

A Manual for Small Towns

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Executive Summary

Many small Pennsylvania downtowns are struggling. In many places, boarded buildings and empty storefronts now dominate once prosperous streets. Seeking to reverse years of decline, a number of communities are thinking about initiating a downtown revitalization programs.

Revitalizing downtown means strengthening the social, physical and economic value of a community's traditional central business district. The primary goal of revitalization efforts is to improve the livability and quality of life in a community by expanding and attracting employment, shopping and social activities.

This manual is designed to help small town revitalization efforts. Building on several basic principles, the manual provides small Pennsylvania communities with a menu of low-cost tools and strategies that they can adopt as they try to revitalize their central business districts. The manual is organized to address the fundamental aspects of a successful downtown program:

- Organization
- Planning
- Implementation and Mobilizing Resources
- Promotion
- Evaluation

The first chapters focus on organizing revitalization efforts. Because this manual is for small town with limited financial resources, we emphasize the importance of volunteerism and coalition building. In general, communities are encouraged to form a downtown organization and institute a board of directors.

The manual then addresses the revitalization planning process. Four basic components of the planning process are reviewed: assessing current conditions, developing a vision for downtown, identifying strategies and developing an action plan, mobilizing resources, and evaluating and updating the program.

Next, low-cost strategies that communities can tailor to their individual needs are identified. Focuses are 1) improving downtown's appearance, 2) strengthening local businesses, 3) identifying new opportunities, and 4) obtaining outside assistance. The manual develops a simple approach to each of these aspects.

Sometimes, examples can help as much as instructional materials. The manual provides three cases studies of small communities in Pennsylvania that have successfully revitalized their downtowns. Here, we offer a description of the program, talk about organizational structure, and look at some of the obstacles and strategies adopted to overcome impediments.

Next, we provide a list of resources that small communities can draw upon as they undertake the revitalization process. These include state, federal and non-profit organizations and agencies.

Finally, the manual contains an appendix of materials that communities can use to evaluate their current situation, identify new opportunities and promote their efforts.

In many ways, healthy downtowns represent healthy communities. With revitalization, downtowns can once again serve prominent and important roles within their communities.

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Chapter 1: REVITALIZING DOWNTOWN

Revitalizing downtown means strengthening the social, physical and economic value of a community's traditional central business district. The primary goal of revitalization efforts is to improve the livability and quality of life in a community by expanding and attracting employment, shopping and social activities.

While downtown programs come in a variety of shapes and sizes, typical activities and projects include:

- ✓ Organizing people who are committed to downtown.
- ✓ Creating a vision for downtown, emphasizing retail and commercial spaces.
- ✓ Devising and implementing a plan that facilitates achieving the vision.
- ✓ Sponsoring special events that increase the number of customers and visitors downtown.

In order to successfully revitalize downtown, communities must have a long-term plan, some financial backing, and commitments from property and business owners, local government officials, and local residents. While revitalization programs require substantial amounts of individual time and effort, they offer a great chance for success in smaller communities.

Why Revitalize Downtown?

In many ways, healthy downtowns represent healthy communities. With revitalization, downtowns can once again serve prominent and important roles within their communities. Communities should consider revitalizing their downtowns for a number of important reasons:

Improves Image. Downtown's appearance is the first impression a community offers to visitors.

Makes Use of Existing Buildings. Reusing properties can help communities manage growth.

Develops Community. Because downtowns have been a traditional focal point in most communities, they are a source of identity to most local residents.

Provides Residents with Retail and Services. In many rural places, Main Street offers a diversity of retail stores, financial institutions, public agencies and local government offices, historic areas, and cultural and educational institutions. This diversity provides long-term strength to downtown.

Downtown is an employment center. Downtowns are still a major source of local employment. This provides the potential for a regular and continuing user base for functions located in downtowns.

Expands the Tax Base. Successful downtowns generate local revenues to pay for community services.

Prevents Blight and Abandonment. A strong downtown will have lower health and safety costs and concerns.

Keeps Dollars in the Community. With services and goods available locally, residents will not need to shop outside the community as often.

Downtown revitalization assistance is available. A number of programs and a variety of assistance are available to help downtown revitalization efforts. They include the Main Street Program of the Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, the Downtown Development Authority program and Tax Increment Financing Act, and various local programs established by local governments or merchants' associations. These have given a particular focus to the needs of downtowns, and have successfully addressed the unique needs of downtowns in their program orientations.

A Cautionary Note

If you are reading this manual, then you likely are engaged in or seriously considering a downtown revitalization program. Be forewarned that downtown revitalization programs are not guaranteed successes. This is true no matter how well promoted they are, no matter how well planned they are and no matter how well financed they are. The fact of the matter is that there are strong economic forces at work that have historically worked against small downtowns...this is often the reason downtown declined in the first place.

Thus, your organization needs to have realistic expectations. Downtown revitalization is not simply "clean it up and they will come." Throughout the US there have been a number of programs that have resulted in pretty--yet empty--downtowns. Your group must recognize early that building a nice downtown is not enough. You must understand the wants, needs and desires of potential downtown users. To this end, all downtown decisions must be made with an eye to the users. Why bother fixing up a building no one will visit?

We are not saying: "don't bother." Our purpose in this manual is to outline a family of proactive strategies that have proven effective for reversing trends of decline. All we are saying is that it is important to remember that your efforts must be market driven, considering not only the 'supply' of a nice downtown, but also the 'demand' for one. And this consideration must not only be at the onset of the program, but throughout the development process. *Vigilance to market forces must be a constant of the program.*

TEXT BOX

Guiding Principles of Downtown Revitalization

While downtown programs vary substantially across communities, there are a few common guiding principles.

A comprehensive downtown program builds community support to create lasting progress.

Successful downtown programs identify and capitalize on local strengths.

New opportunities and complementary activities are explored and built upon.

Successful programs bring together the expertise of both the public and private sectors, with each sector recognizing strengths and weaknesses of the other.

Local citizens have both a voice and opportunities to participate in the process.

Organizers are persistent and committed to long-term goals.

Frequent visible improvements are made to downtown, which reinforces perceptions of positive change and reminds local residents that the program is going strong.

Organization of this Manual

This manual is designed to help small town revitalization efforts. Building on the principles outlined in this chapter, the manual provides small Pennsylvania communities with a menu of low-cost tools and strategies that they can adopt as they try to revitalize their central business districts. The manual is organized to address the fundamental aspects of a successful downtown program:

- Organization
- Planning
- Implementation and Mobilizing Resources
- Promotion
- Evaluation

The next chapter focuses on organizing revitalization efforts. Because this manual is for small town with limited financial resources, the chapter emphasizes the importance of volunteerism and coalition building. In general, communities are encouraged to form a downtown organization and institute a board of directors. This board should consist of local officials, members from the business community and individual citizens. The board is encouraged to provide leadership in shaping and implementing a ‘downtown vision,’ helping promote the community, networking individuals and monitoring program effectiveness.

The third chapter addresses the revitalization planning process. The chapter reviews four basic components of the planning process: assessing current conditions, developing a vision for downtown, identifying strategies and developing an action plan, mobilizing resources, and evaluating and updating the program.

The fourth chapter offers some simple, low-cost strategies that communities can tailor to their individual needs. The chapter focuses on 1) improving downtown’s appearance, 2) strengthening local businesses, 3) identifying new opportunities, and 4) obtaining outside assistance. The manual develops a simple approach to each of these aspects. The first step in this approach is to develop a simple vision for the downtown with respect to each particular strategy. It then provides a brief description on why such a strategy may be important. It then offers some

example goals that communities can try to meet in order to achieve their mission. Finally, steps for implementing each strategy are offered.

Sometimes, examples can help as much as instructional materials. The fifth chapter offers three cases studies of small communities in Pennsylvania that have successfully revitalized their downtowns. Here, we offer a description of the program, talk about organizational structure, and look at some of the obstacles and strategies adopted to overcome impediments.

In Chapter Six we provide a list of resources that small communities can draw upon as they undertake the revitalization process. These include state, federal and non-profit organizations and agencies.

Finally, the manual contains an appendix of materials that communities can use to evaluate their current situation, identify new opportunities and promote their efforts.

Chapter 2: GETTING ORGANIZED

A few individuals that are concerned about the current state and future of downtown spark most small town revitalization programs. Despite good intentions, these individuals often don't have a clear idea of how to proceed. In order to help these efforts, this chapter focuses on organizing a revitalization program.

When organizing your efforts, keep in mind that a group of community leaders usually has a strong commitment to reaching the economic development goals in successful communities. Downtown revitalization requires local champions who are willing to spend the time and effort to make the program work. This commitment is crucial in the local initiatives and perhaps the most difficult to obtain. However, a clearly stated vision with a reasonable action plan can bring forth this commitment.

Successful revitalization will depend on:

- Committed leadership
- Broad based participation
- A shared vision of the future
- Realistic goals and plan of action
- Effective communication
- Management of implementation
- Recognition of efforts
- Use of outside resources

Revitalizing downtown is a community process. It involves coordinating a complex but interrelated series of events, relying heavily on the cooperation of various community groups. The revitalization process is not easy. It also is not guaranteed to be successful. Indeed, there are a number of communities whose revitalization efforts were terribly unsuccessful, despite large financial and human investments.

Getting Established

Forming a revitalization group is the first step in many programs. This section outlines how to establish an effective organization. The procedure is straightforward, with early steps focusing on laying the groundwork for a long-term revitalization effort. Basic tasks include:

- Forming a steering committee
- Building leadership capacity
- Some early steps
- Generating publicity

Because people are the most critical component of downtown revitalization programs, early efforts should focus on corralling willing participants. To initiate the program, two groups should be involved: a steering committee, which drives the effort, and active community participants, who support and help sustain the effort.

In some places, there already exists an appropriate organization to conduct revitalization efforts. This could be a Chamber of Commerce, businesspersons' association, economic development corporation, etc. If possible, such groups are a logical choice for directing the revitalization effort.

In many other places, though, there is not a formal group interested in downtown, and one will need to be formed. The most obvious candidates to form such a group are the individuals identified as "wanting to do something about downtown."

Text Box:

Guiding Principles

While downtown revitalization efforts may seem complex, a strong organization can greatly enhance the prospects for success. There are six principles of organization that might strengthen your revitalization group.

1. Include all groups involved in the revitalization process.
2. The group must include members of both the formal and informal local power structure.
3. The group must have a high degree of autonomy.
4. While continuity is important, it is also important to infuse new blood into the program.
5. The group must meet regularly and frequently, preferably once a week.
6. The organization must raise some funding.

The Steering Committee

A comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization integrates the public and private sectors in a comprehensive, coordinated and mutually supportive manner. Programs that ignore or are unable to bring together representatives from these two sectors usually fail. Because of this mutual dependence, the downtown group should include individuals from both sectors who are capable of making things happen once the program has reached the implementation stage.

Once assembled, this group can put together a steering committee, composed of several individuals whose first responsibility is to mobilize the effort. These individuals should represent various interests with respect to downtown, and it is important that they must be willing to commit a significant amount of time in initiating the effort. They also should be prepared for the possibility that the effort may not work.

The steering committee could include individuals from the following organizations:

- The local Chamber of Commerce or downtown business association
- The local historic society
- Downtown business owners
- Bank chairpersons
- Downtown property owners

- Public officials
- Citizen groups and individual citizens
- Churches
- Non-profit organizations

Once individuals are identified, it is necessary to get them to “buy-in” to the program. Without their support, the prospects for success are greatly diminished. This is especially true in small towns where key residents wear many hats and their participation in and endorsement of the revitalization project will most likely determine its ultimate success.

Generating buy-in can be difficult, but is easier if organizers realize the basic question underlying volunteerism. Put most directly, potential program partners will want to know what’s in it for them. Such a question does not mean that individuals will need to gain monetarily or else not participate; it is just that they need to see how they can realize some reward for the time they invest. This reward is often simply pride from making the community a better place to live and visit. In other instances, though, it is necessary to realize that participants are often business owners in the community. These owners should be convinced that they could benefit not only as citizens, but also as business people.

When discussing possible benefits with potential committee members, it is only fair to also alert them to the costs of such a program. Most often, these costs are the responsibilities members are expected to shoulder.

The steering committee has several important responsibilities, including:

- ✓ Legitimizing the effort with key individuals in the community
- ✓ Identifying participants
- ✓ Arranging, advertising and leading meetings
- ✓ Making the public aware of activities
- ✓ Identifying and involving people outside the community
- ✓ Establishing and distributing an agenda
- ✓ Securing initial funding or in-kind contributions for initial meetings
- ✓ Establish and coordinate project committees and follow through with implementation

Responsibilities of group members may include:

- Commitment to at least one year of service
- Commitment to attend related meetings
- Work three to five hours per month outside of meetings
- Attend all training sessions, where applicable
- Read related literature
- Recruit and orient new group members
- Prepare in advance for meetings
- Cooperatively draft action plans
- Take responsibility for projects
- Present the downtown and downtown projects positively to the public

In short, the steering committee is the leadership core for the organization. This committee will need to meet every one or two months to ensure progress and coordination.

Leadership

Once the steering committee is established, it is time to identify a leader for the revitalization effort. This leader can be a member of the steering committee, but it is not essential. This individual should have strong organizational skills, be a consensus builder, show a commitment to fund-raising and be able to delegate responsibilities. Motivational skills are an important attribute, and the program leader must have genuine excitement and commitment to the project. Finally, the individual should be patient, understanding that downtown programs are time-consuming, full of stops and starts, and that they even can fail.

Qualities of an effective leader are:

- Understands and teaches others
- Has a genuine desire to lead and make great things happen
- Has strong organizational skills
- Is a team player
- Enjoys learning
- Enjoys managing people and projects
- Facilitates group discussion
- Makes sure meeting agendas stay on track
- Maintains a positive attitude that inspires and encourages others
- Respects other people's viewpoints and skills
- Can manage diverse personalities and conflicts
- Communicates goals and progress to group members and the public
- Displays integrity, self-confidence, persuasiveness, decisiveness, and creativity

Where do you find a leader? Think about the individuals in your community. Who possesses particular skills that can be tapped to help the revitalization effort? Often skills go unnoticed or certain groups, such as the retired population or schoolchildren get overlooked. On a separate sheet of paper, try to identify all individuals within your community that can assist in the revitalization process. Think about both individuals and organizations, and write down the skills and talents that they have that can help your efforts. You should be hard pressed to find an individual that has nothing to offer.

Some Early Steps

One the steering committee is organized and a leader is in place, your group will be ready to take some early steps. Most of the tasks are relatively easy, and getting the accomplished will start your effort on the right foot.

Name the Organization

Naming the revitalization program may be the committee's first accomplishment. Names should be simple and action oriented, incorporating the name of the downtown if possible. The program name might also help the community imagine what their downtown will look like as the program reaches its goals. Examples of ongoing efforts in Pennsylvania include *Newport: Preserving Our Future*, *The Montrose Restoration Committee* and *Main Street Harboro*.

Obtain Non-profit and 501 C-3 Status

There are several specific legal steps your group may want to examine as you formalize your efforts, including incorporation as a non-profit and attaining tax-exempt status. In the excellent reference *The Pennsylvania Non-Profit Handbook*, Gary Grobman offers a comprehensive guide for organizing and managing non-profit organizations. Some of his suggestions are reviewed here. (Note: the following discussion presents only a broad overview. While additional materials are included in Appendix C, your organization should access additional resources for more details.)

The decision to incorporate as a non-profit organization is a legal decision, though it does not require the services of a lawyer. Non-profit organizations may want to incorporate for several reasons, including limits on liability, lower taxes, reduced postage, access to media through free public service announcements, and increased organizational credibility. Of course, there are also several disadvantages to incorporating, including loss of centralized control, increased paperwork, and some additional costs in terms of both time and money.

Gary Grobman offers several tips for groups mulling the decision to incorporate:

- ◇ Review Pennsylvania's non-profit laws and decide your organization's willingness to abide by the limitations and accountability requirements
- ◇ Avoid incorporating if it is essential to maintain complete control of the organization
- ◇ Talk to other individuals who run similar non-profit organizations and find out their own experiences
- ◇ Think carefully about potential board members with respect to accessibility, respect in the community and experience as managers and fund-raisers

If your group decides incorporation is a good idea, the organizational leadership must file the appropriate forms with the Pennsylvania Department of State's Corporation Bureau. There are several steps that must be followed, which are detailed in Appendix C.

Obtaining 501 (C) (3) Status

Once the non-profit corporation has been established, your group may want to consider filing for Federal 501(C) (3) tax-exempt status as quickly as possible. Upon obtaining such status your organization will be subject to the following benefits:

- Exempt from nearly all federal income taxes.
- Individual contributions made to the organization are tax deductible.
- Many major donors will not contribute to organizations without 501(C)(3) status.

- Designation stands as sort of an IRS “seal of approval” for the charitable activities of the organization.

Tax-exempt status, however, sets several limitations in allowable activities:

- ◇ The organization may not engage in partisan political activity.
- ◇ The organization cannot actively lobby.
- ◇ The organization will be held to higher levels of accountability with respect to its finances.
- ◇ The application fee is nearly \$500, and is not refundable should tax-exempt status be denied.

Engage the Public Early On

It is important to enlist the community early on. The steering committee should hold a public meeting to describe the group’s intentions and solicit support. The meeting should be advertised well in advance in as many local outlets as possible, including newspapers, radio, storefronts, and even windshield flyers for downtown shoppers. The meeting should be held in the evening at an easily accessible location. Participation from younger residents is likely to be higher if childcare is provided.

The first public meeting is one of the most important. During this meeting, both active participants and community members will form their impressions about the worthiness of the endeavor. Because this meeting sets the tone of the revitalization effort, the program committee needs to be well prepared. There are two components of preparedness that need attention. First, the committee must show that it is organized. Second, the committee must be able to articulate a goal. Of course, the committee needs to be flexible with respect to both organization and goals, so as to ensure the program is inclusive.

The agenda for the first meeting should establish the purpose of the effort, focusing on two questions.

Why this group? People will want to learn about the effort. At the first meeting the revitalization group should be prepared to talk about how it was established and by whom. It should outline general goals of the effort, which are often as simple as “making downtown a better place.” Citizens should be invited to comment on the effort as well as offer suggestions.

What next? After the general goals of the program are introduced, the committee needs to forward a basic plan for the long-term effort. This plan does not need to be specific—there’s plenty of time for that later—rather it should set up a basic structure for addressing the broad issue of revitalization. Three general themes are useful.

Where are we now? This aspect of the project lays the groundwork for the program. It helps the community figure out its current condition, strengths and weaknesses, as well as external forces that are affecting downtown.

Where do we want to go? While the general theme has already been established, it is helpful to formally articulate the program's dream. The committee will want to spend some time crafting a vision for the future of downtown.

How do we get there? Once a vision is established, the revitalization group will need to develop, enact and monitor a plan for how the vision will be achieved. Issues that will need to be addressed include: What strategies can the group adopt? What resources will the group need to implement the strategies? How will we pay for it? How long will it take? How will we know it is done?

In the Appendix, you will find a guide on effective meeting management.

Recruit Active Community Participants

While key individuals are an important component of the program, it is also important to have community backing. Citizen participation in the program is important for a number of reasons, including potential sources of financial and volunteer support, the infusion of new blood into the program, as well as input on the direction (or even desire) for the program. Use the first meeting to recruit volunteer participants.

Generate Publicity

It is important to publicize the revitalization effort. By making local officials and the public aware of the program, the group can generate additional support, both of people and money. The group will want to use a variety of media and materials in its campaign, so as to ensure its message is both widespread and diverse. Potential outlets include:

Local newspapers. Some groups issue press releases that announce upcoming meetings or recent accomplishments. (A sample press release can be found in the Appendix). Other groups write letters to the editor. Still other groups contribute a periodic column updating the community on the program's agenda and efforts.

Local television. Visuals are important. Make the local TV station aware when the group accomplishes a beautification project. Announce meetings on the public access cable channel.

Fliers. Announce public meetings by putting fliers in downtown business windows and, if allowed, on utility poles or street signs. Ask the local print shop to donate photocopies. (And remember to thank donors publicly).

Brochures. Once again, seek the help of local printers in designing brochures that trumpet the program. Find a community resident to design a logo—perhaps even have a contest. Incorporate your theme vision into brief, action-oriented statements. Offer opportunities for residents to participate in the process.

A Few Things to Do Up-Front

The next chapter is dedicated to assisting your group in putting a plan into place, which can be an arduous process. Yet, this doesn't mean that action need be suspended. In fact, soon after the first public meeting, it is imperative for the group to establish a presence and a plan in order to maintain momentum. Remember, the purpose of the first meeting was to generate local interest and awareness. That's hard work. There are several things that the group can do and should consider in order to remain visible while larger scale projects are implemented:

- Have a logo contest for the organization
- Complete a few visible projects
 - ✓ Install benches or flower boxes downtown
 - ✓ Paint crosswalks, fire hydrants, or building murals
 - ✓ Organize a community clean-up day
- Sell t-shirts, hats, or other items symbolizing the effort

A Note about Opposition

The group should try to plan ahead for opposition. Although it is important to remain optimistic, it is important to recognize that not all individuals in the community, whether they are business owners or others, share a similar positivism about your efforts. For instance, perhaps past efforts to coordinate business activities have failed because of lack of cooperation among business owners or maybe there are one or several property owners who do not see the value in upgrading their property. Many times it is simply the case that individuals are fearful of change or they do not see the return on investment in terms of their cooperation in revitalization efforts. If you can identify problems and the reasoning behind them in advance, then you will be in a better position to overcome such issues when they arise.

To help this process, draw three columns on a separate sheet of paper. In the first column, identify potential opponents. In the second column, write down the fear or obstacle this potential opponent presents. In the final column, think creatively about how you can engage these potential opponents. Remember, people often oppose change because it makes them uncomfortable...think about ways that you can use change to develop 'win-win' situations for all parties involved.

Because we are not so naïve to think that recognizing potential opposition on paper is a substitute for reality, in Appendix D we offer a brief guide to managing conflict. The Appendix—which draws on materials developed by Purdue University's Conservation Technology Information Center—outlines the roots of conflict, steps for managing conflict and negotiation principles. The process outlined in the Appendix suggests conflict can actually be a good thing for communities, and seeks to develop a 'win-win' outcome for all participants.

Chapter 3: PLANNING REVITALIZATION

After establishing an organization, it is necessary to develop a revitalization plan. Downtown planning is greatly simplified if participants adhere to three basic questions as the fundamental premise of the process:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

This chapter discusses the fundamental aspects of the revitalization planning process, focusing on the following four steps:

- Step 1. Analyzing resources
- Step 2. Articulating a vision
- Step 3. Developing a plan
- Step 4. Mobilizing resources
- Step 5. Evaluating progress

The chapter outlines a general framework for each of these areas. Chapter Four complements this outline by offering specific revitalization strategies that should be evaluated in light of the five-step process.

