



# LOVING OUR CITY

SENIOR THESIS PROJECT

Alissa Cook  
Research & Process  
Spring 2020

# **TOPIC SELECTION & QUESTION DEVELOPMENT**

## Topic Selection

Every time I worked on gathering ideas for this project, I kept finding things that related back to people and their relationship with their world immediately around them.

The original inspiration came last semester. I started to notice more frequently that people (residents and non-residents) dismissing Ohio. While self-deprecating humor is quite common, I became curious as to why people didn't love the places that they lived. Since then, and especially when I travel, I started to notice the things that make places unique and worth loving. While places like New York and Los Angeles are glamorous and highly regarded, not everyone wants to live there.

I wanted to explore why people migrate to where they live. In addition, does the level of civic engagement correlate with their pride in their chosen community? How can cities position themselves to fulfill the needs of their residents? How are cities adapting and becoming the best new places to live? How can people find the place they belong? **What makes a place special?**

## Analyzing the Problem

### What's the problem?

Getting people to love where they are!

Getting to know their city better

People who move away can have a hard time  
feeling like they belong in a new city

There is overlooked value in shopping local/  
embracing local food/items/culture

### Interests:

City Planning

Programming

Individualization/Self-expression of place

### Location:

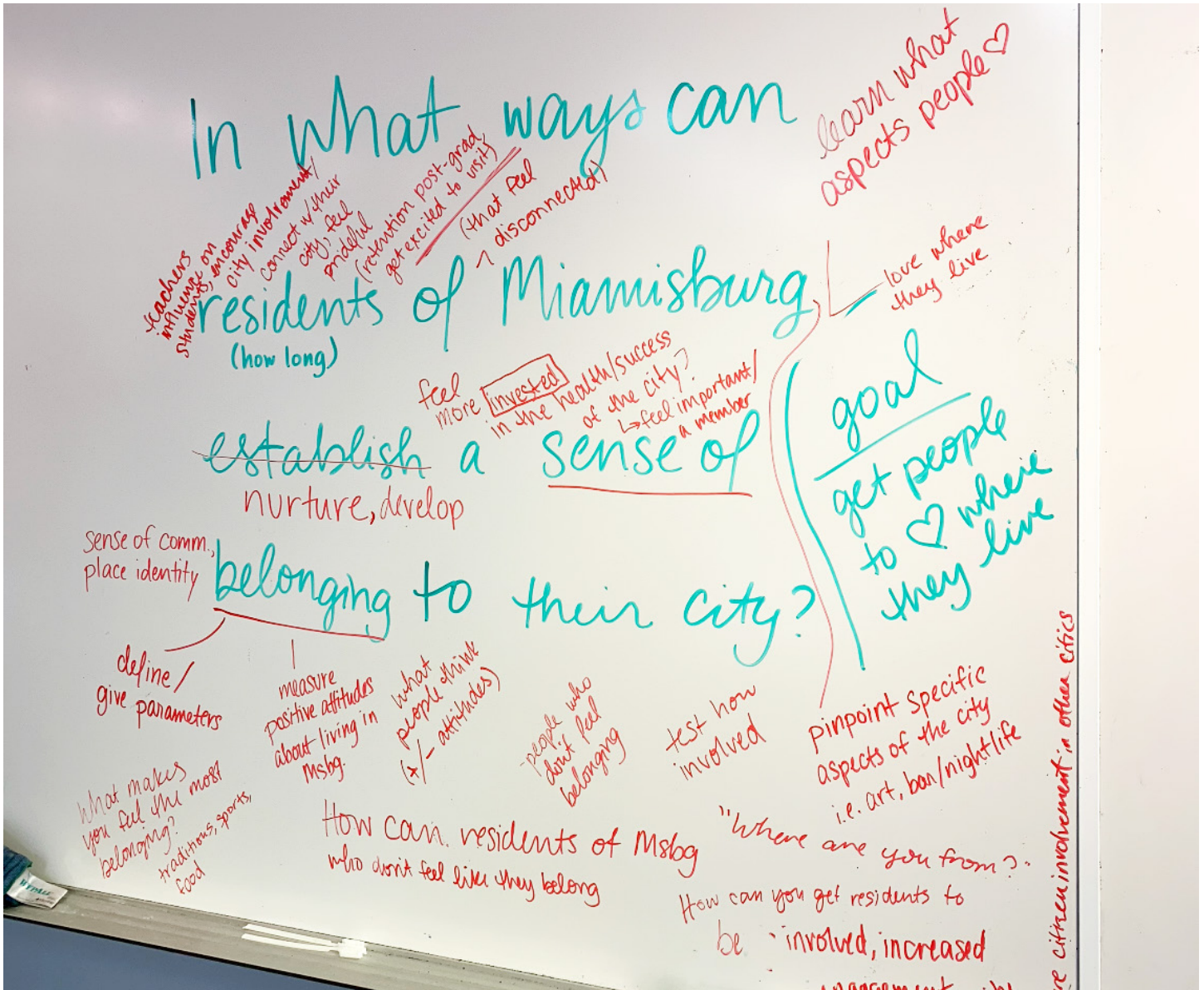
Miamisburg, OH

Miamisburg is my hometown, where I have  
lived my whole life until leaving for college.

This existing knowledge has been very  
helpful in navigating colloquial norms and  
sets a framework for the history of the city.



# Research Question Collaboration



# RESEARCH METHODS

## Research Methods

### **Surveys**

I created a survey to measure resident involvement and overall feelings. I conducted a survey over the course of one week using Facebook as the primary distribution. These surveys revealed a lot of trends that allowed me to analyze the city based on relatively large amount of people - nearly 1.5% of the population.

### **Observations**

On March 6, I visited a handful of local shops in downtown Miamisburg. I talked casually with business owners and learned the history of their business as well as things they liked and don't like about the city. That night, I attended the Miamisburg Merchants Association Fundraiser and talked to community members there. Overall, people like the direction the city is going.

