

# WYOMING RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



**Rural Resource Team Report  
For  
Green River Community Assessment  
Sweetwater County, Wyoming  
October 21-24, 2013**

**Wyoming Rural Development Council's Mission**

*“To enhance partnerships that strengthen  
the vitality of rural Wyoming”*

## The Wyoming Rural Development Council

The Wyoming Rural Development Council is a collaborative public/private partnership that brings together six partner groups: local/regional government, state government, federal government, tribal government, non-profit organizations, and private sector individuals and organizations.

WRDC is governed by a Board of Directors representing the six partner groups. The Board and the Council membership have established the following goals for the WRDC:

Assist rural communities in visioning and strategic planning

Serve as a resource for assisting communities in finding and obtaining grants for rural projects

Serve and be recognized as a neutral forum for identification and resolution of multi-jurisdictional issues.

Promote, through education, the understanding of the needs, values and contributions of rural communities.

The Council seeks to assist rural Wyoming communities with their needs and development efforts by matching the technical and financial resources of federal, state and local governments and the private sector with local development efforts.

If you would like more information about the Wyoming Rural Development Council and how you may benefit as a member, contact:

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## **Process for the Development of this Report**

The Wyoming Rural Development Council (WRDC) has provided a resource team to assist the Town of Green River, Wyoming, in evaluating the community's assets and liabilities and in developing suggestions for improving the environment, social and economic future of Green River.

The City of Green River requested a community assessment from the Wyoming Rural Development Council. Laura Leigh and other volunteers served as the community contacts and worked on agenda development, logistics, and publicity in the community for the assessment. Resource team members were selected to visit Green River, interview citizens and community leaders, and develop a plan of recommended actions for the town.

The Resource Team visited Green River over a four-day period on October 21-24, 2013. The visit began with lunch and a tour afterwards of the surrounding area. Then, the listening sessions began with over 260 people attending the 26 sessions. The schools returned 253 comments, we received 47 written comments and the online comments totaled 45. The sectors interviewed included: Churches & Religious Organizations, Civic, Non-Profit Groups, Business (Retail) Banking & Financial Partners, Business (Service), Chamber of Commerce/Economic Dev., County Government, State and Federal Agencies, Railroad, Industry, Historic Preservation, Tourism, Recreation, High School Students, Law Enforcement, Housing and Real Estate, Educators, Parents and Families, Healthcare & Emergency Services, Social Services, Private School/Home School Students, Seniors, Utilities, Infrastructure, Development and Public Sessions. Each person was asked to respond to three questions:

What do you think are the major problems and challenges in Green River?  
What do you think are the major strengths and assets in Green River?  
What projects would you like to see completed in two, five, ten, and twenty years in Green River?

Upon completion of the listening sessions, the team met to compare notes and share comments. The team agreed upon the major themes and each went back to their respective daily lives to write individual reports that are combined into this one larger report.

A summary of the assessment and major themes were presented to the Mayor of Green River, Town Council, and residents on October 24, 2013 at the Town Meeting.

During this assessment many of the Green River population attended the listening sessions and culminating Town Meeting. Their input helped to provide keys to the themes.

## **Executive Summary**

On behalf of the Green River Community Assessment Resource Team, I would like to thank the Town of Green River and the community members who worked so hard to coordinate the Community Assessment. Green River is a beautiful area and we were warmly welcomed to the community. This report contains an abundance of information that will hopefully be used by the citizens of Green River to better the community and reach its goals.

While reading this report, you will find a variety of recommendations made by the team members on the issues that were identified during the listening sessions. We encourage Green River to use these recommendations to build a plan for the future.

Green River has so many assets, including the beautiful area, an abundance of natural resources and infrastructure in place to build upon. Green River is in a unique position in that most of the major themes that came out in the listening session are very doable and in a short period of time. The City should also concentrate on finishing projects already started, even as they begin to start on the issues addressed in the listening sessions of the community assessment. Communication and relationship building will go a long way to assist Green River to achieve its future goals.

Anything is possible if everyone works together to achieve a common goal. Every step, no matter how small, is a movement in the right direction toward achieving Green River's goals. What you do with the recommendations is your choice and will be accomplished by the dedicated citizens of Green River.

Members of our team will return to Green River to facilitate a priority setting meeting in the spring. The meeting will help determine the priorities and develop strategies for implementation in Green River. We encourage everyone from the community to attend this meeting, even if they were unable to attend the community assessment. This goal setting meeting will identify both short-term and long-term goals for Green River and should help with other planning efforts currently going on in your community.

On behalf of the Green River Assessment Team, let me express our gratitude for the hospitality shown us during our time in your community. Good luck on your goals and visions.

Sincerely,

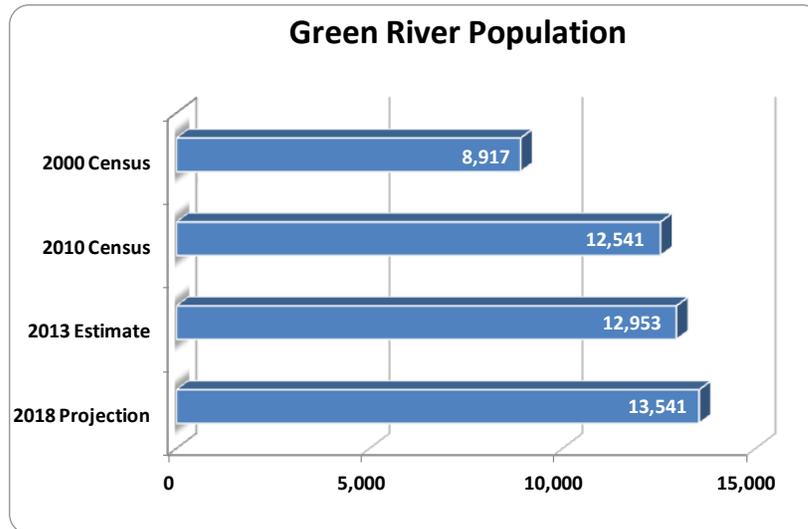
**Kim Porter**  
Team Leader

## Green River Profile

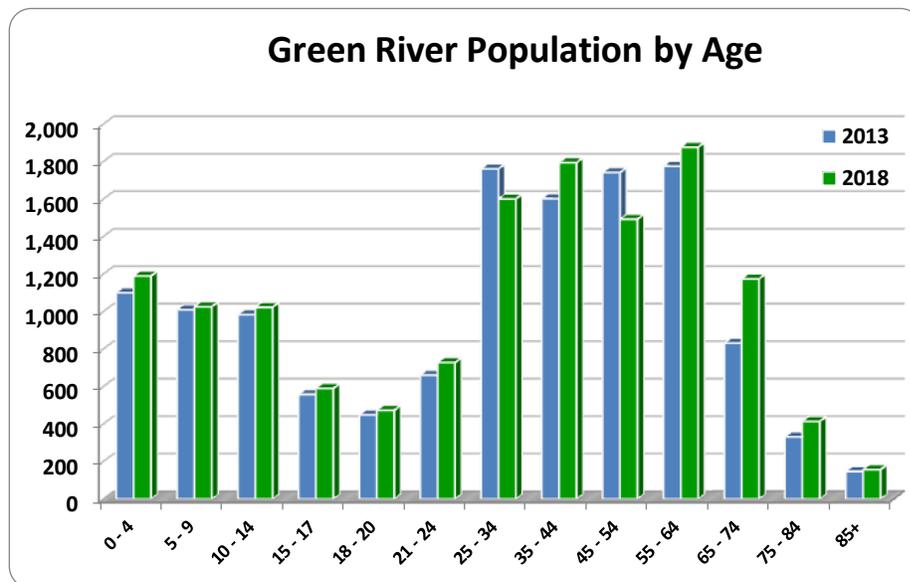


### Population Demographics

The population of Green River in 2000 was **8,917** and in 2010 it was **12,541**, a **40.6%** change. The population for 2013 is estimated to be **12,953** and the projection for 2018 is **13,541**, representing a change of **4.5%**. The growth rate from 2000 to 2013 is **45.3%**.



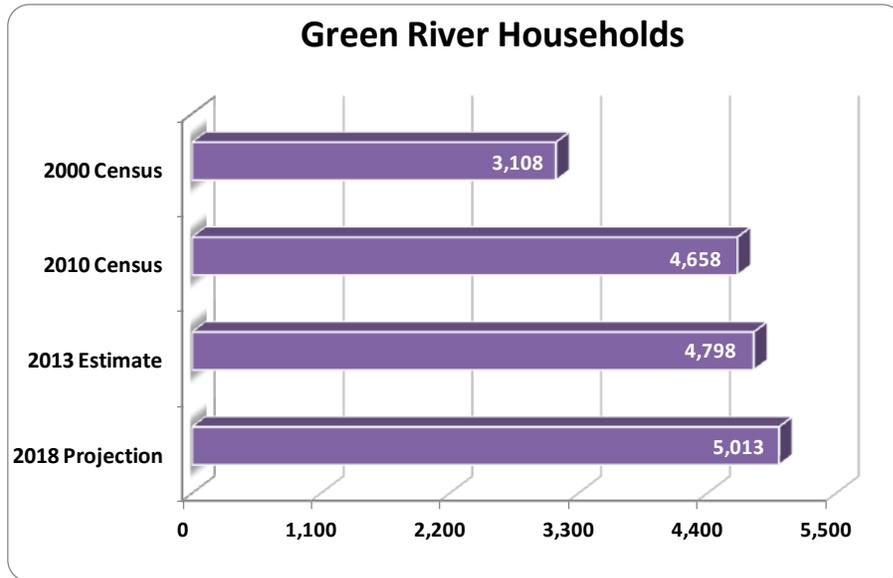
The 2013 median age of the total population in Green River is **34.7** and it is predicted to change in five years to **35.8**. For 2013, males represent **51.6%** of the population and females represent **48.4%**. The most prominent age group in 2013 is **Age 55-64** years. The age group least represented is **Age 85+** years.





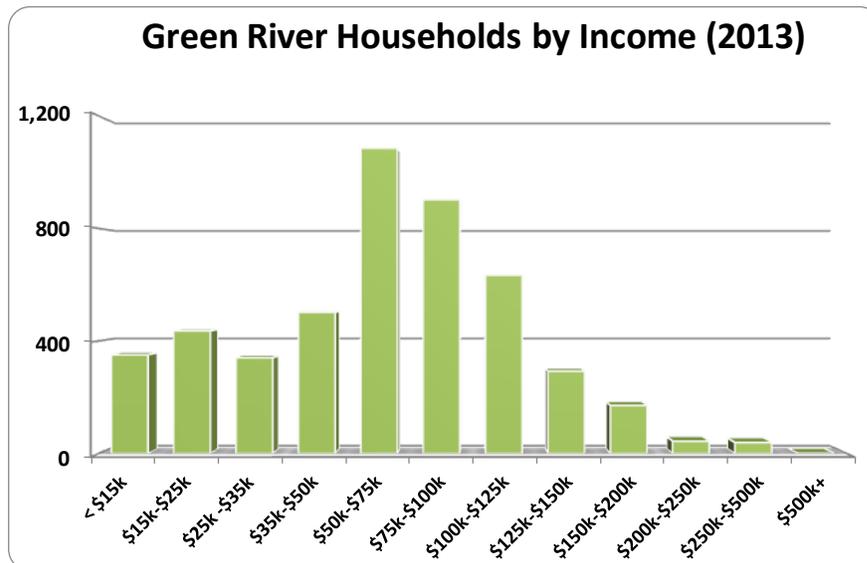
## Household Demographics

The number of households in Green River in 2000 was **3,108** and in 2010 it was **4,658**, a **49.9%** change. The household count for 2013 is estimated to be **4,798** and the projection for 2018 is **5,013**, representing a change of **4.5%**. The growth rate from 2000 to 2013 is **54.4%**.



## Income Demographics

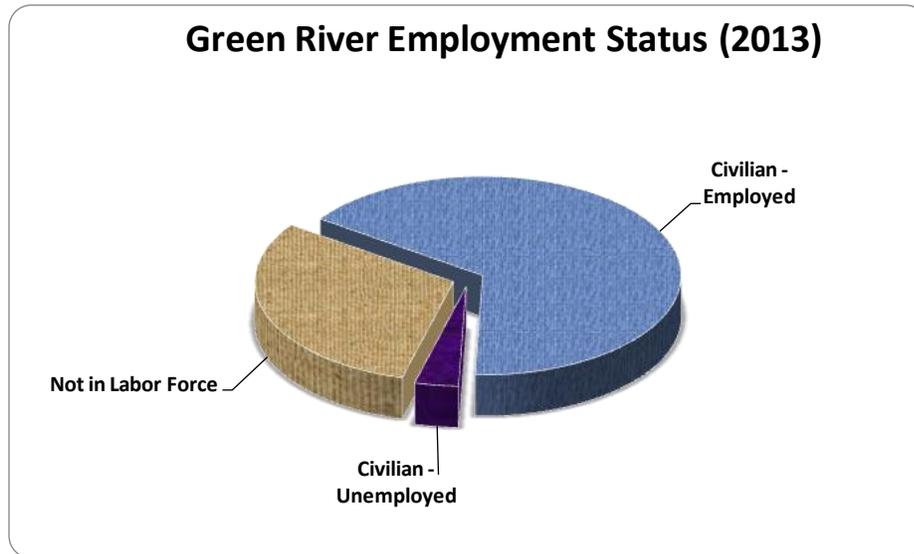
The 2013 predominant household income category for Green River is **\$50k-\$75k**, and the income group that is least represented is **\$500k+**. For 2013, average household income is **\$74,435** and median household income is **\$67,742**.



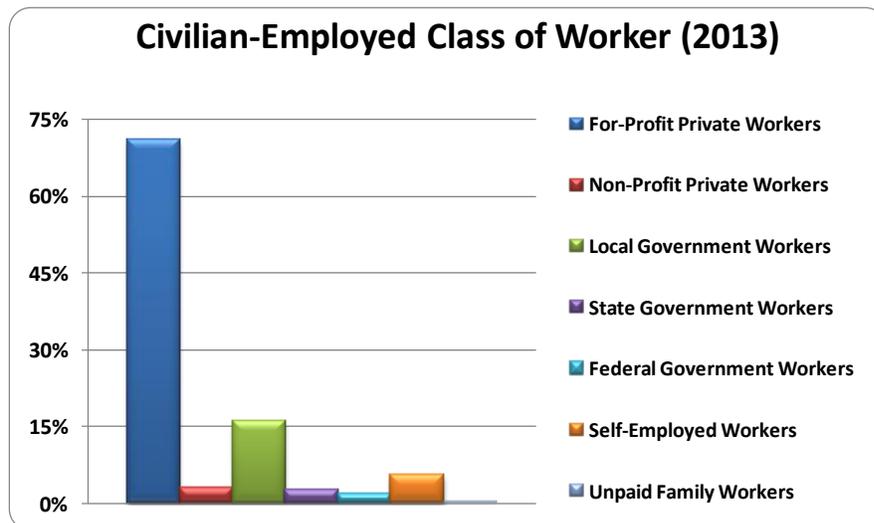


## Labor Force Demographics

For 2013, **49.4%** of the Green River population (age 16+) is estimated to be employed. The status of the labor force is as follows: **65.9%** are employed civilians, **3.6%** are unemployed civilians, and **30.6%** are not in the labor force.



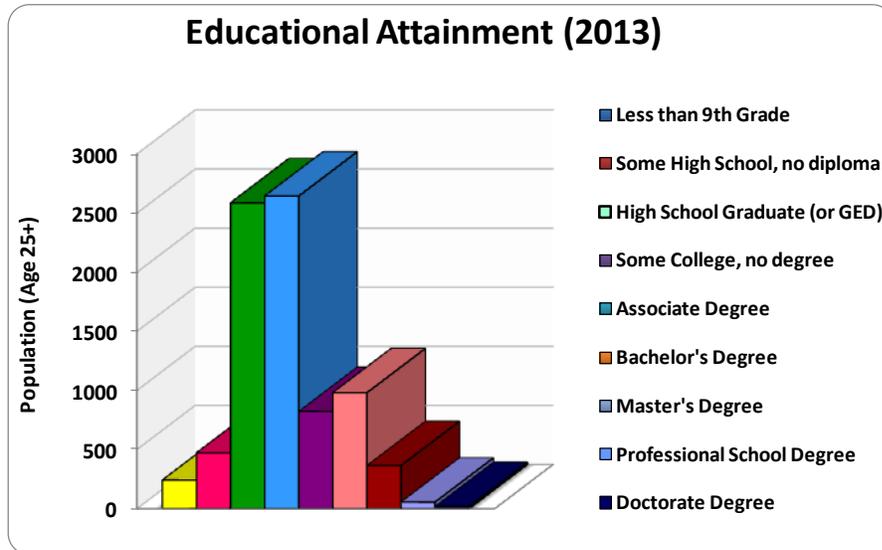
For the civilian-employed population, it is estimated that they are employed as the following class of worker: For-Profit Private Workers (**71.1%**); Non-Profit Private Workers (**3.0%**); Local Government Workers (**16.0%**), State Government Workers (**2.5%**); Federal Government Workers (**1.8%**); Self-Employed Workers (**5.5%**) and Unpaid Family Workers (**0.1%**).





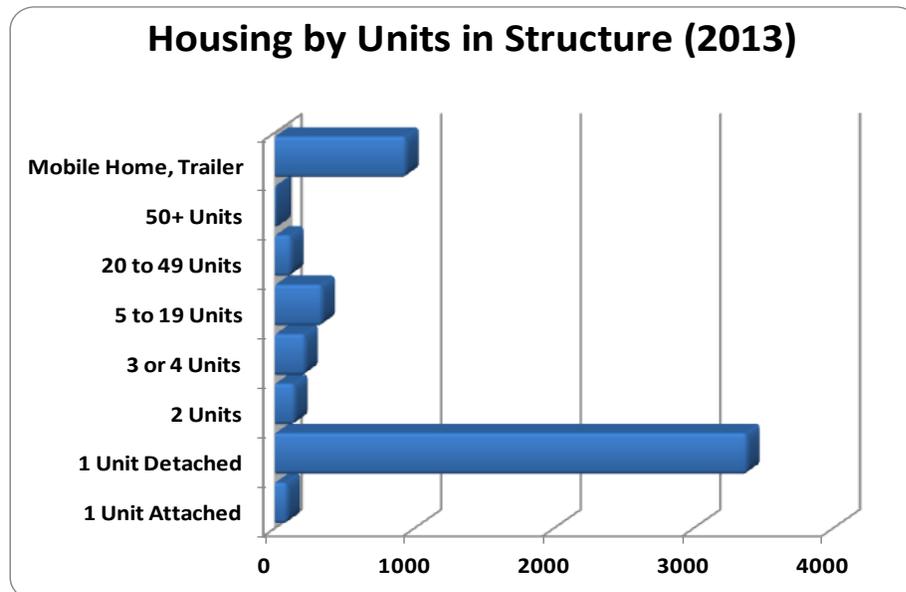
## Education Demographics

For 2013, it is estimated that **5.4%** of the Green River population (Age 25+) earned a Master’s, Professional, or Doctorate Degree and **12.0%** earned a Bachelor’s Degree.



## Housing Demographics

For 2013, most of the dwellings in Green River (**74.3%**) are Owner-Occupied. The majority of dwellings are estimated to be structures of 1 Unit Detached (**64.7%**). The majority of housing units (**38.9%**) were built between 1970 and 1979.



Source: Claritas, Inc.

## Green River RMP Opportunity Gap - Retail Stores 2013

The difference between demand and supply represents the opportunity gap or surplus available for each retail outlet. When the demand is greater than (less than) the supply, there is an opportunity gap (surplus) for that retail outlet. For example, a positive value signifies an opportunity gap, while a negative value signifies a surplus.

	(Demand) Consumer Expenditures	(Supply) Retail Sales	(Opportunity) Gap/ Surplus
<b>Total Retail Sales (\$) - Including Eating &amp; Drinking</b>	236,263,242	222,657,431	13,605,811
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	65,028,948	7,100,240	57,928,708
Automotive Dealers	53,903,851	0	53,903,851
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	8,043,620	3,152,583	4,891,037
Automotive Parts/Accessories, Tire Stores	3,081,477	3,947,657	(866,180)
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	4,197,729	2,449,767	1,747,962
Furniture Stores	2,181,782	2,227,119	(45,337)
Home Furnishing Stores	2,015,947	222,648	1,793,299
Electronics and Appliance Stores	4,264,052	2,002,558	2,261,494
Appliances, TVs, Electronics Stores	3,196,452	2,002,558	1,193,894
Household Appliances Stores-	593,016	0	593,016
Radio, Television, Electronics Stores	2,603,436	2,002,558	600,878
Computer and Software Stores	958,678	0	958,678
Camera and Photographic Equipment Stores	108,922	0	108,922
Building Material, Garden Equip Stores	20,862,214	29,527,783	(8,665,569)
Building Material and Supply Dealers	18,554,031	28,652,121	(10,098,090)
Home Centers	7,506,063	5,148,567	2,357,496
Paint and Wallpaper Stores	312,540	0	312,540
Hardware Stores	1,835,433	989,143	846,290
Other Building Materials Dealers	8,899,995	22,514,411	(13,614,416)
Building Materials, Lumberyards	3,381,859	8,803,137	(5,421,278)
Lawn, Garden Equipment, Supplies Stores	2,308,183	875,662	1,432,521
Outdoor Power Equipment Stores	519,340	0	519,340
Nursery and Garden Centers	1,788,843	875,662	913,181
Food and Beverage Stores	26,507,939	30,913,326	(4,405,387)
Grocery Stores	23,053,337	27,183,038	(4,129,701)
Supermarkets, Grocery (Ex. Conv.) Stores	21,944,004	25,274,466	(3,330,462)
Convenience Stores	1,109,333	1,908,572	(799,239)
Specialty Food Stores	1,965,641	1,816,204	149,437
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores	1,488,961	1,914,084	(425,123)
Health and Personal Care Stores	10,298,823	300,650	9,998,173
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	8,147,745	0	8,147,745
Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, Perfume Stores	712,662	0	712,662
Optical Goods Stores	507,209	172,719	334,490
Other Health and Personal Care Stores	931,207	127,931	803,276
Gasoline Stations	21,483,100	79,609,181	(58,126,081)
Gasoline Stations With Conv. Stores	15,563,907	23,286,189	(7,722,282)
Other Gasoline Stations	5,919,193	56,322,992	(50,403,799)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	10,272,890	1,698,545	8,574,345
Clothing Stores	7,747,158	1,698,545	6,048,613

Men's Clothing Stores	431,282	0	431,282
Women's Clothing Stores	1,704,258	567,234	1,137,024
Childrens, Infants Clothing Stores	537,648	0	537,648
Family Clothing Stores	4,071,843	0	4,071,843
Clothing Accessories Stores	321,906	0	321,906
Other Clothing Stores	680,221	1,131,311	(451,090)
Shoe Stores	1,204,570	0	1,204,570
Jewelry, Luggage, Leather Goods Stores	1,321,162	0	1,321,162
Jewelry Stores	1,230,602	0	1,230,602
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	90,560	0	90,560
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores	3,886,231	0	3,886,231
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Inst Stores	2,900,672	0	2,900,672
Sporting Goods Stores	1,603,630	0	1,603,630
Hobby, Toys and Games Stores	730,710	0	730,710
Sew/Needlework/Piece Goods Stores	316,811	0	316,811
Musical Instrument and Supplies Stores	249,521	0	249,521
Book, Periodical and Music Stores	985,559	0	985,559
Book Stores and News Dealers	824,492	0	824,492
Book Stores	758,169	0	758,169
News Dealers and Newsstands	66,323	0	66,323
Prerecorded Tapes, CDs, Record Stores	161,067	0	161,067
General Merchandise Stores	26,764,937	37,721,962	(10,957,025)
Department Stores Excl Leased Departments	10,965,145	0	10,965,145
Other General Merchandise Stores	15,799,792	37,721,962	(21,922,170)
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	5,691,436	16,270,907	(10,579,471)
Florists	265,980	249,864	16,116
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores	1,822,131	336,496	1,485,635
Office Supplies and Stationery Stores	1,025,127	0	1,025,127
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	797,004	336,496	460,508
Used Merchandise Stores	559,651	179,528	380,123
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	3,043,674	15,505,019	(12,461,345)
Non-Store Retailers	15,683,546	142,358	15,541,188
Foodservice and Drinking Places	21,321,397	14,920,154	6,401,243
Full-Service Restaurants	9,807,816	9,559,357	248,459
Limited-Service Eating Places	8,911,149	0	8,911,149
Special Foodservices	1,722,347	58,988	1,663,359
Drinking Places -Alcoholic Beverages	880,085	5,301,809	(4,421,724)
GAFO *	51,207,970	44,209,328	6,998,642
General Merchandise Stores	26,764,937	37,721,962	(10,957,025)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	10,272,890	1,698,545	8,574,345
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	4,197,729	2,449,767	1,747,962
Electronics and Appliance Stores	4,264,052	2,002,558	2,261,494
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores	3,886,231	0	3,886,231
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores	1,822,131	336,496	1,485,635

\*GAFO (General merchandise, Apparel, Furniture and Other) represents sales at stores that sell merchandise normally sold in department stores. This category is not included in Total Retail Sales including Eating and Drinking Places.

Retail Market Power (RMP) data is derived from two major sources of information. The demand data is derived from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE Survey), which is fielded by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The supply data is derived from the Census of Retail Trade (CRT), which is made available by the U.S. Census.

## **Resource Team Members**

Green River, Wyoming  
Community Assessment  
October 21-24, 2013



### **TEAM LEADER**

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50 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> North Street  
Green River, WY 82935  
307-872-6146  
[lleigh@cityofgreenriver.org](mailto:lleigh@cityofgreenriver.org)

## Green River Community Assessment Schedule

ITINERARY, OCTOBER 21, 2013			
Time		Session/Event Name	Tentative Locations
11:30 AM		Travel to Green River	Travel Time
11:30 AM	1:00 PM	Lunch with Local Team	China Garden
1:00 PM	4:15 PM	Tour of Green River	Various
4:15 PM	4:30 PM	Travel to City Hall	City Hall
4:30 PM	5:30 PM	Churches & Religious Organizations	City Hall
5:30 PM	6:30 PM	Civic, Non-Profit Groups	City Hall
7:00 PM		Dinner	Krazy Moose
ITINERARY, OCTOBER 22, 2013			
Time		Session/Event Name	Tentative Locations
6:30 AM	7:45 AM	Breakfast	Buckaroos
7:45 AM	8:00 AM	Travel to Visitor's Center	Travel Time
8:00 AM	9:00 AM	Business (Retail)	Visitor's Center
9:00 AM	10:00 AM	Banking & Financial Partners	Visitor's Center
10:00 AM	11:00 AM	Business (Service)	Visitor's Center
11:00 AM	12:00 PM	Chamber of Commerce/Economic Dev.	Visitor's Center
12:00 PM	12:15 PM	Travel to Lunch	Visitor's Center
12:15 PM	1:15 PM	Lunch	Travel Time
1:15 PM	1:30 PM	Travel to City Hall	Mi Casita
1:30 PM	2:30 PM	County Government	City Hall
2:30 PM	3:30 PM	State and Federal Agencies	City Hall
3:30 PM	4:30 PM	Railroad	City Hall
4:30 PM	5:30 PM	Industry	City Hall
5:30 PM	6:45 PM	Dinner	Pizza Hut
7:00 PM	8:00 PM	Public Session	City Hall
ITINERARY, OCTOBER 23, 2013			
Time		Session/Event Name	Tentative Locations
6:15 AM	7:15 AM	Breakfast	Get Real Coffee
7:15 AM	7:30 AM	Travel to Island Pavilion	Travel Time
8:00 AM	9:00 AM	Historic Preservation	Island Pavilion
9:00 AM	10:00 AM	Tourism	Island Pavilion
10:00 AM	11:00 AM	Recreation	Island Pavilion
11:00 AM	11:15 AM	Travel to High School	Travel Time
11:15 AM	11:45 AM	High School Students	High School
11:45 AM	12:00 PM	Travel Back To Island Pavilion	Island Pavilion
12:00 PM	1:00 PM	Lunch (Brought In)	Enjoy Expedition Island/Green Belt
1:00 PM	2:00 PM	Law Enforcement	Island Pavilion
2:00 PM	3:00 PM	Housing and Real Estate	Island Pavilion
3:00 PM	3:15 PM	Travel to WWCC	Travel Time
3:15 PM	4:15 PM	Educators	WWCC
4:15 PM	4:30 PM	Travel to Dinner	Travel Time
4:30 PM	6:15 PM	Dinner	Don Pedros
6:15 PM	6:30 PM	Travel to WWCC	Travel Time
6:30 PM	7:30 PM	Parents and Families	WWCC
7:30 PM	8:30 PM	Public Session	WWCC

## GREEN RIVER COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT VISIT SCHEDULE

### ITINERARY, OCTOBER 24, 2013

Time		Session/Event Name	Tentative Locations
6:30 AM	7:40 AM	Breakfast	Penny's Diner
7:40 AM	8:00 AM	Travel to Fire Station #2	Travel Time
8:00 AM	9:00 AM	Healthcare & Emergency Services	Fire Station #2
9:00 AM	10:00 AM	Social Services	Fire Station #2
10:00 AM	10:15 AM	Travel to GRBBC	Travel Time
10:15 AM	11:15 AM	Private School/Home School Students	GRBBC
11:15 AM	11:30 AM	Travel to Senior Center	Travel Time
11:30 AM	1:15 PM	Lunch at Senior Center	Senior Center
1:15 PM	1:30 PM	Travel to City Hall	Travel Time
1:30 PM	2:30 PM	Utilities, Infrastructure, Development	City Hall
2:30 PM	6:45 PM	Team Preparation & working Dinner	City Hall (Domino's Pizza Brought In)
6:45 PM	7:00 PM	Travel to Pavilion	Travel Time
7:00 PM	Town Meeting		Pavilion

## **Major Themes**

### **Green River Community Assessment October 21 – 24, 2013**

#### **Youth**

- Drugs and alcohol
- Things to do
- Winter activities
- Teens
- Free

#### **Leadership**

- Strained relations (voters, County, Rock Springs)
- Expand on what we already have (historic preservation, River)
- Complete existing projects (before starting new)
- Fiscal Management

#### **Community Development**

- Blighted properties/absentee owners
- Land locked
- Deer management
- Parks (both positive and negative)
- Lincoln Highway Access
- Expansion of Recycling

#### **Economic Development & Tourism**

- Wayfinding
- River
- Traffic flow (downtown and off I-80)
- Lincoln Highway Promotion
- Revitalization of downtown
- More retail and restaurants
- Grocery Store
- Affordable business space

## **Team Member Recommendations**

### **GREEN RIVER COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT October 20-24, 2013**

#### **Britta Mireley, State Program Manager**

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Thank you to everyone in Green River that came to talk with us in Green River. Community members' input is the most important part of the Community Assessment process. I hope that this report helps the community leadership and private citizens alike move forward toward the Green River everyone would like to see.

#### **Issue: Leadership**

**Challenge: Expand on what we already have (historic preservation, river)**

**Solution:** Green River has a great deal of potential in its existing assets. Historic buildings and the river were brought up multiple times by the community. Other assets include the existing pathways and multiple parks and green spaces.

Instead of looking outside the city limits for projects to undertake, there are many inside the city limits that could help improve quality of life and tourism prospects. It can many times be more cost effective to expand on existing assets (utilizing existing infrastructure in lieu of adding more, etc.).

**Resource:** An organization named Strong Towns recently hosted "Curbside Chats" in Wyoming that focused on this very issue. Strong Towns is a non-profit organization whose mission is "to support a model for growth that allows America's towns to become financially strong and resilient." This involves expanding on existing assets to increase the financial resilience of the community.

Contact:  
Charles Marohn, Co-founder and President  
Strong Towns  
1511 Northern Pacific Rd., Room 211  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
Email: [marohn@strongtowns.org](mailto:marohn@strongtowns.org)  
Phone: 218-828-3064

**Challenge: Complete existing projects**

**Solution:** This discussion came up with regards to new projects that the City is considering or has started (Sections 10 and 12, the airport, the depot, etc.). Many of the citizens felt that the City itself and the community members would be better served by the City focusing on completion of existing projects before tackling new ones.

Unfortunately, during these conversations, the Tomahawk came up frequently. Many community members 1) do not understand why the WBC grant funding was returned, and 2) that the City does not own the building. While it is more than likely too late to correct the misperceptions of the failed project, it is a good lesson on public outreach during just such issues.

**Issue: Community Development**

**Challenge: Blighted properties/absentee owners**

**Solution:** Absentee property owners or owners of blighted properties in Wyoming can be a challenge, and unfortunately, many times these property owners do not wish to fix up their property or do any maintenance. My recommended solution is to pass an ordinance specifically targeted at vacant buildings, as these can be the worst offenders. The City of Rock Springs passed an ordinance of this nature and I've attached in Appendix A or included links to examples of four others, with varying methods of tackling the issue.

All the examples involve registration of vacant buildings by the property owners. Each community wrote their ordinances slightly differently with differences such as registration fees and department that oversees the program varying from community to community.

I've also attached an issue of Main Street Now in Appendix A that is dedicated to filling vacant buildings.

**Resources:**

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City of Rock Springs  
212 D Street  
Rock Springs, WY 82901  
Email: [vess\\_walker@rswy.net](mailto:vess_walker@rswy.net)  
Phone: 307-352-1540

Link to Rock Springs ordinance: <http://www.rswy.net/egov/docs/1370974365325.htm>

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City of Nebraska City  
Building and Zoning  
1409 Central Ave.  
Nebraska City, NE 68410  
Phone: 402-873-6509

Link to Nebraska City ordinance:  
<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=10745&stateId=27&stateName=Nebraska>

--  
Russ Schaedlich, Planner/Zoning Administrator  
City of Painesville  
P.O. Box 601

Painesville, OH 44077

Email: [rschaedlich@painesville.com](mailto:rschaedlich@painesville.com)

Phone: 440-392-5843

Link to Painesville Vacant Property Registration Program:

[http://www.painesville.com/index.asp?Type=B\\_BASIC&SEC={D8B7BA2D-DA45-4AD4-B908-3019E45FA9FC}](http://www.painesville.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={D8B7BA2D-DA45-4AD4-B908-3019E45FA9FC})

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Paul Ricci, Fire Chief

City of Sandusky

600 W. Market St.

Sandusky, Ohio 44870

Email: [pricci@ci.sandusky.oh.us](mailto:pricci@ci.sandusky.oh.us)

Phone: 419-627-5822

Link to Sandusky Fire Department's Vacant and Abandoned Building Program:

<http://www.ci.sandusky.oh.us/fire/vacantbldgprogram.htm>

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Robert Nitzsche, Chief Building Official

City of Kent

930 Overholt Rd.

Kent, OH 44240

Phone: 330-678-8107

Link to Kent Annual Registration of Vacant Houses and Buildings and registration Fees Ordinance:

<http://www.conwaygreene.com/Kent/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&2.0>

### **Challenge: Landlocked**

**Solution:** Green River has a fair amount of underutilized land within the city limits, and expanding infrastructure to include areas beyond the limits will only increase maintenance costs in the long run. Increasing the density of the community will avoid the increase in long-term costs due to the utilization of existing water/sewer/streets/curb and gutter/etc. There will be a higher tax base in the area existing within the current city limits, allowing for a more adequate maintenance budget for the infrastructure.

**Resource:** For more detailed methods of how to address this issue and increase density without losing Green River's small town feel, I recommend contacting Strong Towns.

Contact:

Charles Marohn, Co-founder and President

Strong Towns

1511 Northern Pacific Rd., Room 211

Brainerd, MN 56401

Email: [marohn@strongtowns.org](mailto:marohn@strongtowns.org)

Phone: 218-828-3064

### **Issue: Economic Development & Tourism**

#### **Challenge: Revitalization of Downtown**

**Solution:** Continued work with and improvement of the Green River URA/Main Street program. I see having a strong Main Street program as Green River's best chance at revitalizing the downtown area. Mary Randolph, Executive Director of Wyoming Main Street, has been working closely with both the City of Green River and the local Main Street program on moving forward and restructuring the relationship between the Main Street program and the City.

I believe the main focus of Main Street for the time being should be the Organization point. Having a healthy Board and committees with a strong volunteer core will help the program tremendously; as well as having a strong and fully supported Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Main Street. An ideal Main Street program is very grassroots and community-driven, which has been lost in recent years in Green River. Having a strong Board and volunteers and full-time director will help get the program back to that structure.

I've also attached an article about the tools of Main Street and how the Public Sector can and should get involved called Cool Economic Development Tool in Appendix A.

### **Resources**

Mary Randolph, Executive Director  
Wyoming Main Street  
214 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
Email: [mary.randolph@wyo.gov](mailto:mary.randolph@wyo.gov)  
Phone: 307-777-6430

Also, I am the designated contact with Wyoming Main Street for Green River's program.

### **Challenge: More retail and restaurants**

**Solution:** One way for not just downtown Green River, but the whole community to attract more retail and restaurants is to become more entrepreneur-friendly. These types of local businesses tend to be owned by entrepreneurs. While most of my resources and advice for become entrepreneur-friendly comes from the Main Street world, it is relevant to the community as a whole.

Suggestion #1: Look at Main Street's Economic Restructuring point for guidance  
Of Main Street's four points, economic restructuring is the point that focuses on filling vacancies, whether it's in the community's niche or a physical vacancy in a building. The main focus is on building an entrepreneur-friendly environment, not only to attract new ones, but to keep the existing ones happy and in business. This could involve a market analysis, business training, etc.

Suggestion #2: Community-owned businesses  
This is something that has been done throughout Wyoming and across the country. Rawlins currently has a successful mercantile that is community-owned. They have also been started in Worland and Powell.

Suggestion #3: Embrace the idea of pop-up businesses  
Pop-ups help attract customers/visitors to an underutilized space. This can help drive traffic in an area (strip mall, downtown, etc.) and can increase business to surrounding businesses that customers didn't know about see the attached article on pop-ups in Appendix A. Also, Laramie had a Halloween store "pop-up" in their downtown this year.

**Resources:**

Suggestion #1

Wyoming Main Street  
Myself or Mary Randolph

Green River URA/Main Street

National Main Street Center

[www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)

Economic Restructuring Handbook

[www.downtowndevelopment.com](http://www.downtowndevelopment.com)

Todd Barman

Consultant specializing in Main Street, and specifically Economic Restructuring

Email: [todd\\_barman@charter.net](mailto:todd_barman@charter.net)

Suggestion #2

Rawlin's Mercantile

Pam Thayer, Executive Director

Rawlins DDA/Main Street

P.O. Box 1778

Rawlins, WY 82301

Email: [rawlinsmainstreeted@rawlins-wyoming.com](mailto:rawlinsmainstreeted@rawlins-wyoming.com)

Phone: 307-328-2099

Powell Mercantile

Sharon Earhart, Board Chair

Email: [Sharon@tctwest.net](mailto:Sharon@tctwest.net)

Phone: 307-754-3709

See attached article on community-owned businesses.

Suggestion #3

See attached article on pop-up businesses.

**Challenge: Affordable business space**

**Solution:** This is a tough topic to tackle, because this issue lies with the private property owners and businesses, and is not an issue that the City can directly affect. With that said, convincing a property owner to lower rents can be difficult.

One way property owners have successfully lowered rents is to use a tiered approach. For example, a new business moves in and for the first few months, rent is only \$500. After those first few months, the business is starting to turn a profit, so the rent goes up to \$750, and so on, with the rent eventually reaching the original rate. This can help get businesses into the vacant space at an affordable rate, and hopefully keep them there long term.

Another way is to not lower the rents to begin with, but instead enhance the property so that it reaches the rent level the property owner wants. If a few thousand dollars' worth of fixes can bring the rental value up to that ideal level, it will be more likely to rent. Having conversations with property owners with vacancies about the couple fixes they could make to help rent their property may help with the disconnect between properties and expected rent.

**Resources:**

Property Enhancement Solution Resource

Michael Young, Vice-President  
Downtown Graphics Network, Inc.  
P.O. Box 4216  
Salisbury, NC 28145  
Email: [Michael@dgninc.com](mailto:Michael@dgninc.com)  
Phone: 800-884-0855

## Tourism Summary and Recommendations

### **Kristin Phipps, Destination Development Manager**

Wyoming Office of Tourism

5611 High Plains Road

Cheyenne, WY 82007

[307-777-2887](tel:307-777-2887)

Cell: [307-421-8722](tel:307-421-8722)

[kristin.phipps@wyo.gov](mailto:kristin.phipps@wyo.gov)

## Tourism Summary and Recommendations

### **Executive summary**

The Wyoming Office of Tourism (WOT) in conjunction with the Wyoming Rural Development Council (WRDC) has developed a Certified Tourism Community (CTC) program to assist communities statewide in developing visitor friendly destinations. This program is designed to be the next step of the WRDC's community assessment process for communities that have identified tourism as an *economic development priority*. The first step to certification as a tourism community is to conduct a tourism assessment. The tourism assessment process mirrors the community assessment process and provides recommendations to communities in growing and sustaining their travel and tourism industry. When a community participates in a community assessment, a tourism listening session is conducted to provide a glimpse into the current state of the tourism industry.

This report summarizes the major themes heard at the listening sessions, recommendations for growing and sustaining your travel and tourism industry, and provides the basis for development of a short-term tourism plan.

### Current State of the Tourism Industry

The City of Green River currently relies on the efforts of the Green River Chamber of Commerce and Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism to promote Green River and the surrounding area for tourism opportunities. The Sweetwater County Joint Travel and Tourism Board is comprised of 11 volunteer board members, six members are appointed by the City of Rock Springs, two by the City of Green River, one by Superior, one by Wamsutter and one by the Sweetwater County Commissioners. Revenue generated by the local lodging tax is allocated for research and marketing efforts to support regional marketing campaigns to drive resident and non-resident travelers to Sweetwater County. In 2012, travel related spending in Sweetwater County totaled \$173 million, which generated \$2.7 million in local tax revenue and supported over 1,500 jobs. This is a 5.3% increase over 2011.

Green River is poised to capitalize on a vast variety of tourism opportunities. In addition to easily accessible public lands and recreation opportunities, Green River is surrounded by world class geological resources and

mineral deposits that are unique to the area and provide opportunity for tourism draw. Finally, the heart of Green River's downtown district has the potential to capture travelers from Interstate 80 or Wyoming highway 530, and is rich with historical assets to peak resident and non-resident interests alike.

### **Additional Resources:**

For more information on tourism promotion in Sweetwater County, please contact Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism at (307) 382-2538. For more information on the tourism industry statewide, please contact the Wyoming Office of Tourism at (307) 777-7777.

### Listening Session Discovery

Listening sessions were conducted over the course of four days during the assessment process. In many of the sessions, the opportunities for tourism development were expressed by members of the local community. Many of the Green River residents in attendance expressed their interest in expanding tourism to help Green River become a destination rather than a pass through community.

In addition to this big picture goal, more immediate aspirations specifically related to tourism development include comprehensive wayfinding signage, continued development of tourism related businesses and opportunities associated with the river and downtown revitalization efforts.

Residents recognize the challenges that their community is currently faced with. Lack of signage to help visitors get around Green River; vacant residential and commercial buildings plaguing the downtown district; and incentives from small business recruitment and retention are all challenges that were identified. In addition to these physical challenges, residents in attendance agreed that a lack of community involvement among residents and community leadership may be preventing the community from supporting efforts directed towards community development.

### Recommendations

#### **Wayfinding**

Increased signage around Green River is a goal that can be accomplished. Every two years the Wyoming Office of Tourism (WOT) awards \$300,000 in funding for signage projects within the state. The purpose of this program is to nurture Wyoming's tourism industry by creating a more visitor friendly and easily accessible destination. The program is a biennium program that provides funds for the following sign categories: Interpretive/Wayside Exhibits, Wayfinding signage, and Free Form signs. Any non-profit entity, municipality, tribal government, state or federal agency are eligible to apply for funding.

Increasing wayfinding signage on Interstate 80 and throughout the community of Green River could greatly benefit the community. In addition to additional signage on the interstate, it is recommended that the community explore branded wayfinding signage at the bottom of the exit ramps and throughout the downtown community to provide more clear direction to the traveling public of the services that are available.

Although it is not required to qualify for funding, it is recommended that communities take a strategic approach to their wayfinding program. Wayfinding is more than signage. Developing an identity, a "brand," is essential for a successful wayfinding program, and it makes the wayfinding design process exciting. Wayfinding combines marketing, consensus building, identity, planning, function, and design. The best wayfinding systems feature consistent standards that can be adapted and altered as required to locate existing destinations plus adapt to feature future development. Creating a consistent and recognizable graphics and placement standard results in a system that responds to the goals and planning vision, and ensures the system is comprehensive and appears neither fragmented nor piecemeal.

Communities that have completed a wayfinding plan are likely to receive priority consideration in a grant review process. In addition to WOT funds, additional funding may be available through the Wyoming Business Council's Business Ready Community- Community Enhancement grants. Applicants that can demonstrate collaboration, support and investment from multiple agencies are also viewed favorably.

Applications for the FY' 14 Biennium will be available March 1, 2014. Applications are due May 1, 2014, with funding being awarded by June 1, 2014.

**Additional Resources:**

For more information on the WOT Sign Grant Program, please refer to the Wyoming Office of Tourism Industry site at [www.wyomingofficeoftourism.gov](http://www.wyomingofficeoftourism.gov), or contact Kristin Phipps, Destination Development Manager at 307.777.2887.

For more information on the WBC BRC grant program, please contact the WBC Investment Ready Communities division at 307.777.2811.

**Downtown Revitalization**

As the vital arteries of our communities, Main Street not only supports the exchange of goods and services, but also promotes social interaction and life in a small community. Historically, these commercial zones were the model of mixed-use development including retail, office, entertainment and residential living. As the heart of the community, Green River has an opportunity to invest in revitalizing its downtown through the assistance of the Wyoming Main Street program. Wyoming Main Street's purpose is to assist Wyoming communities with their downtown revitalization efforts by providing the coordination and delivery of technical services and volunteer training to participating local programs.

This investment in downtown revitalization will have a direct impact on tourism development for the community of Green River, and is a necessary commitment and step to take. Reaching out to other Certified Wyoming Main Street Communities can also serve as a great resource for examples of successful programs and strategies. In Rawlins, Main Street Director, Pam Thayer has been successful in developing a façade easement program to help atheistically revitalize downtown businesses. Investments in downtown beautification and revitalization will lead to business sustainability.

A commitment to hosting community events in the downtown district can also help to revitalize a downtown and rejuvenate a sense of community pride and support. For Green River, this small step may begin to strengthen community relationships and sense of place.

**Additional Resources:**

For more information on the Wyoming Main Street program, please refer to the Wyoming Main Street website at <http://www.wyomingbusiness.org/gateway/main-st-/1245>, or contact Britta Mireley, Wyoming Main Street Program Manager at 307.777-5271.

**Transportation Improvements**

Communities across America have access to Transportation Alternatives (TA) funds from the federal government to expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment. The Transportation Alternatives program was established by Congress in 2012, and is funded through a proportional set-aside of the core Federal-aid Highway Program. Eligible activities include most activities historically funded as "Transportation Enhancements," the Recreational Trails Program, and the Safe Routes to Schools program.

The City of Green River may consider pursuing TAP funding to help support the effort for historic preservation and rehabilitation of the historic depot; planning, design or construction of the old Lincoln highway from Green River to Rock Springs; or streetscaping in the downtown district.

**Additional Resources:**

For more information on the TAP program, or to request a copy of the applications for funding, please contact the Wyoming Department of Transportation, Local Programs Coordinator at 307.777.3938.

**Development of Existing Assets**

*The Trona Trail*

Driving across the wind-swept, seemingly empty Green River Basin as it extends west of the town of Green River, few people are aware of the extensive roadways and bustling activity taking place 800-1600 feet below them in the trona mines. Fewer still know that this deposit of trona (also known as sodium sesquicarbonate) is by far the largest and purest deposit in the world and that it supplies nearly all the United States' (and some other countries') soda ash needs. And fewer still understand the significance of this fact: the ore mines here are used to produce nearly every commodity in their lives as well as to control pollution in the air that they breathe. Giving visitors a glimpse into the world of trona mining provides a unique opportunity for Green River to capitalize on. In 2013, the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office designated the “Trona Trail” as their fourth Historic Mine Byway in the State of Wyoming as part of their Historic Mine Byway and Trails program. An interpretive plan has recently been completed to help provide a suggested route, locations for interpretation, and themes and storylines to be told. It is recommended that the City of Green River consider it a priority to partner with the Sweetwater County Museum and the trona industry to implement recommendations in the plan to begin telling the trona story.

In addition to recommendations set forth in the interpretive plan, it is recommended that the Green River Chamber of Commerce and Sweetwater County Joint Travel and Tourism Board explore offering Trona Tours from the Green River Visitor Center. The Campbell County Convention and Visitors Bureau has successfully established coal mine tours throughout the summer months that have become extremely popular. Tours are operated by the Campbell County CVB, and are approximately two hours long. Visitors board a small passenger bus at the visitor center and are driven out to one of the surface coal mining operations outside of Gillette. Tours are free; however a donation is requested.

**Additional Resources:**

For more information on the “Trona Trail” Interpretive Plan, please visit the State Historic Preservation Office website at <http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us/MM/Byway.aspx> or contact Beth King, SHPO Preservation Specialist at 307.777.6179

For more information on Gillette Coal Mine Tours, please contact the Campbell County Convention and Visitors Bureau at 307.686.0040

**Partnership and Collaboration**

For any large endeavor, collaborations and partnerships prove critical to success. Collaborations require common interests and goals, shared desires and stated outcomes, and constant communication. Tourism is a collaborative industry that requires partnership from local businesses, service industries, local government, and residents alike.

It is recommended that Green River consider establishing a local tourism committee to continue the development and implementation of common interests and goals as recommended by the lodging tax board. Meetings should be held at least quarterly to encourage the progression of projects, and should be advertised

and open to the public to come and actively be engaged. Initiatives of the committee should include, but are not limited to; strategic tourism planning, marketing and promotional efforts; educational outreach of the importance of tourism to the local economy; and state and federal agency engagement and partnership. Additional key players to this committee may include city officials, county officials, representatives from the school district or higher education programs, local historian groups, parks and recreation staff, representatives from the youth council or student government, Main Street committee members, and local state and federal agency partners.

**Resources:**

For more information on the benefits of establishing a local tourism committee, please contact Kristin Phipps, Destination Development Manager, Wyoming Office of Tourism at 307.777.2887.

**Next Steps**

This tourism report has been provided to the City of Green River to provide a glimpse at the current state of the tourism industry and recommendations to begin future tourism development. This document is meant to be a working document that can be changed and updated as progress and industry situations change. Again, it is recommended that a local tourism committee is established to review and prioritize recommendations.

Once the report has been reviewed, the City of Green River will have the opportunity to decide whether or not they are interested in pursuing certification through the Wyoming Office of Tourism Certified Tourism Community program. Communities that chose to continue with certification at this point will work closely with the Wyoming Office of Tourism to work towards these recommendations and the development of short term and long term development plans.

Although this report strives to offer a synopsis of the industry and appropriate recommendations, it must be realized that this report is limited. Destinations have the opportunity to work with contracted vendors through WOT to pursue a complete destination assessment if they choose.

For more information on entering the certification process, please contact Kristin Phipps, with the Wyoming Office of Tourism, at [Kristin.phipps@wyo.gov](mailto:Kristin.phipps@wyo.gov) or 307-777-2887.

For more information on additional destination assessment services, please contact Judy Randall, President, Randall Travel Marketing at [judy@rtmnet.com](mailto:judy@rtmnet.com).

**Kim Porter, WRDC Program Manager**

Wyoming Rural Development Council  
214 W. 15th Street  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
307-777-5812  
[kim.porter@wyo.gov](mailto:kim.porter@wyo.gov)

It was a great pleasure being in Green River for a week and learning more about the area. What a beautiful place to live! Green River, like many towns in Wyoming, has a lot going for it. There was not a very large number of citizens who attended the listening sessions. This could mean everything is great! We did hear that many people thought that city government did not follow through with anything including project and plans. This is a great place to start to show the citizens that progress is being made. Follow through on existing projects and plans will go a long way to build goodwill with the citizens. Below are some ideas to address some of the issues that came up in the listening sessions.

**Theme: Youth**

**Challenge:** Drugs and Alcohol

**Solution:** This is a tough issue, because this starts in the home. The research shows that parents talking to their kids is the number one deterrent to youth usage of drugs and alcohol. The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) has a “Talk Early and Talk Often” website that has tips and ideas to prevent use of drugs and alcohol. The WDH also has a website “Prevention Management Organization of Wyoming with many resources. Even though this is a family issue, it becomes a community issue quickly, especially if it escalates into a tragedy.

**Resource:**

Talk Early and Often: <http://www.talkearlyandoften.org/>

Prevention Management of Wyoming: <http://pmowyo.org/home-page/>

**Solution:** The Department of Health staff recently attended a program called PRIME For Life®. They would highly recommend the schools provide this motivational program. PRIME For Life® is an evidence-based motivational prevention, intervention and pretreatment program specifically designed for people who may be making high-risk choices. This includes but is not limited to impaired driving offenders, college students, and young people charged with alcohol and/or drug offenses. It is designed to change drinking and drug use behaviors by changing beliefs, attitudes, risk perceptions, motivations, and the knowledge of how to reduce their risk of alcohol and drug related problems throughout their lives. Because PRIME For Life® includes both prevention and intervention content, it is also designed in a way that serves universal, selective, and indicated audiences with program delivery options for each.

**Resource:**

Prime for Life  
Michelle Ellison, Director of Training and Development, Trainer  
Prevention Research Institute  
841 Corporate Drive, Suite 300  
Lexington, KY 40503  
Phone Number: 800.922.9489  
Fax: 859.223.5320

**Solution:** The Wyoming Department of Health, Behavioral Health Divisions has many resources. There is also a Prescription Drug Task Force in Wyoming that is seeking grant money for programs and also has resources for addressing this problem.

**Resources:**

Wyoming Department of Health Behavioral Health Division  
307-777-6494

Wyoming Prescription Drug Task Force  
Barbara Warburton  
Secretary to the US Attorney  
307-772-2124

**Challenge:** Youth: Things to do

**Solution:** The students we met with expressed a strong interest in an intramural sports program. The National Association for Sports and Physical Education has a booklet on how to start a program. “Students have the opportunity to be involved in the planning, organization and administration of programs. Such involvement should be age-appropriate and under supervision and guidance of a qualified adult.” Students can begin this process by talking to the Athletic Director of the high school and even the Director of the Rec Center. The program can be student driven with guidance from an interested adult.

**Resource:**

Guide for starting an intramural: <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/upload/Guidelines-for-After-School-PA-Intramural-Sport-Programs-2001.pdf>

Western Wyoming Community College has an intramural program and this would be a good resource to ask any questions when starting up the program: [intramurals@wwcc.wy.edu](mailto:intramurals@wwcc.wy.edu)

**Solution:** With all the parks in Green River, the city may want to consider putting in several Disk (Frisbee) Golf Courses. The city of Cheyenne has several disk courses and these courses are very popular.

**Resource:**

Parks and Recreation  
2101 O'Neil Ave.  
Room 302  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
Phone:(307) 638-4356  
Fax:(307) 638-4355

**Solution:** I don't know if there is a hang-out place or youth center in Green River where the kids can go and hang out and play games. Green River Wyoming has a great asset in “The Shack.” This was mentioned over and over in their community assessment by both adults and kids about one of the assets in Green River. This would be a great program to emulate. There are grants available to help make this happen. If there already is a youth center, the Shack might provide ideas to strengthen the program in Green River.

**Resource: The Shack**

The Shack is a community faith-based youth center that is supported by, but not a ministry of, the Green River Alliance Church. There are video games, pool, air hockey and other games and activities both inside and outside for Jr. High and Sr. High students to enjoy in a safe, positive environment.

Their Mission is to foster and reinforce positive values, habits and lifestyles upon which youth can build their lives and communities. We desire to overcome trouble, difficulty and dysfunction in the lives of youth with the overcoming hope of God.

The Shack is open Fridays from 1-4pm for 6th-12th grades and Saturdays from 7:00 – 10:00 PM for 6th-12th grades. During the School year The Shack is also open after school for 2½ hours for all Jr. High and Sr. High students.

Executive Director, David Bottom  
Office Secretary, Barbara Winstead  
307-765-2190

Grant searches and grant writers:  
Kim Porter  
Wyoming Rural Development Council  
307-777-5812  
Kim.porter@wyo.gov

**Challenge:** Winter Activities

**Solution:** Many people expressed the wish that the outside skating rink was made available again. The city does maintain the pond near the Stratton Myers park. I would recommend the city promote this asset more by putting the information on the website, Facebook and hang posters around town.

Green River has a great trail system that could be used in the winter for cross country skiing or snow-shoeing. This is a program that could nicely tie into the intramural program the kids are interested in. The visitor center might want to consider a rental program for snow shoes, cross country skis or even bikes in the summer. Many visitor centers offer these resources, but below are a few contacts. The city may want to try to recruit a business of this nature, but keep in mind the numbers need to work in order for a business to be willing to locate to a town. Pat Robbins, the WBC Regional Director would be able to help with business recruitment.

**Resource:**

Omaha Visitor Center (Rents Bikes)  
1001 Farnam Street  
Omaha, NE  
402.444.7762

Rainy Lake Visitor Center (Rents snow shoes, cross country skis, etc.)  
Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota  
(218) 286-5258

Pat Robbins  
Wyoming Business Council  
South Central Regional Director  
1400 Dewar Dr, Ste 208A  
Rock Springs, WY 82901  
307-382-3163  
[Pat.robbins@wyo.gov](mailto:Pat.robbins@wyo.gov)

## **Theme: Leadership**

**Challenge:** Strained Relations with voters, County, Rock Springs

**Solution:** This sounds like it is a communication problem and lack of follow through on promises made. As to the relationship with the County and nearby Rock Springs, communications need to be opened up with them in order to provide a working relationship. In today's economy, relationships and partnerships are very important to share the small amount of resources available to everyone. The Wyoming Association of Municipalities is working on their Winter Conference to be held in Cheyenne on February 26-28, 2014. Some of the topics they will be holding workshops on are: *conflict resolution and mediation, human resources, communications, questions with municipal attorneys, ethics, and leadership*. The topics are timely to address some of the issues that were brought up in the community assessment. Carbon County has formed the Carbon County Council of Governments, a group that includes both county and city governments working together. They meet once per month in different towns and work together on different issues and have been quite successful in working together.

### **Resource:**

Wyoming Association of Municipalities (WAM)  
315 West 27 Street  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
Telephone: (307) 632-0398 Fax: (307) 632-1942  
Email: [wam@wyomuni.org](mailto:wam@wyomuni.org)  
Conference information: [http://www.wyomuni.org/index.asp?Type=B\\_EV&SEC={6438B71E-146F-434D-B8A1-7CDA718556CB}](http://www.wyomuni.org/index.asp?Type=B_EV&SEC={6438B71E-146F-434D-B8A1-7CDA718556CB})

Carbon County Council of Government  
President: Mayor Morgan Irene (Elk Mountain)  
307-710-1554

**Solution:** We heard many times throughout the listening sessions that the citizens do not feel like the city follows through with things they say they will do or projects they start. I think it would go a long way to finish all projects that are currently in the hopper before starting new projects. We also heard that many planning documents have been prepared in the recent past and have not been utilized. Citizens felt they were "planned out." Again, I would recommend using these plans as working documents and not keeping them on the shelf. It is difficult to get information out to the citizens if they don't pay attention to the information, but as projects are completed, celebrate by letting the citizens know. Put it on your website, Facebook, Twitter, newspaper, radio – wherever you can. Maybe even a note in the water bill. While it may be too overwhelming for a town the size of Green River, it might be a great idea to start an email list that people can sign up to get updates from the city. The community of Story, Wyoming, has an email list of all community members and they utilize this list by sending out all important community information.

**Challenge:** Fiscal Management

**Solution:** There is the perception of fiscal mis-management of the city's resources. Without more information, it is hard to address this theme. I would recommend the city make the budget as transparent as possible to the citizens, maybe even taking a portion of the city council meetings to update the citizens on budget issues. If you are a citizen that has this concern, become more involved in the city process. This information is public information – get involved and find out more about how your city government works.

**Theme: Community Development**

**Challenge:** Deer Management

**Solution:** High deer populations in urban areas are not unique to Green River. This is an issue that not all citizens will agree on and a balance must be struck between the wildlife value and safety factors. They pose a threat not only to the safety of the citizens and visitors, but also a health issue, such as starvation and disease to the deer if their populations become too large. Where there are game, there are predators, adding another safety layer to the mix. The Wyoming Game & Fish is charged with wildlife management and should be brought in to any discussions on this subject. If not already in effect, every citizen needs to stop feeding the deer. Lander passed an ordinance in June of 2013 to keep people from feeding deer in town. Take a look at the ordinance and talk to them about how they plan to enforce the ordinance: <http://landerwyoming.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Ordinance-1180-prohibing-feeding-of-deer.pdf>. Many towns in Wyoming and across the nation have had success with variations of bow hunting, including Sheridan. There seems to be consensus that you cannot get rid of the deer completely, but you can manage the population. The Game & Fish will work with you to come up with a management plan. Deer Friendly has information about what other Wyoming towns are dealing with in regards to deer: <http://www.deerfriendly.com/deer/wyoming/wyoming-urban-deer-management>.

**Resources:**

Wyoming Game & Fish  
Green River Regional Office  
351 Astle  
Green River, WY 82935  
(307) 875-3223

City of Lander  
Mayor Mick Wolfe  
204 Lincoln Street  
Lander, WY 82520  
307-332-2870  
[landercity@landerwyoming.org](mailto:landercity@landerwyoming.org)

City of Sheridan  
Mayor Dave Kinskey  
55 Grinnell Plaza  
Sheridan WY 82801  
307.675.4223  
[dkinskey@sheridanwy.net](mailto:dkinskey@sheridanwy.net)

## **Theme: Economic Development & Tourism**

**Challenge:** Tourism, Lincoln Highway

**Solution:** People need a reason to stop and Green River needs to create that reason. We heard that Rock Springs has everything, so now Green River needs to create the niche. This is a private business endeavor, not something the government can do. Businesses need to realize that they need to create a reason for people to want to stop. The citizens of Green River also need to patronize the businesses in Green River so businesses can stay open and viable in Green River. Amazingly enough, Twitter is the new way for young people, especially, to do their travel searches. This is good news and bad news. People tweet their experiences – good or bad – and it is very timely. Businesses need to offer top notch products and services to keep their reputation good. The visitor center and local businesses need to become savvy (or hire someone that is) on Facebook and Twitter. Green River needs to decide who it is, then work with the travel center and Sweetwater County Joint Travel and Tourism on a plan to “get the word out.” I would recommend a committee comprised of tourism and local businesses to make sure everyone has buy in to the plan in order to promote the success. Pat Robbins can help with funding avenues when the time is right. Kristin Phipps is another resource for destination travel and her contact information is with her report earlier in the report. There is a lot of information in the report to help Green River with main street, way finding and bolstering its image. Sometimes you need to “clean and spruce up your house before you invite guests in.” The Main Street program is incremental and will light the fire. Once small steps of progress are made, businesses will get in on the excitement, creating a great place to have a business, work and play.