Before proceeding, we offer one piece of advice--your group should carefully document its steps in the planning process. There are several reasons. First, keeping a written record of your plans allows you to evaluate progress. We encourage you to write down your goals and then evaluate whether or not you have achieved these goals at a later date. By writing down your plans, it is easier to see if specific objectives have been met. Also, if goals have not been met, a written plan will help you figure out why.

Second, it is common for volunteers to move on after several years of service to an organization. When they do move on, you don't want the organization to drift. Keeping a written account of your group's past, current and future projects helps maintain the focus on revitalizing downtown. The supporting worksheets we provide in the appendix can help you keep track of your plans.

Text box

Additional Resources

There is a large collection of materials available to help communities with the visioning process. While it's true a general community visioning process can be quite time-consuming, and may be more comprehensive than what the downtown group desires, the visioning framework is quite helpful. In fact, the key principles of the process are straightforward, and can be easily adopted such that only a few meetings may be necessary. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania has published a "how-to" guide for visioning analogous to this one that serves as a useful resource for this aspect of the process.

Step 1. Analyzing local resources

Successful organizations are pragmatic. The revitalization group needs to objectively evaluate what their downtown has been and what it is presently. Understanding downtown must go beyond anecdotes and perceptions, which can be misleading. Instead, the current resources available, the users of downtown, potential markets and competing communities must be known. Identifying ‘*where we are now*’ is a necessary step prior to formulating plans as to what the downtown could or should be.

Early meetings of the downtown group should look at the community’s current condition. As noted, most downtown revitalization programs occur in response to a declining Main Street. In order to rebuild downtown, it is helpful to complete an assessment of your downtown community. The fundamental aspects of this assessment will identify:

- *Problems.* These are obstacles or constraints experienced by business owners or others in the community that make it difficult for them to succeed.
- *Assets.* These are resources that make your community attractive to businesses and individuals whom may want to move into, make investments, or visit your town.
- *Needs.* These are the requirements that sustain individual households and businesses. For instance, access to particular transportation networks or residential or business space.
- *Windows of opportunity.* These are local conditions that make it easier or possible to undertake a particular project. Consider all events, conditions, or changes in the community.

Essentially, this effort will help to identify the best downtown revitalization options for your town. Instead of leaping from problems to fixes, with this analysis you will be able to make better-informed decisions based on opportunities that may exist right in your own backyard.

There are a number of ways in which you can capture the state of your downtown and identify potential resolutions to existing problems. The remainder of this section offers suggestions as to 1) how to develop and analyze a detailed understanding of your downtown, and 2) a means for analyzing that data. You will find that collecting and assessing this information may be time consuming, but it does not have to be costly. While consultants are well positioned to conduct such analysis, key aspects are given here and in the appendix to facilitate low-cost analysis. After assembling the initial database, an ongoing updating procedure should be established, implemented, and maintained.

We next outline three families of assessment tools your downtown group may want to consider. Recognizing that some of the analytical methods are more costly and time intensive than others, the group will want to select from these, as a whole or in part depending on particular goals of the program. The simplest tools are presented first.

Assessment Tool 1: SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is an inexpensive exercise commonly used to evaluate local conditions. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Information gleaned from the

SWOT analysis can provide the group with a clearer understanding of the environment in which they are working. This information can then be used to develop a plan for downtown.

When conducting a SWOT analysis, it may be helpful to think of strengths and weaknesses as internal elements that local people can control using their own resources (time, money, people). Opportunities and threats are often elements outside the community. Opportunities can be thought of as local advantages relative to other communities. Threats are external trends or projects that can adversely impact an area. Finally, it is important to realize that threats can also be opportunities, and opportunities can also be threats.

The downtown plan will want to build on internal strengths and overcome local weaknesses. By doing so, the group will better position itself to take advantage of opportunities and reduce threats. SWOT analysis can be visualized in the following way.

SWOT analysis is conducted with respect to the current conditions of downtown. Cell **A** in the diagram represents those attributes that are the community's greatest advantage. Cell **D** are the areas of greatest vulnerability.

I N T E R N A L			External	
			Opportunities	Threats
	Strengths	A ++	B +	
	Weaknesses	C -	D --	

An important part of downtown revitalization efforts is to have a sense of the current local and external environments. Using the worksheet provided in the appendix (Table A-1), review your downtown's current strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. You may want to focus on issues such as retail climate, aesthetics, traffic and parking, and competing regions. In doing the analysis, think about human resources, the physical and natural environment, infrastructure, organizations and other important factors.

Assessment Tool 2: A Downtown Inventory

The inventory survey establishes an understanding of the present condition of downtown and provides a basis for future objective policy formulation and decision-making. Key components include:

- Tracing historical development
- Knowing downtown's role in the region
- Understanding local transportation patterns and modes
- Assessing local infrastructure

- Mapping current land use and zoning
- Assessing public facilities and services
- Analyzing existing buildings
- Analyzing the streetscape

Several types of inventory surveys are possible, some more involved than others.

Walk-Through Survey

Take a long walk through your downtown and look closely at its appearance. Notice the current businesses, their types, the number and location of empty storefronts, the condition of the sidewalks and roadways, the amount of automobile or pedestrian traffic, and so forth. Using either the worksheet provided in the appendix (Table A-2) or one that is custom-made to suit your needs, record what you see. The downtown group can use this inventory to better understand how downtown functions.

Visual Imaging

Another way to evaluate downtown is to look at photographs. Because you can take the photographs and complete the analysis at a later time, this is a helpful method for those who are time-pressed. Take the photographs on a clear day and when the lighting is sufficient to facilitate comparison of permanent conditions and attributes. Categorize the photos by grouping them according to residential, commercial, recreational, and mixed land-use, as well as infrastructure. Dissect and record what you see.

Commercial Space Inventory

Your group may find it useful to gather a concise database of local commercial property. Initially, it can catalog the existing use of space. It will also be useful down the road when attempting to attract new businesses. Such a database should contain information about the type of industry each business belongs to. Other information you may want to include is the location of the property, occupant (business name) and contact information, owner name and contact information, and the amount of commercial space. Much of this information is freely available at real estate and town offices. Table 1 is an example of one type of commercial space inventory.

Table 1: Sample Downtown Commercial Space Inventory

	Street No.	Street	Occupant	Owner/ Taxpayer	Street Level Commercial Space	
Misc.					900	
	115	Main	The Jewel Box	Tasha Snyder		900
Transportation					3,925	
	201	Main	Federal Express	The Sun Company		2,750
	520	Main	Sunset Travel	Frank Goode		1,175
Retail					10,100	
	111	Main	Mary's Bridal Shop	Dunn Realty		2,400
	105	Main	Jonathan's Shoes	Dunn Realty		1,600
	314	Main	Barry's Carpets	The Sun Company		1,425
	420	Main	Amy's Restaurant	Dunn Realty		2,500

Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	215	Main	Well Read Books	Steve Smith	12,000	2,175
	110	Main	Empire Savings Bank	Blandford Enterprises		9,600
Personal & Business Services	302	Main	Charles Schwab	Luloff Development	4,625	2,400
	360	Main	Jenny Craig	Sun Associates		3,200
Vacant	415	Main	Print Express	The Sun Company	105,340	1,425
	650	Main	Vacant	Metro Consolidated		4,500
	655	Main	Vacant	Federated Dept Stores		80,000
	660	Main	Vacant	Commerce Associates		5,500
	688	Main	Vacant	Dunn Realty		6,680
	660	Main	Vacant	The Sun Company		8,660
					136,890	
			77%	Percent Vacant		
				Percent Retail	7.4%	

Assessment Tool 3: Market Analysis

A comprehensive market analysis is an important part of efforts to improve the local business climate. The market analysis identifies consumer needs and determines what type of retail and service establishments a downtown can sustain. The analysis should include a business and customer base analysis. In addition to providing general demographic information, a comprehensive customer base analysis is helpful in determining buying power and customer habits. Based on this information you may identify the need to recruit a grocery store, organize a farmer's market, support existing businesses in targeted retention and expansion efforts, or some alternative development.

Aspects of a market analysis include:

- Determining the trade area.
- Completing a physical business inventory.
- Surveying resident retail needs and current shopping patterns.
- Identifying competition or programs, projects, and developments that impact retail in your town.

Trade Area Determination

The first step in the market analysis is to determine the relevant geographic areas. The downtown trade area can be defined by physical parameters and demographic data based on observations, consultation with community members, and census tract information. Each community's trade area can be broken down into several different groups. For instance, Trade Area A should consist of the boundaries of your downtown and households within it since that is the focus of your revitalization effort. Trade Area B could be defined as the remainder of the town, businesses and residents outside of the downtown, and Trade Area C could be comprised of business sectors and residents in contiguous communities, those surrounding your town. It can be helpful to map the trade area for use as a visual reference.

Physical Business Inventory

The physical business inventory complements the commercial space inventory. After mapping the trade area, the group should catalog the existing retail and services available in each trade area. A business inventory worksheet is available in the appendix (Table A-3). This inventory provides data concerning existing businesses, thus allowing for a preliminary assessment of the goods and services that are lacking as well as those that are over-provided in the community. For instance, the inventory may reveal an enormous unmet demand due to the absence of a supermarket. An example summary is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample Physical Business Inventory Summary by Area

<i>Trade Area A</i>		<i>Trade Area B</i>		<i>Trade Area C</i>	
<i>Food - At Home</i>					
Bakery	1	Bakery	0	Bakery	2
Candy store	0	Candy store	0	Candy store	1
Fish market	0	Fish market	0	Fish market	1
Grocery	0	Grocery	1	Grocery	3
Convenience store/deli	2	Convenience store/deli	3	Convenience store/deli	8
<i>Food - Away</i>					
Restaurant	3	Restaurant	4	Restaurant	19
Take-out only	0	Take-out only	1	Take-out only	2
<i>Personal Care Products & Services</i>					
Barber shop/Beauty shop	2	Barber shop/Beauty shop	0	Barber shop/Beauty shop	8
Drug store/Pharmacy	0	Drug store/Pharmacy	2	Drug store/Pharmacy	4
<i>Apparel & Apparel Services</i>					
Apparel store	1	Apparel store	3	Apparel store	17
Dry cleaning	0	Dry cleaning	0	Dry cleaning	3
Laundromat	1	Laundromat	0	Laundromat	5
Shoe store	1	Shoe store	1	Shoe store	5
Sporting goods	0	Sporting goods	1	Sporting goods	3
<i>Transportation</i>					
Auto repair	2	Auto repair	3	Auto repair	11
Gas station	1	Gas station	2	Gas station	23
<i>Household Furnishing & Equipment</i>					
Appliances, radio, and TV	1	Appliances, radio, and TV	0	Appliances, radio, and TV	4
Furniture store	0	Furniture store	1	Furniture store	2
Hardware store	1	Hardware store	0	Hardware store	2
<i>Other</i>					
Bank	1	Bank	1	Bank	7
Book and	0	Book and	0	Book and	1

stationery store		stationery store		stationery store	
Department store	0	Department store	0	Department store	1
Funeral home	1	Funeral home	0	Funeral home	3
Gift shop	3	Gift shop	0	Gift shop	8
Liquor store	0	Liquor store	1	Liquor store	3
Music store	0	Music store	0	Music store	1
Variety store	3	Variety store	0	Variety store	11

Surveying the Public

The group can survey residents and shoppers to determine their retail needs and shopping patterns, as well as their general perceptions of the downtown. Survey information complements the inventory in determining market gaps; identifying existing businesses that do not meet customer needs; and identifying the goods and services residents feel the area lacks.

Survey questions may focus on:

- Respondent's preferences for new retail and service businesses.
- Current shopping habits; where, for what, how often.
- Demographic information.
- A listing of the types of shops they would like to see in the town.

Your organization can develop a comprehensive survey or one or a series of one-page surveys. If a lengthy, more detailed survey design is chosen then it is best distributed by mail or some other means that allows respondents adequate time for completion. A simple survey is best conducted in a brief (three to five minutes) face-to-face interview, which allows for clarification. Whatever format is chosen, you should target a wide audience in order to capture all demographic groups. For a mail survey this may require distribution to all three designated trade areas and for face-to-face interviews, surveys should be conducted at various locations and at alternative times. Examples of possible data collected (Tables 3 and 4) and simple survey designs follow.

Table 3: Sample Demographic Characteristics of the Survey

<i>Gender</i>		<i>Household Income</i>	
Male	47%	Less than \$25,000	32%
Female	53	\$25,000-\$39,999	28
		\$40,000-\$60,999	21
		\$61,000-89,999	12
		\$95,000 or more	7
<i>Age</i>		<i>Race</i>	
15-19 years old	9%	White	79%
20-24 years old	23	Black	11
25-34 years old	28	Hispanic	10
35-54 years old	29		
55 years or older	11		

Table 4: Sample Summary Respondents Wants/Needs

Goods and Services	<i>Where Wants/Needs Are Currently Met</i>			
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Area A</i>	<i>Area B</i>	<i>Area C</i>
Apparel/Clothing	62%	6%	36%	54%
Groceries	53	5	50	27
Shoes	26	10	30	10
Restaurant – Take Out	13	14	43	43
Drug Store items	17	0	64	27
Restaurant - Sit Down	12	11	33	44
Variety Store	13	28	23	46
Music/Video	8	0	33	67
Hardware	6	80	0	20
Books/Stationery	3	0	50	0
Furniture	3	0	50	50
Auto Repair/Auto Parts	3	50	0	0
Appliances/Electronics	1	0	45	55
Department Store	1	0	100	0
Recreation/Activities	1	100	0	0
Bank	1	65	35	0
Toys/Children's Stores	1	0	0	100
Crafts Store	1	0	0	100

Perceptions Survey

It is helpful to examine peoples and businesses perceptions of downtown. Knowing how citizens and shopkeepers feel about Main Street provides insight that cannot be obtained through secondary data analysis. Surveying those who use downtown and, as importantly, those who do not use downtown, can provide a deeper understanding of public opinion. Information gleaned from these surveys can help establish priorities, reveal additional concerns and generate support and goodwill for the efforts. Information from this type of survey might include:

- Frequency and use of downtown
- Perceptions of downtown
- Reasons for not using downtown
- Desires for downtown

Purchasing Survey

What goods and services do you and other residents purchase, which of these do you purchase outside of town, where and why? Such a listing can help identify the existing support of local businesses and the goods and services that people may wish to purchase in their home community, but must acquire outside of town do to lack of selection or quality at the local level. It will also provide some indication of how far people are willing to travel to obtain the desired good or service. (Sample worksheet provided in the appendix; Table A-4.)

Unmet Needs Survey

You can ask individuals to identify the types of businesses that they want or feel that the town needs. Ask people to think about the needs that they have or those of family and friends. What kind of businesses would fulfill currently unmet needs or desires? Examples may include certain types of restaurants or business services. This information, when combined with available local resources, such as unique labor skills or available retail space, can be used to encourage new enterprises in your community.

Text Box:

County Retail Market Analysis Available On-line

Penn State Cooperative Extension has developed an interactive web site to help you better understand your county's retail market. Drawing on data from the US Census of Retail Trade, the site provides data and allows graphic analysis for a number of retail sectors. Tools and educational materials are available to help you compare your county's retail performance relative to other Pennsylvania county's or the state as a whole. This information can be useful in understanding retail trends and identifying new opportunities. Visit the site at <http://retailmarkets.aers.psu.edu>.

Identifying Competition, Projects, Programs and Developments

Your downtown is not isolated from the rest of the world. It is important to recognize that economic development programs and plans may be in place elsewhere that will affect your community. For instance, a neighboring town may be in the process of building a factory outlet mall. Or, infrastructure changes may be in the works, such as a new expressway. Therefore, it is important to be aware of and understand the factors that influence your town and to plan accordingly.

Analyzing other places cannot only highlight impact, but also provide assistance in defining your own revitalization plan. You can look to guidance from other small downtowns based on what they have done to encourage local businesses. They can be particularly useful when trying to identify potential niches in your own town. Using the same inventory sheets that you used for your downtown, you can record similar information from other places, facilitating both comparisons and contrasts. Also, you might want to contact downtown organizations or merchant groups in the towns that you visit. Most are willing to share their efforts with you and offer advice.

Presentation and Public Awareness Education

After completing basic downtown analysis, the information should be *clearly* summarized in both written and graphical form. A summary provides participants with a basis for objectively evaluating the data, and helps define a framework for future decisions. Key outcomes of this evaluation include a series of identified weaknesses that must be overcome as well as strengths and opportunities that can be capitalized upon.

The media should be seen as an important player. Once the data has been analyzed, this information should be shared through public meetings and with the local newspaper in order to make the findings known to the greatest number of people. Such a campaign not only encourages inclusiveness and participation, but also “rewards” program participants with public recognition of their efforts—which is especially important to maintain volunteer morale.

Step 2: Articulating a downtown vision

After analyzing downtown, the revitalization group will want to generate a vision for its future. Creating a vision is like painting a picture of the ideal downtown. The group works on a blank canvas, and can be as creative as it wants. But the vision requires sufficient detail so that others can “see” the same picture. Through collaboration and consensus building, the visioning process brings together diverse interests to determine what they want the downtown to be in 10, 15 or 20 years. Special interests give way to a single downtown vision, which provides a focus for the future actions of the revitalization group.

The vision can be inspired by many sources. Your group may want to visit other communities with successful revitalization programs to help identify some of the possibilities. It may also help to talk with organizers in those communities to learn how they enacted their own vision.

The ultimate aim of the visioning process is to help citizens set a vision for their downtown and create action plans to reach agreed upon objectives. One useful analogy for the visioning process is to ask the community to imagine it is planning for a vacation. The *vision* is the destination...where the community wants to go. The *implementation plan* is the ticket...it offers the path for the community to travel from where it is to where it wants to be.

This process should result in a downtown vision statement, which is a carefully formulated statement of intentions that defines a desirable “destination.” The more successful vision statements are general in nature but have specific goals. They also have an eight-to-ten year time frame. *Panther Valley Renaissance’s* vision is:

Panther Valley Renaissance: working together toward economic, community and cultural development. Preserving our heritage while building our future.

Once the vision is established, it serves as the blueprint for coordinating, leveraging and maximizing local resources. Innovative, creative solutions that meet the changing times are developed through the interaction of leaders and citizens working toward common goals.

Step 3: How do we get there?

While a vision statement is an important component of any revitalization program, it is not a guarantee of success. One of the greatest stumbling blocks for downtown revitalization programs is turning vision into reality. In order to successfully revitalize downtown, communities should have a plan, which provides a blueprint as to how the group can achieve its vision.

With a vision in hand it is tempting to latch onto any idea or project. Continuing without a full exploration of potential projects, however, may turn your efforts into a disappointing waste of time and money. As such, step three is designed to help you brainstorm, explore, and evaluate projects that may assist in your community's downtown revitalization.

The planning process has three components:

- Generating and exploring ideas
- Evaluating ideas
- Establishing a plan

During this process be sure to tap into as many ideas as possible, especially the strategies offered in Chapter 4 or any additional sources available to you (see Chapter 6 for assistance).

Generating Ideas

The first task is to identify potential projects. Do not worry about feasibility at this point--this is a wish list. However, it should be a realistic wish list, guided by the "where are we now" analysis you've already performed. The point of brainstorming is to explore a range of options, to produce a number of ideas from which a selection of best ideas can be chosen later in the process of project development.

In a brainstorming session each participant is asked to generate as many options as possible. A successful session uses the following guidelines:

- Appoint a facilitator. The facilitator ensures that everyone gets a chance to express their ideas and helps to summarize those ideas before the next person speaks.
- Reinforce and encourage all ideas. Now is not the time to discuss details, the group should concentrate solely on generating ideas.
- Remember that there are no wrong ideas. Do not sell any idea short...if you must comment then comment on how an idea may be improved.
- It is acceptable to add to ideas or even combine them. Since everyone is thinking about different aspects of the same thing, it is natural that extensions or overlaps may arise.
- Listen to the full explanation of an idea. Allow people a chance to express their idea in full; do not interrupt.
- Remember that nobody has all the answers. Success depends on everyone sharing ideas, opinions, and observations. Criticism of an idea that is not fully developed at this stage is pointless.
- Pay attention to silence. Silence may indicate that there is something more to learn about a project idea.
- All in all, be open to new ideas. Avoid promoting one's own agenda.

Exploring Ideas

Once project ideas have been identified the group should seek to generate at least three ideas and related strategies that could potentially be turned into reality. In order to do this it is helpful to consider four essential factors related to each project idea:

- How would the project improve the vitality of the downtown?
- How does the project fit into the community vision?
- What resources are needed for the project to be successful?
- What information is needed before the project could be set in motion?
- Does it bring people and politics together?

This is not meant to be a detailed examination of project ideas; rather it is an initial exploration that should assist you in narrowing down your project selection to a reasonable number of choices. Asking each brainstorming participant to select three possibilities that they perceive to be the most reasonable can prioritize project ideas.

Evaluating Ideas

Now is the time to evaluate which of the projects makes the most sense. Each proposed project should be evaluated according to: (1) local capacity to see the project through to completion, and (2) the risks and returns associated with a project. After determining the most viable projects, you will want to draw up an action plan for project implementation.

Evaluating Community Capacity

For each idea, you will want to examine the community's ability to take on the project. In other words, is there the local capacity to initiate this project?

The community capacity worksheet found in the appendix (Table A-5) offers a framework for evaluating local capacity. The worksheet asks you to evaluate a number of components of capacity using a scale of 1 (very high capacity) to 5 (very low capacity). Because not every item applies to every project, you can write **NA** (not applicable) in the space provided. In filling out the worksheet for each project consider costs such as dollars, time, or other resources that may be needed.

There are five components of capacity that communities may want to carefully consider. If there are instances that the community does not seem to have capacity, you may want to think about what help may be available.

1. Human resource capacity.
 - a. Does the project fit your organizations vision?
 - b. Are local leaders willing to act?
 - c. How much time is required of individuals?
 - d. What is the local attitude toward the project?
 - e. Will the group have political clout in this area?
 - f. Is there—or can there be--an adequate organizational structure?
 - g. Will neighboring communities cooperate?

2. Entrepreneurial capacity.
 - a. Is the local environment conducive to entrepreneurship (risk taking)?
 - b. Does there exist the local capacity to promote downtown development?
 - c. Are there adequate resources to promote the activity?

