Community Branding & Identity Survey



Summary of Findings



PREPARED FOR: Galva Economic Development Committee & Galva City Council

PREPARED BY: Hometown Consulting, LLC

DATE: September 29, 2026

HOMETOWN CONSULTING
"A Community & Economic Development Consulting Group"

Purpose

Hometown Consulting has reviewed the results of the Galva Community Branding & Identity Survey from all **completed surveys as of September 23, 2026**. Whereas **176 total surveys were submitted.** The review was completed to identify the strongest areas of consensus regarding Galva's identity, community assets, opportunities, and priorities.

The survey was intended to help identify the qualities, traditions, places, and opportunities that best represent Galva and to inform future branding, marketing, tourism, downtown revitalization, business recruitment, and community-development efforts.

For questions that provided respondents with predetermined choices, the three highest responses are presented below. For open-ended questions, HTC grouped individual responses where clear and recurring themes were evident. This provides a more useful picture of community consensus than treating similar one- or two-response comments as unrelated answers.

Survey Findings

1. WHAT MAKES GALVA DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS?

1. **Strong arts and live-music scene**.....114 responses (64.77%)
2. **Parks and outdoor gathering spaces**.....78 (44.32%)
3. **Friendly, close-knit community**.....74 (42.05%)

These results establish an early and important pattern: residents distinguish Galva primarily through its music and arts, public gathering spaces, and people.

2. WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF ABOUT GALVA?

1. **People, community spirit and helping one another**.....approximately 35-40 mentions
2. **Music, arts, festivals and community events**.....approximately 15-17 mentions
3. **Parks, green spaces and public gathering places**.....approximately 12-14 mentions

The strongest sentiment was not simply that Galva has "friendly people," but that Galva comes together when it matters. Respondents repeatedly described residents helping neighbors, supporting fundraisers, volunteering, rallying during difficult circumstances, and working collectively for the community.



3. WHAT LOCAL HISTORY, TRADITIONS, LANDMARKS, OR STORIES BEST DEFINE GALVA?

1. **Arts and live-music traditions**.....106 (60.23%)
2. **Swedish heritage and relationship with Gävle, Sweden**.....70 (39.77%)
3. **Veterans Park, memorials and History Walk**.....58 (32.95%)

4. WHAT ARE GALVA'S GREATEST STRENGTHS OR COMMUNITY ASSETS?

1. **Parks, recreation and open spaces**.....90 (51.14%)
2. **Arts, music and cultural organizations**.....89 (50.57%)
3. **Residents and community volunteers**.....88 (50.00%)

The near tie among these three responses is significant. Residents identify parks, arts/music and people as Galva's three strongest assets at almost identical rates.

5. WHAT AMENITIES OR SERVICES WOULD IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN GALVA?

1. **More restaurants and dining choices**.....124 (70.45%)
2. **Additional shopping and retail**.....104 (59.09%)
3. **More activities for children and teenagers**.....92 (52.27%)

6. WHAT COULD BECOME GALVA'S SIGNATURE ATTRACTION OR DESTINATION?

1. Live music, concerts and music festivals - particularly Levitt AMP, Back Road Music Festival and expanded music programming.
2. Parks and outdoor/community gathering destinations - including Wiley Park, the Park District, Veterans Park, recreation and community events.
3. Downtown revitalization, historic attractions and complementary businesses - including the Opera House, historic buildings, restaurants, shops and other amenities that could create a more complete visitor experience.

A particularly important finding is that several respondents viewed music as an attraction Galva already possesses, rather than something the community needs to create.



7. WHAT COMMUNITY EVENTS HAVE THE GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH?

1. **Levitt AMP Galva Music Series**.....103 (58.52%)
2. **Farmers markets, food events or craft fairs**.....93 (52.84%)
3. **Back Road Music Festival**.....88 (50.00%)

Galva Freedom Fest was also strongly supported with 72 responses (40.91%).

8. WHAT TYPES OF BUSINESSES WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO SEE LOCATE IN GALVA?

1. **Restaurants, dining and food establishments -** including family restaurants, casual dining, pizza, Mexican food, coffee shops, bakeries and ice cream.
2. **Retail, boutiques and specialty shopping -** including clothing, gifts, antiques, bookstores and other unique or destination-oriented shops.
3. **Family/youth recreation, entertainment and gathering places -** including youth centers, sports facilities, bowling, arcades, indoor play areas and non-alcohol-oriented gathering places.

Pharmacy, grocery and other everyday services also represented a noticeable secondary theme.

9. WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WOULD MAKE DOWNTOWN GALVA MORE ATTRACTIVE AND VIBRANT?

1. **More businesses in vacant storefronts**.....139 (78.98%)
2. **Restoration and reuse of historic buildings**.....102 (57.95%)
3. **More downtown events and activities**.....96 (54.55%)

10. HOW CAN THE CITY BETTER PROMOTE GALVA THROUGH MARKETING, SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER EFFORTS?

1. **A stronger and more consistent social-media presence**
2. **More active promotion of Galva's events, businesses, music and community assets**
3. **Centralized communication and coordinated branding -** including a community calendar, improved website information, newsletters, consistent messaging and coordinated promotional materials



11. WHAT PROJECTS OR INITIATIVES SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED TO STRENGTHEN GALVA'S IDENTITY?