### **Resources:**

Sweetwater County Joint Travel & Tourism  
Jenissa Bartlett, Executive Director  
(307) 382-2538  
404 N Street  
Suite 304  
Rock Springs, WY 82901

Pat Robbins  
Wyoming Business Council  
South Central Regional Director  
1400 Dewar Dr, Ste 208A  
Rock Springs, WY 82901  
307-382-3163  
[Pat.robbins@wyo.gov](mailto:Pat.robbins@wyo.gov)

## **Heather Tupper, Marketing & Outreach Program Manager**

Wyoming Business Council  
214 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
[heather.tupper@wyo.gov](mailto:heather.tupper@wyo.gov)  
[307-777-2804](tel:307-777-2804)

### **Introduction**

First off, thank you to the citizens of Green River for hosting our team in your town. It was refreshing to hear, generally, how great of a place Green River is and to be introduced to all of the reasons why. While every city has its challenges, the strengths of Green River are impressive.

### **Theme: Economic Development**

Strong economic development often starts with a good business retention and expansion (BRE) program. By showing existing businesses that they are valued in the community and finding out how to better serve them, a community can help those businesses thrive and potentially make the community appeal to new business in the process. According to an article from the University of Florida Extension, there are two broad approaches to implementing BRE programs. Many variations of BRE programs are in effect around the country. The traditional approach relies heavily on community volunteers to carry out the program. The purpose of the program is to meet face-to-face with local business owners to find out what the immediate and long-term needs of their business are. Through identification of these needs, a community can begin to work on solutions to help existing businesses grow as well as attracting new business to the area by addressing common areas of concern that may create an impediment to future growth. A full series of articles on BRE programs can be found at: [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic\\_series\\_bre](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_series_bre).

A BRE program will take time to develop. First steps may be to convene a working group of business owners and elected officials on the current business climate in Green River. By bringing everyone to the table, elected officials have the opportunity to hear directly from the business owners what motivates them to grow their business in the community and what stands in their way. Issues such as availability of commercial space, workforce issues and utility/technology concerns that come up are often the same issues that create barriers to growth. By working to address these issues, the community as a whole can become stronger.

In the absence of an Economic Development Organization in the city of Green River, economic development responsibilities can be shared by people in other roles such as city employees, Chamber of Commerce board members and Main Street members. The City of Laramie recently formed the Laramie Chamber Business Alliance to combine the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce and the Laramie Economic Development Corporation (LEDC). This may be an interesting model to examine for the City of Green River. The phone number to reach LEDC is 307-742-2212 and the email is [ledc@laramiewy.org](mailto:ledc@laramiewy.org).

### **Theme: Community Development**

#### **City Parks**

One theme that came up on both the challenge and strength list is the number of parks that Green River has. While some citizens felt having so many parks was a benefit to the community, others voiced concerns about the number of parks. The Team thought we should at least mention this in the report as it was a recurring theme. The City Parks and Recreation Director highlighted many of the city parks on our tour of Green River. He explained the process of setting aside funds during the building phase of a new development. This seems like an opportunity to tie green space to the promotion of Green River as an ideal community for families. The value of city parks is documented in many studies and articles. One that may be particularly interesting published by The Trust for Public Land can be found online at: <http://cloud.tpl.org/pubs/ccpe-econvalueparks-rpt.pdf>.

**Theme: Community Development**

**Recycling**

Improving the city's recycling program was a theme that the team also thought could be addressed in our report. While people are happy that some program exists, many people would like to see the program expanded. Wyoming has many public interest organizations with activities related to environmental affairs. A curbside program can be expensive to implement. A local group of volunteers coming together to help operate the local recycling center may be a good first step. Next, working with local businesses to "adopt a recycle bin" and have a recycling drop-off location in their parking area could help to increase availability of recycling in the community.

A few years ago, a statewide recycling directory was published. It details recycling programs in different communities around the state. The directory may be a useful tool to identify groups to reach out to around the state in further developing Green River's recycling program. The directory can be found online at: [http://deq.state.wy.us/shwd/Recycling\\_Diversion/2009%20Wy%20Rec%20Dir.pdf](http://deq.state.wy.us/shwd/Recycling_Diversion/2009%20Wy%20Rec%20Dir.pdf).

Uinta Recycling, Inc., utilizes volunteers through the Rotary Club and Jaycees to help at their recycling center to carry out their mission to expand recycling throughout Uinta County.

Uinta Recycling, Inc.  
100 China Mary Road  
Evanston, WY  
[uintarecycling@nglconnection.com](mailto:uintarecycling@nglconnection.com)  
<http://uintarecycling.com/>

**Mark S. Willis, CEcD, MBA**

Chief Operating Officer  
Wyoming Business Council  
214 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
[307-777-2842](tel:307-777-2842)  
[mark.willis@wyo.gov](mailto:mark.willis@wyo.gov)

**Introduction:** I was pleased to be part of the assessment team in Green River in October 2013 and I came away with a very positive impression of the city and it's potential. The city staff did an excellent job in organizing our visit and ensuring that we received a full view of the city.

It was somewhat concerning that citizen input was not as great as one might have expected. Perhaps this reflects a general satisfaction with the status quo rather than apathy, but those who did attend had strong feelings and demonstrated a true love for their community.

While the city does face challenges, I have no doubt the it can accomplish whatever it decides it wants to. The quality of the parks system, schools and general condition of the city provides testimony to that.

However, there seems to be several competing visions that are not strictly complementary to each other. One vision involves greater traditional business and industry expansion, while another embraces the idea of the city being an affluent bedroom community with a business focused on retail and tourism.

While both are potentially attainable, from an outsider's perspective the second seems better suited to the existing resource base in the short term. In the longer term the development of an industrial park outside of the city, served by city utilities, and an airport development may prove to be extremely beneficial to the city. Additionally, the seemingly adversarial relationship between city and county leadership (we were told the county instructed employees not to participate with the assessment) is an issue that needs to be addressed. Given the limited resource base both entities must deal with, a lack of cooperation increases the difficulty of either being successful.

My approach to this report will be to attempt to address specific issues and hopefully suggest paths to address them or at least note examples of how other communities dealt with similar challenges. Having been in the business of economic development, chamber of commerce and downtown development in venues at the state and community levels, I bring some experience to the process I hope will be of value. I will endeavor to address the specific items noted in the listening sessions.

**Theme: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Challenge:** Attract a Second Grocery Store

**Solution:** To start the process, if it has not been done already, I would suggest using the Market Research team at the University of Wyoming that in partnership with the Wyoming Business Council provides market research throughout the state. They can ascertain the market potential in Green River for supporting a second grocery. It might also be valuable to have them research the potential of a niche grocery location. Given the household income of the population a Natural or Whole Foods type of operation may be better suited for the market. Thermopolis supports this type of business as well as a more traditional grocery operation. While smaller and perhaps more specialized than a second more traditional grocery might be, it might successfully expand the competition and product availability in the area without damaging the existing grocery. With the data the

Market Research team can provide should aid in identifying and perhaps recruiting a business that fits the market.

**Resource:**

Mike Lambert  
Manager, Wyoming Entrepreneur Market Research Center  
1000 E. University Ave., Dept. 3922  
Laramie, WY 82071  
307-766-2688  
[mikelamb@uwyo.edu](mailto:mikelamb@uwyo.edu)

**Challenge:** Expanding retail and restaurant options within the city

**Solution:** By becoming a Main Street City Green River has taken a very positive step in this regard. If looking for a program to emulate, my suggestion is that Green River use the Wyoming Business Council expertise and specifically the Main Street Manager should seek to mentor under the Manager of the Rawlins program. Find a means to revive the Tomahawk Building project. The building is the central fixture in the downtown area and is critical in revitalization efforts. Addressing the next challenge will also help successfully meet the customer demands in regard to this challenge as well.

**Contacts:**

Britta Mireley  
Main Street Program Manager  
Wyoming Business Council  
307-777-2934  
[Britta.mireley@wyo.gov](mailto:Britta.mireley@wyo.gov)

Pam Thayer  
Executive Director  
Rawlins Main Street Program  
116 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Rainbow Te-ton Entrepreneur Center  
P.O. Box 1778  
Rawlins, WY 82301  
307-328-2099  
<http://rawlinsmainstreet.org>

**Challenge:** Improve tourism revenues and opportunities

**Solution A:** Partner with the Wyoming Department of Tourism to advertise in the Salt Lake region, identifying Green River as the “Gateway to the Flaming Gorge.” Additionally, seek more grant funding for “way finding,” concentrating on directing traffic off of the interstate and through town on a city preferred path.

**Solution B:** Further develop river recreational activities through providing rental equipment for those activities (biking, tubing, etc.). Seek out other cities with similar potential attractions and explore their solutions to the challenges. One such example might be the tube and transport services offered to river tourists in San Marcos, Texas. Rather than a commercial venture, these services are managed by the local Lions Club (see below for contact) in this Texas city.

**Resources:**

Wyoming Office of Tourism  
5611 High Plains Road  
Cheyenne, WY 82007  
800-225-5996  
[www.wyomingtourism.org](http://www.wyomingtourism.org)

San Marcos Lions Club  
512-396-5466  
[tubesanmarcos@gmail.com](mailto:tubesanmarcos@gmail.com)

**Theme: LEADERSHIP**

**Challenge:** Improve Relationships Between Governmental Entities (County & City)

**Solution:** The leaders of both entities need to meet and reach a better understanding of roles and develop better ways to complement each other. This would seem to require a facilitator and my suggestion would be to use the services of Western Community College. The college has a presence in the city and a large positive role in the county as a whole.

I should also be noted that we heard several times that the resident population would like to see projects (police station, historic library and the Tomahawk) completed before new capital projects are undertaken.

**Resource:**  
Carole Shafer  
Director of Workforce & Community Development  
Green River Center  
307-872-1307  
[cshafer@wwcc.wy.edu](mailto:cshafer@wwcc.wy.edu)

**Theme: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Challenge:** Blighted property and absentee owners neglect.

**Solution:** I believe, from what we were told, that the city is well into passing ordinances to address this issue.

**Challenge:** Deer management

**Solution:** This is a difficult problem, but working with Game and Fish, perhaps a limited hunting program and/or a birth control initiative (this has been done in areas in the eastern U.S. where there are too few hunter and/or predators) for the deer might be explored.

**Resource:**  
Green River Regional Office, Wyoming Fish and Game  
351 Astle  
Green River, WY 82935  
307-875-3223

## What Was Said In Listening Sessions

The Resource Team spent two days interviewing the local residents to hear what they had to say. Those being interviewed were directed to answer three questions:

What are the major problems/challenges in the community?

What are the major strengths/assets of the community?

What projects would you like to see implemented in your community in the next two, five, ten, or twenty years?

Listed below, without comment, is what was heard from those who volunteered to be interviewed. “\*” denotes ditto’s.

### **Green River Community Assessment Problems and Challenges**

"Finding my way around" - wayfinding \*\*\*

Lack of developable land- inability to expand- landlocked \*\*\*

Too much red tape to get things done

Lack of willingness to invest in the community (private sector)

No long term focus- change/development that hasn't been thought through \*\*\*

Proximity of rock springs- investors may overlook green river\*

Funding for infrastructure

Balancing preservation with new development \*\*\*\*\*

Deer management \*\*

County assets and services are moving to rock springs \*\*\*\*\*

Shrinking congregations

Getting people involved (lack of participation)\*

Apathy

City competing with residents/business people

Difficult to get from one point to another ("you have to go around your ass to scratch your elbow")

Unnecessary restrictions on businesses/ changing businesses \*\*\*

Inconsistent look to the business district

Only two exits from the interstate

High amount of home based businesses\*

Lack of affordable housing development \*\*\*\*\*

Lack of retail/shopping opportunities- need a second grocery store \*\*\*

Lack of information/communication coming from city leadership on projects, events and processes \*\*\*

Absentee landowners

Retail rent is too high to attract new businesses \*

Small businesses can't compete with online businesses

Broadband connectivity- access

Not everyone has access to cable to watch city council meetings

Produce available in grocery stores

State of Wyoming chooses to hire out of state contractors

Customer service

Parking spaces

The city does not think outside of the box

Chief of police not enforcing the laws

Lack of response from city departments regarding complaints

Difficult to be a small business owner here \*\*\*

No defined direction for growth and development

Lack of economic development authority

Turnover in URA/Main Street directors

The city struggles to finish projects that it starts \*\*

Available retail space for small businesses\*\*

We don't sell our community

Confusion between different goals/groups \*

Naysayers

Effective communication \*

Civic interest and community pride

The impression that green river gives - slum and blight

Fear of starting a business here - it's a big risk

Lack of bike lanes\*\*\*

Political competition between city, county and rock springs

Volunteer burnout

Landfill filling up

Lack of participation

Lack of low income housing \*

Disconnect between gov't and citizens

Land locked, can't expand, nowhere to build

Mistrust of local gov't

Road blocks in developing existing assets

Vacant properties

Inconsistent treatment of people in the community by the governing body

Politics \*\*

Politics

Politics

Infrastructure run-down, out dated

Public feeling of entitlement to programs where there's no money

Downturn in economy and sales tax revenue, not enough money

Too many parks, cost to maintain \*\*

Grocery store

Retail shopping

Lack of business \*\*\*\*

Deer population \*

Communication between city and local business is poor

Rock Springs

Relationship between the city and the county

No unique attraction to bring interstate traffic into town

Lack of restaurants

No follow-through with ideas

Blue canopy project??  
Lack volunteerism and entrepreneurship  
People think they pay taxes so things should be done for them  
No architectural attractive properties  
Terrain is cost prohibitive to develop  
Lack of downtown parking  
Incontinuity of main street directors  
Lack of participation from main street businesses during events that are held downtown  
Prime retail space in downtown is taken up by service businesses- weakening the opportunity to attract shoppers downtown  
Grandfathered towing operations on main street are an eye sore  
Historic preservation is something that city leadership doesn't pay attention to  
Traffic patterns detract people from driving through our main street district  
Economic development - we need more small businesses, restaurants to make it more vibrant community.  
Lack of rental equipment, outfitters, tour guides, etc. related to recreational/outdoor  
Lack of consistency in city gov't  
Lack of cooperation  
Not following thru on projects  
Lack of volunteers \*  
Lack of funding for city goals (employee raises, projects)  
Changing priorities from City Council, lack of consistency  
Lack of follow-through on maintaining projects  
Lack of follow-through on maintaining projects \*  
Not improving on existing resources \*  
Division of governing body - no consistency \*  
Governing body doesn't allow rec dept. to change programs mid-year to fit the community's needs \*  
Advertising/communication with the public (ex: council decisions, events, etc.)  
Cost of staffing, communication  
Don't value knowledge and experience of long-term employees/residents  
Land acquisition along river assessable  
Land for development  
Downtown build up  
Landlocked  
Not letting community grow  
Lack of shopping  
Sewer/water issues on homeowners, not on city  
Attract businesses  
Preserving historic buildings  
Need another grocery store  
Bullying/cyber-bullying  
Not enough to do for teenagers  
Sewer System  
Need to meet basic needs before taking on other projects \*\*  
Stuff for kids to do  
Not enough shopping  
Grocery store has high prices

Nothing for older people to shop at \*\*  
Bedroom community, but no tax base  
We need a welcome wagon for new people  
More disaster preparedness in GR  
Want to expand, but where  
Lack of grocery (where to put)  
Lack of nice dinner place to sit down  
Why the airport? Two towns 12 miles apart  
Time of elementary school start  
Economic development - too many years not wanting business or population growth  
Limited economic base - boom-bust cycles  
1 grocery store  
Too many policemen  
Too low speed limits  
Landlocked - nowhere to grow \*  
Hard to start a business  
Need another grocery - lack of competition  
Our council keeps putting things in until it gets passed because they have their own agenda  
Substance awareness  
More grocery store options \*  
Substance abuse  
Need more shopping  
City oversight of projects is shady  
Not enough people involved with city government w/ vision 20 years from now  
Lack of room to expand  
Affordable Housing  
Too willing to vote for someone just because they were born here  
Lack of sidewalks around Teton around Smiths  
Park mad - wasted money  
Anything good they get rid of  
City prosecutor that pats herself on the back  
No dog park  
Idiots running city  
Lack of businesses  
Lack of fun oriented businesses  
None  
Not the bedroom community we want now, but the one we had  
Turn over with doctors  
Lack of activities for old "things"  
Activities are costly  
Water worries about river water going to Colorado  
The community people are not open to including everyone in the activities even though they tell us about them  
Greenbelt  
Small town place, like much better than Rock springs  
Trees, River  
Access to public land for recreation

Lots to do for families (outdoor)  
Stable core population  
The services provided  
Small proximity to recreational opportunities  
Quiet  
Rec Center, safe, quiet  
Clean, city parks, streets well kept, not traffic issues, police/fire/rec/streets, low crime, quite, lack of vandalism  
Schools create own academic opps/activities, few outside opportunities \*\*\*  
Lack of stuff to do for kids \*  
Not a lot to do for little girls/little kids  
Lack of shopping  
Boredom leads to bad behavior  
Too much reliance on RS for activities \*\*  
Need another grocery store  
Historic buildings - preserve/rehab  
Loosing volunteers  
Main Street  
Support for Retail businesses  
Businesses on Main Street - not offices  
GR doesn't utilize assets - Tomahawk, historic buildings  
Not valuing the old  
Lack of recycling/repurposing existing buildings  
Main Street Manager turnover  
City gov't stands in way of progress - turns down ideas  
Downtown organization gets nothing done - no goals, just meetings  
Junkie yards  
Towing businesses on Main Street  
Art Council - too focused on one group  
Keeping businesses  
Infrastructure not in place to keep businesses people here  
Misappropriation of funds  
Lack of cultural program for kids  
City Council has no power to influence business owners (power struggle)  
Lack of good restaurant  
Transient population - unstable  
Business acceptance  
People click-ish, lack of trust  
City council is not supportive of small businesses  
Mayor  
Getting people downtown  
Cooperation among business owners  
Law enforcement agencies not working together  
Drugs \*\*\*  
Alcohol  
Community involvement  
Citizens don't know what else the police do besides enforce law

People are not interested in learning what the city's role is or what the agencies do  
Challenging to determine what agency takes on what roles \*  
Lack of social activities for kids  
People don't know what the things to do are  
The idea that it's a bedroom community  
Council outsources a lot of services, puts people out of work  
Banks don't help people that are losing their homes  
Deer  
Lack of middle income housing \*  
Past projects not done properly  
Diversification of jobs  
More shopping, more variety  
Land locked, people would rather live here, but they go to RS because they have land  
Airport won't help  
Lack of airport  
Unlicensed contractors  
Not enough traffic downtown  
Downtown is a ? Money put into tomahawk but nothing changes\*  
No camaraderie between city hall and volunteers  
Incomplete projects  
City pays for assessment but then throws it away if "they" don't agree with the results \*  
City puts money into projects that compete with private enterprises \*  
City should stay out of real estate  
Not welcoming to new business and new ideas  
Tomahawk situation  
Amount of foreclosed, nuisance properties  
Lack of catastrophic plan for college  
Way finding project a good start, but needs continuation  
Lack of entrance into Green River and it is confusing  
Lack of support for new entrepreneurs and lack of ideas for helping them  
Hard to find catering and services for big events  
No organized economic development to bring in businesses or support them  
No place for performing arts outside of the high school  
Need new businesses  
Worried about dump  
Flaming Gorge days with nonalcoholic events  
Lack of development opportunity  
Proximity to rock springs presents econ dev challenge \*  
Opportunity for business to grow and flourish is lacking \*  
Environment of sw county with an aging population and quality of care  
Trickle down from the state  
Community involvement for emergency services volunteers, ambulance and equipment needed  
Lack of funding  
Need more things for the children in the community, especially teenagers  
Advance tourism  
Consensus among elected officials

Consensus among elected officials  
City gov't and volunteer boards and organizations don't always get along (city says they'll support them but then actions don't support them)  
No consistency in zoning and districts (esp business dist), creates an eye sore \*  
Lack of commercial land or buildings for business, lack of affordable commercial real estate \*  
Land locked--issue for smart growth and development  
Finding affordable commercial property in a decent location \*  
Lack of teens to participate in, inside  
City wastes money on statues that are ugly and other things \*  
Leadership is weak and they cheat and don't do what is right \*\*\*  
Leadership has \$\$ on projects  
Economic development practically zero here \*  
Community is not involved  
Lack of involvement, apathy with starts with leadership  
Lack of enthusiasm from leadership to get citizens involved  
City needs to keep their contracts with the horse corrals with the water and the pump not working  
Only one grocery store \*\*  
No shopping  
Only good motel is Hampton  
Got rid of GR Ordinance  
City government \*  
No improvements  
Trying to compete with Rock Springs  
Spending money in wrong places  
City controls garbage/streets/water/utilities, should be privatized \*  
Not enough for young people to do  
Streets need repaired  
Potholes in Senior Center parking lot  
Need better snow removal  
Deer management  
Wasting money on studies that go nowhere  
Not enough parking downtown  
Trashy houses, slum blight  
Absentee landowners \*\*\*\*  
Deer management \*\*\*\*\*  
Maintaining streets/ally's \*  
Wasteful spending - airport, depot project, river  
Lack of grocery store  
Expensive property  
Hard to shop local when there isn't many places to shop  
Need another newspaper  
Access to wild horses, hart to get water supply  
Roads, tear up and takes too long to fix  
Medical 200 miles away to get service  
Need another grocery store \*\*\*\*\*  
Something nice like a Fred Myers

Grocery store that sells butter ball turkeys  
Not maintaining trees and sidewalks  
Only one grocery store \*  
No shopping  
Need a stronger clinic to not have to travel  
Nothing for kids to do  
Need to clean up sidewalk  
Tearing out mountains for houses  
Potential compliance issues with water and sewer  
Aging infrastructure including water lines, sewer treatment plant  
How to fund aging infrastructure \*  
Consistent source of funding for road improvements  
Community wants new things but doesn't want to pay a dime for it  
Aging infrastructure including water lines, sewer lines, parameters of discharge  
Changing regulations we have to meet  
Need a second grocery store  
Streets are in pretty bad shape  
Challenge to keep street funding  
Excavation permit process could be strengthened  
Wastewater treatment plant \*  
Age of facilities underground  
City more willing to fund recreation than capitol improvement  
Shopping  
Grocery store  
Italian restaurant  
Housing issues  
Shopping \*\*\*  
Deer  
Young people's activities  
Clean up city  
Grocery store and shopping  
Land expensive  
No area to expand  
Need more entertainment  
Tax money going to RS  
Waste money on unnecessary projects  
Depot and airport projects too much money  
No recognition for different income levels  
Traffic patterns detract people from driving through our main street district  
Process to build is difficult  
City fails to offer what is really needed  
Spending money in wrong places  
City council and mayor don't stay out of city business that should be handled by city admin  
Mayor runs the city by his way or the highway  
No retail  
Too many unfinished projects (2nd south, tomahawk, depot, etc.)

Current administration and leadership is questionable

Losing a lot of talent for the egos of a few

Not a happy city employee that I can find

Frivolous spending mayor and council. Spending way too much money to restore old buildings, not using grant money wisely, and not spending enough on city infrastructure etc. Could use cameras to monitor certain streets, bridges, parks etc. What to do with emptying city buildings. Spending money they don't have, trying to do more with less. city government spends/wastes money trying to get big business to come to green river and chases the small businesses away

A mayor that won't keep his nose out of the day to day running of the city. He has to have it his way or else. He makes personal attacks and makes sure they are gone if needed. Businesses that don't have support from the local government. Volunteers that the mayor will push out if he doesn't like them.

The major challenge in Green River is the dictatorial Mayor and the complacent Council which is willing to just follow along. Major decisions facing this group include the future of the Solid Waste Department, Water and Sewer infrastructure and keeping medical and nursing services in Green River. Instead the City Government is focusing on a \$12 plus million dollar renovation to a rundown depot and upgrading (cost millions) the airport to compete with an already strapped airport in Sweetwater County (which the City chooses not to assist financially). Then there is the proposed development west of town which probably includes subsidizing the Rio Vista Water System. I support making City Departments efficient; however, I disagree with the way it is being done. Instead of working with department heads and employees to make things better and cost effective, the Mayor and his hatchet man, Mr. Black, are using tactics such as pressure and fear to force out staff instead of trying to lead them to become better. The budget is being set up to pay for the pipe dreams listed above --to the detriment of infrastructure and services.

Too many major projects; need to focus and complete items already in progress. when is the city going to complete the pedestrian walkway over the rail yard?

Our downtown needs help. Having the downtown be so cut off from the rest of the city makes it difficult to garner support for local business.

Lack of shopping choices especially grocery shopping and restaurants.

Unsafe intersection at Hitching Post and Upland

Drivers who stop at red lights in the middle of the crosswalk. (police cars do it, too)

The thought of closing down the dump on the outskirts of town and moving it to over by the ponds near the rodeo arena. That's going to create more insects and rodents that are coming towards the fellow neighborhood (IE my house), not to mention the stench that is going to come off the trash. And to charge GR residents \$20 to go dump their bigger items at the COUNTY dump is just absurd. Soon you'll find people just dumping their trash anywhere and not giving a crap about what it looks like. Then spending all that money trying to build an airport. We don't need one here. What we need is another grocery store or a descent place to shop.

Lack of Funding from the State, Lack of affordable housing, Lack of community participation, Not enough local shopping/ Groceries store.

Lack of restaurants. Change reputation of local government from unfriendly to friendly for public and New business wanting to come in to the area.

Maintaining infrastructure such as: sidewalks, and roads. For example the sidewalk near our towns only funeral home is a hazard. The belt loop road by Veteran's Park is falling apart, and it is a major traffic road. Too often government is concerned with expanding and new growth, and doesn't seem to take care of our infrastructure and the people who live here and support this city. Do we NEED to spend money on a study for an airport when our sidewalks and roads are falling apart? As taxpayers we already subsidize the airport that is currently in operation in this county. There has been talk for years about a service road between Green River and Rock Springs, studies have been done, but the powers that be spend money on studies, but can't even grade the road so it could be used in case the freeway is shut down. (Which it is numerous times each year.)

Development of the downtown seemingly caused by political roadblocks. There seems not to be enough "Big Picture Vision" for development. If any suggestions or ideas are not of the current administration then those ideas are never investigated. The ongoing troubles we face with construction of our new Police station are not made public and yet we will be asked to pay for them once disclosed. Lack of transparency from this administration.

Too many bars and no shopping!!

This is a huge question. I've lived in a variety of places and this community has so many needs. My overall impression is that no one is really willing to invest in it. Those that try are with good intentions are burned out quickly or chased off by others. There seem to be certain individuals or groups of individuals with their own agenda. Little openness to new ideas. Look at other small communities in the state (Evanston, Lander, Laramie, and even Rawlins) have made great strides with improvement. It seems that the downtown businesses don't want to invest in their business or for the greater good for the community. Complaints from local businesses directed at the efforts of Main Street are boggling. Why is it so hard to take the great foundation we have and build upon it?

Developing and supporting a thriving retail business area. Cultural activities. Areas of blight. (Such as south side and parts of business district). Attracting new industry and businesses. Upgrading technology as fiber optics, competitive phone and cable services. Expand and advertise public transportation. Aging population.

Lack of retail businesses. We can do better than be a bedroom city for Rock Springs. At the very least we need to do whatever it takes to attract a grocery store to compete with Smith's.

Finding a way to bring people into the area. Growth will show in the economy. More programs (ex. art on the green...)

Need to expand city for more housing options, we are running out of places for new homes and apartments

Keeping business in our downtown area.

The closure of our Green River Landfill.

The City Council is exploring all options -The Preferred would be to have a transfer station constructed on the entry to the landfill site to take care of local waste and Continue the Recycling program for/in Green River. It is a great concern that local waste is handled locally to keep our surrounding area clean, attractive and safe.

Solid waste why don't we have curb recycling question new police station cost airport Will city money be spent this without a vote of the people

We have to be sure to remember the businesses here, and shop in Green River anytime possible.

I believe the current City Administrator, Mayor & several on the City Council need to be replaced as they don't fight fairly, and they don't play nice. It seems like they don't want the city to improve unless it's in their personal interest. I edited myself because I don't want to go to hell.

The biggest problem in our community is that we seem to have plenty of income to fund new projects: however, It seems as though we cannot fund proper maintenance on existing infrastructure such as buildings, the boardwalk, roads, parks, sidewalks. I am sure that this list is not a complete list of things neglected but only a start.

I know that much of the new projects are being built by grants, but after the grants are gone and the projects built there will be long term maintenance cost. How are we going to fund maintaining a depot, a new police station, and an airport? Do we expect current staff to be able to keep up with snow removal, building repairs, and runway airport maintenance or do we hire more staff? where is the funding for long term maintenance.

Please consider this before starting more projects and complaining about having a tight budget.

People are bored and go to other places to find things to do.

Teenagers especially need to keep busy or they tend to vandalize property for entertainment.

Council spending too much! need to spend less and save more

Maintaining present services at the current level while being able to continue to grow and offer new things. I also think that closing the landfill is going to create problems with people dumping things in the countryside around town. There are many areas where people have dumped things like construction materials and tree branches and animal carcasses and I feel this will get even worse if they have to drive to Rock Springs to use a landfill.

1. Lack of retail business and restaurants in the downtown area.
2. Lack of a restaurant adjacent to the Hampton Inn Hotel.

Not enough volunteers, the same people volunteer for everything and tend to burn out. council disagrees too much and can't get along with each other and the Mayor, they need to get along with the county and Rock Springs, too much bickering! please reduce city spending, too many grand projects and not enough money, nothing gets finished.

Lack of developable land away from the river. This is due to the surrounding rock formations.

Also the lack of easy exit off the interstate into the community, traffic drives around the community not through it .

One of the biggest issue is services to the public. I know it's hard to have a bunch of restaurants and stores in a small town, I just wish we had more. What we do have are great!!

Not spending wisely in tough times. Mayor, administrator, council people with personal agendas.

Biggest challenge? Growth. We don't seem to have an adequate plan for dealing with growth. Our schools are too full, we have too few shopping opportunities (second grocery store?) and housing is difficult to find, especially rentals. Another challenge is the unwelcoming business environment. What do I mean by this? GR makes it very difficult for a small business owner to establish a business anywhere but where the city wants the business. Seems if you are looking at downtown with its high rent you'll do fine. Anywhere else and expect difficulty and delays. It is so bad that I would set up in RS before GR (and that's not saying much since RS isn't much better). Other challenges include drugs and a lack of community values (a strip club on main street, music with the F-word being played at Flaming Gorge Days).

I believe the major problem in our community is diversity. With understanding that we want to keep Green River a beautiful place to live, we need to expand or renovate old buildings to bring more diversity and culture to our small town. We aren't afraid to build million dollar homes atop the beautiful green belt, but we won't bring in major restaurants or establishments to keep residents here in town. I think the challenge is partly because we are a small town. We are landlocked and don't have much "city land" to expand. However, I think we could come up with ways to solve that issue in due time. A lot of people drive outside of town to eat, shop, and play. I think we need to help keep our town on the map and funded, by providing some of these options here in town.

A lack of strong businesses in our community. Especially something like having a second grocery store. I grew up here always having a second one, and years ago it was closed. I don't know the logistics of opening another one, but if there were a petition to start a second and get a franchise interested here I would surely sign, as would many others.

Vandalism on the school playgrounds seems to be up, but I'm not sure if that has been reported for anyone to do anything about it.

The cost of admittance to the recreation center is cost prohibitive to many people in our community.

Flaming Gorge Days is no longer as family friendly as it used to be. I understand costs, but taking away the country concert pretty much eliminated families attending concerts together. The music may have been appropriate, but the crowds were not.

The problems I see amongst many of the youth of the community is apathy. Many simply don't feel like they want to better themselves or struggle to achieve better things.

I believe the a major problem in the community is its ability to grow and attract new businesses. I think the community is currently land-locked with very limited areas for potential future growth. Annexing areas to the west would be a possibility but I think these areas have their own issues due to poor condition of utilities that could be extended to growth areas.

Galactic Airport-- serious problem. Don't spend money, grant or otherwise ☺

Streets need work

Bring in businesses. The old Pizza Hut lot is a big eyesore

We have very little shopping. I would love to see more here. We have so many bars and not enough places to socialize without them. Not everyone is a senior citizen. We need more for our 18 to ? adults.

I love the deer but I am not liking the deer. They are eating all our flowers. We work very hard to have a very nice yard and it is hard to watch your plants suddenly be damaged or gone. HELP!

Consider putting a traffic light on Hitching Post where the High School traffic comes out. We live close and if you happen to be coming out when school is out or after a program it is very difficult.

There are a few areas in town that need a little fixing up. Also if yards are really trashy we really need to ask them to clean it up.

City Council refuses to focus on revitalizing the downtown area to promote new business & find Green River's notch for local growth. We are not Rock Springs and never will be....we should not try to compete with them.

We have only 1 major hotel chain (Hampton Inn) and it is relatively hard to find (needs better signage). Local businesses sometimes struggle because local residents drive to Rock Springs to shop rather than supporting Green River businesses.

Bringing in business. We need to secure a second grocery store and a large department store. Chain restaurants won't even come here. Why? If we had a target, rock springs folks would be here to shop. White water park? Ridiculous. If it were successful, where could they eat or stay?

Parks that are not age specific. Who devoted that idea. I work with children. No thought into our parks.

Drug abuse for kids & adults.  
Stimulate local economy--better shopping opportunities.  
Maintaining quality medical personnel.

I have two issues, the shopping and the upkeep of what we have currently.  
I worry about the upkeep of all of the projects our community takes on. We have wonderful parks and community areas for recreation, but in my view the council takes on so many projects and then does not have the money to maintain what they have already. I know some of the city employees and their families. It seems to me that they are way underpaid and underfunded by the city. It also seems the council is constantly taking away things from their employees like raises, stipends, and long standing bonuses to fund things that do not make sense for our small community. I think this is because the council only looks to add and not keep what we have. We do not need an airport. We do not need to remodel the old train depot. I know the police station is needed, but why so big and expensive? The kayak park was nice to say we have one, but is it used? I don't even get why we need to expand the clock tower park, it's nice the way it is.

The shopping here is limited. With the kayak park, I would love to try- but I'm not going to buy a kayak for maybe one time use. I would like a shop like Cabela's or Sheels or even a smaller store where I could rent and or buy outdoor equipment. The only grocery is Smith's- but I try and avoid buying my produce and meat as both are overpriced and the quality is not good. Instead I do Bountiful Baskets and I make regular trips to Park City for their Wholefoods grocery. I also buy my meat/eggs from the local butcher. Target, Kohl's, Sears or something similar would be nice as I often buy my clothes in Salt Lake or online. The downtown main street is ok, but only if I want something very specific. I have only purchased things from Green River Trophy, the bakery, the museum, and the Book and Bean....

There is little retail and only one grocery store. I would also like to see another nice restaurant like chilis or outback come here. It would be nice to have a dog park as well.  
We also own horses and it is a big draw back that there is not enough land in the community to have horse property and housing together. The city ordinance about no horses in city limits unless they are in corrals is frustrating.

Common sense, ethics and courage by elected officials. Common sense in use of public moneys.

How does Green River find a way to be less dependent on Rock Springs for business success? We have to accept the fact that RS is only 12 mi away and has Wal Mart, Home Depot and the Mall but in what other ways can more business succeed in GR? A Wyoming business like Rocky Mtn Discount Sports would actually pull RS residents to GR.

We need to replace blight, aging (but not historic) residential, and industrial storage along the river with aesthetic businesses and open space.

Irrespective of the comprehensive city plan, please don't develop on South Hill. There is plenty of work/opportunity in town.

I'm not convinced the Spaceport is a good use of time/talent/effort/dollars.

Green River needs the infrastructure/business to be able to host 300+ person conferences.

Sharing the road with cyclists and sharing trails with cyclists. Bike lanes would be helpful to safely connect sections of the green belt. Signs are being put up at the Wilkins Peak Trail head to notify shooters and atv riders of the multi-use recreation area which should help.

High prices for using the Rec Center annual/monthly pass as a family. If you work for the city, the school district or are a senior... I think it is a great deal for them they all get a heavy discount. For the rest of us without special benefits - we are lucky to take our families once or twice a month as a treat. We sure would benefit from being able to work out daily especially my Husband & I. (But maybe this is a way they control the Over population/use of the rec center?) What about adding on, upgrading, enlarging the Rec. & using a grant, or funds allocated, or part of a 1¢ tax or such (not sure what funds can be used for what) to make special benefits in our town for those who live, work, & play here to get access to the Rec. Center at the same price as all others who get discounts so we can take advantage of it just as well.

\*Another issue I feel is the ordinance on Cell phones... I think it is important & I am shocked at how many people don't take it seriously in town & how little seems to be done about it. But have been even more disturbed when I have pulled up to a stop light or passed several police & sheriff deputy who are talking on their phones too... NOT in an emergency!! :( So what is the purpose -those who are to enforce it aren't following it themselves?

Maybe a few more covered LARGER Gazebo's/picnic facilities for family, work parties, church activities, & large groups at some of bigger parks - as many times the 3ish Gazebos or covered picnicking areas in town/Jamestown are always taken when they are needed on weekends & big holidays when extended family & reunions are held?

I think one of the main challenges to our community is the fact that parents believe they have to "keep up with the Joneses" in terms of how many "toys" they need (e.g., campers, 4-wheelers, snowmobiles, boats, etc.). Therefore, families need at least two incomes including overtime pay to foot the bills. This means that children don't get the attention from parents that they need. This leads to unsupervised children making bad choices and being raised without values. Drug and alcohol usage is rampant here, leading to even more deterioration of the family unit.

Only one grocery store...not enough competition for Smiths to provide good produce!

Lack of shopping opportunities - food, clothing, etc.  
Need a greater variety and number of restaurants.  
Need to clean up - repair properties along main routes in and around city.  
Not having public input in major capital expenditures - example the Winter building/new police building.  
Wasting money on clock tower and intergalactic airport  
Concern about additional cost of trash transfer  
Too much reliance on consultants/ should be done locally with qualified staff

lack of shopping opportunities, medical services - obtaining doctors

With regard to economics, having only one grocery store is a major negative. Green River has become a bedroom community to Rock Springs with regard to most shopping and having only one grocery store only contributes to that issue. Downtown redevelopment is also another area that requires work.

Lack of business is the first thing that comes to mind. Our city council refuses to let any new business come into town, and the new places that do open often don't even make it a year before closing. This is a fairly small town, but one grocery store is not enough. Also, it would be nice if we could get a new restaurant, or some shopping around here. The right kind of place could easily bring people over from Rock Springs and would be supported. The biggest complaint I hear, from kids and adults alike, is that there's nothing to do here, and they're not entirely wrong. Our lack of anything in this town is a bit ridiculous and I think we need to look again at our priorities as a city.

Making Green River a tourist attraction.

For our low income community in both Rock Springs and Green River, we have very little housing. We have a 6 month to 2 year wait list for subsidized housing in the county, which is unacceptable. I have clients who worked hard their whole lives, and are now on social security retirement or railroad retirement. They are not able to afford housing and end up doing without items like soap and toilet paper so that they can have a place to live. Some have become homeless.

Women struggle to find jobs in this area. Many women end up under-employed and unable to use their education as they remain in the area for their spouse's higher paying job. There is a great pay discrepancy across Wyoming that demoralizes women, and should have no place in the modern world.

For some reason, although 50% of our population are women, and over 50% of law school graduates in Wyoming are women, our judges in this area are mostly men. We have 1 woman out of 6 judges. it should be 4. This is a problem with systemic discrimination in our area and many other areas in Wyoming. It should be addressed at some level.

In our community, women are not represented in our city councils, county commissions, legislature, or other organizations. When women do try to participate, they are torn apart by the community, discriminated against, and held to a different standard than the men. It is really quite sad. They do not receive support from the "good old boys" clubs, being that they are not boys. This leaves our community with a one sided view of most issues that does not include the female experience. This is a poor way to run a modern community.

Lack of cultural and social activities for adults and children. Outdated, stagnant downtown. Unattractive east entry into town. Few quality restaurants.

Grocery stores & businesses

The lack of organization at community events.

Lack of interesting things for single folk to do within the community, save for a matinee followed by barhopping.

The police need a bigger structure and I hope the one on the corner gets finished soon. I was so disappointed people didn't approve the funding for it. (Since when is a swimming pool more important than the safety of our community?) I don't know how much of a problem it is- but I remember an officer telling me he confiscated drugs in Monroe. I'm glad he did, but hope there's no more. That exposure to children scares me.

I'm not pleased with the litter I see on the streets sometimes.

I do not like 'The Mast' across the street from our court house and public museum. Drive-through bars/liquor stores are an oxymoron.

I believe that there is a deep-seated resentment against a neighboring town which compels elected and appointed officials to pursue projects which are unrealistic to the current economic status of Green River. Although no one can deny the fact that more commercial business in the city would be a good thing, the fact is that the type of commerce which Green River could effectively attract is on a small scale. Green River is a small community - one of its greatest strengths - but also a serious handicap for attracting business when placed in direct competition with a nearby city with greater potential for development. The fact is that residents of Green River have become accustomed to conducting commerce in Rock Springs, maybe it is time to accept that reality and work from a different paradigm.

The resentment against Rock Springs is a significant roadblock to the prosperity of Green River. It makes any type of inter-community effort impossible and prevents economic development in the entire area of the county. Green River has become a bedroom community to Rock Springs and that is a fact that will not soon change if ever. The key is to consider future projects in this light; those things which initially appear to benefit Rock Springs are also beneficial to Green River. Get the two communities on the same page and working from the same playbook. Work from the reality of what is possible, not the resentment of what has already been lost.

Charm of down town

One major problem that I see in the future (for all reasons this may not even be a problem yet but rumors do circulate), is that the Expedition Academy here in Green River will be losing its facility next year. Rumors have it that it will be moved to in the high school next year until its own building is erected. This I find to be a HUGE problem for both the EA kids as well as our GRHS kids. The whole reason the EA kids are there is because they were not successful in the atmosphere at GRHS. Why would we put them back into that atmosphere again? To help them fail?? I certainly hope not. Is there not another place that we can have them go next year as to help them succeed? Also it is rumored that the new EA building will be built adjacent to the Recreation Center. Again, putting these kids right by the problem that they had previously, next to the HS! Can we not find another area to build the school? I see many MANY problems in the near future if these rumors are true.

If the rumors I have heard are true and there has been very big businesses that have expressed interest in building in Green River off Interstate 80 and the City Council voted NOT to allow this, I am very disappointed. It does not matter if it brings business into Green River (which it will), but the taxes that the Green River would get would be a great boost to the city.

Safety, Cleanliness (trash)

I truly believe that the biggest challenge facing our community is the Mayor and Marty Black. They are going to run this City into the ground, and take all of the credit while they are doing it! If anything we need a new Mayor and a new councilman to replace Tom McCullough. The morale at the City is terrible and the powers that be can't see it.

Housing is wayyyyyy too expensive. The younger generation cannot even afford to live here; those with lower incomes cannot live here.

limited businesses (grocery store, restaurants, etc.), the "good ol' boys" run the town and any decision made, NOTHING FOR KIDS TO DO (AGES 10 - 20)

The need for a second grocery store. This is a great community but so often you cannot get what you need here and there is no competitive pricing either. I have lived here 35 years and grew up with 2 grocery stores and cannot figure out why our city has not made an effort to replace the one that has left.

Not enough retail, 2nd grocery store, quality eatery.

A major challenge is the availability of land to build a house without paying half of what a house would cost. Taxes and the price of having two garbage cans are high as well.

One of the biggest challenges in our community is our willingness to act as a suburb of Rock Springs. Almost all of our residents choose to live here because of the strengths of our community. However our lack of retail business such as another grocery store hurts our community.

Lack of business development. The city keeps spending money on projects that will never benefit the citizens. Money was wasted on surveys and input from outside sources to try and develop a secondary road between Green River and Rock Springs- total waste of money! We should be working on attracting businesses to the area instead of forcing everyone to travel to Rock Springs or Salt Lake City. Unless they (Mayor and council) change their focus and tactics we will always be a "bedroom" community to Rock Springs. I am also concerned about the moral issues the city is experiencing right now, not sure the leadership has been a benefit to the working community.

This is a bedroom community and, as such, somewhat socially challenged. The opportunity for social interaction is largely restricted by emphasis on church activity and cloistered association. Community activities that are civilly arranged are attended adequately across these artificial borders.

I believe there is not enough suicide prevention for kids. I think it needs to be addressed to children as young as 10 and have something presented quarterly, not just once a year. We talk about bullying, and being nice to each other and what not, but we don't give our kids coping skills to deal with the pain of a breakup or a bully or resources to know where to go to talk. There could be pastors, counselors, parents, teachers, etc all involved because it is a serious issue especially since Sweetwater County is #10 in the nation for suicide rates.

My son just committed suicide 1 month ago over a girl. He had threatened it many times as we found out afterward and no one tried to get him help. If my husband and I would've known, we could've helped him-but now it's too late. But it's not too late to start better prevention before this happens again.

\*\*\*\*\* We need another grocery store pretty badly. \*\*\*\*\*

High prices of real estate. The City at times makes it difficult to remodel and add on to an existing structure. The "old" parts of town seem to be falling apart, if there was an incentive to update existing homes and buildings out city would look nicer everywhere!

One grocery store. Not enough shopping, restaurants. Losing local landfill in the near future. Gas prices are some of the highest in the state.

Diversifying our economic base. While local industry has provided a strong economic base, we struggle to build on that base with well-run service oriented businesses, technology based business, manufacturing etc.

Lack of affordable housing limits available work force. Planning for future development seems to be limited to small business areas with little thought to the big picture of where will major streets be added, how will they tie into the residential areas, what residential areas will be added that will be able to offer affordable housing, etc. By affordable housing, I mean housing that would be affordable to a family with income in the \$30,000 - 60,000 range.

This is not a business-friendly community starting with the mayor. There needs to be a liaison to work with businesses and the local government in order to streamline the processes and deal with challenges that arise. I have become convinced that the elected officials and staff have good intentions but do not have the abilities to make this a more friendly environment for businesses.

1. Self-reliance and isolation lead to ingrained bias.
2. Communication is very poor between groups and individuals. Misconception and miscommunication abound.
3. It is hard to interest anyone outside the hidebound groups in new businesses, ideas, or cultural trends.

The need for another grocery store is essential in Green River.

Lack of affordable housing  
Need additional Grocery Store  
No curbside recycling  
Need to get a transfer station put in before landfill closes  
Keep the city employees working, DO NOT outsource the Solid Waste/Recycling Division  
A non friendly City Government

I would appreciate a public golf course ran by the city. It would afford something to do for people who don't hunt fish or 4wheel. There is a woeful lack of cultural things to do for both older and younger people. Would also love to see our town encourage a second grocery store to come to green river.

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The overpopulation of deer within city limits, they are destructive of landscapes and personal property and they are potentially dangerous to children and pets. Lack of volunteerism and entrepreneurial spirit. We need a higher population if we are want to attract more businesses. A higher population means more housing. We need people with a stronger work ethic.

Continuing to provide needed services with less money. Recognizing that sales tax revenues are variable, and raising taxes is unpopular, it falls on the council to decide what services can be pared back or privatized to stay within their budget. Seeing the huge number of employees retiring at the school district and trona mines, I can only assume that a similar problem faces the city. Finding ways to keep some of these people a bit longer, at least until some of the knowledge and experience they possess can be passed on to the new recruits, is a foreseeable concern if the city is to avoid the problems the schools and mines are experiencing. New ideas are always good, but experience and loss of institutional memory is devastating.

Keeping businesses open, and giving the population something to do. As a family of four, this is not an ideal spot for us because there is nothing to do. We make our money here and spend it elsewhere. We really love to go to Steamboat, CO.

Some of the City's civic Commissions & Councils lack good organization - especially in regard to event planning. This is relevant because a small town's events help to build cohesiveness, comradery, and identity. This in turn engenders a more engaged community.

1.. Progress and creativity related to economic development, cultural development, and land uses are often hindered by long-held/ingrained "good 'ole boy" attitudes. There are a handful of "founding fathers" who own and control significant real estate resources and seem to oppose any effort to improve or expand commercial properties, especially downtown.

2. More on economic/business development- We continue to be locked into the bedroom community philosophy and seem to be satisfied with status quo and allowing Rock Springs to make all the gains in economic diversity.

A mayor that cares more about the right things for Green River then getting his name on as many things as he can.

A government that appreciates the opinions and the work of volunteers that may feel different about things then those elected.

And remember that the volunteers are doing there time for free.

Needing to let help the currents long term businesses decide how the business community evolves.

Support current local businesses and listen to what they have to say.

Listen to what the committees and boards even though they may conflict with what the mayor wants.

The elected need to follow the laws and ordinances and realize they can be sued.

Being able to shop and eat here in green river with some verity.

As a parent, the challenges of knowing what programs are available and when. There are many great programs we have stumbled upon; story time at the library, Kids in Motion, Monkey and Me gymnastics and the splash park. It would be beneficial to have a things to do campaign to inform parents of the great programs available to their kids.

Knowing I can't afford the changes that are coming to Green River. Solid Waste and Waste Water are both going to be costing the residents more money.... The City government is run by shady people who give themselves raises but tell the others there is no room in the budget for such things.

One grocery store continues to be an issue. We could really use a second grocery store.

Trying to close down our city Solid Waste Department. Why is there all of a sudden a deficit in that department. If you shut down this department what will happen to all of the equipment that us as tax payers paid for. How much does administration make, and why do they make that much, but as a city you are looking to close departments that we need. Why aren't there new business moving into Green River, they are all going to Rock Springs? Why does my property tax keep going up and you want to raise it again for things that should of been being taken care of through the years instead of building all the parks that now you don't have enough funds to fix and keep up or the personnel to do it with. What happened to all the money that was in the Water treatment funds over the last 5 yrs. along with the solid waste funds. Why is money been taken out of these departments and put into the general fund?

I have always thought it was funny and strange that we have literally dumped hundreds of thousands of dollars into the river. It is now made a dangerous river much more dangerous. I see people putting in backyard streams and ponds and trying to make them realistic, yet parts of our natural river now look completely fake! I doesn't appear that the kayak park has brought much money to GR as promised. Yet, those of us who have grown up floating the river can only do that now with a higher risk of drowning or flipping over in the rapids. I am not impressed with the removal of trees near the river. My family and I had a 'secret spot' that was very shallow and secluded, we used to take our boys down there to throw rocks in the river and enjoy the beauty of the Green River. The last time we were there, the ground was completely destroyed and rutted by bulldozer tracks and all of the trees were removed. We have not been back. I've read the stories regarding invasive trees, but it broke my heart that our special place was ruined. I am very irritated that one city employee in particular uses his position to further his and his families personal wants. A few years ago I was very pleased to see the city's parks being upgraded. Most of them seemed to be redone without much thought, yet the park on Andrews street was decked out to the nines! Someone brought it to my attention that that park is located less than a block from the city's Parks and Recreation Directors wife's daycare!!! Aha! Which, by the way, is located in a neighborhood of mostly elderly couples. I would be interested in seeing the budget for the parks project

and how much of it was allotted to that particular park as compared to the others. This is not the only time this man has caused a stir within the community, while he is nice, he repeatedly abuses his position. Take for instance the time I saw a city owned truck, trailer and JLG at his parents' house. They were cutting down trees. While I don't know if the men helping him were city employees or not. We as taxpayers are paying for personal work to be done, or it is a MAJOR liability for random people to be operating city owned equipment with a city employee responsible for it. This occurred during work hours on a weekday. I could go on. I would like to know if city employee abuse of our tax dollars for personal reasons is rampant or just isolated to this man and his family?

Getting a light industry area to create jobs. Need more jobs to keep our young in area. More active chamber. Needs to be open on weekends in summer to for traveling visitors see so many during summer stopping and it is not open. Poor shopping, you could get more shops and restaurants, etc. along the river front, that would attract tourist.

We really need another grocery store. I feel like that is a major problem. We can't use Rock Springs as an excuse forever. Walmart will be there when we are long gone. Let's just really try to bring another store in. Smiths is getting so rich from this town .

We need some restaurants in town that offer good food and clean place. Have you been to Buckaroo lately? That is the first place people see when they come here and that is not a good example of our town.

We don't need any more studies to see if we need something. Clearly if you think we need it that means we do stop wasting money on studies.

The railroad corridor is an eyesore through town (not enough effort into screening the tracks from general view) and too many "travelers" wander through town (especially in the summer) after arriving by illegally hitching a ride on the trains.

Growing new businesses into lasting enterprises also seems to be a weakness for us, but they may be a reflection of population numbers or the nature of the start-up businesses rather than anything Green River can directly control.

Attracting and retaining retail businesses. Although there are many vacant buildings, there is very little available land for business development. The main thoroughfare and entrance to Green River (via Flaming Gorge) is unattractive (vacant buildings, poorly maintained building facades, homely motels and limited food choices), recreation locations are difficult to find. There is really nothing to "draw" visitors into Green River, other than the occasional special event. The sidewalks roll up at 5 p.m. and visitors wander the main street looking for something to do or see without success. Keeping travel between Green River, Rock Springs, and the various outlying employers (FMC, Black Butte Coal, etc.) passable in bad weather conditions. The Governing bodies waste a LOT of resources on non-viable and ridiculous projects that benefit just a small handful of people. The "kayak park" was a HUGE snake oil project for no return, disrupted the natural flow and habitat of the river, causing major damage to the greenbelt which has never been repaired - and literally hundreds of people use that greenbelt every week for walking, biking, etc. The money, time, and resources being invested in the "Greater Green River Intergalactic Spaceport" is total and utter nonsense.

A major problem/challenge of our community is the number of "bars" that are located on the main route through our town. I understand that we are not a dry town but to have them right next door to each other seems a bit redundant. Depending on the direction one enters town, one of the first things a person sees is a bar and the last thing they see is a billboard with an beer advertisement on it. We claim to be family oriented but it doesn't look like it.

Street and utility reconstruction. The streets and utility lines being reconstruction are between 35 to 40 years old. When a street surface is reconstructed all the adjoining concrete curb, gutter and sidewalk must be replaced since concrete only has a useful life of 40 years. All clay tile sewer lines and AC water mains should be replaced with PVC lines! PVC or concrete Storm Drain lines should be required in new developments. New storm drains should be constructed during reconstruction of existing streets where the original developer did not install storm drains to lower their cost per lot. Continue with the slurry seal program to maintain existing streets. No new city parks should be required for at least 10 years.

Green river, needs to be more inclusive. More participation should be encouraged. More businesses are needed to give the city more economic activity.

Mayor Castillon's single-minded desire to purchase land 6 miles west of town. Why? The time, money and energy could be better spent developing land and infrastructure within the existing boundaries of the City.

Development of the Green River airport. This project is short-sighted and accomplishes nothing but to stroke the Mayor's ego.

Purchase of the UP Depot. Why should the City assume the liability of this contaminated property?

Lack of a second grocery store.

Miscommunication. There is a lot of contention about the Depot project, for instance, mostly because people are misinformed. They don't know that the money is grant money, so they feel like the city is wasting tax payer's money.

Downtown is wasted. Economic development should be the priority because it feeds every other aspect of a vibrant community.

Too much concrete in downtown. Flowerbeds are paved over. Buildings are torn down and paved over for parking. We fight too much against building up so we tear everything down. People joke and call it the concrete jungle. We're a small town, we should not be using the same nicknames as large cities to describe downtown area.

There is very little appreciation for our historic landscape/built environment. The mayor and city council have been wonderful about it in the recent past, but the community in general doesn't seem to care because downtown isn't a gathering place.

The few businesses there are downtown do not cater to their potential market. They have hours like 10-4:30 when the majority of their potential customers are at work. Many of those that have gone out of business offered horrendous service. We need dynamic entrepreneurs, not 2-3 business owners that offer very little to their customers.

Absentee landlords who have let many buildings in the business district/downtown fall into disrepair or simply look ugly.

Too much focus on large projects like the spaceport. It's too much focus on big revenues and not on a sense of community. What's the point of offering another means to enter Green River (spaceport) if there's no place to shop, eat, or stay once people get here? We need to build up our own economy, people, and community first.

Attitude. There is often much resistance to positive change.

Houses cost too much. Not everyone works at the mines or oil field. There is a false sense of economy here. A simple example: compare the price of gas between GR and Evanston, it is always 30 cents more in GR. Since houses are more costly in GR, the population growth is in RS, where a nice new home is the same price as an old fixer upper in GR. More businesses blossom there as well, so teenagers have to drive to RS for jobs. Marketers won't send businesses to a lower population. The other problem is the one that will never go away: a road between GR & RS. I-80 is so busy with semi-trucks, it is dangerous for those who live in GR & commute to RS to and vice-versa. I wish someone in this area was friends with Warren Buffet & could get him to provide a road! The DEER need to be hunted down with tranquilizer dart guns, lifted into horse trailers then transported FAR from here! I am sure the list of volunteers to help would be lengthy if this could take place! I don't agree with the city of Gillette allowing bow hunters to hunt them in city limits. This is civilization - hunters shouldn't hunt deer in town, and deer don't belong in town! I hope that ugly GAS sign that is still where the tobacco friendly gas station will be gone soon. It is an eye sore. Between that and The Buckaroo Cafe, the east end entrance is unattractive. Better than 25 years ago, I admit, but still shabby shambles.

I think one of our biggest problems is that we are not connected to Wyoming/local news. Our newspaper can be decent, but I love going to Casper or Cheyenne and getting to see what's happening in our state. I think the general public would benefit from being in touch with more than Just Utah news.

Greedy government with no sense of fiscal responsibility. They vote themselves a raise and cut beneficial programs. Put thousands of dollars worth of artwork on the streets and they cancelled the youth tennis and golf camps. Our youth need programs more than tourists need sculptures.

We have too much real estate. Too many city buildings. City hall, dispatch, new jail. A lot of wasted money.

Drugs are a major problem. Kids don't take it seriously. High school students can get them way too easily.

Large religious groups have a lot of political influence. I appreciate good moral leadership when it is not favoring one group amongst the whole.

The current city council will bail out wealthy private citizens (new jail) but not even hold the city inspectors accountable for the sewer and water lines that lead away from our property. We have to pay for extra insurance to cover costs we have to pay for if their lines are we're not properly installed or inspected 30 years ago? The cost of one repair is \$9,000 and the insurance only covers \$4,000. The city pays 0? But they will buy a construction project gone wrong from 1, very wealthy, citizen, to build a police station that very few citizens support; to the tune of 4 million dollars.

Our city government/administration get more and more perks, expensive cars at tax payers expense, and our friends and neighbors lose their part time jobs with the city.

I think we don't have a lot of area to expand unless we move up on south hill so it's hard to attract new development.

I want to preface my remarks with a few comments. I love living in Green River. I've been a resident for 34 years. I believe our city council and mayor have spent time passing some ridiculous ordinances.# 1, dog poop.I walk around enough to know that doesn't work.# 2 cell phone use while driving,#3 feeding deer, Does not work.. Our great police department has better things to do to utilize there valuable time than on these kinds of matters. Our city is land locked. That hasn't changed since I've lived here. I'm not sure where to go, but we need to expand somehow, somewhere. I'm not sure Jamestown is the way to go. I have kids who have moved to Rock Springs because of lack of new housing here in Green River. I hate to see people move to Rock Springs because of what housing, shopping, etc.

Lack of business. Cafes, Stores,grocery,clothing and a decent like mercantile.

Jobs, Green River hires outside community and state. Local natives have to move to make a living.

The City Council wasting time trying to buy property west of town that will not be used.

The inane pursuit of developing the Intergalactic Spaceport. Even the name indicates how stupid this idea is.

Development of downtown. The council is perceived as unfriendly to business.

#### Project Funding

Selection of Projects that are beneficial to all GR residents.

Continuation of 6th Penny Projects but do not get to the point where they are the only projects selected and completed by the City.

Utility Rates, need to set aside funds for future projects

Changing of priorities, what is a hot topic one day may not be the next.

Green River's biggest challenge is directly related to its uniqueness and beauty. We are landlocked with very little area to expand our residential population. City Leadership has been focusing on purchasing land that is not contiguous to City Limits and there-by wasting my tax dollars on a venture that will not bring more revenue by way of sales taxes directly to the City. There is no realistic hope that tracts 10 & 12 will ever be annexed into City of Green River limits. We would be better off buying land in Rock Springs, that already has infrastructure and selling for development! It makes more sense to look at land that borders City Limits, for instance land to the east north of I-80 all the way to 191 South. Even though much of that land has pipeline/utility corridor in it, it is much more conducive to development and could be annexed into Green River City Limits.

The only way that Green River can attract more business is to increase its population. The only hope in getting another grocery store is increasing its population. The City needs to create the opportunity for economic growth not in the business of business recruitment.

City Leadership needs to stay focused on what can afford and what is in reach. Stand behind and support the Main Street program; the entity needs to become its own entity and supported in philosophy by the City of Green River Government. Main Street/URA can have a contract for service with the City similar to what the Chamber has.

Stay focused on the renovating and developing the UP Depot. That is a huge project and needs to have ongoing attention. A UP Depot group similar to what Cheyenne had for their old depot building would help tremendously. That group was made up of Museum/historical folks, businesses, Chamber, Main Street, Business Council, Travel & Tourism, Arts Council and citizens.

Quit trying to compete with and be like Rock Springs. I love Rock Springs; it is a great partner to Green River. What we lack they have and visa-versa. The issues with the Inter-Galactic Space port will only further and alienate Rock Springs & the County. Why would anyone want to land their private plane to a place that has no hangers, fuel, car rental and any other amenities? It is unrealistic to keep moving forward with that project.... It would take millions of dollars with very little return on the investment.

Support the local airport we have....be a better partner in the Sweetwater "Community".

Deer in the city are a problem. They destroy public and private vegetation (i.e. shrubs, other plants, and gardens. For many this reduces the quality of life. Although vehicle speeds in the city are low compared to the highway, the possibility of deer in the roadways causing an accident is very real.

The "do not feed the deer" ordinance is nearly impossible to enforce and does nothing for the deer feeding themselves. There are some who continue to feed the deer and enjoy watching them. Unfortunately too often they are watching them destroy their neighbors gardens etc. There has to be a better way. Government is not business, although they too often lose sight of that. Government can't and shouldn't be running businesses. When another supermarket sees Green River as an economically productive area for them, it will be hard to keep them out. But government promises of incentives will not help the community or a company in the long run. They didn't before. The Main Street Organization does some helpful things, but dictating the color of paint to businesses is not one of them. Businesses know what they need to operate and have the most at stake

in making those choices and decisions. Let them do it.

The City claims they want to help re-vitalize business areas, especially downtown but when they purchase property and begin to develop it in competition with other businesses and real estate interests, they immediately exempt themselves from the requirements everyone else is held to. (regulatory fees, landfill fees, etc.).

The lack of a vital and growing business community. The need for another grocery store and a variety of good restaurants. We know from the past that Rock Springs people will come to Green River if they value what we have to offer. We also need to promote more effectively and vigorously the great small businesses we already have.

Here are the issues which I think present a major problem or challenge in Green River:

There is little confidence in our City Council but most importantly in our Mayor for the past 6-7 years. There is a serious concern of the lack of transparency within the administrative and executive parts of the city government in the areas of decision-making, budgeting, and other aspects of finance.

There is a belief that our City Government is not very friendly toward business, real business development, or maintaining present businesses.

It appears that the community's voice is given little weight when important issues evolve.

There appears to be a sense of micromanagement between our elected officials and the staff hired to do city business.

There seems to be little interest or positive direction to save the historical and 'old' buildings/neighborhoods within our city. It appears to be difficult to maintain directors and boards of the special interest agencies which overlook this area.