3. Business recruiting capacity.
 - a. Is the community competitive with its peers?
 - b. Does the community have the capacity to develop homegrown businesses?
 - c. Are there steps the community can adopt to help existing businesses?

4. Financial capacity.
 - a. Can we fund this project locally?
 - b. Does someone have grant writing skills (this includes the time to track both private and public funding sources)?

5. Infrastructure capacity.
 - a. Can the community address the needed infrastructure improvements identified in the community inventory?

Costs and Benefits and Risks and Returns

After examining the capacity to initiate particular projects, the next step in feasibility evaluation is to estimate risks and returns that each project offers. Using the grid in the appendix (Table A-6), projects should be analyzed in terms of their expected costs and payoffs.

First, projects should be evaluated with respect to *Returns and Benefits*. These benefits can include:

- ✓ Expanding or retaining the local economic base.
- ✓ New jobs and income in the community.
- ✓ Strengthened community pride.
- ✓ The creation of additional capacity.
- ✓ Larger local tax base.
- ✓ Providing new opportunities to residents.

When evaluating *Risks and Costs*, the group should consider both social and economic aspects.

Social costs are large when projects fail: leaders lose status in the community and project support may quickly fade. When evaluating projects, it is important to think how failure will affect both project participants and community members as a whole.

Economic costs are also relevant, and can include loss of investments and the cost of infrastructure.

It is possible, however, to minimize potential risks by spreading project ownership more broadly throughout the community (i.e., broadening the number of local participants), or implement several smaller projects instead of one large one (i.e., not putting all of the eggs in one basket).

In general, while considering each project keep in mind that:

- ✓ Projects should work together to accomplish the goals articulated in the vision.
- ✓ Beginning one project may depend on completing another.
- ✓ Long-term community support may require a number of immediate successes first.
- ✓ Project coordination, in terms of timing and difficulty, should be designed to make the best use of time and resources so community benefits are maximized.

Of course, some projects may require more detailed evaluation than others, depending on their duration, complexity, expense, and so forth. For example, façade rehabilitation and flower box projects are less complicated projects, while a total streetscape redesign is a very intense process; promoting and developing a new festival lies somewhere in between.

The preliminary evaluation offered here can be completed based on the data and analysis obtained in prior steps. The goal is to help you choose workable projects that are suitable for your revitalization goals. Final project development involves financing, organization, and administration of detailed project tasks, topics undertaken in the next step presented in this chapter. However, before you start a project it is wise to consider further evaluation. Indicators of a need to do so include projects that:

- Require large amounts of financial capital
- Pose significant negative side effects
- Benefit on a small portion or segment of the community
- Eliminate the option of completing another project
- Receive little community support
- Sets an important precedent or limits future project choices

Establishing an Action Plan

After identifying projects, the next step is to establish an implementation plan. The plan will want to include what needs to be done, who will do it, and a timeline. Chapter Four may be helpful in completing this task, whether strategies were selected from the chapter or not, each may serve as a template.

What needs to be done?

Goals must be clarified from the onset. Unfortunately, goal setting is difficult in many communities, as local leaders are often reluctant to declare what they specifically hope to accomplish. This reluctance generally arises from concerns about being held accountable for not reaching a specific goal or objective. While this is a valid concern, successful communities find ways to set goals and objectives so that they can accurately measure progress or take corrective action when

needed. Without quantified goals, it is hard to evaluate progress. Goals and objectives should possess the following qualities:

- They should be consistent with respect to expectations.
- They should be comprehensive and include *all* major dimensions of the problem.
- They should be precise to assure effective action and response.
- They should be internally consistent and not redundant.
- The plan should identify a series of measurable outcomes by which the community can judge progress and make necessary revisions.
- They should recognize resource constraints relative to any program to be initiated.

Who will do it?

After establishing what to do, the group needs to figure out not only who will do it, but also what resources they will need. This involves:

- Identifying the people and groups committed to implementing each step of the action plan; this requires clarifying roles and responsibilities, as well as leadership development, and a schedule for the completion of each task.
- Identifying resources needed, including those within as well as outside the current capacity of the community (i.e. financial support).

A strategic plan worksheet (Table A-7) and a communications plan of action worksheet (Table A-8) can be found in the appendix. These may be useful while initially defining your plan of action. However, a more detailed plan and activities journal are recommended.

What's the time frame?

When scheduling each individual aspect of the project four overarching factors should first be considered.

- Project schedule: When should the project begin?
- Project duration: How long do you estimate it will take to complete the project from start to finish?
- Critical path: What projects or events must take place in order for this particular project to succeed?
- Time of payback: When will the community realize the positive effects of the project?

Text Box:

Realistic Expectations are Critical

Downtown experts note that participants (and observers) in downtown programs have a number of expectations. These can include an upturn in business income, decreased vacancy rates, tangible visual improvement and individual (or institutional) recognition and credit. It is important for downtown groups to convey *reasonable* expectations to participants and the

community. The success depends, in large part, on the effort level participants are willing to put forth to achieve their vision.

Examples of unreasonable expectations include:

- Façade rehabilitation is the panacea for all that is wrong in downtown.
- The program will draw wide support from local leaders, retailers, property owners and the general public.
- The results will be what I hoped for.
- All businesses and property owners will adopt the recommendations.

Reasonable expectations include:

- Visual improvements are one part of a comprehensive revitalization program.
- The general public may, or may not, embrace the program.
- It is quite possible that there will be no significant improvement in downtown, and participants recognize this possibility.
- Downtown businesses and property owners will likely respond in one of three ways to recommendations. One group will do something right away. A second group will take a “wait and see” approach. The third group will do nothing.

Step 4: Mobilizing Resources

While time and commitment are the most important resources for small town revitalization efforts, it is a fact that downtown programs cannot be sustained without money. Thus, it is necessary for downtown groups to raise money to support their efforts. The amount of money that must be raised will, of course, depend on the scope of the effort. For example, if ambitions are modest, it might be possible to raise the necessary resources locally, either through in-kind donations, or local fund raising efforts. If, however, the community has grander goals, such as total streetscape rehabilitation, then outside funding sources are essential.

While it is outside the scope of this manual to provide step-by-step fund-raising activities, there are a number of actions that can be undertaken to develop the necessary financial backing. These range from simple promotional activities that might generate a few thousand dollars for signage and landscaping, to rather complex grants that will enable the community to repave Main Street. Perhaps your group can start small, and develop larger projects once the community can see the early results.

With respect to local fund-raising, several small-scale activities are possible.

Membership donations: Allow local residents to become members of the organization by making a small contribution, such as \$10.

Hold a Community Day: Arrange a festival. Solicit local music and other entertainment, making sure there are plenty of activities for children. Charging food and other vendors a fee for space can raise money.

Historic or holiday house tours: If you have a historic preservation commission, arrange tours of historic facilities. Charge admission.

In-kind contributions: As noted above, it is important to have early indications of success. Flowers and new planters, for example, can generate excitement in the program. Donations of these items are common. But make sure to publicly acknowledge donors, and perhaps provide a plaque on recognition.

It is important to generate resources locally, but most small towns cannot afford big projects. Thus, if the revitalization group has grand ambitions about downtown projects, outside funding is essential. Funding is available at both the state and federal levels, as well as through private foundations. We list general categories of potential funding below. Detailed information about some of the main funding sources can be found in the Appendix.

Grants are monies given to the downtown group, local governments, or other agencies to carry out projects or planning activities. One of the most common sources for downtown projects is the Community Development Block Grant. Eligibility requirements may either preclude or require funding through certain entities--such as governments or non-profits--so grants must often be channeled through other organizations. Often requires local matching. Potential sources include municipal, county, state and federal government, as well as private foundations.

As a cautionary note, the grant-writing process can be quite arduous. We have provided some basic guidelines in the text box and reference materials are in the Appendix. Finally, Penn State Cooperative Extension can often help with grant writing in counties with Community Development Agents.

Loans are available to fund specific projects. Interest rates are often below market rates. Individual businesses can usually apply. Once again, these loans are available from a variety of sources.

Property owners can tap into the federal government's *Rehabilitation Tax Credit* program to help rehabilitate old and historic buildings.

A tax credit differs from an income tax deduction. An income tax deduction lowers the amount of income subject to taxation. A tax credit, however, lowers the amount of tax owed. In general, a dollar of tax credit reduces the amount of income tax owed by one dollar.

The 20% rehabilitation tax credit equals 20% of the amount spent in a certified rehabilitation of a certified historic structure.

The 10% rehabilitation tax credit equals 10% of the amount spent to rehabilitate a non-historic building built before 1936.

Text Box:

The grant writing process requires careful planning, research, outreach, and cultivating relationships. Like the downtown effort as a whole, time, persistence and patience are essential to success.

Grant writing is easier if you think of it as a step-by-step process.

1. Establish need
2. Research funding sources
3. Analyze guidelines
4. Select best sources
5. Refine concept and discuss project with potential grant source
6. Write and submit proposal
7. Follow-up
8. Negotiate contract/modify proposal
9. Implement project
10. Evaluate project
11. Report
12. Reassess needs

One common problem of grant seekers is that they jump straight to step 6. But laying the groundwork for the actual proposal is equal in importance to the proposal itself. Indeed, completing step 1-5 will greatly enhance your chances for success.

While most communities can use hard work to accomplish steps 1-5, they are often unsure about how to write a proposal. A number of resources for proposal writing are available, but the basic components are as follows:

1. Executive summary: An umbrella statement of your objectives and a summary of the entire proposal. (1 page)
2. Statement of need: why is this project necessary? (2 pages)
3. Project Description: *How* will the project be implemented (be specific)? (3 pages)
4. Budget: What, specifically, will the money be used for? (1 page)
5. Organization overview: what is the organizations history and governing structure, primary activities, and audience? (1 page)
6. Conclusion: Summarize main points of project. (2-3 paragraphs)

Step 5: Evaluating progress

The implementation plan is a vital step in downtown revitalization efforts. Yet many communities have developed plans that were soon relegated to a bookshelf and never looked at again. To prevent this from happening in your community, you need to be constantly using your plan as a reference. Make sure that your actions are guided by your vision!

A practical way of “forcing” your group to adhere to its plan is to incorporate performance evaluation into your organizational structure. Simply put, think about developing a report card for your efforts. As outlined above, a well thought out plan will have goals, measurable

indicators, identified resources, and a timeline. The report card is used to assess how your organization has performed in implementing its plan. This may involve a more or less formal analysis. The indicators of success from Chapter Four include both and can be used as a guide.

Such a report card will serve several important purposes. First, just like a school report card, you will be able to examine how successful your efforts are. For example, your group may have a goal to “refurbish three facades over the next year.” The report card will grade your group with respect to this goal. Did the group indeed renovate three facades? If so, then the group gets high marks. When goals are met, the report card can remind you to trumpet your progress. Let the community know that you met your goals! External recognition for things accomplished through hard work is essential to the long-run viability of organizations, through increased morale of volunteers, and measures of progress that may encourage still more people to volunteer.

A number of questions can be entertained in order to determine the trials and tribulations of your efforts, the successes and failures thus far, and actions left to be taken according to your strategic plan. Here are some suggested considerations:

- Is a working strategic plan in place?
- Has broad support been sought?
- Did you adequately determine what type of help you needed for your project?
- Did you adequately assess your financial needs?
- Do you understand and project the motivations, interests, concerns, and commitment of the community?
- Have your successes been celebrated?

These questions can be answered using the evaluation guide provided in the appendix (Table A-9).

Final Remarks

Communities with successful revitalization programs have one common characteristic. Namely, they followed through on strategies and stayed with the course of action until they reached the objectives. Since a wide disparity exists in types of objectives pursued, the amount of time involved differs among communities. However, perseverance is a key element and one of the most difficult to maintain.

Chapter 4: STRATEGIES

There are a number of strategies that revitalization programs can adopt to achieve their vision, ranging from small projects such as new planters and benches to large projects such as totally reconstructing Main Street. This chapter presents some basic strategies your community may want to consider. Each “family” of strategies offers a vision, goals, action steps and measurable indicators. Additional resources, including potential partners, and reference materials are also identified.

Improving Downtown’s Appearance

Vision: People will be attracted to downtown by improving its appearance.

Overview: There are many ways to make your downtown successful. It is important to consider business location, display, product selection, and marketing techniques. However, the appearance of your downtown is paramount to the overall health of the downtown economy. Therefore, in order to draw people to the downtown it must not only be functional, but also include a façade that offers a sense of place and well-being.

Goals: Downtown groups should try to provide an intimate and distinct character for the downtown. For instance, they may create a warm feel to the downtown by building a pedestrian friendly atmosphere or by highlighting its historic charm and architecture. Such efforts include responsibility and action by a number of local groups, including planning boards, chambers of commerce, cultural societies, community associations, individual business owners, residents, shoppers, and visitors. Each group’s role will vary and more than likely those who live and own property in the community will offer the most direct assistance. Regardless, the first goal should be to unite all camps so that revitalization is a joint process.

Action Plan: Improving downtown’s appearance is best achieved by local groups working together to portray a healthy economy, to highlight the richness of the community (cultural, historical, environmental, etc.), and to create an ambience indicative of those factors. Thus, the downtown group may want to establish a streetscape improvement plan, which is designed and coordinated by community members with the assistance of a professional consultant. This approach for downtown public spaces can incorporate efforts by owners of private spaces, which combined provide the essential elements for creating downtown’s overall, unique physical character. The basic components of that plan may include:

Clean-up

To make downtown attractive, creating and maintaining cleanliness is an essential step. This is the first impression of your downtown that visitors will get as they pass through. To look good both public and private spaces must be clear of debris. In order to ensure that the downtown is kept in pristine condition regular maintenance is a must. Possible actions in a local clean-up program include:

- Identify problem areas.
- Define a public space maintenance plan.
- Honor merchants who clean up their own spaces; from plaques to tax breaks.
- Research government façade rebate programs.
- Declare a community pride day with organized clean-up efforts completed by volunteers.
- Install garbage cans and recycling bins in strategic locations throughout downtown; volunteer groups can be rewarded by reaping the benefits of recycled goods.
- Offer incentives such as scholarships and trophies to individuals who display leadership and commitment to the effort.
- Design an “adoption” plan for maintaining the cleanliness of public areas: target groups may include scout troops, community clubs, entire schools or individual grades, religious organizations, businesses, and so forth.

Store Windows and Building Facades

There are many tactics for making buildings look lively, whether occupied or vacant. Several are low cost, but require the cooperation of the property owner.

- Decorate and light the windows of vacant buildings while they are waiting to attract new tenants; display a video illustrating local attractions or annual events or a documentation of the ongoing rejuvenation process.
- Have volunteer organizations adopt windows and stores for holiday decorating; encourage local retailers to donate materials for display.
- Showcase the downtown art scene in otherwise vacant windows; this can be the work of professionals, amateurs, or beginners of any age.
- Consider using the sides of buildings for murals that represent the business or community as a whole.
- Encourage physical improvements, such as: planters and flower boxes, benches, and awnings. These items may be sought from local nurseries, gardeners, carpenters, banks, etc., as a pure donation or rewarded by a plaque (placed on a bench, sidewalk, or planter) or even exchanged for a reciprocal favor.

Beautification and Safety

Spaces between buildings, along streets, and specific design features can be improved to make downtown visually dramatic, convenient, and safe. Once again, the cooperation of a variety of community members through the donation of goods or volunteer activities may be essential to the success of any number of these projects. Keep in mind, though that many of these suggestions can be costly.

- Plant trees to enhance beauty and shelter pedestrians; consider both low cost and low maintenance.
- Create vest pocket parks in open spaces between buildings.
- Install and use exterior lighting; antique lampposts, trees decorated with white lights, or a lighted water fountain can create a beautifully dramatic, yet safe atmosphere.

- Raise crosswalks as speed bumps for safety and to keep walking areas dry; paint lines bright colors to increase the safety of both pedestrians and motorists.
- Plan greater density to minimize travel.
- Offer seating by providing benches and picnic tables where appropriate.

Signage and Directional Assistance

Presentation of what the downtown has to offer by way of signs, banners, and maps can be effective marketing tools.

- Survey streets, storefronts, government buildings, and public areas in order to identify the need for improved signage.
- Coordinate and commission attractive signs that identify and link travelers, by car as well as by foot, to the community's high traffic destination points.
- Design and hang banners that promote local events, such as festivals, exhibits, and combined retail sales.
- Consider decorating streetlights or electric poles with banners or flags that represent the season or history of the community; an effective way to obtain such items is through a craft fair competition in which the winners are honored by display of their products.
- Offer rewards to encourage local business signage improvement efforts. Recognize unique presentations or plans--a shared style that will promote synergy throughout the downtown.
- Design and give away a map illustrating downtown routes and local attractions. This can be funded by donations from businesses, groups and organizations, which are rewarded by inclusion on the map and possibly advertising space.

Parking and Traffic Flow

Congestion and inadequate parking can discourage downtown travel. Your group should examine the amount, type, use, and location of parking spaces as well as traffic routing. Any changes should be incorporated into the design and implementation of downtown projects. Remember that the goal is to turn motorists into pedestrians and to encourage walking throughout the downtown.

- Analyze parking needs and availability; consider the amount and convenience of parking for patrons, residents and employees alike.
- Surface parking lots should not be located directly along the main street, but behind main street buildings.
- Parking facilities should blend with the prevailing architecture of the downtown.
- Both surface parking lots and buildings should be well managed, structurally maintained, clean, and well landscaped.
- On-street parking alternatives should be considered. For instance, parallel parking may be safest, narrow streets may make on-street parking impossible, wide streets may provide for the opportunity to create drive-in parking which would increase the number of spaces and add to the uniqueness of the downtown.

In addition to location and availability of parking spaces, safe and efficient traffic flow of both vehicles and pedestrians must be encouraged. Strategies include:

- Voluntary reservation of the most convenient parking spaces for business patrons.
- Further signage that identifies and directs motorists to all the parking facilities located within the town.
- Make downtown parking and traffic flow more pedestrian-friendly by adjusting the timing of streetlights, providing walkways and crosswalks, and enforcing laws such as jaywalking and failure to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks.

Indicators of Success:

- ✓ Visual appeal: Survey residents to determine whether or not the vision for downtown's attractiveness has indeed been created; complete a before and after survey, rating the attractiveness of the downtown, categorized by individual improvements (cleanliness, parking, etc.).
- ✓ Number of visitors: Count the number of downtown visitors before and after a project is completed. Be sure to differentiate between motorists and pedestrians. This can be completed by simple street corner counts during both peak and off-peak hours.
- ✓ Use of downtown: Determine type of visit and length of stay. Relate this to the change in the number of visitors. Was the downtown primarily empty in the evenings and on weekends in the past and now there is activity during those times? Are parking spaces in use around the clock? Are stops more frequent during peak traffic hours than previous? What are peak pedestrian and motor traffic hours – mealtimes, business hours, after dark...? How is this different than in the past?
- ✓ Business patronage: Survey downtown businesses to determine if the number of patrons has increased and if there is a correlation between patronage and façade improvements and signage.
- ✓ Safety: Examine before and after crime and accident rates, such as vandalism, assault, traffic and parking violations, and so forth. Reductions may indicate the successful creation of a safer, more pedestrian, residential, and business friendly environment.

Potential Partners:

PennDOT
 DCED/Pennsylvania Main Street Program
 Pennsylvania Downtown Center
 The Hamer Center for Community Design Assistance, Penn State University

Additional Readings:

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 Holiday Downtown: How to Promote Them Successfully, Margaret DeWitt, ed., Downtown Research & Development Center, New York, NY, 1988.

Keeping Up Appearances: Storefront Guidelines, B. Clarkson Schoettie and Tom Moriarty, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington DC, 1983.

Methods of Financing Parking, Dolores Palma, Hyett Palma Publications, Washington DC, 1990.

Parking Handbook for Smaller Communities, National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington DC, 1992.

The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America: Where to Find Fresh Air, Creative People, and Affordable Living, John Villani, John Muir Publications, Santa Fe, NM, 1994.

Improving Local Business Practices

Vision: Downtown merchants will improve their profits by improving their business practices.

Overview: As retail markets evolve, small business owners face a relatively simple problem: adapt or fold. Confined to relatively small spaces and lacking access to large sums of capital, local businesses are often unable to compete with large retailers with respect to variety or “one-stop” convenience. Still, many small retailers thrive in the shadow of retail giants. This section offers some strategies small retailers can easily adopt in order to remain competitive.

Goals: The downtown groups should set some goals on how they hope to improve the practices of local downtown businesses. For example, they may want local merchants to attend a training session in improved business practices. Or, they may want to develop a handout describing some of the key ideas developed below. This program could be conducted by members of the local business community, or by merchants from other areas.

Action Plan: The downtown group should work closely with local retailers in helping them improve local business practices. The group may want to bring in outside retailers whose success arose because they have adopted these principles. Handouts can be distributed or informal training sessions can be conducted to help businesses improve customer service and convenience. Ken Stone, a Professor at Iowa State University and an expert in rural retail markets, offers five areas on which businesses can focus:

Develop Superior Service

Many small retailers find superior service is an important competitive advantage. Larger stores often do not have the flexibility to offer extra service. Small store proprietors have a distinct advantage in that they are absolutely committed to their stores success.

- Emphasize expert advice. This is particularly true for businesses selling complex items such as electronic equipment or hardware.
- Offer delivery on large items.
- Offer on-site repair of certain items.
- Develop special order capabilities.
- Develop a customer friendly return policy.

- Identify services you can offer for an additional fee, such as maintenance contracts.

Manage Your Inventory Better

Carefully select the items you sell. Buy smart and work closely with your suppliers. It is vital for small businesses to frequently compare your range of goods and prices to those of competitors.

- Try not to handle the exact same merchandise as a mass discounter; offer complementary merchandise instead. If your product lines are the same, make sure that your prices are competitive.
- Look for gaps in the local market. Large retailers sell many goods, but it is impossible for them to offer everything. Find a special niche that you can fill.
- Consider upscale merchandise. Not all local shoppers desire low priced goods. Many are looking for higher quality items that discounters may not offer.
- Keep your inventory fresh by removing obsolete products.
- Keep your business clean, safe, and attractive and have good visual merchandising.

Improve Your Marketing

Marketing practices can always be improved. The following tips have been proven successful.

- Update your operating hours. As the proportion of two wage-earning families and single head households increases, the traditional 8-5, Monday through Friday, hours are not appropriate. Perhaps downtown businesses can stay open late one or two days a week.
- Sharpen your pricing skills. Incorporate different markups in a variable pricing strategy. Keep prices low on frequently purchased items. If your store has a few items that are priced out of line, most customers will think that all items in the store are priced too high.
- Stress your competitive advantages in your advertising. Develop effective and innovative promotions and advertising, and participate in business district promotions.
- Develop an overall theme about your store.
- Stress the quality of your products, service and competitive advantage.

