



DOWNTOWN OSKALOOSA

2015 MARKET STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DOWNTOWN OSKALOOSA

OSKALOOSA, IOWA

IN VIEW

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

Oskaloosa 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 will provide a sound basis for local decision-making processes and strategies aimed at enhancing the Oskaloosa downtown business district.

For Oskaloosa Main Street and the entire community, this Market Study will launch another phase of downtown development. The findings will also strengthen the current branding process that is a major priority in our community.

This summary report serves to highlight only a small sample of the data to analyze. Likewise, the implementation steps are only a starting point for future initiatives.

The Market Analysis has helped us to understand our community better. We have learned that

- We are a regional shopping district and destination;
- Our County Courthouse and the service businesses surrounding it draw many customers daily to our downtown;
- There is potential demand for additional upper story housing in the Main Street District;
- Area residents want to see more dining, shopping, and events downtown;
- The historical aspects and architectural significance of the downtown structures should be an important piece to redevelopment efforts;
- ESRI profiles describe our area as an "outdoor living" center; and
- The 20-minute drive time area should be the focus for our marketing efforts.

The current market analysis is another important step in our ongoing effort to understand our community. Oskaloosa will use the results of these surveys to recruit and retain businesses now and in the future.



Oskaloosa Main Street

124 N. Market Street
Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577

Telephone: (641)672-2591

khafner@oacd.org

www.oskalosamainstreet.org





Oskaloosa is a diverse, micropolitan community and Mahaska County Seat that offers big-city amenities while preserving that small town feel. It's a "hot-spot" for entrepreneurs, thanks to public and private leaders who work to build strong infrastructure, communication, and transportation systems and have a vision of sustainable growth. It's a place businesses and workers want to call home. Our historic downtown district is the hub for live music, shopping, and dining. A high-speed fiber optic system delivers world-class communications solutions that helps make the world our market place.

We're a college town full of diverse ideas and fresh thinking. Oskaloosa is home to William Penn University and Indian Hills Community College. The Oskaloosa Community School District and Oskaloosa Christian School have growing enrollments and provide top-notch education.

A diverse economy has long been a recipe for success in Oskaloosa. We're home to top manufacturers like CLOW Valve Company, Musco Sports Lighting, and Oskaloosa Food Products. Cargill Corn Milling, located nine miles south, is the second largest Cargill plant in the world. Pella Corp. and Vermeer, located 15 miles west, are among the largest employers in the area. Mahaska Health Partnership recently completed a \$25M expansion, and Hospice Serenity House was constructed in 2010 to serve area families.

We're a regional employment and retail hub, drawing shoppers from a 25-mile radius. Some of Oskaloosa's best shopping resides in its downtown area, with more than 30 boutiques, specialty shops, restaurants, and service businesses. A nearby downtown mall provides a mix of national stores as well as local favorites.

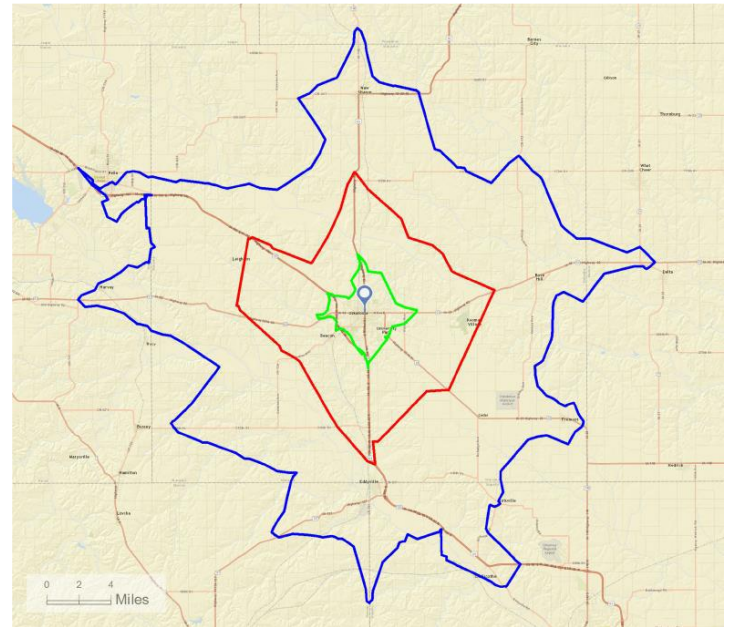
For dining, Oskaloosa has an outsized selection for a small town. Chain restaurants and fast food are easily available, while locally-owned dining options are available throughout the town.

The downtown has been carefully restored, setting the tone for community pride and providing the backbone of a bustling economy. The district is on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of Iowa's longest tenured Main Street Communities, and is a designated Cultural & Entertainment District.

Throughout the year you can find events in the town square. Whether you are into live music or art, the square has an event for you. From the city band playing live concerts every Thursday night to the Friday after Five concerts during May and June, music fills the square. Don't miss your chance to participate in the Christmas parade, Sweet Corn Serenade, or Art on the Square.