1. **Downtown revitalization**.....89 (50.57%)
2. **Business recruitment and entrepreneurship**.....73 (41.48%)
3. **Youth and family programs**.....70 (39.77%)

Arts, music and cultural development also received substantial support.

12. WHAT IS ONE IMPROVEMENT THE CITY SHOULD BEGIN WORKING ON IMMEDIATELY?

1. **Recruit new businesses and fill vacant storefronts**.....69 (39.20%)
2. **Repair/improve streets, sidewalks and infrastructure**.....31 (17.61%)
3. **Add youth and family activities**.....15 (8.52%)

Overall Findings

GALVA'S IDENTITY ALREADY EXISTS

The survey does not suggest that Galva needs to invent an identity. Instead, three characteristics repeatedly rise to the top across multiple questions: music and arts, parks and gathering places, and people and community spirit. These same characteristics appear when residents are asked what makes Galva different, what they are most proud of, what Galva's greatest assets are, and what could attract visitors. This consistency provides a strong foundation for developing Galva's community identity and future branding.

MUSIC IS GALVA'S CLEAREST DIFFERENTIATOR

Music and arts received the strongest response when residents were asked what differentiates Galva from other Central Illinois communities, and Galva's arts and live-music traditions were also the highest-ranked response regarding the traditions that define the community. That finding is reinforced by support for the Levitt AMP Galva Music Series and Back Road Music Festival and by numerous open-ended responses identifying music as a potential signature attraction. Importantly, Galva already has established music assets to build upon.



GALVA'S PEOPLE ARE PART OF THE PRODUCT

The survey consistently describes Galva as a place where people help one another, volunteer, support community organizations and come together when needed. That characteristic should not be treated merely as a quality-of-life observation. It is potentially part of Galva's external identity: a community where people gather and where people show up for one another.

THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IS TO BUILD AROUND EXISTING STRENGTHS

The survey also identifies a clear gap between Galva's existing community assets and the commercial activity surrounding them. Residents want more restaurants, more retail, more occupied storefronts, more activities, and more reasons to stay in Galva longer. This suggests an economic-development strategy in which business recruitment supports the community identity rather than operating separately from it. Restaurants, specialty retail, coffee and gathering places, family-oriented businesses, and complementary visitor amenities could help capture more economic activity from people already attending Galva's concerts, festivals, parks and community events.

MUSIC & ARTS + PARKS & GATHERING PLACES + PEOPLE & COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Conclusion & Recommended Next Steps

The Galva Community Branding & Identity Survey provides a clearer and more current understanding of how residents view the community, what they value most, and where they believe additional attention and investment are needed. Importantly, the results generally support many of the priorities established in Galva's existing **2024 Community & Economic Development Strategy**, particularly downtown revitalization, business development, arts and music, parks and recreation, community engagement, and infrastructure improvements.

Rather than developing an entirely new strategy, **Hometown Consulting recommends updating the existing Community & Economic Development Strategy to incorporate the 2026 survey findings and establish a more focused implementation plan for the next several years.** The survey provides meaningful community input that was not available when the original strategy was prepared and can now be used to refine priorities, identify specific opportunities, and better connect Galva's community identity with its economic-development efforts.



Following review and input from the **Mayor, City Council, and Economic Development Committee**, the updated strategy should generally focus on:

- **Community Identity, Branding & Marketing:** Build upon Galva's demonstrated strengths in music and arts, parks and gathering places, and its strong sense of community, while developing more consistent messaging, marketing, social media, and visitor promotion.

- **Downtown Revitalization & Business Occupancy:** Continue building and façade improvements while placing greater emphasis on filling vacant storefronts, reuse of key properties, downtown activity, and creating an environment that supports restaurants, retail, and other businesses.

- **Business Recruitment, Retention & Entrepreneurship:** More specifically target the types of businesses identified through the survey, including restaurants, specialty retail, gathering places, family-oriented businesses, and other services, while continuing to support existing businesses.

- **Music, Events, Tourism & the Visitor Economy:** Build upon Levitt AMP, Back Road Music Festival, parks, community events, historic assets, and other existing draws to attract visitors and encourage them to spend more time and money throughout Galva.

- **Quality of Life, Parks, Youth & Families:** Continue investing in Galva's parks and recreational assets while giving greater attention to the identified need for youth, teen, family, and year-round activities.

- **Infrastructure, Accessibility & Community Appearance:** Continue addressing streets, sidewalks, accessibility, downtown infrastructure, property appearance, and other physical improvements that support business development and quality of life.

The updated strategy should also move beyond broad goals by establishing **specific actions, reasonable timeframes, responsible parties or partners, and practical measures of progress.** Hometown Consulting can assist the City and EDC in coordinating this process and helping move identified priorities from planning into implementation.

The survey confirms that Galva already has significant assets upon which to build. The next step is to use the community's input, together with direction from the City Council and Economic Development Committee, to update the existing strategy into a focused and actionable roadmap for Galva's continued community and economic development.