### **Interviews**

I conducted interviews with city officials, business owners, and residents in Miamisburg. Doug Sorrell, a resident of 66-years who told me his lifetime involvement with the city, starting with becoming student body president in 1968. I also talked with Katie Frank, who is the Community Development Director, about ensuring my deliverables are plausible. I later met with Michelle Collins, the mayor and a realtor in Miamisburg.

## Survey Results

My survey results were overwhelmingly positive. Nearly all were happy with living in Miamisburg, with 87% indicating a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the happiest. Over 99% of survey takers indicated a 3, 4, or 5 – which is great news for the city. When given the opportunity to say anything about the city, the responses were 84% positive. I asked residents to list their involvement and favorite things about Miamisburg in free written responses. People spend their time engaged by shopping and eating local as well as school and sports. When asked to list what they loved about Miamisburg, the people and the atmosphere huge aspect that keeps people coming back.

### **280 Responses**

Happiness (87%)

Very Positive (84%)

Involvement: Eat Local (129), Schools (192), Parks and Trails (94), Community Outings (133)

What People Love: People/Community (95), Small Town Atmosphere (65) Downtown Area (73)



## Observations

On March 6, 2020, I traveled to Miamisburg, OH and informally interviewed business owners on Main Street. I was also invited to the Monte Carlo Fundraiser for the Miamisburg Merchants Association - which gave me access to talk to many involved residents.





## Interviews



### **Doug Sorrell**

Doug Sorrell, a long-time resident/activist. He served on City Council and his parents were business owners downtown. He shared his career path along with the city's history. As a City Councilman, he shaped Miamisburg to be what it is today.



### **Katie Frank**

Katie Frank, the Downtown Development Director. She shared some of the city's initiatives and ways they aimed to increase engagement among residents.



### **Michelle Collins**

Michelle Collins, Miamisburg mayor and realtor. I walked her through my solution near the end of the project. Her perspective as both the mayor and a realtor validated the concept and ensured its plausibility.

# Visual Research



# Miamisburg Branding

# Nearby Branding



# City Branding Inspiration



## Pivot and Welcome Home Survey

The results from the first survey were overwhelmingly positive. Generally speaking, the residents of Miamisburg loved where they live. I decided to shift the focus to new residents and easing their transition to a new city.

