

DOWNTOWN AVOCA

2015 MARKET STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



DOWNTOWN AVOCA

AVOCA, IOWA

IN VIEW

Avoca, a Main Street Iowa Community, is exploring and pursuing exciting opportunities for the future of the community's traditional downtown business district.

Avoca Main Street spearheaded the downtown market analysis process to promote an in-depth understanding of local and regional market conditions and trends impacting the downtown district's current economic performance and opportunities for the future. Information and direction gained throughout the market analysis process provide a sound basis for local decision-making processes and strategies aimed at enhancing the Avoca downtown business district.

This summary report serves to highlight only a small sample of the knowledge and direction that can be synthesized from analysis of data collected during the market analysis process. Similarly, the accompanying implementation strategy is only a starting point for a more comprehensive slate of projects that is likely to emerge as local leaders and stakeholders work together and continue to study the market.

As Avoca Main Street moves forward, we will continue to involve partners, community leaders, business persons and residents in efforts to analyze and interpret the information in order to develop a complete understanding of the findings and results – and the implications for downtown. The process will “dig deep” into the results and their meanings and incorporate local knowledge into the analysis and interpretation of the study's findings. The process will serve to aid in the development and implementation of strategies that are both market-driven and intrinsic to our community's goals and aspirations for downtown Avoca.

Now, and in the future, Avoca Main Street and the entire community will be able to use these results for the betterment of Avoca. It will serve as a useful and flexible tool for business recruitment and retention, as well as remain a “living and breathing” document. It will be able to change along with the times and trends of the community, and remain very useful in aiding Avoca Main Street's enhancement of the downtown area.




Avoca Main Street

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Just off Interstate 80, Avoca is a progressive community that sits on the east side of Pottawattamie County. With the split of the West Nishnabotna River running along both sides of the community that started a colony in 1869, to later years as the railroad paved the way to more modern ways of life, Avoca has thick roots of history and cultural.

With a rich history of agricultural background, the roots of farming are still strong in Avoca with Ag retail and service businesses along with a one of a kind tractor museum. Interstate-80 services and the health industry are also important components to the local economy.

Avoca is home to excellent public services. A regional school district, MidAmerican Energy, the Iowa Department of Transportation, select County services, and the United States Post Office are located in Avoca. The City of Avoca also provides a full complement of recreational opportunities and other essential infrastructure to the public.

The Main Street District is located in the heart of the community and is also the traditional downtown area. The district houses a selection of traditional retailers, core service providers, and a selection of eating and drinking establishments.

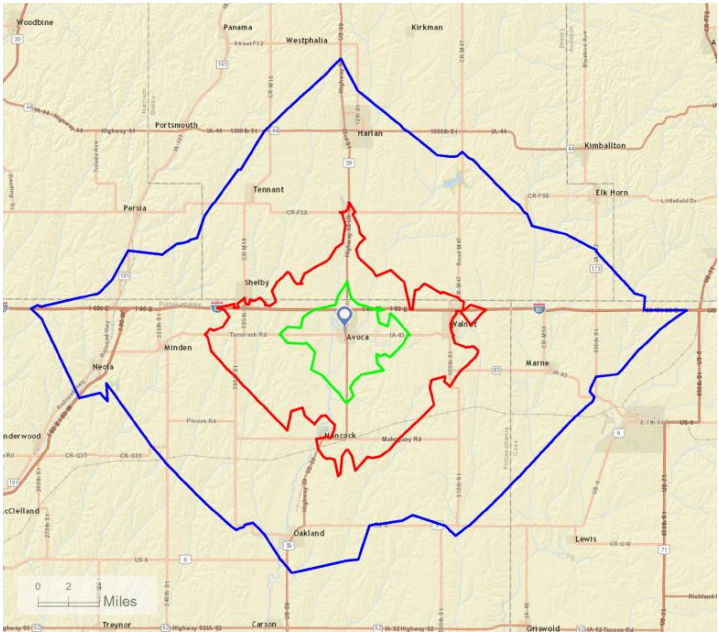
Improvements made to the Elm Street Town Center have been a priority. The new streetscape has given the community a complete and cohesive look with new awnings, signage and a clean look to the Main Street District. The streets are lined with light poles with hanging floral baskets, and music fills the air.

Avoca provides a good balance of interstate travel industry and a quaint rural community setting that provides for the basic needs of its citizens. Economic development for the town will always be a priority, with essential services being equally important.

We are working to attract both traditional businesses and high-tech companies. New business opportunities will also create opportunities for new families to become part of the Avoca community. These outcomes will produce a sustainable community for the future.

DOWNTOWN AVOCA DRIVE TIME MARKET

FAST FACTS



Population	5 MIN	10 MIN	20 MIN
2010 Census	1,633	2,851	15,255
2014 Estimate	1,628	2,829	15,100
2019 Projection	1,623	2,808	14,904
Change: 2014 – 2019	-0.3%	-0.7%	-1.3%

Households	5 MIN	10 MIN	20 MIN
2010 Census	715	1,244	6,370
2014 Estimate	718	1,245	6,366
2019 Projection	720	1,243	6,317
Change: 2014 – 2019	0.3%	-0.2%	-0.8%

Median HH Income	5 MIN	10 MIN	20 MIN
2014 Estimate	\$56,053	\$54,870	\$54,084
2019 Projection	\$63,387	\$62,389	\$62,166
Change: 2014 – 2019	13.1%	13.7%	14.9%

Source: Esri





DOWNTOWN MARKETING

Consumer rankings of media preferences demonstrate the strong presence of the local newspaper publication and the growing influence of the Internet and social media applications as a resource for news, for researching products and services, and for communicating with clients.