Finding candidates for council without special agendas is difficult.

There is a perception that the city council/mayor often determines which projects are important to the city whether the city can afford to fund these projects or not.

Deer in city. we need to get rid of the no archery in city limits law and start an archery hunt like other cities that have had great success in the reduction of auto collisions and property damage. This was a stupid law to enact in Wyoming to start with.

Poor shopping

Only one grocery store

Have to drive to rock springs for other service

Better surveillance

Vandalism

Vandalism

Unsafe Parks

Unsafe Parks

Bike park is dangerous

Skate night is too much money

Skate night is too much money

Not many kids are playing pc

Swimming at your risk at the pools and river

Litter \*\*\*\*\*

River is dangerous

River rafting

Not enough money

War and murders, vandalism, gangs

Weather is dangerous

Wreck

Not enough schools

Crime

Crime

Need less apartments

More candy

People don't get paid

Not enough restaurants \*\*

People waste water and power  
Graffiti/vandalism \*\*\*\*\*  
No sports that kids can join  
No hospital \*\*\*\*\*  
Not enough stores \*\*\*  
Drugs  
No Walmart  
People that smoke \*\*\*  
Cold weather \*\*  
Cops taking kids away Green River  
The taxes go up  
Bullying  
Bullying  
Need more stuff for kids our age (middle school)  
Stop letting kids have energy drinks  
Not enough parks  
Young children smoking and stealing  
Too many homeless people  
Not enough stuff to do with smaller kids  
Robbing  
Kids smoking and drinking alcohol  
Too many bars  
Need better parks and cheaper prices  
People getting really drunk  
People like to speed  
Prices are too high  
Need to clean the water a little bit better  
People should be nicer  
Painting on the trains  
Glass on the ground  
Spending on ridiculous things  
Spending on ridiculous things  
A lot of gossip and back biting, jealousy  
Shutting down the dump  
Shutting down the dump  
Who you are in middle school determines everything  
Some roads need re-done \*  
Alcohol and drugs \*\*\*\*\*  
Litter \*\*\*  
Drama  
Wanna be gangsters  
Need the roads to be better cleaned when it snows  
Construction takes forever  
Building houses at FMC \*  
Police \*  
Seat belts

Too much violence  
Too many idiots driving  
Not enough people to trust  
Bullying  
Smoking  
Kids skipping school  
Peer pressure  
The bad people  
Stupid people  
The "art" doesn't make sense  
Random construction  
Violence at the skate park  
Not enough people  
People disrespectful of others \*\*  
Unsafe drivers  
Drug problem  
Nothing  
Roads, trash/litter  
Harassment  
Too many drugs  
People being heard  
Recycling  
Cops having false evidence and lying  
Fatal car crashes  
People being mean  
Drugs in underage  
Chewing  
Drugs  
No enough swag, too many cowboys  
Too many cowboys that chew  
Nothing to do  
Roads, trash/litter  
Nothing  
There are issues with drugs  
Unity  
I like Green River the way it is  
Litter \*\*\*  
Drug users  
Compared to where I came from, Green River is nice  
Bullying  
Community is litter, trash by river  
Underage drinking and car crashes in high school parking lot  
People being jerks  
We hire cheap construction workers  
Teens get hooked on drugs there is nothing to do in this town  
We have nothing to do!!! For teenagers

It seems like this town uses a lot of money on things that don't work out

Trash everywhere

Bullying, double standards

Bullying

Bullying and seclusion

There are not enough jobs for high school students

Bullying

Spend money on not needed stuff

No child left behind

None

It looks run down

The fact that so few business (big businesses) are allowed to be brought into the community (ie Walmart, Starbucks)

Little support for other sports in the community, such as soccer, cross country and track

No unity, need to come together

Not enough activities

Not enough activities

Drugs/alcohol \*\*\*\*\*

Thug children

Cell phones while driving

Drinking and driving

Pregnancy/teenage pregnancy \*\*

Traffic

Home space

Need more hunting time

Not be so racist in parts of towns

Discrimination

People's health, obesity

Recycling & conservation

More chains/restaurants \*\*\*\*

Drug trafficking/transportation/trade \*\*\*\*\*

Transportation

Attitudes

Political corruption

Local government decisions do not benefit citizens

Monopoly of food & market

Lack of economic development \*\*\*\*

Lack of entertainment for teens

Large percent of domestic violence

Bad sports/directors/coaches in junior high and high school

Not very many things to do (fun places to go, etc.)

Not really evolving and bringing new businesses

No support for activities other than football

Cleanliness

Evolving in economic and modern-day technology

Economically confined

Partisanship  
Not a diverse community of jobs  
People not being treated equally (illegal is illegal)  
Finding safe, fun activities for hanging out  
Lack of stores  
Litter \*  
Graffiti  
Family issues  
Bullying \*  
Sex at young age  
Need more community gatherings  
Town is kind of boring  
Need new library books  
Activity opportunities, boring \*\*\*\*\*  
Students academically  
There should be more shops  
Not enough attractions  
School Lunch  
The price of gas and ice cream

## **Green River Community Assessment Strengths and Assets**

The people \*\*\*\*\*  
Education system (money being invested in education)- high graduation rate \*\*\*\*\*  
Parks and recreation opportunities \*\*\*\*\*  
Mountain biking trail system \*\*  
The history in this area (pony express, railroad, Powell expedition) \*\*\*  
Generous citizens  
The river \*\*\*  
Small town atmosphere- sense of community \*\*\*\*\*  
Small population  
Small population  
Extraction industries  
Potential in downtown district \*  
Intergalactic space port (airport) \*  
Flaming gorge/ flaming gorge scenic byway\*  
Carnegie library  
Strong support from city for use of facilities for religious groups  
"Cleaner and greener"  
Great place to raise your family  
"I'd rather live in green river than rock springs" (family community)\*  
Unique events (art on the green, trunk or treat, crystal classic, river festival) \*\*\*  
Potential to create a unique identity  
Visitors center  
"People that do speak up have the power to influence change"  
Volunteerism \*\*\*\*\*

Safe \*\*\*

Senior involvement (senior center)

Location (proximity to flaming gorge and access to public lands for hunting and fishing) \*\*\*\*

Friendly community

Cultural activities through the community college and the library \*

Youth programming \*

Green river ordinance

6th penny tax for infrastructure development

Western Wyoming community college campus

The rec center

"You won't get shot here unless you know the person shooting you"

The police department has better things to do than deal with barking dogs

Green belt

Green River hospital with new oncology center (huntsman center)

Police force- could be more active in the community

Solid fiscal foundation

Transportation infrastructure \*

Opportunities for niche businesses

Accept that we're a bedroom community

Streamlined processes for business processing

Wild horses/ wild horse loop tour

Western Wyoming community college campus

Family friendly

Unique geography

Nature \*

Outside education

Recycling program and solid waste dept.

recreational opportunities

police dept. is top of the line

Raise children

Education system

Parks and recreation opportunities

Bedroom community feel

City employees are helpful \*

river

Flaming gorge/ flaming gorge scenic byway

Interstate

Railroad

Family oriented bedroom community

Low crime rate \*

feels safe to live here \*

Good schools

Good schools

Outdoor activity availability close by \*

Take care of streets nicely \*

1 percent tax helps \*

Parks around town, taken care of \*\*  
Splash park \*  
Good people \*  
Low tax rate \*  
Employment and wages \*  
Infrastructure in good shape  
Railroad \*  
City administration is approachable, make time to see people, publish their contact info  
Main street program has done some good things to improve downtown district  
Long standing business owners who have been in green river a long time- they have ownership in green river  
Improvements to the tomahawk have been beneficial- just need to continue it  
"It's vibe" - it has a more family, laid back vibe. I like the community feel that Green River has  
The addition of a lot of green space, and places for the community to gather  
Gorgeous  
Tourism product: river, gorge  
People passionate about the assets  
Local pride  
People that work together and believe in the cause  
Great volunteers great local leaders  
Longevity, knowledge base of long-term employees  
Longevity, knowledge base of long-term employees  
Dedication of city employees \*  
Safe community for kids \*\*  
Parks and rec programs  
Lots of outdoor rec opportunities (board walks/trails, river, Killdeers) \*  
Residential-friendly community ("one big neighborhood")  
Scenic \*  
City employees \*  
Rec Center \*  
City and School district relationship/partnership (specifically rec center) \*  
police and fire departments  
Embracing philosophy of bedroom community and small size  
Cooperation of parks and rec dept. with other city departments  
Parks, river, railroad, friendly people  
Green River and airport  
People, gas stations accessibility, friendly, parks, events  
Small life style, quiet  
Close knit, schools, good place to raise a family.  
Nice town, schools, attractive  
Rec, (parks, fields), schools  
Friendly people, good place to live  
Good community involvement, tight-knit, help for people that need it  
Just like the community, nice people, shopping adequate  
Greenbelt, great community, safe, good for kids  
small town, everyone looks out for each other  
Dedication of city employees

Most beautiful city in United States  
Lions Clubs that does for others.  
Love it, can't tell you why  
People talked to you  
Air is cleaner  
Open spaces  
Lots of activities to do outdoors  
Parks are nice and used by kids all the time  
Good set up to get kids involved in activities  
Community oriented  
Small town feel  
Good facilities  
Unified as a town (make a wish, sports)  
Fishing \*  
Lots of summer activities  
Lake  
Polar plunge  
Safe town to live in, for families  
Location - close to rock springs, slc  
Wyoming scholarship opportunities keeping kids in WY  
The recreation center and programs for the kids  
Cleanliness, family oriented  
Parks/skate park  
Rec center  
People, sense of community, support individuals and families get in time of need  
Parks and rec  
river  
Greenbelt  
Lots of people care about the future  
Kind of a loner, but it's clean  
People are friendly  
Way of life  
Community  
Small town community, family oriented, less  
Scenery  
Friendly residents - volunteerism  
Parks/rec opportunities  
Incredible talent - artists  
Strong base of civic minded people  
Willing volunteers  
Location - beautiful  
Greenbelt  
Great place to raise your family  
Great place to live  
Great community  
Wonderful people

Farmers Market  
Library - free programs  
Group Painting at River Fest  
Safe  
Friendly  
Quiet  
Wide open spaces  
Small  
A lot of volunteer groups  
Lot of jobs  
Community is happy and proud to be here  
Involvement and cooperation of police dept.  
Great people  
Rec Center  
Community has reputation as a better place to raise a family  
Nice parks  
Low crime rate  
Lot of programs for people with problems  
River  
Community atmosphere, involved community  
Cooperation amongst agencies  
Flaming gorge days  
Sheltered from some of the problems that occur in RS  
Gated community  
Natural resources in abundance  
City employees are helpful \*  
Relationship between law enforcement and youth  
Warm friendly community \*  
School system  
River  
Rock structures, landscapes  
Good place to raise a family  
Chamber of commerce works to get things going  
Awesome real estate family  
Relationship between the city staff and business owners \*  
Community supportive of the small town atmosphere  
College has good communication with community leaders  
Educational system is good  
Bedroom community of western slope  
Community is stronger, school is stronger than Rock Springs  
Great community, I love it.  
Huge family community, family oriented  
Swimming pool will be nice, as rec center pool is often busy  
Library, rec center, art on the green , parks, greenbelt  
Museum  
Visitor center

recreational opportunities  
Education \*\*  
City does a good job in maintaining streets  
Nice parks  
General small town, not much traffic  
Good access to local resources (cdc), county and cities do a good job presenting the opportunities  
Proximity to SLC  
Police dept. is top of the line  
Fire department is a 10 out of 10  
Ambulance service does a good job, provides good care to the community  
city of gr provides a high level of service to the citizens  
Family friendly  
Lots of parks  
Friendly environment, town  
Feels safe to live here  
Beautiful: river, bluffs, greenbelt  
Because it is small the gov't is approachable, can voice concerns at city council  
Family activities  
Lots of parks  
Partnership to build the child dev center with city through the 6th penny tax  
Arts and parks\*\*\*\*\*  
People are nice and like to have visits  
Very neighborly  
Bike park, river  
Community development director \*  
Police department building  
Tomahawk building, the center of town \*  
Great history here, the tomahawk is part of that  
The loaf and jug is pretty cool and maverick has good  
Nature and surroundings  
Home \*  
Small town \*\*\*\*\*  
Friendly \*  
Grew up here  
No place like Green River  
Good place to raise a family  
Know everybody  
Family \*  
Cheaper to live here  
People  
Real Estate  
Willingness of city to get involved  
No crazy drivers  
Less Traffic \*  
Location/scenic \*  
Not a lot of crime

Summers  
Railroad \*  
Parks and recreation activities for youth  
City streets cleaning  
The river  
Rec center, swimming pool  
Education, special needs \*\*\*  
Small town  
Greenbelt  
Great people  
Great people  
Medical Center  
Small community \*\*\*  
Clean town  
Knowing neighbors  
Pretty clean town  
New stuff is good stuff  
Excellent place to raise kids and great place to live  
My kids love the parks  
Nice parks and ball fields and are well maintained \*  
City tries to do things that people can enjoy (facilities) rec opportunities \*  
The river - fishing, boating, swimming \*  
Good air quality  
No traffic congestion  
Senior center  
Aquatic center and programs for kids  
Green belt  
People  
People  
River improvements  
School system  
School system  
Parks and water features  
Bedroom community  
Park and greenbelt  
Crime rate is low, feels safe to live here  
City effort to clean-up ugly property  
Economical to live here

Great place to live and raise a family. Very safe, quite town. Lots to do in this small town. Nice Green Belt, parks, schools, laws are enforced. City seems to work well with schools other local entities. We are a bedroom community and should be happy to stay that way.

A strong group of citizens that will help at a moment's notice.

Green River is a beautiful wonderful small town--it probably will always be a bedroom community although a few people think we need all the amenities of Rock Springs. Departments of the City offer good service that has been an expectation of previous Councils. People feel safe and secure with our fire department, ambulance service, police department, medical services.

Strong sense of family, great outdoor recreational opportunities; river corridor

We are a bedroom community, and we have a beautiful river running through our town. We have great schools.
The walking paths, Recreation center, community college and the extension classes.
The parks are kept clean.
The river, friendly people, gateway to Flaming Gorge, the Trona Mines
In my opinion, the greatest asset this community has is the Trona Mines. They have been the backbone of this community for over 40 years. They have provided steady growth to this community. The river itself and the river valley we live in.
Unfortunately I cannot list any strengths or assets. Our town doesn't exhibit any sense of pride, not even from the long-time residents. Too much resentment toward the new residents who move here, go to work, and buy property as they try to make this their new home. I do hope this survey will be used effectively to help improve this.
Good schools, good people
The structure itself is a wonderful foundation to create a beautiful and functional down town, school systems and early intervention, activities in the sports realm for the children, reaction center, biking and walking paths, and mountain biking trails.
Location on I80 and railroad for shipping of products. Also, for the transportation of raw materials into area for manufacturing. WWCC for training of employees. Recreation areas close by for activities during all seasons.
Low crime rate, good schools, great outdoor activities (hunting, fishing, camping) in the area.
People who care about the community. Green Belt, Library.
Strong sense of family values, parks and strong local economy from the Trona industry
We are a civically minded community with a strong turnout for events.
The mineral based businesses that we have that provide the area with money. Our productive & beautiful and well-constructed and maintained community . our citizens are diversified and a good number are educated and involved. Well run City departments. beautiful open natural areas for recreation the Green River and Flaming Gorge being so close Clean water and environment
Rec center is one of the best things city has done pleased with law enforcement great museum
The City does a great job taking care of the streets and trash pickup and recycling. The trees and landscaping around town are beautiful. There are many city events that people can participate in year round. We are more often than we even realize, very safe in Green River. The Police and Fire Dept. and Ambulance and etc. are very much appreciated.
Green River is a beautiful city with fantastic parks. It is very clean and has caring citizens.
I think the biggest asset in the community is the people. We have a diverse community with great people, great schools, and super parks. When help is needed, the people are willing to step up and lend a hand. I think we have this because our community stays small and close. I also think that our city employees are an asset because we would not have the infrastructure and the community events if they did not exist.
People pull together when asked to help with projects and events.
Mining industry/employment;; open space
The Recreation Center is our major strength. The facility offers activities and opportunities for people of all ages and the instructors are excellent. I also feel the art along the streets adds so much to the positive impressions people take away from our city.
1. Diverse recreational opportunities. 2. Excellent mountain bike trail system. 3. The trail system located within the City limits.
Family friendly and lots of parks; friendly neighbors; great employment at the mines and plants; the river and Flaming Gorge
The major assets of the community are the river and the trail system along the river . Also the parks throughout the community. Great neighborhoods with great outdoor recreational uses close by .
The people who live here, and the people who work for the city. Those folks take great pride in our city. We have a great Police, Fire and Parks department. It is why I chose to live in Green River over Rock Springs.
Clean, well policed, quiet, government and schools work together for the youth programs.

The community does a nice job of providing recreational activities for residents. The rec center is fantastic. The youth programs - soccer, basketball, baseball - are well organized and staffed. I like all the summer activities for families and children. The library provides a good variety of programs for adults, teens and children. We also have good schools in the area.

One major strength our community has is pride. We have an art council that provides beautiful sculptures throughout our community. We have a recycling center that is doing their best to keep our landfill empty. And we have a school system that prides itself on reaching out to the community, involving them in sporting events, community service and voting issues.

Low crime, friendly atmosphere.

Our schools are awesome--very student centered! Our parks and play areas are some of the best I've seen.

I'm impressed with our police force. It is run well. Our officers are visible and approachable.

My wife and I have discussed many times how nice it is to have a community with so many parks for our young daughter to enjoy and that there are many community events that happen to get people involved.

I think the community's parks and recreation opportunities are definite strengths.

Parks and Recreation. grrc and parks are amazing. Continue great youth programs.  
The shrimp boil/art festival  
Continue celebrating our natural resources

We are lucky to have a great library. The City of GR does a good job keeping the streets and parks, love that, thank you. We are a friendly town and people seem to feel welcome.

We have a beautiful city. The river runs through it; we have bike trails that people would travel hundreds of miles to experience; we have a greenbelt that almost ties the whole city together that in other towns small businesses could flourish near; we have events that draw people from throughout the region at specific times during the year (FGD, Art on the Green, RiverFest, etc.); and we have Harley Davidson (to draw people further in to our city).

We have a lot of volunteers!

Owner pride shows in the homes n yards.

Great parks recreation opportunities.  
Good schools.  
Good libraries.  
Good Senior Centers.

The people and the attempts to have regular family community events. I love the ability to take my kids to a park every day during the summer. The green belt is my favorite thing in our town. I take advantage of our recreation center and the classes offered. The activities available for our children that are affordable and accessible. Our community is really family and children oriented. I believe we have one of the most outstanding school districts in the nation.

There are a lot of programs for the kids and a lot of parks and outdoor activities available. I've also been impressed with the education system.

Many good and honest people who do not feel the need to serve. Low level of unemployment and good economics.

The Green River and surrounding cliffs provides great recreational and scenic benefits. There is potential to better develop the river corridor with desirable businesses.

Green River parks are well maintained, especially Expedition Island, the Pavilion and Greenbelt.

The railroad is here to stay so take advantage of the depot and overpass walk-way. Develop/promote rail history, the train watching as recreation, etc.

Small town atmosphere, good neighbors watching out for each other.

Our green belt is beautiful & well maintained!! We have a lot of nice parks to play at with our families during the 6-7 months of the year we are able to use them. We love Edgewater park with so many things to do in 1 area. It is nice it is a long the greenbelt too & has the nice gazebo, bathroom access, & something for all ages. (It would be nice to have another park like this or 2 across town.)

Most people are friendly and willing to give a helping hand. We have good schools with wonderful music and academic opportunities. The fine arts are valued in our schools and will lead to better citizens. Our library services are unparalleled. It's good to have a counseling center in town as well, so folks don't have to drive to Rock Springs for help.

I love the farmers market! Please continue and extend the season if possible. I love the fresh produce, bread lady & beehive cheese.
The willingness of people to help each other. Sense of community. Helpfulness of city workers. Community activities. Volunteer fire department/ EMTs
Parks and river walks, good school system, safe community
The Parks and Recreation Department has done an excellent job in promoting events that benefit our community, particularly the youth. The river flowing through Green River is an amazing asset that can continue to benefit the community.
We have a very friendly, welcoming community. We have some great people here and with it being a small place everybody gets to know everybody else. Also, I think we live in a really pretty community. It's a safe place to raise a family and just a great place to be in general.
The Green River and Flaming Gorge.
We have many people who are willing to go the extra mile to help people. Our senior centers are great, having bingo, games, crafts, and meals. We have many good programs for children including story time, reading clubs, sports, cooking classes, dance, karate, after school programs, girl scouts, boy scouts, etc. We have a variety of good community programs available through the college including cake decorating, stained glass, and more.
The community college has a good variety of challenging classes, engaging professors, and lots of support for their students. They have support for nontraditional students, a good variety of people from other places, and lots of help for those who are struggling. The price is reasonable and the quality of the education is above that at the U of Wyo.
One of the assets that we have enjoyed is Bernadine Craft, who had done much for our community and brings a female perspective into the legislature. We need more people to support women in government and in the community.
City services are reliable and extensive. Great library. Economic stability (city and individual citizens) Green belt No traffic!
Parks
Love the parks. Just wish they would finish up redoing the ones that still need up graded like the one in Hutton Heights.
Small communities make for tight communities. "It takes a village to raise a child" sounds much better than "Leave your child in the metropolis and watch and she becomes a tainted shadow of her former self".
I love our community. I like the numerous parks for children to play, the extracurricular opportunities, the rec center, the green belt, the artistic statues along Flaming Gorge Way and Uintah, the bike park.
The Green River, the small-town atmosphere, sense of pride in the heritage of Green River, values of the citizens of the community which reflect the standards upon which our great nation was built.
Strong industry/jobs and good school system
As a former resident of Rock Springs, I see some major strengths in comparison that Green River has. We have a very friendly community, we strive to have things happening for all of the town to participate in, and we keep our community bright and shining with cleanliness at all times that I see.
Green River is a great community. It is a community with a small town feel.
Parks/Recreation
We have a lot of activities that a person can do to stay healthy.
It is a clean community and the high school athletes receive much support!
tight-knit feeling of community. Town always does its best to look very nice.
Clean and beautiful, lots of parks and outdoor activities. It is also safe place for kids and people to live. One of the best things the city has done in a while is ad the splash park.
Friendly people Beautiful community

Great parks, places to walk and feel safe while walking. Schools are great for the most part.
Our schools are world class. Our residential neighborhoods are well planned. The scenery surrounding our city is spectacular. The friendliness of our residents is to be commended.
We have good people here that really care about Green River. Many natives still live here and would like to see Green River keep and attract our young people. When they graduate, they leave here because there isn't much to draw them back. We have some beautiful scenery that could be used as a way to draw in some businesses. We have some great volunteer groups here that work really hard to make this a great place for people to live. We have a huge economic base here, but we don't offer enough here to keep the money here, they spend it elsewhere where they can get the meals and or products they want. Our schools are great too- we have some excellent educators here that work hard to make sure our kids are ready for college and their future. Very little crime and friendly people make this a good place for young families.
There is a good sense of community here and those activities that are sponsored by civil and social organizations are well attended. The library seems to be the driving force for most actual programs and associations and actually substitutes as a boys and girls club which would not be supported if funded independently. Grocery and dining options are limited but adequate and not something that governments should or could influence as commerce regulates itself quite well.
Cleanliness. I like driving through town and it's not all trashy and junk filled. Rock Springs feels that way to me.
Our parks and schools are wonderful !
Parks, river, activities. Friendly people. good schools.
School District #2. Street clearing following snow storms. Recreation center. Recycling center. Opportunities to volunteer for various boards and committees.
We have a strong economy and a service rich local government that provides many amenities not available in many cities.
I-80 and the railroad system are great transportation assets that could be leveraged for manufacturing businesses
Availability of raw materials
Our beautiful city, our parks and trees, and, of course, some of the wonderful people who we call friends.
1. Self-reliance is a strength as well as a challenge. 2. There are employers of long standing here, such as the mines. 3. There is a big focus on events for children. 4. The stark landscape is beautiful as well as isolating. 5. We have ready access to high-speed Internet, which connects us to the world although it also encourages physical isolation from others.
We are the Gateway to Flaming Gorge and have many historical assets.
The River Friendly people
Quiet...clean..well maintained for the most part. Businesses have much better customer Service than I see in rs. Roads are well maintained
Many family and recreational opportunities. The greenbelt, bike park, splash park, youth recreational programs. The greenbelt is one of the most highly used projects in the city. High incomes, low taxes. People are friendly and the community feels safe.
The city has made efforts to utilize the river's attributes by establishing the Green and Bronze Belts and the placement of the walking paths. The beautification of Uinta and Flaming Gorge Way are also greatly appreciated. The city's willingness to recognize and accommodate a wide variety of sporting and hobby interests is another asset of Green River. The rec center, baseball and soccer fields, horse corrals, neighborhood parks, bike park, and water park are great examples of the city meeting the needs of its citizens. The police dept's ability to responds to calls in a timely manner greatly impressed me, as did the my recent experience with the court trial process. I was most pleased with the timeliness and personal effort put forth by the staff and attorney. So, the beauty of the city itself, along with the employees I've met stand out in my mind as assets for which Green River should be very proud.
The strengths are that crime is low, and we feel safe. The Green River, Expedition Island, and park areas around town are great.
The natural resources in regard to tourism. Green River is well positioned to become a "destination" if it plans properly, invests in the Main Street, generates economic growth and actively attracts tourists.
Many... Great community atmosphere at all levels. Involved citizens. Outstanding natural resources. Good city government.

<p>Lots of recreation. Quiet. friendly</p>
<p>It is peaceful and a friendly community</p>
<p>I believe the parks and Rec Center are our strengths. I have met people at the water park and Kids in Motion that drove over from Rock Springs. That is pretty cool, because most people drive over there to shop. It's nice to have them drive here to play. Our parks are awesome, there are many with varying age focus and it has been cool to watch my family grow through the parks. In addition the gazebo's and ability to have parties at the pavilion with the Kids in Motion equipment, or a gazebo that has tables and trash cans at no charge is a great asset to the community.</p>
<p>The people who continue to work for the City even though they are not appreciated. That is amazing to me.</p>
<p>We have a beautiful city with well kept parks and main streets. We also have a great variety of events for all interests from Art on the Green to the Riverfest to Flaming Gorge Days and more. The Farmer's Market has been a great addition also.</p>
<p>I used to think we had a wonderful, nice affordable housing community, family orientated, school strong community but now I don't. I have lived all of my life have been VERY proud of that, really wanted to raise my family here, and am really questioning why now.</p>
<p>Being a parent with small children, I am very impressed with the splash park. It is always one of my kids favorite places to go in the summer. We also spend a lot of time on the greenbelt, which is like a wonderland for my kids. I am pleased with our schools and teachers and love the fact that I can see the progress my son makes. I am very happy with how safe Green River still is. I was born and raised here and it seems like it's close to the same since I was a kid, which is something that can't be said for a lot of communities around America. I like the small town feel and always knew that I wanted to raise my kids here. I like that the trona mines offer great job opportunities with pay that is well above cost of living and their future is very stable. I am very impressed with the crossing guards around town; the woman at my sons school makes sure that each child walks the way they are supposed to and she also knows which child belongs to who. What an amazing reassurance for parents! I am happy that they are remodeling the clock tower plaza. I for one never paid any attention to it but I'm excited to see it when it's done. I am also happy that the CDC building is completed I think it is a major asset to our community.</p>
<p>The river, surrounding, landscape, history, national trails, hiking, biking</p>
<p>Very nice place to live. Police force seems to keep our town safe. Love our parks and the beautification we have.</p>
<p>Wonderful parks and recreational opportunities, terrific ratio of police officers to residents, quality care and maintenance of roads, water, sewer, etc.</p>
<p>Green River is a reasonably safe community. Residents are generally well behaved and law-abiding. The Green River Recreation Center is an excellent facility, very affordable, and offers many opportunities for wellness. The Parks are attractive, maintained well, and the Green Belt walking paths are generally safe and pleasant. (And will be better when the trees that have been planted are large enough to provide some shade!!) The Castle Rock Medical Center seems to be making strides to attract and retain medical professionals and work more closely with the hospital in Rock Springs. There are a few special events that are well organized and are enjoyed by residents and visitors - Art on the Green and the River Festival, Crystal Classic in February, and the Rodeos. The schools are excellent.</p>
<p>A major strength of our community is the strong support for the library. This support demonstrates that our community finds literacy vitally important! A community that is able to read is able to contribute productive members of society.</p>
<p>The City of Green River has a municipal horse corral which sets it apart from most of the cities in Wyoming. The city owns the land and leases to the corral owners. The corral owners paid all the costs of constructing and maintenance of their barns according to the cities requirements. The 25 year corral lease comes up in the near future. I think it is fair for the corral owners to pay for the water they use but there must not be a substantial increase for the space rental to the individual corral owners.</p>
<p>It has a lot of disposable income. nice setting next to a river.</p>
<p>The major strength of the community is the River. The U-drops and the Killdeer wetlands diversion dam have made the river dangerous and unfloatable by the average citizen or tourist. They should be removed.</p>
<p>The green belt should be improved and maintained. Allowing the improvements to deteriorate is a problem.</p>

Potential. We have this wonderfully unique landscape that makes us stand out. We're right on I-80 so we get lots of potential tourism passing us by. We could be a destination if we had more than being a pit stop to offer to the average tourist.

Steady employment. Because of the industry here, we very rarely see a slump in jobs or tax revenue (based on the non-transient population).

A well funded educational system.

It is pretty, I love the rock formations. It is like our own little Sedona, AZ here. We have beautiful sunsets! I enjoy the Island and the Green Belt. Green Riverites are such kind people. I am always touched when people pull over in their cars when a funeral procession is driving over the over bridge and the oncoming cars pull over out of respect. If we only have one grocery store, I'm glad it is Smith's, since the prices are lower than Walmart & Albertsons. The teachers in the schools work so hard! I've substitute taught for 8 years, and I tell you, they work harder and longer and for less money than they deserve. At Christmas I like the new snow flake lights on the viaduct over the railroad tracks, very nice. I also enjoy seeing JOY TO THE WORLD in lights at the east entrance of GR. I am glad to live in a religiously tolerant community and that non-Christians don't stop those words (Joy to the World) or Christmas hymns at school programs.

I think we have a great city council, good economic development, healthcare and great rec opportunities for many people. Our schools are top notch and I feel great about raising my family here.

The citizens. We have a lot to offer if our leaders would listen. Parks. I believe we have almost 30. My kids and I love to go to the parks.

The friendliness of the citizens, the feelings of job security and feeling relatively safe.

I believe we have good city workers. Whenever I've had any city issues the city staff has taken care of my needs. We have great schools. We have good jobs here. Our Volunteer Fire Dept. is a great asset for the citizens here. I believe they save money for the city and do a great job. I also believe we have a good recreation center.

Police department. City staff. Our Schools and Staff.

Community pride even in a down economy.

The beauty of the rock formations and the river. The City should try to draw people into town not send them on some wild horse chase across the desert.

Well maintained nice clean community  
Lots of ball fields/parks, well maintained and cared for  
Good Public Utilities  
The Green River

Green River has many wonderful assets. Location and proximity to the river and rock formations & Wild Horse Loop Tour, it is a great place to raise a family, splendid Visitor's Center, opportunity for unique downtown area, Expedition Island, Splash Park, Bike Park, Wilken's Peak Trail System, Scott's Bottom Nature Area, Archery Range/Barn, Parks, WWCC, Trona Industry, County Museum....

Green River is a nice place to live. There is nothing wrong with Green River being a "bedroom" community in the Sweetwater County, Rock Springs, Green River area. The City of Green River should encourage the development of quality housing. Few want to live in an apartment all their lives, even fewer to live in "low-income" housing. These are necessary but the City of Green River should avoid falling all over themselves to allow fly-by-night real estate speculators to guide the development of housing.

Many retail businesses present and future make life in Green River pleasant and comfortable, but for some types of business the larger market place of Rock Springs provides a much better venue (can't have a super Walmart in Rock Springs and Green River.)

One of the strengths of Green River is the solid economic base of the soda ash and associated industries. It seems foolish to envision Green River as a tourist meca. Tourists come and are visible for a time but I expect the economic impact is quite small in reference to the whole community.

Some very good small businesses. The Art on the Green and Flaming Gorge Days celebrations. A lovely location and city workers who are very good at caring for and beautifying our community. A city that honors and displays fine art.

No great strengths in green river. we go to R.S. for most everything we need. It is a nice quiet town if we don't need anything.

We have many people who volunteer often and willingly to do the unpaid jobs of this community. We have many cultural opportunities in which many people participate. The Arts Council does an amazing job of beautifying our city with sculpture. We have many talented people within our community. We are a community which prides itself on their neighborhoods. We are so fortunate to have so many delightful parks within our city limits. The rec center is well used as are the schools and churches for community use. We are a very charitable and generous community which helps many people in times of need. Our schools are excellent. Because of our small and close-knit community there is a strong sense of knowing 'everyone' or at least having the connections necessary for a caring community. The new Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center is a real draw for tourists and locals alike.

The fairs

Building a new police station

Rock formations

Fish and crawdads

School \*\*\*\*\*

Freedom we have \*\*

Bike park \*\*\*\*\*

Playing pc

Movie theater \*\*

skate park \*

Parades \*\*

Bike trails

hunting

Hunting

Good people \*

Parks \*\*\*\*\*

Nice community

Water parks \*\*\*

Archery

Gun range

Fun activities \*\*

Not much crime here \*\*\*\*\*

Swimming pool \*

Greenbelt

Being a tree city

We help each other \*

Nice people \*\*\*\*

River improvements

A lot of stuff here

Safe driving

People care about our environment

Learning locations

Easy to make friends

Quiet

Downtown

It's pretty

Football field

It's perfect

Animals

Nice summer \*\*  
Nice trees  
"Lots of foliage"  
Lots of green  
Traffic  
Deer  
After school activities  
The community donates money and blankets to needy people  
Good families  
Places to roam  
Sports for kids  
Working together and helping  
"Only be able to kill one deer"  
"We can live with animals like deer"  
We have a place to keep horses and ride them  
Speaking up  
The police \*\*\*\*\*  
We all work together  
Friends  
Kindness  
Many places to meet and talk  
Good firefighters  
We have money  
Very supportive of each other, a lot of respect  
We have lots of \$  
Safe place to grow up in  
School system  
It's small  
It is a small community  
Good schools  
Community ship  
Politeness, friendly  
Good people  
People mostly polite, friendly, mean comments usually in jest  
The new stadium  
Nothing  
Schools  
No crime  
Families, gorge, Flaming Gorge Days, Schools - especially teachers  
We are small!  
Good people \*\*  
The authority and the schools  
Good people and family, small town news travels and gets out  
It is a safe community with no gun violence  
The good people  
Our people

No crime  
The food  
Little town  
We are a very supportive community  
Good driving ha  
Good friends, small town  
Math  
Coming together  
Safety, graduation ratings (GPA's, etc.)  
Safety  
Over half the people will help you if you look like you need help  
Friendly people, clean  
Friendliness  
Friendly people, clean  
Nice people  
Family oriented activities, safe to live here  
Kindness  
That it's a small town and words get around  
Tough kids  
People  
No idea  
The people  
There are some nice people  
Good school system  
Kids who lift  
Sports, academics  
Kids who lift \*  
Good school  
Lots of activities to do, safe for everyone  
Nothing  
There are plenty of parks and things for everybody to use  
Money management  
We're pretty unified  
We unite together  
The river  
Everything \*  
People are nice and helpful  
Sports  
The community is great, it's really nice, and probably the best I've lived in and I've lived in many different towns  
We get along very well, no bullying issues  
We unite together  
We are gonna have a cool pool, I think  
We are a very close community  
Supportive of activities  
It is a small town so everyone seems to know everyone. Our biggest asset would be how close we are.  
Our conservitenness

Cheer, band, we don't have school uniforms  
Sports  
Bonding as a whole  
We are a wealthy community  
Supportive of school events  
We do most stuff locally  
Coming together as a community  
We have each others backs if someone needs help  
Good involvement  
Kind community members  
Great education/schools/school system (well-funded) \*\*\*\*\*  
Many policemen & women at all times on duty  
Close knit \*\*  
Supportive  
Hunting and fishing \*\*  
The people \*  
That get involved  
Clean \*  
Everybody is nice to everyone  
Friends & family makes things stronger  
Everything'  
Friendliness \*\*  
Caring, helpful, respectful \*  
Opportunities given to young people  
People are involved in the community  
We can rally the community behind a cause or event  
Large workforce  
Many quality jobs available \*  
Unity \*\*\*  
Stable /good economy \*  
Low unemployment \*\*  
Low crime \*\*\*\*\*  
Good/lots of parks \*\*\*\*  
Sports \*\*  
Community programs  
Work  
Work  
Law enforcement  
Very intertwined  
Disposable income  
High morals/values \*  
Pretty to see  
River \*  
Work together  
Love each other  
Friends

Right size/small town \*  
Activities  
Good food  
Recreation is great  
The student special at taco time (is pretty intense) \*  
Number of trees

## **Green River Community Assessment Projects**

Completed wayfinding signs (to include churches) \*\*\*\*\*  
Healthier retail climate  
Second grocery store \*\*  
Develop sections 10 and 12  
Downtown district that is vibrant and attractive - unique, higher end stores, "active successful main street program"  
Downtown district that is vibrant and attractive - unique, higher end stores, "active successful main street program"  
Downtown district that is vibrant and attractive - unique, higher end stores, "active successful main street program"  
Develop space port (airport) for niche markets (tourism) \*\*\*\*\*  
Develop "triangle" - green river, airport, rio vista (?) \*  
Development of the river area \*\*\*\*\*  
Controlled and thoughtful growth \*\*  
Green River Depot- renovated and utilized- place for cultural identity \*\*\*\*\*  
Restore the Carnegie library \*\*  
Develop/support arts in the community (performing arts) \*  
Improve civic pride  
Remove buildings in the community that cannot be preserved/rehabilitated  
Proactively work with absentee landowners for improvements \*\*  
Commuter parking lot for industry workers  
Capitalize on I-80 for industry/transportation development  
Complete an inventory of existing assets for business/industry recruitment  
Maximize western Wyoming community college facility (for unique niche) \*\*  
Leverage partnerships with industry  
Community garden  
Increase green belt connectivity to all areas of town (near visitors center, downtown) \*\*\*  
Population growth  
Rental business for river/recreation opportunities (bikes, rafts, fishing equipment) \*\*\*\*\*  
"If we had attractive, affordable retail space- it would be filled" - more retail/business space \*\*\*  
We need to find a way to funnel people downtown  
We need to be more business friendly  
Attract larger commercial retail businesses  
Beautification - aesthetic appeal- unified look  
We need to keep our county services in Green River  
Information on city website on upcoming events and projects that are going on in the community  
Hydroponic business

Industrial park

Further development of FMC park area

"Kill the deer and the pigeons"

"Leave it the same - don't fix it if it isn't broken"

Improved customer service

More recycling services

Make an ordinance for 10ft parking spots

Make an ordinance for 10ft parking spots

Help for small businesses to help identify resources to help improve business skills

Improve infrastructure to be more bike friendly

Market our outdoor education opportunities (geography)

Rezoning in downtown for mixed use

Finish bike trails to be known for them

Nature and historical tour system

We need to sell our community on our strong points emphasize tourism (flaming gorge, bike trails, river, geology, community events) \*\*\*

Tomahawk finished and fully utilized \*\*\*

Light industry development near the airport \*

Business incubator to encourage home businesses into downtown business space \*\*\*

More residential zoning areas

Promote Lincoln highway tour

Attract more quality lodging properties

Small lot housing development

Full implementation of marketing/branding plan \*

Market our events "we have some really great events... People actually come back for!"

Transfer station and increased recycling program through solid waste dept

Protection of water supply and animals

More cooperation between local gov'ts and county \*

Build up water front area for recreation and riverfront shopping \*

Low-income housing

Redevelopment of existing area and vibrant downtown \*\*

Investing in what GR has

Become more self-sufficient on home rule enforcement of building and fire codes w/in jurisdiction \*

Finish the tomahawk \*

Increase community development area of city

More participation and volunteers

Complete pedestrian overpass over rail

Finish depot and Carnegie library, finish them first

Something to take care of the deer \*

Feasibility study of airport needs to be looked at \*

Revitalization

In-fill projects

Bring in tourism, not just fix up things that would benefit a handful of people

Progressive revitalization of downtown, utilize the access to main street off of i-80

Retail shopping, retail friendly \*

URA finish projects it starts

Finish lighting on main street (flaming gorge)  
Convention center  
Beautification on 2nd South  
Parking downtown  
Parking for island use (dirt area by railroad)  
Maintaining the area around the sculptures to keep weeds and vegetation down--utilize student volunteers  
Develop residential  
Develop gateways to community to draw people in  
Restore the Carnegie library for local historical research center (partnership with library and museum) \*  
School district #2 strengthen arts programs in partnership with the city to support fine arts center  
Expansion for Sweetwater county museum  
Recreate a sense of community  
Rehabilitate historic buildings downtown  
More community outdoor areas on the north side of town  
Continue to create more events to capitalize on our unique assets  
Utilization of the river: rent equip, offer guides  
Downtown improvement  
Signage  
Plans implemented that are already on the shelf  
Plans implemented that are already on the shelf  
More cohesive, forward moving progress amongst governing bodies, follow through  
Enhance bird watching tourism opportunities (ex. Killdeer Wetlands) \*  
Don't drain all the ponds - staging area for many bird species  
Maintain intermittent wetlands near ponds along greenbelt (like Killdeer)  
Expand rec center (climbing wall, improve weight room, cardio, leisure pool) \*\*\*  
Enhancing existing greenbelt (expansion and maintenance) \*  
Another grocery store \*\*  
Vital downtown \*\*  
River corridors - river related businesses \*\*\*  
Disc/Frisbee Golf Course \*  
Renovation of the park sprinkler systems/outdoor restroom facilities/etc. \*  
No privatization of parks and rec services \*  
Make GR the place people want to be \*  
Maintain existing buildings/programs/projects before moving to new ventures  
City of GR/City of RS/County greenbelt following bitter creek route - connect two communities (bike, xc ski friendly) retail at either end  
More partnerships between GR and RS to take advantage of what's beyond the city limits  
We need a welcome wagon for new people who move into community  
More disaster preparedness in Green River  
Shopping  
Bounce houses/trampoline park  
Movie theater that has an arcade  
Ice skating rink in GR  
Game nights/concerts for teens (like spirit week) \*\*\*  
Teen co-ed volleyball team (intermural sports, need someone to organize it) - utilize rec center, anyone who wants to play can, make teams that night \*\*

Main Street more developed  
More places to eat and shop  
More places to eat and shop  
Expansion of the Rec Center \*\*  
More places to eat \*\*  
Indoor facilities to host tournaments  
More family activities  
Clothing stores  
HS academic opportunities to help get students back after college  
Increased tourism opportunities  
More job opportunities for college grads  
Winter activities ie sled riding hill, ice arena (outdoor lake ice)  
Space port and develop section 10-12 and Rio Vista Water development  
Upgrade family oriented FMC park, Recreation  
Upgrade sewer system  
Indoor sports facility, grocery store, restaurants  
More parks w/ playground equipment, more things for kids to do besides bowling and rec center  
Boys and Girls club, safe place for kids to hangout (that is free)  
Railroad Ave restored, finish the bridges  
Another grocery store  
City be more receptive to businesses  
See police department finished  
See street signs fixed, blind corners  
Other family type business, grocery store, general type of store, growth toward supporting more, but not too big  
More businesses (Target), place to rent movies  
Encourage business that are sustainable, continue providing services to citizens, Expend funds on projects that will enhance the city and provide opportunities not currently available not that leave a legacy for certain citizens.  
Sportsman's Warehouse, better sporting goods stores, update rec center weight room  
Mall, Clothing store  
Community golf course, housing development, not the airport, fix cable TV  
A second grocery store, more winter activities, dog park  
"Scared Straight" experience for kids/at risk - Hooked on Fishing, not on Drugs (Fishing federation)  
Add on to rec center  
Community Center available for events in life (weddings, anniversaries), City to come to an agreement with Rolling Greens for a community golf course, service road to Rock Springs  
More winter activities, enclosed or indoor ice skating rink  
Store in the circle not being used, old Lincoln historical property, do a dog park, fix houses behind city hall, don't build everything on this (Smiths) side of town  
Bring more businesses in  
More things for kids to do  
Finish existing projects (Tomahawk, Police Department, Clock Tower) and ensure they can stand on their own before adding more  
Programs for all ages - inspiring, art/music  
Get people downtown  
More businesses downtown in general  
Santa Claus at Courthouse - activities downtown to promote downtown

Clock Tower

Utilize space - open it up

Centennial Park - needs equipment for smaller kids

Recycling - receptacles in more areas

Landfill

Mayor - new leadership

Grocery store

Partner mines and city to help kids do work around town to earn money

Activities and places for kids

Grocery store \*\*

Support for community groups and enterprises

Maintain small town community feel but draw in grocery store, restaurants, etc.

Maintain small town community feel but draw in grocery store, restaurants, etc.

Community to support local businesses

City focus on tourism with gorge...will bring other things with it

Programs to combine different activities and efforts in the community, service programs

Fresh approach to economic development

Training or changing mindset of local biz to improve customer service

Signage (way finding and identifying what is available)

Bring in people from other countries to visit, GR people visit those countries

Make the downtown better

Outlet mall between RS and GR

Grocery store

Affordable senior housing

Zoning that allows for mixed use and live-work units

Annex Jamestown, grandfather properties in

Develop river area and residential off of interstate

Shopping

County seat presence stronger in GR \*\*\*\*\*

Develop river walk or fun things, hotels, shops, cruise or boat, focus on tourism \*

Economic development group \*

Road between Rock Springs and Green River

A large gathering spot for weddings, reunions, conferences, etc.

Not have to leave as much to shopping, more Wyoming made and shopping

More places to eat lunch

Family activities in the winter, indoor activities for winter

More support for new businesses

On-line business support classes, maybe by the Chamber, for one person businesses

Greenbelt extended out north, using existing sidewalks and back to river

Would be nice to not have so many empty buildings

Do the airport project, help tourism, a place for air medical service, easy access to gr

Better recycling program, have the city help, city help: give can, help with process

Better recycling program, have the city help, city help: give can, help with process

Healthy vibrant downtown, incorporate the river and rr

Bring in more business, a little competition to Smith's wouldn't hurt

Bring in more business, a little competition to Smith's wouldn't hurt

Bring in more business, a little competition to Smith's wouldn't hurt  
More opportunities for employment for the teenagers  
Shopping for moms  
Retail and restaurants  
Cleanup flaming gorge dr and Uinta dr  
Make more commercial land avail, look at city owned and land swap opps  
Housing development  
15-20 thousand people by smart development and people working together  
Cleaner more cohesive better functioning  
Relocate the skate park to develop commercial business  
Relocate the skate park to develop commercial business  
More restaurants  
Get the main street program up and going again, downtown is stagnant  
Do something downtown - visible - citizens need to see something happening  
More businesses, not mall, more restaurants and little businesses \*  
More economic development  
More utilization of what we already have and main street/downtown area  
More railroad uses, expand \*\*  
The railroad, the rodeo, the river is what green river is and needs to be expanded  
Build the relationship with the railroad and county commissioners and other entities that live in our community - learn to get along  
More rodeo's and bigger rodeo's  
Grocery store \*\*  
Work on streets more in Green River  
Improvements  
Not the airport  
more activities for young people \*  
Grocery store \*\*\*\*\*  
Low income housing \*\*  
Retirement living - senior housing \*\*\*  
More restaurants "that stay"  
More fish in river  
New grocery store  
Business likeabela's for better jobs  
More shopping  
More medical  
Nicer restaurants - sick of fast food and tacos  
Businesses move here  
More gambling  
Bring community nursing back  
New waste water treatment plant  
Street projects, water line replacements, aging sewer projects, development review process clarified \*  
Utility projects  
Finish project we got going on  
Police department building finished \*  
Community garden \*

- Dog park
- Grocery store
- Outdoor pool and skate rink
- Area across from McDonalds
- Grocery store
- Shopping and restaurants
- More river development
- More color-murals-paint the bridges
- Behind payless outdoor dining
- Camping world
- Affordable senior housing
- Dog park
- Lincoln highway between rs and gr
- Expand the splash park

Nice Green Belt to go with the river. need to figure out how to combine the two for more usage. maybe volleyball courts, sand along certain parts of the river, down by statton meyer park. Get rid of old buildings replace them with new ones if necessary.

Strong downtown. Good infrastructure. Happy people and volunteers.

Continuous intelligent infrastructure upgrade which will promote growth and attract economic development. Forget the big concentration as GR being a tourist attraction; the tourist are already here. Hundreds of recreationalists are travelling through town to and from Flaming Gorge each day; hopefully some private enterprise will figure out how to get some of them to stop here.

In summary, I love Green River but this current City Administration has its priorities mixed up.

Complete the depot renovations over 10 years; restore the Carnegie Library; go slowly on the airport - only invest if the economic feasibility is clearly demonstrated, don't spend any more city funds until the study is complete; add more bike and OHV trails; restore the Tomahawk.

I'd love to see a Community Garden!

I'd like a dog park with a water feature and some sort of pavilion so it could be used all year round.

I'd like to see more stores and restaurants.

Build another grocery store or a real place to shop (Shopko doesn't count as it's expensive).  
More things that families can do besides the recreation center. Maybe an arcade or something.

Find the property for affordable housing, move to West or the South.  
Bring in another Grocery store.  
Bring in new restaurants/ Fast food.  
Remove the rapids at Expedition Island, Restore the river back to its old self.  
Turn FMC/ Scotts Bottom park into a RV Park for Visitors.

A service road between Green River and Rock Springs. Trees planted along the sewer ponds. Finishing the second south beautification project, mostly planting trees. And maintaining the sidewalks and roads we have.

I would like to see our town purchase a leaf vacuum system. We could then put our leaves on the curb and the city would then pick them up. In addition, the city could dump those leaves in a designated area where they would turn into compost and the people could then go to that location to get compost for their gardening needs. I would like to see this within the next 2 years.

More local businesses to shop and eat..

- 1 vibrant useable downtown
- 2 more activities for children outside of sports
- 3 utilizing and revitalizing what we have. Not spending millions on creating something our county already has aka airport
- 4 competitive shopping and restaurants

<p>Golf course, driving range. Can incorporate local country club as a public course by buying out memberships with a trade of annual passes for a fixed number of years or the purchase outright of memberships. I would suggest 5 years for a couple or 1000\$ per family membership.</p> <p>Revitalization of downtown area with buildings face lifted as done with the old Dells market. Buildings needing are the Merc, Masonic Temple, and residential areas along Flaming Gorge.</p> <p>New buildings in Green River should be built to be permanent structures, not metal buildings.</p> <p>Strange as it sounds, work to get a Sam's club or Costco. This would bring in other retail businesses. Address south side zoning and cleanup.</p>
<p>We need fewer projects, not more. The city and county both seem to develop bad spending habits during booms, then can't seem to cut back when the boom ends and both the need and the revenue for projects are reduced.</p>
<p>A new library....a place where the community can come together.</p>
<p>Add more vacant land to the city limits for private development</p>
<p>The library in Green River has had many foundation issues. As the building settles I wonder if a new location for our community library could better serve our area, with more community use rooms and areas for study, youth activities, etc..</p>
<p>The Transfer/Recycling Center</p> <p>The continued quality of Solid waste management</p> <p>The City Infrastructure completed with updates</p> <p>Established Parks kept None of them lost.</p> <p>Continued protection of our water quality and quantity</p> <p>Wild horses population protected</p> <p>Public lands remaining open and accessible to the public</p> <p>Streets and Highways maintained and country roads for safe access</p>
<p>More tourism historic preservation</p>
<p>Keep City street, water, trash, and recycling workers, and etc. in town, not outsourced and taken away. The City wants to keep their workers working here, as much as local private business wants to keep working. The City needs to hire locally as much as possible in all phases of building and etc. It needs to be business friendly to keep private businesses here alive and growing, as well as bringing in new businesses.</p> <p>Big government taking control could be a challenge in the future.</p>
<p>Please get us another grocery store. No more bars. Please keep the Carnegie Library, Railroad Station and any other historical buildings. I would love to see the renovated Railroad Station filled with small shops, eateries, art displays, venue for musicians, railroad museum/memorabilia.</p>
<p>Unless we have a great increase in population., I would like to see us develop what we already have. a couple of examples would be businesses on Wild Horse near the Hampton, or businesses in the business park. We have plenty of empty lots and buildings in town to promote bringing in business. It would also be nice to have a choice for groceries.</p>
<p>As far as what projects I would like our city to implement, I say leave that alone we have a big enough government as it is and it does not need its hands in any more projects.</p>
<p>Indoor activities during the cold months (8 months out of the year) such as indoor walking paths More businesses for groceries and shopping</p>
<p>Complete the Depot and the pedestrian viaduct/overpass; don't start anything new until those are done</p>
<p>Renovation of the downtown area.</p>
<p>1. The Downtown area needs to be revitalized in the next five years to bring additional businesses in to the community.</p>
<p>Reduce the size and cost of city government; improve relations with the county and Rock Springs;</p>
<p>Redevelop the Downtown area as well as the entrances to the community along Flaming Gorge Way. Also develop the property along the river</p>
<p>I would like to see the city expand its size. More housing developments would help do that</p>
<p>Flaming Gorge days is great, just get rid of the booze. Every city sponsored event has booze and the youth see that. yet, the youth are beat to death with don't drink. It's time for the city to stand up and say we will not permit alcohol at city sponsored events!</p>

2 years or sooner - get rid of that eye sore on Flaming Gorge by finishing the police station and help bring in a second grocery store. I also wouldn't mind city wide Wi-Fi that could be accessed by any resident anywhere in city limits.

5 years - a new senior center. I like what we have, but I'm jealous of the center in RS. I'd love to see us with something similar. Also, win a state championship in either HS Football or Basketball.

10 years - Make sure the river has been protected and the green belt has been maintained.

What I don't want to see in the next 2, 5, 10 or 20 years is an airport. This is a ridiculous idea. We have a county airport. Why do we need another?

I would like to see more expansion as far as choices in entertainment, small businesses, and more community activities and events. I think it is possible to accomplish these ideas in the next 10 years. I would also like to see more advertising of events between Green River and Rock Springs. I believe there are a lot of interesting things happening between the 2 towns, but there is not much information out there to let you know when they are happening.

Attracting more businesses to the town. Think if we didn't have any mines near us? We would have very little to support families and people in town. There would be no reason for newcomers to move here and we would quickly lose what people we have. The oil and gas industry is too boom and bust to be dependable. Having a variety would help add to our town.

I'd really like to see the police station completed. It's something that is needed and the building (skeleton) is an eye sore.

I would like to see an observatory put in. This is such an amazing place and people could gain so much from seeing that science that is so readily accessible to them.

I don't think we need an airport. I don't know if an alternate access to and from the south side of the river is a necessity due to the limited potential for future growth and increased traffic. I do believe a service road on the north side of I-80 would be a benefit in opening up additional future growth areas but I know the service road has its own set of problems.

Business  
Restaurants  
The history  
The River  
The greenbelt

Provide more for the adults to do. We do not need another park there are plenty. Evanston has done a great job with the Bear River State Park. Maybe we could do something like it with a twist highlighting the beauty of our valley. Maybe Castle Rock Park or bring back Palisades Park. It could be more than a park, it could also have a few wild horses (like at the Chamber), maybe an elk or two, a few small animals that the Game & Fish may help us with. Just ideas. We could look into ideas from other communities and try to implement them here.

Thanks for doing the surveys. It is appreciated.  
Micki Gilmore mgilmore@wyoming.com

Near-term to Mid-term: Renovate the UP Depot building and use it as a community events center to host concerts, business conventions, or events year round. Promote business growth downtown so there is additional shopping opportunities for locals and tourists coming off the interstate. Something to draw them in. Also, finish the Tomahawk project!!

Chain business. An indoor rodeo arena.

Restoration of downtown.  
Recruiting another grocery store.  
Better use of our WWCC building. ..more local classes.

No-more projects from the city.... I would like to see a grocery store, an outdoor sports store, and some sort of clothing store. (None of these indicate I want a Wal-Mart- I do not shop there at all costs) I do not know how long it would take to pursue these store options, but in the short term would be nice. I would also like the city to stop spending money on unnecessary studies and funding projects that are not needed- keep up what they have and pay their employees.

In the short term another outdoor water/ splash park would be great. The one we have is so heavily used it would be nice to have another. I would like to see more AP and concurrent enrollment classes at the high school in the next 4-5 years. Ideally, again, more retailers would be great.

Addressing more long term goals this city needs to expand its land and boundaries to grow. We will stagnate and digress economically in the long run if this does not happen.

Healthcare facilities, schools with best possible staff, public safety, best possible infrastructure in area.

2 yr - Clock tower plaza  
5 yr - pedestrian plaza connecting downtown and Expedition Island  
5 yr - train depot redevelopment  
10 yr - conference center  
20 yr - completed re-development of the river corridor below Expedition Island

Bike lanes on Flaming Gorge Way and Uinta, pave a bike path across the Stratton Meyers dirt road to connect the bike paths.

It would be great to have a community center or 2 that the public could reserve for parties, events, etc... that had rooms large enough to have company dinners, wedding receptions, Graduation gatherings, etc. at an affordable price. (As we can't use the schools unless you have a school sponsor & 2 million dollar Insurance rider policy & the cost of \$700 - \$1500 to use the GRHS commons area for 1 day/afternoon is out of reach for too many.)

What about purchasing the old Sweetwater Ford Building & doing some work to it to make that a community center... right along the river - has lots of parking, beautiful location & easy access. I'm sure 3-4 rooms could be made out of the back location & then the front Glass location could be rented out. Maybe with walls that are accordion/expandable - so depending on how much room is needed the space could be opened up for bigger events or closed off for 3-4 smaller meeting/banquet rooms?) Just some Ideas.

Farson has an amazing new community center they built a couple years ago where funerals, birthday parties, company parties, basketball games, etc. can be held. Evanston has a number of refurbished buildings the public is allowed to rent/reserve for weddings, family parties, graduation parties, dinners, etc.... Their Round house (\$, their Beeman Cashin' building (\$50 day) , etc.)

Adding onto or improving any of our public facilities we all use - Rec Center, Picnic Gazebo's.

Maybe a few more covered LARGER Gazebo's/picnic facilities for family, work parties, church activities, & large groups at some of bigger parks - as many times the 3ish Gazebo's or covered picnicking areas in town/Jamestown are always taken when they are needed on weekends & big holidays when extended family & reunions are held?

What about another splash & play area - or something Like a Blair-town park in our area.... Or what if something was built along the river (like we've done for the Kayaking) something for bigger kids that includes the water ... possibly a rope swing, or zip line? Our teens love playing in the river & tubing.. it would be fun to have some Less dangerous attractions in/at the river the whole family can access (not just for Kayakers who come 2-3 times a year, who set up their camps at the Island Pavilion park/parking lot & eat out of their campers.)

There is PLENTY near the Island Pavilion - Maybe a place north - near Zehawi/Stratts that is along the greenbelt, that has parking, some launching sites, picnic areas, covered gazebo area for more than 4-6 people, Rope swings into the River or Zip lines that go across? Just some thoughts & ideas.

Mid-term, I'd love to see the beautification of 2nd South take place. There's been a lot of talk about it, but no action. In the near-term, I think more effort needs to be placed on beautifying our neighborhoods and providing consequences to those who choose not to keep up their yards/homes. Long-term, I think the Green Belt walk could be improved and beautified in some manner.

Another grocery store please...

Additional grocery store.

Restaurant - not just fast food

Another road to connect Green River and Rock Springs

The City should start thinking of the horse corrals as an asset and not a liability. I the City would have built an indoor arena it would have been money ahead. There are over one hundred families that chose to live in Green River because they could keep horses. Most importantly the City should support the therapeutic horse program started by Cindy Bradford for kids with disabilities. Everyone should see the smiles on those kid's faces when they are round the horse!

Additional shopping, particularly grocery shopping is a must. I would like to see the downtown area be revitalized, which would draw the community, as well as tourists passing through, to the area for shopping. It would be good if some type of downtown theme could be adopted, perhaps focusing on the Powell Expedition. I can recall visiting a John Wesley Powell Museum in Arizona, and thinking that Green River needs to do more to promote the fact that he began his amazing journey here. A downtown walking tour that also promotes the river walk and the history of Green River would be good. If there is such a thing, it is so poorly promoted that most people are not aware of it.

Like I mentioned earlier, we need to invest in getting some new business in town. Shopping, places to eat, etc. I like that I live in a small town and I don't want that to change too much but we need something to bring people here, and to make the people who already live here want to stay.

Improved river front with campground and river front stores and restaurants.

Within 2 years, we need more subsidized housing for low income people with disabilities, especially those that are handicap accessible.

Implement some building codes: I would like to see the Green River downtown made into an attractive shopping district with some neat restaurants and such similar to Pinedale within 10 years. I think that the communities of Rock Springs and Green River should not be afraid to make demands on businesses that they have a certain standard for appearance so that our towns do not look like a low class hodge podge of tacky businesses with neon signs and bad paint. Think of Fort Collins, Co. Their building codes require everyone to have some standards and it looks great.

Something really, really important for Rock Springs would be that they fix their sewer problem. It is really gross there many mornings.

I would like to see an initiative to bring women's wages up that does not focus on trying to make women act like a man. Women need to be supported and brought into the government process. I would like to see some changes, or the state should stop humiliating itself with the "Equality State" slogan that just screams with irony.

Interior renovation of Expedition Island pavilion.

Beautification of the east entry into the town.

Shuttle from the west side of town to downtown. Could run one night a week and Saturdays - during the winter and more often during the summer.

Adoption of an ordinance requiring property owners to keep their land free of garbage and overgrowth.

Development of more community ed opportunities (art classes, drama and music classes, language instruction, etc.). Pinedale is much smaller than Green River, but their BOCES program offers many more programs than ours does.

Bring in something other than country and 70s rock to Flaming Gorge Days.

Turn the empty car dealership on Uinta into either an outlet mall or a children's activity center (like Classic Fun Center in Layton, Utah).

More sophisticated strategy to reinvigorate downtown with new businesses (hipper, more trendy small stores and at least one restaurant) to draw in traffic from I-80 and Rock Springs. Could include developing new signage (with updated logos?) for downtown businesses. People shop for the experience as much as the opportunity to purchase.

If Green River's culture stays mired in the past, we will never attract the people who are looking toward the future.

One dumpster at the entry of the dump where residents can place 1-5 smaller items. It's inconvenient to have to drive all the way up to drop off one item. Why can't Green River be as much of a destination as at least Little America?

Downtown developed -bring in businesses

A few new major shopping stores like target, Some more major restaurants like Taco bell, Chick-fla and updates to the roads and a city ran major craft fair.

An immediate restoration of the famed Green River Ordinance, in addition to an immediate stop to the outsourcing of Divisions. Outsourcing entire divisions is good for outside businesses that can take the load, but plain sick and wrong to the affected outgoing employees. Local service divisions can provide more intimate service on a customer to customer basis, as opposed to Joe schmoe from outside of the county memorizing a code of conduct book.

Near-term: Fix the school zone speed limit flashing lights on Flaming Gorge- do they even work?

Mid-term: The brickwork under the railroad overpass looks great. Continual visual improvement of this area would be great. Clean-up/remove abandoned buildings around town. A developed campground along the Green River southwest of town, beyond Scotts bottom.

