are destination businesses, with 38% reporting
primary market areas that were regional or national, while 62% of businesses reported customers primarily located within six miles.

Q: What do you consider to be the greatest benefits of being located in Cheviot? Businesses reported the greatest benefits of being located in Cheviot as: character of the community, small city feel, loyalty of customers, and helpfulness of City staff. Other benefits reported included: visibility, proximity to market area, and long history in Cheviot.

Q: What do you consider to be the greatest obstacles of being located in Cheviot? The greatest obstacle reported by businesses included: changing demographics, public safety/crime (loitering, theft in particular), and parking in certain areas of the business district. Other responses included: lack of foot traffic in the business district, lack of a business association, and negative perception of the west side in greater Cincinnati.

Q: What are the most important services that could be improved or provided to your business to support economic growth and development? Business coaching was the number one response in terms of assistance that would support business growth. Areas of coaching mentioned included: Point of Sale system, succession planning, inventory management, marketing, and by-laws (CWCA). Other assistance mentioned was improved communication with the City, particularly with the sign ordinance.
Q: Do you have a website?
As expected, all but two of the businesses surveyed have a website. Additionally, the vast majority of businesses are active on social media, including Facebook.

Q: Do you depend on “walk-in” customers?
Nine of the businesses surveyed responded that they do rely on walk-in customers. Given the walkable nature of the business districts, this is the expected response.

Q: Do you own or lease your place of operation?
Nine of the businesses surveyed responded that they own their building. Businesses that own their buildings tend to have a longer-term commitment to the community.
Participating Businesses

Ailie Skincare/Wellness Center
Angel’s Touch Nursing Care, Inc.
Avocado’s Cocina Mexicana
Back Street Studio Salon LLC & Laser Hair Therapy
Burnett Fine Furnishings
Cappel’s
Cheviot Westwood Community Association (CWCA)
Cincinnati Chiropractic
Daily Appliances
Inner Blessings Christian Books and Gifts
Kroner Dry Cleaners
Lisa Rose Alterations
Maribelle Cakery
N.Y.P.D. Pizza
Seibel’s Cabinets & Design
The Avenue Salon & Spa
Up, Up, & Away Comic Store
Vineyard West
West Side Venue