I conducted a second survey - this time open to anyone who had relocated at any point in their life. My goal was to understand the successes and challenges that come about with a move. I was able to leverage access to a group of young professionals, who make up a majority of the 68 results. I learned about what they were disappointed to leave, and how they acclimated to their new town.

While most moved for a job opportunity, people were looking for three main things in their new cities; friends, local restaurants, and parks. Many respondents were looking for some sort of welcome to the city with information they needed to acclimate. Some had wished they had an overall guide to the city or newsletter. Others just wanted to know what day was their trash day.



# DESIGN ITERATIONS

# WELCOME PACKAGE

Delivered by neighbor or volunteers

- Welcome Book
- Coupon Book
- “Swag” from Local Businesses
  - Stickers, vouchers, etc.
- Reusable grocery bag

## WELCOME BOOKLET

Welcome/Table of Contents

Introduction (*interactive*)

City History (important to current residents)

Mosaic Walking Tour (*interactive*)

First Year Walkthrough

Divided into seasons; *interactive components*

Local Business Highlights (6)

Business Owner Highlights (2)

Club/Organization Information (*interactive*)

Resources

## COUPON BOOK

Cover

Table of Contents

Coupons to 24 local businesses frequented by residents

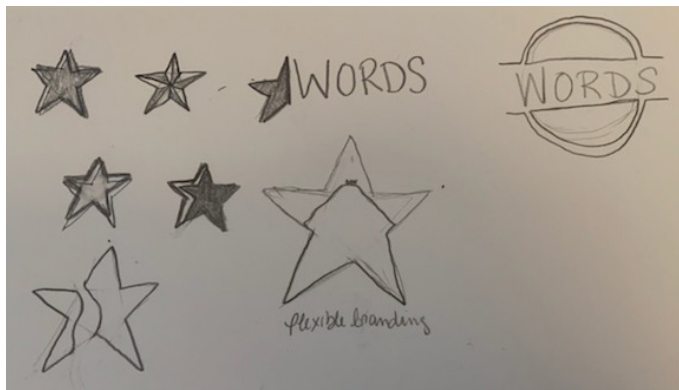
# Miamisburg Visual Moodboards



## LOVING OUR CITY MIAMISBURG, OH

*A SUBTITLE THAT RESONATES WITH AUDIENCE*

Copy that speaks to the awesome adventure that the user will take part in as they explore Miamisburg!



# Design Iteration - Skyline Illustration

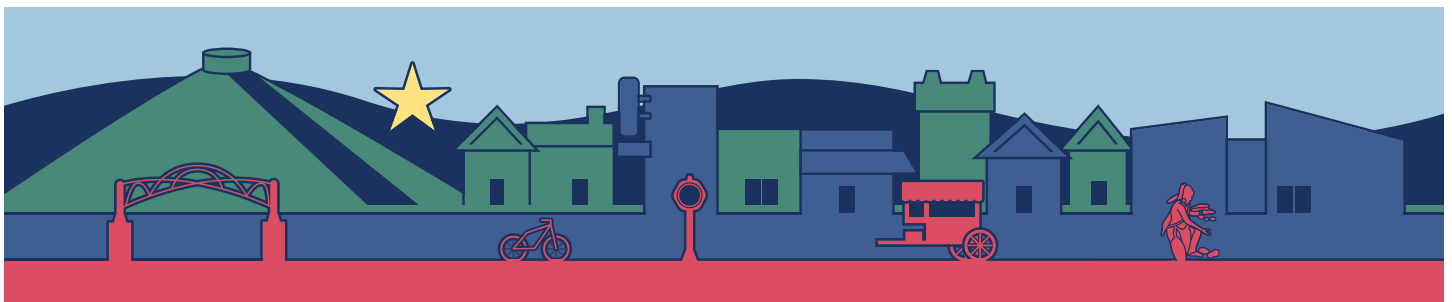
Sketch



Two-Color Iteration



Final Design



# Design Iterations - Welcome Book

## Interactive Introduction Page

### INTRODUCE YOURSELF

WHERE DID YOU JOIN US FROM?