Long-term: Not an airport- use our money somewhere else. More health care facilities in Green River.

There is a misconception that Green River has no place to grow unless two sections of land are annexed on Peru Hill. The fact of the matter is that Green River has already opened up new ground for economic development by facilitating the location of the Hampton Inn north of I-80 at the mouth of Mormon Canyon. By extending infrastructure further up Mormon canyon there is a great potential for new business as well as more residential development. This avenue of development will take advantage of an existing road and also provide potential for an as yet unconsidered alternate route to Rock Springs.

In short, extending water, sewer and other utility infrastructure up Mormon Canyon will provide excellent future development opportunities.

The other project would be the alternate route - weather route if you will - to Rock Springs. The key to this effort is to determine an advantageous route down to Rock Springs from County Road 53. To date the alternate route is an unpopular proposal for voters in the entire county because the majority of the voting populace (who live in Rock Springs) can see no advantage to their own situation. If the alternate route were to come down into Rock Springs in a location that promoted development in their city, it would be a much easier sell to their voters.

downtown shopping and restaurants leveraging the green belt

n/a

Bring in businesses.

Dog Park

We need to find activities for all youngsters to participate in that doesn't cost a lot of money. We also need some sort of activities or a learning skills opportunity for young adults in the community. I'd love a mentoring program to match up with your youth so that they can learn job skills to become a more productive citizen.

Stop the airport idea - it is ridiculous.

More affordable housing,

Anything for kids who are not athletic to do!!! more businesses!!!!

I would like to see the Skate park upgraded and added to, to provide a place for the teens and children to congregate. I would also like to see a more centrally located library with a larger children's and teen area.

2nd South project completed.

Viaduct finished.

Tomahawk as the core retail. (no Boy Scouts, AA, Dance studios.

I am new in the area but I am concerned that the dump will be shut down or put to minimum. There needs to be a new solution without having to run to Rock Springs to take garbage. It is a matter of convenience but also to keep the people who work at the dump employed. I would also like to see an airsoft course put in.

We have many streets that are desperately in need of repair.

Curbside recycling would benefit our community and possibly pay for itself.

I think the city needs to do more to take advantage of the beautiful Green River that runs through town. That may involve buying out some of our absentee landlords. (old car dealership and mostly vacant buildings downtown)

Expanding the splash park and then advertising its existence on I-80 would help tourism. Tourists will want food and shopping.

We don't currently have much to offer them along those lines.

Projects- forget the airport the county can barely keep Rock Springs airport thriving. The UP building is a large money pit- not sure if that will EVER fly.

I think we should focus on attracting business, updating our downtown and work towards making Green River an affordable place to raise a family. I hope the council will work towards talking to the people in the community and start listening to them with ideas and what they want instead of their personal "grind". I think if we don't start listening and doing what is really best for the citizens, we will become a suburb of Rock Springs 20 years down the road!

The best thing we could do for the community is clean up and revitalize the Main Street. While government could offer tax or other incentives to people who would do the work, it does not need to be a government directed or managed project as it will only be viable if it makes economic sense to do so, not highly subsidized support of favored business or hobbies. Tax incentives will lower the cost of doing business downtown, including rent, and provide the economic incentive for business that can support themselves and not just be whims that fail in three years. We are not a community that would support downtown lofts or trendy shops that make up urban revitalization but we can help existing business stay afloat.

More modern stores, restaurants, but still keep the small town feel. That's the best.

My street feels like railroad tracks, aaaaaand . . . we still need that grocery store. Other than that . . . I like our bedroom community . . . a lot !!! Leave the traffic in RS !!!

Ice Rink, roller rink, mini golf, rock wall for climbing, More wholesome family activities (less alcohol involved). A Community Fruit and Veggie garden! One that has a fence high enough that Deer can't get over it and by the River so that there are not all the rabbits to dig under the fence...Possibly part of the field at Hoover Park or even Stratton Myers?

Updating the rec center to include a therapy pool and family dressing areas not in the regular dressing rooms. Another grocery store.

For local government I would like to see

2 year - Create more detail to the master plans for cities and counties to include how they fit with the other communities, where we can grow together, how it will be lined out with major streets, etc.

5-10 years, work on providing infrastructure to tie the designated areas for growth with the rest of the community so it is actually practical for businesses and residences to develop in those areas. - do not let pet projects stand in the way of this. Government is here to support an entire community and the focus should be on infrastructure and safety. While rebuilding things like the railroad depot are nice individual projects when time and money allow, they should not detract from the main focus.

There needs to be more professional people elected at the local level. The mayor seems to regularly break rules (such as the sewer line issue) with impunity. The council members are well-meaning people but lack a basic understanding of their roles, how government should run and how to be fiscally responsible. More professionally-oriented people need to be encouraged to run. Then projects such as the one mentioned in the first question have a much better chance of success.

Two: A second grocery store. Wal-Mart has a Neighborhood Grocery division that targets underserved areas.

Five: Turn the Carnegie Library into a research/display center. The building has emotional ties to the community as well as historical value.

Ten: A second bridge over the tracks and the river, linking Flaming Gorge Way to East Teton.

Twenty: Start encouraging building up instead of out. The sprawl wastes valuable river frontage and hill views. Building up would defeat the present land lock.

The sign on I-80 needs to be replaced. It is very old and doesn't attract anyone.

Curb side recycling

Affordable housing

Remove the rapids in the river and return the river back to normal

Another way to get out of town from the south side of town.

Another bridge....Rock Springs excels at this.

Another way to get out of town from the south side of town.

Another bridge....Rock Springs excels at this.

Condemning old buildings and houses to make room for new neighborhoods and businesses. Making more real estate available for new construction.

Possibly a small business incubation center with low rents to help new businesses get started. A better defined, central and attractive business district.

Continued development of the greenbelt system, more paths and longer distances.

NO AIRPORT, that has to be the biggest boondoggle idea ever!!!!!!

Recruitment or selling of the city to those who need our surrounding resources such as companies that use trona, and river sportsman. Like to see the rec center enlarged to include a climbing wall. Stricter laws to reduce all the junk vehicles in peoples yards in residential areas. Find a way to move the junk yard on Uinta out of town completely. Implement a City Pride Day, and encourage more citizen help in the picking up of trash in and around the city.

I would like to see a longer bike path that extends out in both directions, towards Jamestown, and southeast of town. The current one is great, but isn't long enough. The Wilkes Peak bike paths are okay, but I never use them because they're too rocky and dusty. A bike path around the river where there are more trees and shade would be nice.

Long term, I would like to see a more centralized area to do things, like a ped mall would be in a college town. For example, in Steamboat, CO you can walk all along the river and there are many things to do off the river, including businesses, and city services. You can walk to the library which is right by the river, go tubing/kayaking, bike/trick parks, go get a coffee or go out to eat, play at a park, etc. It's constantly full of people roller blading, going into the library, bringing their kids to the park, eating out at restaurants, fishing, etc.

I would like to see a healthy Community Garden serving the needy as well as the average citizen. And I would like to see a thriving Main Street with the renovated Depot at the center of a bustling down town. In the Depot I would like to see a nice micro brewery/restaurant!

2 years: Improved city ordinances (and enforcement) of property appearance to address neighborhood deterioration. Complete the new police station and city offices.

5 years: Incentives for new businesses in the business park and another grocery store. Revisit the "stupid" rule about responsibility of property owners for sewer line repairs from the property boundary to the main line in the street.

10 years: Continue to systematically upgrade neighborhood appearance and infrastructures.

A new mayor  
Strong Business community  
Volunteers returning  
caring leaders

Another grocery store, something besides fast food to eat at, someplace to shop and buy clothes besides a pamida or shopko type style.

I believe that better advertisement of the programs and facilities available would make them thrive. As a parent, the library and parks and rec departments are the most used departments, and I believe the most beneficial. Being able to have a gymnastics class and swim lessons and story time that my kids can grow through and progress in are all priceless and part of the reason we have stayed in the community.

The Kids In Motion Program is one of the best values around and I believe with some well placed advertisement or even partnership with library story time it would really thrive. A calendar with all toddler programs, CDC, Rec Center, Library, times and places, with some advertising on the radio, newspaper and social media would be amazing and make some programs explode.

Less money spent on project that yield no return.

Bringing in business to the city that employ locals

Tax breaks for the middle class

We could really use an indoor turf facility for multiple sports use. Our weather can be very harsh and quite often leaves us cancelling many athletic events. This hurts our participants as well as potential income for our community. If we had some kind of indoor facility to host events such as track, soccer, football, baseball and more, we would have another source for community events and would also bring money into the community. This facility could be shared by the city and school district. It could be rented out for private club use helping to fund the upkeep of the building.

Green River City to get there stuff together to bring back our community, and not to take away our solid waste department DO NOT bring in other companies do to jobs that city population does and can do!! BRING in business to OUR city, keep jobs, make jobs better for your city employees!!! Why should our high school students want to work for you? Do you need any more details or suggestions? And so you know I DO NOT OR HAVE EVER WORKED FOR THE CITY

I would like to see streets improved. I would like it if more were put into the care and landscaping of city properties. I would like to see the city supporting more TRULY affordable housing. While I understand that the city has tried, almost all of the available land for building, which is not much, has been purchased by contractors and then a family has to build using that company and most houses are in the 300k range and up. I am very thankful that I am already a homeowner, but I've seen many families struggle with this. Most of them make very good money, it's about being responsible and not wanting to be 'house poor.' I would also love to see something done for the teenagers and young adults in our community. There really isn't much for them to do in their free time and I believe that is why so many have alcohol and drug problems. The drug problem in Green River has gotten SO much worse in the last several years. When I was in my early 20's, ten years ago, I had never heard of heroin in this community. Now, I know two kids that got let go for possession of pot because the police are too busy looking for the heroin abusers!!!

Better shopping, like a small mall, less bars and more restaurants. Don't waste tax payers money on an airport, aquarium, etc..

ANOTHER GROCERY STORE!!!!!!!

Clean up areas around town that are eye sores.

Bring in more businesses.

WHEN? not sure, but these are goals I'd like to see us pursue:

- \*make use of solar and wind energy
- \*plant living shelter belts to act as snow fences
- \*establish an alternative and safe route to Rock Springs besides I-80
- \*use landscaping to hide more of the railroad yard

Near term - Improving the attractiveness of Green River's entrances to the downtown area (all along Flaming Gorge) and adding some signs (similar to those in Rock Springs) directing people to places of interest in Green River. Mid-term - recruiting retail businesses suitable to a small community - "Mom and Pop" businesses, a nice locally owned sit-down restaurant. As soon as possible -develop and implement an alternate road between Green River and Rock Springs and to outlying employers to be open and maintained during the Winter months. People have to be able to get to work! Additionally, when I-80 is closed between Green River and Rock Springs due to an accident or poor road conditions, there is no way to get to the hospital for a medical emergency.

Near future

I would like to see some land that is tied up by the BLM and the railroad released and affordable house built. Not large elaborate housing but housing that the middle class could afford. By doing this it makes our community attractive to people moving in. 5-10 years

With the affordable housing and productive members of society Green River will need an additional grocery/department store, since the citizens have a choice of Wal-Mart now I suggest that a super Target be brought in as an option and competition.

Expansion of the water park within 2 years. Maintenance of the Kayak Water Park indefinitely!

Forget the alternate road to Rock Springs it is so rare that it would be used in an emergency. Just build a helicopter pad at Castle Rock Medical center! The maintenance of the helicopter pad is far less expensive than an alternate road to Rock Springs.

Green River airport maybe in 20 years!

In 2 years, more housing development o lower the cost of housing

Doggie DNA. Every dog must submit a sample to receive a license. Match the crap to the dog & owner. It's the wave of the future.

Finish the Police station, refurbish the existing downtown. Allow businesses to advertise with signage larger than a postage stamp.

Develop GR as a tourist stop off by highlighting the river and surrounding area as a gateway to Yellowstone and Flaming Gorge.

Acknowledge that GR is a bedroom community to RS and highlight the fact that GR is safer and family friendly.

Curbside recycling! And the expansion of the recycling program. For example, most food stuffs come in number 5 plastics and we can't recycle anything but 1s and 2s here.

A complete reworking of the Main Street program. It is obviously not working under the current city structure. Perhaps it would function better if the Main Street manager reported directly to the board instead.

We desperately need a second grocery store. Too much money is spent in Rock Springs and Utah and this also draws people away from the other businesses we do or could have here because they do all their shopping at once.

I would like to see the Tomahawk and other downtown buildings opened up to more varied businesses. The upper floors can be turned into living quarters (or made into better ones) which will encourage indwelling instead of urban sprawl which threatens our landscape, views, and sense of community.

I would really like to see the Depot project be successful because it will provide a venue for downtown gathering/community building. This might spur economic development.

The long term development of a more vibrant cultural community. This is slowly being built up through public events like Art on the Green, but there are more things that can be done such as a city sponsored art venue/gallery, the creation of a business incubator to encourage more creative entrepreneurs, or the fostering of a public arts/performance program that brings in musicians, artists, and performers. This could be a good use for some of the multipurpose space in the planned Depot building.

I have long awaited something to happen to the Winter Building/Police station. It has been a pock on our main street. I hope that that building will be worth the ridiculous cost the city has spent on it. I will always be suspicious of that transaction. So, I hope there will be a fine building there within 2 years. I would like the rec center to get tall tube indoor pool slides like the pool at the Jackson Rec. Center. This town could use AT LEAST 2 MORE OUTDOOR WATER PARKS/FEATURES! Parking by Evers/the Island is congested and the actual splash park is congested. Apache Park is huge with little to offer the community, it has room for reinventing and adding a water feature. One might argue that the river IS a water feature, but it has been changed and made dangerous for floating the river because of the kayak areas. Precious money was spent on something that benefits but a

few people from Green River. A sprinkler system needs to be installed at the east entrance to keep the trees alive. Trees were transplanted from the old Lincoln/GRHS building on West 3rd North, and they are dying. The trees in the center where the road curves around to become Uinta look nice and healthy. I'd like GR have a place for the homeless train hoppers to go as soon as they jump off the train. They are scary looking and uncomfortable to be around at Maverick, the Post Office, Family Dollar, etc. They need a place to get cleaned up, fed, and on their way.

I would like to see a recycling program implemented where recyclables get picked up along with the trash. Green river is beautiful, and we need to keep it that way. With the dump closing, I feel like we need to be thinking outside if the box. Even if the plan is to take trash to rock spring via city transport, there are plenty of other cities across America implementing programs like this because it is the right thing to do for your environment. I feel it is the city's responsibility to provide more opportunity for recycling that makes it convenient and cheap- then your citizens will be a lot more likely to buy in.

Near term- consolidate bills and buildings

Mid term- reduce cost of recreation activities or set aside \$ from the new price increases to improve the recreation facility. My kids prefer the rock springs recreation center.

Long term- improve the recreation center.

Curbside recycling. I recycle but know many who don't but would if it was curbside collection. I believe we wouldn't be having to send our garbage to RS if we did more recycling. And a Western Family brand grocery store

I feel strongly we need another grocery store. I understand big chain stores say the demographics don't support another store. I believe that it's frustrating for those trying to get this done. I really believe in recycling. I would like to see curb side recycling. It may not be cost effective but it's the right thing to do. I believe the recreation center is good but needs expansion. It needs more room. I wish I had more answers, I hate to see the constant bleed of people moving to rock springs, and even Bridger valley.

Our street has needed more than patch attention for @20 yrs  
Stage Pl.

Finish police station, add a truck stop for local employment and dinning.

Clean up the downtown area and encourage property owners to maintain their property.

Remove the man made hazards in the Green River.

Build a convention center in town, not in some canyon or polluted railroad depot.

Utilize the areas already in city limits and quit wasting resources on far flung projects.

2 Years

Get 6th Penny Projects underway

Finish ongoing projects

Scrap the Depot Project

5 Years

Get traffic/streets looped at the east end of the City from Railroad back to Flaming Gorge Way

More development up Wild Horse Canyon

Continue with city improvement projects, streets, water, parks, sewer

10 Years

Replacement of FGW concrete with all utilities under it.

Continue with city improvement projects, streets, water, parks, sewer

20 Years

Another bridge across the railroad and the river

Continue with city improvement projects, streets, water, parks, sewer

Work on Main Street program- find a suitable location for a downtown parking area/parking lot, very little parking on Flaming Gorge Way.

Stay focused on the UP Depot building form a group that will stay on task.

Maintain and support the Bike Park and Wilken's Peak Trail System

Infill and develop property within City Limits--as in empty lots and tracts.

Work on expanding Green River's land that is adjacent to Green River

Indoor Arena for all kinds of events and activities.

If incentives are needed, keep the County Government in Green River, protect the water supply, enhance the quality of life for all residents. Develop the alternate road to Rock Springs. Garbage pickup, animal control, and the police force are not always so visible but really add to making Green River a nice place to live. It's not always the big projects that make the difference. Maintaining and enhancing the infrastructure is an important. Many retail businesses present and future make life in Green River pleasant and comfortable, but for some types of business the larger market place of Rock Springs provides a much better venue (can't have a super Walmart in Rock Springs and Green River.).

One of the strengths of Green River is the solid economic base of the soda ash and associated industries. It seems foolish to envision Green River as a tourist mecca. Tourists come and are visible for a time but I expect the economic impact is quite small in reference to the whole community.

. Reliability and consistency really helps businesses and makes life better for individuals.

The City ought to find a way to take care of the water and sewer hookup repair responsibility that they have so vigorously retreated from recently. It is appalling that they would succumb to the blackmail and kickbacks from a company that profits from the problem they have manufactured. It is carefully phrased in alternative language, but when you look in the bottom of the bucket, the city escapes from an obligation they previously shouldered, the citizens are encouraged to pay for a service of unknown quality and the company walks away with the money.

The recreation center is a valuable (but sometimes expensive) community asset. It would probably benefit from some expansion in the years to come. It would be nice if the school district and the city had a more synergistic relationship.

A rejuvenation of some of the less attractive areas of the city. The encouragement of and support for the beautification of our Main Street area which has already been done by a few of the businesses.

I would like to see the Green River area developed to include the Island, boutiques, small shops and/or restaurants. I would like to see the industrial areas along the river to be relocated or at least to be visually minimized. I would like to see the city to capitalize on John Wesley Powell's historic expedition AND for us to capitalize on the importance of Thomas Moran's paintings of our area. These are two tourists and local draws. We do need a large gathering place for conferences, meetings, social events, caterings, conventions etc. although I'm not sure the Train Depot is large enough for these events.

I would also like to see curbside recycling which I think would save our city much money on the transporting of solid waste.

I would also like to see better services for our aging population beyond the Senior Center, Mansface Apts and Green Rock Apts. I think it is difficult for seniors who live at home to get out to do errands, fun activities etc. unless they drive. The Star Bus helps but is not enough or easy to access.

More places to eat other than Mexican or pizza.

Better parks\*\*\*\*

Water park in the swimming pool

Stop vandalism

Better restaurants \*\*\*\*\*

More parks \*

Better guard from robbing and killing

Finish the swimming pool \*\*

More theaters in the movie theater \*\*

More kid-friendly parks

A nice McDonalds

More recycling

More rec centers \*\*

Bigger bike park

Playing xbox in the car

More good works and ice truck

Make houses and trailer parks nice

Shooting bows in the back yard

Stay out past 12

Gymnastics school for free

See the animals in the shelter not be killed

Less murders

Hotels \*

Grocery store

Get rid of bullies  
More video game stores  
Place to buy monster trucks  
Finish the police station \*\*\*\*\*  
Build buildings for GR  
Arcade and comic book store  
Ice skating rink \*\*\*\*\*  
More community activities  
Hockey team for high school  
Good school lunch  
You should get in trouble for chasing wild life  
New water park  
New water park  
New ice cream shop \*  
Mall \*\*  
Build-a-bear workshop  
New skate park  
New skate park \*  
Sports stores \*\*  
Lagoon  
Hospital \*  
Outdoor swimming pool  
Upgrade old things  
Drug free town  
Shoe store  
Clean up the parks  
Different stores \*  
Pickup the trash projects \*  
Plant more trees \*  
Improve the green river  
A robot  
"To do something like this more often"  
Flying cars \*\*\*  
Have no school on Friday  
Mist system at the bike park  
Telaporter  
Pay less for stuff  
Better landscape on town buildings  
Whole town pick up \*\*  
All the roads to be fixed  
Smoke free  
More families  
New aqua center  
More things to do in the winter  
Helping the poor  
Everyone is not allowed to smoke

A town party  
Doctor office  
Major store  
Major store  
Build a blockbuster  
Build a building down by the island  
More high schools  
To see everyone have a good time  
Do something with the space where the Pizza Hut was  
Older kids water park  
More restaurants  
Whatever the city thinks is best  
More restaurants  
New parks  
More stuff to do  
Clean up water/amusement park  
Clean up the parks  
More stuff to do  
More stuff in rec  
Less trash  
A huge water park  
A huge water park  
Mall, more stuff to do  
Motocross track  
New skate park  
New grocery store (like now), a really big park for families to go do  
I would like a cleaner community  
Good people \*  
To be more safe in cars  
A cleaner community  
Next two years the swimming pool finished, five years a decrease in harassment and in 10 years I would like it to be near gone.  
More stores such as an art store. Please!  
A homeless shelter.  
More stores and more parks  
New skate park  
The police department  
Outlet stores!!!!(Hollister, aeropostale, Nike, etc.)  
I would like to see a cleaner community  
At skate park have full time officers watching over everyone  
I really don't care  
n/a  
Being more aware of kids doing drugs/alcohol, behavior modification  
More businesses such as Walmart  
People being nicer and doing what they say they will do.  
Finish our pool, get a mall

No drugs, safer streets  
Finish school pool, plant more trees  
More stuff to do  
Finish road work, expand rec center  
Less harassment through technology  
I'm not sure  
Have the police station finished  
Fishing improvements  
New parks, new school food, a high school baseball team  
Getting rid of dumb people as leaders  
People being nice  
Swimming pool  
Have the new pool finished  
Better grades  
Better skate park, have police dept built  
Have Drake rap battle Eminem  
More stuff to do  
Finish the road work, the pool, and expand the rec  
Nothing  
More housing areas  
Development of baseball  
Better entertainment  
More recycling  
The new police department  
Nothing, our community is pretty good.  
I think our community is just peachy!  
A lot  
Closer community  
I would like to see the indoor tennis courts and a cleaner river!  
More safety  
Recycling, online schooling!  
Less rednecks  
We should have an indoor amusement park or water park  
Get more teen and kid friendly places to hang out and make it a drug free community  
More projects carefully thought through BEFORE they're started  
We should pick up trash everywhere  
No school on Fridays  
Unity  
A homeless shelter.  
Half days every Friday, and yummiest school lunches  
All the construction done  
Dump needs to stay open. More places to eat and shop instead of going to Rock Springs.  
Be ridding no child left behind  
More fast food chains, restaurants like Olive Garden and Starbucks  
I would like to see new restaurants and cafés built. More nationwide chains. I want Starbucks  
Skating rink - synthetic, open to the public

Alcohol use go down  
Better school lunch  
Better schools \*  
Bigger theater  
Birth rates go down  
Community interaction with teenagers  
Community murals  
Concerts  
Drug use go down  
Economic growth/advancement/development \*\*\*  
Fun activities  
Holiday design contents  
Infrastructure improvement \*  
Less litter/cleaner \*\*\*  
Less stairs on the way up from P.E. at the high school  
Library  
Lincoln highway restored to a drivable state  
Lots of/more shopping stores \*\*\*  
More activities for teens/high schoolers \*  
More businesses \*  
More diversity  
More games  
More help in prevention for hanging out for drugs and alcohol (reduction) \*  
More housing  
More involvement with athletics  
More recreation  
More restaurants (chains)/hangouts \*\*\*\*\*  
More teen jobs  
More things to do \*\*\*\*  
Parks \*  
Playgrounds  
Pool \*  
Population growth  
Price of gas  
Public activities  
River  
Scholarship awards  
Starbucks \*\*  
Stronger local government that benefits the people and not personal gains.  
More Chinese food places  
Jobs \*  
Hunting and bass pro shops and cabelas \*  
More work on gun ranges  
Building Wal-Mart  
Updated schools  
More youth activities \*

## 20 CLUES TO RURAL COMMUNITY SURVIVAL

### **1. Evidence of Community Pride:**

Successful communities are often showplaces of care, attention, history and heritage.

### **2. Emphasis on Quality in Business and Community Life:**

People believe that something worth doing is worth doing right.

### **3. Willingness to Invest in the Future:**

In addition to the brick-and-mortar investments, all decisions are made with an outlook on the future.

### **4. Participatory Approach to Community Decision Making:**

Even the most powerful of opinion leaders seem to work toward building consensus.

### **5. Cooperative Community Spirit:**

The stress is on working together toward a common goal, and the focus is on positive results.

### **6. Realistic Appraisal of Future Opportunities:**

Successful communities have learned how to build on strengths and minimize weaknesses.

### **7. Awareness of Competitive Positioning:**

Local loyalty is emphasized, but thriving communities know who their competitors are and position themselves accordingly.

### **8. Knowledge of the Physical Environment:**

Relative location and available natural resources underscore decision-making.

### **9. Active Economic Development Program:**

There is an organized, public/private approach to economic development.

### **10. Deliberate Transition of Power to a Younger Generation of Leaders:**

People under 40 regularly hold key positions in civic and business affairs.

### **11. Acceptance of Women in Leadership Roles:**

Women are elected officials, plant managers, and entrepreneurial developers.

### **12. Strong Belief in and Support for Education:**

Good schools are the norm and centers of community activity.

### **13. Problem-Solving Approach to Providing Health Care:**

Health care is considered essential, and smart strategies are in place for diverse methods of delivery.

### **14. Strong Multi-Generational Family Orientation:**

The definition of family is broad, and activities include younger as well as older generations.

### **15. Strong Presence of Traditional Institutions that are Integral to Community Life:**

Churches, schools and service clubs are strong influences on community development and social activities.

### **16. Sound and Well-Maintained Infrastructure:**

Leaders work hard to maintain and improve streets, sidewalks, water systems, and sewage facilities.

### **17. Careful Use of Fiscal Resources:**

Frugality is a way of life and expenditures are considered investments in the future.

### **18. Sophisticated Use of Information Resources:**

Leaders access information that is beyond the knowledge base available in the community.

### **19. Willingness to Seek Help from the Outside:**

People seek outside help for community needs, and many compete for government grants and contracts for economic and social programs.

### **20. Conviction that, in the Long Run, You Have to Do It Yourself:**

Thriving rural communities believe their destiny is in their own hands. Making their communities good places is a pro-active assignment, and they willingly accept it.

\*Reprinted from Heartland Center Leadership Development, Spring 2002 *Visions Newsletter*.

## **Appendix A**

Appendix A contains all the documents below, which are referred to in Britta Mireley's report section.

Maintenance-Code-Ordinance_FlorenceSC.pdf	244K
Community-Owned Businesses - Main Street Now 2010.pdf	679K
Cool Economic Development Tools - Kennedy Smith - Main Street Now 2010.pdf	5545K
Filling Vacant Buildings - Main Street News -2011-01.pdf	2119K
msnews-2010-03_04 - Community Owned Businesses.pdf	2631K
Pop-up businesses - Main Street Now 2011-10.pdf	1398K

ORDINANCE NO. 2012- 12

**AN ORDINANCE TO REVISE CHAPTER 4 OF THE CITY CODE BY DELETING ARTICLE II ELECTRICAL AND ESTABLISHING ARTICLE II MAINTENANCE AND APPEARANCE CODE FOR DOWNTOWN FLORENCE.**

**WHEREAS**, S.C. Code grants municipalities the authority to adopt codes and other regulatory means directed at redevelopment and the limitation of blighted conditions within specific areas of a municipality; and

**WHEREAS**, the City has completed a downtown master plan which found the downtown core business district to have elements of blight and in need of additional consideration to assist in removing the blighted conditions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Florence establishes both programs and specific projects directed at assisting the redevelopment of downtown Florence, which includes the adoption of maintenance and appearance codes;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Mayor and Council for the City of Florence that Article II Electrical is hereby deleted in its entirety and that Article II Maintenance and Appearance is established.

**ARTICLE II. MAINTENANCE AND APPEARANCE**

**4-10. Purpose.**

It is the purpose of the provisions of this Code to provide a practical method whereby buildings or structures, which diminish property values or detract from the appropriate appearance of the Florence Downtown Historic District, may be required to be repaired. The Downtown Historic District is deemed by the City of Florence to require supplemental regulations because of its special economic importance. This area is deemed to constitute an "overlay zone" as defined in S.C. Code 6-29-720(C). The provisions of this Code are cumulative, and in addition to

any other remedy provided by law, including the current editions of standard codes adopted by the City of Florence.

**Sec 4-11. Scope.**

The provisions of this Code shall apply to all commercial buildings or structures whether occupied or vacant within the designated area. The City Manager or his designee shall be responsible for carrying out the provisions of this Article.

**Sec. 4-12. Boundaries of the Florence Historic District.**

The boundaries and parcels of the Florence Historic District shall be the same as the H-1 Florence Historic Overlay District.

**Sec. 4-13. Responsibilities of the Florence Design Review Board.**

In matters related to this Article the rules and procedures governing the approval of repairs or work shall be the Design Guidelines for Downtown Florence.

**Sec. 4-14. General duties and responsibilities of the owner.**

It shall be the duty and responsibility of the owner to ensure that buildings and structures affected by this Article are maintained and repaired per the following:

- (a) The exterior of the structure is to be maintained in good repair. In general, the term good repair shall mean that the structure(s) shall be free from broken glass from exposed windows; failed, failing or unattached gutter systems; failed or failing exposed wood elements that are either an architectural feature, a structural element, or placed on the structure for some other purpose; and/or other failed or failing plastic, metal, brick, stone or other building materials found on the exterior of the structure(s).
- (b) All structures and decorative elements of building fronts, sides and rears shall be repaired or replaced in a workmanlike manner to match as closely as possible the original materials or as approved.
- (c) Structures at the rear of buildings, attached or unattached to the principal structure, which are structurally deficient, shall be repaired or demolished upon approval.
- (d) All extraneous elements on building walls and roofs and surrounding premises which serve no useful or aesthetic purpose, such as empty electrical or other conduits, unused sign brackets, etc., shall be removed.

- (e) If the building is used for storage, the contents shall be masked from view of the public from the street right-of-way, public parking lots, or pedestrian corridors.
- (f) If the building is unoccupied, the owner shall cause the building to be maintained in such a way as to prevent it from looking abandoned. In general, it is the intent of this paragraph to cause the building to blend in with other occupied buildings within the immediate area. In addition, the building shall remain broom clean with all debris and other waste removed from inside the building.
- (g) The owner shall also be responsible for compliance with other sections of the City Code as they relate to nuisances and the abatement of nuisance conditions.

#### **4-15. Specific duties and responsibilities of the owner.**

- (a) *Walls* – In the event that a wall of a building has become exposed as a result of demolition of adjacent buildings, all doors, windows, vents or other similar openings exposed by the demolition must be either restored or closed. It shall be the responsibility of the property owner or agent causing the exposure of the wall to make required repairs and bring the building into compliance. Additional work required and time schedule allowed shall be the following:
  - a. The removal of any protruding or loose materials.
  - b. The owner or agent causing the exposure shall submit an application and schedule for compliance to the City within sixty (60) days of demolition.
- (b) *Windows* – In general, all windows shall be in good repair. For the purpose of this section, the term good repair shall mean that windows are tight fitting and have sashes of proper size and design. In addition, sashes with rotten wood, broken joints, or broken or loose mullions shall be replaced. Good repair shall also mean that exposed wood is sealed or otherwise protected and that the window is free of broken or cracked glass. For windows that are four (4) square feet or larger and are broken, the following rule shall apply:
  - A glass pane is not required to be replaced, if the largest single portion of the pane which is free of cracks, is 80% or greater of the total surface area of the glass pane.

- a. First-floor - Existing windows shall be maintained as windows, complete with sills, lintels, frame and glass, unless changes are specifically approved by the Design Review Board.
- b. Upper floor(s) - Existing windows may be closed as approved by the Design Review Board.
- c. Signage and display windows – The following regulations shall apply to window advertising and/or display window space:
  - i. No more than 25% of a storefront window may be covered by advertising signs. This restriction shall not apply to signs permanently painted on or etched into the window that serve as the business' identification sign.
  - ii. The interior area of enclosed display window space(s) shall be maintained in a manner free of dirt, debris and clutter. If the display window space is not enclosed, the area measured from the bottom of the window to 24 inches inside the building shall be considered the display window space.
  - iii. Temporary signage shall not be placed on the exterior of any building or structure. All temporary signage must be on the inside of the window and shall be considered when calculating the 25% allowance for window signage. For the purpose of this section temporary signage shall be defined by the City of Florence Zoning Code and/or the Design Guidelines.
  - iv. All other signage shall be in conformity with the City of Florence Zoning Code and/or the Design Guidelines.
- d. Allowable exceptions - The following exceptions for window treatments are available if approved by the Design Review Board.
  - i. Upper Story Windows -
    - 1. Use of inoperable glass inserts.
    - 2. Use of painted wooden shutters.
    - 3. Use of public art.
    - 4. Other options as approved.
  - ii. Alley Windows -
    - 1. Use of painted wooden shutters.
    - 2. Other options as approved.
  - iii. Back Streets –
    - 1. Use of painted wooden shutters.

2. Other options as approved.

- (c) *Protection of exterior surfaces and facades* - All exterior surfaces which require painting or sealing to protect the underlying surface(s) from deterioration shall be so painted or sealed. As a matter of regulation, when 25% or more of the aggregate exterior surface of any wall face has peeling or flaking paint the entire area shall be repainted. An exception to this regulation may be granted by the City where the owner or owner representative, as a matter or design maintains the underlying paint, advertising sign or art work in a satisfactory manner.
- (d) *Advertising structures, signs, and awnings* - All advertising structures and awnings and their accompanying supporting members shall be maintained in good repair and shall be in compliance with the development codes for the City of Florence. Non complying signs, billboards, marquees, or awnings shall, together with their supporting members, be removed. It is the intent of this section, to cause the removal of all abandon signs or like structures within the H-1 District.

For awnings or marquees which are made of cloth, plastic or similar material, such awnings, or marquees shall be maintained so as not to show evidence of excessive tearing, ripping, and unsightly conditions. For the purpose of this section, excessive tearing shall be defined as a tear in excess of six (6) inches in length. In the event that the awning covering has been removed, the supporting members may remain in place for a period not to exceed four (4) months if the intent is to replace the covering.

- (e) *Cornices* - All cornices shall be structurally sound and maintained/protected. Rotten or weakened portions shall be removed and/or replaced to match as close as possible the original patterns as approved by the Design Review Board.
- (f) *Downspouts* - Sheet metal gutters and downspouts shall be functional, replaced or repaired as necessary and shall be properly located and securely installed.

**Sec. 4-16. Notice of violation and penalties.**

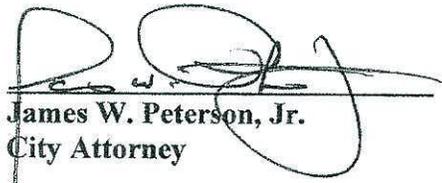
Any violation of the provisions of this Article is hereby declared a public nuisance and shall be corrected or abated as required by this Article. Further, violation(s) of this Article shall be subject to the provisions of the Florence City Code governing such nuisances, including reimbursing the city for any costs incurred in removing, abating or remedying said nuisance. When an owner is found to be in violation of this Article, the city may serve upon such person a written notice stating the nature of the violation.

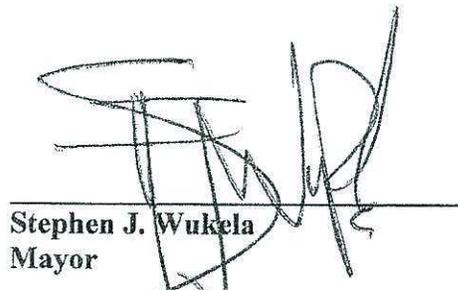
Within thirty (30) days from the date of receipt of the notice of violaiton, the owner shall submit to the City a plan for the satisfactory correction of the violation - which shall include acceptable milestones and other remedies to abate the violation. Within two weeks of submittal, the City shall review the correction plan and respond in writing to the owner of its acceptance, rejection, or recommended modification(s) to the plan.

Upon acceptance of the plan by the City the owner shall abate the public nuisance in a manner consistent with the approved plan. The City's duly appointed official may amend the plan, upon a written request by the owner or the owner's representative. All amendments shall be in writing and upon acceptance by the city shall be made part of the accepted correction plan. A phased schedule approach toward compliance may be acceptable. However, if a phased schedule approach is proposed it shall not exceed 36 months from the date of acceptance by the City.

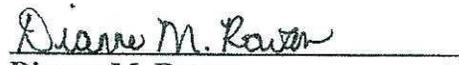
ADOPTED THIS 12th DAY OF March, 2012.

Approved as to form:

  
James W. Peterson, Jr.  
City Attorney

  
Stephen J. Wukela  
Mayor

Attest:

  
Dianne M. Rowan  
Municipal Clerk

APPROVED ON FIRST READING AT A  
MEETING OF FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL  
DATE 2-13-2012  
ADOPTED ON SECOND READING  
DATE 3-12-2012  
COPY TO \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Community-owned Businesses: HOW COMMUNITIES BEC

Throughout the nation, in a movement too small to be called a trend, engaged community members are organizing themselves in new ways to become community entrepreneurs. Often motivated more by mission than capitalistic ambition, community groups are opening new businesses.

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By Joshua Bloom

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COME ENTREPRENEURS





Community-owned businesses differ from traditional businesses in that they are motivated by a *purpose*. They usually arise to fill a void where the marketplace is too slow to act on its own, or the risks appear too high (think decayed downtown). Founders of community-owned businesses don't just see an opportunity that the market failed to see, but in times when capital for funding new ideas is scarce, they can give life to new business ideas. In many ways, a community-owned business is the same as any other mercantile endeavor: it must satisfy a market need and it must offer the potential to generate a profit.

They are a tiny niche among alternative ownership structures, yet community-owned businesses span a wide range, from a doughnut shop in Clare, Michigan, to the Green Bay Packers. (More on the doughnut shop in a minute.) Did you know that the Green Bay Packers, after an informal start, were financed by a group of Green Bay small businesses? The Packers (named after the Indian Packing Company, where they played their early games) established themselves as a nonprofit corporation in 1923 and the franchise remains so today. The ownership structure, with shares sold as non-appreciating investments in a community corporation, means the Packers can never leave Green Bay, Wisconsin. (If the team is sold, all of the money must go to charity, leaving the shareholders with nothing.) As a city of 100,000, Green Bay is by far the smallest market among professional football teams.

Any viable business begins with a market opportunity. (Despite Green Bay's size, the Packers have a season-tickets waiting list of 81,000 people.) When that need isn't recognized by traditional investors or entrepreneurs, or is seen as having too much risk, the community-owned model presents an alternative path to business development. And, in disinvested commercial districts, a community-owned business can prove to the market that a good idea can be profitable.

Community-owned businesses fall into four broad categories:

- **COOPERATIVE:** A *communally* owned and managed business, operated for the benefit of its members;
- **COMMUNITY-OWNED CORPORATION:** A traditional, for-profit corporation that integrates social enterprise principles;
- **SMALL OWNERSHIP GROUP:** A small, ad

hoc investor group that capitalizes and/or operates a business as a partnership or closely held corporation; and

- **INVESTMENT FUND:** A community-based fund that invests debt or equity in local business ventures.

## Cooperatives

PCC Natural Markets (formerly Puget Consumers Co-op) started in 1953 as a food-buying club for 15 families in the Seattle area. Today, it is the largest consumer-owned natural food cooperative in the United States, with nine stores and 40,000 members. As with many cooperative groceries, it formed to provide a consumer option not available from traditional supermarkets. Co-op grocers used to have the natural and organic foods category virtually to themselves. Today, they compete with Whole Foods, traditional supermarkets, and even Wal-Mart, all of which offer natural and organic foods – either exclusively (Whole Foods) or in addition to their standard grocery lines.

PCC Natural Markets is the largest in the category, but co-op markets come in every size, with different motivations, and with different consumer markets. Local citizens founded Township Grocery in Bonaparte, Iowa (pop. 458), in 1986 to offer a local grocery option after the town's general store closed.

In many ways, cooperatives are the essence of a community-owned business. Cooperatives are democratic organizations where each member has an equal vote, and they typically operate as not-for-profit businesses. (Unlike a typical nonprofit, co-ops often distribute surplus revenues as “patronage dividends” to members.) From their origins to modern co-op enterprises,

and from rural electric co-ops to grocery co-ops, they embrace socially progressive ideals to use the power of the marketplace to meet an under-served need.

Cooperatives are a special breed of corporation and most states have statutes governing them. (State statutes regulating cooperatives differ from place to place and may not apply to the type of cooperative you are considering.) The concept of a cooperative – people organizing a business activity for their mutual benefit – is ancient. But most histories credit the modern cooperative model to the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, a consumer cooperative founded in England in 1844 by a group of hand weavers who found themselves unable to afford basic food items during the Industrial Revolution. They created the Rochdale Principles, which first codified the philosophy behind modern cooperatives. The principles promulgated by the International Cooperative Alliance, the National Cooperative Business Association, and others, though slightly modified and expanded over the last 150 years, derive directly from the Rochdale experiment.

## Principles of Cooperative Businesses

According to the International Cooperative Alliance, “A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.” The original Rochdale Principles were based on the following ideas:

1. Open Membership
2. Democratic Control
3. Dividend on Purchase
4. Limited Interest on Capital
5. Political and Religious Neutrality
6. Cash Trading
7. Promotion of Education

The principles have been expanded slightly over the past 150 years to include reinvestment in the cooperative, sustainable development, and a responsibility to strengthen the cooperative movement as a whole.

For more information about cooperative principles, visit [www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop).



*The CO-OP Supermarket & Pharmacy, a full-service grocery and drugstore in Greenbelt, Md., is owned by more than 6,000 local members.*



© Joshua Bloom/Clue Group

In a cooperative, there are no outside investors and, usually, every member owns an equal share – an equity investment in the corporation. A share generally entitles the member to voting privileges and patronage dividends, but shares do not increase in value like other investments. (Depending on the co-op's own governing rules, a member may be able to redeem his or her shares, although there may be timing or other restrictions on redemptions.)

The “one member, one share” structure can limit the capital a cooperative can raise. If, for example, shares cost \$100, the co-op would have to sell 10,000 shares to capitalize a new \$1 million grocery store. In order to make it easier to raise capital,

“preferred shares” to outside investors. These shares allow a larger investment than a standard equity share (and may pay a small annual return), but may come with restrictions on voting rights. At the core, the co-op model strives to preserve an egalitarian structure.

Co-ops in the Main Street universe generally take one of four forms:

- **CONSUMER (OR RETAIL) COOPERATIVES** (e.g., grocery stores) sell retail goods or services to their members. In practice, many consumer cooperatives today allow anyone to be a customer, but they provide certain benefits (such as voting and patronage dividends) only to members. A consumer

cooperative often hires professional management, although in some cases members serve as a supplemental workforce.

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- **WORKER COOPERATIVES** are owned and operated by the owners of the business. There is no professional management, and the workforce consists primarily of the owners. All owners are equal and they usually run the business through a democratic or consensus process.

- **PURCHASING COOPERATIVES** allow member businesses to aggregate their buying power. By acting as a wholesaler, they often form the support structure that allows many modern retail cooperatives to exist. In addition, they may provide marketing and financing assistance to their member businesses. For example, the National Cooperative Grocers Association is a “co-op of co-ops,” serving cooperative grocery stores. TrueServ is a buying cooperative that serves as a wholesaler and brand manager for independently owned True Value hardware stores (each of which is a member of TrueServ).

- **PRODUCER COOPERATIVES** unify individual manufacturers or producers to give them access to larger wholesale and retail markets. They are common in agriculture (e.g., in the citrus and milk industries), but also exist among artisans and other makers of goods.



## Examples of Cooperative Businesses

While cooperatives may serve different membership types, each fills an unmet market need.

**CONSUMER COOPERATIVES:** In addition to PCC Natural Markets in Seattle and Township Grocery in Bonaparte, there are hundreds of food co-ops across the country, many responding to consumers' interests in sustainable supply chains and innovative ap-

proaches to how we buy and consume food.

The Park Slope Food Coop in Brooklyn strives to source all its grown and raised food within a 200-mile radius of New York City during the growing season, and within 500 miles at other times of the year. Weavers Way Co-op, with two locations in Philadelphia, has taken "local" one step further: it operates an urban farm in Philadelphia from which it gathers and sells produce. (Consumer-based grocery cooperatives can even benefit traditional farmers. As the "locavore" movement grows, grocery co-ops can foster more predictable demand for products than other direct-to-consumer channels such as farm stands and farmers markets.)

The Mercantile ("The Merc"), in downtown Powell, Wyoming, is a cooperatively owned department store that was created by community members after a downtown anchor business closed. It was inspired by two other community-owned clothing stores in nearby Montana:

Little Muddy Dry Goods in Plentywood, and Family Matters in Malta. See "The Merc" sidebar below for more details.

The Harvard Coop ("The Coop") was founded in 1882 by a group of Harvard students to sell merchandise to the academic community at competitive prices. While anyone can shop there today, membership is open only to the Harvard and MIT student, staff, and faculty communities. Membership still costs \$1 – the same as it did in 1882. Last year, The Coop returned a hefty 7-percent patronage dividend to its members, as a proportion of their individual purchases.

Responding to the need for a downtown café and community space, the New Deal Café in downtown Greenbelt, Maryland, operates as a restaurant, music performance venue, art exhibition space, and gathering spot. Appropriately enough, Greenbelt was founded as a utopian, cooperative residential community during the New Deal era. The Café, which got its start in 1995, was originally operated entirely by volunteers. It now has professional management. Its 400 members buy shares at \$50 and renew annually at \$15.

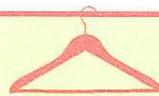


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© Joshua Bloom/Clue Group

The New Deal Café in Greenbelt, Md., has 400 members who support this restaurant-arts-community space downtown.



### The Merc

The Merc in Powell, Wyoming, opened in 2002 with a goal of offering basic clothing to fill the needs of the rural area's residents. Powell's population was 5,373 in 2000, but the store serves several small towns with a combined population of about 25,000 people.

Sharon Earhart was one of the early leaders. She recalls the organizing committee meeting every week during the start-up phase. Their business plan required \$400,000 in capital, and the committee decided to raise it in \$500 increments. They looked at the business model in Plentywood, Montana, which had priced shares at \$10,000, but Powell wanted to sell its shares at a more accessible price. Still, \$500 was out of reach for some. Earhart said some of the committee's most gratifying moments came when community members pooled their resources to buy a single share, or when one retiree withdrew savings to buy a share so he could help create a future for his grandchildren and his community.

The board threw fund-raising parties and set up speaking engagements in front of every possible community organization, from students groups to farmers. Since it opened, The Merc has paid one dividend to its member owners and anticipates being able to do so again.

Today, The Merc is governed by a five-member board and is operated by a paid general manager. Volunteers help out occasionally, particularly with gift wrapping during the holiday season. The store has deviated only slightly from its original plan, including adding athletic footwear a few years ago.

The store's manager, Paul Ramos, reports he still uses a revolving portion of The Merc's original capital to purchase inventory. (The business has never had to borrow.) Three years ago, with the help of a grant from the Wyoming Business Council, The Merc doubled in size, acquiring a 7,000 square-foot former drug store next door. While the store is affected to some extent by the broader economy, and by Walmart 22 miles away, Ramos says, its fortunes are more directly linked to the cycles of the area's agricultural industries.

**WORKER COOPERATIVES:** The Moosewood Restaurant in downtown Ithaca, New York, quickly became one of the most renown vegetarian restaurants in the country when it was founded in 1973. Operated as a “collective” (Moosewood’s term), its 19 worker-owners manage the business and cook in the kitchen, and together they have published 12 cookbooks. (The cookbooks are all authored by “The Moosewood Collective.”)

The Bicycle Kitchen in Los Angeles and the Bike Kitchen Coop in San Francisco are volunteer-run bicycle repair shops. They don’t sell bikes. They don’t even fix bikes. They teach members how to fix their own bikes, and the co-ops provide the tools and space to do it.

A few antiques marts around the country provide retail space to independent vendors in a managed “mall,” but allow the vendors to help with the sales counter, cleaning, and inventory management in lieu of paying rent.

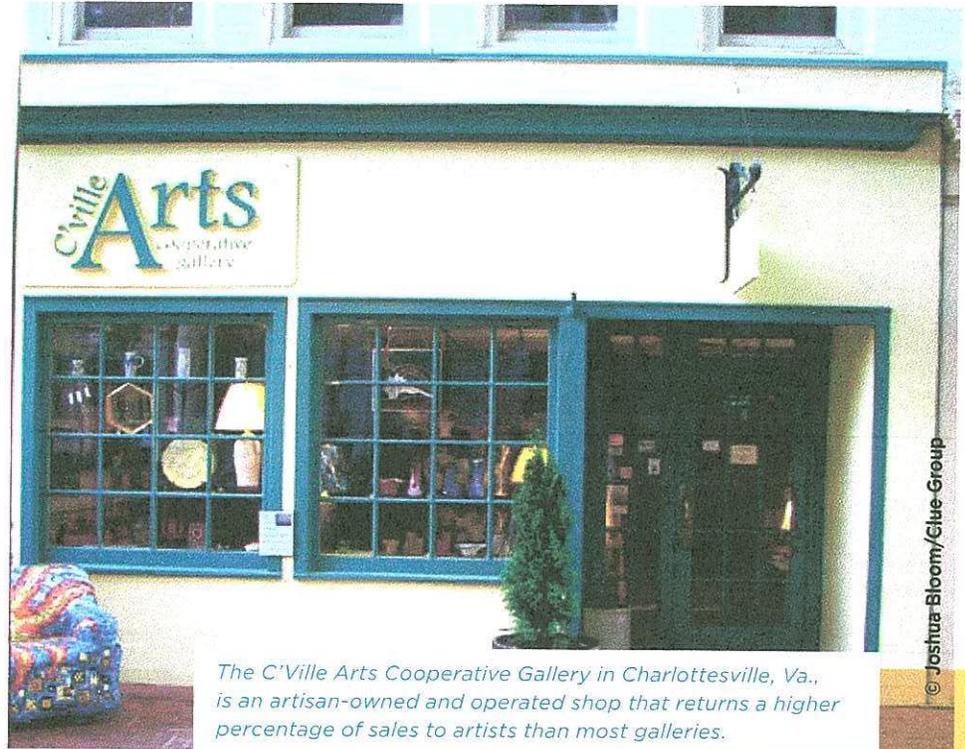
**PURCHASING COOPERATIVES:** TruServ and Ace Hardware are purchasing cooperatives that serve thousands of independently owned True Value and Ace Hardware member retailers. The Independent Purchasing Cooperative, owned by Subway restaurant franchisees, was organized to buy supplies and services for its member owners; and the United Foodservice Purchasing Co-op provides a similar service to franchisees

“Cooperatives vary widely as a species, both in type and scale. But they all embody similar ideals or aspirations: to serve their members in an egalitarian system.”

of Yum! Brands restaurants (A&W, KFC, Long John Silver’s, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell). In all of these cases, the member businesses believed they could reduce their inventory costs by acting together.

The National Cooperative Grocers Association assists its members with marketing, operations, and purchasing. Food Co-op 500 is a national organization that helps communities organize and launch grocery cooperatives.

Another example is the Bike Cooperative (formerly Mobeus and the Biking Solution) which provides financing, marketing, credit card processing, and private-label bicycle products to independent bicycle shops, helping them compete against larger, more powerful retailers.



*The C'Ville Arts Cooperative Gallery in Charlottesville, Va., is an artisan-owned and operated shop that returns a higher percentage of sales to artists than most galleries.*

© Joshua-Bloomy/Glue Group

**PRODUCER COOPERATIVES:** The C'Ville Arts Cooperative Gallery in Charlottesville, Virginia, is an artisan-owned and operated retail business in downtown Charlottesville, with membership by juried application. The co-op creates a retail venue for producers to sell their wares, and it returns 92 percent of actual sales to the artisans – a much higher rate than traditional galleries.

In a variation on the “producer cooperative” concept, the Independent Restaurant Collaborative in Colorado Springs, Colorado, provides group marketing for member independent restaurants.

For additional examples of cooperative businesses, visit [communitybusinesses.blogspot.com](http://communitybusinesses.blogspot.com).

How a cooperative is incorporated may confer some benefits or impose some restrictions on its operation, depending on state laws. But it’s really the cooperative’s governance documents (e.g., articles of incorporation, membership agreements, and bylaws) that determine how a cooperative operates and the benefits and obligations of its members. Cooperatives vary widely as a species, both in type and scale. But they all embody similar ideals or aspirations: to serve their members in an egalitarian system.

For more information, sample organizing documents, and cooperative resources, visit [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org).

## Community-owned Corporations

While cooperatives have a set of principles and a codified movement, the term “community-owned corporations” more loosely describes a wide range of traditional businesses with a social-enterprise component. In this spirit, several communities are currently developing community-owned stores that are not technically cooperatives.

The Adirondacks community of Saranac Lake, New York, (pop. 4,800) stopped a 120,000 square-foot Walmart from opening in 2006 by preventing the commercial rezoning of several key parcels. Gail Brill, a local businesswoman and community activist, noted while the anti-Walmart campaign was successful, Saranac Lake still needed more retail options. “We couldn’t just be ‘anti,’” said Brill, “we had to say ‘yes’ to something.” So they formed a committee to investigate ways they could create retail alternatives downtown – and avoid creating sprawl outside the community.

Ames, a chain of small, discount department stores, had closed in 2002 and nothing had filled its place. The committee was inspired by The Merc in Powell and invited one of its organizers to come to Saranac Lake. Fired up with enthusiasm, Saranac Lake quickly formed an interim board, retained a local corporate attorney, and registered their venture with the New



York attorney general's office. As a first step, they developed a business plan, and in June 2007 they launched a stock offering. To maximize the project's feasibility, they decided from the outset to lease a property, instead of building new. Brill describes the people involved as "serious": they wanted a "real corporation" that included democratic principles, but was not a cooperative. Alan Brown, the group's treasurer, observed that members of the organizing group felt a for-profit corporation "would have broader appeal" than a nonprofit. Brill added that they wanted a for-profit store that would be "as American as apple pie."

Shares were priced at \$100 and the capital needs were \$500,000. In order to foster broad community ownership, the prospectus stipulates that investors may purchase a maximum of 100 shares, or \$10,000 of company stock. As of December 2009, they had raised \$415,900 – an accomplishment that surprised even Brill and Brown.

The money was raised entirely through grassroots efforts: the group organized house parties where a local host invited 20 guests to hear a presentation and pitch. Residents were encouraged to buy shares as gifts. People with summer homes in the area bought shares. The group sent direct-mail appeals and sold shares at the local farmers market.

The organizers cannot do much besides selling shares until they have reached the \$500,000 goal specified in the prospectus. (In fact, because shareholders' money can only be used to capitalize the business, the interim board has had to organize additional fund-raising activities to pay for the costs – like printed materials, postage, etc. – associated with selling the shares.)

The prospectus lays out risks associated with the stock offering, but, as a practical matter, shareholders are making an investment in the community. If the group does not reach its goal, it will have to pay back all the money raised to date, with interest, and the board will be personally responsible for \$25,000 in legal fees that would otherwise ultimately be paid out of the start-up capital. They have six more months, after which they can file with the attorney general for a six-month extension, but Brill and Brown are confident they will meet their goal.

For examples of organizing documents and prospectuses, visit [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org). For additional examples of community-owned corporations, visit [community-businesses.blogspot.com](http://community-businesses.blogspot.com)



## Clare City Bakery (a.k.a, "Cops & Doughnuts")

"It began as a crazy idea," says Officer Al White.

Last May, Clare City Bakery was about to close after 113 years of continuous operation. The owners were retiring and didn't see any prospects for selling the struggling business in Michigan's tough economy. Today, Clare City Bakery (redubbed "Cops & Doughnuts") is creating new life in downtown Clare.

It started when members of Clare's municipal police department heard news of the bakery's imminent closing. It was nearly at that moment that the entire force of nine men and women (though acting in their capacities as private citizens) decided to buy the business. Each person agreed to put in a modest equal initial investment and to make a small additional monthly investment for the next year. They would manage the business as volunteers and there would be no profits distributed for at least 12 months. The group elected a president and vice president of the corporation and then hired a general manager, who in turn hired the bakery's staff.

Today, with four billboards on two nearby interstates, recent profiles on CNN and "The Today Show," and inquiries from no fewer than a dozen interested franchisors, Cops & Doughnuts is the hottest thing to happen in Clare in some time. (And three new businesses, including an art gallery, have recently opened downtown.) The bakery has 18 employees (nine full-time) and has already expanded into an adjoining storefront. The bakery's bathroom is designed to replicate a jail cell (complete with wall-mounted bed), and the store is already selling Cops & Doughnuts logo apparel. The owners are considering future wholesaling and franchising options – but they are trying not to get ahead of themselves. They still haven't paid themselves anything.

The irony of cops and their fondness for doughnuts isn't lost on the owners, and they take the jokes as they come. "Any joke is good advertising," says Officer White. "We thought it would be fun to own a bakery," he continues, although one wonders if he envisioned serving doughnuts on Christmas Eve (see his photos on Cops & Doughnuts' Facebook fan page). As the *Central Michigan Morning Sun* observed, "protect and serve" has taken on a new meaning.

## Small Ownership Group

Small groups, such as partnerships and closely held corporations (also called private-stock corporations), are such traditional forms of business ownership and capitalization that most people don't think of them as models for a community-owned business. But they can be. A small group, or even an individual entrepreneur, can open a business with a community-minded purpose.

Partnerships and private-stock corporations have different legal structures (in a partnership, the individuals are owners; in a corporation, they own shares, even though the stock is not publicly traded or easily sold), but both can embody social-enterprise and community-ownership principles. The most notable functional difference from a "community-owned corporation" (such as The Merc) is that small ownership groups tend not to be open to the general public and the "group" is usually, well, smaller.

Firefly Restaurant opened in Effingham, Illinois (pop. 12,000), in 2006. Operating their own restaurant was the dream of an Effingham native and her chef-husband, Kristie and Niall Campbell, who were then living in San Francisco. But they hadn't considered opening it in Effingham. Meanwhile, local leaders in Effingham had long seen a need for an upscale, independent restaurant where they could bring friends, family, and business associates, but they had not been successful in recruiting one.

During a visit home, the Campbells were courted by several local business leaders. Among them was Jack Schultz, CEO of Agracel, Inc., headquartered in Effingham, author of *Boomtown USA*, and self-described "business agitator." He was one of 18 local business people who helped raise \$50,000 to invest in a new restaurant. The members of the group act as silent partners in the business, which is run by the Campbells. (A portion of the Campbells' ownership stake, in addition to a cash investment, derives from "sweat equity"; the remainder of the required capital was borrowed.)

The business is actually two LLCs: one owns the land and developed the building; the second operates the restaurant and leases the building. In its first three years of operation, the members of the initial group have made some additional investments, and the business is performing in the black. In Firefly's case, while the partners certainly hope to recapture their initial investment, they see their venture's

primary goal as improving the quality of life in Effingham.

At the smallest end of the "ownership group" scale, even a sole proprietorship can incorporate social-enterprise tools and values. Linda Welch is a Washington, D.C., entrepreneur who has started and operated a number of businesses that have ranged from boarding pets to a comic book store. While she has never owned a restaurant, she is keenly aware of the need for additional vegetarian restaurant options in the city. So she's planning to open one, which will be called "Elements."

She teamed up with Neil Takemoto, an expert in crowdsourcing – a technique that uses a "community" to solve a problem. (See sidebar below for more information on crowdsourcing.) Together, they convened hundreds of local vegetarians to help Welch design the restaurant concept, including its name, logo, menu, location, and feel. Different from traditional focus groups, Welch's process helped her get potential customers' input while building buzz about her endeavor. What's more, this information-gathering and community-building process happened both online (using social media) and in-person.

The "crowd" – which now numbers in the hundreds – has been meeting regularly for over a year and participating actively in online discussions. As one ongoing activity, members of the group collect pictures on their travels of places or characteristics they would like to see incorporated into

Elements. Ultimately, Welch will own the restaurant, though she is considering a cash-plus-sweat-equity partnership arrangement with the chef. But Washington's vegetarian community will feel a sense of ownership, too, because they contributed to the restaurant's concept. And the benefit for Welch is clear: on opening day, Elements hopes to have 500 already loyal customers. Says Welch, "This is not a democracy, but I'm open to hearing any idea. For me, it's been wonderful."

Members of a small ownership group may be active managers or silent partners, but they typically expect some degree of profit sharing in the business' success, usually in proportion to their investment or participation in the business' operations. If an ownership group is financing an entrepreneur, it is critically important that the business operator has a stake in the venture. The entrepreneur must assume a portion of the risk, just as the silent investors do. (See sidebar "Tips for Small Ownership Groups and Investment Funds" on page 12.)

Firefly's story is the product of two great coincidences of entrepreneurship: a native, with restaurant experience, who was considering a move back home and was able to put together a compelling business plan. And a group of fast-acting local businesspeople that was able to secure resources, identify a site, establish itself as the building's developer, and provide financial and technical support. Cops & Doughnuts



## Crowdsourcing in practice: Army-Community Heritage Partnership Program

Two Army communities – Fort Knox in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and Fort Polk in Leesville, Louisiana – are currently organizing to develop community-owned or community-initiated restaurants.

Fort Knox and Fort Polk are participants in the Army-Community Heritage Partnership, a special initiative of the National Trust Main Street Center and the Department of the Army. Through surveys of local Army families (military and civilian), focus groups, and an analysis of consumer buying power, the Community Land Use & Economics Group and the National Trust Main Street Center were able to research and document the need for additional dining options "off-post," especially in the downtowns neighboring these two Army installations.

In Elizabethtown and Leesville, volunteer task forces made up of Army and community representatives are employing crowdsourcing techniques: they have each established blog-to-post updates about restaurant development plans and have invited local residents and Army families to participate in the initiatives. Each city hopes to establish a new, community-owned or community-initiated restaurant downtown within the next three years.



happened almost impulsively when a group of co-workers decided they needed to do something to save their favorite coffee spot. Community-minded investor groups can be cultivated by organizing individuals around a great idea with social impact, even if it means accepting a relatively high investment risk.

## Investment Funds

An investment fund provides venture capital (equity) or loans (debt) to an entrepreneur. Unlike traditional venture capital, community-development investment funds have less interest in high returns and more interest in stimulating new businesses – especially great business ideas that cannot gain access to capital (or sufficient capital) through traditional channels. Instead of owning and operating a business directly, a community can use this tool to invest in one or more businesses – and, potentially,

revolve the capital into more new businesses over time.

Many examples exist of community investment funds organized to foster new industries such as manufacturing, software development, or biotech. However, few investment funds have been organized to invest in new, small-scale retail, service, or arts and entertainment businesses.

The National Trust Community Investment Corporation (NTCIC), for example, makes real estate investments in projects that qualify for historic or New Markets tax credits. Beginning in the 1990s, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) began making equity investments to establish supermarkets as shopping center anchors in neighborhoods with underserved food alternatives.

The LISC retail project began with a \$2.4 million investment in a Pathmark built in East Harlem, New York, by the Abyssinian Development Corporation. In 2005, in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California, LISC, through the Unity Council Community Development Corporation, provided a \$580,000 loan to acquire a site for a new farmers market.