Customer Relations are Vital

Most of us have refused to return to a store because of the way we were treated as customers. Word-of-mouth advertising is the most powerful form of advertising.

- Greet your customers when they enter the store. Studies suggest that customers are offended if they are forced to find a store employee for help.
- With a smile, offer a “hello,” “thank you” and “good bye.”
- Get to know the names of your main customers and send them thank you notes periodically. Update your technology to improve customer service.
- Have your employees wear nametags.
- Answer the phone by the third ring.
- Schedule a customer appreciation day.

- Make employees “associates.” It is important that your workers feel important and part of the team. Prevent problems before they happen by conducting frequent store meetings. Employees often have a wealth of ideas, so ask for their opinions.
- Solicit complaints. Without feedback from your customers it is nearly impossible to uncover potential problems.

Attitudes and Actions

Many downtown businesses struggle when large retailers move in. In general, it is best to keep a positive attitude about the opening of a new mass discounter in your area. Remember that mass discounters are unlikely to locate in a community that does not show strong growth opportunities. Accept that change can be good and seize the opportunities that are created.

Indicators of Success:

- ✓ Number of training sessions held.
- ✓ Number of business operators adopting suggested practices.
- ✓ Increased retail activity downtown.
- ✓ Increased participation in the downtown merchants association.

Potential Partners:

DCED/Pennsylvania Main Street Program
 Pennsylvania Downtown Center
 Small Business Development Centers
 Penn State Cooperative Extension

Additional Readings:

Competing with the Mass Merchandisers, Ken Stone, Small Business Forum, Madison, WI, spring-1991.

Competing with the National Discounters-Public and Private Strategies for Small Town, Small Business Success, Meredith Miller and Barbara Cole, Colorado Division of Commerce and Development and the University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, 1991.

Up Against the Wal-Marts: How Your Business Can Prosper in the Shadow of the Retail Giants, Don Taylor and Jeanne Smalling Archer, American Management Association, New York, NY, 1994.

Developing Niches

Vision: Downtown will co-exist with shopping malls and discounters by defining a marketing niche.

Overview: Many formerly declining downtowns can now compete with retail giants because they have found a way to successfully co-exist. These downtowns are not flourishing from head-on competition, but rather through the establishment of distinct niches. Such places offer highly

specialized businesses that are committed to exceptional customer service, qualities often lacking in large retail companies.

Goals: A goal of many downtown organizations is to establish a competitive advantage in a particular segment of the retail market. A *niche* is a specialization that allows a business district to gain prominence in certain retail categories. In many places a unique market may already exist, and downtown stakeholders can work together to recognize and build upon this pre-existing niche. Once the complementary strengths of the local economy are identified, cooperative promotion can bring together the various downtown elements. In other places, potential niches can be determined via marketing analysis research. For instance, local businesses can track sales and residence of current consumers in order to better understand consumer preferences and their willingness to travel. It is important to note, though, that successfully creating a new niche requires commitment and investment from both public and private parties.

Action Plan: The local downtown group should work with businesses to define specific niches appropriate for the community and assess their viability. There may be a potential to work within the current marketing framework or it may be necessary to create a new niche. Whether capturing an existing niche or developing a new one, you may want to obtain outside assistance in order to formulate a plan. Regardless of who is completing the process, the following sections may be helpful in identifying existing niches, determining potential types of new niches, and assessing viability.

Identifying Existing Niches

For many communities, niches already exist. In these instances, the challenge is to improve organization and visibility. The first step is to collect data pertaining to the business district strengths and the economic activity that draws people to those businesses. The second step is to organize this information into a comprehensive promotional and marketing campaign. Bill Ryan, an expert on downtown revitalization at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, offers several steps that small communities can take:

- Identify potential opportunities by analyzing successful niches in comparable communities.
- Study how current local businesses fit together. Walking and photographing the area is often helpful.
- Build a database of commercial space to include data on ownership, square footage, tenancy, and business category.
- Review previous market studies.
- Carry out survey research as needed. Survey shoppers to find out who is shopping downtown and why. A survey of residents living in the trade area can look more broadly at the attitudes and preferences of the local population with respect to downtown.

Identifying Potential Niches

Though riskier than enhancing existing niches, it is also possible to create a new niche for your downtown. New niches can be successful; but their development demands broader participation

and investment by all community members. When exploring this option, keep in mind that needs and risks can be lessened to some degree if an existing niche is used to develop another. In this regard, developing a new niche means capitalizing customers that are already drawn downtown. For instance, if downtown activity is based on the local restaurant scene then an entertainment niche may be pursued which appeals to a similar customer base. The following ideas can help you define potential niches:

- Examine the characteristics of your downtown and community. What types of offices, businesses or institutions are located nearby?
- Spend time looking at niches in comparable communities.
- Carefully define your local trade area, but recognize that a very different and expanded trade area could arise depending on the niche developed.
- Identify retail gaps with market research that includes a supply and demand analysis. Use focus groups to generate ideas about possible niches.

Some Potential Niche Strategies

Many successful downtowns have more than one niche, and as the number of niches increases, downtown's capacity to support multi-purpose visits increases, as does its ability to attract customers from other places. Once a consumer-based niche is established, other businesses interested in selling to a similar target segment may be attracted to the community. Bill Ryan and Mike Malcheski, both of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, suggests a number of potential niches:

- College students: Some communities with colleges and universities have successfully targeted the student population. Smaller towns and communities with commuter campuses tend to have more difficulty developing this niche.
- Retirees: As the population ages and older Pennsylvanian's gain a larger share of savings and income, many communities are trying to attract retirees as an economic development strategy.
- Tourists and travelers: Tourism has become an important economic engine for both big and small communities across the Commonwealth. Visitors not only demand retail and entertainment, but also provide opportunities for activities including festivals, museums, lodging and promotional events.
- Office workers: While downtown office workers tend to make larger purchases at shopping centers located near their homes, many specialty items such as cards, books, CDs, and some apparel are very convenient "lunch-time" purchases.
- Artists and crafters: Local artists and crafters and those interested in their work are a unique and active consumer segment. Downtowns serving this niche often have galleries, restaurants and bars, and unique specialty retailers. Their Main Street may include a mix of professional offices and business support services, such as copy shops and office supply stores.
- County government users: In addition to attracting residents from throughout the county, county seats often attract lawyers, public management consultants and others.
- Medical facility users: Hospitals not only attract patients and their families and friends, but they also attract visiting medical professionals. A mix of medical offices and retail

businesses (e.g., drug stores, florists and medical supplies are often found in business districts serving this niche).

In addition to niches based on consumer type, your downtown can develop niches focusing on various goods and services, creating a specialty business character downtown. Successful business clusters in other towns include those based on antiques, fudge, women's apparel, home furnishings, and baby and maternity shops. Once again, Bill Ryan offers examples of niches based on these and other categories and services.

- Home furnishings: A cluster of related businesses may include home remodeling, furnishings and decorative design. Specific businesses might include hardware, floor covering, furniture, lighting and paint stores.
- Antiques: Many small and medium sized communities successfully attracted antique shops, often in an historic district. These businesses work well together in creating an historical, craft and hospitality theme.
- Crafts: Some communities focus on crafts such as furniture, rugs, textiles, ceramics, and glassware. Quality must be very high to be successful in upscale markets.
- Children's products: Some downtowns combine stores focusing on children's clothing, furniture, toys and family entertainment centers.
- Food-for-the home: This includes specialty foods such as bagels, breads, wines and cooking items. In some places, it also includes a large grocery store that serves as an anchor for downtown commercial activity.
- Jewelry: While many large cities have a jewelry district, an increasing number of small towns have their own niche composed of jewelry retailers and service businesses.
- Entertainment and the arts: Promote the arts and entertainment. Cinemas, theater, concerts, ballet, museums, art galleries, craft shops, and clubs all bring local and visitor spending downtown.
- Restaurants: Eating-places attract residents, tourists, and downtown employees. In many downtowns, restaurants are the largest retail category.
- Factory outlets: Factory outlet stores are owned and operated by manufacturer's who sells their brand named merchandise at a discount. These stores are often clustered together to serve a "value retailing" niche. Because they have strict location needs, outlet malls are not appropriate for every town.

No matter which strategy seems most appealing, the potential for that niche to lead to business expansions and development and increased retail activity must be carefully analyzed. Therefore, determining the feasibility of a particular niche idea for your downtown is the next step. Niche viability can be assessed using the same tools introduced in the Market Analysis section of Chapter 2.

Indicators of Success:

- ✓ Number of business expansions.
- ✓ Number of new niches created.
- ✓ Number of new businesses.
- ✓ Number of new visitors to downtown.
- ✓ Amount increase in goods and service sales.

Potential Partners:

DCED/Pennsylvania Main Street Program
 Pennsylvania Downtown Center
 Small Business Development Centers
 Penn State Cooperative Extension

Additional Readings:

Business Plans for Business Districts, Dolores Palma, Hyett Palma Publications, Alexandria, VA, 1990.

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Developing a Downtown Design Assistance Program in Pullman, Washington, B. Ryder and K. Gray, *Small Town*, Vol. 18(5), March/April 1988, pp. 4-13.

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Focusing the Old Downtown on Specialty Retail for Economic Survival: The Transition of Ponchatoula, Louisiana, Manon Pavy and Fritz Wagner, *Small Town*, Vol. 24(3), Nov/Dec 1993, pp. 18-23.

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Meeting the Challenges of the Future: Main Street in the 21st Century, Dolores Palma, *California MainStreet*, February, 1992.

Strategic Retail Market Analysis, Dolores Palma, Hyett Palma Publications, Washington DC, 1991.

The State of the Art: Economic Initiatives in Downtowns, Doyle Hyett, Hyett Palma Publications, Washington DC, 1991.

Winning Ways, Dolores Palma and Doyle Hyett, Hyett Palma Publications, Alexandria, VA, 1993.

Historic Preservation

Vision: Downtown's heritage and character will be preserved by concerted actions aimed at restoring and maintaining existing buildings.

Overview: Pennsylvania communities have a rich assortment of properties with architectural, historical, archeological and cultural significance. These properties may include residences, public or commercial buildings, barns or bridges. Preserving these facilities is often a central

component of downtown revitalization programs. Historic preservation creates a bond between a community and its citizens, stabilizes neighborhoods and creates viable business districts and effectively targets areas appropriate for public attention. Historic downtowns also provide a diversity of space and rent levels not found elsewhere in the community. Downtowns in general and historic buildings in particular provide excellent locations for start-up small businesses.

Goals: Historic preservation can encompass a number of goals. Your effort may want to preserve and maintain sites and structures that serve as reminders of the local social and architectural history. Another goal may be one of preserving neighborhood character and civic pride through neighborhood conservation. Or, you might want to improve the local economy by encouraging expenditures for restoration work, adaptively reusing buildings and promoting tourism related to historic resources.

Action Plan: Many Pennsylvania communities have taken steps already to protect their heritage. The Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Plan notes 91 cities, boroughs, and townships have passed ordinances protecting historic districts under the Pennsylvania Historic District Act. This act favors the development of meaningful local preservation programs by establishing a framework for local governments to use in order to protect historic resources within their jurisdictions. In addition, 25 municipalities have elected to become Certified Local Governments, making them eligible to receive federal grant money to support preservation planning activities.

Historic preservation plans articulate the goals of historic preservation for the local community and provide an organizing framework for efforts to preserve historic properties. Preservation plans often include a survey of historic resources in the community. The plans also help to eliminate uncertainty about the meaning of historic preservation ordinances and form the legal basis for the adoption of a preservation ordinance. Some potential preservation planning strategies follow.

Establish a Historic Resources Commission

Local resource commissions are established by local ordinances and members are usually appointed by the municipal governing body (e.g., mayor and borough council) to oversee implementation of the local preservation ordinances. The commission's primary purposes are to survey and designate local historic districts and landmarks, to restrict their demolition and to ensure their character is protected through design review. Some specific strategies such a commission can pursue are:

- Use existing programs like Keystone Opportunity Zones and Community Development Block Grants to revitalize historic resources. Work in close collaboration with state and governments, businesses, and others to encourage designation and funding under these programs.
- Promote flexible building-code interpretation and streamlining of local approval processes to facilitate rehabilitation of historic properties.

- Promote the use of federal tax credits, state and federal grants, and T-21 transportation enhancement funds to revitalize historic structures by providing information and assistance regarding applying for funds.
- Establish suggested guidelines for building rehabilitation, focusing on color, façade, awnings and other exterior elements. Hire an outside consultant to help the process if you feel it is warranted.
- Prepare a historic district guidebook. Arrange walking tours of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Establish Historic Designations

Creating a downtown historic district is often an effective early step in downtown revitalization. A community may only have one property of prehistoric or historic significance or it may have several historic properties that together may constitute an historic district. The presence of historic or prehistoric properties in a community provides community identity and helps foster a special sense of place and an association with the past. A growing number of communities have sought to protect and enhance historic structures in a variety of ways.

One common tool is to list building with the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places--the official list of the nation's cultural resources that are worthy of preservation. The Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Board nominates sites for listing on the National Register of Historic Places before the National Park Service reviews them.

Once a building is listed on the register, there are substantial tax incentives available for rehabilitation. (Of course, there are some restrictions.) Two Federal Tax Incentive Programs currently apply to preservation activities in Pennsylvania: the rehabilitation investment tax credit and the charitable contribution deduction.

Rehabilitation investment tax credits are the most widely used incentive program. Certain expenses incurred in connection with the rehabilitation of an old building are eligible for a tax credit. Rehabilitation investment tax credits are available to owners and certain income-producing properties. There are two rates: 20% for historic buildings and 10% for non-residential, non-historic buildings built before 1936.

The charitable contribution deduction is taken in the form of a conservation easement and enables the owner of a "certified historic structure" to receive a one-time tax deduction. A conservation easement usually involves the preservation of a buildings' façade by restricting the right to alter its appearance.

Individuals interested in the tax credits or the availability of grants should contact the State's Bureau for Historic Preservation before beginning rehabilitation plans.

TEXT BOX

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places was established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The National Register includes properties of national, state, and local interest. To be listed on the register, a property should be at least fifty years old, should not have been significantly altered and must meet at least one of five criteria: (1) has association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; (2) has association with the lives of persons significant in the past; (3) has architectural significance, including distinctive characteristics or methods of construction; (4) represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; and (5) yields, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

Other Activities

There are several other complementary strategies the group may want to pursue:

Update zoning regulations. Local zoning should be consistent with historic preservation objectives. The size of proposed new buildings should be compatible with existing structures. Also needing attention are provisions such as allowable floor area, off-street parking and side- and rear-yard requirement for residences.

Stress building reuse. Promote the adaptive reuse of historical buildings and complexes. Create an inventory of industrial buildings with an eye toward reuse potential. Update local building codes to encourage adaptive reuse of industrial facilities.

Indicators of Success:

- Creation of a local historic district.
- Listing of local buildings on the National Register.
- Number of building rehabilitation programs started.
- Establishment of a Historic Commission.
- Number of building adaptively reused.

Potential Partners:

Pennsylvania Downtown Center
 DCED/Pennsylvania Main Street Program
 Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission
 National Trust for Historic Preservation
 Preservation Pennsylvania

Other Resources:

For a copy of the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Plan, visit <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/BHP/presplan.htm> on the world wide web.

Local Businesses Development

Vision: Creating a viable business community in the downtown.

Overview: Often, downtown revitalization efforts focus on visual attractiveness. For instance, streets are cleaned up, brick sidewalks installed, and streetlights replaced by old-fashioned light posts. Although these steps are necessary to make downtown visually appealing, particularly for the visitor, true downtown revitalization requires a commitment to attract new businesses and retain the old.

Goals: Downtown revitalization efforts should try to strengthen the local business community. To this end, an important goal is to help existing businesses thrive and expand. Similarly, local leaders should make a concerted effort to attract additional appropriate businesses to downtown in order to better serve the market and support the current range of existing businesses. This effort should focus on making it convenient and easy to locate downtown, which does not require complicated techniques or high finance on the part of the community. Organization and perseverance are generally the rule.

Action Plan: Existing businesses are some of the best participants in downtown revitalization efforts. The downtown revitalization groups will want to meet with local business owners to see how their success can be enhanced. The group will also want to work to bring in new businesses. Some types of businesses are naturally attracted to a downtown location and some types of businesses are needed to complement existing downtown businesses and fill out the local business mix. These types are not always the same, therefore downtown organizers and government officials must act to ensure that the right types of businesses are recruited to appropriate locations within the downtown structure. Local leaders have several means by which to assist local business development.

Retain and Expand Existing Businesses

Retention before recruitment! Existing businesses are the building blocks of downtown. If current businesses are struggling no efforts to strengthen them are put into place, then customer loyalty may continue to dwindle, and so will the credibility of the downtown as a viable market for new businesses. Any business requires an adequate market, space, and support facilities, as well as a sense of local upward momentum. There are several key steps that can be taken by local leaders to help improve the local business environment.

- Convene a forum where businesses can enter a discussion among one another and establish a means for developing ideas and acting on them. This could include conducting business visitations or collective discussions on issues related to downtown businesses.
- Keep track of when leases expire. When a lease is coming up, contact businesses ahead of lease termination to intercept any potential business losses.

- Talk to your existing retailers. This way, you can find out their complaints as well as find out what kind of retailers they would like to see filling the vacancies, and what retailers they fear.
- Consider implementing a Business Retention & Expansion program. Such a program interviews local businesses to help identify their needs and resolve business-specific problems if possible.
- Access such avenues as a regional revolving loan fund as a revenue source for upgrades at existing facilities.
- Utilize resources fully by finding off-peak and off-season uses, including those resources privately and publicly owned. This may involve developing a joint strategy with business owners of local leaders in order to ensure the best and most viable uses.
- Develop an internship program between the educational system and local businesses. This provides students with hands-on training and experience in a variety of fields, while providing businesses with low-cost employment.
- Several home micro-businesses may exist in your community, and yet it is difficult to know what and who they are or how to offer assistance. The downtown group could host a discussion on the resources available to micro-businesses and possible networking opportunities.

Recruit and Develop New Businesses

In addition to working with existing businesses, the downtown group may want to help local efforts to recruit new businesses. Recruiting may be new to your community, it may have been tried in the past (either successfully or unsuccessfully), or it may be ongoing. Regardless, it is important to determine what works and what doesn't work when negotiating with established firms or attempting to define the viability of new businesses. Some aspects to consider are:

- Is there a formal organization that engages in business recruitment efforts? Local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce or merchants' association, may recognize the need to provide such services but may not be taking an active role. In many instances the resources exist and all that is needed is for individuals to form a working committee.
- Is there a banking presence downtown? In many small towns financial services do not meet the community's financial needs. As a result, residents and business owners must bank outside of the downtown area. Local leaders should meet with bankers on behalf of downtown organizations to ensure the availability of financial services.
- Is the local labor force appropriately trained? Training could enhance the skill level local workers, allowing them to meet the needs of potential new businesses. This may include the opportunity for ongoing training to upgrade labor force skills as technology advances, thus adding to business retention efforts. A business visitation or forum would find what skills are lacking and develop a strategy to address the problem areas.
- Is downtown safe? Sometimes business owners may not feel comfortable locating downtown because they perceive the downtown to be unsafe. The town must dispel this notion by doing its part to improve safety and promote the safety of downtown.
- Is parking convenient? Downtown parking problems must be addressed. Solutions include altering parking restrictions, creating municipal parking lots, increased signage, and so forth (see the section on parking earlier in the chapter).

- Do you know your market? A complete market analysis lends credence to the fact that there is a strong market for particular goods and services downtown. Keep in mind that homegrown statistics might not be enough to impress recruits--you might want to hire an outside firm to do a professional analysis of you market.
- What's the local retail mix? Use what you know about current retailers to evaluate tenant mix. It may not make sense to court a bagel maker when you've already got three on Main Street. Or perhaps you are trying to create an upscale shopping district; in that case, a discount clothier may not do.
- What attracts national retailers? Retailers looking for several criteria when choosing a location, including population, traffic counts and vehicular speed, income and other demographic information, proximity to other retail, regional growth, access and visibility.
- Do you know your competition? Other places also want your prospective retail recruits. You not only need to be aware of them, but also to know them intimately. Do this while you're driving around neighboring downtowns. Also, look at the paper to see what events and promotions they run. Ask your own shoppers' and visitors' about how you compare.
- Can you offer incentives? Government incentives may be available for your downtown; look for lending programs and tax abatements, etc. Think about a business improvement district.
- Do you have a business-to-business directory? A downtown Business-to Business Directory, in essence a yellow pages for downtown, is a great retention and recruitment tool. Several downtowns have created these by working with the phone company. They should be designed for CEO'S, office managers, and purchasing agents to encourage them to patronize other downtown businesses. The local utility company often underwrites costs.
- Do you have a consumer guide? Distributed a consumer guide to all downtown employees and visitors. This guide should provide coupons and information on local restaurants, entertainment and retailers, their hours of operation and location. Use advertising to pay for publication costs.
- Build a network of referrals. Successful recruitment programs generate leads from its "network of referrals." When volunteers make retention visits, one question they ask is "do you know anyone who might be interested in locating downtown?" Volunteers follow up with a face-to-face meeting. After contacting referrals on the phone, they visit and tour their facilities to better understand what they want.
- Adaptive re-use: As the prime location of older or historic buildings in their regions, many downtowns are anxious to capitalize on their ambiance by adaptively re-using the space within. When recruiting you might want to think about what kind of businesses might benefit from the special spatial benefits or situations offered by older buildings.

Fostering Ease of Establishment

Business owners tend to seek locations that allow them to open their businesses as quickly and profitably as possible. Downtown consultants Dolores Palma and Doyle Hyett suggest a number of ways in which these issues can be addressed.

- One-stop shops. One-stop shops refer to single locations where business owners can file for and obtain all required approvals for opening their business without having to go to visit various town agencies. It should be located in the town hall and is best staffed by a single person, such as the town clerk, who can help applicants with all the paperwork.

- Streamlined processes. Municipal governments can streamline their review processes in order to reduce the loops and time constraints usually involved, thereby making downtown locations more enticing. For instance, officials can meet with owners to explain local code requirements and walk them through the development process.
- Real estate orchestration: Town officials can help interested business owners acquire desirable real estate in order to increase the appeal of downtown. First, the availability of quality real estate can be improved by encouraging additional investment by real estate developers through the upgrading of public properties and infrastructure. Second, the town can help negotiate land for development when special circumstances arise.

Indicators of Success:

- ✓ Compilation of a downtown inventory database.
- ✓ Increase in the number of businesses located downtown.
- ✓ Growth in downtown retail sales.

