

Mineral Point, Wisconsin



Quick Facts

Population: **2,494** Housing Units: **1,304** Median Household Income: **\$52,788** Median Age: **43.8**

The story of Mineral Point is the story of Wisconsin. In 1827, settlers convened to the area to mine lead ore. By 1829, the growing population demanded the creation of Iowa County, an area that included all of the lead mining communities in the region, within the Michigan Territory. In 1836, Mineral Point was chosen as the site for the inauguration of the first Wisconsin Territorial governor, Henry Dodge and John S. Horner, secretary. The Great Seal of Wisconsin Territory features mining elements referencing Mineral Point's and the territory's heritage.

Mining continued to be a major focus, first lead then zinc oxide. By 1891, Mineral Point Zinc was the largest such operation in the United States. By the 1920s, the industry was closing down representing the end of an era. The Cornish settlers who moved to the area built magnificent architecture using local stone and timber. As the community transitioned from a mining settlement to an agricultural community, the downtown thrived with civic institutions, retail, hotels, restaurants, and an opera house.

Like many small rural communities, as changes in technology transformed the agricultural industry and world economy, the local economy transitioned as well. Mineral Point capitalized on its historic architecture and



Downtown Mineral Point

Lessons for Success

1. Leverage Community Strengths
2. Encourage Collaboration Between Community Organizations
3. Work with Neighboring Communities
4. Create and Implement an Effective Outreach and Marketing Strategy
5. Preserve Historic Buildings and Encourage the Arts
6. Support Downtown Retail Development

rich heritage to establish itself as a tourist destination for art, culture, and history.



Galleries, Shops, and Cafes Along Commerce Street

What Makes Mineral Point Successful?

Leveraging Community Strengths

Mineral Point community leaders identified several of the city's key assets that help contribute to the community's success in the downtown area and community wide:

- **A thriving arts community;** Numerous artists make Mineral Point both their home and place of work.
- **Unique shopping;** Mineral Point captures retail dollars both from community residents and visitors to the area by offering unique niche products unavailable in large retailers.
- **Historic preservation and intact architecture;** Preservation efforts and appreciation for original architecture add to the unique sense of place in Mineral Point.
- **Picturesque regional landscape;** The bucolic drift-less landscape in which Mineral Point is located provides a significant asset as a recreational and tourism draw.
- **Engaged and involved residents;** Mineral Point residents are passionate about their community and are willing to be involved in civic life. Community resident efforts add to the quality of life in Mineral Point.
- **Effective Marketing;** A significant factor in Mineral Point's success are marketing efforts which increase tourism to the area and subsequently capture retail dollars which circulate in the local economy.



Mineral Point Artist at Work

Involved Organizations and Collaboration

Mineral Point community leaders identify several key groups who collaborate in numerous ways to improve and maintain the quality of the city and the quality of life for community residents. Mineral Point Schools, University of Wisconsin Extension, area major employers, area chambers of commerce, the regional planning commission, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, the University of Wisconsin Platteville Arts Board, and the Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development Council all play key roles in programs and initiatives in Mineral Point. A broad variety of collaborators with unique areas of expertise and influence leads to effective partnerships and collaborative efforts.

Community leaders also mentioned that local leadership capacity has been enhanced by the participation of local residents and elected officials in the Community Leadership Alliance of Southwest Wisconsin. This University of Wisconsin Extension program's mission is "to develop a base of informed and motivated community-minded leaders."

Working with Neighboring Communities

Regional cooperation with neighboring communities emerged as a key theme in Mineral Point. Working with neighboring communities presents the opportunity for costs savings, to create synergies, and to think and act regionally. Examples of effective collaboration between Mineral Point and neighboring communities include:

- The partnering of Mineral Point and Dodgeville school athletic teams.
- Joint Mineral Point and Dodgeville Chamber of Commerce Events.
- Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grants including: Cycle Southwest Wisconsin and Europe in Your Backyard.
- Fall Art Tour including the communities of Mineral Point, Baraboo, Spring Green, and Dodgeville.

Effective Outreach and Community Marketing Efforts

City leaders mentioned that multiple venues and forms of media are used to reach the public regarding plans that affect the community's downtown. The weekly chamber newsletter, local newspaper, and City Hall emails are all used as communication tools. Further, city officials use social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest to communicate with local residents.

Outreach efforts extend beyond just reaching and informing local residents; the city has a robust and varied marketing strategy. The community targets potential tourists from the rest of Wisconsin, northern Illinois, eastern Iowa, and the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Around 25,000 annual visitor guides highlighting Mineral Point are distributed throughout Wisconsin. Other print marketing avenues include regional theater playbills, and Wisconsin Department of Tourism publications. The community is promoted on public radio stations in Wisconsin, Iowa, and in the Chicago Market. Further, city

leaders appear monthly in regional commercial radio interviews. Community leaders also mentioned the importance of the municipal website and targeted online advertising as effective vehicles for marketing the community.

Historic Preservation and the Arts

Mineral Point leaders and community members are active in historic preservation efforts, and historic building stock is seen as one of the community's most vital cultural amenities. The historic preservation and restoration efforts have been carried out both by private individuals as well as the City. City funded restoration and preservation efforts have included city hall, the library, and the opera house. Preserving the architectural integrity of the historic downtown buildings enhances both the aesthetics and the sense of place for downtown Mineral Point. Specifically, the Pendarvis Historic Site, Opera House, Orchard Lawn, Shake Rag Alley Center for Arts, and the Public Library and Archives are examples of important historic buildings in Mineral Point. Mineral Point was the first city in Wisconsin to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Pendarvis House Historic Site

Resilient Downtowns - Mineral Point, WI

In addition to well preserved and restored historic building stock, the community celebrates the arts and community leaders and residents see Mineral Point as an arts community. In addition to the standard festivals and celebrations including the County Fair and Fourth of July celebration, the community is host to four annual Gallery Nights, the Cornish Festival, and the Fall Art Tour. These festivals provide entertainment not only for local residents, but draw tourists from outside of the area.



Adaptive Reuse of Historic Structures as Part of Shake Rag Alley Center for Arts Campus

Strong Downtown Retail Environment

Mineral Point community leaders emphasized that there are a wide variety of retail options in the downtown. Further, community leaders recognize that Mineral Point is somewhat unique being a community of 2,500 people with a nearly fully occupied downtown that covers six blocks. This has been possible because the community has been intentional about limiting sprawl development and working to keep downtown appropriate businesses located in the downtown. The community has embraced mixed-use development and varied land uses in the downtown area which increases the number of people downtown, and subsequently increases retail activity.

The availability of revolving loan funds and the marketing efforts of the Chamber of Commerce were also mentioned as key elements contributing to Mineral Point's healthy downtown retail environment. Finally, city leaders and the business community have encouraged the development of locally owned business as opposed to franchises or big box stores. This approach of promoting locally owned businesses can encourage a greater volume of retail dollars staying in the community and cycling through the local economy than might occur with the same expenditures at a franchise or big box. Further, locally owned businesses provide variety and contribute to a unique sense of place.



Historic Architecture and Whimsy Define Mineral Point's Downtown

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