WHAT IS YOUR NEW ADDRESS?

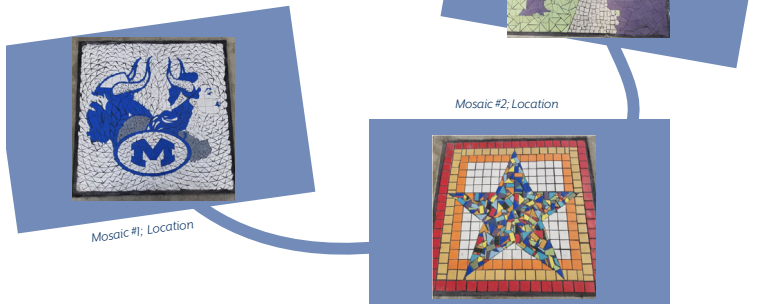
WHO IS LIVING IN NEW HOUSE?

ICONS OF PEOPLE, PETS, AND HOME

## Mosaic Walking Tour

### MOSAIC WALKING TOUR

Copy that speaks to the awesome history to explore in Miamisburg! Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Fusce eleifend sodales nisi vel aliquam. Proin malesuada, enim et tincidunt iaculis, diam nulla viverra purus, ut tempor mi odio quis dui. Nullam pulvinar porta mauris vitae lobortis. Proin at erat lobortis, mattis libero sed, ornare elit.



## Local Business Highlights

### LOCAL BUSINESSES



#### HAMBURGER WAGON

Copy that speaks to the awesome business that the user will take part in as they explore Miamisburg! Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Fusce eleifend sodales nisi vel aliquam. Proin malesuada, enim et tincidunt iaculis, diam nulla viverra purus, ut tempor mi odio quis dui. Nullam pulvinar porta mauris vitae lobortis.



#### HAMBURGER WAGON

Copy that speaks to the awesome business that the user will take part in as they explore Miamisburg! Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Fusce eleifend sodales nisi vel aliquam. Proin malesuada, enim et tincidunt iaculis, diam nulla viverra purus, ut tempor mi odio quis dui. Nullam pulvinar porta mauris vitae lobortis.



#### HAMBURGER WAGON

Copy that speaks to the awesome business that the user will take part in as they explore Miamisburg! Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Fusce eleifend sodales nisi vel aliquam. Proin malesuada, enim et tincidunt iaculis, diam nulla viverra purus, ut tempor mi odio quis dui. Nullam pulvinar porta mauris vitae lobortis.

# Design Iteration - Coupon Book

Cover



Table of Contents

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Dips	Fox Motors	Mound Golf Course
A Taste of Wine	Grandpa Joe's Candy Shop	Pappa's Pizza Palac
American Health & Fitness	Hamburger Wagon	Plaza Theatre
Bear Creek Donuts	Koffee Kup	Ron's Pizza House
Bennett's Publical Family Sports	Quiky Star Brewery	Spoonful
Big Axe Spice	M & Co.	Star City Brewing Cc
Blush & Grey Boutique	Miamisburg Art Gallery	Sycamore Trails Aqt
Bullwinkle's Top Hat Bistro	Miamisburg Appliance	TJ Chumps
Classic Stitch	Miamisburg Dairy Queen	Urban Loft Salon ar
Curious Styles & Coffee Shop	Miamisburg Historical Society	
Dabble Creative Studio	Mz Pickles	

Business Template

## BUSINESS NAME

123 Main Street

(937)555-5555

website.com

Our business is summarized here? Get your essential items at this store. Lorem Ipsum text that will fill this space. Maybe 1-2 sentences to learn about the business.

### THIS IS A DEAL!

Get everything free with purchase of nothing. One time offer, get it while it lasts.



**FINAL DESIGN OUTCOMES**



## Welcome Kit

New residents are welcomed to the neighborhood with a reusable tote filled with local goodies.





## Welcome Book

The cover illustration of the *Loving Our City* Welcome Book introducing new residents to their unique town.