Potential Partners:

DCED/Pennsylvania Main Street Program
 Pennsylvania Downtown Center
 Small Business Development Centers
 Team PA
 Penn State Cooperative Extension
 SCORE

Additional Readings:

A Rural Economic Development Source Book: Selected Training and Technical Assistance Materials, Margaret G. Thomas, Midwest Research Institute, Kansas City, MO, 1986.
 Business Development for Main Street, National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington DC, 1990.
 Business Retention and Expansion, Dolores Palma and Doyle Hyett, Hyett Palma Publications, Alexandria, VA, 1993.
 Downtowns in the 1990s: The Economic Future of America's Center Cities, Dolores Palma, Hyett Palma Publications, Washington DC, 1990.
 Economic Development on Main Street, Donovan D. Pypkema, National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington DC, 1990.
 Strategies and Tactics for Successful Retail Recruitment Downtown, Laurence A. Alexander, ed., Downtown Research and Development Center, New York, NY, 1988.
 Successful Retail Recruitment Strategies, Dolores Palma and Doyle Hyett, Hyett Palma Publications, Washington DC, 1990.

Taking Advantage of Tourism

Vision: Local businesses will capture more tourist dollars.

Overview: In Pennsylvania's small towns, residents are responsible for most of the economic activity downtown. Still, there are a number of communities where tourists generate substantial amounts of economic activity. While tourism dollars may not be sufficient in and of themselves to maintain a business, they can provide enough additional revenue to allow a business to remain profitable.

Goals: Downtown revitalization groups can work with businesses and tourism promotion agencies to seize new opportunities. Improved business practices and customer service should strengthen downtown businesses in nearly all tourist communities. The downtown group can also work with tourism agencies to better market the region. Reasonable goals include increased visitor traffic and expenditures.

Action Plan: The downtown group can provide useful information to businesses that serve tourists. This information could include suggestions for tourism-oriented businesses, or an analysis of basic tourist demographics and characteristics. The group can work closely with the local or county visitor's bureau to achieve its goals. Communities can focus on five components.

Know Your Visitors

Understanding the demographic and geographic origins of community visitors is the first step. For businesses to capture the potential spending of visitors, they must know who is coming or passing through town. This allows businesses to expand their products and services to meet unique needs.

To achieve this understanding, the group may want to develop a brief visitor survey. Surveys can be distributed at restaurants, motels and the entrances to local attractions. Key components of a survey include:

- Who is the 'typical' tourist? Is it a family with children? Or perhaps a camping party? Each tourist type has different needs. Families might need low-cost restaurants and entertainment for children. Campers may need dry goods or last minute supplies.
- How old is the typical tourist? Older visitors may want to browse antique stores, while younger visitors might participate in active sports.
- Where are the tourists from? Visitors from outside Pennsylvania's might want special keepsakes from the state.

Know Your Visitors Activities

Visitors usually travel for recreation rather than to eat or shop. They do, however, visit downtown and use these services when they are visiting a community. It is important, then, for downtown groups to understand "why" people visit, because the type of attraction determines the type of tourist.

Take account of the attractions and activities offered in your area. Some typical activities include:

- Outdoor adventures: These visitors are most interested in active sports such as bicycling, canoeing, hiking, swimming, kayaking, fishing, rafting and skiing.
- Live and learn: Many tourists like to visit museums, antique stores, historic sites and state parks, dine out and watch wildlife.
- Browsers delight: A substantial number of visitors enjoy shopping, antiques, and dining out.
- Woodsman experience: These travelers seek a rural experience including attending rural festivals and watching wildlife.
- Resort land and water: This group enjoys golfing, skiing, playing tennis and boating.
- Keep in touch: These travelers typically visit friends and relatives, but also dine out and visit state parks.

Each community has a different mix of these activities. It is important to understand the reason tourists visit so businesses can work together to develop appropriately targeted promotions.

Provide Products that Appeal to Visitors

Businesses should target tourists. Retailers who have been successful in tapping this market manage their inventories and are mindful of visitor needs and expectations. The Center for Community Economic Development at the University of Wisconsin offers the following suggestions:

- Every store should sell some affordable products. While most gallery visitors would love to purchase a \$1,500 painting, only a small number can afford to. For every expensive painting, you might sell 200 prints at \$35 each.
- If you sell “cheap” merchandise, don’t disguise it. Many visitors are looking for a \$3 paperweight or other inexpensive souvenir as a reminder of their stay. There is nothing wrong with selling such items as long as the customer is not misled into believing that the item has some greater value.
- Keep stocking items that sell. If something sells like hotcakes, keep selling it. Don’t discontinue something just because you are tired of it.
- Sell products that tie the visitor to the community. Provide a lasting memory for visitors.
- Offer products for kids. Some stores will sell “travel packs” for children that include activity books, cards, games and crayons. If kids find stores interesting, parents will spend more time shopping.
- Sell products that match your visitors’ lifestyle. Marketing data firms can help you better understand visitors’ spending patterns based on the type of tourist and their activities.
- Don’t compete strictly on price. Seldom do we tell our friends how little we spent on our vacation. Instead we brag about the best ice cream or pie, or the most beautiful sculpture.

Strengthen the Local Shopping Experience

In small towns, a unique shopping experience has helped businesses successfully capture tourist dollars. These businesses provide shoppers with memories that help make their store an attraction rather than just a place to buy goods. Downtown merchants in your community may be able to adopt some of the following strategies:

- Talk to your visitors about your products. Take the time meet talk with your customers. Share information about your product, such as its development and distribution.
- Provide an interesting and fun experience.
- Make shopping easy for parents. Welcome customers with coffee, a table for children to play games, and soothing background music. One retailer provides a play area in the back of the store for small children. Parents feel more at ease when they don't have to constantly worry about their children.
- Provide samples. A cheese shop can offer samples to visitors before they buy. People, especially tourists, are more likely to buy a product if they can sample it first.

Improve Local Hospitality

Visitors appreciate good service. Retailers that stress hospitality have had good success at capturing tourism dollars. Some strategies retailers in your community might want to consider include:

- Provide visitor information. Provide tourists with county maps, brochures and calendars free of charge. Listen carefully to customers and provide items they may have forgotten.
- Keep regular hours. Erratic hours are not acceptable to out-of-town customers. To the extent possible, operating hours should be coordinated among businesses and based on what is most convenient for the customer. Keep in mind the operating hours of important local attractions.
- Talk to each person that comes in the door. Make sure each visitor is greeted as they walk in the door. Try to find out something about people, even if it's only where they are from.
- Offer free gift-wrapping. If your business sells gift items to tourists, remember that free gift-wrapping is an important service for visitors when they are away from home.
- Develop a mission statement that recognizes hospitality. Remind managers and other employees about the importance of good service by posting a "hospitality statement" in a prominent place.
- Accept credit cards. Most tourists don't like to carry a lot of cash when they are on vacation.

Indicators of Success:

- ✓ Increase in the number of tourists shopping downtown.
- ✓ Increased occupancy rates for local lodging.
- ✓ Increase in number of out-of-state vehicles.

Potential Partner:

DCED/Tourism Promotion Agency

Additional Readings:

How One Kansas Town Used Tourism to Revitalize Its Economic Base, David L. Edgell, Business America, Vol. 111(21), November 1990, pp. 14-17.

Tourism and Retail Development: How Businesses in Your Community Can Sell to Tourists, Bill Ryan, Center for Community Economic Development, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999.

Community Tourism Assessment Handbook. <http://www.montana.edu/wwwwrdc/>

Promoting Downtown

Vision: To build an image of downtown that attracts customers, investors and businesses.

Overview: Your downtown must present a unified image in order to keep investors, consumers and visitors coming. This image should be based on the quality and value of local goods, a unique physical environment, and the community's present and historical culture. This mix of ingredients in varying combinations is what makes no two places exactly alike. An understanding of this uniqueness is the key to community pride and the motivation for concerted action. The overall objective is to reshape perception of downtown as the center of activity.

Goals: Promotional image building highlights the downtown in a positive manner. Downtown organizers should create events and activities that reveal many different views and aspects of the community. Efforts should focus on developing community pride, and heightening awareness of what is distinctive about the community and its downtown. This will contribute to the attractiveness of the community for current and potential residents and business owners.

Some examples that community leaders might draw on include an open house for a newly renovated downtown building or a general promotional advertisement about the downtown. Special events can be started to draw people downtown, including things like an arts and craft show, a street carnival, or a music concert.

Action Plan: Creating a new image of the downtown involves promotional activities that build upon the downtown's economic and cultural offerings. The key is to create a healthy mix of retail promotions, special events and festivals, and public relations. The following suggestions are steps in that direction:

Create a Heritage Day or Festival

Heritage day's celebrate and share the community's character. Involve a broad variety of groups, including varying segments of the local population and their interests. The point is for the community to remember and enjoy its distinctive character and therefore the focus should be on those who have or have had a stake in the forming and functionality of the community.

Heritage celebrations should have flexible content and structure. It could be a full day, an evening, or even a weeklong activity. Many rural places hold heritage festivals in autumn, a season that is synonymous with the harvest. There is no set season, though, when such an event should be held, mainly it should not conflict with other major town-wide activities...it could even be built around an existing event, such as a July 4th or Labor Day picnic. If the event is

unique to your community, then you may want to consider a special name--one named after the community, or perhaps Discovery Day.

Business community support is required, as is a significant volunteer component. Participation should be diverse and no group should dominate. The planning and steering committee of the event must seek widespread participation. It is also desirable to keep presentations personal and interactive so that a wide range of people will feel welcome and willing to participate.

Complementary Activities

Complementary activities help a community discover its unique history and character, while using that distinctiveness to breed economic and social livelihood into the downtown. Complementary activities should be light, fun, and locally driven. Community members provide the organizing energy and talent, while capitalizing on the unique resources of the area and adding to the viability of downtown. Some ideas include:

- Produce a community play.
- Display community photographs or local artists views of things distinctive about the downtown, possibly presented as a contest and sales event.
- Storytelling of the history, colorful characters, or major events of the downtown.
- Create community pathways, possibly involving a series of walks and talks centered on history, nature, or adventure.

Community Brochure

Producing a brochure that highlights some of the distinctive features of the community helps attract new businesses and tourists. The brochure should be simple, displaying some photographs, providing a map with points of interest, and even offering historical stories (or tales!). If no formal brochure already exists then the group may want to target a broad audience. If a similar is already available, such as a tourism brochure, then an additional advertising tool that specializes in capturing a particular group may be desirable. For instance, a business or real estate directory for business development purposes or a walking/cycling tour for recreation.

A committee must be established to work out the details of the brochure and oversee reproduction and distribution. Some specific things to consider include:

- Size: physical design, including page length.
- Content: necessary literature and graphics.
- Artistic design: layout, color scheme, etc.
- Cost: dollar investment by the community and cost to the user.
- Availability: number of copies to reproduce and distribution logistics.

A practical goal is to work toward producing a brochure that offers the necessary elements of information while being attractive to the eye and inexpensive. Often, costs can be deferred by soliciting advertisements for the brochure and distributing copies free of charge to area businesses and attractions.

Other Ideas

Ideas for promoting downtown are only limited by imagination. The key is to add your own touch depending on the character of the local downtown and surrounding community. Some other ideas include:

- Establish a collaborative downtown marketing plan. Plans should be implemented keeping national trends in mind, while focusing on steady progress and small, yet visible results that grow along with the downtown's capacity. A consultant can help with these activities, or you might want to approach a local college or university, offering a potential class project.
- Develop and advertise special events to add activity to downtown, such as a farmers market. Special events should entail a few, high quality, signature events that grow in attendance each year.
- Public relations should be a major element of the downtown marketing campaign and communication among downtown constituents should be improved to avoid the proliferation of misinformation. Issue press releases and public service announcements as appropriate.
- A downtown web site could be created in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, the merchants' association, or other local and regional groups. Newport Revitalization, Inc.'s (NRI) web site highlights local businesses and outlines the organization and its goals <http://www.tricountyi.net/nri/default.htm>.
- Each downtown business owner should accept personal responsibility for marketing their own enterprises, using cooperative ads, direct ads, and any other means possible.
- A fundamental goal is to give downtown a distinct identity. One way is to design a contest to devise a logo for use on printed materials, posters, and banners advertising downtown events. Find inspiration by visiting other downtowns; obtain a vendor list from their efforts leaders.
- Let the community know that something is happening downtown. Items such as t-shirts, buttons, posters, and brochures can be used to promote the revitalization process.
- Write and submit news stories to local newspapers and television stations about the building of downtown, its progress, and accompanying events. NRI has its own periodic column.

Indicators of Success:

- ✓ Creation of a formal downtown marketing plan.
- ✓ Public opinion poll results indicating a positive image of downtown.
- ✓ An increase in the number of visitors to the downtown area.
- ✓ Establishment of a heritage day.
- ✓ Completion of a community action plan for community and economic development.
- ✓ Completed production and distribution of a community brochure.
- ✓ Increased number of visitors to the community.

Additional Readings:

Pennsylvania Downtown Program: Program Guidelines 1998-1999, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Harrisburg, PA, 1998.

- Retail and Service Trends in Wisconsin: What's Hot (and What's Not), Tim Baye, Hans Hanson, and Dick Mistele, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Center for Community Economic Development, January (41), 2000.
- Revitalizing Downtown: 1976-1986, National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington DC, 1988.
- Citizen Participation in Frisco Main Street: Revitalization, J.R. Leigh, Landscape and Urban Planning, Vol. 17(4), 1989, pp. 297-304.
- Holiday Downtown: How to Promote Them Successfully, Margaret DeWitt, ed., Downtown Research and Development Center, New York, NY, 1988.
- Riverfront Gamblers: Small Cities are Learning That Attractive Waterfronts Help to Revive Downtowns, Jim Schwab, Planning, Vol. 55, September 1989, pp. 15-18.
- The Rebirth of Downtown Huntington, Sara Leuchter Wilkins, Main Street News, (111), May/June, 1995.

Chapter 5: THREE CASE STUDIES

While this manual offers a number of approaches for downtown revitalization, there is no single method that will work for all places. Indeed, one of the most exciting aspects of the revitalization effort is the ability to make your downtown unique. Yet there are certain themes that are common across programs, especially with respect to volunteer efforts. Recognizing that lessons learned in other communities that have already initiated downtown programs might help with your own program, this chapter provides three case studies of small town revitalization programs in Pennsylvania.

Newport: Leveraging Success

Located in Perry County, the Borough of Newport is in the midst of a dramatic turnaround. Once boarded up buildings are now home to thriving retailers and the Perry County Arts Council. Deteriorating building facades have been renovated. And a total reconstruction of the main street is about to begin. Newport Revitalization, Inc (NRI) has been the catalyst.

Founded in 1990 by just a handful of residents concerned about the decline of downtown, NRI has blossomed into a widely supported organization. Not long after forming, the group obtained both non-profit and 501 (C) (3) status, which has enabled them to obtain tremendous outside financial resources. While the heart of the organization remains a few committed individuals, its membership today exceeds 400 people.

The group's activities are guided by a strategic plan, which was developed in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. The planning process contained several elements that are described in this manual, including: a consumer survey and market analysis, a business owner survey and analysis, and a preliminary historic sites survey. This information was then used to guide the implementation plan, which offered guidance on marketing, physical rehabilitation, business development and organization of the effort itself.

By acting on the strategic plan, NRI has garnered a number of notable achievements, and the story underlying two particular ones might be most useful to new organizations.

Façade improvements are an early sign of progress. Since its beginnings, NRI has recognized the importance of broad community support. To achieve this support, NRI focused its early efforts on small, visible accomplishments that generate enthusiasm for the effort. One notable accomplishment has been façade restoration of many of the downtown buildings.

Recognizing that façade renovation can be costly, NRI aggressively pursued grant money to help local businesses achieve this goal. The group researched organizations that provide money for these types of projects, and received a \$25,000 grant from Pennsylvania Power and Light (PP&L). Because the grant required a match from local businesses, the local bank was enlisted to provide low interest loans to businesses enrolled in the façade program.

According to members of NRI, the visible success of the façade program helped the community rally around the initiative. Other efforts also showcase visible progress, including an annual

community clean-up day (with local school participation) and flower planting, which helps build community ownership of the revitalization process.

PennDOT is helping rebuild Main Street. NRI offers a good lesson in thinking about establishing both short- and long-term goals. While the facade program's aesthetic achievements have been helpful for generating new business and local support, facade refurbishment has also been a complementary component of an ambitious infrastructure improvement effort in Newport.

NRI has led local efforts to rebuild Main Street. After enlisting the help of a consultant to design a streetscape, NRI helped the borough secure nearly \$800,000 in TEA-21 (Transportation Enhancement Act-21) funding from the PennDOT Sustainable Streets program. This money will be used for several purposes, including reconstruction of Main Street, new crosswalks, new lighting and new downtown landscaping.

According to NRI's leaders, the facade program was a critical element in securing the TEA-21 funds for two reasons. First, NRI board members believe that the success of the facade program demonstrated the organization's ability to set goals and achieve success. Second, the board believes that the general community excitement about the results of the facade program—documented in the press—helped generate enthusiasm in state agencies as well.

Complementary activities. Newport's success has resulted from projects both big and small. In addition to the facade and streetscape projects, NRI continues to sponsor promotional activities, including a Christmas House Tour of the interesting and historic homes of Newport. Held every year on the second Saturday of December, the tour takes place the same day as Newport's Ole Fashion Christmas, a downtown business promotion event. Also, NRI sponsors the annual Canal Day, which is a downtown festival celebrating the town's heritage as a major transportation hub on the Pennsylvania canal.

The organization also actively promotes itself. The local paper features a periodic column that highlights NRI's recent activities, the group produces a newsletter, and a family of web pages has been created that outlines the organization and discusses past, ongoing and planned activities.

Still, the organization has had to overcome several obstacles. The initial streetscape grant proposal was rejected, and the subsequent application became a drawn out affair, full of stops and starts. According to NRI, the operative word was "patience." Also, while the group has a large membership, much of the 'heavy lifting' is done by a relatively small handful of people. An ongoing challenge for the organization is recruiting new volunteers to take active roles in the process.

For more information, contact:
Newport Revitalization, Incorporated
PO Box 13
Newport, PA 17074
<http://www.tricountyi.net/nri/default.htm>

Laceyville: Persistence and Progress

Laceyville, located between Highway 6 and the Susquehanna River in northwestern Wyoming County, offers a lesson in perseverance. Home to approximately 450 residents, the borough is the smallest community we visited.

Founded in 1997, the Laceyville Revitalization Association (LRA) set out to improve the appearance of downtown. While progress has been slow, the group has several notable accomplishments.

Attracting new businesses. Since LRAs inception, several new businesses have opened in Laceyville, making it the most recognizable outcome of the program to date. These businesses include a restaurant, chiropractor, a physician and a pharmacy.

The local bank has been the driving force in attracting these new businesses. The bank bought the upper block of the business district, which at the time consisted of three vacant storefronts. Extensive renovations were then undertaken to improve both appearance and functionality of the buildings.

Of course, attracting new businesses depends on more than simply building appearance; in the end, businesses need to be profitable to endure. To attract tenants, the bank offered potential clients low rent to help reduce their costs of doing business. While the bank CEO admits this strategy is not a profitable one, he felt that it was necessary for the institution to “give something back to the community.”

At the same time, community members aggressively sought potential tenants through both formal networking (i.e., looking for leads by calling local businesses in targeted sectors) and informal networking (i.e., approaching seminar leaders at local fitness clubs).

PennDOT provides money for Laceyville. LRA also encouraged the borough to seek TEA-21 money for infrastructure improvements. Based on the borough’s comprehensive plan (developed from a grant-financed consulting report), PennDOT awarded \$91,000 for curbing, sidewalks, trees, light posts and benches. Laceyville is in the process of soliciting the 20 percent local match required by the grant. It is expected the project will be completed by the end of 2001.

The Borough of Laceyville also has adopted some of the other strategies described in this manual. For instance, a local business association has been reactivated, which hosts events designed to “foster community togetherness.” The association sponsors an annual community day, which entails the closing of Main Street in order to host games, food and crafts booths, a parade and the fireman’s dinner. The association also sponsors some children’s events and coordinated group sales for local merchants. Finally, the association has developed a local business brochure, which provides a directory of local businesses, schools, churches and other organizations.

While LRA is making good progress on its goals, there is some frustration with the time it is taking. LRA members lament that there are substantial administrative requirements (i.e., red

tape) that must be met before a project can begin. Once again, “patience and persistence” are important attributes of program participants.

For more information, contact:
 Laceyville Revitalization Association
 24 E. Main Street
 Laceyville, PA 18623
<http://www.laceyville.com/>

Belleville: Enabling Change

Village Pride (VP) exemplifies the ability of downtown efforts to serve as catalysts for broader economic development efforts. Organized to revitalize Belleville, a village in Union Township, Mifflin County, VP sees itself as an enabling organization. Accordingly, downtown revitalization is just a piece of the broader efforts of the group.

The far-reaching aims of the organization have resulted in several ongoing projects.

Project Impact is a cornerstone of the program, with the goal to mitigate the periodic flooding of Kish Creek that affects downtown. VP initiated action in the writing of a grant proposal to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to address the problem. The result was a \$300,000 FEMA grant to Belleville, enabling the community to 1) increase the creek’s capacity to carry flood waters; 2) help property owners better prepare for and deal with floods; and 3) continue with efforts to restore the creek as the focal point of the community.

What’s the significance of the project for Belleville’s revitalization efforts? In the past, businesses were hesitant or unable to locate downtown because it was in a 100-year flood plain. With this designation, it is difficult for businesses to obtain loans and affordable insurance; power companies and others are less likely to provide essential business support services; and designation as an historic district is not possible. By removing the risk of flooding, downtown Belleville becomes a more attractive location, and existing buildings become commercially viable candidates for adaptive reuse.

Here, then, we see that VP was able to utilize outside help (the Army Corps of Engineers) to better understand a local need. With this understanding, a plan was developed and the needed resources were raised through the grant-writing process.

VPs second notable outgrowth is its ongoing Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program. Conducted with assistance from Penn State Cooperative Extension, the program encourages local businesses to remain in place and even grow. This is accomplished by surveying the business community to identify problems they are facing. The data is collected by trained local volunteers and analyzed by extension personnel at Penn State. Local governing bodies, in turn, use this information to remove some of the obstacles faced by local businesses in order to make them more competitive.