Originating out of an identified need for local jobs, in 2008, the Unity Council launched “Made in Oakland” (“mio,” for short, or “mine” in Spanish), a storefront-based apparel design and manufacturing business. The project was capitalized with money from the Unity Council and a jobs-creation grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As a condition of the grant, mio was required to find a for-profit partner in a related industry. It partnered with Los Angeles-based The Evans Group, which creates patterns and samples for emerging designers. The Unity Council and mio director/designer Hiroko Kurihara expect the social and retail venture to create 60 to 70 new jobs for low-income Fruitvale-area residents.

As towns like Powell and Saranac Lake have raised capital through the creation of shareholder corporations, a community could apply the same approach to raise venture capital and make equity investments in new downtown businesses. Even without creating an investment fund, individuals or groups can make loans to small businesses using social-venture lending programs like VirginMoney (formerly CircleLending), a service used to generate formal promissory notes and third-party-managed repayment systems.

## Which is the Right Model?

### COOPERATIVES

The cooperative is a philosophy as much as it is a business model. Its structure is designed for maximum community involvement in ownership and management and sometimes in the workforce, as well. The model fits best when it matches the values of the community. A cooperative is a good choice if one or both of the following conditions exist:

- 1 The community embraces cooperative ideals and tenets as a means to benefit members and build social capital.
- 2 There is a wholesale buying, marketing, and/or distribution infrastructure in place, as with grocery and hardware stores.

Cooperative structures can present challenges when raising large amounts of capital: if shares are priced low, they will be accessible, but the membership numbers required may not be achievable. If shares are priced high, they will be out of reach for many people, which will limit membership and may not fit the co-op’s social principles. Nevertheless, many cooperatives have found a workable middle ground or have issued other classes of shares to augment their capital.

The cooperative comes with all the benefits and challenges of broad community involvement and ownership, which may slow decision-making or require extensive consensus building. Its broad base notwithstanding, in the end, a cooperative must only respond to its members – not the entire community.

### COMMUNITY-OWNED CORPORATIONS

A community-owned corporation can share many characteristics of a cooperative, but it allows greater flexibility, primarily because it does not necessarily require that each owner make an equal investment or have an equal vote.

Like cooperatives, community corporations may (depending on the capital needs of the business) require a similar level of energy and volunteer commitment to sell shares to a large number of people. And community-owned corporations may be burdened by a process-oriented governance system, both in their organization and in their management. A community-owned corporation is a good choice when local ideals will more naturally embrace a for-profit venture or when greater flexibility is needed in share pricing or share-ownership limits.

## Tips for Investor Groups and Investment Funds: Have Skin in the Game

When a group of investors mobilizes to finance an entrepreneur, several common-sense rules apply:

- The entrepreneur must have “skin in the game.” In addition to bringing skills and a viable business plan, the operator must have a personal financial stake in order to leverage other people’s money and build a successful business.
- Be patient. Most businesses don’t take off as quickly as Cops & Doughnuts.
- Have a contingency plan. If the business takes longer than anticipated to become profitable, initial investors should be prepared to increase their financial commitment.
- Check expectations so they align with the (usually) large risk and the (usually) small potential for payoff.
- Investors must support the new business as its best customers, promoters, and marketers.

### SMALL OWNERSHIP GROUPS

Small investor groups, whether partnerships or closely held corporations, are the most nimble and flexible of the possible community-owned business structures. Like the Clare police department, they can act quickly and with a minimum of process. The small-group aspect lessens the risk to each individual investor. Assuming the members of the group bring money as one of their chief resources, a business can raise capital relatively quickly.

In addition, the tight control offered by a small ownership group helps avoid “owner-agent” problems: because the owners are likely to be actively involved in the business, they are also likely to be involved in, and support, day-to-day operational decisions. (In a cooperative or community-owned model, because of the number of shareholders, the owners are further removed from the general manager’s motivations and decision making.)

However, small ownership groups – whether partnerships or corporations – present two related challenges:

- 1 It requires great trust to enter into a business relationship with a small group of partners, and it often takes time to cultivate the trusting relationships that small groups need to operate.
- 2 In addition, maintaining healthy relationships during the management and operation of a business can be as challenging as establishing the group in the first place.

In a cooperative or community-owned corporation, the numbers are large enough that individuals’ relationship-based disagreements are less likely to cause a systemic breakdown. In a small investor group, relationship breakdowns are one of the most common causes of business failures.

### INVESTMENT FUNDS

An investment fund is well suited to attract the best new ideas when the organizing entity itself is not interested in starting and operating the business, or when it wants to stimulate the development of multiple businesses. Flexible venture capital is also an excellent tool for leveraging additional private and public capital.

Community-based investment funds have been used to catalyze a wide range of business types, but are more common in industrial and knowledge-based business development than in the retail sector. Because an investment fund is not selling a specific

concept with cool imagery (a grocery store or a mercantile, for example), it may be harder to motivate individual investors.

## How Can Main Street Lead?

A Main Street program can play many pivotal roles in creating community-owned businesses, from instigator to owner-operator.

- **OPPORTUNITY SCOUT.** By having its ear to the ground and listening to customers and merchants alike, Main Street can help define or refine the types of business most needed in the district, and those most likely to succeed.

- **RESEARCH.** Main Street can gather consumer information (like demographics and buying power), conduct consumer surveys and focus groups, or even send out reconnaissance teams to gather information about similar businesses.

- **CONVENER.** If an idea (for a mercantile, a restaurant, a movie theater, etc.) is floating around, Main Street can convene an exploratory group and provide it with support and structure while the idea gains credibility and momentum. Because of its relationships with local business people, Main Street may even be able to arrange “marriages” among interested investors and entrepreneurs.

- **ADVISOR.** Main Street can advise investment funds, banks, and public agencies to steer investor groups and social-enterprise ventures to the downtown.

- **SALESMAN.** When it comes time to sell shares, Main Street can use its marketing

know-how to advance the stock offering, particularly among its members and business district constituents.

- **TRANSITION MANAGER.** If a venerated local business (like the Clare City Bakery) is in danger of closing, and no single individual is stepping forward to buy it, Main Street can facilitate the formation of a group of buyers and, in doing so, transition a sole-proprietorship to a community-owned business.

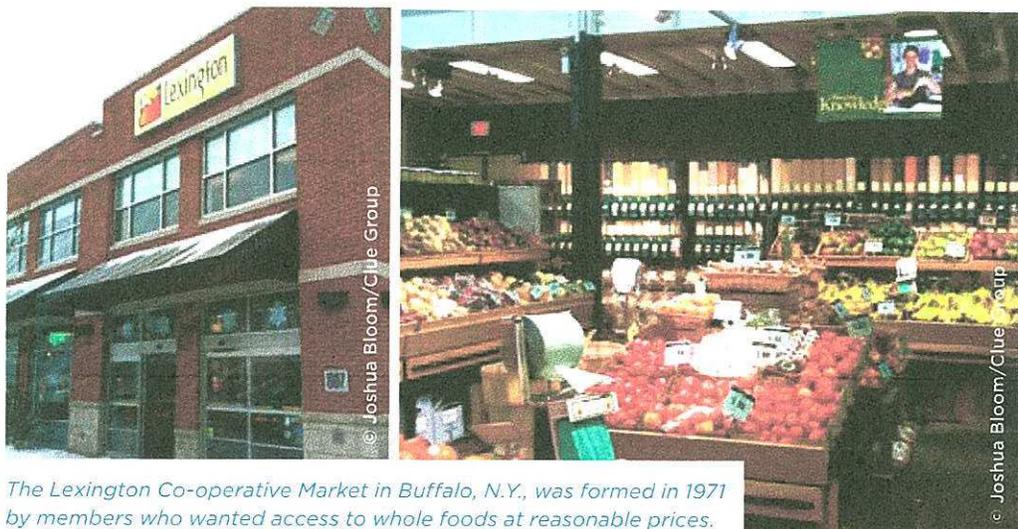
- **HOME BASE.** After acting as convener, Main Street may decide to house the community-owned business initiative within the program itself, either through its own task force or as a project of the economic restructuring committee.

- **MARKETER.** With its deep reach into the consumer community, Main Street can become a marketing partner for a new (or developing) community business.

There are many alternative, and probably easier, ways to recruit a business than trying to launch one as a community project. But there are not many business development efforts that can mobilize as much financial and social capital. The Green Bay Packers are currently valued at about \$1 billion. It’s not hard to imagine Cops & Doughnuts someday becoming an equally valuable franchise.

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*The Lexington Co-operative Market in Buffalo, N.Y., was formed in 1971 by members who wanted access to whole foods at reasonable prices. With more than 5,000 member owners, it has evolved from an entirely member-run organization to a full-service store with paid staff.*

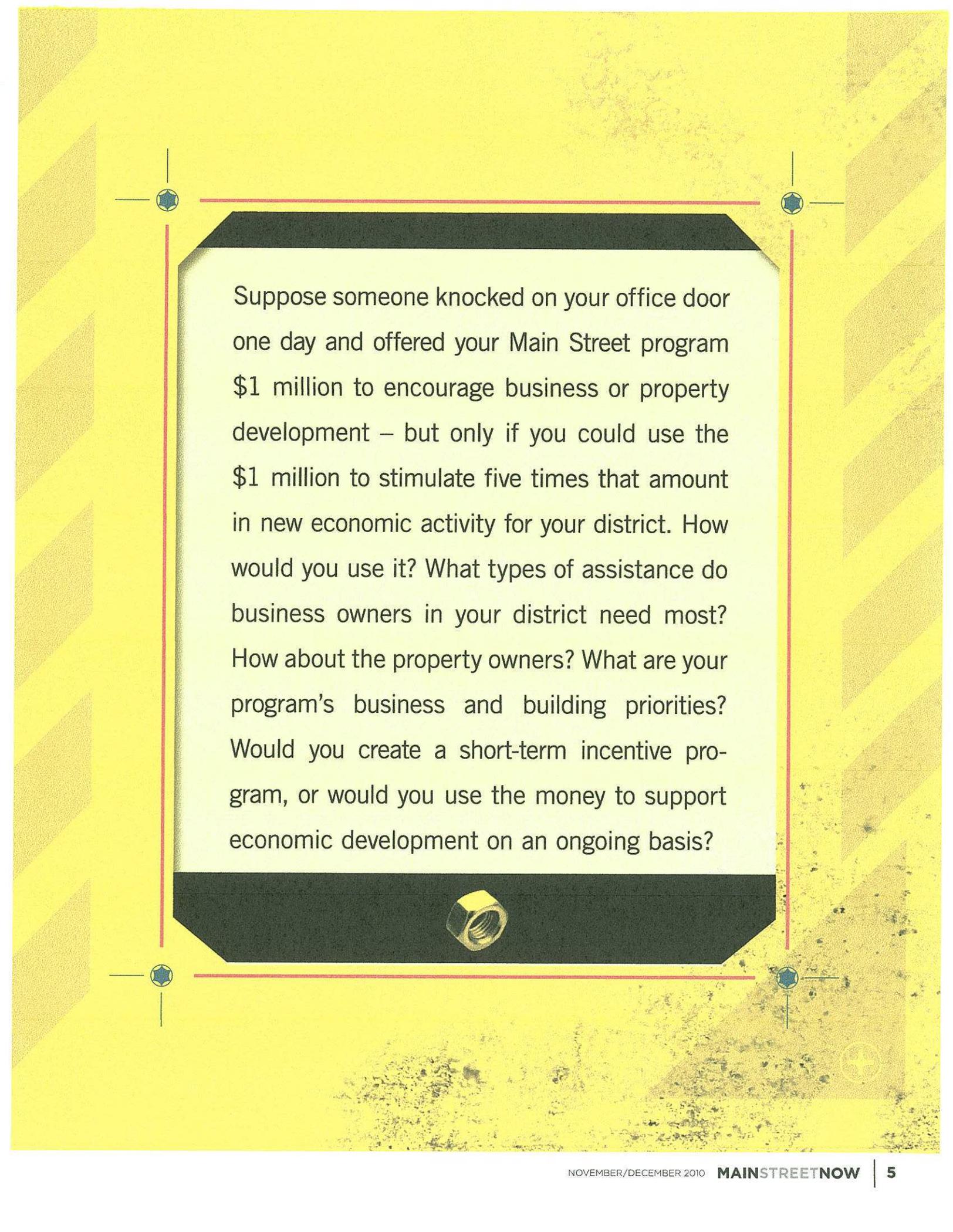


COOL

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOOLS

BY KENNEDY SMITH



Suppose someone knocked on your office door one day and offered your Main Street program \$1 million to encourage business or property development – but only if you could use the \$1 million to stimulate five times that amount in new economic activity for your district. How would you use it? What types of assistance do business owners in your district need most? How about the property owners? What are your program’s business and building priorities? Would you create a short-term incentive program, or would you use the money to support economic development on an ongoing basis?



You might not have a white knight or fairy godmother knocking on your door and making you an offer like this – but there are plenty of things your program can do to stimulate economic development. From launching local angel investment groups to organizing business plan competitions, communities are experimenting with new economic development tools for their older commercial districts – and putting a new spin on some old ones – to stimulate and support commercial district business and property development.

Communities in the United States have powers to stimulate economic development that cities and towns in many other nations lack. Amazing powers, really. Unlike many other nations, most planning and land-use policies in the United States are created at the local level. Local governments have considerable latitude in deciding how much and what types of development will take place within

their boundaries. Some land-use policies are made at the state and federal level, of course, and many are influenced by state and federal policy. But, this still gives local governments, and the private-sector entities with which they often partner to stimulate development, lots of room to create new economic development tools and shape existing tools to better meet their needs.

There are lots of reasons why your organization might want to be actively involved in creating new economic development tools and adapting existing tools to better fit your needs:

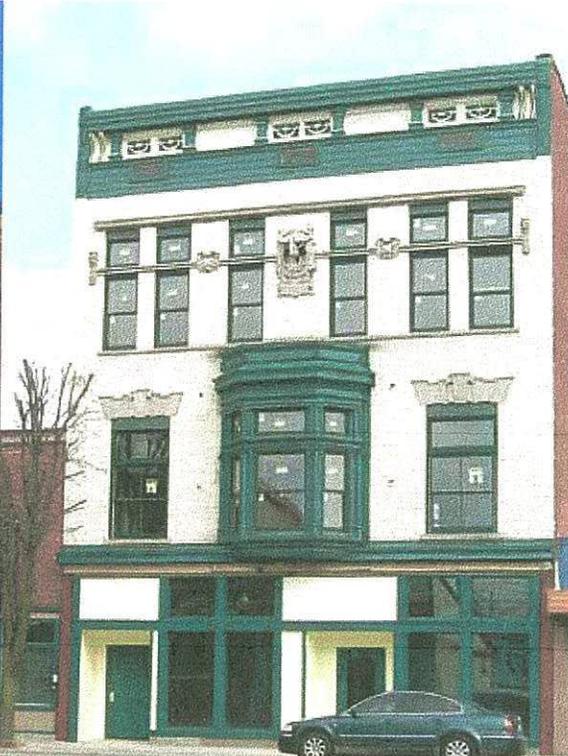
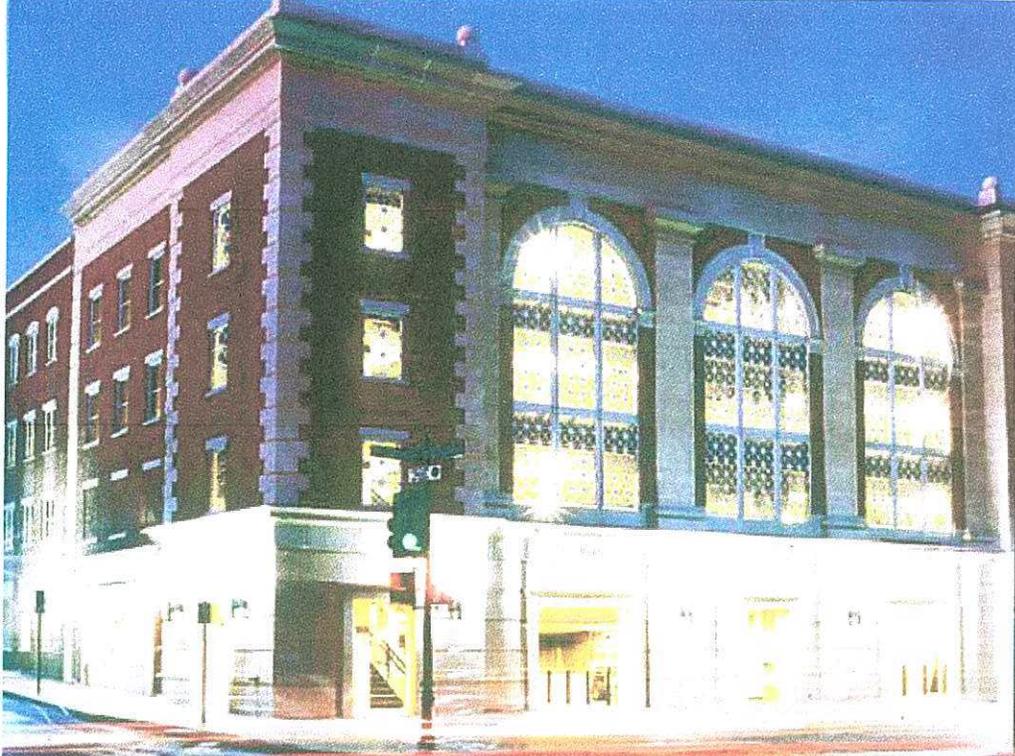
**Leveling the playing field.** It has always mystified me that we create design review processes for older and historic downtowns and neighborhoods, but we usually don't require equally good design along the highways leading into the community.

Development is like water – it follows the path of least resistance. If it is easier for developers to rehab buildings downtown than to build new ones out on the highway, that's what they'll do. If it is easier for entrepreneurs to open businesses downtown than in a shopping center, that's what they'll do. Unfortunately, it's usually easier – much easier – to develop buildings or businesses outside the central business core. Downtown zoning is often more complicated, financing is frequently more difficult to obtain, and there's often the additional hurdle of design review. But, if you can make Main Street the *easiest* place for business and property development to take place – or at least level the playing field – you'll win half the battle.

**Attracting the type of property development you need.** Maybe your district needs upper-floor housing. Maybe it needs to find a new use for a historic warehouse. Maybe it needs



*Development follows the path of least resistance. If it's easier for developers to build malls and for entrepreneurs to open businesses outside of town, that's what they'll do. Communities need to level the playing field by making Main Street the easiest place for business and property development to take place.*



*Economic incentives are often needed to stimulate the type of development a downtown needs, such as upper-floor housing (above right) or to pay for necessary amenities, such as a parking garage for new residents (above left).*

better office space, or a small hotel. Whatever your district needs, you're more likely to get it if you offer economic development tools that help make that particular project more likely to succeed.

**Attracting the types of businesses you need.**

As with property development, you can use economic development tools to attract or cultivate the types of business your district needs.

ing construction, new building development sometimes wins out over historic building rehabilitation because of the greater potential risks bankers might believe exist with rehabilitation. In communities where banks – or other potential lenders – aren't willing or able to loan the money needed to rehab buildings or open or expand businesses, the Main Street organization can seek out alternative, or additional, ways to make capital available.

**Helping businesses increase sales.**

Economic development tools aren't just for start-ups. Practically every existing Main Street business would like to increase sales. But finding capital for expansion is often challenging for small businesses, and options for developing new markets and new distribution channels might seem risky to business owners without some sort of incentive.

**Paying for features, amenities, and services required for other development to take place.**

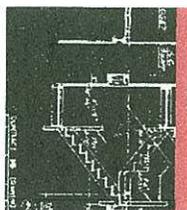
Some downtown development projects depend on other things happening first or happening

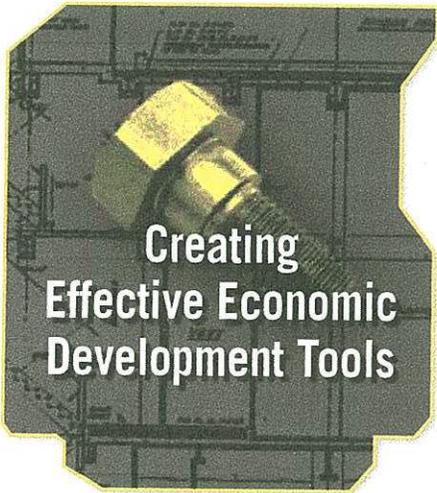
in tandem. For example, creating a sizable number of new housing units in the commercial core might also mean providing parking for some of the new residents. Or, in order to develop and operate successful online commerce to complement sales in their bricks-and-mortar stores, retailers might need high-speed internet service in the district.

**COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE POWERS TO STIMULATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT CITIES AND TOWNS IN MANY OTHER NATIONS LACK.**

**Making capital available for business and property development projects.** Generally speaking, banks don't like to take risks. They like to make safe investments. This almost always means that, given the choice of loaning money to an entrepreneur interested in opening a new business downtown or loaning money to a national retail chain with a thousand other sites and market capitalization in the millions of dollars, they'll choose the national retail chain. Although the situation isn't quite as depressing when it comes to loaning money for build-

**Closing financing gaps in proposed downtown development projects.** In many instances, a building rehabilitation project's budget falls just short of what's needed. Sometimes, the rehabilitation is more expensive than anticipated or the rent levels supported by the market are too low to cover the building's mortgage. Some economic development tools are designed specifically to fill financing gaps in projects that are likely to have significant public benefit.





Identifying or creating economic development tools that will achieve your goals requires a good understanding of how the financing for a building rehabilitation or construction project, or a business start-up or expansion project, works. There are two key documents to understand:

- **Sources and Uses Statement:** the document that lists and tallies the sources and uses of financing for the project; and
- **Pro Forma Spreadsheet:** the document that projects revenues and expenses for the first five years or so after the project is put in service.

Together, these two documents (almost always in spreadsheet format) can provide essential insights into the type of economic development tool that could be most effective in making a project work. Let's walk through an example, and I'll explain what I mean.

At right is a simplified "sources and uses" statement for the rehab of a two-floor historic warehouse building that is being adapted for ground-floor retail and restaurant space and second-floor apartments.

The box at the top of the spreadsheet summarizes major project characteristics – in this simplified example, the "assumptions" box contains just the estimated rehabilitation costs per square foot and the building's total square footage.

Below the assumptions box, the spreadsheet lists the sources of financing for the project. In this example, the sources of financing are owner's equity (the amount of cash that the owner is investing in the project) and a mortgage.

The bottom of the spreadsheet lists the ways this money will be used: property

acquisition; architectural, engineering, and other professional fees; permits; construction; landscaping; construction-period financing; and utility costs during construction.

On page 9 is the operating *pro forma* statement for the first five years of operation after the building has been rehabbed.

As in the "sources and uses" statement, the operating *pro forma* begins with a box that summarizes some of the major assumptions about the project – the amount of square feet to be used for retail/restaurant space and for offices; the initial rents anticipated in the project's first year; estimates of annual rent increases and vacancy rates; the property tax rate; and assumptions about the mortgage – interest rate and the term of the mortgage.

Below the assumptions box, the spreadsheet lists the revenues the building earns. In this

example, rent is its sole source of revenue.

The bottom of the operating *pro forma* lists the building's operating expenses: real estate taxes; insurance; management fees; utilities; repairs and maintenance; water and sewer; trash removal; janitorial services; marketing costs; and reserves for replacement (basically, money to be set aside each year to pay for replacement of building components like roofing, floor coverings, and mechanical equipment).

The project's income, minus its expenses, equals its net operating income. The mortgage payment – the project's "debt service" – is then paid from its net operating income. If there's any money left over, the owner makes a profit. But if the cash flow is negative, there's a problem.

$$\text{Gross income} - \text{gross expenses} = \text{net operating income}$$

$$\text{Net operating income} - \text{debt service} = \text{cash flow}$$

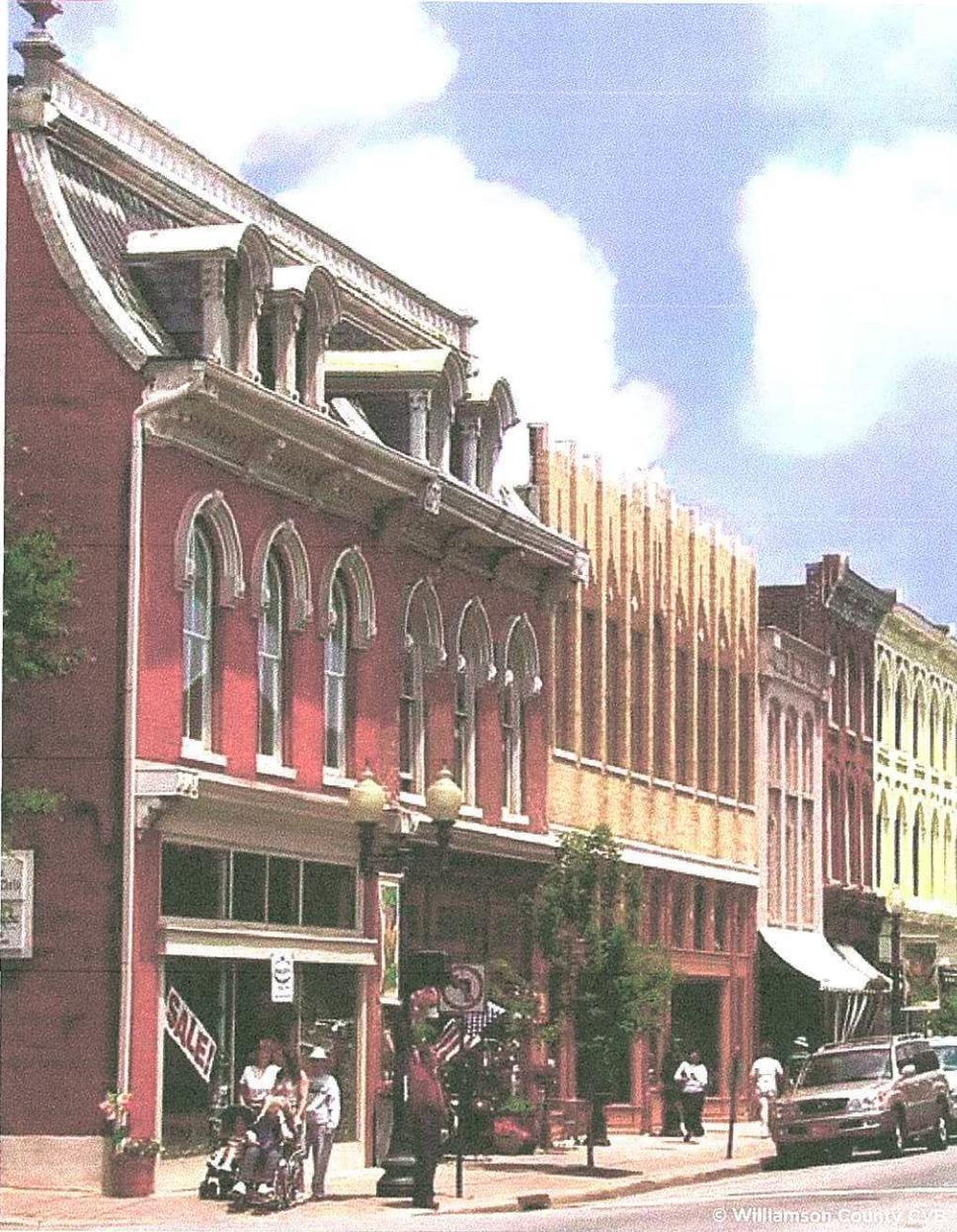
SOURCES + USES OF FINANCING	
<b>Assumptions</b>	
Rehabilitation costs/SF .....	\$125
Square feet (total) .....	10,000
Maximum loan (% of project cost) .....	70%
<b>Sources of financing</b>	
Owners equity .....	\$100,000
Mortgage .....	\$1,400,000
<b>Total sources of financing</b> .....	<b>\$1,500,000</b>
<b>Uses of financing</b>	
Property acquisition .....	\$120,000
Architect, engineer, other professional fees .....	\$100,000
Permits .....	\$1,500
Construction .....	\$1,250,000
Site preparation, landscaping .....	\$20,000
Construction-period financing .....	\$5,000
Construction-period utilities .....	\$3,500
<b>Total uses of financing</b> .....	<b>\$1,500,000</b>

# OPERATING PRO FORMA

## Assumptions

SF retail + restaurant .....	5,000
SF offices .....	5,000
Initial rent/SF (retail + restaurant) .....	\$16.00
Initial rent/SF (offices) .....	\$15.00
Annual rent increase .....	1.5%
Allowance for vacancy .....	5%
Property tax rate .....	0.65%
Mortgage interest rate .....	6%
Mortgage term (years) .....	30

Income	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Gross scheduled rents	\$155,000	\$157,325	\$159,685	\$162,080	\$164,511
Minus: allowance for vacancy	\$7,750	\$7,866	\$7,984	\$8,104	\$8,226
Plus: other income	—	—	—	—	—
Effective gross income (EGI)	\$147,250	\$149,459	\$151,701	\$153,976	\$156,286
Expenses	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>Fixed expenses</b>					
Real estate taxes	\$9,750	\$9,750	\$9,750	\$9,750	\$9,750
Insurance	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Other					
<b>Variable expenses</b>					
Management	\$9,300	\$9,440	\$9,581	\$9,725	\$9,871
Utilities	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Repairs + maintenance	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Water + sewer	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Trash disposal	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Supplies	\$250	\$250	\$250	\$250	\$250
Other					
<b>Reserve for replacement</b>					
Roof (25 yrs)	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400
Mechanical equipment (15 yrs)	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Floor coverings (10 yrs)	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500
Other					
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$66,200</b>	<b>\$66,340</b>	<b>\$66,481</b>	<b>\$66,625</b>	<b>\$66,771</b>
<b>Net operating income (NOI)</b>	<b>\$81,050</b>	<b>\$83,119</b>	<b>\$85,220</b>	<b>\$87,351</b>	<b>\$89,515</b>
Minus: Debt service	\$101,708	\$101,708	\$101,708	\$101,708	\$101,708
<b>Equals: Cash flow</b>	<b>\$(20,658)</b>	<b>\$(18,589)</b>	<b>\$(16,489)</b>	<b>\$(14,357)</b>	<b>\$(12,193)</b>



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To encourage building rehabilitation projects, Main Street programs and their public and private-sector partners can create economic incentives, such as loan guarantee or interest buy-down programs.

One component connects these two spreadsheets: the mortgage payment (“debt service”) on the operating *pro forma* is calculated based on the mortgage amount listed in the “sources” section of the “sources and uses” statement. *But*, if you’ll look closely at these two spreadsheets, you’ll see that the project’s financing has a few problems.

For example, the *pro forma* shows that the project will have a negative cash flow for its first five years. So, unless the property owner can afford to pump money into the project until it begins generating positive cash flow, the project isn’t likely to happen.

Also, the assumptions box on the “sources and uses” statement says that the mortgage issuer will finance a maximum of 70 percent of the total project cost. This is a \$1.5 million project, which means the maximum mortgage the owner can get (at least from this mortgage issuer) is \$1,050,000. But, the “sources” section of the “sources and uses” statement lists only \$100,000 in additional financing – so the owner will need to find some other sources of financing. Without some sort of assistance, this building rehabilitation project will almost certainly not take place.

So, let’s take a close look at the “sources and uses” and operating *pro forma* statements. What could make this project feasible?

**More equity.** If the bank will only finance 70 percent of the project’s value, and the owner can only invest \$100,000, the project needs an additional \$350,000. Where might that \$350,000 come from? It could come from historic rehabilitation tax credits (if they are converted to cash), for example, or perhaps through a grant from the local or state government or from a foundation. Or perhaps the property owner could find someone to share ownership of the building.

**More loans.** It looks like the property owner has only explored the possibility of obtaining a mortgage loan from one bank. Because this bank is only willing to finance 70 percent of the project’s value, perhaps another lender could provide a smaller loan for another 10-20 percent of the project’s value.

**A lower interest rate.** If the bank lowered the interest rate from 6 to 4.5 percent, the project would begin generating a profit in Year 4.

**Lower rehabilitation costs.** Some of the rehabilitation costs aren’t likely to change, but some could potentially be lowered. For example, the city might consider waiving the permit fees it

would ordinarily charge. The owner and/or a nonprofit organization could provide some of the labor, lowering the construction costs. The current owner of the building might consider donating it to a nonprofit organization to obtain a sizable tax deduction. The nonprofit could, in turn, give the building to the new owner or developer, thereby reducing or eliminating acquisition costs.

**Lower operating expenses.** If it costs less to operate the building, the net operating income will increase. So, for example, if the city were willing to waive the building's post-rehab real estate taxes for 10 years, the project would save almost \$10,000 a year. This would cut its negative cash flow almost in half during the first year of operation and make the project profitable by its seventh year.

**More operating income.** Generating more income could help close the project's cash-flow gap. It is unlikely that the property owner will be able to charge a higher rent per square foot for this building than other owners are charging for comparable space in their buildings, but there might be building uses that could generate higher rents than the uses the owner assumed in the operating *pro forma*. Or there could be additional sources of rental income that the owner has not yet considered – renting on-site parking spaces, for example.

In each of these instances, there are potential opportunities for a Main Street program and its public- and private-sector partners to create economic development tools that could increase this project's feasibility. For example:

- The Main Street program could identify or create a second loan source. The Downtown Housing Assistance Fund in Louisville, Kentucky, for instance, stimulates development of market-rate downtown housing by offering below-market-rate loans of 10 to 20 percent of a project's total debt to augment loans made by a primary lender.

- The Main Street program might create a loan guarantee program, using funds from a foundation, from a Community Development Block Grant, or from another source to “guarantee” all or a portion of the loan. This would assure a project's primary lender (in this case, the bank) that if the project fails and the owner defaults on the loan, the loan guarantee capital will be used to repay the bank's loan.
- The Main Street program could “buy down” interest rates with cash from another source, lowering mortgage payments for people who borrow money to rehabilitate downtown buildings. For example, in Kansas, the Downtown Hays Development Corporation and the City of Hays have created an interest buy-down program for façade improvements. The program, funded with a \$15,000 appropriation from the city government, will effectively reduce façade improvement loans of up to \$20,000 by several basis points. (A basis point is one percent of the amount of the loan.)
- The local government might waive permit fees. For example, Shreveport, Louisiana, waives construction permit fees for rehabs of downtown buildings built before 1960.
- The local government might abate property taxes for a certain period of time. Seguin, Texas, provides a five-year abatement of property taxes on improvements made to historic downtown buildings.
- The local government could offer additional incentives, either by designating the district an Enterprise Zone, by creating a special overlay zone to encourage certain types of investment, or simply by passing an ordinance that offers targeted incentives. Downtown South Boston, Virginia, for instance, lies within the town's Enterprise Zone, which offers a rich package of incentives that includes waivers of business license fees and utility tax payments, below-market-rate loans for buying or improving downtown buildings, and access to a revolving loan fund that supplies capital for small business development. All of these local incentives are on top of the Enterprise Zone incentives offered by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The state's incentives include a grant of 30 percent of the cost of qualified building improvements within the Enterprise Zone, with a maximum grant of \$125,000 for projects that cost less than \$2 million and \$250,000 for projects above \$2 million.

*Incentive grant programs can benefit Main Street districts in a variety of ways. In Dubuque, Iowa, the Downtown Housing Incentive program provides incentive grants to encourage downtown property owners to create market-rate housing downtown.*





One of the first projects to win a federal HOPE VI Main Street grant, Stillwater Mills, a historic woolen mill complex in Burrillville, Rhode Island, was converted to offices and apartments, using a combination of federal, state, and local grants and tax credits.



## Why Should the Public Sector Participate?

In most of these instances, local government plays an important role by providing funding, either directly or as a pass-through from a state or federal government source; by waiving fees; or by offering tax or other incentives. Sometimes local governments are reluctant to play an active role in encouraging and supporting development – but there are many good reasons why local and state governments should be actively involved:

**Property tax revenue.** The local government will earn more property tax revenue once a building is rehabilitated and occupied, so it is in the city's best fiscal interest to help ensure that all commercial buildings within its jurisdiction are performing well financially. In this example, the building is worth about \$100,000 before rehabilitation. After being rehabbed, it will be worth about \$1.5 million. At the city's current property tax rate of 0.65 percent, the city will earn \$9,100 more annually on the building after rehabilitation.<sup>1</sup>

**Sales tax revenue.** State governments – and, in many states, local governments – will earn more retail sales tax revenue after a building has been rehabbed and new businesses are operating within it. In this case, half of the building (5,000 square feet) will be used for retail shops and restaurants. If these businesses generate \$200 per square foot in gross sales (about average for downtown retail

- The Main Street program could create an incentive grant program for façade improvements, energy upgrades, or other improvements that benefit the district and the community. There are literally hundreds of examples of downtown incentive grant programs throughout the United States. In LaGrange, Georgia, for instance, the Downtown LaGrange Development Authority offers grants of up to \$1,000 for façade improvements, with grants covering no more than 50 percent of the improvement. In Dubuque, Iowa, the Downtown Housing Incentive Program provides incentive grants of up to \$10,000 per unit to encourage downtown property owners to create market-rate housing units downtown.
- The \$2.5 million program (which, with maximum grants of \$10,000, can help support development of 250 new market-rate housing units) was funded by savings from and reductions in several capital improvements projects.
- The Main Street program could provide technical assistance and guidance to introduce and explain funding options the building owner might not know about. This might include assistance on how to use historic rehabilitation tax credits to help finance the building's rehabilitation, on using the façade improvement option, on building code requirements, or on environmentally friendly upgrades.

shops and restaurants) and the state sales tax rate is 5 percent (about average for most states), the state will collect \$50,000 in sales tax annually from the building's ground-floor tenants.<sup>2</sup> Many states return one percentage point or more of the sales tax to the community in which the sales were generated; in this example, that could mean \$10,000 in revenue for the city.

in new property and sales tax revenue for the city government each year, \$40,000 in sales tax revenue and more than \$43,750 in income tax revenue for the state government, and \$875,000 in wages. Each of these new revenue streams is multiplied as the businesses located in the building buy supplies and inventory from other businesses, as the businesses' workers spend their wages on goods and services, and as the local and state governments

- The Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation, a local organization, and NeighborWorks America, a national organization that focuses on affordable housing development, provided grants of \$50,000 and \$185,000, respectively.

This left a gap of only \$475,000. I don't know what the term and interest rate were for

## THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WILL EARN MORE PROPERTY TAX REVENUE ONCE A BUILDING IS REHABBED AND OCCUPIED, SO IT IS IN THE CITY'S BEST INTEREST TO HELP ENSURE THAT ALL COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS... ARE PERFORMING WELL FINANCIALLY.

**Jobs.** New businesses create new jobs, which bring new expenditures to the community for rents, utilities, groceries, clothing, home furnishings, and many other goods and services. In this instance, the rehabilitated building would provide jobs for approximately 35 people. If these 35 people earned an average of \$25,000 annually, the rehabbed building would generate \$875,000 in annual wages.

**Income tax revenue.** New businesses mean a new source of corporate and personal income tax revenue for the state and federal governments. In this example, if the state's average personal income tax rate is approximately five percent, the \$875,000 in wages earned by the building's workers would translate into approximately \$43,750 in new income tax revenue for the state. And the state would earn business income tax from both the businesses operating within the building and from the building owner.

There are many other benefits, as well. For example, the more activity that takes place downtown from residents, workers, visitors, and businesses, the safer the district will be, and the more appealing it will be to others. But, as important as some of these less quantifiable benefits might be, nothing attracts the attention of government officials quite as quickly as the opportunity to generate new revenues.

In the examples listed above, public investment in this project could generate \$19,100

use the revenues earned to support education, public safety, infrastructure, and other essential community services.

One of my favorite examples is the rehabilitation of Stillwater Mills in Burrillville, Rhode Island. One of the first projects to win a federal HOPE VI Main Street grant, it involved rehabilitating a historic woolen mill complex and converting it to offices and apartments.

The project's rehabilitation cost was estimated to be around \$14.2 million. But the development team ultimately had to borrow only \$475,000. Here's how the financing worked:

- The developers partnered with private-sector investors to convert federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits and federal low-income housing tax credits into cash, which covered more than \$9.5 million of the project's cost.
- They obtained several federal grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: a HOPE VI Main Street grant (\$500,000) and a HOME grant (\$500,000) for development of affordable housing; a Community Development Block Grant (\$603,065); and a Brownfields Economic Development Initiative grant (\$910,000) to remove environmental hazards from the site.
- The State of Rhode Island gave the project an outright grant of \$1,450,000.

the mortgage loan – but, if the term was 30 years and the interest rate was 6 percent, the annual mortgage payment would be around \$34,500, or less than \$3,000 per month – much less than the rental income the project will likely earn, and almost certainly generating enough positive cash flow to more than cover the project's operating expenses.

\$500,000	HOPE VI Main Street grant
\$500,000	HOME grant
\$603,065	Community Development Block Grant
\$910,000	Brownfields Economic Dev. Initiative grant
\$1,450,000	Grant from State of Rhode Island
\$5,115,342	Low income housing tax credit equity
\$4,406,815	Historic rehabilitation tax credit equity
\$50,000	Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation grant
\$185,000	NeighborWorks America grant
\$475,000	First mortgage

<sup>1</sup>  $(\$1,500,000 - \$100,000) \times 0.65\% \text{ property tax rate} = \$910$     <sup>2</sup>  $5,000 \text{ SF} \times \$200/\text{SF} \times 5\% \text{ tax rate} = \$50,000$



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## Making Things Happen: How Cool Economic Development Tools Work

**They leverage other resources.** The Stillwater Mill project illustrates one of the key characteristics of cool economic development tools: great leverage. With the exception of the tax credit equity, no one funding source contributed more than seven percent of the project's financing; yet each of these economic develop-

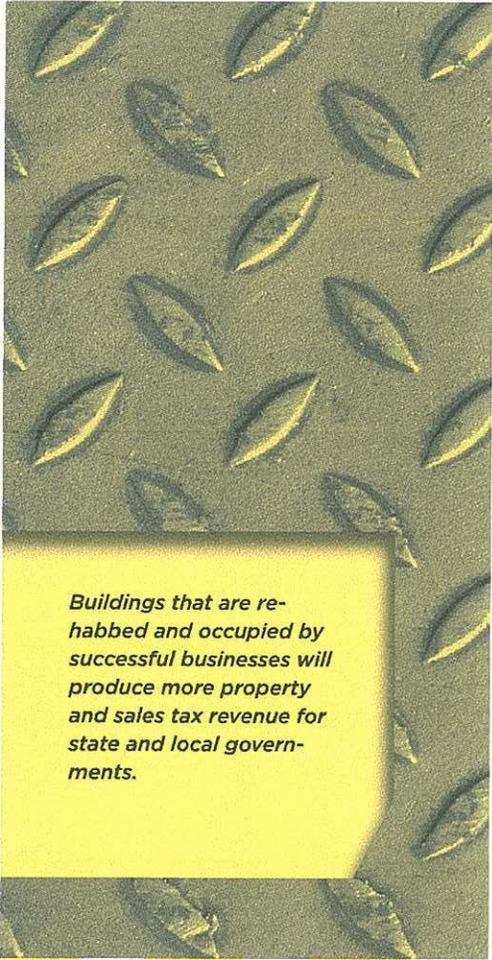
ment tools was instrumental in making the project happen (we'll talk more about tax credit equity later). So, for a relatively small percentage of the project's total cost, each funder and investor can claim an important role in turning a derelict property into a profitable project – and a source of community pride.

**They're designed for specific needs.** Some economic development tools provide one-size-fits-all development assistance – for example, a revolving loan fund for downtown building rehabilitation projects. Tools like this can benefit just about every commercial district. But the really cool economic development tools are designed for specific needs or opportunities. They make things happen that probably wouldn't otherwise.

For example, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, designed an economic development tool specifically to recruit a cluster of new restaurants to a concentrated area on the edge of its central business district. The program – called

Restaurant Row – made it possible for restaurateurs willing to open a new establishment within this concentrated area to borrow most of the financing they needed from one of two local banks. The city used Community Development Block Grant funds to pay the debt service on loans made through the program, making it possible for restaurateurs to defer loan repayments for the first two years of their restaurants' operation. It's usually very costly to launch a new restaurant – fixtures and furnishings are expensive. It also takes a while for restaurants to build a customer base, so it's particularly important that new restaurants be able to cover start-up costs while gradually increasing sales. Winston-Salem's Restaurant Row program tackled this problem head-on by relieving debt repayment during the critical start-up period. The program successfully attracted 10 new restaurants.

Another example: several years ago, a college community in suburban Detroit was concerned about keeping recent grad school students in the area, rather than watch-



**Buildings that are rehabbed and occupied by successful businesses will produce more property and sales tax revenue for state and local governments.**

ing them move away as soon as they got their diplomas. So, when the college hired a developer to create new housing for graduate students, the developer suggested setting aside a percentage of each student's rent into an interest-bearing escrow account that could be used as a down payment to purchase the apartment after three years. Unfortunately, the housing project fell through – but the concept of setting aside a portion of rent to accrue a down payment could be an effective strategy to encourage young adults to stay in a community and build their careers there.

**They have significant impact.** When an economic development tool is designed to meet a specific need, such as keeping young adults in the community, or to encourage a certain type of development, such as developing a concentrated cluster of new restaurants, it is likely to have a greater impact than if it is designed to meet routine, ongoing downtown development needs, such as making loan money available for historic building rehabilitation.



## More than Money

People usually think of economic development tools as *finance* tools to help business and property owners close financial gaps or to provide capital for projects that might otherwise have a hard time getting financing, and some communities have created very cool tools to help fund projects. But non-financial tools can often be equally or even more effective in meeting certain needs or stimulating certain types of development activity.

**Technical assistance.** Some of the most effective economic development tools don't involve loans or equity investments at all. Instead, they focus on helping business or property owners make their businesses more profitable by providing training, encouragement, ideas, and access to resources that they might not otherwise have. For instance, production kitchens – professional kitchens in which entrepreneurs (and even established restaurateurs) can prepare and package food for resale somewhere else – have popped up in several older and historic commercial districts in recent years.

Entrepreneurs typically rent access to the production kitchen for a day or two at a time; this gives them access to lots of work space and professional equipment that is too expensive for them to buy or rent on their own, particularly if they only produce small quantities for resale. Some production kitchens focus on particular types of food or on particular types of producers. For example, La Cocina, a production kitchen in San Francisco, focuses on helping low-income people – particularly women – develop and market food products. In addition to renting its production kitchen space to entrepreneurs, La Cocina offers training programs, workshops, and one-on-one assistance.

A business plan competition is another (usually) great technical assistance tool that helps business owners focus intensively on improving their operations. Business plan competitions typically give entrepreneurs several months to develop a business plan, often with hands-on guidance from business management experts. A panel of judges reviews the business plans submitted and selects a winner. The winner usually receives a cash prize, publicity, and guidance in implementing the plan. But all of the business owners who enter the competition are winners in the long run because the process of developing a business plan helps them think deeply about ways to make their businesses more successful. Business plan competitions can be general (e.g., a business plan for a new downtown business) or specific (e.g., a business plan for adding a new product line or creating a new sales distribution channel), with a cash prize to help defray or cover the costs of implementing the plan.

When it comes to the bottom line, two different approaches can accomplish essentially the same goal of increasing the success and profitability of a business: reducing costs or increasing revenue. Financial incentive programs typically address the former; technical assistance programs usually address the latter. Ideally, Main Street programs should offer both.

**Facilitation.** The simple act of bringing people together so that they can pool their resources or gain better economies of scale can serve as a powerful economic development tool. For example, it might not be financially feasible for a single downtown property owner to convert historic rehabilitation tax credits into cash to rehab a building because the accounting and legal costs might offset most or all of the value of the tax credits. But, by banding together, a group of several property owners could share accounting and legal costs and could more effectively attract a tax credit investor. By promoting an idea (in this case, grouping property owners together) and providing some guidance (in this case, explaining how grouping properties together might make it possible for all participating property owners to convert tax credits to cash), the Main Street program can stimulate a form of development and reinvestment that might not otherwise occur.



## Creating an Economic Development Toolkit

So, here are some of my favorite cool economic development tools – some financial, some technical assistance, some facilitation. Some of these tools aren't particularly new, but they are woefully underused and should, in my opinion, be a larger part of most Main Street programs' toolkits.

**Tax credits.** The federal historic rehabilitation tax credit program provides great tax benefits to owners of historic commercial buildings. There are two federal historic rehabilitation tax credits: a credit equal to 10 percent of qualified rehabilitation costs for non-historic

buildings built before 1936 and a credit equal to 20 percent of qualified rehab costs for historic buildings. The 20 percent credit is obviously the more lucrative of the two, and more than half of the states offer a state income tax credit that roughly parallels the 20 percent federal credit. When you combine the federal and state credits, you've got an amazing incentive.

BUT, tax credits aren't always a good fit for property owners. For example:

- There are some income restrictions. For many Main Street property owners, owning and managing their buildings isn't their main profession. The IRS considers income from activities that aren't someone's main profession to be "passive" income, and it limits the amount of tax benefits an individual can use if those benefits are generated by passive income.
- Sometimes property owners need cash up front to make improvements, rather than credits to use afterwards. Property owners can convert federal historic rehabilitation tax credits to cash by partnering with an investor who isn't subject

to passive income restrictions (like a corporation) and letting that investor use the credits in exchange for a cash investment in the project. However, because of the amount of accounting and legal work involved in setting up this sort of transaction, investors are usually only interested in projects that have rehabilitation costs substantial enough to earn them a hefty amount of tax credits. That means they aren't likely to be interested in rehabilitation projects involving single storefront buildings.

But Main Street programs can play a key role in making tax credits a more practical and appealing option for downtown property owners. For example, the Main Street program can help bring together a group of property owners interested in rehabilitating their buildings; as a group, they might be able to attract the attention of a tax credit investor. Or, the Main Street director might talk with corporations in the community and region about becoming tax credit investors for downtown projects. In Oskaloosa, Iowa, for instance, a local lighting company with a global market, Musco Lighting, became the tax credit invest-

**TWO DIFFERENT APPROACHES CAN ACCOMPLISH ESSENTIALLY THE SAME GOAL OF INCREASING THE SUCCESS AND PROFITABILITY OF A BUSINESS: REDUCING COSTS OR INCREASING REVENUE.**



tor for the rehabilitation of several downtown commercial buildings – a project that would probably not have attracted the attention of an out-of-town corporation. Musco’s investment was motivated not only by the ability to offset taxable income with tax credits but also by a civic-minded desire to support downtown revitalization in its hometown.

**Tax-increment financing.** Undeveloped land and vacant buildings generate significantly less property tax revenue for local governments than developed land and occupied, rehabilitated buildings. But sometimes property can’t be developed, or buildings rehabbed, or districts revitalized, without some infusion of cash. Tax-increment financing (TIF) helps provide some of the cash that’s needed by using the new property taxes generated by the redeveloped land and rehabbed buildings for the redevelopment and revitalization process. The amount of tax revenue that results from redevelopment, above and beyond what the municipality is already collecting on the undeveloped (or pre-rehabbed) property is the tax “increment.” This isn’t a new tax, or a higher tax rate; it’s simply that because the property’s value

has increased due to the improvements, the prevailing property tax rate generates more revenue.

There are two types of tax increment financing: pay-as-you-go and bonded. With a pay-as-you-go TIF, property tax revenue accumulates as the district’s property values increase. When the accumulated revenue reaches a certain level, it can be tapped for things the district needs, from business development plans to new benches and trash cans. With a bonded TIF, the city estimates how much new property tax revenue will be generated by a specific rehabilitation or development project, then sells bonds to raise that amount of revenue, paying off the bonds as the new property tax revenue comes in. Here are a couple of examples.

- The historic Hippodrome Theatre, in Baltimore, was rehabbed about 10 years ago. It needed a large number of on-site parking spaces, however; and the developer could not afford to build a parking garage in conjunction with the theatre redevelopment. To solve the problem, the city used TIF to generate funds for construction of a parking garage. It issued

municipal bonds to raise the money up front and is paying off the bonds with the incremental tax revenue it collects annually from the rehabbed, reopened theatre.

- Carlsbad, California, created a redevelopment district in the 1980s to help revitalize its downtown, Carlsbad Village. Unlike the TIF enacted for the Hippodrome Theatre, which issued bonds to raise money up front, the TIF in Carlsbad Village is “pay as you go.” It pools the new, incremental property tax revenue that is collected each year into a special fund that can be used for revitalization and redevelopment projects approved by the city council and the city’s redevelopment authority.

**Community capital.** I’ve seen communities wait for years for the right business or the perfect entrepreneur to come along ... and most are still waiting for someone to walk through the door and say he wants to open a cool new restaurant, buy a block of buildings and create some great upper-floor housing, or rehab the downtown’s historic movie theatre. So, it’s not too surprising that a growing

*A business plan competition can be a great technical assistance tool that helps new entrepreneurs develop feasible operating plans and existing business owners focus on ways to improve their operations (left).*

*The downtown program in Mobile, Alabama, offers forgivable loans for business start-ups and expansions in targeted downtown blocks. If the business remains in operation for five years, the loan repayments are refunded to the borrower (right).*



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number of communities are taking the bull by the horns and raising money themselves to pay for building rehabilitations and business start-ups and expansions. Community equity can be particularly useful in helping launch businesses the community really wants – and can realistically support – but for which it has been unable to find an interested or available business owner or entrepreneur.

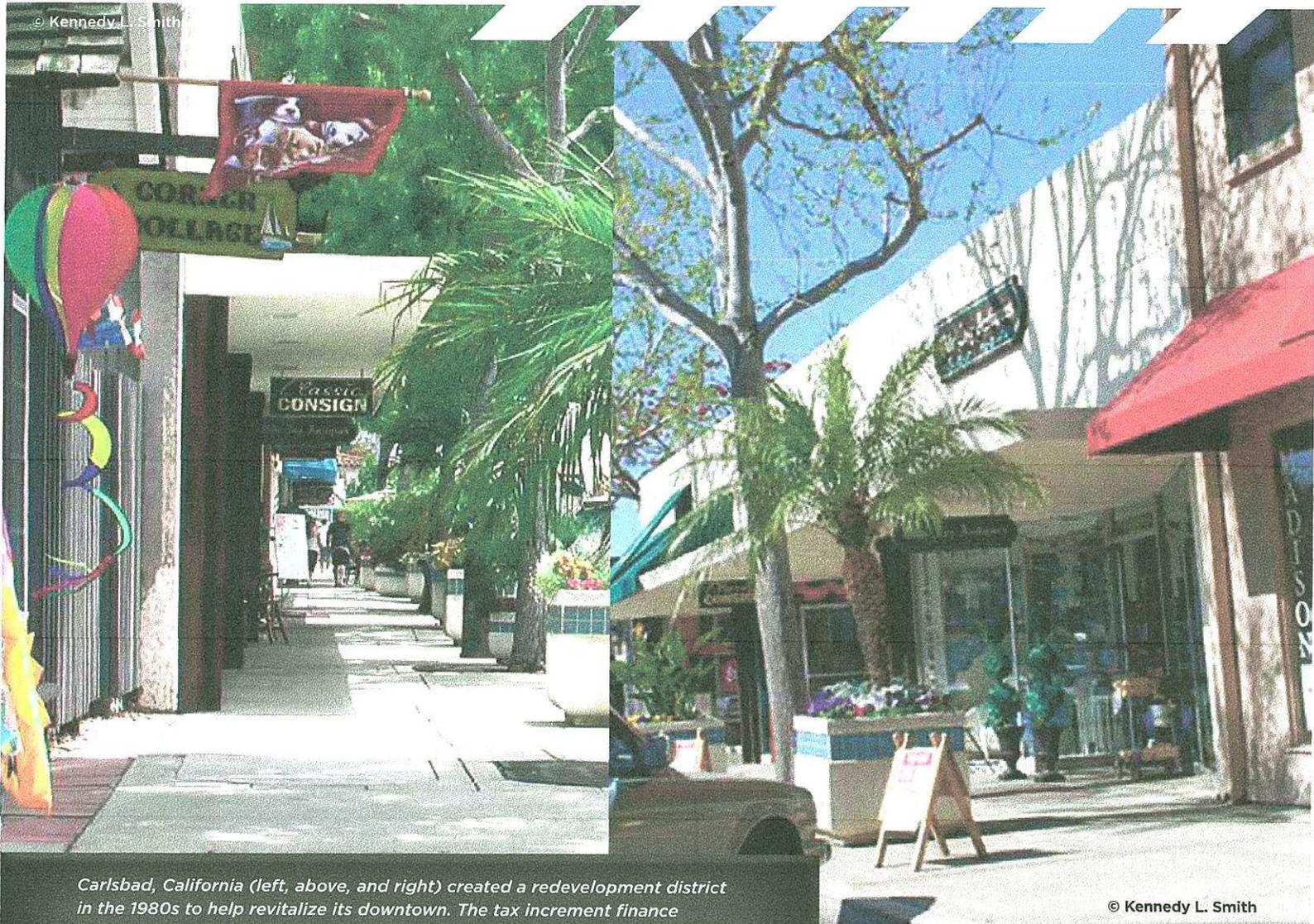
- **Private investment groups:** A small group of community residents pools its money and creates or buys a business as a group.
- **Community stock ownership:** A business, or group of businesses, sells shares of stock in its operation to members of the community. More than 20 community-owned downtown department stores have been created this way, with residents buying stock and, when the business is

profitable, receiving periodic dividends. In the United Kingdom, three charitable foundations have given this model of community ownership a boost by offering to match up to £40,000 in locally raised funds for the launch of community-owned department stores.

**Shared building ownership.** When commercial property values increase more rapidly than retail sales, businesses may be at risk of failure as rents escalate. The best defense against this form of commercial gentrification is for merchants to own the buildings in which they operate. In some circumstances, it might be possible for a nonprofit organization, a private foundation, or a civic-minded local corporation to buy commercial buildings in partnership with business owners. Instead of having to cover the entire purchase price, a business owner might only need to cover half of the cost, with the remainder being paid by the civic-minded investment partner.

The business owner and the investment partner would create a limited liability company or other corporation to own the building, with ownership shares allocated according to the percentage of the purchase price each partner covers. If the business fails, or the owner retires or decides to sell his or her share of the building for some other reason, he or she would simply sell it to another business owner. The civic-minded investment partner would continue to own its share of the building. This would probably be a good investment for the investment partner, as it is likely that the district's buildings will continue to appreciate in value as time goes by.

**Tax incentives for downtown investment.** In many European nations, it is common for governments to charge higher taxes on businesses and commercial buildings located outside town centers than on those that locate or built downtown. Why? Because they



Carlsbad, California (left, above, and right) created a redevelopment district in the 1980s to help revitalize its downtown. The tax increment finance district pools new, incremental property tax revenue each year into a special fund that finances revitalization projects approved by the city.

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recognize that it will cost more to provide municipal services and to extend and maintain infrastructure in outlying areas. No such system exists in the United States because land-use decisions in this country are made at the local, not the federal, level. But local governments can choose to guide development patterns through property tax policy, encouraging businesses to locate downtown and encouraging developers to improve downtown buildings – and some communities have done so.

Nearly 20 years ago, Collierville, Tennessee, passed an ordinance charging a fee for commercial development larger than a certain size outside the downtown area. The fee acts as a deterrent to development outside the downtown, and the fees help support Collierville's downtown revitalization initiative.

**Coworking space.** Collective work space – or coworking space, as it is usually called – provides shared office or production space to small businesses (usually with solo practitioners) at a fraction of what it would otherwise cost the business owner to rent space independently. For a relatively modest monthly fee, the business owner has a small work space in a large office that houses a dozen or more similar tenants. The tenants share use of a conference room, office equipment, high-speed internet service, a kitchen, and other amenities, such as a reference library or a receptionist. Coworking spaces not only help the business owners who work there – by providing them with relatively low rent and with the synergy of working with other small business owners; they also benefit the

overall district, which now has more daytime workers.

**Incubating new retail businesses inside established retail businesses.** Successful, established retailers have already done the hard work of building a customer base (not that that process ever ends, of course), while start-up businesses desperately need exposure to potential customers. So, successful, established stores make great incubators for new businesses. In some instances, the start-up business might place its products in the host business, with the host retailer essentially folding the start-up's products into its own merchandise mix in exchange for a flat monthly fee or a percentage of sales. If the host business has room to create a physical space for the start-up business, that's also an option – just try to avoid a “mini-mall” appearance, which turns lots of shoppers off.



A restaurant located in a historic former hardware store in downtown Charlottesville, Virginia – called The Hardware Store Restaurant – was perfectly designed for this set up. Several small bays in the restaurant’s entryway made ideal homes for start-up businesses. The

InQBox, a Singapore-based business, manufactures stackable display cubes approximately 3-feet-by-3-feet, stacks the cubes from floor to ceiling and wall to wall, and rents the cubicles for a nominal amount to artisans and small manufacturers that can’t yet afford an

than 500 employees – but, of course, most small businesses are much smaller than that. In the late 1970s, the term “microenterprise” popped up to define a business that has no more than five workers and that could benefit from loans of \$35,000 or less. The SBA

## COMMUNITY EQUITY CAN HELP LAUNCH BUSINESSES THE COMMUNITY REALLY WANTS – AND CAN SUPPORT – BUT HASN’T BEEN ABLE TO FIND AN INTERESTED OR AVAILABLE ENTREPRENEUR.

restaurant owner provided storage and work space for his start-up tenants on the building’s top floor. More than 500 people patronized the restaurant on an average day, and all of them walked past the small bays of the start-ups, giving them great exposure. Over the 30 years the restaurant was in operation before the owners retired, more than 20 small businesses were born there and successfully moved into their own storefronts.