The Internet can be a particularly valuable resource for businesses because it provides the potential for businesses to expand their trade area well beyond local or regional geographies. Businesses with collectible, specialty, and custom merchandise lines, in particular, can use the Internet, and sites such as Amazon, eBay and Etsy, to market to the entire United States or even globally. Even traditional retailers and businesses carrying “staple” products are reaping benefits as, more and more, consumers use the Internet to “shop and compare” products and services, and then use it – in much the same way previous generations of consumers used the Yellow Pages – as a resource to find a local outlet or vendor where they can make their purchase.

Downtown Avoca’s promotion and collaborative marketing efforts should continue to consider how the Internet and various social media applications might be most effectively used to communicate with consumers and to further downtown promotional goals. The growing popularity of Facebook, Twitter and other social media applications is evident in consumer survey results that show 62.1% of all respondents selected Social Media and 20.5% selected Internet Websites as one of their top two sources for news and information.

Q: Of the following, which two (2) media and information sources do you most rely on for Avoca area news and information?

Consumers Responses	Percentage
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	62.1%
Newspapers	61.8%
Internet Website(s)	20.5%
Television	18.6%
Email Marketing and News Feeds	18.3%

Source: 2015 Downtown Avoca Consumer Surveys. Top five responses shown.



HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Consumer survey results show interest in potential downtown housing options. The findings could lend support for the rehabilitation of existing housing and the development of new, mixed-use concepts in Downtown Avoca.

Q: Would you consider living in Downtown Avoca?

Responses	
Yes	14.5%
Maybe	28.6%
I live downtown	8.1%

Source: 2015 Downtown Avoca Consumer Online Survey.

Those indicating they would consider living in the downtown expressed interest in a variety of housing styles, and in both owner- and renter-occupied units.

Q: What kind of housing in Downtown Avoca would you look for or consider?

Responses	
Apartment	41.2%
Loft	29.4%
Condo	36.3%
Townhouse	43.1%
Senior Housing	7.8%

Source: 2015 Downtown Avoca Consumer Online Survey. Multiple responses allowed.

Some of the best prospects for new downtown housing might be directed toward the development of units that are quite different from the current inventory of housing options available in the broader community – including styles that might take advantage of the unique dimensions, layouts and materials found in the upper levels of downtown commercial buildings to create distinguishable and even “funky” living and/or live/work spaces; and for higher-density mixed-use development at potential redevelopment sites in the downtown district and immediate surrounding area.



VALUES AND PRIORITIES

Consumer and business survey participants place a high priority on business expansion and recruitment efforts—including proposals for creating incentives for new and expanding businesses in the downtown area. Efforts to restore and preserve the downtown’s historic character and to stage additional festivals and special events in the downtown area are also viewed favorably by consumers and businesses alike.

Q: Would you place a high, moderate or low priority on possible downtown Avoca enhancement efforts to:

Consumers (C) and Businesses (B) Rating as a “High Priority”

Enhancement Efforts	(C)	(B)
Create incentives for new and expanding downtown businesses	56.4% (1)	52.4% (2)
Restore and preserve the downtown’s historic character	39.8% (2)	54.5% (1)
Stage additional festivals and special events in the downtown area	38.5% (3)	40.0% (3)
Improve the downtown’s streets, sidewalks, lighting, furnishings, green spaces, trails, etc.	35.8% (4)	21.7% (5)
Improve and/or create more housing in the downtown area	20.9% (5)	34.8% (4)

Source: 2015 Downtown Avoca Consumer and Business Surveys.

Input regarding priorities for the downtown district generally aligns with suggestions offered by consumer and business survey respondents when asked, “What is the first thing you would do to improve Downtown Avoca?” Economic restructuring initiatives, dominated by business recruitment, business enhancement and efforts to diversify the business mix, ranked highly, followed closely by design-oriented subjects and topics.

Consumers and businesses surveyed overwhelmingly identified features associated with the downtown’s general appearance, environment, character and history as the things they love most or would never change, showing a great affection for the small town atmosphere and friendly nature of downtown.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Retail Targets

Market research findings provide general direction for various retail business types and merchandise lines that could be prime candidates and appropriate for expansion and recruitment in Downtown Avoca. The implementation of economic development strategies is part of a comprehensive, long-term enhancement program that emphasizes business retention efforts and a series of initiatives that will make the downtown an even more attractive place to do business and invest.

Business types and lines that might be considered primary targets and candidates for expansion and recruitment, based on the existing business mix, trends in the marketplace, consumer and business survey findings and analysis of Esri retail data include:

- ▶ **Food Services and Drinking Places**
 - Full-Service Restaurants
 - Coffee Shops and Tea Rooms
 - Desserts and Sweets
- ▶ **Recreation and Entertainment**
 - Music, Film & Performances
 - Fitness Centers and Recreational Sports
- ▶ **Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores**
 - Clothing Stores
 - Shoe Stores
 - Family Clothing

The targets listed above serve as a starting point. Downtown Avoca stakeholders must infuse local knowledge and expertise into the process of analyzing market information contained in this study to further develop profiles for business types and uses which are a good fit for Downtown Avoca and which appear to have the very best chance to succeed.

Office and Service Uses

Office and services uses in Downtown Avoca already play an important role in generating consistent traffic to support the district’s economy and sense of vitality. Predictably, office and service uses will continue to be important to downtown in the future. These uses should continue to be encouraged to locate within the downtown district and, where appropriate and applicable, Avoca Main Street and community development partners should work to locate these uses in buildings and spaces that are conducive to creating and maintaining a strong sense of retail vibrancy throughout the district.




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