The BR&E program identified a number of important issues facing local businesses. Three important problems are power surges, traffic during the Wednesday auction and a need to improve local business-to-business networking. Each issue has given rise to a committee to tackle the problem. For instance, the Executive Director of the Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation is leading a discussion on improving the stability of the local power supply, helping both residents and commercial interests. In addition, the Mifflin County Tourist Promotion Agency is taking the lead in developing a new directory of local businesses in the region.

Village Pride has also taken several low-cost steps to improve the general appearance of downtown, including:

- ✓ Annual Clean-Up Day. Conducted on the second to last Saturday in May, the program recruits volunteers to help clean-up efforts throughout the community. In addition to picking up trash downtown, sections of the creek are cleaned and cleared of weeds, and planters are placed and maintained throughout the Main Street area.
- ✓ Trees and Flowers. VP was awarded a \$2,100 grant from the Pennsylvania Urban and Forestry Council to purchase and plant trees. The grant was matched locally by more than \$3,000 in donations.
- ✓ A new walking path. Surrounding the athletic fields and the elementary school, the walking path is being used by a variety of residents.
- ✓ Entrance signs. Garnering local business donations, VP spearheaded the design and installation of three signs welcoming people to Belleville. The township maintains the signs and areas surrounding them, and also pays for the costs of lighting the signs.
- ✓ Finally, VP has taken the lead in forming a community wide library committee that has overseen the efforts of the Mifflin County library to move into larger quarters.

Like the other organizations, a few key individuals carry out most of the work of Village Pride. According to one of the organization's leaders, the most difficult challenge is "pulling other people into the process in a responsible and productive fashion." To overcome this challenge, VP tries to keep their process as open as possible. Regularly scheduled public meetings are held, and the group produces a newsletter.

Welcoming public participation serves two purposes. First, it allows the organization to reach out and pull people into the process. This helps avoid burnout, generates important local support and encourages additional perspective and input. Second, by holding public forums, controversial issues become part of an open dialogue. Since the meetings are open to everyone, public input can be solicited, a process that helps avoid future conflicts.

Still, because of limited citizen involvement, the process takes some time before results are noticeable. VP handles this in two ways. First, it limits the number of activities it engages in.

While the group has a number of goals, it focuses on only a few at a time in order to avoid becoming frustrated. Second, members remain patient.

For more information, contact:
 Village Pride Association
 PO Box X
 Belleville, PA 17004

Lessons Learned

The three revitalization programs we examined all began with a few individuals who decided to “do something downtown.” While the methods and goals of the groups differed substantially, there are a number of recurring themes that can guide your organization.

Organize early. Take the time to develop an enduring organization. Establish a board of directors. Bring in both public and private sectors. Obtain 501-C3 status if it seems reasonable.

Enlist the community. Hold several well-publicized meetings early on in the process. This will not only generate community interest in the idea, but will likely result in additional volunteer support.

Enlist state agencies. A number of state agencies can help you with your effort. Contact the Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, PennDOT and Penn State Cooperative Extension for possible assistance.

Enlist the media. The local papers are looking for stories! Send out press releases to advertise meetings. Call reporters with story ideas.

Local government support helps. Only local governments can apply for many of the appropriate grants. Recruit sympathetic supervisors and council members to serve on the board. Understand that local governments operate with very tight budgets.... expect strong hesitation when asking for financial support. When pitching your ideas, make sure officials know exactly the role and resources you hope they provide.

Develop both short- and long-term plans. A vision and a set of goals provide your organization with focus. Write down your plan, and a timetable. Identify the individuals responsible for implementing particular aspects of the plan. Evaluate plans regularly. Celebrate success!

Early visible progress is essential. Your group should always be dreaming, and a long-term plan is essential for a truly vibrant effort. Still, the group needs short-term accomplishments, as well. New planters, trees and signs are low cost signs of progress that will be greatly appreciated by community members and program participants alike.

Get outside money. People drive revitalization programs. But outside money is necessary to accomplish larger projects. Learn how to research and apply for grant money.

Be persistent! No downtown program is an overnight success. Indeed, they often take years of hard work. While the administrative aspects can be daunting, and everything seems to take three times longer than it should, persistence can see your group through most problems.

Chapter 6: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

While this manual offers fundamental suggestions for revitalization efforts, communities may be interested in alternative materials. In this chapter we provide information on available training resources and networking organizations.

Agencies Providing Funding and Technical Assistance

State Agencies and Organizations

Pennsylvania Community Development Bank

Community Development Housing

PA Department of Community and Economic Development

502 Forum Building

Harrisburg, PA 17120

Phone: 717-787-7404

http://www.dced.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/DCED/project/in-cdbank.htm

The Pennsylvania Community Development Bank (PCD Bank) is a program of the Pennsylvania Economic Development Financing Authority (PEDFA). The PCD Bank makes capital available for community and economic development lending and provides capacity building and technical assistance grants to promote the creation and expansion of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) within distressed communities. A committee of the PEDFA Board administers the PCD Bank.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Forum Place

555 Walnut Street

Harrisburg, PA 17101-1900

<http://www.dot.state.pa.us/>

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is responsible for the integration of programs and policies for all transportation modes, including: highways, urban mass transit, rural public transportation, airports, railroads, ports and waterways. PennDOT offers a number of development programs and funding services, such as the Highway Beautification program, the Transportation Enhancements program, and the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Bank.

Pennsylvania Economic Development Program

Community Empowerment

PA Department of Community and Economic Development

352 Forum Building

Harrisburg, PA 17120

Phone: 717-787-1984

<http://www.dced.state.pa.us/>

The DCED offers a group of economic development programs that are designed to create partnerships between state and local governments to support community development

opportunities. A few of the funding programs available through DCED are the Community Economic Development Loan Program, the Community Revitalization Program, and the Small Communities Planning Assistance Program.

Pennsylvania Office of Travel, Tourism and Film Promotion

PA Department of Community and Economic Development

Harrisburg, PA 17120

Phone: 717-787-5453

<http://www.dced.state.pa.us/>

This DCED office offers assistance in promoting regional tourism. In addition to providing a listing of regional tourism bureaus, they can help in marketing your region by developing visitors' guides and other promotional materials.

Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations

P.O. Box 1026

Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026

717-787-3253

www.pamuseums.org

E-mail: pamuseums@pamuseums.org

The Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations is a statewide membership organization providing educational and organizational support for the Commonwealth's museums and historic sites.

Pennsylvania Main Street and Commercial Reinvestment Programs

Department of Community and Economic Development

576 Forum Building

Harrisburg, PA 17120

Phone: 717-720-7300

<http://www.dced.state.pa.us/>

The Main Street program is designed to help a community's downtown economic development effort through the establishment of a local downtown revitalization organization and management of downtown revitalization by a professional downtown coordinator. The Commercial Reinvestment program works in conjunction with the Main Street program by using business district strategies to support eligible commercial related projects located within a central business district.

The Hamer Center for Community Design Assistance

Penn State University

227 East Calder Way

University Park, PA 16801

Phone: 814-865-5300

Email: hamercenter@psu.edu

<http://www.sala.psu.edu/hamercenter/>

The Hamer Center is an outreach unit of Penn State University that focuses on issues relevant to the future of Commonwealth communities. The Center provides communities with education and technical assistance as they seek design solutions related to land use and transportation,

community and economic development, the environment and quality of life. Typical projects may include architectural design of infill housing, adaptive re-use and civic structures; streetscape and plaza design; open space plans, master planning; small-scale construction projects, and historic preservation studies.

Penn State Cooperative Extension ([www. extension.psu.edu](http://www.extension.psu.edu))

Community Affairs Extension

Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology
The Pennsylvania State University
Armsby Building
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: 814-865-0659

Many of Pennsylvania's counties have Community and Economic Development Agents who can provide various forms of support for your organization. Currently, agents offer support to local efforts in visioning, organizational development and grant writing. Agents are also able to help foster linkages with additional Penn State resources. To find what type of support Penn State can provide to your organization, contact your local extension office, or, you can find your local Community and Economic Development Agent at <http://cax.aers.psu.edu/caxmap.htm>.

The Penn State Extension Urban Forestry Program

School of Forest Resources
The Pennsylvania State University
108 Ferguson
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: 814-863-7941

<http://4trees.cas.psu.edu/index.html>

The Urban Forestry program has several objectives consistent with the goals of downtown revitalization efforts. (1) To encourage communities to develop comprehensive community forestry programs. (2) To provide technical assistance to communities, volunteers, and professionals on establishing and managing the urban forest. (3) To provide financial assistance to communities and organizations for tree plantings and urban forest management.

Federal Agencies

Economic Development Administration

Curtis Center, Suite 140 South
Independence Square West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-3821
Phone: 215-597-4603

<http://www.doc.gov/eda/>

EDA was created to generate jobs, help retain existing jobs and stimulate industrial and commercial growth in rural and urban areas of the Nation experiencing high unemployment, low income, or severe economic distress. EDA works in partnership with state and local governments, regional economic development districts, public and private nonprofit organizations, and Indian tribes to empower communities to plan and implement locally and

regionally-developed economic development and revitalization strategies. EDA hosts the Economic Development Information Clearinghouse (EDIC), which provides information about programs and resources available to assist communities with their economic development needs.

Pennsylvania USDA Rural Development

Federal Building, Room 728

P.O. Box 9905

Harrisburg, PA 17108

Phone: 717-782-4476

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/pa/index.html>

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/pa/rbs.html>

Pennsylvania USDA Rural Development helps the people of rural Pennsylvania develop sustainable communities and improve their quality of life. USDA believes rural Americans have the right to the same quality of life as is enjoyed by people who live in suburban and urban areas and has a number of funding avenues available to communities to achieve that goal.

U.S. Small Business Administration

Regional Office

475 Allendale Road, Suite 201

King of Prussia, PA 19406

Phone: 215-962-3700

<http://www.sbaonline.sba.gov/>

The U.S. Small Business Administration provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses.

Non-governmental Organizations

Downtown Research & Development Center

215 Park Ave. South, Suite 1301

New York, NY 10003

Phone: 212-228-0246

<http://www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html>

This is an independent organization that analyzes and reports on downtown problems and solutions in an effort to provide a focus for revitalizing cities worldwide. They conduct research, publish books, reports and studies, hold seminars and workshops, and act as an international clearinghouse on downtown revitalization.

International Downtown Association (IDA)

915 15th St., NW

Washington, DC 20005

Phone: 202-783-4693

<http://www.ida-downtown.org/>

The International Downtown Association seeks to be the principal advocate for North America's community centers. IDA focuses its programs on coalescing public, business and non-profit

interests into civic partnerships that affirm the diversity of these centers, and creating livable communities. They offer conferences, publications, and consulting services.

National Center for Small Communities

444 N. Capitol Street, NW, Suite 208

Washington, DC 20001-1202

Phone: 202-624-3550

<http://www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm>

The National Center for Small Communities (NCSC) is the only national, non-profit organization devoted exclusively to serving the leaders of America's smaller communities. The mission of the NCSC is to provide small town decision-makers with the tools to govern effectively and the skills to expand local economies, protect natural resources and preserve community character.

National Main Street Center

1785 Massachusetts Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20036

Phone: 202-673-4219

<http://www.mainst.org/>

The Main Street program is designed to improve all aspects of the downtown or central business district, producing both tangible and intangible benefits. The National Main Street Center assists states, communities and others in the revitalization of business districts within a preservation context. Delivers consultation and information services to states and communities under contract. Provides information and consultation on downtown revitalization through technical assistance, the National Main Street Network, conferences, products and Main Street Certification Institute.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

Washington, D.C. 20036

Phone: 1-800-315-NTHP

<http://www.nthp.org>

The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides leadership, education and advocacy to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize our communities. The Trust provides help on issues related to preservation, Main Street, heritage tourism and other services.

Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC)

1230 North Third Street

Harrisburg, PA 17120-2020

Phone: 717-233-4675

<http://www.padowntown.org/>

The PDC is a statewide, non-profit organization, which advocates for the preservation and economic vitality of the Commonwealth's downtowns and business districts, and advises communities on economic development. The Pennsylvania Downtown Center is committed to helping communities through education, training, strategic partnerships, and advocacy efforts.

Preservation Pennsylvania

257 North Street

Harrisburg, PA 17107

Phone: 717-234-2310

<http://www.preservationpa.org/>

Preservation Pennsylvania is a statewide, private non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of historically and architecturally significant properties. Preservation Pennsylvania acts as a resource for and provides expertise to the many local and regional preservation organizations and agencies throughout the Commonwealth. Their services include funding, technical assistance, and conferences/workshops in addition to useful publications.

Additional Internet Sources**American Planning Association**

<http://www.planning.org>

National organization with more than 30,000 members, actively working for better planned communities. Includes a list of Planners Book Service publications, links to home pages of APA Chapters and divisions, research on key planning issues and links to other Internet sites devoted to planning issues.

Center for Rural Studies (CRS)

<http://crs.uvm.edu/staff/>

A nonprofit, fee-for-service research organization which addresses social, economic, and resource-based problems of rural people and communities.

Community Toolbox

<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/>

A resource to help citizens in community problem solving to address local concerns. It can be used to develop leadership and organization capacities. It contains concise and practical information on issues such as strategic planning, promoting financial stability and other information needed by collaborative partnerships. The community toolbox can also be helpful in networking.

National Association for Community Leadership

<http://www.communityleadership.org>

A nonprofit organization dedicated to nurturing leadership in communities helping strengthen and transform them.

National Civic League

<http://www.ncl.org/>

Advocates a new civic agenda to create communities that work for everyone and promotes the principles of collaborative problem solving and consensus-based decision making through technical assistance, publishing, research and an awards program.

Rural LISC

<http://www.ruralisc.org/>

The Rural Local Initiative Support Corporation's website provides Community Development Corporations and other interested parties with helpful resources and networks for community development.

United States Department of Agriculture Nonprofit Gateway

<http://www.usda.gov/nonprofi.htm>

Offers related links on business, community development, food service, research and education, and volunteers.

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Center for Community and Economic Development

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/publicat.html>

CCED creates, applies and transfers multidisciplinary knowledge to help people understand community change and identify opportunities. Numerous publications, including four newsletters, are available online that may assist community leaders in their endeavors.

W.K. Kellogg Rural Community Development Resources

<http://www.unl.edu:80/kellogg/>

The collection contains high quality rural community development materials funded by the Kellogg Foundation and other selected sponsors of recognized rural programs. Guidebooks, manuals, workshop materials, reports, books and videos included.

Publications

Getting Organized

Business Improvement Districts: Tool for Economic Development

The report looks at the role local government can play in the creation of BID's and the balance between private and public sector initiative. It explores key elements of state and provincial BID legislation, outlines steps for forming a BID, explains how a BID works, and provides strategies for supporting the efforts of property and business owners to form BID's. Published by International City/County Management Association, March, 1997. Available through the International Downtown Association (IDA): <http://www.ida-downtown.org/>

Developing Downtown Design Guidelines

A guide meant for small community development, emphasizing the importance of public participation in the process of revitalization. It points out that redevelopment takes time and commitment from all people involved. Having a vote in the process can enliven the atmosphere and create a harmonious working environment for a successful program. By Janice Pregliasco. Sacramento, CA: California Main Street Program, 1988.

Doing Good Better! How to Be an Effective Board Member of a Nonprofit Organization

In this manual, two veterans of many boards address the ideal relationship between a nonprofit organization and its board. They candidly cover the realities that often threaten that relationship, then suggest strategies for overcoming these common difficulties. Published by Good Books and

written by Edgar Stoesz and Chester Raber. Available through the National Main Street Center: <http://www.mainst.org/>

Making Groups Effective

In this revised edition, Zander draws on the latest research to show how groups can function more effectively to achieve the full potential of group work. For leaders and group supervisors, as well as members of teams, boards, task forces, and other groups, a clear vision of what makes groups work is offered. Written by Alvin Zander and published by Jossey-Bass. Available through the National Main Street Center: <http://www.mainst.org/>

The Pennsylvania Non-profit Handbook

Includes step-by-step instructions on the decision to and process of incorporation, setting up and managing a board of directors, strategic planning, fundraising and grantsmanship, volunteer benefits, and much more. A publication of the Pennsylvania Association of Non-profit Organizations. 1997-98 edition by Gary M. Grobman, Harrisburg PA: White Hat Communications.

Collaborative Communities Are America's Success Stories

Outlines the positive effects that collaborative efforts have had on many cities. Some of the improved outcomes include: 1) creating a healthy climate for reaching solutions; 2) improving communication and building trust among various groups such as government and non-government organizations; and 3) building trust among participants to secure the success of a plan. Collaborative efforts for downtowns have made them physically, economically, and socially better places to live. Stressed are the need for persistence and a change in public values from the quick fix to one of long-term commitment. Margery F. Baker and others. *Nation's Cities Weekly*, Vol. 17(1), November 14, 1994. p. 12.

Downtowns Are the Hearts of Communities

Argues that a downtown is not just a shopping district, but an activity center for the community. Points out that encouraging a critical mass of people to use the downtown should be a major goal of local government to revitalize downtowns of communities. *Small Town*, Vol. 19 (4), January-February 1989. p. 4.

The Seven Secrets of Downtown Success

Provides an insightful discussion about the best ways to make your downtown revitalization a success. Proven methods over the last 20 years are outlined in detail. Some of these strategies include: 1) forming partnerships; 2) knowing your vision; 3) being market-driven; 4) using a business plan; 5) daring to be different; 6) focusing on target areas; and 7) knowing the best management techniques that malls use to become successful. Dolores Palma. *The Alabama Municipal Journal*, Vol. 52(1), July 1994. pp. 4-5.

Planning Revitalization

Downtown Development Handbook

An updated version, this book reflects the development environment of the 1990s. The strategies required to rebuild downtowns are presented along with examples of cities that have succeeded.

Written by Susanna Mc Bee, et al and available through the National Main Street Center:
<http://www.mainst.org/>

Downtown Management: An Economic Development Strategy

Discusses the elements and benefits of downtown management. Describes management organizations, the special assessment district and the private voluntary association. Includes a case study of a successful downtown management effort in Shelby, North Carolina. Richard H. Bradley. Washington, DC: International City Management Association, 1987.

Downtowns in the 1990s: The Economic Future of America's Center Cities

Provides an overall view of the demographic and economic trends taking place in the downtowns of the 1990s and ways that businesses and organizations can take advantage of these trends. Dolores Palma. Washington, DC: Hyett Palma Publications, 1990.

Economic Development on Main Street

Covers the wide range of economic and real estate issues facing downtown revitalization leaders. Provides fundamentals of the real estate development process for downtown professionals of historic commercial areas. Includes checklists, forms and step-by-step methodologies necessary for the evaluation and implementation of a successful real estate project. Donovan D. Pypkema. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1990.

Focus Groups for Downtown

Downtown markets can improve upon existing services with the help of focus groups, which provide an accurate indication of the public's attitude toward consumer businesses and the products they sell. Dolores P. Palma. Washington, DC: Hyett Palma Publications, 1992.

Getting Online: A Guide to the Internet for Small Town Leaders

Getting Online explains the power, organization, and tools of the Internet, with emphasis on the World Wide Web. It shows how small communities can encourage telecommunications access and promote economic development by creating an interactive town Web site, establishing a community technology center, aiding local businesses in using electronic commerce, and more. Getting Online includes an extensive listing of Web sites of interest to small town leaders. It is available through the National Center for Small Communities:
<http://www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm>

Harvesting Hometown Jobs: The New Small Town Guide to Economic Development

This is a how-to guidebook for the citizens and practitioners of small communities. Topics covered include: rethinking economic development, getting started on community, visioning/strategic planning, retaining and expanding existing businesses, recruiting business and industry, attracting tourists and retirees, managing growth, innovative partnerships for economic development (research report), and resource organizations for economic development (appendix). Available through the National Center for Small Communities:
<http://www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm>

How to Sell to Downtown Workers, Successful Retailing to the Captive Workers

Analyzes the potential of the worker market. Provides methods of determining the potential of worker markets. Outlines plans, programs and ideas for tapping this market and making it a growth opportunity for local merchants. Laurence A. Alexander, ed. New York, NY: Downtown Research & Development Center, 1989.

Market Analysis on Main Street

Provides a step-by-step process for analyzing market conditions in traditional downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. Describes methods of measuring the market, defining the trade area and measuring sales gap. Contains worksheets and sample surveys. Provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1990.

Revitalizing Downtown

Explains successful main street methodology, a comprehensive strategy to improve downtown's image and management. Contains important information on organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring, plus an extensive bibliography and useful list of organizations. Published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Rev. 1988.

A Rural Economic Development Source Book: Selected Training and Technical Assistance Materials

Offers training and technical assistance materials for use in planning rural economic development strategies. Covers topics such as: downtown revitalization and historic preservation, the role and organization of a local development organization, recruitment of business and industry, small businesses, financial management for local government. Written by Margaret G. Thomas. Kansas City, MO: Midwest Research Institute, 1986.

Strategic Retail Market Analysis

Success in revitalizing downtowns can be improved with a better understanding of how the markets function. Provided are ways to conduct a productive retail market analysis, an essential part of any revitalization effort. Dolores Palma. Washington, DC: Hyett Palma Publications, 1991.

Winning Ways

This publication consists of summaries of the essence of how to succeed in downtown revitalization efforts. The publishers point out that downtown "professionals" need to work continuously to determine what works and what does not, depending on the situation for each community. Provided by Dolores Palma. Alexandria, VA: HyettPalma Publications, 1993.

Mobilizing Resources

Finding the Funds You Need: A Guide for Grant Seekers

Penn State Cooperative Extension, College of Agricultural Sciences, Penn State University. This excellent guide outlines the basic steps of the grant writing process. It includes information on how to identify potential funding sources, as well as how to structure and write proposals.

www.aers.psu.edu/cedev/grantwriting/

Funding Downtown Promotions

A step-by-step guide to raising the money you need for downtown marketing and promotions. Available through the Downtown Research & Development Center:
<http://www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html>

How to Get the Funds to Promote Downtown: Tested Tools & Techniques That Work

Discusses many tools and techniques available for raising funds, creating the funding plan and carrying out the plan. Laurence A. Alexander, ed. New York, NY: Downtown Research & Development Center, 1989.

Innovative Grassroots Financing: A Small Town Guide to Raising Funds and Cutting Costs

This guide can help community leaders meet the challenges of paying for programs and services in the face of taxpayer resistance and limited public resources. It offers community examples and strategies to increase revenue, secure grants, fundraising ideas, volunteerism, the pros and cons of contracting out, and more. It is available through the National Center for Small Communities: <http://www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm> and the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT): <http://www.natat.org/natat/default.htm>

Keys to Successful Funding

Small and rural governments face increasing demands to meet new environmental regulations, to create jobs and to offer new local services, all with limited resources. *Keys to Successful Funding* describes the major components that mark successful proposals for public and private financial assistance. It is available through the National Center for Small Communities: <http://www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm>

Methods of Financing Parking

Parking is an important aspect of a revitalization effort in many small towns and can enhance the streetscape by providing easier access to and from local businesses. Included are sources for getting the needed funding for improving your parking facilities. Provided by Dolores Palma. Washington, DC: Hyett-Palma Publications, 1990.