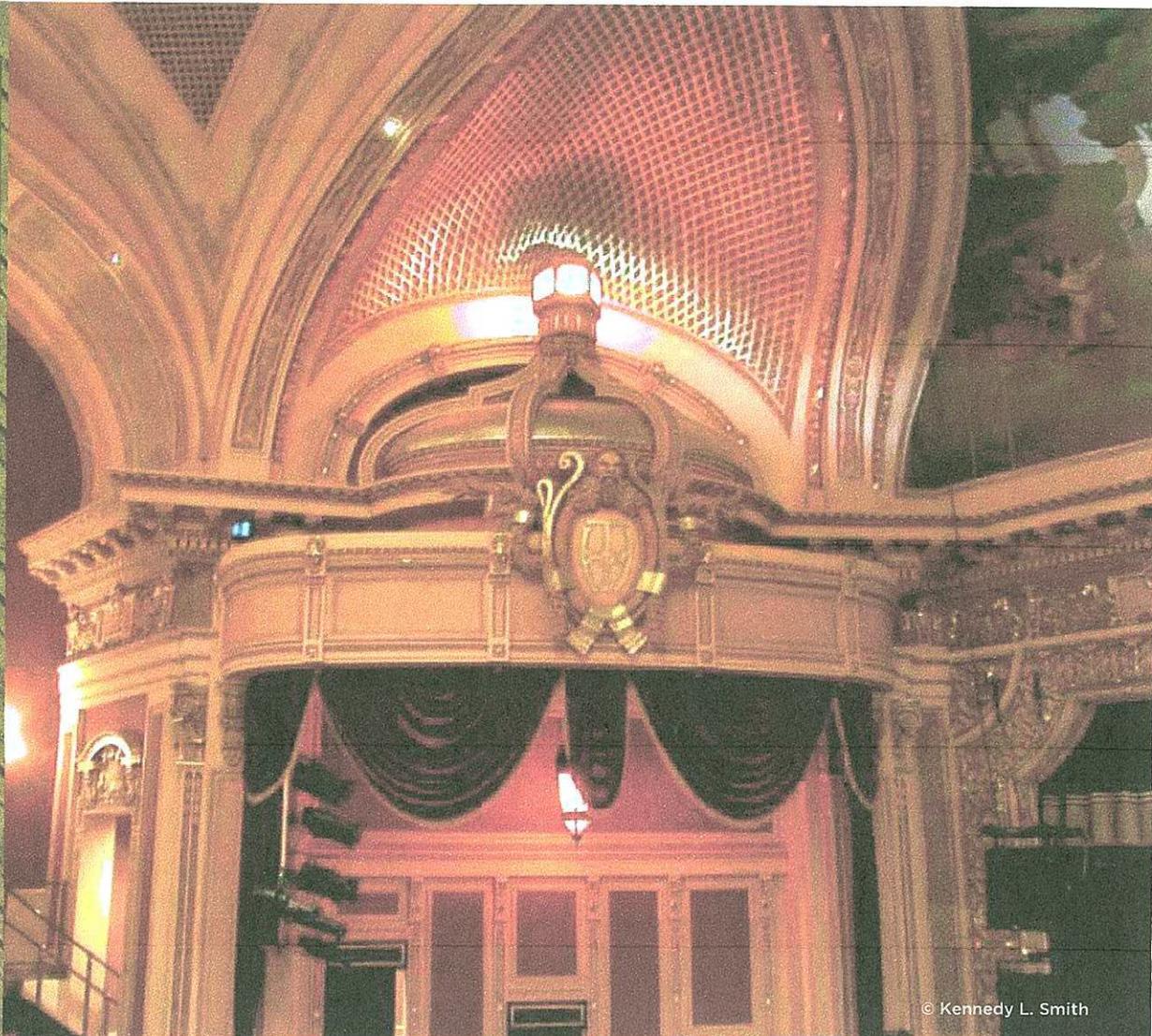
independent storefront space. InQBox provides a staff person who fulfills sales and distributes proceeds to the cube renters.

**Microfinance programs.** Microfinance programs provide small, but crucial, amounts of funding to small businesses. What’s a small business, really, you might ask? According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, a small business is *technically* one with fewer

adopted that definition in 1991, designating microenterprises as a subset of small businesses. And, there are lots of them. In 2005, more than 60 percent of all businesses in the United States were microenterprises. And, consistently, microenterprises create the largest share of the nation’s new jobs, in almost every industry.

According to ACCION USA, a leading microfinance organization, most microen-

*When Baltimore’s historic Hippodrome Theatre was rehabbed a decade ago, it needed a large number of on-site parking spaces, which the developer could not afford to provide. The city solved the problem by using tax increment financing to generate funds for a parking garage.*



terprises have never procured bank loans for their businesses. They finance their establishments with their own savings, with loans or investments from family and friends, and with their personal credit cards. Of those that have applied for bank loans, many are turned down because they lack collateral.

As a result, many microenterprises are undercapitalized; they don't have the cash needed to add new product lines, to expand into new markets, to upgrade fixtures and equipment, to buy the buildings in which they operate, or to finance other desirable improvements. According to a survey conducted by a research firm on behalf of ACTION USA, only 18 percent of the nation's microenterprises have received bank loans. Of those that have *not* received bank loans, 46 percent have never considered getting one, 42 percent would like a bank loan but haven't applied because they think the process would be too difficult or that their applications would be rejected, and 13 percent have applied but were rejected.

Microfinance programs help make small loans available to small businesses for things like creating an online storefront, adding a new product line, or increasing store hours. Microloans are technically loans of less than \$35,000 – but the maximum loan amount of many microloan programs is \$10,000, and some are even smaller. These loan programs are often administered by a nonprofit community development organization working in conjunction with local banks.

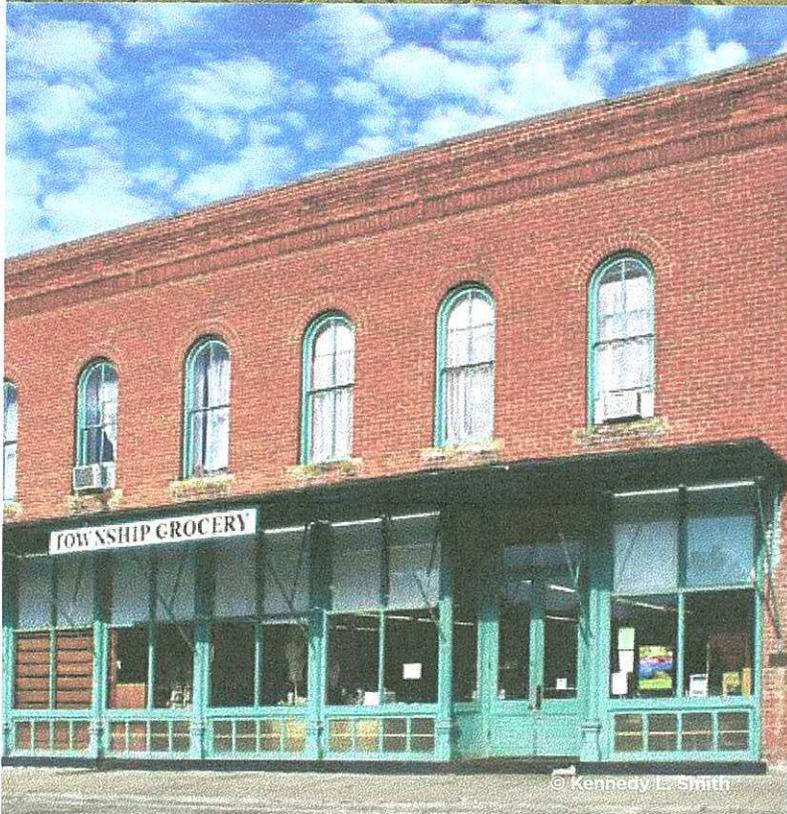
**Forgivable loans.** The downtown management organizations in Mobile, Alabama; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Louisville, Kentucky, all offer, or have recently offered, forgivable loans for business start-ups and expansions in targeted downtown blocks. The programs vary slightly from one another, but their basic characteristics are similar. In Mobile, loans have an upper limit of \$20,000, and business owners must match the loan amount 1:1 with their own funds. The loan term is five years, at zero percent interest. Borrowers

must make monthly principal payments, but if the business remains in operation for five years, the loan repayments are refunded to the borrower. Businesses must have ground-floor street access, must be open a minimum of 48 hours per week, and must be a business recommended in the community's downtown retail development plan.

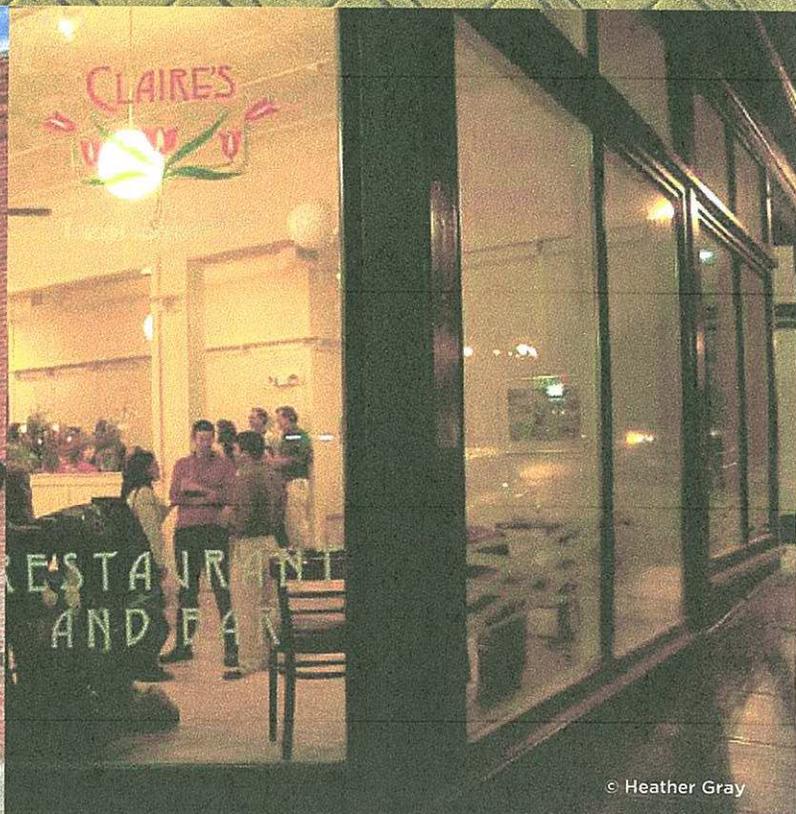
**Charitably minded venture capital funds.** Venture capital funds are usually created to make profits for their investors, but sometimes they have charitable goals. The Boston Community Venture Fund and Pacific Community Ventures, for example, invest their equity in businesses that provide needed goods and services, like grocery stores, to underserved neighborhoods.

**Shared building equity.** In downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts in which commercial rents are accelerating quickly and threatening to force out locally owned businesses, some community organizations

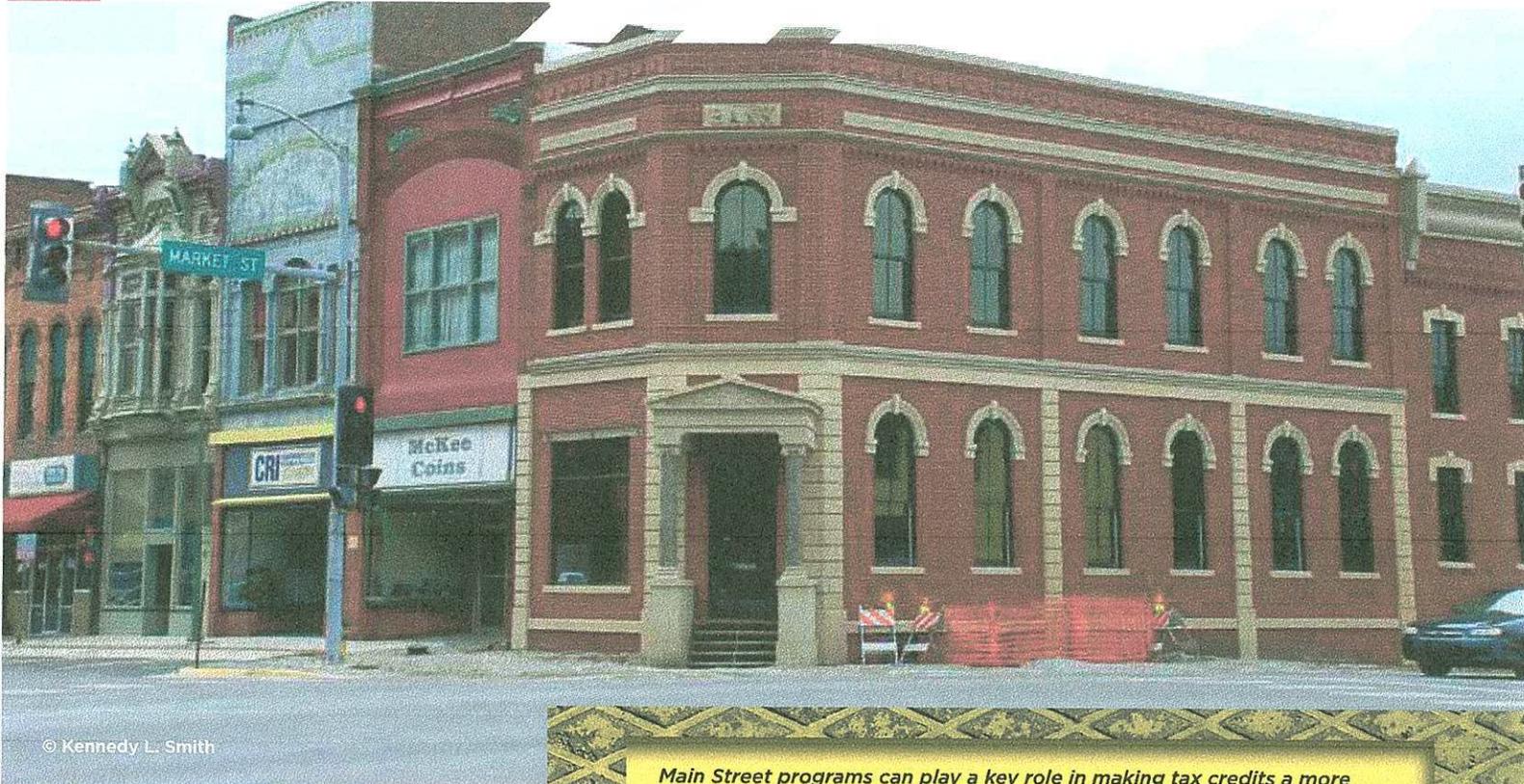
*A growing number of communities are taking matters into their own hands and raising the money to rehab buildings and finance new businesses. Bonaparte, Iowa, (below left) raised more than \$100,000 to create Township Grocery, a community-owned grocery and hardware store that has remained strong for more than 20 years. In Hardwicke, Vermont (below right), a downtown bookstore owner mobilized residents to raise operating capital to create Claire's, a fine dining establishment.*



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*Main Street programs can play a key role in making tax credits a more practical and appealing option for downtown property owners. In Oskaloosa, Iowa, a local lighting company, Musco Lighting, became the tax credit investor for the rehabilitation of several downtown buildings.*

have bought commercial buildings, then sold a share of the buildings to the business owners operating there. This reduces the cost of the building since the business owner is only buying a percentage of the property.

**Use your resources to leverage additional resources.** Potential funders are often more willing to support a project if other funders are also supporting it.



**Find funding sources that fit your priorities, rather than shaping your priorities to fit funding sources.** Remember urban renewal? The

federal government offered communities lots of money to “eliminate slum and blight.” As a result, scores of communities demolished blocks of older and historic downtown buildings – believing, somewhat weirdly, that demolishing vacant buildings would somehow eliminate the reasons they were vacant. I have never yet met a civic leader from a community that used urban renewal money to demolish downtown buildings who doesn’t now regret it.

Similar regrets are popping up around grants and financing for low-income housing. While it is certainly a good thing for commercial districts to pursue, it should be a component of a comprehensive housing program for the district, a program that also includes market-rate housing, transportation, and other popular federal programs of the past couple of decades. It’s awfully tempting to grab a grant when it’s dangling in front of you – but, is the activity it supports really one that fits your district’s overall, long-term agenda?

**Provide capital and incentives.** Often, there isn’t enough capital to finance the building rehabilitation and business development that would make the commercial core healthy. The money is almost certainly there *somewhere*, but banks may prefer to loan money to national retail chains rather than to independently owned businesses, property owners may not understand how to tap historic rehabilitation tax credits, or, for a variety of other reasons, capital may be hard to come by. Consequently, downtown revitalization programs must often play a central role in ensuring that adequate capital is available. But simply making capital available isn’t always enough to convince entrepreneurs and property owners to invest in new businesses and downtown building development projects. For that, your program will probably need incentives – either financial, technical assistance, or facilitation, or some combination of these.



© Kennedy L. Smith

Successful retailers make great incubators for new businesses. For more than 30 years, the Hardware Store Restaurant in Charlottesville, Virginia, displayed the wares of startup businesses in small bays in the restaurant's entryway. More than 20 small businesses were born there and eventually moved into their own shops.

**Start small.** If your program doesn't have a track record of creating economic development tools, start with some small tools and gradually build the capacity of your organization and your partners to manage larger and/or more complicated tools.

**Think big.** Always keep your organization's goals for your district's long-term future in mind as you're designing economic development tools. What are the major transformations that need to occur over the next 10 or 20 years, and what sorts of economic development tools are most likely to help you get there?

*Kennedy Smith is a principal with the Community Land Use and Economics (CLUE) Group and a former director of the National Trust Main Street Center. She is an Allied Member of the National Main Street Network. To learn more about CLUE group, visit <http://allieddirectory.mainstreet.org/listing/cluegroup.html>. Kennedy can be reached at [kennedy@cluegroup.com](mailto:kennedy@cluegroup.com).*

### Join the Conversation Online

You have just been hired to be the executive director of the Bigsville Main Street Program. For the program's first five years of activity, its board and previous executive director worked very hard to make more capital available for building rehabilitation and business development projects, and they have created a revolving loan fund for building rehabilitation and a loan guarantee program for business development and expansion. But, in spite of the fact that adequate capital is now available, not much is happening. The organization's long-range goals include creating upper-floor market-rate housing, bringing more restaurants downtown, and expanding the number of small (e.g., five workers or less) working arts studios and manufacturing businesses.

**What economic development tools would you recommend to encourage business and property owners to take action towards one or more of these goals, and why?**

To give us your opinion, go to <http://bit.ly/e8Z9FH>.

# MAIN STREET NOW

The Journal of The National Trust Main Street Center

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011

## FILLING VACANT BUILDINGS

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New Take  
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By Doug Loescher,  
Director, NTMSC



## FROM STUBBORN VACANCY... TO OVERNIGHT SUCCESS

All it takes are a few dark storefronts to give your street a bad rap. You can have a hundred occupancies filling 98 percent of your downtown buildings, but just a few empty windows on a key downtown corner can send a subtle yet powerfully negative message to the public: *STAY AWAY*.

In some downtowns, vacancies are sporadic and short-lived – a product of a stubborn recession that has been tough on older small businesses, but short on new entrepreneurs. In other city centers, vacant storefronts are just the first floor of entirely empty *buildings* that, so far, have been too large or too difficult to redevelop. These “white elephants” stall the momentum of progress in otherwise successful districts. Yet years of redevelopment strategies have proven that there is no one magic bullet to wipe our downtowns clean of vacancies, and given the nation’s tough economic times, “problem real estate” has become even more pervasive.

This issue of *Main Street NOW* explores a variety of tools and creative approaches to change the perception – if not reality – of vacant properties, with tried-and-true preservation tools and new insights from the field. In our lead article, Wisconsin Main Street architect Joe Lawniczak explores the economic drivers of vacant commercial properties, offering a rationale for preservation, along with a menu of “carrots and sticks” for property owners that can create a climate for occupancy and redevelopment.

And speaking of “sticks,” small-town Main Streets have too often gotten the short end of one, when it comes to the federal historic tax credit. As one of the biggest “carrots” out there for

building rehabs, this otherwise powerful economic engine for preservation and revitalization in larger cities and urban areas has too often bypassed our rural commercial districts. In an article by National Trust staffer Erica Stewart, we look at how Main Street organizations, armed with better information and innovative strategies, are making tax credits a key tool in their campaign against vacant buildings.

Even more “sticks” can be found in a new publication by the National Trust on successful regulatory approaches to “demolition by neglect.” See our excerpt from this valuable publication on page 31. And if regulations and redevelopment aren’t realistic ways to rid your district of vacant storefronts this year, you may find inspiration in “A New Take On Pop-Up Storefronts” by Cambridge, Maryland, Main Street Manager Jim Duffy. This year, a creative contest called the Holiday Pop Up Project gave would-be entrepreneurs a chance to try out new retail concepts in empty buildings *rent-free* during the 2010 holiday season!

So while vacancies may be no stranger to Main Street in the past several years, we hope that these articles illustrate how we can change this dynamic and create new momentum, with big projects that may be years in the making, and small success stories that can “pop-up” overnight.



# MAIN STREET NOW

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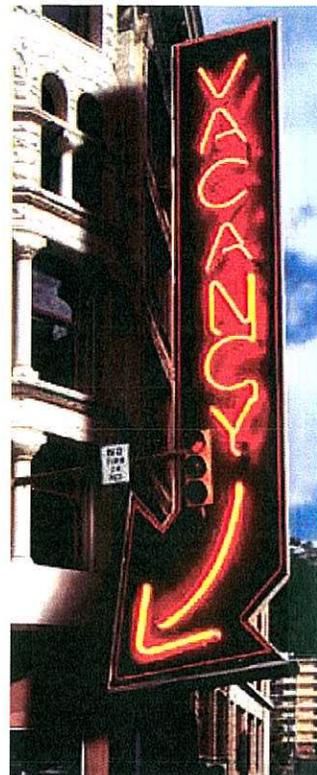
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## NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the only national, private organization chartered by Congress to encourage public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects significant in American history. The National Trust Main Street Center provides technical assistance in downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization to communities throughout the nation.

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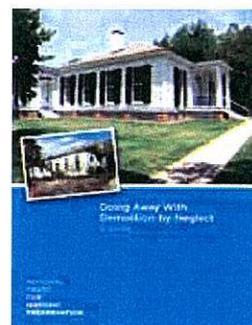
Project, which gave two entrepreneurs the chance to test out their retail concepts rent-free for two months.

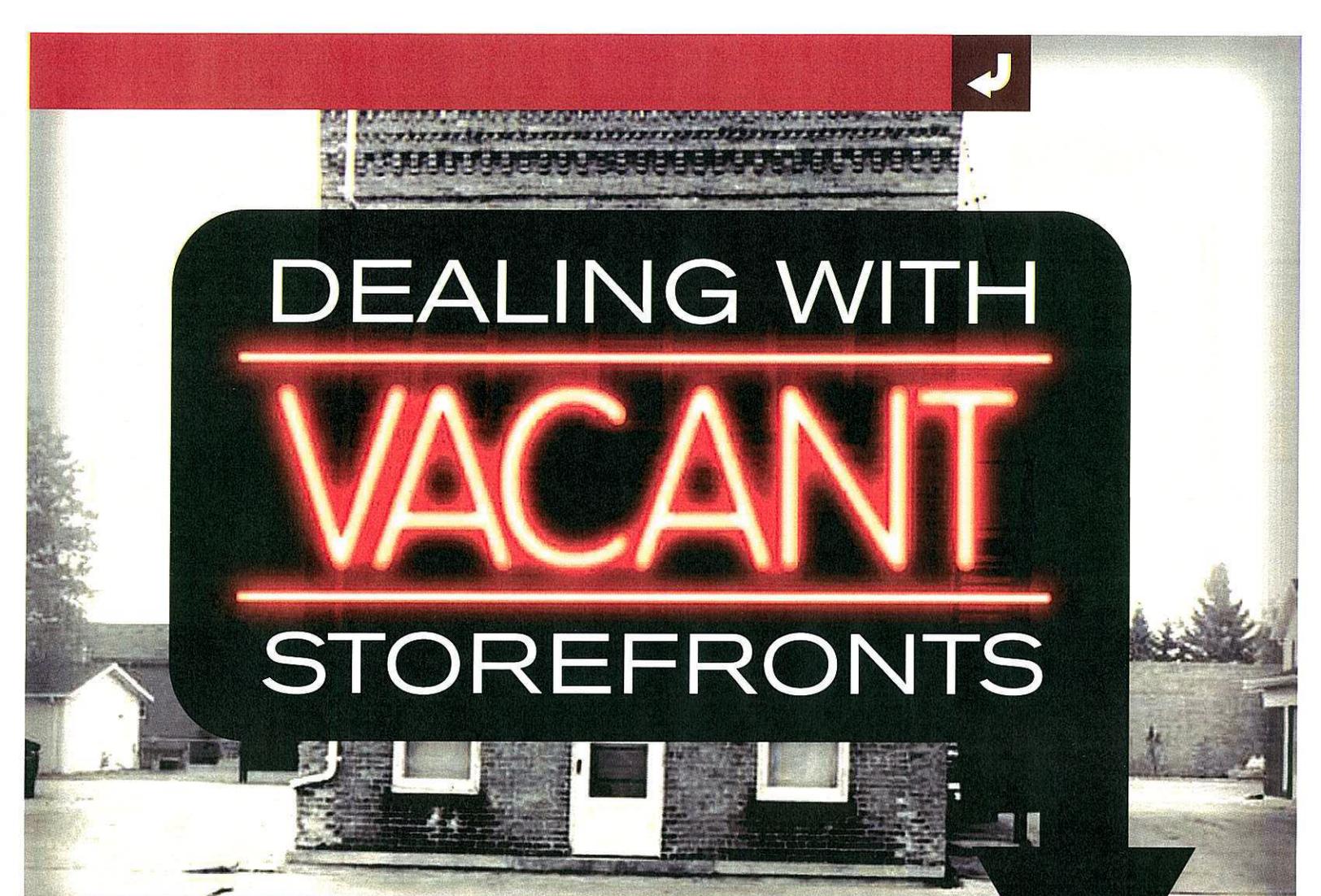
 **Shop Talk: Resolve to Maximize Profitability in 2011 | 28**  
Find out what retailers must do in 2011 to embrace the challenges of change and jumpstart their businesses as the economy rebounds.

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**Doing Away with Demolition-by-Neglect | 31** Find out what can be done to ensure that our historic buildings withstand the test of time in this new National Trust publication.

**My Main Street | Back cover** This month we showcase the wonder of the holiday season in Kilgore, Texas.





# DEALING WITH VACANT STOREFRONTS

BY JOE LAWNICZAK, DESIGN SPECIALIST, WISCONSIN MAIN STREET

Anyone who has traveled beyond his or her front door has seen examples of vacant, neglected, and run-down properties. There is no true or consistent definition of a vacant property or an abandoned building, yet we know them when we see them. The National Vacant Property Campaign states that vacant properties can include abandoned, boarded-up buildings; lots with trash and debris; greyfields (vacant or underperforming commercial properties); and brownfields (neglected industrial properties with environmental contamination). Often, these structures have been unoccupied for at least a year, need repair, and may pose a threat to public safety.

Given the nation's tough economic times, "problem real estate" has become even more widespread. It doesn't take a real estate or revitalization expert to imagine the

negative impact these properties can have on a district, but it runs deeper than most of us realize. Donovan Rypkema of Place Economics says that problem real estate directly affects not only the property owner, but also the municipality, adjacent property and business owners, current or potential tenants, and overall downtown revitalization efforts. To use a residential example, a study of Philadelphia's neighborhoods by Temple University suggests that abandoned housing on a block can reduce the value of the surrounding properties by an average of \$6,715. This not only affects each property owner's assets; it also reduces property tax revenue for municipalities.

And beyond that, says Rypkema, it creates problems for emergency responders, mortgage lenders, insurance agencies, and industrial recruiters, among others. As

an example, the U.S. Fire Administration reported that more than 12,000 fires in vacant structures are reported each year, resulting in \$73 million in annual property damage. A study in Austin, Texas, found that police intervention was required more often on blocks where there were vacant buildings.

There are a number of reasons why properties are vacant or neglected. Some people don't have the money or know-how to take care of their buildings, or they don't want the "hassle" of going through the permit process. Perhaps the property is in foreclosure. Or, maybe the owner thinks it is fine to use ground-floor space for storage or housing. Plenty of us on Main Street have seen owners sit on properties while they wait for market conditions to change so they can make more money on higher sales prices.

*The run-down appearance, lack of maintenance, papered-over windows, and large for-sale signs not only make this building unattractive to potential tenants and buyers but also harm the appearance of the entire district.*



© Joe Lawniczak

In one West Virginia community, a few “old-money” families held on to huge chunks of real estate with no plans for putting them back to use. Ironically, they were waiting until the district improved so they could demand higher prices, ignoring the fact that the district could never reach its potential as long as they were sitting on these buildings.

We also encounter situations where properties are part of an estate and the heirs have no interest in maintaining or marketing them. And then there are the absentee owners who have no idea what their buildings look like or what condition they are in. In some particularly bad situations, property owners simply neglect their buildings out of spite. Do any of these scenarios sound familiar?

There are many approaches to dealing with problem properties. Sometimes there are solutions; sometimes there aren't. This article will share dozens of ideas, some that you may have tried and others that may be new to you. While complex steps and methods such as pro-formas, market analyses, receiverships, injunctions, land banks, and other strategies may be necessary and beneficial, this article will focus on simpler, less inexpensive, and locally achievable methods.

## WORDS OF CAUTION

Before discussing achievable solutions, let's talk about methods that can do more harm than good. The first is hastily resorting to demolition because buyers or tenants haven't stepped up to bring a new use to a vacant building. Difficulties in identifying a new occupant are usually temporary conditions. More often than not, patience pays off and eventually someone becomes interested in the space. Historic buildings are irreplaceable – most of them were built with quality materials and with an

## MOTHBALLING HISTORIC BUILDINGS

In a National Park Service Preservation Brief, Sharon C. Park, AIA, wrote that “when all means of finding a productive use for a historic building have been exhausted or when funds are not currently available to put a deteriorating structure into usable condition, it may be necessary to close up the building temporarily to protect it from the weather and secure it from vandalism. This process, known as mothballing, can be an effective means of protecting a building while planning the property's future, or raising money for a preservation, rehabilitation, or restoration project. If a vacant property has been declared unsafe by building officials, stabilization and mothballing may be the only way to protect it from demolition.”

Park adds that it's important to keep in mind that a vacant building cannot survive indefinitely in a boarded-up condition. If a building is to be mothballed, necessary physical repairs, such as structural stabilization, pest control, and moisture proofing, must be made before securing the building. Adequate interior ventilation must be maintained, and utilities and mechanical systems must be secured or modified. If a building has always been heated, minimal electrical services may need to be retained to provide minimal heat in winter and fan exhaust in the summer.

Make sure that no weatherization efforts harm historic materials and that the weight of any reinforcing materials can be supported by the structure. Plywood is a common material used to secure windows and doors. It may be desirable to paint these panels so that they detract from the appearance of the building as little as possible. Painting them to look like windows or doors (trompe l'oeil) is common.

Mothballing a building is not necessarily inexpensive, especially if structural and mechanical repairs have to be made. In fact, mothballing may cost 10 percent or more of a modest rehabilitation budget. And convincing a building owner who already neglects his or her building to spend this type of money just to secure the property may be next to impossible. It is recommended that any local façade grants or building improvement incentives be used for such a project. After all, it is better to pay to protect a building than to have it demolished. Another option is to use any fees or fines collected from the owner. While the building is mothballed, be sure to keep looking for a new owner or use for the building so that it doesn't stay vacant long.



*Demolition of even the most neglected building should be the last resort, after all other methods have been tried.*

## CURB APPEAL

In discussions with owners about vacant storefronts, a debate that frequently arises is *when* to make improvements. Building owners will often claim they need to wait until they find a tenant before they can afford to make improvements. The problem is, in cases where the space and storefront are in dire need of repair and updating, it will be next to impossible to attract a good tenant to rent that space.

Therefore, curb appeal must be addressed; improvements need to be made *before* the owner seeks a tenant so the space is more attractive. The same is true of general building maintenance. If a building is in rough shape and outdated, a good tenant will see this as a sign of a neglectful owner and be leery of renting or leasing the property.

The same is true of owners who want to sell their vacant properties. Typically, they need to make improvements before they can find a buyer and/or get their asking prices. Improvements do not have to be expensive, and they should be generic so that any new occupant can easily remodel the space to fit the needs of his or her business. Logistically, too, it makes sense to make improvements to a vacant building, especially to the interior space because there won't be tenants or customers to work around. Good improvements to make while the building is empty include removing suspended ceilings; restoring tin ceilings and wood floors; opening up transom windows; upgrading electrical systems, lighting, restrooms, and HVAC equipment; painting; and plastering.

In addition, simple alterations can easily be made at this time to improve accessibility into and throughout the building for people with disabilities. Replacing door knobs with lever handles or widening doorways to 32 inches wherever possible allows easier access into spaces. Installing full-height mirrors and lowering paper towel dispensers in restrooms are extremely simple alterations to make. Putting in grab bars and replacing toilets with new 17 to 19-inch-high seated models require a bit more effort, but are

attention to detail that is too expensive to replicate today. Instead of demolishing these vital links to a community's past and future, they should be mothballed and protected until a suitable buyer can restore them to their former glory.

Far too often, demolition is the first resort. This is especially true with today's ever-increasing stock of vacant and foreclosed housing. According to the National Vacant

restored, and today, both communities have vibrant economies based on heritage tourism – a lucrative industry that would never have been possible if it weren't for the historic structures the cities leveraged.\*

Part of the waiting game for reusing an old building is resisting the urge to allow inappropriate uses. Do not let owners convert ground-floor commercial spaces into residential units or storage space. There are

## PART OF THE WAITING GAME FOR REUSING AN OLD BUILDING IS RESISTING THE URGE TO ALLOW INAPPROPRIATE USES.

Properties Campaign, from 2000 to 2005, the City of St. Louis spent \$15.5 million to demolish vacant buildings. Detroit budgets approximately \$800,000 annually for demolition, and Philadelphia spends \$1.8 million cleaning vacant lots. But just look at Galena, Illinois, or Savannah, Georgia, to see the value of retaining historic structures for future use, even if they must sit vacant for a while. In both Galena and Savannah, countless historic buildings sat vacant for years, but were eventually

a few instances where ground-floor housing may be a viable option, but these occur mostly in larger cities like Chicago, where the building stock in some neighborhoods far outnumbers demand for commercial space. In small and mid-size cities, however, ground-floor housing can hinder revitalization efforts. Main Street districts rely on a series of storefronts lining the street (the "streetwall") to portray an image of a unified business district. Inserting residential units on the ground floor will disrupt that vital cohesion.

\*A 2009 study of U.S. cultural and heritage travel by Mandela Research shows that these tourists spend \$383 more per trip than other types of U.S. travelers.

easier to do when the building is vacant.

Construction is an opportune time to amplify interest in the building. Window signs that say “pardon our progress” or “this building isn’t empty, it’s full of opportunity” will put a positive spin on the work being done. Some building owners have even been known to gift wrap the entire building and put up a big sign that says “don’t open until [date].” These simple techniques are more effective in finding a new occupant than plastering an unattractive vacant storefront with for-sale or for-rent signs.

Another inexpensive tactic to improve the curb appeal and boost interest in an unoccupied building is to create temporary window displays. They not only add life to the vacant storefront and give the district more visual appeal; they can also show the true potential of the space. You can use before-and-after photos, renderings of the completed project, historical information about the district, information about the Main Street program, local artwork, seasonal displays, and even merchandise displays from nearby business owners.

Some communities have taken advantage

of a vacant space to create temporary, lifelike murals depicting storefronts, people, and activity over the vacant storefronts. It is important, however, to make sure the murals are designed and painted by a professional artist so they look as lifelike as possible and contribute to the high-quality image of the building and district.

Another strategy is to jump on the pop-up shops bandwagon and house a temporary business in a vacant space. This can be a great idea that puts a home-based or Internet business into a bricks-and-mortar space. Pop-up shops can create a buzz in your community with effective promotion and can ultimately turn into permanent downtown businesses. Read more about this strategy in “A New Take on Pop-ups” on pages 26-27.

## COMMUNICATION

Educating building owners, especially absentee landlords, about these simple techniques can prove difficult. Remember to be helpful and respectful when talking to owners about the reasons why the appearance and maintenance of their property are

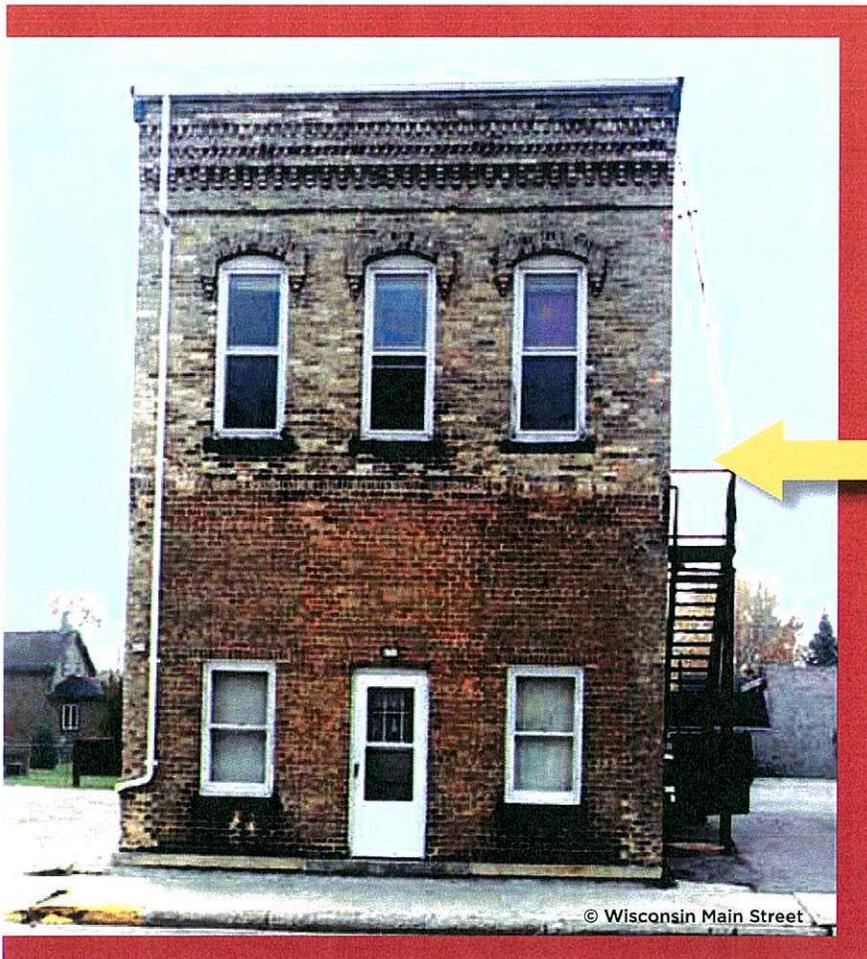
important. Never be condescending or tell neglectful owners that their buildings are ugly and need work. That will only make them defensive and turn them against the revitalization efforts.

Instead, compile information that building owners would need from the time they start thinking about making improvements to the time the work is completed. Include design guidelines; the design review process; pertinent ordinances; local, state, and federal financial incentives; available design assistance; a local preferred contractor list; and contact information for building inspectors and other pertinent individuals.

After you compile and put this information in an attractive packet (as well as online), create a block-captain system in which each member of the design committee is responsible for visiting or contacting assigned building owners, especially absentee or neglectful owners. Michael Gioulis, contract designer for West Virginia Main Street, also recommends that a “mentor” be included on each visit. This mentor could be a local building owner who has been through a successful rehabilitation project and can “talk the talk” with fellow property owners.

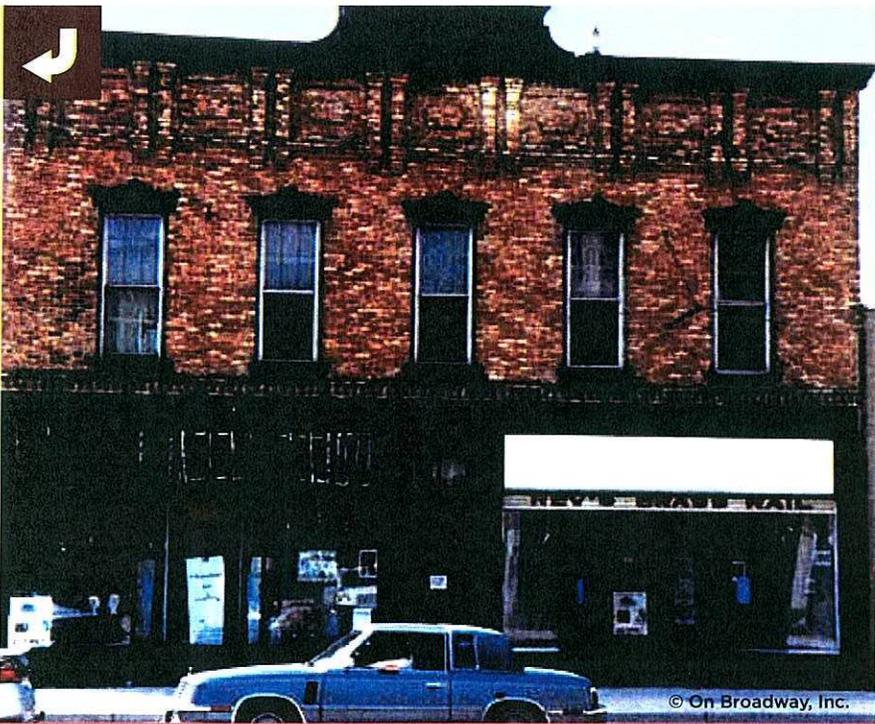
These visits can be quick and simple: just go through the information packet and describe what is available to each property owner. If you approach every building owner, no one will feel singled out. Leon Steele, designer for Louisiana Main Street, also recommends including a photo of the building in its current state. A picture not only helps initiate discussion, but also offsets the fact that many neglectful or absentee owners have no idea what their buildings actually look like or what condition they are in.

Another strategy is to get a Main Street design specialist to provide contractor and



© Wisconsin Main Street

*The ground floors of historic commercial buildings should not be converted to residential use just because a tenant or buyer is hard to find. These spaces should remain commercial, even if it takes a couple of years to find an acceptable tenant.*



*Taking care of maintenance issues BEFORE searching for a quality tenant is the best way to attract good prospects.*

building owner training. Invite all building and business owners within the district as well as local contractors, carpenters, sign manufacturers, and other trades people. The training should focus on such topics as the importance of preservation, proper maintenance and restoration techniques, things to avoid, and even proper design of signs and awnings.

In conjunction with the contractor training, create a checklist of specific activities often required for building restorations – brick repair and cleaning, window repair, sign design, etc. Ask trades people to check off the areas in which they have experience and provide photos and references for each item they check off to verify their experience in that area. All trades people who attend could be added to your local “preferred contractor list” — a resource building owners can use to select qualified people.

Since a picture says more than a thousand words, ask a Main Street design specialist to create a schematic drawing that shows what the building could look like if restored. (This can also be quickly done using Google SketchUp.) Seeing the difference between the building’s current appearance and its potential transformation can truly change someone’s mind. The rendering can also illustrate proper restoration techniques and serve as a marketing tool for the property. Take caution when using this tactic on people who are sitting on their dilapidated properties and asking exorbitant sales prices. A rendering that illustrates the building’s potential may only cause them to demand more money for the property.

Convincing some people may indeed be a hopeless endeavor. There may be a point when you need to shift your focus to people willing to listen. Often, if you can get enough property owners on board, the resistant ones may come around out of peer pressure, or simply because their buildings will stand out like a sore thumb.

### THE CARROT APPROACH (INCENTIVES)

Most building owners in Main Street districts want to do the right thing, but often they lack the financial capability to make improvements. Given the fact that few bricks-and-mortar grants are available at the national or even state level, establishing local incentives is important. Financial incentives can encourage improvements while offsetting the added costs of doing a proper restoration as opposed to a quick fix. When tied to design guidelines and design review, they can ensure that the work is done right. More importantly, when it comes to vacant or neglected buildings, incentives can minimize the financial burden building owners face when they’re

forced by an ordinance to improve their buildings. Incentives such as façade grants, sign grants, low-interest loan pools, and revolving loan funds have been used effectively by countless communities.

Cuyahoga County, Ohio, which includes Cleveland, created a \$13 million commercial redevelopment loan fund to assist communities with abandoned or underutilized commercial and industrial properties. The maximum loan per project is \$800,000 and is available to municipalities, nonprofits, private developers, and businesses. More often than not, however, local incentives are created on a much smaller scale, often with the help of local Main Street programs.

But, why would you provide incentives, or rewards, for building owners who knowingly neglect their properties? What if your city tied financial incentives into a minimum maintenance ordinance? Then the owner would not be eligible for any incentives until the building meets all minimum maintenance standards. This would eliminate any rewards for neglect, and just as importantly, none of the incentive's limited funds would be spent on maintenance issues that the owner should have already addressed.

While limited in quantity, but not necessarily in quality, some resources are available at the national and state levels. Roncove, West Virginia, used U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rural and community development funds to renovate several long-vacant properties, then sold or leased them once the improvements were completed.

In many cities, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds have been used to finance brownfield cleanup and redevelopment, building acquisition, historic

structure reports, and design services. And, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits as well as Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs, such as HOME Rental Rehabilitation, exist to fund projects such as affordable housing in the upper stories of commercial buildings.

## ↳ THE STICK APPROACH (REGULATIONS AND ORDINANCES)

Sometimes all the incentives in the world won't be enough to convince an owner to make even basic repairs and improvements.

# FINANCIAL INCENTIVES CAN ENCOURAGE IMPROVEMENTS WHILE OFFSETTING THE ADDED COSTS OF DOING A PROPER RESTORATION INSTEAD OF A QUICK FIX.

Federal and state rehabilitation tax credits provide tax incentives for the rehabilitation of income-producing historic buildings (for more information on Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits, see "The New Deal for Main Street's Historic Tax Credit Projects," pg. 14.)

Periodically check the "Find Funding" page under resources on [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org). The National Trust for Historic Preservation frequently updates this page with new grant announcements and other financial resources.

In such cases, you need to pull out the big guns. This is where the aforementioned minimum maintenance ordinance comes in handy because it holds property owners accountable for keeping their buildings up to basic code requirements and life safety measures. This measure is not meant to create hardship, but rather to make the community's building stock safe and sanitary, and maintain the district's attractiveness and historic character.

*Creative, attractive window signs can take a negative and turn it into a positive.*

This Building is Not Empty.



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**MAIN STREET** Pardon Our Progress

Estimated Completion Date— Jan. 2010 This project is being completed with the help our a façade grant from Port Washington Main Street. For more information on grant opportunities, go to [www.mainstreetportwashington.com](http://www.mainstreetportwashington.com)

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Cities such as North Bend, Washington, and Texarkana, Arkansas, among others, have enacted minimum maintenance ordinances that focus specifically on their historic commercial districts. In North Bend, the ordinance applies to designated historic buildings, as well as sheds, signs, alleys, parking areas, and vacant lots. The local building inspector formally inspects each building yearly and looks for violations such as dilapidated foundations, flooring, walls, ceilings, roofs, chimneys, stairs, and ornamentation. To enhance the ordinance, the city treasury created a revolving fund to help the city recoup costs and expenses incurred in connection with the repair, alteration, or preservation of any substandard building, public way, or property.

In Texarkana, the ordinance applies to any building within the historic district, whether it is designated a local historic landmark or not. The ordinance also has an important section on demolition by neglect, which states that building owners are not allowed to let their property fall into such disrepair that it warrants demolition. In Texarkana, the local historic district commission is an integral part of the review process.

Other communities impose hefty fines to prevent neglect and abandonment. Providence, Rhode Island, for example, has considered fining owners of vacant buildings up to 10 percent of the assessed property value. Garland, Texas, requires owners of abandoned and neglected properties to post a \$2,500 bond that the city can use to maintain the property. Minneapolis has proposed a registration fee of up to \$6,000 on vacant commercial buildings to prompt owners to rehabilitate them. Owners can get the fee waived if they rehabilitate their properties.

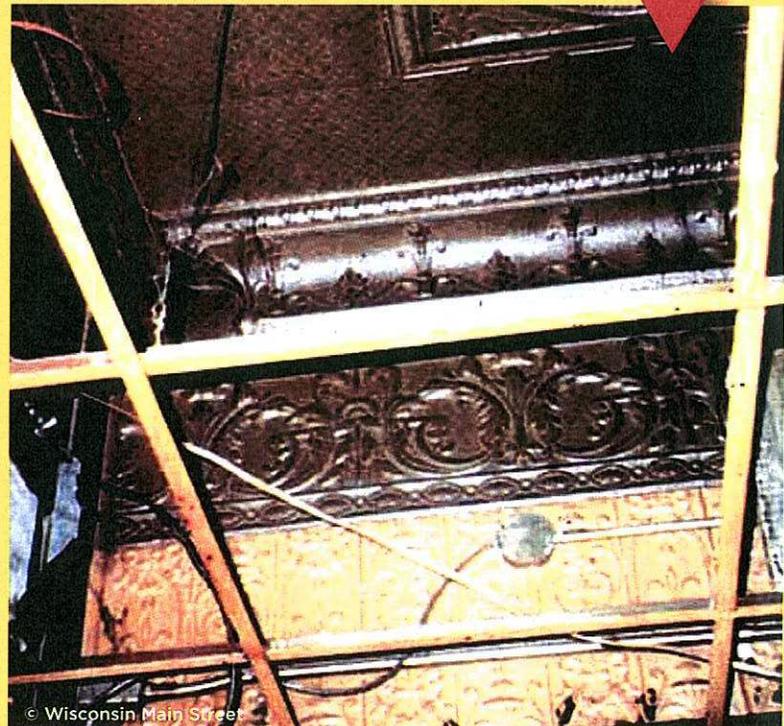
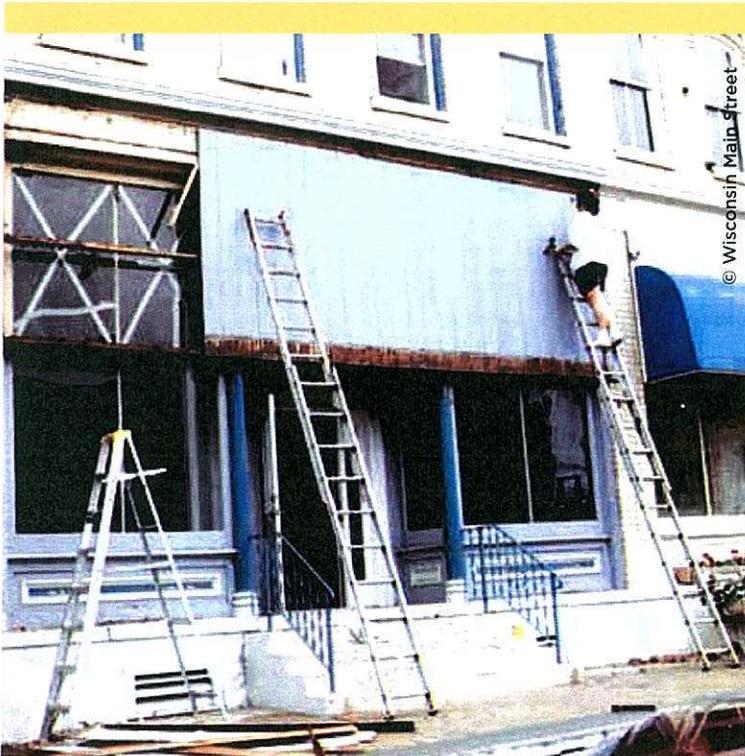
In an effort aimed specifically at vacant buildings, Nebraska City, Nebraska, developed a vacant building ordinance, which requires owners register a building within 30 days of its becoming vacant. The definition of a vacant building is one that is unoccupied and either dangerous, condemned, has code violations, or is illegally occupied. Owners are required to pay a \$40 registration fee, which covers an initial inspection by the building inspector. If a building is not registered within 30 days, the fee increases to \$250. In addition, there is an annual fee for each year the building sits vacant. That fee is \$1,000 per year for the first three

years, and \$3,000 per year for each year thereafter. Upon registration, the building owner must include a plan for continued upkeep that meets code, as well as a timeline for returning the building to an appropriate use.

The ordinance also states that the owner must keep the building secure and safe until the rehabilitation is completed. If any code violations are noted during the initial inspection, the owner must pay a \$50 fee for each subsequent inspection, and a \$250 fee if code violations are not corrected within the approved timeline. Buildings are exempt if the owner is making a concerted effort to sell or lease the space at a reasonable rate, based on comparable real estate in the district.

If your community enacts a vacant building ordinance, make sure it doesn't force or encourage the building owner to accept any commercial tenant just to avoid the fines. The same holds true for residential tenants. The local Main Street program or neighborhood association should use any and all market data to find a tenant that is a good fit for the building and for the community. And for residential tenants, encourage owners to perform comprehensive

*Opening up transom windows (below left) or removing suspended ceilings (below right) is a lot easier when there are no tenants in the space.*



background checks before renting or leasing their units out.

The main risk in implementing a maintenance ordinance is that the owner may choose to demolish the building rather than pay the continued fines or perform the needed improvements. It is recommended that any maintenance or vacant building ordinance provide some protections against demolition. One way to do so may be for the municipality to waive any fines or liens if the owner is willing to sell the property at a reasonable price (market rate or lower).

Another way would be to require an owner to provide detailed proof that the building is beyond repair, or infeasible to repair, and thus needs to be demolished. Keep in mind however, that people can have widely differing definitions of “beyond repair.” It is recommended that the owner be required to get written documentation from two or three professional developers or contractors with expertise in working with historic buildings, and that the local building inspector and preservation commission be consulted as well before a demolition permit is issued. And similar to the Texarkana, Arkansas, ordinance, be sure to include a section that prevents demolition by neglect.

## THE ROLE MAIN STREET CAN PLAY

In response to several fires in vacant buildings, the townsfolk of Richmond, Virginia, created a website called [www.VacantRichmond.com](http://www.VacantRichmond.com) that listed the many vacant properties on the city’s “blight” list and allowed citizens to track and comment on them. It permitted citizens to find out who owned these properties and report trouble to the police and city council. The site is no longer in use, but it served its purpose while it was active and put pressure on building owners to keep up their properties.

Sometimes just getting properties out of the hands of neglectful owners will be your biggest first step. Some municipalities use controversial eminent domain methods, and others acquire them when a property is seriously tax delinquent. Unfortunately, in many cases, these properties are then sold at auction to the highest bidder, with no regard to who the buyer is or what plans he or she has for the property. Some states have enacted land bank authorities that acquire tax-delinquent properties from local municipalities and sell them to developers committed to rehabilitating them. This ensures that the new owners will make necessary improvements.

Fortunately, local Main Street programs are perfectly suited to play a vital role in solving some vacancy problems. Actions as simple as working with building owners and real estate agents to post available properties or commercial spaces online; using market analysis data to help owners determine what types of businesses the district can support and helping them recruit these potential tenants; providing design assistance, design review, and guidelines to facilitate appropriate building improvements; and providing financial incentives such as low-interest loans and facade/sign grants are all activities Main Street programs can carry out.

So, while there are global and national economic factors beyond our control, we, as Main Street staff and volunteers, can still make a difference in each of our communities.



*Creating interest in a building during its renovation, such as this eye-catching gift wrapping of an Oskaloosa, Iowa, building, is a great way to attract potential tenants or buyers.*

© Musco Lighting, Inc.



*The murals in this vacant storefront are a creative and effective way to make the district look lively and less empty while the owner seeks to sell or rent the space.*

**Joe Lawniczak** is the design specialist for Wisconsin Main Street. For over nine years he has worked with more than 700 property owners, helping them restore their historic buildings. He has also worked in many states, from South Carolina to Oregon, providing design expertise and education. He has written several articles for publications in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and for the National Trust Main Street Center, including the November 2005 *Main Street News* article, "Inappropriate Building Materials on Main Street," and three chapters in the National Trust publication, *Revitalizing Main Street*.

## RESOURCES

### **National Vacant Properties Campaign**

<http://www.vacantproperties.org/index.html>

### **Preserving America: A guide to using Community Development Block Grant funds for historic preservation and heritage tourism in your communities**

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/library/historicpreservation/historicpreservationlow.pdf>

### **National Trust for Historic Preservation, Information Sheet #2, How to Preserve A Historic Building**

<http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/faq/information-sheets/Historic-Buildings.pdf>

### **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Rural and Community Development Program**

[http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda!ut/p/c4/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os\\_gAC9-wMJ8QYOMDpxBDA09nXw9DFxcXQ-cAA\\_2CbEdFAEU0joE!/?navid=RURAL\\_DEVELOPMENT&navtype=SU](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda!ut/p/c4/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os_gAC9-wMJ8QYOMDpxBDA09nXw9DFxcXQ-cAA_2CbEdFAEU0joE!/?navid=RURAL_DEVELOPMENT&navtype=SU)

### **North Bend, Washington - Historic District Minimum Maintenance Ordinance**

<http://www.codepublishing.com/WA/NorthBend/nobend19/nobend1924.html>

### **Texarkana, Arkansas - Historic District Minimum Maintenance & Demolition by Neglect ordinances**

[http://search.municode.com/html/10535/level3/COOR\\_CH19PL\\_ARTIII\\_HIDICOH.html](http://search.municode.com/html/10535/level3/COOR_CH19PL_ARTIII_HIDICOH.html)

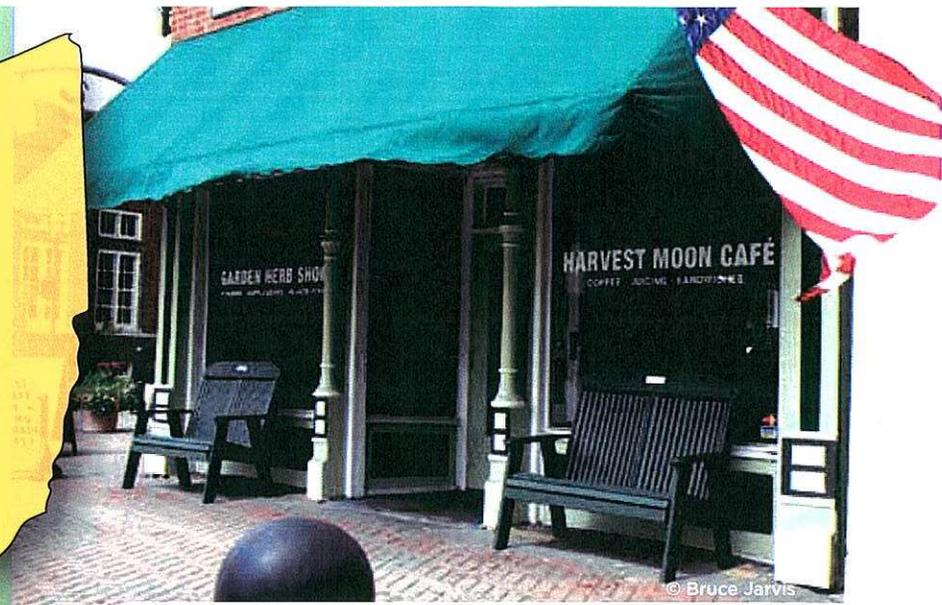
### **Nebraska City, Nebraska - Vacant Building Ordinance**

[http://library.municode.com/HTML/10745/level3/CODE\\_C9\\_AV.html](http://library.municode.com/HTML/10745/level3/CODE_C9_AV.html)

**National Trust Main Street Center, *Revitalizing Main Streets: A practitioner's guide to comprehensive commercial district revitalization***  
[www.preservationbooks.org](http://www.preservationbooks.org)

# LOWERING THE VACANCY RATE IN CANAL WINCHESTER, OHIO

BY ANDREA L. DONO



*This former grocery in downtown Canal Winchester now serves coffee and sells health products.*

When economic development professionals in the Village of Canal Winchester, Ohio, were thinking of ways to fill their vacancies downtown, they developed a simple tool that would soon become part of their solution: a business and building inventory.

Taking a no-cost approach, the local Main Street program proposed its idea to the Old Town Committee, which serves as the interface between Main Street Canal Winchester and the town council. Main Street proposed using data from the county auditor to get parcel descriptions for all vacant or underused buildings and sites in the downtown, and then starting a dialog with the village's economic development director about the best and highest uses for these properties.

The inventory turned into a valuable tool for both active and passive business development. Property owners appreciated the inventory because it showed that the Village wanted to work in partnership with them to lease their buildings or develop their sites.

"With this document, we are able to approach developers with our visions and give them a specific idea of the type of development we expect on given parcels. This information makes it a lot easier for them to run their pro formas to determine if the project is feasible," says Chris Strayer, the Village's economic development director and primary user of the inventory. "If a developer or property owner comes to us about a specific project we can show them the preferred alternatives for the site. Essentially it takes a lot of the guesswork out of a project for a developer or property owner."

The inventory strategy has had an impact. The downtown, which is four square blocks, has been running a vacancy rate between 0 and 5 percent in the last few years. However, Bruce Jarvis, executive director of Main Street Canal Winchester points out that there were periods of time when there were long vacancies, "which isn't to say that tumbleweeds were rolling down the street. But with this inventory we were able to reduce the number of available parcels in the inventory by a third." Although, says Jarvis, "that didn't happen overnight."

The Main Street program, economic development office, and Old Town Committee meet once a year to revise the inventory and vision for the available properties. While they don't use a formal market analysis, the group uses trends and their experience with managing the downtown to determine the types of businesses and developments that will work best.

The inventory helped the group rethink how the old lumberyard downtown could be redeveloped. Originally the team thought retail was the best reuse, but on such a large site, that use alone wasn't feasible. They decided to add height and density to the plan and turn it into a mixed-use development – thereby bringing the costs down and responding more effectively to the marketplace.

The inventory has had uses beyond business recruitment. It was used to bring attention to a problematic brownfield site. An abandoned gas station had proved difficult to redevelop, but after it was added to the inventory it got the county's attention. The

county cleaned up the site and demolished the building to make future development easier.

Another situation involved an absentee landlord. "We had a maintenance issue with a particular property even though we have a minimum maintenance code on the books," says Jarvis. "The exterior appearance of this building was a problem. Discussing the inventory and our goals for the downtown with the owner allowed us to bring up this issue. He decided to sell the building, and fortunately it ended up in the hands of a preservation-minded person who did the right thing."

The inventory has had some other unexpected results. First, as a bonus, one of the entrepreneurs brought into the downtown ultimately became a Main Street board member. Second, it shone a light on the Village's suburban-style zoning, which makes some projects incompatible with the downtown environment. Applicants must apply for variances to achieve a density that fits the commercial district even if their projects meet the Village's vision. The inventory, says Jarvis, helped put zoning complications on their radar screen and enabled them recognize that there was a problem they needed to address.

"Overall this tool has been extremely useful. It has helped us figure out the best case scenario for the parcels in the inventory," says Strayer. "The property owners and the Village can work together to complete a project that is mutually agreeable. I have found that most developers like it when a community knows what it wants and can facilitate a better process because of it."



2011

BY ERICA STEWART AND JOHN LEITH-TETRAULT

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# The New Deal FOR MAIN STREET'S HISTORIC TAX CREDIT PROJECTS...

Tips on how  
you can apply  
for tax credits.  
=  
SUCCESS

The federal historic tax credit (HTC) is a powerful economic engine. By providing developers of historic properties with a dollar-for-dollar reduction in taxes owed, the HTC gives them a strong incentive to take on historic rehab projects that otherwise would not be financially feasible. These projects transform vacant properties, help revitalize local downtowns, and, collectively, create a vast economic multiplier effect nationwide. Rutgers University, with support from the Historic Tax Credit Coalition, proved the program's economic impact unequivocally in its recent report: over the credit's 30-year history, the HTC has created 1.8 million jobs, attracted \$85 billion in new private investment, and stimulated the local economy to a far greater extent than new construction.

Identification Number

TOTAL \$

Revitalization

Unfortunately, small towns and rural areas do not get their fair share of the federal tax credit's economic benefits. This stems from the relatively small size (less than \$1 million in total development costs) of historic real estate projects in Main Street districts and the fact that the dollar amount of the credit is equal to 20 percent of the project's eligible rehabilitation costs (i.e., a small project yields only a small tax credit amount). As a result, both of the major ways to utilize the historic tax credit are difficult for Main Street developers to pursue:

**1** One way to utilize the HTC is for the developer to reduce his or her annual tax bill by filing for the credit after the

historic rehab project is complete. But many Main Street developers and property owners have insufficient tax liability, earn too much annual income (\$250,000 or more), or are limited in their ability to use the credits (per the passive loss limitations of the Internal Revenue Code).

Still others are subject to the Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT), a tax paid by individuals and corporations that would otherwise have enough credits and deductions to zero out their federal tax liability. Until recently, the AMT could not be reduced by the historic tax credit. Furthermore, some developers need the money the tax credit represents while

they are developing the project, not once it is complete. In all these scenarios, the historic tax credit offers little benefit to the developer or owner, prompting many to consider the second option for utilizing the credit.