Local history is important to a large number of long-time residents. As such, the book begins with an abbreviated history of the city.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

### ORIGINAL SETTLEMENT

The first settlers in this area were the Adena. They built a series of earthworks between three and ten feet high and fifty feet wide at the base, which enclosed their village, the site which now comprises downtown Miamisburg. Centuries later, the valley between the Great and Little Miami Rivers was the hunting grounds for the Miami Indians, a tribe of the Miami Confederation. Their villages were located on the west side of the river, a short distance north of town.

On February 20, 1818, Drs. John and Peter Treon, Emanuel Gebhart and Jacob Kercher, offered for sale ninety lots on the East bank of the river. Thus Miamisburg came into existence, the only city by that name in the world. In the ensuing years Miamisburg grew and prospered. Transportation was a key to development with good access provided by the river, the Miami-Erie Canal, the railroads and, later, the highways.

### THE STAR CITY

Zachariah Hole was a minister who east of Mad River Road on Whipp Road. There were four or five log cabins - one was a church. Zachariah rode horseback down to the Great Miami River where Bear Creek empties into the Miami River and met the chief of the Miami Indians and the medicine man. The three sat at a campfire and the medicine man asked 'what will we call the new settlement?' The chief looked up to the sky and saw seven stars, the seven sisters. The medicine man said, 'it be Star Settlement.'



Mound



Civic Center



Entrance to Downtown

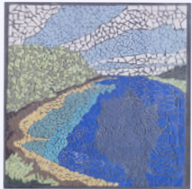


Modes of Transportation

The Mosaic Walking Tour guides new residents around the downtown installation celebrating the Bicentennial (2018).

## MOSAIC WALKING TOUR

While strolling through downtown be sure to do the Mosaic Walking Trail featuring 6 unique mosaics created by Mosaic Institute. Multiple volunteers and community members placed individual mosaic tiles into the pieces! Approximate walk time is 12 minutes. Funded in part by the Ohio Arts Council, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.



River

Miamisburg has a rich history with the Great Miami River and former Miami-Erie Canal.



Market Square

Once the community's hub for commerce, Market Square has now become an icon feature in the heart of downtown.



Bicentennial 2018

Founded in 1818, Miamisburg has weathered 200 years of change and continues to thrive.

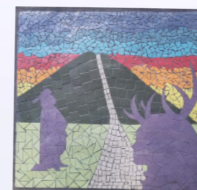
### Did You Know?

There is a star hidden in each of the mosaic murals. See if you can find all 6!



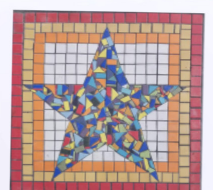
Vikings

Viking pride stays strong in the community as the Miamisburg Schools' mascot.



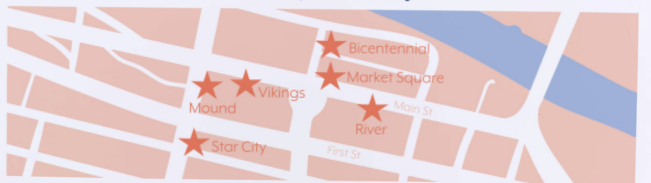
Mound

One of the two largest conical mounds in eastern North America, the Mound stands tall as a symbol of American Indian heritage.



Star City

Legend surrounds the true meaning of Miamisburg's nickname "Star City."





The next section guides new residents through the annual events that happen in the city - all of which are local favorites!



The summer months are the most active in terms of community events. The spread highlights four of the most popular.

## SUMMER

### ROCKIN' GREEN TOMATO FESTIVAL

The Rockin' Green Tomato Festival is a hit for the entire family. Events and entertainment performed live outside in Riverfront Park next to Ron's Pizza in Downtown Miamisburg! Come join us for a two days filled with Beer and Food Vendors, Craft Vendors, Contests, Cornhole Tournament and some great FREE Live Rock 'n' Roll Music.

### STAR CITY CONCERT SERIES

The City of Miamisburg is excited to announce the 2019 Star City Concert Series. Enjoy free music every Sunday evening beginning June 9 through Aug. 25 in Riverfront Park. Don't forget to bring a lawn chair or blanket to enjoy this traditional summer pastime. All concerts begin at 7 pm.