Successful Downtown Development Design and Management Programs: A Compendium of Funding Tools and Techniques

This book provides an overview of ways to finance downtown management development organizations, programs and capital projects. Written by Peter Mosbacher and Carol Patrylick, 1991. Available through the International Downtown Association (IDA): <http://www.ida-downtown.org/>

Improving Downtown's Appearance

Downtown Parking Made Easy

Six simple steps to ensuring convenient parking for downtown shoppers and other visitors.

Available through the Downtown Research & Development Center:
<http://www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html>

Keeping Up Appearances: Storefront Guidelines

This practical guide provides helpful illustrations along with explanations of physical revitalization strategies to benefit the entire business community. The material in this source is vital to the goal of achieving a fully integrated Main Street. It was written by B. Clarkson Schoettie and Tom Moriarty. Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1983.

Parking Handbook for Smaller Communities

Examines the issues affecting parking in communities with population between 5,000 and 50,000. Covers parking supply, management, maintenance and development in context of preserving the built environment of the traditional commercial core. Provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1992.

PA Blueprints: Best land use principles & results interactively shown.

This CD-ROM contains a series of exemplary regulatory approaches supplemented by dynamic illustrations and pictures of actual examples of how a community can retain characteristics and direct growth through comprehensive planning and appropriate zoning regulations. Published by Penn State's department of Landscape Architecture <http://www.larch.psu.edu/>

Developing a Downtown Design Assistance Program in Pullman, Washington

Describes the partnership among the downtown businesses, the Pullman City Council, Washington State University and several civic groups. Presents a case study of how Pullman Main Street Program's Design Committee assisted downtown business owners to design the marketplace to provide an attractive atmosphere. Presents a survey questionnaire for customer and for the businessperson. B. Ryder and K. Gray. *Small Town*, Vol. 18 (5), March/April 1988. pp. 4-13.

Improving Local Business Practices

Business Plans for Business Districts

Having plans for both businesses and districts are thought to be advantageous. This introductory guide provides recommendations for local businesses and community leaders. Dolores Palma. Alexandria, VA: Hyett Palma Publications, 1990.

Dealing with a Volume Chain Store: Carroll, Iowa, Guides Development and Protects Its Downtown

Examines the experience of Carroll, Iowa, a small town that successfully guided Wal-Mart into the town's central business district. Suggests three options for a community when a national volume chain wants to open a store in community. J. Knox. *Small Town*, Vol. 22 (2), Sept/Oct 1991. pp.19-23.

Developing Niches

The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America: Where to Find Fresh Air, Creative People, and Affordable Living

This source reinforces the trends taking place in quality small towns across America. Artists particularly find them attractive because of their peaceful atmosphere and aesthetic qualities. Highlighted are many examples of such towns and artists personal reflections about them. Emphasizes the important economic contributions that artists bring with them to these towns. An excellent guide for anyone who is interested in discovering more about some out of the way places. John Villani. Santa Fe, NM: John Muir Publications, 1994.

Niche Strategies for Downtown Revitalization

Full of case studies, strategies, and advice, this invaluable book gives the practitioners the tools and techniques for developing niche markets in a downtown. The author presents national and regional trends, assessing niches existing in your downtown, organizational and promotional strategies, and discusses how to develop a business recruitment program. This step-by-step guide is an excellent tool for completing a marketing analysis in your downtown. By N. David Milder. Downtown Research & Development Center, 1997. Available through the International Downtown Association (IDA): <http://www.ida-downtown.org/> and the Downtown Research & Development Center: <http://www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drchome.html>

Historic Preservation

Guiding Design on Main Street

This book outlines procedures for rehabilitating historic and older commercial buildings, as well as for developing strategies to manage design changes in historic downtown and neighborhood commercial districts. It includes authoritative information on developing design guidelines, implementing historic preservation ordinances, creating financial incentive programs and rehabilitating main street buildings. Written by Suzanne G. Dane. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1988.

History Repeats Itself

Identifies the best ways that rural downtown merchants can revitalize their town by examining its true original character. In this way a sense of history is preserved and consequently a more charming town in which to live. Suggestions also include making the downtown more accessible and to identify a common theme to create visual beauty to attract shoppers. Brian Crumlish. *American City & County*, Vol. 109 (12), November 1994. pp. 45-48.

Local Business Development

Business Clustering: How to Leverage Sales

Leasing plans have become commonplace for mall developers and can be utilized successfully by small downtowns as well. "Business clustering" refers to marketer's efforts to serve the needs of like customers, thereby creating a healthier economic environment and more satisfied clientele. Doyle G. Hyatt. Alexandria, VA: Hyatt Palma Publications, 1990.

Business Development for Main Street

Offers hands-on guidance in the process of developing a successful downtown business expansion and recruitment program. Includes information on developing and analyzing retail clusters, using market information, helping existing retailers capture a larger share of the market and approaching potential new businesses. National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1990.

Business Retention and Expansion

Examines ways that existing small local businesses can profit by focusing on long-term economic gains. Produced by Dolores P. Palma and Doyle G. Hyett. Alexandria, VA: Hyett Palma Publications, 1993.

Strategies & Tactics for Successful Retail Recruitment Downtown

Discusses strategies of downtown retail leasing, downtown retail inventory doing and retail recruitment action and practices. Includes case studies of downtown retail recruiting. Laurence A. Alexander, ed. New York, NY: Downtown Research & Development Center, 1988.

Successful Retail Recruitment Strategies

Using “grass-roots” and “peer-to-peer” organizations can assist in helping small businesses find a niche in the marketplace of many downtowns and improve the economic health of commercial districts. Dolores P. Palma and Doyle G. Hyett. Washington, DC: Hyett Palma Publications, 1990.

Clustering Can Bring Customers Back Downtown

Business clustering is a phrase used to describe an economic development strategy used consistently by shopping malls to enhance the overall market share of many businesses. This technique is now being used by downtowns to improve their economic base. Clustering has the potential of working especially well for the parking industry such as increasing the number of customers by making downtown business districts more appealing and accessible. Dolores Palma and Doyle Hyett. *Parking*, August 1994. pp. 23-27.

Keeping Retailers on Main Street

Discusses the move to retain business downtown and the new understanding of the value of downtown business cores. Explores what the inherent economic value is for a downtown business community to the area in which it is located. Kathleen Les. *Western City*, Vol. 64 (10), October 1988. pp. 15-19.

Taking Advantage of Tourism**How One Kansas Town Used Tourism to Revitalize Its Economic Base**

Outlines the excessively high unemployment rates in rural America during the 1980's and its impact on small town economy. One way to revitalize is through tourism development. This success story serves as an example of how other rural regions can benefit from their unique histories. David L. Edgell. *Business America*, Vol. 111 (21), November 1990. pp. 14-17.

Promoting Downtown

Holiday Downtown: How to Promote Them Successfully

The author describes strategies for sales, parades, festivals, races, music, demonstrations, give-aways, contests, shows, dances, decorations, advertisements and public relations, prizes, food and drink. These promotions are applied to holiday celebrations in downtown districts. Margaret DeWitt, ed. New York, NY: Downtown Research & Development Center, 1988.

Case Studies

How Downtowns Organize for Results: 24 Case Studies

Presents the way in which successful downtowns have been organized into centers of action. It describes downtown associations, for-profit and non-profit private development corporations, committees, task forces, public/private development corporations, high-level policy groups, partnerships, merchants associations, authorities, foundations and commissions. Laurence A. Alexander, ed. New York, NY: Downtown Research & Development Center, 1987.

The State of the Art: Economic Initiatives in Downtowns

A survey of 200 Downtowns taken in 1990 suggests which economic enterprises are being utilized by their communities. An excellent source comparing downtown revitalization plans and ways for sharing information between local leaders. Doyle Hyett. Washington, DC: Hyett Palma Publications, 1991.

The Thriving Hometowns Network

A compilation of 109 economic development success stories drawn from communities of less than 10,000 population. Each case study explains why, when, how, with whom and with which financial resources the small community achieved its economic development results. Thriving profiles successes in retaining, expanding, creating or attracting businesses, through a variety of community and economic development strategies. Available through the National Center for Small Communities: <http://www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm>

Bootstrap Rural Development: How Putnam County (MO) Took Control of Its Own Future

Describes how a North Central Missouri town coordinated revitalization efforts among county officials, school administrators, business leaders, and local civic organizers. Important findings suggest that grassroots funding and networking work best through broad-based community support. Linda Fettig. *Economic Development Review*, Vol. 9 (3), Summer 1991. pp. 50-52.

Chambersburg, PA., Gets Back On Track: Southgate Center Serves As Catalyst In Downtown Revitalization

Reveals how a depressed downtown business district can benefit from the upgrading of a local shopping center. This "ripple" effect produces incentives for other local merchants on main street to revitalize their businesses. The whole idea is based upon a solid downtown planning process, which leads to long term growth potential. *Chain Store Age Executive*, Vol. 66 (5), May 1990. pp. 166-167.

Focusing the Old Downtown on Specialty Retail for Economic Survival: The Transition of Ponchatoula, Louisiana

Presents a successful case study for rural redevelopment in a small town north of New Orleans. Describes how the economy of the town declined throughout the mid 1980's and how strong community efforts and careful planning produced a viable downtown area. Manon Pavy and Fritz Wagner. *Small Town*, Vol. 24 (3), November/December 1993. pp. 18-23.

Innovative Help for Small Downtowns

Describes how the Kansas Main Street Program used a state-of-the-art approach to downtown revitalization. One feature of its success was due to careful retail market assessments of three cities selected to participate in the small cities program. As a result, a three-way partnership was formed between the local Main Street representatives, the Kansas Main Street staff, and the Hyett/Palma consulting firm specializing in downtown revitalization. Consequently, better communication was fostered as well as sound knowledge of the physical, market, and management of local Main Street Programs. Dolores P. Palma. *Kansas Government Journal*, April 1992, pp. 121-122.

The Rebirth of Downtown Huntington

Describes the enormous changes taking place in a rural West Virginia town as they prepare for its 125th anniversary founding as the terminus for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway. The Main Street Program serves as the model for its success in creating new restaurants, renovation of commercial structures, new specialty shops, and a new hockey team. One of the attractions is the rebirth of the town's nightlife. Includes historical background of the town's decline and eventual revitalization. Sara Leuchter Wilkins. *Main Street News*, (111), May/June 1995

Revitalizing Downtown 1976-1986

Analyzes revitalization programs and strategies developed over the last decade and describes how and why some have succeeded while others failed through a study conducted by the National Trust's National Main Street Center in association with the Urban Institute. Richard Wagner. *Preservation Forum*, Vol. 3 (2), Summer 1989. p. 6.

Riverfront Gamblers: Small Cities are Learning That Attractive Waterfronts Help to Revive Downtowns

Describes how small communities in North Carolina, Minnesota, Colorado and Washington State leveraged private investment to spruce up their waterfronts and brought back vitality back to their downtowns. Jim Schwab. *Planning*, Vol. 55, September 1989. pp. 15-18.

Newsletters/Journals

Downtown Idea Exchange

It's the twice-monthly publication that brings you detailed case studies, practical news reports, how-to information and hundreds of real-world examples of how downtowns are growing and prospering. In its pages, you'll find ideas, insights and solid information that you can convert into tangible improvements in your downtown. Available through the Downtown Research & Development Center: <http://www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html>

Downtown News Briefs, IDA Fax News and Legislative Updates

Downtown News Briefs is IDA's quarterly newsletter informing members of trends, initiatives and activities of downtown groups. It includes downtown association career opportunities and IDA news. *IDA Fax News* is a new monthly feature providing up-to-the-minute information on IDA programs, pending research and late breaking legislative issues. *Downtown Legislative Updates* is published as an occasional supplement to IDA's newsletter. It serves as a status report on relevant legislation, and legislative initiatives in which IDA is involved. Available through the International Downtown Association (IDA): <http://www.ida-downtown.org/>

Downtown Promotion Reporter

Downtown Promotion Reporter is the monthly illustrated promotion service. It helps plan new promotional programs from scratch and modify and strengthen current programs. It offers the know-how to plan and carry out an entire promotional program for your downtown via detailed information on some of the best events, sales, public relations, image building and other programs taking place around the country. The Downtown Promotion Reporter explains how these programs are organized, funded and staffed. It also includes samples of successful ads, posters, flyers, maps, press releases, brochures, banners, logos, and surveys. Available through the Downtown Research & Development Center: <http://www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html>

Network Quarterly Newsletter

The Northeast Center quarterly newsletter focuses primarily on issues and problems of rural areas in the northeast region of the United States. Copies can be viewed online. Available through the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development: <http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/casconf/nercrd/nercrd.html>

Planning Magazine

Offers insight to community members and planners who are looking for ways to make their community's more livable. Planning magazine provides information on how innovative planning programs and techniques are reshaping America's communities. Available through the American Planning Association: <http://www.planning.org/pubs/planning.html>

Preservation

The magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Contains in-depth articles on community revitalization and planning, stunning architectural photography, plus feature stories about ordinary people working to preserve historic homes, churches, gardens and other landmarks around the country. The magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation: <http://www.nthp.org/>

Rural Development News

It provides on research and educational materials to support rural development programs, feature articles on NCRCD programs, information shared by other educational institutions and organizations on successful rural development efforts, and announcements of publications and conferences that are currently available on a wide variety of topics relating to rural development.

It is the newsletter of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University: <http://www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/rdn.html>

Small Community Quarterly

NCSC's newsletter, the Small Community Quarterly, concentrates on issues of importance to small and rural towns. The Quarterly features exclusive interviews with public policy and opinion leaders, articles on economic development, financial management, revenue generation, telecommunications, environmental concerns and more. The Quarterly also includes helpful resources and updates on NCSC's publications and activities. Available through the National Center for Small Communities: <http://www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm>

Small Town

A bi-monthly publication to the dissemination of information on new and innovative ideas concerning issues and problems facing small towns and non-urban areas. Published by The Small Towns Institute, a nonprofit organization: <http://www.sustainable.doe.gov/database/1054.html>

Audiovisuals

Videos

Downtown...The Place to Be

International Downtown Association. Washington, DC: International Downtown Association, 1989. 1 videocassette, 10 minutes. This video presents successful programs and projects in downtown development efforts across North America.

Mainstreet at Work

Produced by Diane Kostecke and Linda Baldwin. 1987. This is a collection of four videocassettes totaling 81 minutes. These are designed to help the citizens of smaller cities revitalize their commercial districts by sharing the experiences of communities that successfully transformed their main streets.

A. *Bringing in Business*. 1987. 1 videocassette, 21 minutes. Illustrates effective business recruitment programs through the experiences of Statesville, North Carolina and Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania including packaging information, identifying prospects and helping them locate or expand downtowns.

B. *The Four Point Approach*. 1987. 1 videocassette, 20 minutes. Shows how Tarboro, North Carolina and Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania have adapted the comprehensive Main street approach to fit the needs and assets of their downtowns and how they have created ongoing revitalization programs with successes in organization, promotion, design and economic development.

C. *Getting Organized*. 1987. 1 videocassette, 20 minutes. Reveals how McKinney, Texas, Fergus Falls, Minnesota and Shelby, North Carolina, initiated and sustained their main street programs by developing strong public-private partnerships, broadening participation, building nonprofit organizations from volunteer efforts and establishing a stable funding base.

D. *Investing in Your Image*. 1987. 1 videocassette, 20 minutes. Demonstrates how quality design attracts people and investment downtown, as in Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania, Hillsboro,

Texas, and Thomasville, Georgia. Explores such issues as raising public awareness, using design professionals and setting up a design assistance program.

Rural Communities: Legacy & Change

South Burlington, VT: Annenberg/CPB, 1993, a 13 video series, 60 minutes each. Available from Annenberg/CPB Collection P.O. Box 2345, South Burlington, VT 05407-2345 ; Toll free: 800-LEARNER. This television series and telecourse brings to life the many challenges and transmissions faced by rural communities. Examined are 15 unique regions, each with their own social and community problems. Discussions include personal reflections by towns' people of different social classes and how they perceive the past, present and future conditions of their lives. Included in the package is a textbook, study guide and faculty guide for additional learning experience.

Slides

Awnings and Canopies on Main Street

National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1987. 140 slides. Using examples from around the country, this narrated slide-tape program focuses attention on the importance of awning and canopy design to the appearance of individual buildings and to the overall image of the commercial district. Reveals the wide range of styles and also shows how to recognize and maintain good examples from the past and how to design appropriate new awnings and canopies for historic downtown buildings.

The Main Street Approach

National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Rev. 1989. 80 slides. Illustrates the four elements of the successful main street approach-design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring - includes before and after photos of facade renovations and building conversions from across the country.

Promoting Main Street

National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1987. 140 slides. Examines ways to create a comprehensive program based on coordinated improvements in three areas: image promotion, retail activities and special events. Includes creative examples from downtown revitalization programs around the country.

Public Improvements on Main Street

National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1987. 140 slides. Discusses the role of public improvements in the revitalization process, with useful information on implementation strategies and the selection of suitable elements.

Signs for Main Street

National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic preservation, 1987. 112 slides. Offers non-technical examples of effective sign placement and creative sign designs for historic commercial areas.

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Keywords

Central business districts
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 Small business development
 Small communities
 Small towns
 sustainable communities

Appendix A: Worksheets

Table A-1: SWOT Analysis Worksheet

When planning for downtown revitalization, it is essential that your group understands both local and non-local factors affecting downtown. This worksheet is designed to help you think about your downtown's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). Your group can use this worksheet not only to assess the current state of downtown, but also as a place to start thinking about how downtown can be improved.

<i>What are downtown's Strengths?</i>	<i>What are its Weaknesses?</i>
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
<i>What are the Opportunities?</i>	<i>What are the Threats?</i>
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
<i>How do we protect and enhance our strengths?</i>	<i>How can we overcome local weaknesses?</i>
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
<i>How do we capitalize on opportunities?</i>	<i>How can we minimize threats?</i>
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

The following discussion questions can help you with this effort.

Questions to think about:

- ✓ What are the financial needs of local businesses?
- ✓ What institutions provide capital? Have private investors shown interest?
- ✓ Do existing businesses and community organizations depend on federal, state, or regional programs?
- ✓ What grants are available, from whom and for what uses?
- ✓ Are or have many businesses failed in your community? If so, what types?

- ✓ What are the reasons for business failures? (national economic conditions, lack of business experience, personal problems, customer dissatisfaction, excessive expenses, insufficient capital, fraud or disaster)
- ✓ What businesses have relocated out of downtown? Why? What can be done about this?
- ✓ Do local business owners feel that they are a part of a supportive business environment?
- ✓ Are residents loyal to local businesses? Are those businesses thought of as friendly, reliable, and helpful?
- ✓ What is the general level of business activity in the community?
- ✓ What is the attitude of state and local government toward business?
- ✓ What local actions can eliminate barriers to business recruitment or expansion?
- ✓ What are the conditions that prevent the formation of new businesses in your community?
- ✓ What programs exist within your community that help existing businesses stay healthy?
- ✓ How do town regulations affect businesses? (zoning, licenses, fees, etc.)
- ✓ Is there a forum for government, business people, and consumers to share information and concerns?
- ✓ In the recent past, how has the community invested in infrastructure?
- ✓ Have any residents, business owners, or property owners expressed concern over the condition of the town's infrastructure?
- ✓ How does the cost and condition of the infrastructure affect local businesses? Residents? Potential visitors?
- ✓ Does the community vision require the expansion of existing services or facilities?
- ✓ What types of skills do current residents have? What do they have to offer to the revitalization effort?
- ✓ Are most residents working in jobs that take full advantage of their skills?
- ✓ Do entrepreneurial opportunities exist? What about job opportunities in general?
- ✓ Can local schools play a role in the revitalization effort?
- ✓ Do local civic groups work together? What services do they provide the community?
- ✓ Have retired individuals been contacted? What role might they play in assisting the effort?
- ✓ What are the community's natural resources?
- ✓ How does commerce or industry affect the community's local or neighboring environment?
- ✓ Does your community have a recycling program? How are recycled materials used in your community?
- ✓ Do local businesses/organizations share or trade materials?
- ✓ How does the community ensure the long-term health and availability of its natural resources?
- ✓ What arts and cultural assets does your community have to offer? (facilities, traditions, landmarks, or noteworthy activities)
- ✓ Do any unique recreation opportunities exist in your town?
- ✓ What community assets serve as anchors for businesses? What community assets attract tourists?
- ✓ What special amenities or assets would attract new businesses? Residents?
- ✓ What amenities do residents want? Do you have a source of supply?
- ✓ Does your community have a reputation in the region or state? If yes, for what? (cultural events, recreational facilities, crime, etc.)
- ✓ How would you describe your community's way of life to an outsider?
- ✓ What characteristics detract the most from the quality of life in your community?

Table A-2: Walk-Through Inventory Worksheet

Take a close look at your downtown. A low-cost way to assess the current state of downtown is to take a leisurely walk through it and take an inventory. The following worksheet offers some of the main attributes you will want to consider in a walk-through inventory. Rate each attribute on a scale from “excellent” to “very poor.” After the inventory is complete, you should have a better understanding of local strengths as well as things that need to be improved.

<i>OVERALL RATING</i>		<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Adequate</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Very Poor</i>
Aesthetics						
	Architecture					
	Artistic Venue					
	Atmosphere					
	Cleanliness					
	Community Pride					
	Landscaping					
	Utilities (wires/poles)					
Buildings						
	Entranceways					
	Expansion Capabilities					
	Façades					
	Interiors					
	Lighting					
	Structures					
	Vacancies					
Business Practices						
	Displays					
	Hours					
	Product Selection					
	Product Quality					
	Professionalism					
	Promotional Activity					
Housing						
	Availability					
	Exterior Appearance					
	Interior Quality					
	Location					
Movement						
	Motor Vehicle Volume					
	Pedestrian Volume					
Parking						
	Available Spaces					
	Convenience					
	Handicap Spaces					
	Parking Garages					
	Parking Meters					

Services					
Benches					
Garbage Cans					
Public Phones					
Public Rest Rooms					
Visitor Information					
Water Fountains					
Streets/Sidewalks					
Crosswalks					
Curbs					
Roadway Surface					
Sidewalk Surface					
Signage					
Street Lights					
Traffic Lights					

Table A-3: Physical Business/Service Inventory Worksheet

Knowing which goods and services are available locally and which ones are purchased outside of the community is helpful for discovering potential growth areas. The following worksheet offers a partial list of business types, and can serve as a model for an inventory of your downtown's businesses. Develop a similar worksheet for your community, thinking about all the goods and services that people need, and where they purchase them (i.e., locally, nearby or outside the region). When a service is not available locally, think about why not (for example, the community may be too small to support such a business). Once this inventory is complete, you might have some ideas about potential new businesses for the community.