**2** Those who can't fully utilize the credit themselves can transfer the rights to the tax credits to a corporate investor in exchange for cash invested in the project. This cash infusion is often an essential piece of the project financing that enables the project to move forward, while the tax credits can prove highly beneficial to corporate investors with onerous tax burdens. However, the accounting and

legal fees involved in transferring tax credits are high — regardless of the deal size — so if the credit value is relatively low, as is the case with smaller deals, the net benefit of the transaction may not be worth the effort.

Typically, the lack of interest in these small deals by corporate investors or the inability of the property owner to utilize the full value of the credit has prevented many Main Street developers from taking advantage of this powerful incentive.

## NEW HOPE FOR THE SMALL DEAL

Fortunately, help has arrived for Main Street building owners and developers. Signed in the waning months of the Bush Administration, the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 provides a simpler, less costly method of utilizing the federal historic tax credit. The law enables individuals to use the historic tax credit to lower their Alternative Minimum Tax. This effectively makes the credit a true incentive for individual local investors who are subject to the AMT.

What's the bottom line? It's easier than ever to employ the historic tax credit to benefit a Main Street-scale historic rehab project.

## HOW IT WORKS

Thanks to the new legislation, if Main Street property owners cannot, for the reasons stated above, use the credits or if they simply want to trade the credits for cash up front, they have the option to convey them to individual "real estate professionals" (REPs) who enjoy a unique exemption from passive loss limitations.

To make this connection happen, the developer can work with a local accounting firm — preferably one that knows a lot of real estate professionals — to identify an individual in the community who could use the credits in exchange for cash. This person should be a high net-worth real estate professional with substantial federal tax liability. If the real estate professional is also subject to AMT, his or her motivation will be especially high. After admitting this individual into a limited partnership or limited liability company, the real estate professional can pay the property owner cash in exchange for the right to use the credits.

### An example:

In 2010, the City of Wyandotte, Michigan, (population: 25,000) renovated the 1911 Masonic Temple building into a community arts center and arts incubator. The developer, Dudley Ventures, also a prominent national syndicator of historic and new

markets tax credits, was able to identify a local real estate professional who could benefit from the historic tax credits generated by the \$1.5 million rehab, but only because the credits could be used to offset the investor's Alternative Minimum Tax. The individual invested \$180,525 into the project in exchange for the right to use the tax credits. This key financing made the project financially feasible.

Partnering with a local investor also has the benefit of building a network of support for historic preservation on Main Street. The local investor is more likely to invest any profits from the partnership with the developer locally, unlike a national corporate investor with a distant headquarters and limited connection to the community.

▶ *The Masonic Temple, in Wyandotte, Michigan, has been transformed into the Wyandotte Regional Arts Center, thanks in part to historic tax credit equity invested by a local real estate professional and made possible by the 2008 legislative changes. The Center offers 12 affordable artist studios; provides performance space and galleries; and hosts poetry readings, lectures and classes.*



**SIGN  
HERE  
FOR HELP**



## WHAT IS A REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONAL?

A Real Estate Professional (REP) is defined as a person who:

- 1 Spends more than 50 percent of his or her time and more than 750 hours per year engaged in real estate activities; and
- 2 Owns at least 5 percent of the real estate business where he or she works.

Qualifying real estate activities include work performed by:

- Real estate developers
- Construction contractors
- Property managers
- Real estate brokers
- Leasing agents
- Architects

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*Things to consider.*

## ROLE OF THE MAIN STREET ORGANIZATION: HOW YOU CAN HELP SEAL THE DEAL

Main Street organizations, armed with the details on how the historic tax credit can be used and by whom, can work with property owners and local developers to better understand how the tax credits function and also help identify real estate professionals. Better information in the hands of property owners about ways to use the credits is essential to achieving greater use of the HTC on Main Street.

One idea is for the Main Street organization to develop and promote a “directory” of local REPs who may be potential investment partners for property owners, as well as a list of developers who do not qualify as REPs.

### MORE HELP ON THE WAY?

The National Trust and its for-profit subsidiary, the National Trust Community Investment Corporation (NTCIC), are currently heavily invested in advocating for provisions to the federal historic tax credit that would further simplify the use of tax

credits in small transactions. If adopted by Congress, these provisions would increase the use of the historic tax credit. One major change that would have an immediate impact is to increase the value of the federal credit from 20 to 30 percent for smaller deals.

## THE FEDERAL HISTORIC TAX CREDIT: A USER'S GUIDE

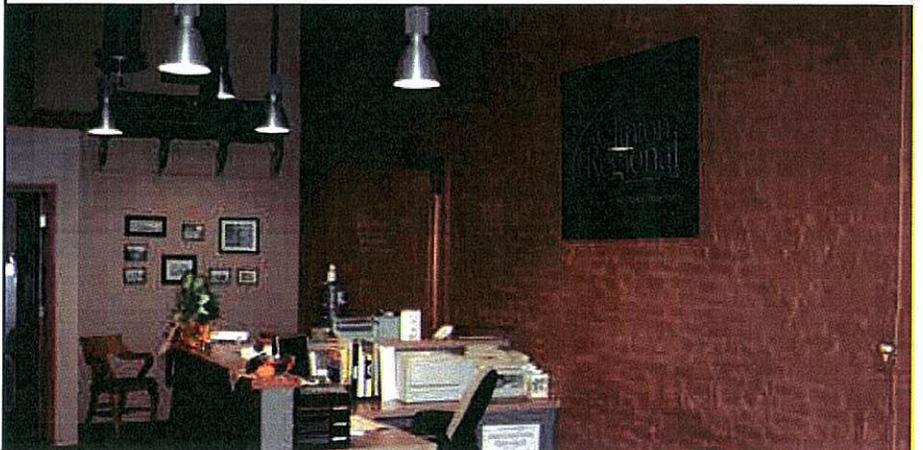
If you're still trying to get some bearings on how the HTC operates, some background information is in order.

The federal government created this incentive in 1981 to encourage and increase the financial feasibility of historic building rehab projects. The federal government offers a 20 percent credit (for historic and architecturally significant buildings) and a 10 percent credit (for nonresidential, nonhistoric buildings built before 1936; a mixed-use project, however, can take the 10 percent credit on the commercial portion of the rehab).

While the federal rehab tax credit program has changed several times over the years, most of the program's basic elements have remained the same:

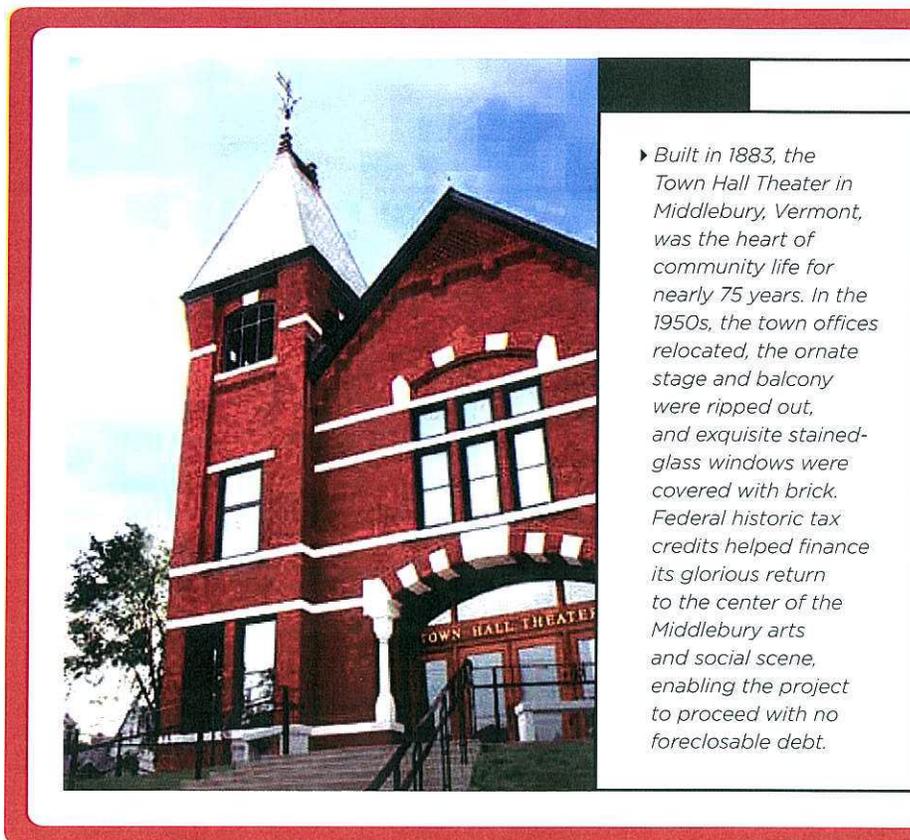
### CASE STUDY: Moeszinger/ Marquis Hardware Co., Clinton, Iowa

The Moeszinger-Marquis Hardware Co. project in Clinton, Iowa, demonstrates the significant financial hit a project suffered under the previous legislation — before the 2008 changes. The \$3 million rehab of the upper floors of the building into affordable housing was substantial enough to attract an investor. However, the first-floor office space was created as a separate condominium unit within the building, and could not attract a national tax credit investor because the credits generated were deemed too small to be worthwhile. Without the tax credit payments of approximately \$98,000, the project needed to take on more debt: \$98,000 more to be exact. With a larger bank loan, the project paid \$10,530 more to the bank in a year than it would have if its loan principal was \$98,000 less.



- To be eligible for the 20 percent tax credit, buildings must be listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or be “contributing” buildings in a National Register historic district. Property owners file Part 1 of the National Park Service’s Historic Preservation Certification Application to seek property approval for the tax credit.
- To be eligible for the 20 percent credit, the property owner’s building plan must meet certain design and construction standards, as outlined in the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation* ([www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab\\_index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_index.htm)). These standards ensure that the building’s architectural and/or historic significance will not be damaged. Property owners file Part 2 of the Historic Preservation Certification Application to seek approval for their rehabilitation plans.
- The building has to be an income-producing building. Most Main Street commercial buildings are therefore eligible, but private homes are not. However, because it’s income-producing for the property owner, rental housing is eligible for the 20 percent credit.
- The property owner gets a tax credit equal to 20 percent — or 10 percent for the nonhistoric credit — of the total rehabilitation cost, provided the rehabilitation costs are equal to or greater than the “adjusted basis” of the building (adjusted basis is generally defined as the purchase price, minus the cost of the land, plus the value of any capital improvements made since the building acquisition, minus any depreciation of the building since purchase) or \$5,000, whichever is greater.
- The tax credit is applied against tax liability. So, a property owner who has a \$20,000 rehab tax credit and owes \$20,000 in federal income tax can apply the tax credit to the amount of tax owed — and, in this example, not have to pay any tax. The credit can also be divided up and carried back one year and forward 20 years.

There are some other requirements and limitations, of course. For example, individuals who earn more than \$200,000 cannot claim the full value of the credit, and people earning more than \$250,000 cannot use the credit at all. Additional information, including an interactive guide to determine if your project would qualify, is available at [www.ntcicfunds.com](http://www.ntcicfunds.com).



► Built in 1883, the Town Hall Theater in Middlebury, Vermont, was the heart of community life for nearly 75 years. In the 1950s, the town offices relocated, the ornate stage and balcony were ripped out, and exquisite stained-glass windows were covered with brick. Federal historic tax credits helped finance its glorious return to the center of the Middlebury arts and social scene, enabling the project to proceed with no foreclosable debt.

## TURNING CREDITS INTO CASH

People and businesses that own property in historic commercial districts have three choices when it comes to using the federal rehabilitation tax credit.

1. They can do a certified rehabilitation project, earn the 20 percent tax credit, and use it to reduce their taxes.
2. If the building was built before 1936 and is neither historic nor residential, they can bypass the National Park Service’s Part 2 certification process, earn a 10 percent tax credit, and use it to reduce their taxes.
3. They can sell the tax credit to an investor.

Who buys tax credits? Banks and other large corporations are the primary buyers of credits generated by large projects. They have lots of tax liability, and the tax credit reduces their taxes while also bringing capital (in the form of the money they pay for the credits) to historic commercial districts and other places that need it. As explained above, the 2008 Housing and Economic Recovery Act also enables individuals and corporations to use the historic tax credit to offset the AMT.

## SHOULD YOU USE THE TAX CREDIT? A CHECKLIST FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

For a variety of reasons, a third of the property owners who receive design approval (Part 2 of the tax credit application) from the National Park Service do not proceed to final approval (Part 3) and use of the tax benefits. While no surveys have been conducted, it’s fair to assume that many of these building owners discovered — after they had committed predevelopment time and resources — that it was in their best interests to forgo the credits.

To help property owners in your commercial district avoid this loss of time and money, ask them the following questions at the beginning of the development process:

- **Do you have the right building?** Is your property a contributing structure in a historic district or is it listed or eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places? Only such properties can take advantage of the 20 percent historic tax credit. A nonhistoric, nonresidential building built before 1936 is eligible for the 10



## THE TAX CREDIT TEAM

Assembling an experienced development team is critical to the success of any tax credit transaction. Be sure to include:

- Tax attorney
- Tax accountant
- Preservation consultant
- Experienced architect
- Rehab contractor
- State historic preservation officer

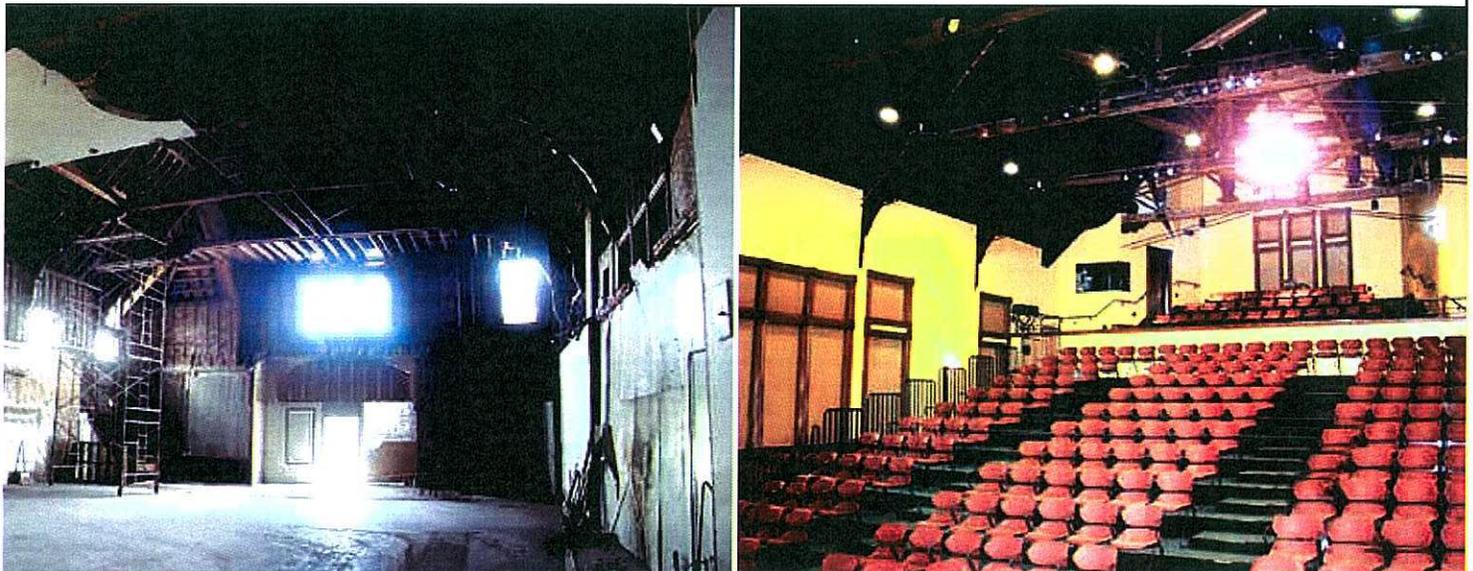
percent credit. Ask your local municipal planning department, preservation commission, or State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to help determine the building's eligibility.

- **Can you live with the design constraints?** The State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service reviewers are not trained to consider practical issues such as retail visibility, parking access, optimum use of floor space, or building code compliance. To avoid less than optimum results for your

business, walk through the property with a state reviewer or a preservation consultant before you submit an application so you will be aware of what is required by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

- **Will the net tax credit benefit justify the additional costs?** Historic rehabs cost more than contemporary improvements, and selling the credits to an investor will generate transaction costs you would not incur otherwise. If you sell your credits, the investor will buy one dollar of credits for a discounted price, typically paying between \$0.80 and \$0.90 per \$1.00 of credits. Be sure to factor in these hidden costs before making a decision.
  - **Are you in a tax position to use the HTC or will you need to transfer it to an investor?** Using the credit to offset your own tax liability is the most efficient type of small tax credit transaction. But depending on your tax position, you may be better off selling your credits to an investor. The key difficulty in doing small tax credit projects centers on the sometimes complicated and expensive process of selling the credits. Is it worth it to spend \$25,000 in legal and accounting fees to obtain a \$50,000 credit? The answer may be
- “no,” given the other constraints tax credit use may impose on your business. Be sure to calculate the net tax benefit (the value of the credits less all transaction and additional construction costs) before committing to a project that depends on the sale of tax credits.
- **Do you need the equity to make your financial package work?** You may need the equity provided by the credits to meet lender cash requirements. You may need the HTC to finish the rehab because the project does not qualify for a loan large enough to complete the work. Or you may need the cash to reduce the size of the bank loan. If your financing package works without the equity from federal and state tax credits, make sure the net credit amount is worth it before committing to an HTC transaction.
  - **Do you have access to the right professional expertise?** Your current legal and accounting advisors may not be familiar with the use of tax credits. The contractor and architect you use may have never worked on a rehab that takes advantage of federal and state tax credits. You will have to get your team the advice they need, or find new resources with specialized experience you can rely on.

► After a \$5.9 million historic rehabilitation, the 250-seat Town Hall Theater hosts plays, dances, wedding receptions, classes, exhibits, and even a very popular winter farmer's market.



- **Do you have the extra time?** Under the best of circumstances, preparing an application and obtaining approval of Parts 1 and 2 of the application from the SHPO and National Park Service is a 120-day process. If you have to submit an amended application to obtain final approvals, the process could stretch out to four months. You will need to factor this extra time into your schedule.
- **Are there additional benefits, such as state historic tax credits or tax abatement, that go along with federal historic tax credit use?** If your state and locality provide additional benefits for historic rehabs, such as property tax relief, a piggy-back state HTC, or preservation grant programs, be sure to add these extras into your net benefit calculation.

## CALCULATING THE VALUE OF THE TAX CREDIT

It is useful to know certain rules of thumb to estimate the value of a HTC benefit before spending time and money in pursuit of the credits. Generally speaking, the federal HTC is 20 percent of the eligible rehab and rehab-related “soft costs.” These rehab-related soft costs include construction loan interest, appraisals, construction lender points, architectural and engineering fees, and environmental evaluations. Excluded items include any expenses related to a permanent loan, such as appraisals, points, and interest; acquisition expenses and related costs; site improvements, furniture, fixtures, and the costs of any additions to the existing building.

For a quick and dirty estimate of the federal tax credit’s value, a building owner should calculate the sum of hard construction costs and 95 percent of the total soft costs, then multiply this amount by 20 percent. If the owner plans to sell the federal credits, multiply this sum by \$0.80 for a conservative estimate of value on the market as investors will typically pay between \$0.80 and \$0.90 cents for every dollar of credits. If your state has a historic credit, multiply the percentage of that credit times the same tax credit basis number and, if the owner intends to sell it, multiply by 65 percent for the conservative value of your state’s hard construction costs. Selling the credits will require formation of a limited liability company or limited partnership that will allow the building owner to transfer the credits to a third party investor. Combined tax accounting and tax counsel fees can range from \$15-20,000 if local resources are used.

► This 22,000-square-foot former bank building in downtown Rocky Mount, North Carolina (population: 56,341), was converted into office space for nonprofits and small businesses by the Self Help Ventures Fund at a cost of \$3.5 million.





NOTE



▶ The \$5.8 million historic rehabilitation of the Dalton Building, a former bank, created 23,000 square feet of upper-floor apartments and first-floor retail and office space in Rock Hill, South Carolina (population 69,210). The rehabilitation project has helped cement the character of the downtown, while providing first-rate upper-floor housing.



## FINDING AN INVESTOR IN A SMALL TOWN

If you estimate that the tax credits for a rehab project are worth less than \$500,000 and the building owner's individual or corporate tax position does not justify keeping the credits, it will be difficult to find a buyer in the national historic tax credit marketplace. Companies such as Chevron and Sherwin Williams, which actively solicit direct tax credit investment opportunities typically buy credits in units of no less than \$2 million.

The market for projects that total less than \$2.5 million in development costs and \$500,000 in credits is your own community. A small community bank with which the Main Street program or the building owner already has a business relationship is one of your best bets. Banks may see the credits as a way to improve the return on a construction or permanent loan.

A local bank with state tax liability may be interested in investing in both the federal and state credits. A utility company or a major local employer might also be potential investors. And of course, as explained previously, a real estate professional, such as a developer, contractor, property manager, appraiser, or architect, is a potential tax credit investor and may be someone the building owner already trusts and does business with. The importance of experienced legal and accounting advisors comes into play most importantly when approaching local investor prospects who may be unfamiliar with the credits.

## IDENTIFYING A TAX CREDIT TRANSACTION TEAM

Failing to assemble an experienced development team is the most common mistake made by first-time users of the HTC. But where does a building owner find an architect and contractor with preservation experience and accountants and attorneys who've done a tax credit transaction? Is it necessary to throw away existing relationships with local professionals because they are unfamiliar with the complexities of the HTC? Well, you have a choice.

You can help the owner pull together a new team. The State Historic Preservation Office and your local preservation commission are good places to find people who've helped out on similar projects in your area. Your statewide or local preservation advocacy group can recommend qualified architects. For a list of statewide preservation organizations, consult the National Trust web site at <http://www.preservationnation.org/about-us/partners/statewide-local-partners/>. Contact the American Institute of Architects

at <http://architectfinder.aia.org/> for a qualified preservation architect in your state. Local developers who've done similar projects can also recommend architects, tax accountants, and tax attorneys.

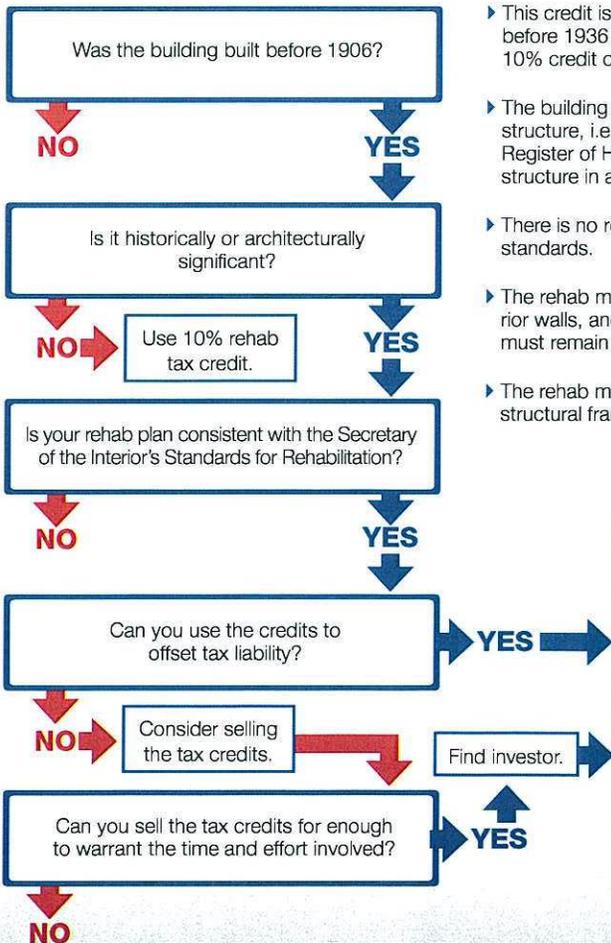
Your second option is to train the real estate team the building owner already has by connecting them with firms and individuals who have tax credit experience. A local tax attorney or accountant can obtain advice from a larger firm that specializes in tax credit work. An architect who hasn't done a historic rehab can be paired with a preservation consultant who can prepare the tax credit applications and provide advice on how to meet the Secretary's Standards. The building owner will spend less money on this second option because it limits the billable time of the higher-priced firms and consultants. Just make sure the experienced resource people ultimately certify the work and recommendations of the local team.

## AUTHOR BIOS

**Erica Stewart** has supported the communications and marketing of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's community revitalization programs and its for-profit subsidiary, the National Trust Community Investment Corporation (NTCIC), for 10 years. She currently serves as Outreach Coordinator for the Communications and Marketing Department of the National Trust.

**John Leith-Tetrault** has 32 years' experience in community development financing, banking, community organizing, historic preservation, training, and organizational development. He has held senior management positions with Neighborworks, Enterprise Community Partners, Bank of America, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Mr. Leith-Tetrault is the founding president of the NTCIC and serves as the chairman of the Historic Tax Credit Coalition.

## Steps in the Tax Credit Feasibility Process

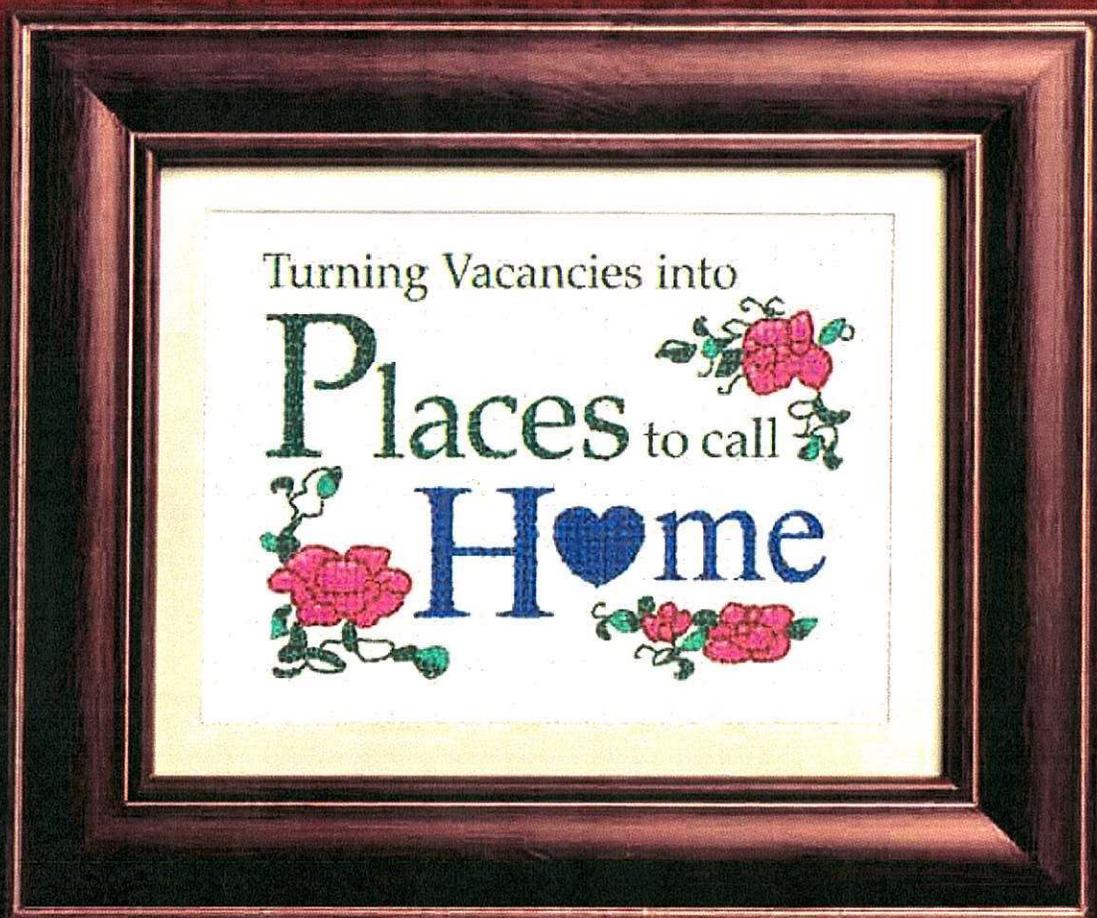


### 10% Federal Tax Credit Basics

- ▶ This credit is for nonresidential properties built before 1936 (a mixed-use project can take the 10% credit on the commercial portion only).
- ▶ The building must be a non-certified historic structure, i.e., neither listed in the National Register of Historic Places nor a contributing structure in a National Register historic district.
- ▶ There is no review and there are no design standards.
- ▶ The rehab must retain 50% of the original exterior walls, and 75% of the original exterior walls must remain either as exterior or interior walls.
- ▶ The rehab must keep 75% of the internal structural framework in place.

### 20% Federal Tax Credit Basics

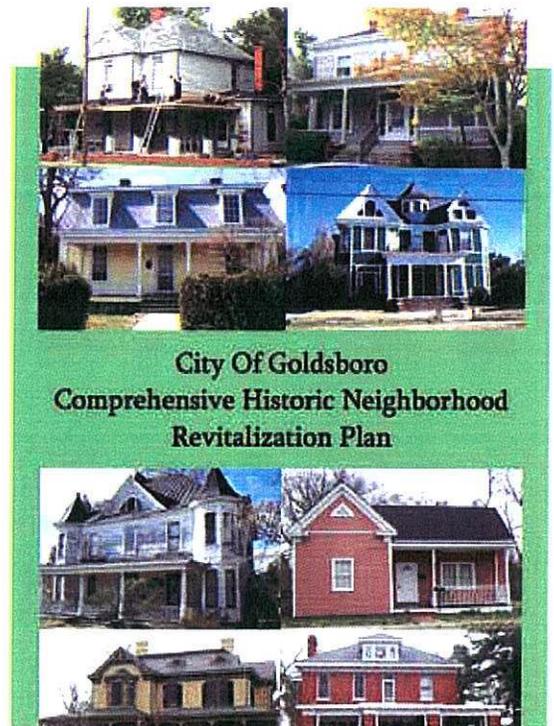
- ▶ The credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction of federal tax liability for 20% of eligible costs to rehabilitate a certified historic structure.
- ▶ The property must be listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or a contributing building in a National Register historic district.
- ▶ The application consists of Parts 1, 2, and 3 and must be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office, which makes recommendations and submits the application to the National Park Service for final approval.
- ▶ The rehab over a 24-month period must be "substantial," defined as \$5,000 or the building's adjusted tax basis (acquisition cost + cost of improvements - value of land - depreciation taken) whichever is greater.
- ▶ The exterior and interior rehab must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as interpreted by the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.
- ▶ The credit may only be claimed by building owners after the property is placed in service (generally a certificate of occupancy); an investor may claim the credit only if he or she is admitted to the partnership before the building is placed in service.
- ▶ Transfer of ownership or adverse change to a character-defining feature of the building during the five-year compliance period triggers recapture of the credits (20% recapture for every year left in the compliance period).
- ▶ The credit may be taken by the owner or be transferred to an investor.



— By Tom Neeley —

When trying to deal with empty buildings, a group of stakeholders in Goldsboro, North Carolina, decided to take the bull by the horns and found a way to reduce residential vacancies. Using public funding provided by the city government, they began an innovative program that acquires and stabilizes historic homes before selling them to private owners.

Goldsboro (population 39,000) has a long-established Main Street program that was started in 1984. After focusing solely on the community's historic downtown for nearly 20 years, city officials realized that several neighborhoods surrounding the business district had become persistent sources of attention for several of their departments. For the police department, it was an issue of crime; for the inspections department, it was an issue of condemning derelict and dilapidated homes and demolishing some of the structures; and for the public works department, it was an issue of maintaining vacant land created by demolition.



**City Of Goldsboro  
Comprehensive Historic Neighborhood  
Revitalization Plan**

*Goldsboro's neighborhood revitalization plan focuses on three downtown neighborhoods with a high concentration of historic homes facing demolition.*

The seemingly endemic issues facing the neighborhoods stemmed not only from a failure of city leadership in areas such as land use, which allowed a neighborhood of prominent turn-of-the-century, single-family homes to be turned into an area dominated by multi-unit rental conversions and boarding houses but also from sequential neglect by property owners.

"My belief has always been, the house isn't the problem," says Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation Director Julie Thompson. "It's the people owning them who are the problem."

The tipping point occurred in September 2005, when the Inspections Department had run through its annual \$100,000 appropriation for home condemnation. The department head wrote a letter to the city requesting an additional \$100,000. City Manager Joe Huffman asked if that amount would take care of all the problems, to which the director laughed. When asked how large an appropriation would be needed to condemn all property for the year, Huffman was told it would take \$1 million.

### Devising a Plan

Faced with this staggering amount, Huffman approached the city council with a proposal to stop seeking demolitions and, instead, generate a plan that would revive the neighborhoods around downtown. In October 2005 a group of stakeholders, including Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation's Thompson, was charged with developing a plan to present to the city council at its February 2006 retreat. The plan presented to the council, the Goldsboro Comprehensive Historic Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (known as the Neighborhood Plan), was unanimously approved and implementation began in summer 2006.

"I like to tell people it's not really a plan; it's a set of goals," says Thompson. "It's not something that sits on the shelf. It's constantly evolving and taking on new issues and problems because the only thing we're concerned about is the end goal — traditional owner-occupied neighborhoods."

The Neighborhood Plan targets three neighborhoods: the Depot District (about five blocks long and three blocks wide), North James Street (about three blocks by two blocks), and South Williams-South John Street (about five blocks by two

blocks). The neighborhoods were chosen because each has strong community fabric — many historic homes, large canopy trees, and sidewalks — as well as a high concentration of at-risk structures facing demolition and about 70 vacant lots.

"We had obviously missed a lot of opportunities to save historic structures," Thompson says. "In order to recreate a traditional neighborhood feel, we wanted to create an environment that would attract private investment of owner-occupied homes."

In order to attract this kind of investment, they developed a two-part approach: (1) work to stabilize and rehabilitate the existing housing stock by creating incentives for owners to invest in the work themselves or sell the home to someone who would; and (2) fill vacant lots with new, affordable housing that fits into the fabric of the historic neighborhoods.

Because the neighborhoods were so heavily dominated by rental units and neglectful landlords, the group sought to increase the percentage of owner-occupied housing, which at the time represented less than 10 percent of the housing stock in the area. Additionally, city officials knew that the development of the 1909 Union Station

*Goldsboro works with Preservation North Carolina (PNC) to preserve the community's historic homes. After the city has acquired a home, stabilized it, and cleaned it up, PNC then markets the house to potential buyers. PNC ensures that restrictive covenants and rehab agreements are customized and attached to each property.*

**SAVE** <sup>+</sup> **this old house** <sup>+</sup>

**Price: \$10,000**  
**Location: Goldsboro, North Carolina**  
**Contact: Glen VandenKirk 703-497-0134**

The 1870s Thompson House is a late Victorian-style house with elements of the Queen Anne style. It is well-preserved and located in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Built in 1870, it is a prime example of the architectural styles of North Carolina through the 1800s. The house was built with high-quality materials and would be hard to find elsewhere. It has a full-bath, kitchen, and living room with original hardwood floors and built-in cabinets. The house was built with high-quality materials and would be hard to find elsewhere. It has a full-bath, kitchen, and living room with original hardwood floors and built-in cabinets.

**The late Victorian-style House has 2,800 square feet of space. Most of the floor is original wood. It has a full-bath, kitchen, and living room with original hardwood floors and built-in cabinets. The house has a full-bath, kitchen, and living room with original hardwood floors and built-in cabinets.**

**Price: \$10,000**  
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**Location: Goldsboro, North Carolina**  
**Contact: Glen VandenKirk 703-497-0134**

*Available for Rehabilitation*

**The Historic Grantbam-Baker House**

316 N. Virginia Street, Goldsboro, Wayne County

**Price: \$46,000**  
 (Cash Offer Expires 1/31/11)  
 Call Glen VandenKirk 703-497-0134

**Live in a landmark that is part of Downtown Goldsboro Revitalization**

**Price: \$46,000**  
**Location: Goldsboro, North Carolina**  
**Contact: Glen VandenKirk 703-497-0134**

**Price: \$46,000**  
**Location: Goldsboro, North Carolina**  
**Contact: Glen VandenKirk 703-497-0134**

train depot into a multimodal transportation hub would make Goldsboro more attractive to new residents and young people seeking to live in a quaint historic town within commuting distance of nearby Raleigh.

Given the scale of the work required to rehab existing homes and build new ones, the group recognized the need for partners. In terms of preservation, it was clear that the historic district commission alone was ill-equipped to deal with the scope of the buildings in the neighborhoods. Thompson invited the regional representative of Preservation North Carolina (PNC), the state's largest nonprofit preservation organization, to the second meeting to discuss protecting the historic housing stock.

**Preserving Existing Homes**

"We really wanted to save the neighborhoods," says Thompson. "There's a niche market of people who want to save these structures and provide a little TLC."

The process begins with identifying homes that are threatened. Then those homes are acquired by:

- Donation;
- Option: the owner gives up control of the property and it is put up for sale; or

- Acquisition: the property is bought through a city revolving loan program, which was started with \$100,000.

Ideally, property owners will take the initiative to maintain and preserve their homes, but if they don't, the city can acquire properties. Officials have shied away from using eminent domain; instead, they rely on incentives to encourage maintenance by the building owner or persuade an absentee landlord to sell the property to the city.

The city can pressure negligent property owners to make physical improvements and maintenance through its demolition-by-neglect ordinance. The ordinance states that properties with historic value need to be treated with respect to that unique value and allows the city to fine property owners who neglect the exterior of their buildings. The city also has the authority to stabilize at-risk structures and bill the property owner for the cost of the repairs. Faced with these costs or with the costs of being billed for demolition, many property owners opt to transfer their properties to the city.

In an attempt to limit the number of boarding houses, which tend to be poorly maintained, the Inspections Department outlines strict requirements for legal boarding houses. This action increases the cost of operations, which has reduced the number

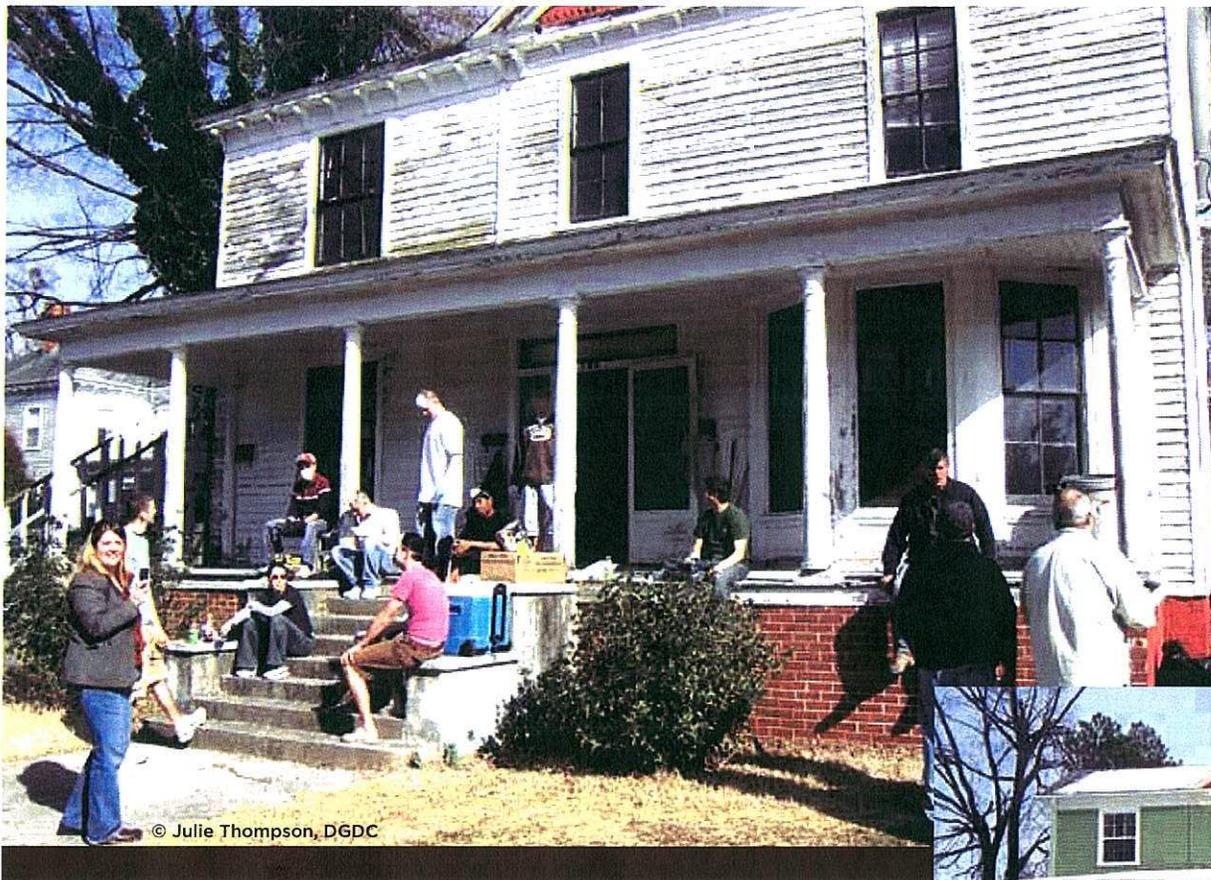
of boarding houses in Goldsboro.

Once the city acquires a home, a small amount is used to stabilize the structure and clean it out in preparation for sale. Then Preservation North Carolina markets the home to potential buyers. On average, it costs about \$10,000 to cover attorney fees, deeding, and prepping properties for sale. Once a home is sold, the costs associated with prepping or selling the property are returned to the revolving loan fund, and profits are divided between Preservation North Carolina (75 percent) and Goldsboro (25 percent). PNC also receives \$5,000 for each house sold. Because the properties pass ownership through Preservation North Carolina, restrictive covenants and rehab agreements are tailored and attached to each property. All state that the property owner recognizes the historic value of the home, will protect its historic nature, and will live in the house for at least five years after the purchase.

**Building New Homes**

To fill the vacant lots, the Neighborhood Team wanted a stock of new, affordable housing to hedge against gentrification. Goldsboro envisioned its residential neighborhoods achieving a 50 percent balance of owner-occupied housing and rental units.

To address the issue of vacant lots, the city partnered with Durham-based



© Julie Thompson, DGDC

Left: Members of the Goldsboro Neighborhood Team, DGDC staff, and volunteers from the Seymour Johnson Air Force First Term Airman Center clean out one of the homes acquired in 2007 with revolving loan funds supplied by the City of Goldsboro. Below: Sold in April 2010, the home has been restored and painted a lively bright green.



© Julie Thompson, DGDC

Self-Help, which agreed to build homes for low- and moderate-income buyers on lots donated by the city. Self-Help forms partnerships throughout North Carolina to create affordable, owner-occupied, single-family homes and help build wealth among people who frequently are not served by traditional lending institutions. To assist in Self-Help's mission for the Neighborhood Plan, the city set aside \$100,000.

Despite its long and successful history, Self-Help has had little experience building homes in a historic neighborhood. Typically, it constructs homes with vinyl siding to lower building and maintenance costs for first-time homebuyers. Changing building materials and adding architectural details to the homes pushed costs above the narrow range in which Self-Help is usually able to sell to targeted demographics. Because the city wanted the new homes to blend in with the fabric of the historic homes, it agreed to provide \$10,000 per house to fund upgraded building materials and design structures compatible with the historic district.

In 2008, three homes were constructed. Although the first home sold on opening day, five months after construction started, the other two houses took about a year to sell. A master plan consultant determined that Goldsboro has a much stronger market for market-rate housing than for affordable housing, given the existing housing stock.

Given the challenges of finding suitable homeowners for the last two properties,

Self-Help decided to step back from the Neighborhood Plan. Self-Help realized that its capacity to provide counseling to first-time homebuyers in the low- to moderate-income bracket in Durham was particularly important, and that the lack of such counseling in Goldsboro affected its ability to find suitable homeowners. As a result, Goldsboro is currently looking for ways to provide counseling through a program like Self-Help's or through the local community college. Additionally, the community is looking into the possibility of partnering with other affordable housing organizations.

### Exit Plan

The Neighborhood Plan gave the city control over more than 30 properties; over half of the buildings have been sold, and some have already been resold. The entire community witnessed a huge increase in both public and private investment — especially in the downtown. The new energy in Goldsboro can mostly be attributed to the fact that the city saw an opportunity and a growing market for historic homes and neighborhoods.

“By rolling up our sleeves, setting a goal, and working toward it. By not taking ‘no’ for an answer, we’re seeing great results,” says Thompson.

Although the Neighborhood Plan's vision

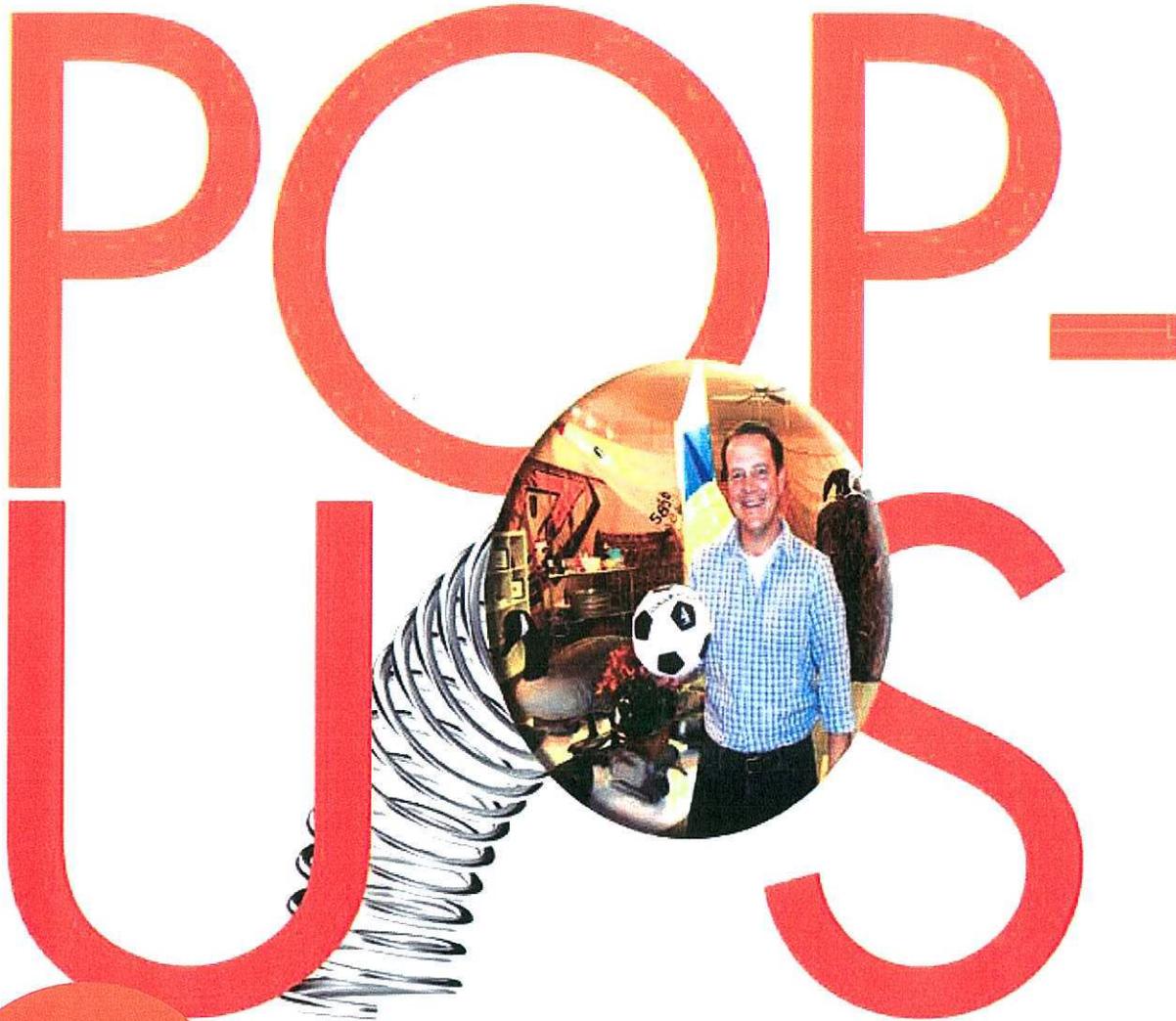
is to turn these three neighborhoods into areas with about 50 percent owner-occupied housing, the larger goal is to allow the private sector to take its course. To protect the character of the neighborhoods while encouraging private investment, Goldsboro is instituting neighborhood design guidelines as more independent developers begin rehabbing properties. Still, as with development in the downtown, Goldsboro officials foresee long-term vigilance in promoting the revitalization of the neighborhoods.

“I think we have another 10 years before we say we can safely exit,” Thompson says.

*Tom Neely was an intern with the National Trust Main Street Center in 2010 and is currently working on his Masters in Public Policy at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.*

A NEW TAKE ON

# POP-UPS

A large graphic of the word "POP-UPS" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The letter "O" in "POP" is replaced by a circular inset photograph. The photo shows a man in a blue and white checkered shirt holding a soccer ball. He is standing in a store that appears to be a sports or outdoor gear shop, with various items visible in the background. The word "POP-" is on the top line, and "UPS" is on the bottom line.

Colin Edgell, owner of Whitecap Outdoor Consignments, was one of the two winners in Cambridge's Holiday Pop-Up Project.

## Store Giveaway Contest Takes Aim at Downtown Vacancies By Jim Duffy, Cambridge Main Street

Most folks associate short-term pop-up stores with shopping malls, not historic downtowns, but the Main Street program in Cambridge, a city of 10,000 on Maryland's Eastern Shore, set out to see whether a variation on the pop-up concept might generate holiday excitement and perhaps help reduce vacancies.

Conceived by Cambridge Main Street Board President Phil Feldman, the Holiday Pop Up Project (H-PUP) sounds a bit like a reality TV show, and it is — only without the cameras. Feldman proposed running a contest in which would-be entrepreneurs could apply for the chance to test out retail business concepts rent-free during the 2010 holiday season in November and December.

I admit that I had doubts about the project at first. The timeframe to put such a contest together seemed short. Would a property owner really play along? What if we didn't get any good applications — or worse yet, no applications at all?

Feldman focused on the upside. Every phone call that came in would be from a prospect we could work with going forward, whether the caller decided to enter the contest or not. That could help our Main Street program boost its progress on a top priority — reducing vacancy rates that were still too high at 25 percent.

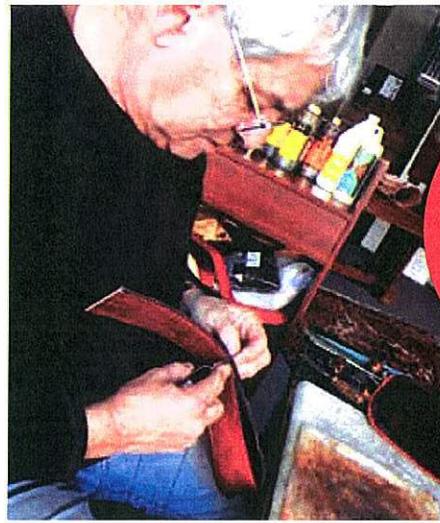
Plus, Feldman felt that adding two new stores could generate excitement and foot traffic during the critical holiday season. And if the contest garnered media attention, H-PUP might help brand downtown Cambridge in its region as a place that goes the extra mile to help entrepreneurs. In late September, Feldman and I met with property owner Bill Harrington. We invited Harrington not only because his vacant storefronts occupied a key location in the downtown, but also to pursue another of our organization's priorities — building stronger partnerships with select property owners whom we felt might be skeptical of the Main Street approach and with whom we had not successfully partnered before.

Harrington peppered us with questions and concerns — would he have a voice in choosing winners? What types of businesses were we hoping to land? What would be his expenses? In the end, despite lingering doubts about whether the program would attract businesses built to last and capable of paying market rents, Harrington agreed to give the program a shot, as long as the winners agreed to cover utility costs and licensing fees.

The next day, press releases announcing H-PUP went out to regional media. The first call I fielded was from a television reporter asking if she could come to Cambridge the next morning. Over the next few weeks, the H-PUP program was featured on TV newscasts on six different occasions.

Overall, the contest drew 15 expressions of interest and six formal applications. The two winners were announced in late October. One was Whitecap Outdoor Consignments. Owned by Colin Edgell, the shop offers consignment merchandise in the outdoors and sports category — hunting gear, team sports equipment, boating supplies and accessories, clothing, and other products.

In a retail environment where dollar stores and high-quality consignment shops have done reasonably well, all things considered,



Dennis Napolitan, owner of Malina Custom Leather, handcrafts high-quality leather goods, ranging from purses and belts to briefcases, on-site.

Harrington, Feldman, and I found this concept really appealing.

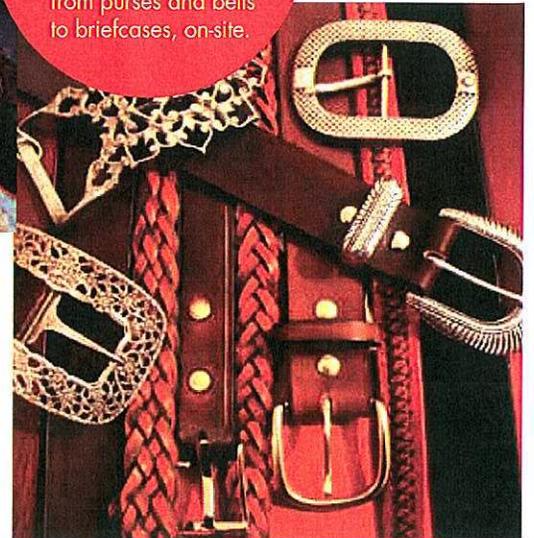
Most recently, Edgell had been working as a chef. But he also had extensive professional experience working at boatyards and marine suppliers. It turned out this was a concept he'd been mulling over for years and our contest gave him an unexpected opportunity to test it out in the real world. He staffs the store himself, with a little help from his dog, Teak.

"One of the great reasons for living on the Eastern Shore is all the amazing boating, kayaking, and hunting opportunities available here," Edgell says. "But there aren't any stores that are really focused on providing affordable options in this area. I thought this concept would have strong appeal to local residents and visitors alike, especially in this economy, and everything that's happened so far has me continuing to believe that."

The other winner, Malina Custom Leather, offers retail sales in the atmosphere of an artisan's workshop. The focus is on high-quality leather products — everything from purses to portfolio covers and belts to briefcases. The business's tagline is "Every Stitch By Hand," and the inventory is created on site by Dennis Napolitan, a craftsman who used to be a partner in the chain of D'Naz Leather shops that formerly operated in New York City. The store also features works by a local photographer, Lisa Krentel.

More recently, Napolitan had been working in the antiques field. He co-owned a downtown shop that was gutted by a 2008 fire. Since then, he had been supplying leather goods to local art galleries on a limited basis, but he hadn't really considered opening his own retail workshop until the contest surfaced. On the day the shop opened, Napolitan sold a \$600 handbag.

"I have to confess that when this opportunity came along, I thought it was likely to be a two-month project and that's it," says Napolitan. "But now I'm in my third month and I'm really excited about moving forward."



At press time in mid-January, both business owners were still engaged in lease negotiations with Harrington, but they are eager to move forward and become permanent operations.

Edgell reports that his biggest challenge at Whitecap has been finding enough consignment inventory to keep his shop looking full and vibrant at all times, especially after a busy weekend. He is negotiating with a major marine-supply and boat-accessories wholesaler to provide a line of new products to augment his used merchandise.

Through the Christmas season, Napolitan's bulletin board was strewn with yellow tickets representing custom orders for everything from simple belts to ornate holsters. He hopes someday to supply his merchandise to select stores in nearby cities, in addition to running his Cambridge shop.

H-PUP has exceeded my expectations, and Cambridge Main Street will look for opportunities to repeat the contest in the future. The next time around, however, we will be looking to launch the contest at least a month earlier and to work harder to make it simple and seamless for winners to get stores up and running.

We'll also look at offering a longer test period than two months. Giving away at least three months and possibly more might generate even more interest and additional applications. But overall, we're very pleased with how things went the first time around.

*Jim Duffy is the manager of the Cambridge Main Street program.*



# SHOPTALK

By Margie Johnson



## RESOLVE TO MAXIMIZE PROFITABILITY IN 2011

Shop Talk is a continuing series of consumer-oriented retail articles by Margie Johnson, president of Shop Talk, a retail consulting firm that specializes in showing organizations how to become leaders in their marketplaces and industries through customer-centered training. Over the past 15 years, Margie has worked in many Main Street towns throughout the nation. She is passionate about helping small business owners become more successful.

Many small business owners will be looking back at 2010 as one of the most volatile years of their business life. The great recession has been one laced with “course corrections” at many levels of business — starting with how consumers view shopping, how they are dealing with debt and available credit, and how they or their friends and loved ones have been directly or indirectly affected during this time. Suffice it to say, the recent economy has dramatically altered the shopping and dining behaviors of most Americans.

The scope of these behaviors is striking. Among the most prevalent trends include (1) fewer shopping trips; (2) purchasing fewer items than before and postponing purchases; (3) taking more time to find the best prices; and (4) using more coupons. In general, consumers are more discerning about their purchases, but they are also expecting more from the businesses they frequent.

Regardless of your specific niche, you must understand that today’s customers have so many choices, yet so little time. This mindset, however, clearly points to opportunities for small businesses that are looking for comeback strategies.

As small business owners reposition for 2011, there are numerous opportunities that they should consider to regain market share and “mind share” with current and potential customers.

As a consultant to small businesses, I constantly ask owners to challenge

all of their assumptions about the way they *have done business* versus *the way they must do business*. In this economic environment, retailers must work diligently to stay relevant in the consumer’s mind. I remind owners and managers that each day they open their stores their mantra must be about “earning business” — the era of entitlement (just because we open our doors) is not a strategy that will work with today’s shoppers or in the current competitive marketplace.

In 2011, business owners can “no longer be married to what has been their strategy”; instead they must *resolve* to revisit their business practices and have the courage to *act on* what is necessary. New Year’s resolutions typically have a very short shelf life, and commitment to them diminishes after a few weeks or months.

All business owners have to be decisive and have an unflinching readiness to face the new realities necessary for success in today’s marketplace. Often, as owners and managers, we have to make decisions that are neither pleasant nor popular. I urge clients to demonstrate their ability to make these changes by discarding outdated, old ways and investing time, money, and energy to re-invigorate their staff and themselves. Remember, consumer confidence starts within your business, and your attitude is communicated daily to your clients.

The following are points to ponder. These practices are widely applied by the most successful businesses. Before you read these strategies, however, I urge you to ask yourself these three questions:

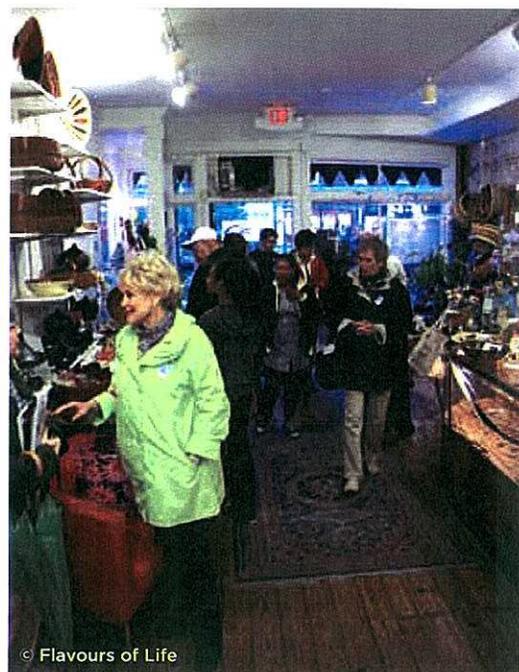
- **What must I change?** (Pause here and think. In many cases, you know the answers.)
- **What is holding me back?** (What kind of resistance do you expect to face? Explore the “what-ifs.”)
- **What are the consequences if I don’t make these changes?** (No more “blamestorming” about reasons that make you unsuccessful.)

### The Challenges of Change

This list of strategies and tactics is not a “one size fits all,” but rather a composite of key opportunities that many independent business owners have neglected to embrace. Those who do resolve to change their business strategies are among the most successful.

- **Own the issues!** Don’t continue to blame the economy. Business has not stopped! Great businesses often capture sales from merchants who pull back and wait for business to get better. Ask yourself what you are doing each day to make business happen.
- **Work on a plan of attack.** Create goals, write them down, explain the importance of each goal, and make your team stakeholders in the advancement of each. Keep an open dialogue on how the goals are progressing.

*Create an enticing environment for customers. Flavours of Life, a fair trade store on Bank Street in downtown New London, Connecticut, is a popular spot because of its engaging atmosphere and interesting merchandise.*



© Flavours of Life



© Flavours of Life

*Customers respond well to businesses that consistently create a sense of welcome, with engaging staff that meet shoppers' needs.*

- **Adapt an attitude of “no customer left behind.”** Create an engaging, enticing environment in your business — stress “solution selling.” Customers respond well to businesses that consistently create a sense of welcome, with an engaging staff that provides solutions to shoppers' needs. Focus on an environment that is enticing, fresh, and an accurate reflection of your desired image.
  - **Integrate the “voice of the customer” into your business.** Conduct simple market research, i.e., a focus group or a short in-store or online survey. “We value your opinion” are the key words. Start listening. It's essential to be open to constructive feedback.
  - **Look at your resources one by one and brainstorm ways to obtain some improvement from each.** Resources are your time, your staff, your vendors, your service, your marketing, etc. Think R&R (Resources and Results). Approach all of your vendors with a “partners' mentality.” Think of this as a reciprocal relationship — one where both succeed when business is profitable. Don't be afraid to ask for concessions, incentives, mark-down money, etc.
  - **Know your numbers and work them.** Set sales and margin goals for each month. Look closely at profitability in every category. Stay in touch with your cash flow and project needs. Maximize inventory turn! Remember to turn it, not churn it! Get your staff involved in goal setting for inventory turns — communicate expectations and progress weekly.
  - **Be vigilant about cost cutting — in the right places.** Aspire for operational excellence. Look at each line item on your financial statement and seek creative ways to save a little here and there; but do not cut staff and sacrifice service. Look at salaries as perhaps an underperforming asset and challenge associates in new ways to be accountable for sales.
  - **Advice you can “bank on” is simply to create an ongoing dialogue with your bankers.** Keep them well informed with current financials. Always include your bankers on your mailing lists. Copy them on press releases, etc. Let them feel the momentum of your business.
  - **Consider continuing education for management and staff.** Get out of your comfort zone. Be innovative and leverage any learning opportunities that can help grow the business.
  - **Use technology — from inventory management to social media — to grow the business.** Technology is getting easier and more affordable. Ask yourself the question “what will the future of my business be if I don't keep up with technology.” Consider outsourcing or investing in simple software.
  - **Add your own ideas.** What do you think *must* happen in order for your business to grow and prosper.
- I urge every small business owner to review and embrace the notion that in the toughest of economic times, a “get-down-to-essentials attitude” will not only be a necessary strategy, but it will jumpstart your business as the economy rebounds. In closing, remember *change* is essential in the business world. Without change, we can be swept away by the tide and become obsolete and irrelevant. Resolve to think *change* and to adapt and thrive.