### HALFWAY TO CHRISTMAS HALF-MARATHON

It's the most wonderful time of the year again this July! Celebrate Santa and his elves, Christmas trees, lights, cookies & more as you run through Christmas themed music, decorations, costumes and more! Plus ornament finisher medals, Christmas cookies, festive aid stations, tree lighting and pictures with Santa! You can never have too much Christmas, and so come join us for a jolly good time this summer. We have races for all ages and abilities; beginners welcome!

### RIVERBLAST & FIREWORKS

Enjoy an evening of fun for the whole family. Enjoy entertainment, live music, FIREWORKS and more. Children's entertainment includes giant inflatable play zone, face painting, crafts, caricature artists, puppet shows and games.



Rockin' Green Tomato Festival



Star City Concert Series



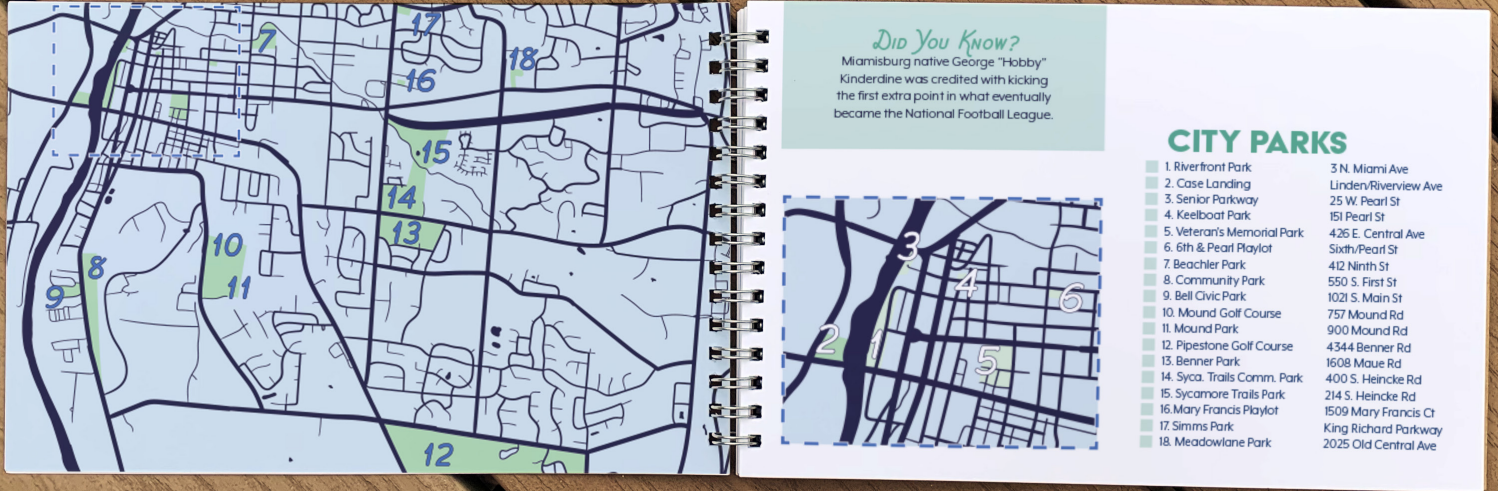
Halfway to Christmas Marathon



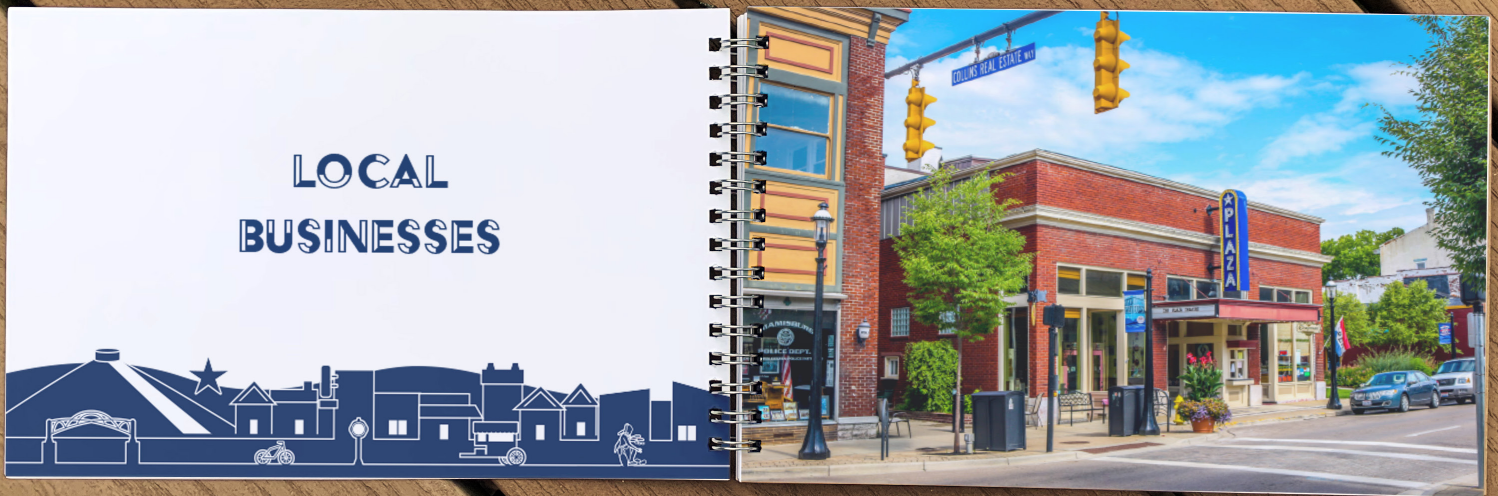
River Blast & Fireworks



Outdoor parks are scattered all over the city of Miamisburg. New residents can check off each park after visiting.



Local businesses add flavor to the town. This next section gives a spotlight to some top restaurants and shops in town.





Hamburger Wagon is a 107-year old tradition. This page allows new residents to record their first order at the wagon.