DOWNTOWN OSKALOOSA DRIVE TIME MARKET

FAST FACTS



Population	5 MIN	10 MIN	20 MIN
2010 Census	12,445	15,262	23,349
2014 Estimate	12,428	15,329	23,418
2019 Projection	12,386	15,349	23,446
Change: 2014 – 2019	-0.3%	0.1%	0.1%

Households	5 MIN	10 MIN	20 MIN
2010 Census	5,086	6,193	9,413
2014 Estimate	5,083	6,237	9,480
2019 Projection	5,065	6,252	9,508
Change: 2014 – 2019	-0.4%	0.2%	0.3%

Median HH Income	5 MIN	10 MIN	20 MIN
2014 Estimate	\$42,364	\$44,983	\$48,264
2019 Projection	\$50,770	\$52,896	\$55,123
Change: 2014 – 2019	19.8%	17.6%	14.2%

Source: Esri



DOWNTOWN MARKETING

Consumer rankings of media preferences demonstrate the exceptionally strong presence of Oskaloosa News, a local internet based community journalism source with a strong social media presence. Social media had a strong influence on the local shoppers. While much of the country is just now beginning to see the potential benefits of truly high-speed internet service, Oskaloosans have had this benefit for decades via a fiber-to-home available throughout the community.

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.”

Downtown Oskaloosa’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 59.4% of all respondents selected Social Media and 52.6% selected Oskaloosa News as one of their top two sources for news and information.

The Downtown Oskaloosa branding process should continue to be developed and consistently deployed across a variety of medium to enhance further awareness and to create business connections to the Oskaloosa brand.

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

Consumers Responses	Percentage
Social Media	59.4%
Oskaloosa News	52.6%
Oskaloosa Herald	30.0%
Radio	21.2%
Internet Website(s)	14.0%

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



HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Consumer survey results show interest in potential downtown housing options. With downtown housing continuing to rise across the country, Oskaloosa has a chance at making downtown living something very attractive for people of all ages – from the young professional who just moved to town, to the older couple looking to ditch the yard and live closer to the active downtown. Iowa’s property tax laws also greatly favor upper story housing and makes remodeling upper story units a sound investment for downtown property owners.

Q: Would you consider living in Downtown Oskaloosa?

Responses	
Yes	9.2%
Maybe	16.8%
I live downtown	7.9%

Source: 2015 Downtown Oskaloosa 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 Oskaloosa would you look for or consider?

Responses	
Loft	61.5%
Apartment	37.5%
Condo	33.7%
Townhouse	32.7%
Senior Housing	10.7%

Source: 2015 Downtown Oskaloosa 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. Oskaloosa 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. It only takes one cool apartment to bring in the hipster crowd.





VALUES AND PRIORITIES

Consumer and business survey participants place a high priority on creating incentives for new businesses and to help current businesses expand. Efforts to stage additional festivals and special events in the downtown area are also viewed favorably by consumers and businesses alike. Both groups also want to see a concerted effort to restore and preserve the downtown’s historic character, with business owners providing a higher ranking.

Q: Would you place a high, moderate or low priority on possible downtown Oskaloosa 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	73.8% (1)	65.9% (1)
Stage additional festivals and special events in the downtown area	48.1% (2)	48.8% (3)
Restore and preserve the downtown’s historic character	46.6% (3)	53.7% (2)
Improve the downtown’s streets, sidewalks, lighting, furnishings, green spaces, trails, etc.	40.0% (4)	46.3% (4)
Improve and/or create more housing in the downtown area	19.3% (5)	29.3% (5)

Source: 2015 Downtown Oskaloosa 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 Oskaloosa?” Add/recruit new businesses ranked first, followed by parking and transportation, and improving building and appearances.

Consumers considered the history and the historic character of the buildings the most loved feature about the Downtown. Businesses identified the special features and attractions as an area that they would never change in downtown. The responses could be affected by the rebranding efforts started in 2015.



BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Market research findings provide direction for economic development strategies implemented as part of a comprehensive, long-term 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.

Retail Targets

Retail categories 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
 - Limited-Service Eating Places
 - Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)
- ▶ **Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores**
 - Clothing Stores

Recreation and Entertainment

With a picturesque Downtown, Oskaloosa has the potential to draw in large crowds for recreation and entertainment. Oskaloosa Main Street host several large gatherings, including Friday After Five, Sweet Corn Serenade, and Art on the Square. Oskaloosa is continually looking for more programming downtown especially after the recommendations from the new branding process.

Office and Service Uses

Office and services uses in Downtown Oskaloosa already play an important role in generating consistent traffic to support the district’s economy and sense of vitality. These uses should continue to be encouraged to locate within the downtown district and, where possible, to locate in buildings and spaces that are conducive to creating and maintaining a strong sense of retail vibrancy throughout the district.



For Information Contact

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