<i>Type of good or service</i>	<i>Available Locally</i>	<i>Available in a neighboring community</i>	<i>Recently closed in local or neighboring community</i>	<i>Why?</i>	<i>Not readily available</i>
Accounting services	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Antique store	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Apparel (children)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Apparel (general)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Apparel (men)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Apparel (women)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Auto dealer	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Auto & Home Store	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Auto repair/service	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bakery	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bicycle shop	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Book store	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dental services	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dry cleaners	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Electricians	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Farm implements	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Feed store	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Floor covering	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Table A-4: Purchasing Survey Worksheet

Another way of looking at the business inventory is to think about where residents are spending their money. Use the following worksheet as a means of tracking the purchases made by local people. Perhaps you can conduct a survey (mail or face-to-face) asking some form of these basic questions. Here, the goal is to understand where people spend their money and why they spend it where they do. The survey cans then be analyzed to determine potential opportunities.

<i>Item purchased</i>	<i>How much do you spend on this item per year?</i>	<i>Where is this item usually acquired?</i>	<i>Why do you acquire it at this particular place?</i>
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____	_____
11. _____	_____	_____	_____
12. _____	_____	_____	_____

Table A-5: Community Capacity Worksheet

It is important for your group to honestly assess its ability to undertake particular projects. Similarly, you should assess how willing the community might be to embrace potential projects. This worksheet is designed to facilitate such an analysis. For each potential strategy, evaluate your organization or community's capacity to implement the proposed project, using the following scale. Also think about what resources might be available to help meet the needs.

- 1 = very high capacity
- 2 = high capacity
- 3 = medium capacity
- 4 = low capacity
- 5 = very low capacity
- NA = not applicable

PROJECT NAME

<i>Evaluate our capacity</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>What additional resources might be available?</i>
Human resource capacity		
a) Within mission		
b) Willing leaders		
c) Time requirements		
d) Local attitude		
e) Political clout		
f) Adequate organizational infrastructure		
g) Regional cooperation		
Entrepreneurial capacity		
a) Entrepreneurial		
b) Business development		
c) Promotion		
Business development capacity		
a) Competitive ability		
b) Homegrown businesses		
c) Helping existing businesses		
Financial capacity		
a) Local funding		
b) Grant writing skills		
Capacity for infrastructure improvement		
a) Business district		
b) Government		
c) Tourism		
d) Attitudes and relationships		
Overall	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Table A-6: Risks and Benefits Analysis

When evaluating potential projects, your group might want to carefully consider both the potential benefits and costs of a project. Evaluate each project with the following worksheet, keeping in mind that both costs and risks can be monetary or non-monetary.

<i>High risk</i>	E	D	C
<i>Medium risk</i>	D	C	B
<i>Low risk</i>	C	B	A
	<i>Low benefit</i>	<i>Medium benefit</i>	<i>High benefit</i>

In this grid, items with low risk and high benefits will be found in Box A. These projects might be priority projects. Projects in Boxes B and C may also be attractive, as they offer a relatively good ratio between expected benefits and risks. Projects in Box E are characterized by high risks and low benefits, and may not be suitable for the community.

Table A-7: Strategic Plan Worksheet

Once a set of projects has been identified, it is necessary to develop an implementation plan. The following worksheet outlines the various components each project should consider.

<i>Action Steps</i>	<i>Person in Charge</i>	<i>Things to be Done</i>	<i>Resources Needed</i>	<i>Date to be Completed</i>
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Table A-8: Communications Plan of Action

Revitalization efforts typically involve a number of people and organizations. As a result, good communication becomes important. When projects are undertaken, there should be a means to keep related groups aware of all ongoing activities. By developing—and acting on—a worksheet such as the following, your group can keep communications open.

How will we keep each other informed?

<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>	<i>How frequently</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

How will we keep the community informed?

<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>	<i>How frequently</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

How will we keep the county informed?

<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>	<i>How frequently</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

How will we communicate with state/federal agencies?

<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>	<i>How frequently</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Table A-9: Evaluation Guide

It is important to critically evaluate ongoing projects. Use this worksheet for each project your group is undertaking. If your accomplishments fall short of your objectives, think about steps that can be taken to get the project back on track. If you successfully completed a project, make sure you thank all participants and celebrate the success.

This year's objective	What we accomplished	Resources used	People or organizations responsible
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Appendix B: Conducting Effective Meetings

A good way to involve residents in the revitalization process is to encourage them to participate in community meetings. Accordingly, it is important to properly set up and conduct meetings. How the organization acts before, during and after the meeting will determine how successful you are at maximizing participation. Here are some points to keep in mind:

Before the Meeting

- Establish a time, date and place which you feel would be most convenient to as many of the people as possible. Pay attention to parking, air conditioning, other community activities scheduled for the same night, etc.
- Send out notices to everyone on the committee giving them details of the meeting and a meeting agenda at least 10 days prior to the meeting. Follow up with a second notice two or three days before the meeting date.
- If outside resource people or speakers are involved, be sure to give them the vital statistics as to date, time, place and how to get there well in advance of the meeting.

At the Meeting

- Be sure you come early enough to get the room set up the way you want it. Remember, people participate best when they can see each other! If possible, put the chairs in a circle rather than straight rows.
- If the participants don't know each other, provide name tags or make introductions.
- Start on time!
- State the purpose of the meeting as briefly as possible. Use a large sheet of paper or a blackboard to list some of the points to be covered in the meeting.
- Speak confidently, but don't be too formal; try to help others feel at ease.
- The best way to stimulate discussion is to ask questions, not make statements. Remember, people prefer to be asked, not told!
- Sometimes it's helpful to have a "coffee break" during the meeting. It gives people time to visit informally about what is being discussed. This is especially true before important decisions are going to be made, five or ten minutes will usually get it.
- At the end of the meeting, try to summarize briefly what's been talked about. Get some idea from the participants about what to do next and where to go from here.
- Remember, the success of a community meeting is everybody's responsibility. If you are the discussion leader or chairman, your job is to help create the environment for interaction and stimulate discussion rather than dominate the discussion.

After the Meeting

- Visit informally with some of the committee members a few days after the meeting. Get their impressions of what happened during the meeting.
- You might try sending out a follow-up report to those attending the meeting, simply "putting to paper" what was discussed during the meeting.

Appendix C: Forming a Nonprofit and Tax-Exempt Organization: A Checklist

In order to be effective, a nonprofit organization must carefully develop a structure and operating procedures. Good governance starts with helping the organization begin on a sound legal and financial footing in compliance with the numerous federal, state, and local requirements affecting nonprofits. Several steps are in order.

Determine the purpose of the organization. Every organization should have a written statement that expresses its function. Resources: Board members, potential clients and constituents.

Form a board of directors. The board helps translate ideas into reality through planning and fundraising. As the organization matures, the nature and composition of its board will change. Resources: the secretary of state or state attorney general's office; professional organizations.

File articles of incorporation. Not all nonprofits are incorporated. For those that do wish to incorporate, state law governs the requirements for forming and operating a nonprofit corporation. *When filing articles of incorporation, there are a number of legal details that should not be taken lightly. Thus, should you decide to incorporate, your group might be well-served by seeking services of a lawyer who specializes in non-profits.* Resources: Your secretary of state or state attorney general's office.

Draft bylaws. Bylaws--the operating rules of the organization—should be drafted and approved by the board early in the organization's development. Resources: An attorney experienced in nonprofit law.

Develop a strategic plan. The planning process helps you express a vision of the organization's potential. Outline the steps necessary to work toward that potential, and determine the staffing needed to implement the plan. Establish program and operational priorities for at least one year. Resources: Board members; planning and management consultant.

Develop a budget and resource development plan. Financial oversight and resource development (e.g., fundraising, earned income, and membership) are critical board responsibilities. The resources needed to carry out the strategic plan must be described in a budget and financial plan.

Establish a record keeping system for the organization's official records. Corporate documents, board meeting minutes, financial reports, and other official records must be preserved for the life of the organization. Resource: Your secretary of state or state attorney general's office.

Establish an accounting system. Responsible stewardship of the organization's finances requires the establishment of an accounting system that meets both current and anticipated needs. Resources: Certified public accountant experienced in nonprofit accounting.

File for an Internal Revenue Service determination of federal tax-exempt status. Nonprofit corporations with charitable, educational, scientific, religious, or cultural purposes have tax exempt status under section 501(C)(3)--or sometimes section 501(C)(4)--of the Internal Revenue Code. To apply for recognition of tax-exempt status, obtain form 1023 (application) and

publication 557 (detailed instructions) from the local Internal Revenue Service office. The application is an important legal document, so it is advisable to seek the assistance of an experienced attorney when preparing it. Resources: Your local IRS office, an attorney.

File for state and local tax exemptions. In accordance with state, county, and municipal law, apply for exemption from income, sales, and property taxes. Resources: State, county, or municipal department of revenue.

Meet the requirements of state, county, and municipal charitable solicitation laws. Many local jurisdictions regulate organizations that solicit funds within that state, county, or city. Usually compliance involves obtaining a permit or license and then filing an annual report and financial statement. Resources: state attorney general's office, state department of commerce, state or local department of revenue, or county or municipal clerk's office.

Other steps include: obtaining an employer identification number from the IRS, registering with the state unemployment insurance bureau, applying for a nonprofit mailing permit from the US Postal Service, and obtaining directors' and officers' liability insurance.

To apply for 501C(3) status, you will need to obtain the following forms from the Internal Revenue Service, on the web at www.IRS.gov, or phone 1-800-829-3676.

- ◇ Form 8718--*User Fee for Exempt Organization Determination Letter Request*
- ◇ Form SS-4--*Application for Employer Identification Number*
- ◇ Form 5768--*Election by an Eligible Organization to Make Expenditures to Influence Legislation*
- ◇ Package 1023--*Forms and instruction booklets for applying for 501(C)(3) tax-exempt status*
- ◇ Publication 557--*Tax-exempt status for your organization*

Be prepared to spend about a day and a half preparing the application materials. Legal advice is recommended.

For more information on organizing and managing non-profits, visit *The Best Free Internet Resources for Not-for-Profit Organizations* on the world wide web at <http://www.webcom.com/jac/free.html>.

Appendix D: Sample Press Release

Any editor will tell you that readers need to know “who, what, when, where, why and how” as succinctly as possible. Let these principles guide your press release. A press release for the first public meeting might read like the following fictitious sample:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Rebuilding Downtown: Borough group looks to revitalize Main Street”

Kathlyn Alison believes that there is a bright future for downtown Kelseyburg. Vowing to “renew our heritage” Alison has helped form *Kelseyburg Alive!*, a local citizen organization dedicated to improving the Borough’s downtown.

“This is an extraordinary opportunity to enrich our community,” Alison said, “We want to rekindle some of our proud past.” *Kelseyburg Alive!* brings together local merchants, officials and citizens to map out a vision and plan for downtown.

Initially formed by a few residents “concerned about our deteriorating downtown,” the group has already lead several downtown beautification projects, including the new flower boxes on Main Street and three new welcome signs on the outskirts of town, according to Zeke Peabody, a board member of Citizen’s Bank, and secretary for *Kelseyburg Alive!*

Now, the organization seeks broader community participation. On March 1st, the group will conduct a two-hour public meeting at the Borough office, beginning at 7:00 pm.

According to Alison, the first part of the meeting will briefly review the origins and early accomplishments of the revitalization program. The remainder of the meeting will solicit community input to help develop a vision and action plan for the future.

Borough Mayor Mary Johnson enthusiastically supports the program. “What we are all after is improving the quality of life in Kelseyville. This meeting will go a long way to developing a plan for achieving this goal,” Johnson said.

All citizens are invited to participate in the meeting. Child-care and refreshments will be provided, and there is no registration fee. If you would like more information about the meeting or *Kelseyburg Alive!*, contact Kathlyn Alison at 555-1234.

Appendix E: Understanding Conflict¹

What is conflict?

Conflict is a natural disagreement resulting from individuals or groups that differ in attitudes, beliefs, values or needs. It can also originate from past rivalries and personality differences. Other causes of conflict include trying to negotiate before the timing is right or before needed information is available.

The ingredients of conflict.

Needs - Needs are things that are essential to our well-being. Conflicts arise when we ignore others' needs, our own needs or the group's needs. Be careful not to confuse needs with desires (things we would like, but are not essential).

Perceptions - People interpret reality differently. They perceive differences in the severity, causes and consequences of problems. Misperceptions or differing perceptions may come from: self-perceptions, others' perceptions, differing perceptions of situations and perceptions of threat.

Power - How people define and use power is an important influence on the number and types of conflicts that occur. This also influences how conflict is managed. Conflicts can arise when people try to make others change their actions or to gain an unfair advantage.

Values - Values are beliefs or principles we consider to be very important. Serious conflicts arise when people hold incompatible values or when values are not clear. Conflicts also arise when one party refuses to accept the fact that the other party holds something as a value rather than a preference.

Feelings and emotions - Many people let their feelings and emotions become a major influence over how they deal with conflict. Conflicts can also occur because people ignore their own or others' feelings and emotions. Other conflicts occur when feelings and emotions differ over a particular issue.

Conflict is not always negative. In fact, it can be healthy when effectively managed. Healthy conflict can lead to...

- Growth and innovation
- New ways of thinking
- Additional management options

¹ This material is reproduced and adapted from "Managing Conflict: A Guide for Watershed Partnerships," with permission of The Know Your Watershed campaign (<http://www.ctic.purdue.edu/KYW/>). The campaign is coordinated by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC), a nonprofit public/private partnership dedicated to the advancement of environmentally beneficial and economically viable natural resource systems. The materials were developed mainly by Dr. Thomas Hoban, an Associate Professor at North Carolina State University.

If the conflict is understood, it can be effectively managed by reaching a consensus that meets both the individual's and society's needs. This results in mutual benefits and strengthens the relationship. The goal is for all to "win" by having at least some of their needs met.

How public and private conflicts differ.

Most of us have experience with conflict management and negotiation in private disputes (with a salesman, among family members or with your employer). Public conflicts, like those that can occur during revitalization efforts often are rooted in trying to balance various community interests. Keep in mind, however, that effective programs can result in both economic and environmental benefits. Some complicating factors include:

Distribution of costs and benefits. Those who benefit may not be the same as those who pay the costs.

Perceptions of problems. People tend to blame others for causing the problem.

Speed of process. Some will want changes to take place more quickly than others.

Managing Conflict

There are five steps to managing conflict. These steps are:

1. Analyze the conflict
2. Determine management strategy
3. Pre-negotiation
4. Negotiation
5. Post-negotiation

Step 1: Analyze the conflict.

The first step in managing conflict is to analyze the nature and type of conflict. To do this, you'll find it helpful to ask questions. Answers may come from your own experience, your partners or local media coverage. You may want to actually interview some of the groups involved. Additional information regarding analyzing conflicts can be found in the Guide to Information and Resources.

Step 2: Determine management strategy.

Once you have a general understanding of the conflict, the groups involved will need to analyze and select the most appropriate strategy. In some cases it may be necessary to have a neutral facilitator to help move the groups toward consensus.

- Conflict Management Strategies
- Collaboration
- Compromise
- Competition
- Accommodation
- Avoidance

Collaboration - This results from a high concern for your group's own interests, matched with a high concern for the interests of other partners. The outcome is "win/win." This strategy is generally used when concerns for others are important. It is also generally the best strategy when society's interest is at stake. This approach helps build commitment and reduce bad feelings. The drawbacks are that it takes time and energy. In addition, some partners may take advantage of the others' trust and openness. Generally regarded as the best approach for managing conflict, the objective of collaboration is to reach consensus. (See the Building Local Partnerships guide for more information about consensus.)

Compromise - This strategy results from a high concern for your group's own interests along with a moderate concern for the interests of other partners. The outcome is "win some/lose some." This strategy is generally used to achieve temporary solutions, to avoid destructive power struggles or when time pressures exist. One drawback is that partners can lose sight of important values and long-term objectives. This approach can also distract the partners from the merits of an issue and create a cynical climate.

Competition - This strategy results from a high concern for your group's own interests with less concern for others. The outcome is "win/lose." This strategy includes most attempts at bargaining. It is generally used when basic rights are at stake or to set a precedent. However, it can cause the conflict to escalate and losers may try to retaliate.

Accommodation - This results from a low concern for your group's own interests combined with a high concern for the interests of other partners. The outcome is "lose/win." This strategy is generally used when the issue is more important to others than to you. It is a "goodwill gesture." It is also appropriate when you recognize that you are wrong. The drawbacks are that your own ideas and concerns don't get attention. You may also lose credibility and future influence.

Avoidance - This results from a low concern for your group's own interests coupled with a low concern for the interests of others. The outcome is "lose/lose." This strategy is generally used when the issue is trivial or other issues are more pressing. It is also used when confrontation has a high potential for damage or more information is needed. The drawbacks are that important decisions may be made by default.

Conflict Analysis Exercise:

Think of a controversial issue to analyze. On a separate sheet of paper, answer these questions.

Groups involved

- Who are the groups involved?
- Who do they represent?
- How are they organized?
- What is their power base?
- Are the groups capable of working together?
- What are the historical relationships among the groups?

Substance

- How did the conflict arise?
- How are the main and secondary issues described?
- Can negative issues be reframed positively?
- Are the issues negotiable?
- Have positions been taken and, if so, are there
- Common interests?
- What information is available and what other information is needed?
- What values or interests are challenged?

Possible strategies

- Would consensus serve all interests?
- Are there external constraints or other influences that must be accommodated?
- What are the past experiences (if any) of the groups working together?
- What is the timeline for a decision?
- How will the public and the media be involved and informed?
- Will an outside negotiator be needed?

Step 3: Pre-negotiation.

To set the stage for effective negotiation, the groundwork must be laid. The following should occur prior to negotiation.

Initiation - One partner raises the possibility of negotiation and begins the process. If no one is willing to approach the others to encourage them to reach an agreement, a trusted outsider could be brought in as a facilitator.

Assessment - Conditions must be right for negotiation to be successful. Key players must be identified and invited. Each side must be willing to collaborate with the others. Reasonable deadlines and sufficient resources to support the effort must exist. Spokespersons for each group must be identified and involved. Parties need to determine which issues are negotiable and which are not.

Ground rules and agenda - The groups must agree on ground rules for communication, negotiation and decision making. They should agree on the objectives of the negotiation process. An agenda of issues to be covered needs to be developed.

Organization - Meeting logistics must be established, including agreed upon times and places. People must be contacted and encouraged to attend. Minutes must be taken so that information can be distributed before and after meetings.

Joint fact-finding - The groups must agree on what information is relevant to the conflict. This should include what is known and not known about social and technical issues. Agreement is also needed on methods for generating answers to questions.

Step 4: Negotiation.

Interests - When negotiating be sure to openly discuss interests, rather than stated positions.

Interests include the reasons, needs, concerns and motivations underlying positions. Satisfaction of interests should be the common goal.

Options - To resolve conflicts, concentrate on inventing options for satisfying interests. Do not judge ideas or favor any of the options suggested. Encourage creativity, not commitment.

Evaluation - Only after the partners have finished listing options, should the options be discussed. Determine together which ideas are best for satisfying various interests.

Written agreement - Document areas of agreement and disagreement to ensure common understanding. This helps ensure that agreements can be remembered and communicated clearly.

Commitment - Every partner must be confident that the others will carry out their parts of the agreement. Discuss and agree upon methods to ensure partners understand and honor their commitments.

When evaluating options...

- Use objective criteria for ranking ideas.

- Make trade-offs among different issues

- Combine different options to form acceptable agreements

Step 5: Post-negotiation.

Once negotiation is complete, the group will need to implement the decisions made. Some key steps include:

Ratification - The partners must get support for the agreement from organizations that have a role to play in the agreement. These organizations should be partners and should have been involved in the previous steps. Each organization will need to follow its own procedures to review and adopt the agreement.

Implementation - You and your partners' jobs are not done when you've reached agreement. Communication and collaboration should continue as the agreement is carried out. The partnership will need to have a plan to monitor progress, document success, resolve problems, renegotiate terms and celebrate success.

Negotiation skills.

Negotiation is an important skill for coming to an agreement when conflicts develop at home, at work and when dealing with issues like those related to watershed management. When negotiating...

Separate people from the problem.

When negotiating, remember you're dealing with people who have their own unique needs, emotions and perceptions.

Some conflicts are based on differences in thinking and perceptions. These conflicts may exist mainly in peoples' minds. It helps for each party to put themselves into the other's shoes so they can understand each other's point of view.

Identify and openly discuss differences in perceptions, being careful not to place blame. In addition, recognize and understand the other side's emotions as well as your own.

Interest vs. Position

People often confuse interests with positions. An interest may be reducing litter in roadside ditches. There are many possible ways of addressing this interest. One might be the position of mandatory recycling. Another position might be a deposit on bottles and cans. Still another could be organizing a clean-up day.

Focus on interests, not positions.

Focusing on interests, rather than positions, makes it possible to come up with better agreements. Even when people stand on opposite positions, they usually have a few shared interests.

It takes time and effort to identify interests. Groups may not even be clear about their own interests. It helps to write down each group's interests as they are discovered. It helps to ask why others take the positions or make the decisions they do. Partners will have multiple interests. Interests involving important human needs (such as security, economic well-being, a sense of belonging, recognition and control over one's life) are difficult to negotiate.

Develop optional solutions.

When developing optional solutions that meet the interests of all sides, try to meet as many of each side's interests as possible. Start by inviting all sides to brainstorm ideas (before reaching a decision).

Some obstacles to developing innovative options are:

- Judging and rejecting prematurely
- Searching for a single best answer
- Putting limits on scope or vision
- Considering only your own interests

To overcome these obstacles, view the situation through the eyes of different partners. Focus on shared interests to make the process smoother for all involved. Look for meaningful opportunities, not simple solutions.

Developing objective criteria.

When developing criteria for selecting or combining possible alternatives, revisit the conflicting interests. These can't be ignored or "wished" away. Instead discuss them as you begin developing criteria for judging alternatives. Also keep in mind principles such as fairness, efficiency and scientific merit.

Strive for criteria that are legitimate, practical and unbiased. You may also find it helps to explore the criteria used in making past decisions and discuss criteria with your partners or outside experts.