## HAMBURGER WAGON

Miamisburg was virtually under water during the infamous Great Flood of 1915. The Red Cross set up a tent city for the refugees at the top of Mound Hill. Sherman "Cocky" Porter, a Miamisburg resident, volunteered to help provide food for the flood victims and relief workers. As the cold March winds blew through the camp, Porter knew that whatever food was to be provided needed to be warm, nutritious and readily available in large quantities. Porter had just the right answer. Utilizing a favorite family recipe, Porter began serving up hot, tasty hamburgers to everyone in the camp for many days. These sandwiches were a huge hit and were extremely popular throughout the community.

As time went by, the floodwaters receded, the tent city closed and life in Miamisburg returned to normal. However, something was missing! Miamisburg residents loved the little "Porter Burgers" so much that nary a day went by without a request to Porter to cook up a few more of his burgers. With demand swelling, Sherman Porter finally agreed to start selling his secret recipe burgers on Saturdays. The burgers were so popular it soon became a full time endeavor and these tasty treats have been a Miamisburg institution ever since.



We ORDERED...

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### ORDER LIKE A LOCAL

Slider-style burgers are made-to-order with pickle, onions, salt and pepper. Bagged chips and canned drinks are available as well. Residents typically order 2-3 sliders, chips and a drink.



Clubs and interests groups create a sense of belonging. New residents can find their passion here.

## LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS



**AMERICAN LEGION**  
35 N Main St  
(937) 866-5493



**CHURCHES**  
Visit church websites for more information.



**ART GALLERY**  
16 N Main St  
(937) 866-3891



**CLASSES**  
305 E. Central Ave  
(937) 866-8999



**ATHLETICS**  
1860 Bevo Rd  
(937) 866-0771



**CITY COUNCIL**  
10 N 1st St  
(937) 866-3303



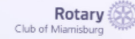
**BOOSTERS CLUB**  
vikingboosters.com



**CITY SCHOOL**  
540 E. Park Ave  
(937) 866-3381



**EAGLES**  
69 N Main S  
(937) 859-4442



**ROTARY CLUB**  
miamisburgrotary.org



**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
35 South Fifth St  
(937) 859-5000



**SCHOOL PTO**  
540 E. Park Ave  
(937) 866-3381



**MOYBSA**  
2001 Dayton Cincinnati Pike  
(937) 901-8502



**STAR CITY BAND**  
900 Alex Rd  
(937) 847-9012



**THE MOOSE**  
2110 E Central Ave  
(937) 866-8848

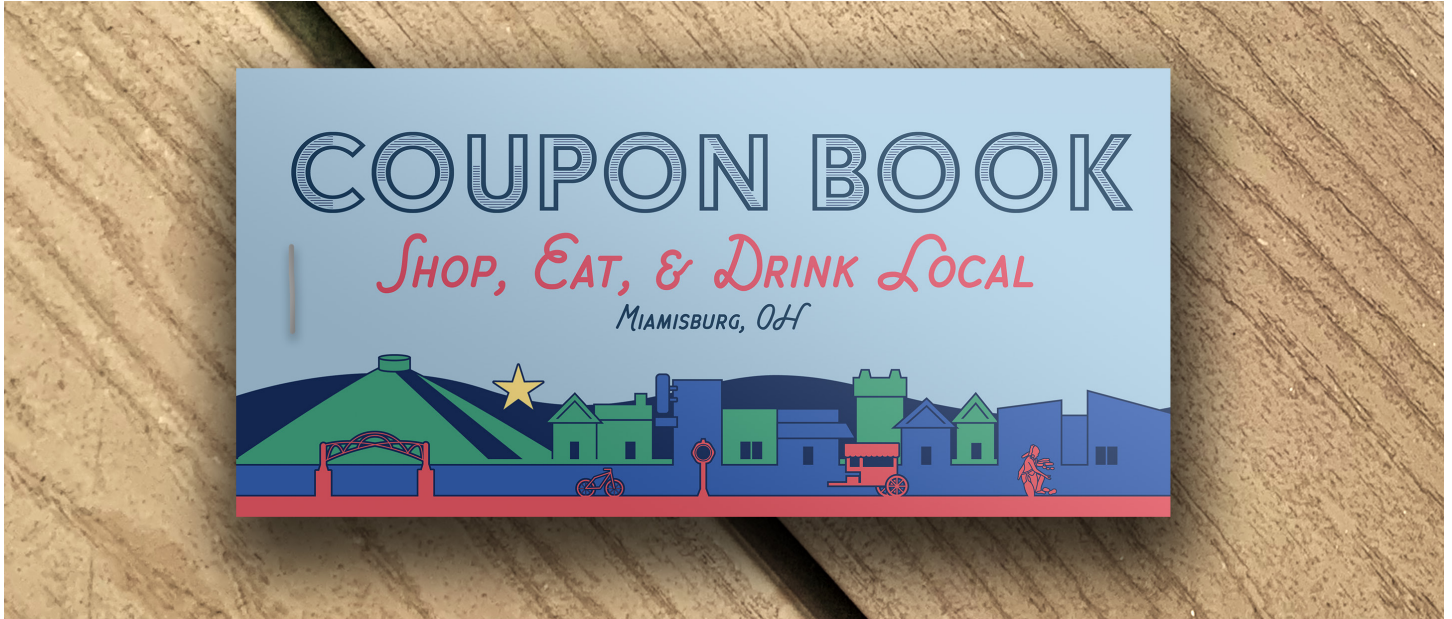


**YMCA**  
900 Alex Rd  
(937) 847-9012



# Coupon Book

The coupon book offers special deals to new residents in order to give them a taste of their new city.



This sample page shows an incentive to try the ice cream shop on Main Street by including an extra scoop for the whole group!



## Closing

This thesis project took place over the course of several months in early 2020. Due to the impact of COVID-19, I was unable to properly test and observe my design solution. However, I met with Miamisburg Mayor and Realtor, Michelle Collins, to talk through the possibility of a Welcome Kit. She shared potential roadblocks and helped to shape the final outcome of the project.

The final project turned out to be a love letter to my hometown of Miamisburg, OH. I am incredibly grateful for the hundreds of residents who helped me gather data and learn more about my home.