### **Make 2011 a banner year!**

*Margie Johnson is an Allied Member of the National Main Street network. Learn more about Margie and Shop Talk at <http://allieddirectory.mainstreet.org/>. She can also be reached at 757-491-1411, by e-mail at [shoptalk@shoptalk.org](mailto:shoptalk@shoptalk.org), or by visiting her website, <http://www.shoptalk.org>.*



# NETWORK NOTES

“Network Notes” is compiled and written monthly by **Andrea L. Dono**. If you have interesting projects or ideas you would like to share, e-mail [andrea\\_dono@nthp.org](mailto:andrea_dono@nthp.org).

## Web Watch

I am going to pat my colleagues on the back for creating a truly fantastic online book, *The Best Practices Manual for Historic Sites*. It was developed to help stewards of the National Trust care for their sites and landscapes — BUT, once you



get past the first few chapters, the content applies to anyone in this field. You'll find information on disaster planning and developing an emergency response; sample requests for proposals; best practices for greening a historic building and green housekeeping tips; dealing

with construction projects and regulatory review; and so much more. Check it out at <http://historicsites.wordpress.com/2011/01/10/true-green-best-practices-for-historic-sites-buildings-grounds/>.

Do you know any business owners who are ready to hang up their hats? Instead of scrambling to deal with a vacancy, try helping them with **transitioning their business** to another entrepreneur. You could find a certified broker through the International Business Brokers Association at <http://www.ibba.org>, or you can check out sites that allow you to list a business for sale online: [BizBuySell.com](http://BizBuySell.com) and [BizQuest.com](http://BizQuest.com).

## Grant Announcement

**National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grants.** This round seeks projects that support creative placemaking projects that have an arts twist and contribute to the livability of communities. Submit a Statement of Interest no later than March 1, 2011. Grant awards will be between

\$25,000 and \$250,000. Eligible applications will involve a minimum of two organizations (a nonprofit design or cultural organization, such as your Main Street program, and a governmental entity). Check out the other requirements at <http://www.arts.gov/grants/apply/OurTown/index.html>. Don't forget to tell us if you get a grant, ok?

## Public Spaces Out of Failed Developments

Did you notice our theme this issue — dealing with vacant spaces? Big cities have been addressing this problem, too, using a bit of creativity to temporarily fill the voids created by stalled or failed development projects. Nathaniel Popper of the *Los Angeles Times* in his December 31st article, “Cities coax public spaces out of stalled developments,” mentioned several cool ideas that have been used to make lemonade out of real estate lemons. When the recession hit, San Francisco turned empty lots it was on the cusp of selling to developers into urban gardens cared for by volunteers. Thrilled with the outcome, the city also installed a temporary beer garden and some cafes. To encourage more of these projects, the mayor's office is working on a policy that offers developers incentives for making temporary use of land they are sitting on now.

In Seattle, the planning commission held a contest for temporary projects in vacant spaces and posted the 13 winning proposals and the runner-up ideas online (see the details of these projects at <http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/> — search for “Holding Patterns”). These ideas are replicable in many Main Street districts. They include a hockey rink; video installation; performance space; food cart zone; interactive blackboard art; a neighborhood story book; and a climatized, vegetated, transportable bubble structure, among other cool and zany ideas.

## Walkable Communities and Taking Back Our Streets

A University of New Hampshire study called “Examining Walkability and Social Capital as Indicators of Quality of Life at the Municipal and Neighborhood Scales” finds that those living in more walkable neighborhoods participated in community projects, clubs, and volunteering more often; and described television as their major form of entertainment less frequently than survey participants living in less walkable neighborhoods.

“We found that neighborhoods that are more walkable had higher levels of social capital such as trust among neighbors and participation in

community events,” says Shannon Rogers, lead author of the study and a Ph.D. candidate in UNH's Natural Resources and Earth System Science program. She adds that those who have higher levels of positive social capital have been shown to have a higher quality of life through better health and economic opportunities, among other things.

Rogers cautions that the study's results are mitigated by a possible self-selection bias: “People who enjoy walking may choose to live in more walkable neighborhoods,” she says, adding that it would be naive to say this study “proves” that walkability affects social capital in neighborhoods.

When it comes to livability, our streets must be designed for everyone — not just drivers.

Re:STREETS is convening a working conference/design charrette to develop a **design manual for creating streets** that balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. The conference will be held on July 21-23, 2011, on the UC Berkeley campus. Interested professionals from a wide range of disciplines are encouraged to participate. For more information, go to [www.restreets.org](http://www.restreets.org). (You must apply for the conference; to do so, click “register.”)



## Local Biz Should be Facebooking

McKinsey & Company recently surveyed some large businesses about **social media**. Nine out of 10 respondents said using Web 2.0 has yielded measurable business benefits. Some of those benefits include increased marketing effectiveness — 63 percent; increased customer satisfaction — 50 percent; and reduced marketing costs — 45 percent.

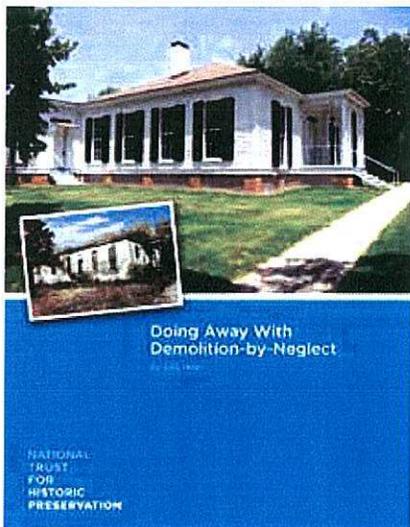
In contrast, another study released last year by RatePoint revealed that 47 percent of small business owners don't think their customers spend time using social media and 24 percent don't think customers do online research before finding their business. Really? Because ComScore and 15 Miles conducted a **local search study**, which confirms that shoppers of all ages use the Internet to gather information before heading out to a bricks-and-mortar store. Plus there are a lot of people who really like connecting with businesses through social media because they feel it gets them quick customer service attention. (You can learn more about this study by watching an online webinar at <http://www.localsearchstudy.com>.)

Sometimes what works for the big guys works for the little guys — so perhaps you can use this ammo when persuading local business owners to take the social media plunge.

## Doing Away With Demolition-by-Neglect

Julia Miller

In November 2009, the Chicago Department of Buildings declared the YWCA in the city's South Loop "imminently dangerous," paving the way for its current owners, 830 LLC, to demolish the 1894 building. Among the oldest of the structures composing the "Michigan Avenue Streetwall" and included in the city's Michigan Boulevard Historic District, the YWCA had been neglected for over three decades while under the ownership of a major publishing company. Following an unsuccessful attempt by a local developer



to convert the structure into condominiums, the YWCA was sold in 2008 to its current owner, who, in turn, obtained permission to demolish the building, notwithstanding its historic status.

While many Chicago preservationists reluctantly agreed that the building was too far gone to be salvaged, no doubt they also felt that more could and should have been done to prevent the YWCA's ultimate fate. The building's dilapidated condition was no secret. Reportedly, the building, located on one of Chicago's pre-eminent streets, had received multiple citations over the years from the building department for numerous code and safety violations. Why wasn't the inclusion of the property in a local historic district enough? After all, Chicago's historic preservation ordinance, as one of the strongest in the country, protects against

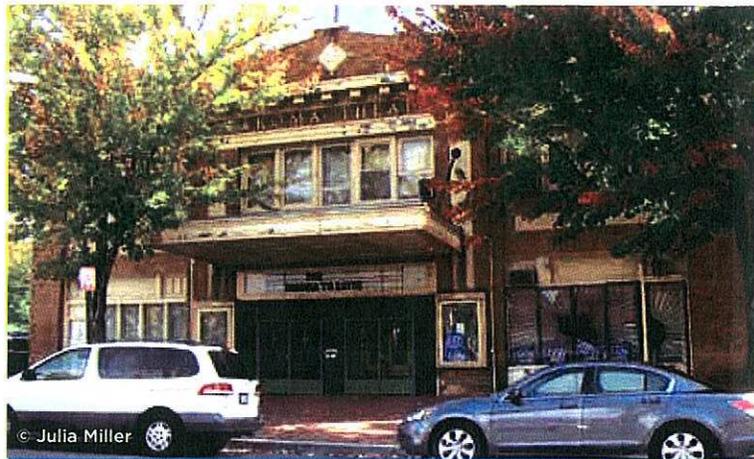
the demolition of historic resources. What is the loophole and how can it be closed?

Chicago's YWCA fell victim to a condition commonly referred to as "demolition-by-neglect." The building, following a pattern of long-term neglect, became so dilapidated that rehabilitation no longer proved to be a viable option and the building, ultimately, was demolished on public safety grounds.

While no one "tried-and-true" solution exists to prevent demolition by neglect, a number of measures can be taken to help ensure that historic resources withstand the test of time. By requiring that routine maintenance and major repairs be made, routinely inspecting properties, adopting and utilizing demolition-by-neglect procedures, committing to a course of enforcement, and working closely with building department officials, properties deemed worthy of preservation should, in fact, be preserved over time.

It is important to keep in mind that non-regulatory solutions, even when regulatory measures are present, can be instrumental in protecting endangered resources. For example, the role of historic preservation organizations and their efforts to protect poorly maintained historic properties should not be discounted. Each year, preservation organizations work tirelessly to find solutions to dilapidated resources featured on endangered lists, often with successful results. Large numbers of historic houses and Main Street buildings in aging communities have been rehabilitated through revolving fund and community investment fund programs. The adoption of new regulatory measures, such as neighborhood conservation districts and tax programs, such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and New Markets Tax Credit, have also been instrumental in spurring community reinvestment and stabilizing older, historic neighborhoods.

A new National Trust publication, *Doing Away with Demolition-by-Neglect*, explores the various approaches to this



*Closed since 2007, the 1923 Takoma Theatre, located in the District of Columbia's Takoma Park Historic District, is in danger of demolition by neglect. In May 2010 the city denied the owner's application to demolish the 500-seat theater, rejecting the owner's claim of unreasonable economic hardship.*

problem in some detail. First, it looks at affirmative maintenance requirements and demolition-by-neglect procedures in historic preservation ordinances. Second, it looks at approaches that may be used to resolve maintenance problems and enforce violations under these laws as they arise. Finally, it examines the role of historic preservation boards in preventing the needless demolition of historic structures under laws designed to protect the public against unsafe buildings.

To order a copy go to [preservationbooks.org](http://preservationbooks.org). Item No. 2DBN \$15 (Main Street Members \$11.25)

**A number of measures can be taken to help ensure that historic resources withstand the test of time.**

- Require that properties are maintained and major repairs are made on a timely basis;
- Have a good monitoring system in place;
- Adopt and utilize demolition-by-neglect procedures;
- Commit to a course of enforcement; and
- Work closely with building department officials.

# Main Street

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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## My Main Street



by Sean Landry, Southwest Studios  
Children gaze in wonder at holiday window display  
in downtown Kilgore, Texas.

If you have a photo that captures the essence of your Main Street, e-mail it to [mainstreet@nthp.org](mailto:mainstreet@nthp.org) and we'll consider it for next issue's Parting Shot. Please make sure the image file is at least 5"x6" at 300 dpi. Let your imagination run wild. We're looking for unusual, artistic shots that capture the spirit of your Main Street District.

# MAINSTREETNOW

The Journal of The National Trust Main Street Center | MARCH/APRIL 2010

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By Doug Loescher,  
Director, NTMSC



## SUSTAINABILITY: MORE THAN JUST BRICKS

Quick: when you think of the word “sustainability,” what comes to mind? For many, a picture of a building may pop into their head. And for good reason. Many leading sustainability organizations focus specifically on bricks-and-mortar issues. In fact, one of the dominant players in the field – the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) – is seen as a driving force of an industry projected to contribute \$554 billion to the U.S. gross domestic product from 2009 to 2013.

And who could dispute the importance of the built environment? According to the USGBC, buildings in the United States are responsible for 39 percent of CO<sup>2</sup> (carbon dioxide) emissions, 40 percent of energy consumption, 13 percent of water consumption, and 15 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) per year. More dramatically, they claim that greater building efficiency can meet 85 percent of future U.S. demand for energy! Clearly, energy-efficient buildings have become the “poster child” for the movement. Yet, sustainable communities, businesses, and programs are so much more than “just bricks.”

Buildings (energy efficient or not) need vibrant businesses to pay the rent. And those businesses need a comprehensive revitalization and management effort, such as a Main Street organization, to minimize their (investment) risk and maximize their (market) potential. Those organizations, in turn, need people and money – in the form of volunteers and funding – to keep the doors open. The people who give their time and dollars to a local Main Street effort also need resources – from the state and national level – to learn best practices and develop successful initiatives.

In short, without comprehensive revitalization and long-term management of our community centers, the promise and potential of truly sustainable communities will remain elusive. The independent, isolated actions of millions of decision makers on Main Streets across the country present an enormous challenge. Consider that by some estimates, there are:

**30,000** cities across the United States with populations under 50,000, each possessing at least one traditional commercial center in need of continuing revitalization and development;

**3 million** older and independently owned buildings fill these districts. While some have undergone modest-to-substantial rehabilitation over the past few decades, fewer have addressed the need for energy efficiency in a significant way; and

**5 million** small and independent businesses – by similar calculations – might occupy these buildings, many of which are not owner occupied... resulting in a significant challenge to coordinate and drive action on potential community-wide goals.

How can we sustain all those buildings, businesses, districts, and programs? At the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), our commitment is focused in two broad areas: policy and practice.

Through the Preservation Green Lab and Sustainability Program (see page 25), the National Trust will work with several cities to develop model policies that encourage preservation as sustainable development. This work will include refining building, energy, and zoning codes, as well working to expand the availability of historic tax credits at the state and federal level.

By supporting state and local partners, the Trust will provide our network of practitioners with the tools they need – through the development and dissemination of best practices and other guidance for greening older and historic buildings. For 2010, we are excited to launch a new plank to our sustainability program. Called Main Street GREEN, it is designed to capture the best thinking and innovative strategies on sustainable Main Streets and to create a national action plan to retrofit buildings and districts throughout the Main Street network.

Our first step will be to conduct a comprehensive in-depth survey of local issues and innovations on the subject. This assessment will identify specific activities in LEED (leadership in energy

“Without comprehensive revitalization and long-term management of our community centers, the promise and potential of truly sustainable communities will remain elusive.”

and environmental design) certifications, energy audits, building retrofits, green business certifications, municipal policies, energy conservation, public infrastructure upgrades, water conservation and management, alternative energy systems, transportation improvements, local food systems, and “buy local” campaigns. What will emerge will be a picture of Main Streets that incorporates broad, inclusive principles for environmental, economic, and social sustainability goals.

Later this year, we hope to leverage this fresh data to forge a powerful coalition of federal, national, state, and local leaders by convening leading practitioners and partners in the field of sustainability and Main Street revitalization during a focused event at NTHP headquarters in Washington, D.C. Our goal: to create a roadmap to place Main Street at the center of the sustainability movement.

This is our second annual “green issue,” and as you thumb through the pages, you’ll see how profound the issues are – and how diverse the solutions have become. From growing your own entrepreneurs through cooperative businesses to building an enduring political constituency through social media advocacy, local leaders are creating sustainable solutions in every corner of the Main Street network.



# MAINSTREETNOW

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## NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the only national, private organization chartered by Congress to encourage public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects significant in American history. The National Trust Main Street Center provides technical assistance in downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization to communities throughout the nation.

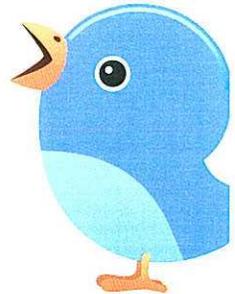
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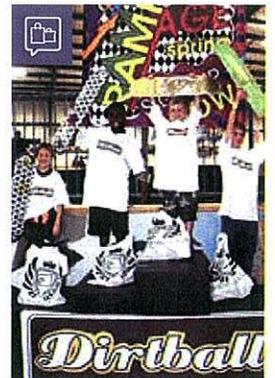
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Community-owned Businesses:

# HOW COMMUNITIES BEC

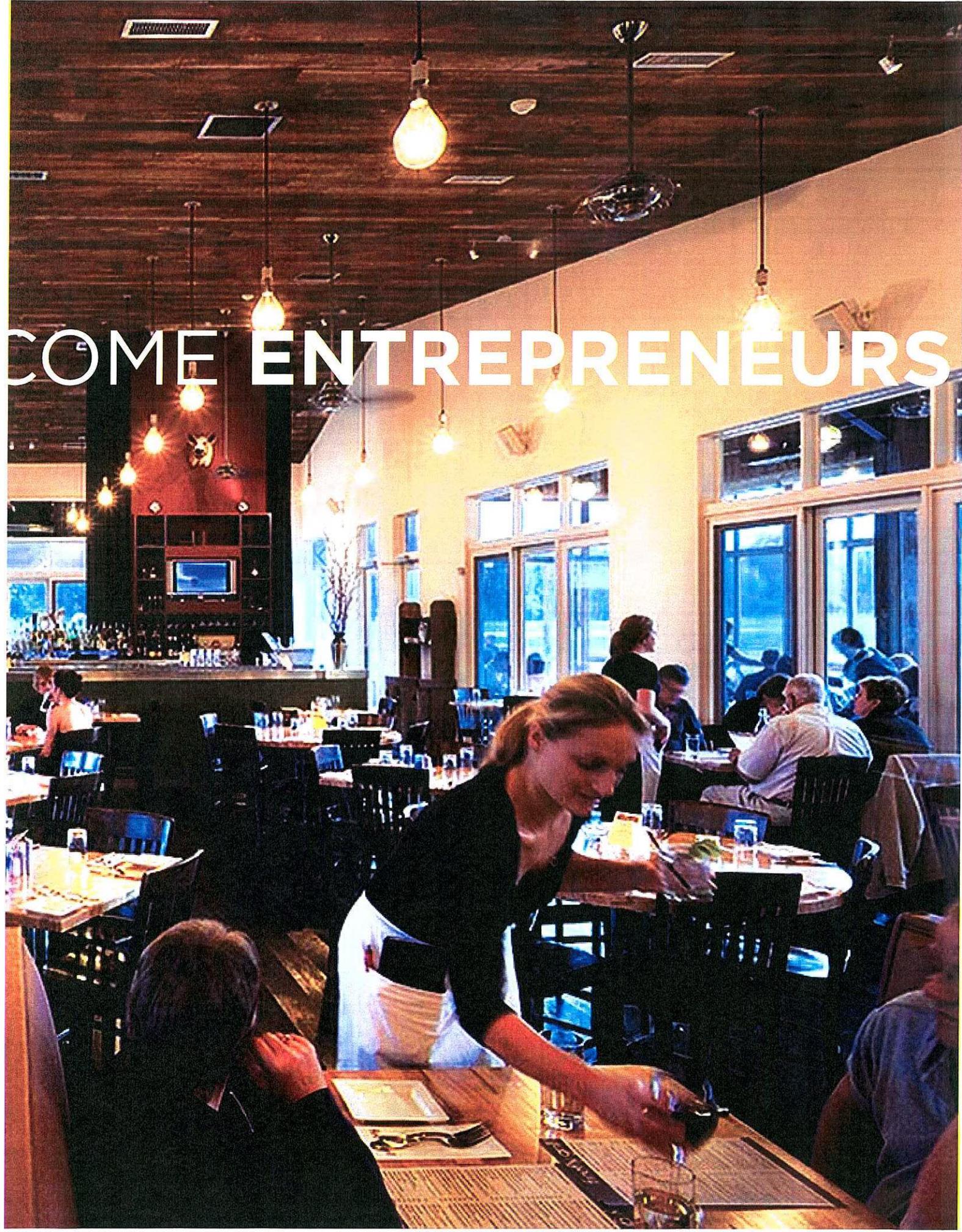
Throughout the nation, in a movement too small to be called a trend, engaged community members are organizing themselves in new ways to become community entrepreneurs. Often motivated more by mission than capitalistic ambition, community groups are opening new businesses.

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By Joshua Bloom

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# COME ENTREPRENEURS





Community-owned businesses differ from traditional businesses in that they are motivated by a *purpose*. They usually arise to fill a void where the marketplace is too slow to act on its own, or the risks appear too high (think decayed downtown). Founders of community-owned businesses don't just see an opportunity that the market failed to see, but in times when capital for funding new ideas is scarce, they can give life to new business ideas. In many ways, a community-owned business is the same as any other mercantile endeavor: it must satisfy a market need and it must offer the potential to generate a profit.

They are a tiny niche among alternative ownership structures, yet community-owned businesses span a wide range, from a doughnut shop in Clare, Michigan, to the Green Bay Packers. (More on the doughnut shop in a minute.) Did you know that the Green Bay Packers, after an informal start, were financed by a group of Green Bay small businesses? The Packers (named after the Indian Packing Company, where they played their early games) established themselves as a nonprofit corporation in 1923 and the franchise remains so today. The ownership structure, with shares sold as non-appreciating investments in a community corporation, means the Packers can never leave Green Bay, Wisconsin. (If the team is sold, all of the money must go to charity, leaving the shareholders with nothing.) As a city of 100,000, Green Bay is by far the smallest market among professional football teams.

Any viable business begins with a market opportunity. (Despite Green Bay's size, the Packers have a season-tickets waiting list of 81,000 people.) When that need isn't recognized by traditional investors or entrepreneurs, or is seen as having too much risk, the community-owned model presents an alternative path to business development. And, in disinvested commercial districts, a community-owned business can prove to the market that a good idea can be profitable.

Community-owned businesses fall into four broad categories:

- **COOPERATIVE:** A *communally* owned and managed business, operated for the benefit of its members;
- **COMMUNITY-OWNED CORPORATION:** A traditional, for-profit corporation that integrates social enterprise principles;
- **SMALL OWNERSHIP GROUP:** A small, ad

- hoc investor group that capitalizes and/or operates a business as a partnership or closely held corporation; and
- **INVESTMENT FUND:** A community-based fund that invests debt or equity in local business ventures.

## Cooperatives

PCC Natural Markets (formerly Puget Consumers Co-op) started in 1953 as a food-buying club for 15 families in the Seattle area. Today, it is the largest consumer-owned natural food cooperative in the United States, with nine stores and 40,000 members. As with many cooperative groceries, it formed to provide a consumer option not available from traditional supermarkets. Co-op grocers used to have the natural and organic foods category virtually to themselves. Today, they compete with Whole Foods, traditional supermarkets, and even Wal-Mart, all of which offer natural and organic foods – either exclusively (Whole Foods) or in addition to their standard grocery lines.

PCC Natural Markets is the largest in the category, but co-op markets come in every size, with different motivations, and with different consumer markets. Local citizens founded Township Grocery in Bonaparte, Iowa (pop. 458), in 1986 to offer a local grocery option after the town's general store closed.

In many ways, cooperatives are the essence of a community-owned business. Cooperatives are democratic organizations where each member has an equal vote, and they typically operate as not-for-profit businesses. (Unlike a typical nonprofit, co-ops often distribute surplus revenues as "patronage dividends" to members.) From their origins to modern co-op enterprises,

and from rural electric co-ops to grocery co-ops, they embrace socially progressive ideals to use the power of the marketplace to meet an under-served need.

Cooperatives are a special breed of corporation and most states have statutes governing them. (State statutes regulating cooperatives differ from place to place and may not apply to the type of cooperative you are considering.) The concept of a cooperative – people organizing a business activity for their mutual benefit – is ancient. But most histories credit the modern cooperative model to the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, a consumer cooperative founded in England in 1844 by a group of hand weavers who found themselves unable to afford basic food items during the Industrial Revolution. They created the Rochdale Principles, which first codified the philosophy behind modern cooperatives. The principles promulgated by the International Cooperative Alliance, the National Cooperative Business Association, and others, though slightly modified and expanded over the last 150 years, derive directly from the Rochdale experiment.

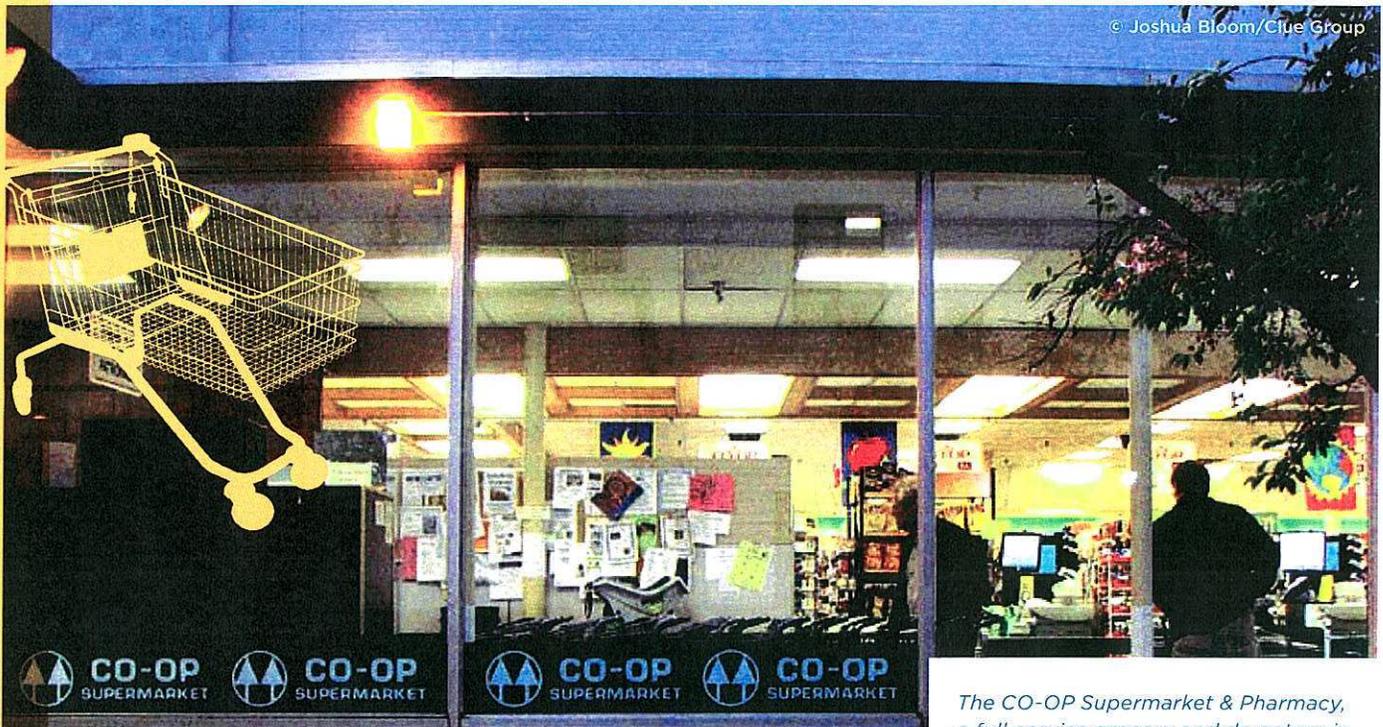
## Principles of Cooperative Businesses

According to the International Cooperative Alliance, "A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise." The original Rochdale Principles were based on the following ideas:

1. Open Membership
2. Democratic Control
3. Dividend on Purchase
4. Limited Interest on Capital
5. Political and Religious Neutrality
6. Cash Trading
7. Promotion of Education

The principles have been expanded slightly over the past 150 years to include reinvestment in the cooperative, sustainable development, and a responsibility to strengthen the cooperative movement as a whole.

For more information about cooperative principles, visit [www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop).



*The CO-OP Supermarket & Pharmacy, a full-service grocery and drugstore in Greenbelt, Md., is owned by more than 6,000 local members.*



© Joshua Bloom/Clue Group

In a cooperative, there are no outside investors and, usually, every member owns an equal share – an equity investment in the corporation. A share generally entitles the member to voting privileges and patronage dividends, but shares do not increase in value like other investments. (Depending on the co-op's own governing rules, a member may be able to redeem his or her shares, although there may be timing or other restrictions on redemptions.)

The “one member, one share” structure can limit the capital a cooperative can raise. If, for example, shares cost \$100, the co-op would have to sell 10,000 shares to capitalize a new \$1 million grocery store. In order to make it easier to raise capital,

“preferred shares” to outside investors. These shares allow a larger investment than a standard equity share (and may pay a small annual return), but may come with restrictions on voting rights. At the core, the co-op model strives to preserve an egalitarian structure.

Co-ops in the Main Street universe generally take one of four forms:

- **CONSUMER (OR RETAIL) COOPERATIVES** (e.g., grocery stores) sell retail goods or services to their members. In practice, many consumer cooperatives today allow anyone to be a customer, but they provide certain benefits (such as voting and patronage dividends) only to members. A consumer

cooperative often hires professional management, although in some cases members serve as a supplemental workforce.

cooperative often hires professional management, although in some cases members serve as a supplemental workforce.

- **WORKER COOPERATIVES** are owned and operated by the owners of the business. There is no professional management, and the workforce consists primarily of the owners. All owners are equal and they usually run the business through a democratic or consensus process.

- **PURCHASING COOPERATIVES** allow member businesses to aggregate their buying power. By acting as a wholesaler, they often form the support structure that allows many modern retail cooperatives to exist. In addition, they may provide marketing and financing assistance to their member businesses. For example, the National Cooperative Grocers Association is a “co-op of co-ops,” serving cooperative grocery stores. TrueServ is a buying cooperative that serves as a wholesaler and brand manager for independently owned True Value hardware stores (each of which is a member of TrueServ).

- **PRODUCER COOPERATIVES** unify individual manufacturers or producers to give them access to larger wholesale and retail markets. They are common in agriculture (e.g., in the citrus and milk industries), but also exist among artisans and other makers of goods.



## Examples of Cooperative Businesses

While cooperatives may serve different membership types, each fills an unmet market need.

**CONSUMER COOPERATIVES:** In addition to PCC Natural Markets in Seattle and Township Grocery in Bonaparte, there are hundreds of food co-ops across the country, many responding to consumers' interests in sustainable supply chains and innovative ap-

proaches to how we buy and consume food.

The Park Slope Food Coop in Brooklyn strives to source all its grown and raised food within a 200-mile radius of New York City during the growing season, and within 500 miles at other times of the year. Weavers Way Co-op, with two locations in Philadelphia, has taken "local" one step further: it operates an urban farm in Philadelphia from which it gathers and sells produce.

(Consumer-based grocery cooperatives can even benefit traditional farmers. As the "locavore" movement grows, grocery co-ops can foster more predictable demand for products than other direct-to-consumer channels such as farm stands and farmers markets.)

The Mercantile ("The Merc"), in downtown Powell, Wyoming, is a cooperatively owned department store that was created by community members after a downtown anchor business closed. It was inspired by two other community-owned clothing stores in nearby Montana:

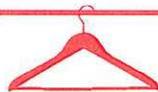
Little Muddy Dry Goods in Plentywood, and Family Matters in Malta. See "The Merc" sidebar below for more details.

The Harvard Coop ("The Coop") was founded in 1882 by a group of Harvard students to sell merchandise to the academic community at competitive prices. While anyone can shop there today, membership is open only to the Harvard and MIT student, staff, and faculty communities. Membership still costs \$1 – the same as it did in 1882. Last year, The Coop returned a hefty 7-percent patronage dividend to its members, as a proportion of their individual purchases.

Responding to the need for a downtown café and community space, the New Deal Café in downtown Greenbelt, Maryland, operates as a restaurant, music performance venue, art exhibition space, and gathering spot. Appropriately enough, Greenbelt was founded as a utopian, cooperative residential community during the New Deal era. The Café, which got its start in 1995, was originally operated entirely by volunteers. It now has professional management. Its 400 members buy shares at \$50 and renew annually at \$15.



*The New Deal Café in Greenbelt, Md., has 400 members who support this restaurant-arts-community space downtown.*



### The Merc

The Merc in Powell, Wyoming, opened in 2002 with a goal of offering basic clothing to fill the needs of the rural area's residents. Powell's population was 5,373 in 2000, but the store serves several small towns with a combined population of about 25,000 people.

Sharon Earhart was one of the early leaders. She recalls the organizing committee meeting every week during the start-up phase. Their business plan required \$400,000 in capital, and the committee decided to raise it in \$500 increments. They looked at the business model in Plentywood, Montana, which had priced shares at \$10,000, but Powell wanted to sell its shares at a more accessible price. Still, \$500 was out of reach for some. Earhart said some of the committee's most gratifying moments came when community members pooled their resources to buy a single share, or when one retiree withdrew savings to buy a share so he could help create a future for his grandchildren and his community.

The board threw fund-raising parties and set up speaking engagements in front of every possible community organization, from students groups to farmers. Since it opened, The Merc has paid one dividend to its member owners and anticipates being able to do so again.

Today, The Merc is governed by a five-member board and is operated by a paid general manager. Volunteers help out occasionally, particularly with gift wrapping during the holiday season. The store has deviated only slightly from its original plan, including adding athletic footwear a few years ago.

The store's manager, Paul Ramos, reports he still uses a revolving portion of The Merc's original capital to purchase inventory. (The business has never had to borrow.) Three years ago, with the help of a grant from the Wyoming Business Council, The Merc doubled in size, acquiring a 7,000 square-foot former drug store next door. While the store is affected to some extent by the broader economy, and by Walmart 22 miles away, Ramos says, its fortunes are more directly linked to the cycles of the area's agricultural industries.

**WORKER COOPERATIVES:** The Moosewood Restaurant in downtown Ithaca, New York, quickly became one of the most renowned vegetarian restaurants in the country when it was founded in 1973. Operated as a “collective” (Moosewood’s term), its 19 worker-owners manage the business and cook in the kitchen, and together they have published 12 cookbooks. (The cookbooks are all authored by “The Moosewood Collective.”)

The Bicycle Kitchen in Los Angeles and the Bike Kitchen Coop in San Francisco are volunteer-run bicycle repair shops. They don’t sell bikes. They don’t even fix bikes. They teach members how to fix their own bikes, and the co-ops provide the tools and space to do it.

A few antiques marts around the country provide retail space to independent vendors in a managed “mall,” but allow the vendors to help with the sales counter, cleaning, and inventory management in lieu of paying rent.

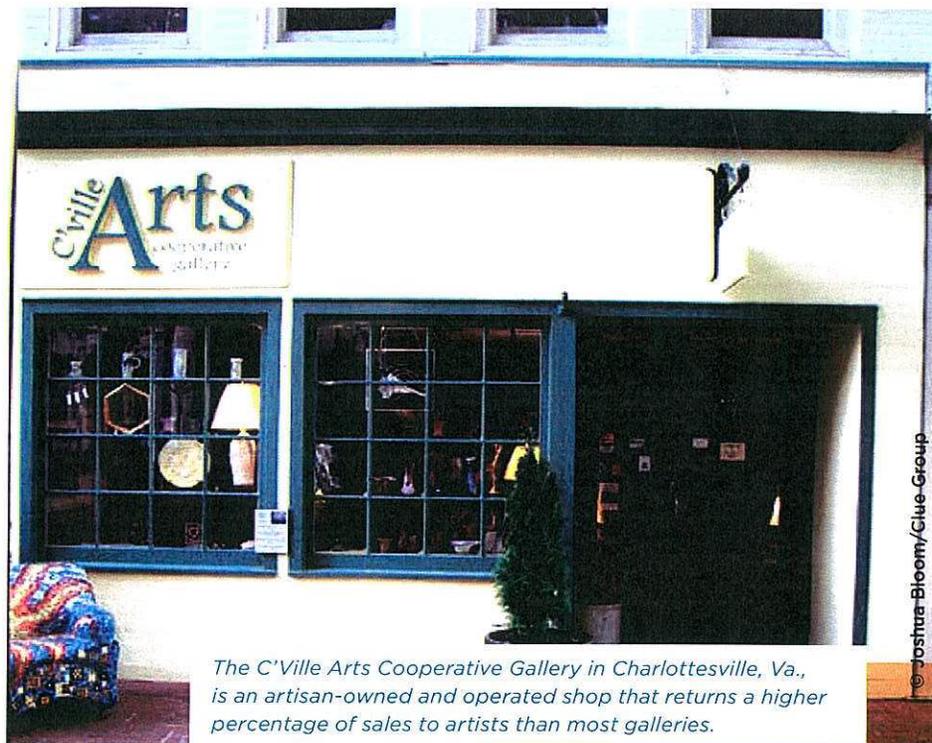
**PURCHASING COOPERATIVES:** TruServ and Ace Hardware are purchasing cooperatives that serve thousands of independently owned True Value and Ace Hardware member retailers. The Independent Purchasing Cooperative, owned by Subway restaurant franchisees, was organized to buy supplies and services for its member owners; and the United Foodservice Purchasing Co-op provides a similar service to franchisees

“Cooperatives vary widely as a species, both in type and scale. But they all embody similar ideals or aspirations: to serve their members in an egalitarian system.”

of Yum! Brands restaurants (A&W, KFC, Long John Silver’s, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell). In all of these cases, the member businesses believed they could reduce their inventory costs by acting together.

The National Cooperative Grocers Association assists its members with marketing, operations, and purchasing. Food Co-op 500 is a national organization that helps communities organize and launch grocery cooperatives.

Another example is the Bike Cooperative (formerly Mobeus and the Biking Solution) which provides financing, marketing, credit card processing, and private-label bicycle products to independent bicycle shops, helping them compete against larger, more powerful retailers.



*The C'Ville Arts Cooperative Gallery in Charlottesville, Va., is an artisan-owned and operated shop that returns a higher percentage of sales to artists than most galleries.*

**PRODUCER COOPERATIVES:** The C’Ville Arts Cooperative Gallery in Charlottesville, Virginia, is an artisan-owned and operated retail business in downtown Charlottesville, with membership by juried application. The co-op creates a retail venue for producers to sell their wares, and it returns 92 percent of actual sales to the artisans – a much higher rate than traditional galleries.

In a variation on the “producer cooperative” concept, the Independent Restaurant Collaborative in Colorado Springs, Colorado, provides group marketing for member independent restaurants.

For additional examples of cooperative businesses, visit [communitybusinesses.blogspot.com](http://communitybusinesses.blogspot.com).

How a cooperative is incorporated may confer some benefits or impose some restrictions on its operation, depending on state laws. But it’s really the cooperative’s governance documents (e.g., articles of incorporation, membership agreements, and bylaws) that determine how a cooperative operates and the benefits and obligations of its members. Cooperatives vary widely as a species, both in type and scale. But they all embody similar ideals or aspirations: to serve their members in an egalitarian system.

For more information, sample organizing documents, and cooperative resources, visit [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org).

## Community-owned Corporations

While cooperatives have a set of principles and a codified movement, the term “community-owned corporations” more loosely describes a wide range of traditional businesses with a social-enterprise component. In this spirit, several communities are currently developing community-owned stores that are not technically cooperatives.

The Adirondacks community of Saranac Lake, New York, (pop. 4,800) stopped a 120,000 square-foot Walmart from opening in 2006 by preventing the commercial rezoning of several key parcels. Gail Brill, a local businesswoman and community activist, noted while the anti-Walmart campaign was successful, Saranac Lake still needed more retail options. “We couldn’t just be ‘anti,’” said Brill, “we had to say ‘yes’ to something.” So they formed a committee to investigate ways they could create retail alternatives downtown – and avoid creating sprawl outside the community.

Ames, a chain of small, discount department stores, had closed in 2002 and nothing had filled its place. The committee was inspired by The Merc in Powell and invited one of its organizers to come to Saranac Lake. Fired up with enthusiasm, Saranac Lake quickly formed an interim board, retained a local corporate attorney, and registered their venture with the New



York attorney general's office. As a first step, they developed a business plan, and in June 2007 they launched a stock offering. To maximize the project's feasibility, they decided from the outset to lease a property, instead of building new. Brill describes the people involved as "serious": they wanted a "real corporation" that included democratic principles, but was not a cooperative. Alan Brown, the group's treasurer, observed that members of the organizing group felt a for-profit corporation "would have broader appeal" than a nonprofit. Brill added that they wanted a for-profit store that would be "as American as apple pie."

Shares were priced at \$100 and the capital needs were \$500,000. In order to foster broad community ownership, the prospectus stipulates that investors may purchase a maximum of 100 shares, or \$10,000 of company stock. As of December 2009, they had raised \$415,900 – an accomplishment that surprised even Brill and Brown.

The money was raised entirely through grassroots efforts: the group organized house parties where a local host invited 20 guests to hear a presentation and pitch. Residents were encouraged to buy shares as gifts. People with summer homes in the area bought shares. The group sent direct-mail appeals and sold shares at the local farmers market.

The organizers cannot do much besides selling shares until they have reached the \$500,000 goal specified in the prospectus. (In fact, because shareholders' money can only be used to capitalize the business, the interim board has had to organize additional fund-raising activities to pay for the costs – like printed materials, postage, etc. – associated with selling the shares.)

The prospectus lays out risks associated with the stock offering, but, as a practical matter, shareholders are making an investment in the community. If the group does not reach its goal, it will have to pay back all the money raised to date, with interest, and the board will be personally responsible for \$25,000 in legal fees that would otherwise ultimately be paid out of the start-up capital. They have six more months, after which they can file with the attorney general for a six-month extension, but Brill and Brown are confident they will meet their goal.

For examples of organizing documents and prospectuses, visit [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org). For additional examples of community-owned corporations, visit [community-businesses.blogspot.com](http://community-businesses.blogspot.com)



## Clare City Bakery (a.k.a, "Cops & Doughnuts")

"It began as a crazy idea," says Officer Al White.

Last May, Clare City Bakery was about to close after 113 years of continuous operation. The owners were retiring and didn't see any prospects for selling the struggling business in Michigan's tough economy. Today, Clare City Bakery (redubbed "Cops & Doughnuts") is creating new life in downtown Clare.

It started when members of Clare's municipal police department heard news of the bakery's imminent closing. It was nearly at that moment that the entire force of nine men and women (though acting in their capacities as private citizens) decided to buy the business. Each person agreed to put in a modest equal initial investment and to make a small additional monthly investment for the next year. They would manage the business as volunteers and there would be no profits distributed for at least 12 months. The group elected a president and vice president of the corporation and then hired a general manager, who in turn hired the bakery's staff.

Today, with four billboards on two nearby interstates, recent profiles on CNN and "The Today Show," and inquiries from no fewer than a dozen interested franchisors, Cops & Doughnuts is the hottest thing to happen in Clare in some time. (And three new businesses, including an art gallery, have recently opened downtown.) The bakery has 18 employees (nine full-time) and has already expanded into an adjoining storefront. The bakery's bathroom is designed to replicate a jail cell (complete with wall-mounted bed), and the store is already selling Cops & Doughnuts logo apparel. The owners are considering future wholesaling and franchising options – but they are trying not to get ahead of themselves. They still haven't paid themselves anything.

The irony of cops and their fondness for doughnuts isn't lost on the owners, and they take the jokes as they come. "Any joke is good advertising," says Officer White. "We thought it would be fun to own a bakery," he continues, although one wonders if he envisioned serving doughnuts on Christmas Eve (see his photos on Cops & Doughnuts' Facebook fan page). As the *Central Michigan Morning Sun* observed, "protect and serve" has taken on a new meaning.

## Small Ownership Group

Small groups, such as partnerships and closely held corporations (also called private-stock corporations), are such traditional forms of business ownership and capitalization that most people don't think of them as models for a community-owned business. But they can be. A small group, or even an individual entrepreneur, can open a business with a community-minded purpose.

Partnerships and private-stock corporations have different legal structures (in a partnership, the individuals are owners; in a corporation, they own shares, even though the stock is not publicly traded or easily sold), but both can embody social-enterprise and community-ownership principles. The most notable functional difference from a "community-owned corporation" (such as The Merc) is that small ownership groups tend not to be open to the general public and the "group" is usually, well, smaller.

Firefly Restaurant opened in Effingham, Illinois (pop. 12,000), in 2006. Operating their own restaurant was the dream of an Effingham native and her chef-husband, Kristie and Niall Campbell, who were then living in San Francisco. But they hadn't considered opening it in Effingham. Meanwhile, local leaders in Effingham had long seen a need for an upscale, independent restaurant where they could bring friends, family, and business associates, but they had not been successful in recruiting one.

During a visit home, the Campbells were courted by several local business leaders. Among them was Jack Schultz, CEO of Agracel, Inc., headquartered in Effingham, author of *Boomtown USA*, and self-described "business agitator." He was one of 18 local business people who helped raise \$50,000 to invest in a new restaurant. The members of the group act as silent partners in the business, which is run by the Campbells. (A portion of the Campbells' ownership stake, in addition to a cash investment, derives from "sweat equity"; the remainder of the required capital was borrowed.)

The business is actually two LLCs: one owns the land and developed the building; the second operates the restaurant and leases the building. In its first three years of operation, the members of the initial group have made some additional investments, and the business is performing in the black. In Firefly's case, while the partners certainly hope to recapture their initial investment, they see their venture's

primary goal as improving the quality of life in Effingham.

At the smallest end of the "ownership group" scale, even a sole proprietorship can incorporate social-enterprise tools and values. Linda Welch is a Washington, D.C., entrepreneur who has started and operated a number of businesses that have ranged from boarding pets to a comic book store. While she has never owned a restaurant, she is keenly aware of the need for additional vegetarian restaurant options in the city. So she's planning to open one, which will be called "Elements."

She teamed up with Neil Takemoto, an expert in crowdsourcing – a technique that uses a "community" to solve a problem. (See sidebar below for more information on crowdsourcing.) Together, they convened hundreds of local vegetarians to help Welch design the restaurant concept, including its name, logo, menu, location, and feel. Different from traditional focus groups, Welch's process helped her get potential customers' input while building buzz about her endeavor. What's more, this information-gathering and community-building process happened both online (using social media) and in-person.

The "crowd" – which now numbers in the hundreds – has been meeting regularly for over a year and participating actively in online discussions. As one ongoing activity, members of the group collect pictures on their travels of places or characteristics they would like to see incorporated into

Elements. Ultimately, Welch will own the restaurant, though she is considering a cash-plus-sweat-equity partnership arrangement with the chef. But Washington's vegetarian community will feel a sense of ownership, too, because they contributed to the restaurant's concept. And the benefit for Welch is clear: on opening day, Elements hopes to have 500 already loyal customers. Says Welch, "This is not a democracy, but I'm open to hearing any idea. For me, it's been wonderful."

Members of a small ownership group may be active managers or silent partners, but they typically expect some degree of profit sharing in the business' success, usually in proportion to their investment or participation in the business' operations. If an ownership group is financing an entrepreneur, it is critically important that the business operator has a stake in the venture. The entrepreneur must assume a portion of the risk, just as the silent investors do. (See sidebar "Tips for Small Ownership Groups and Investment Funds" on page 12.)

Firefly's story is the product of two great coincidences of entrepreneurship: a native, with restaurant experience, who was considering a move back home and was able to put together a compelling business plan. And a group of fast-acting local businesspeople that was able to secure resources, identify a site, establish itself as the building's developer, and provide financial and technical support. Cops & Doughnuts



## Crowdsourcing in practice: Army-Community Heritage Partnership Program

Two Army communities – Fort Knox in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and Fort Polk in Leesville, Louisiana – are currently organizing to develop community-owned or community-initiated restaurants.

Fort Knox and Fort Polk are participants in the Army-Community Heritage Partnership, a special initiative of the National Trust Main Street Center and the Department of the Army. Through surveys of local Army families (military and civilian), focus groups, and an analysis of consumer buying power, the Community Land Use & Economics Group and the National Trust Main Street Center were able to research and document the need for additional dining options "off-post," especially in the downtowns neighboring these two Army installations.

In Elizabethtown and Leesville, volunteer task forces made up of Army and community representatives are employing crowdsourcing techniques: they have each established blog-to-post updates about restaurant development plans and have invited local residents and Army families to participate in the initiatives. Each city hopes to establish a new, community-owned or community-initiated restaurant downtown within the next three years.



happened almost impulsively when a group of co-workers decided they needed to do something to save their favorite coffee spot. Community-minded investor groups can be cultivated by organizing individuals around a great idea with social impact, even if it means accepting a relatively high investment risk.

## Investment Funds

An investment fund provides venture capital (equity) or loans (debt) to an entrepreneur. Unlike traditional venture capital, community-development investment funds have less interest in high returns and more interest in stimulating new businesses – especially great business ideas that cannot gain access to capital (or sufficient capital) through traditional channels. Instead of owning and operating a business directly, a community can use this tool to invest in one or more businesses – and, potentially,

revolve the capital into more new businesses over time.

Many examples exist of community investment funds organized to foster new industries such as manufacturing, software development, or biotech. However, few investment funds have been organized to invest in new, small-scale retail, service, or arts and entertainment businesses.

The National Trust Community Investment Corporation (NTCIC), for example, makes real estate investments in projects that qualify for historic or New Markets tax credits. Beginning in the 1990s, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) began making equity investments to establish supermarkets as shopping center anchors in neighborhoods with underserved food alternatives.

The LISC retail project began with a \$2.4 million investment in a Pathmark built in East Harlem, New York, by the Abyssinian Development Corporation. In 2005, in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California, LISC, through the Unity Council Community Development Corporation, provided a \$580,000 loan to acquire a site for a new farmers market.

Originating out of an identified need for local jobs, in 2008, the Unity Council launched “Made in Oakland” (“mio,” for short, or “mine” in Spanish), a storefront-based apparel design and manufacturing business. The project was capitalized with money from the Unity Council and a jobs-creation grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As a condition of the grant, mio was required to find a for-profit partner in a related industry. It partnered with Los Angeles-based The Evans Group, which creates patterns and samples for emerging designers. The Unity Council and mio director/designer Hiroko Kurihara expect the social and retail venture to create 60 to 70 new jobs for low-income Fruitvale-area residents.

As towns like Powell and Saranac Lake have raised capital through the creation of shareholder corporations, a community could apply the same approach to raise venture capital and make equity investments in new downtown businesses. Even without creating an investment fund, individuals or groups can make loans to small businesses using social-venture lending programs like VirginMoney (formerly CircleLending), a service used to generate formal promissory notes and third-party-managed repayment systems.

## Which is the Right Model?

### COOPERATIVES

The cooperative is a philosophy as much as it is a business model. Its structure is designed for maximum community involvement in ownership and management and sometimes in the workforce, as well. The model fits best when it matches the values of the community. A cooperative is a good choice if one or both of the following conditions exist:

- 1 The community embraces cooperative ideals and tenets as a means to benefit members and build social capital.
- 2 There is a wholesale buying, marketing, and/or distribution infrastructure in place, as with grocery and hardware stores.

Cooperative structures can present challenges when raising large amounts of capital: if shares are priced low, they will be accessible, but the membership numbers required may not be achievable. If shares are priced high, they will be out of reach for many people, which will limit membership and may not fit the co-op’s social principles. Nevertheless, many cooperatives have found a workable middle ground or have issued other classes of shares to augment their capital.

The cooperative comes with all the benefits and challenges of broad community involvement and ownership, which may slow decision-making or require extensive consensus building. Its broad base notwithstanding, in the end, a cooperative must only respond to its members – not the entire community.

### COMMUNITY-OWNED CORPORATIONS

A community-owned corporation can share many characteristics of a cooperative, but it allows greater flexibility, primarily because it does not necessarily require that each owner make an equal investment or have an equal vote.

Like cooperatives, community corporations may (depending on the capital needs of the business) require a similar level of energy and volunteer commitment to sell shares to a large number of people. And community-owned corporations may be burdened by a process-oriented governance system, both in their organization and in their management. A community-owned corporation is a good choice when local ideals will more naturally embrace a for-profit venture or when greater flexibility is needed in share pricing or share-ownership limits.

## Tips for Investor Groups and Investment Funds: Have Skin in the Game

When a group of investors mobilizes to finance an entrepreneur, several common-sense rules apply:

- The entrepreneur must have “skin in the game.” In addition to bringing skills and a viable business plan, the operator must have a personal financial stake in order to leverage other people’s money and build a successful business.
- Be patient. Most businesses don’t take off as quickly as Cops & Doughnuts.
- Have a contingency plan. If the business takes longer than anticipated to become profitable, initial investors should be prepared to increase their financial commitment.
- Check expectations so they align with the (usually) large risk and the (usually) small potential for payoff.
- Investors must support the new business as its best customers, promoters, and marketers.

### SMALL OWNERSHIP GROUPS

Small investor groups, whether partnerships or closely held corporations, are the most nimble and flexible of the possible community-owned business structures. Like the Clare police department, they can act quickly and with a minimum of process. The small-group aspect lessens the risk to each individual investor. Assuming the members of the group bring money as one of their chief resources, a business can raise capital relatively quickly.

In addition, the tight control offered by a small ownership group helps avoid “owner-agent” problems: because the owners are likely to be actively involved in the business, they are also likely to be involved in, and support, day-to-day operational decisions. (In a cooperative or community-owned model, because of the number of shareholders, the owners are further removed from the general manager’s motivations and decision making.)

However, small ownership groups – whether partnerships or corporations – present two related challenges:

- 1 It requires great trust to enter into a business relationship with a small group of partners, and it often takes time to cultivate the trusting relationships that small groups need to operate.
- 2 In addition, maintaining healthy relationships during the management and operation of a business can be as challenging as establishing the group in the first place.

In a cooperative or community-owned corporation, the numbers are large enough that individuals’ relationship-based disagreements are less likely to cause a systemic breakdown. In a small investor group, relationship breakdowns are one of the most common causes of business failures.

### INVESTMENT FUNDS

An investment fund is well suited to attract the best new ideas when the organizing entity itself is not interested in starting and operating the business, or when it wants to stimulate the development of multiple businesses. Flexible venture capital is also an excellent tool for leveraging additional private and public capital.

Community-based investment funds have been used to catalyze a wide range of business types, but are more common in industrial and knowledge-based business development than in the retail sector. Because an investment fund is not selling a specific

concept with cool imagery (a grocery store or a mercantile, for example), it may be harder to motivate individual investors.

## How Can Main Street Lead?

A Main Street program can play many pivotal roles in creating community-owned businesses, from instigator to owner-operator.

- **OPPORTUNITY SCOUT.** By having its ear to the ground and listening to customers and merchants alike, Main Street can help define or refine the types of business most needed in the district, and those most likely to succeed.

- **RESEARCH.** Main Street can gather consumer information (like demographics and buying power), conduct consumer surveys and focus groups, or even send out reconnaissance teams to gather information about similar businesses.

- **CONVENER.** If an idea (for a mercantile, a restaurant, a movie theater, etc.) is floating around, Main Street can convene an exploratory group and provide it with support and structure while the idea gains credibility and momentum. Because of its relationships with local business people, Main Street may even be able to arrange “marriages” among interested investors and entrepreneurs.

- **ADVISOR.** Main Street can advise investment funds, banks, and public agencies to steer investor groups and social-enterprise ventures to the downtown.

- **SALESMAN.** When it comes time to sell shares, Main Street can use its marketing

know-how to advance the stock offering, particularly among its members and business district constituents.

- **TRANSITION MANAGER.** If a venerated local business (like the Clare City Bakery) is in danger of closing, and no single individual is stepping forward to buy it, Main Street can facilitate the formation of a group of buyers and, in doing so, transition a sole-proprietorship to a community-owned business.

- **HOME BASE.** After acting as convener, Main Street may decide to house the community-owned business initiative within the program itself, either through its own task force or as a project of the economic restructuring committee.

- **MARKETER.** With its deep reach into the consumer community, Main Street can become a marketing partner for a new (or developing) community business.

There are many alternative, and probably easier, ways to recruit a business than trying to launch one as a community project. But there are not many business development efforts that can mobilize as much financial and social capital. The Green Bay Packers are currently valued at about \$1 billion. It’s not hard to imagine Cops & Doughnuts someday becoming an equally valuable franchise.

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*The Lexington Co-operative Market in Buffalo, N.Y., was formed in 1971 by members who wanted access to whole foods at reasonable prices. With more than 5,000 member owners, it has evolved from an entirely member-run organization to a full-service store with paid staff.*



# New Media, New Advocacy:

## Washington State Main Street Program Saved by Facebook Campaign

By Andrea L. Dono

Like finding coal in their Christmas stockings, three weeks before the new year, the Main Street revitalization community learned that Washington Governor Chris Gregoire's proposed budget would cut funding for the Washington State Main Street Program (WSMSP). The program had already been jeopardized during the 2009 budgeting process when its funds were slashed by 75 percent – leaving only one staff member to support more than 90 community revitalization programs. Zeroing out the budget this year would be its demise – leaving Washington Main Street communities in a lurch.





With no choice but to mobilize at the speed of light, the leaders of the local Main Street programs rallied quickly to assess the situation. Because the Washington State Main Street Program is housed in the state government, it is barred from lobbying on its own behalf, so the task fell to the Main Street communities to save the program. In a whirlwind of grassroots advocacy and a nonstop social media blitz, their efforts proved successful when the Main Street Bill passed the House in February and the Senate on March 2.

“The organizing effort behind the scenes was crazy,” says Timothy Bishop, executive director of the Ellensburg Downtown Association and a member of the advocacy team. “We had to create an action plan between Christmas and New Year’s. We had to contact our legislators during that critical holiday week and get a bill introduced in the House literally the first day of the session to save the program.”

Because March 11, 2010, was the last day of the Washington State legislative session, the group couldn’t wait until the first of the year to start an advocacy campaign; they had to act immediately. The leaders of the 11 local certified programs (Bainbridge Island, Chelan, Ellensburg, Kennewick, Mount Vernon, Olympia, Port Angeles, Port Townsend, Puyallup, Walla Walla, and Wenatchee) held their first conference call on December 28 to create their plan.

They assessed the key players, identified partners, built e-mail lists, created a Facebook advocacy page, and called their elected officials to see whose support they had and whose support they needed. They also made contact with their partners – the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation; the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Mary Thompson, a National Trust board member; and surprise partners, like the Association of Washington Businesses.

## Formulating the Strategy

On the policy side, advocates were determined to get a bill introduced in both the Senate and the House on the opening day of the legislative session. Securing bipartisan support was an important goal, too. Representative Dean Takko (D) from the 19th district introduced House Bill 2704, co-sponsored by Representative Bill Hinkle (R) from the 13th district, on January 11th. By week’s end, Senator Steve Hobbs (D) from the 44th district had introduced

Senate Companion Bill 6507 with co-sponsor Senator Janéa Holmquist (R) from the 13th district.

The bill, which passed with a 91 to 7 vote in the House and a unanimous vote in the Senate, moved the Washington State Main Street Program into the state’s Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). Formerly housed in the Department of Commerce, there was a disconnect between the department and the Main Street program, says Bishop.

“Most of our state economic development programs focus on providing grants for big projects like foreign trade or working with large corporations, like Boeing,” says Bishop. “The Main Street program is not a grant-making program. It offers technical resources and training to create jobs and stabilize local economies.” Explaining that the state program is a better fit in the DAHP, he points out that the department has the support of the state historic preservation officer and the capacity to manage the program more efficiently.

Allyson Brooks, Ph.D., Washington’s state historic preservation officer, calls the move a natural fit. “A lot of Main Street programs are housed in historic preservation offices. Historic preservation is economic development and there is a synchronicity between what Main Street does and what [DAHP] does – particularly with the historic tax credit incentive.”

Cumulatively since 1991, Washington’s local Main Street districts have generated more than \$413 million in new private sector investment, 11,810 new jobs, and 3,721 new and expanded businesses. What’s more, every \$370 invested by the state into the WSMSP has yielded one new job in a local Main Street district. Every \$1 invested by the state into the WSMSP has also yielded an average of \$96 in private investment in a local Main Street district.

Statistics like these, as well as statistics from the individual communities and personal stories, were sent to legislators and constituents as quickly as possible. The Facebook page helped the advocacy team achieve this outreach. Team leaders encouraged people in their networks to become a fan of “Supporting Main Street in Washington State.” They were up front

*The Washington advocacy team created a press release template that explained the state program’s services and provided space for local communities to add their own quotes and successes. The downtown association in Ellensburg, Wash., (below) noted that it had 20 new businesses open downtown in 2009 despite the economic downturn and credited much of its success to the support of the state program.*



about this being an advocacy page and for fans to look for calls to action, talking points, and updates.

The viral nature of social media helped the local advocates grow a network of 500 supporters by January 13 – a number that exceeded 850 six weeks later. Facebook proved to be an important tool for reaching and engaging communities beyond the 11 designated Main Street programs. Because these “affiliate programs” do not necessarily have a formal Main Street organization or even a staff member or key contact, including them in the organizing process would have been difficult if not for social media.

This was particularly important because when the advocacy team looked at the map to find strong local Main Street programs in key legislative districts, they realized it didn’t match up well. The Facebook fans in those key affiliate communities were critical in reaching out to residents who could contact key legislators.



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Wednesday, January 20, 2010 - 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
John A. Chelberg Building, conference rooms A/B

Featuring a celebration of the revitalization of  
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Light lunch provided

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*Washington State's social media campaign served as an advocacy tool that mobilized a grassroots network throughout the state. Main Street supporters also wrote letters, made phone calls, and attended a legislative reception in Olympia to plead their case. Legislators such as Representative Sam Hunt (D) [above left] and Senator Janéa Holmquist (R) [in blue, above right] met with Washington Main Street managers (top).*

## Getting the Messaging Right

Leaders of the advocacy team quickly posted press releases and talking points on Facebook with action alerts calling upon fans throughout the state to contact their representatives. They desperately needed to show elected officials that the Washington State Main Street Program serves more than 11 certified communities; it is a resource for 90 programs in 85 communities.

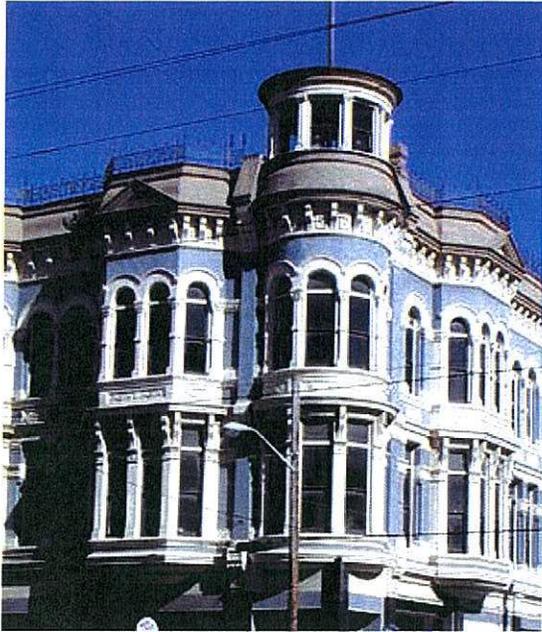
The terrific speed of their advocacy efforts was matched only by their deliberate

messaging strategy. “We worked with the Washington State Historic Trust and the National Trust Main Street Center to get the messaging right,” explains Bishop. “We worked together to draft a press release that got the tonality right. We wanted to grab people’s attention and spur them to action but we didn’t want to cause a negative reaction.”

An early press release template created a unified message for all advocates to use. It discussed the issue, explained the Washington State Main Street Program’s services,

defended its impact through statewide reinvestment statistics, and provided space for local programs to add their own quotes and successes in investment and job creation.

For example, the Ellensburg Downtown Association, which became a Main Street town in 2007, credited its success to the strong support of the state program. “We’ve had 20 new businesses open in our downtown in 2009 despite the economic downturn, and our first new business of 2010 opened in the first week of January,” says Association President Mary Young-Ness.



Since 1991, Washington State's Main Street communities, including Port Townsend (above left) and Bainbridge Island (above), have generated more than \$413 million in private reinvestment.

"We understand the need to balance the state budget against mounting deficits, but eliminating an economic development program that's demonstrated this level of success, just doesn't make sense when we're talking about the need to grow our economy."

This strategy worked. Local newscasts, local newspapers, and community blogs across the state picked up the story. Advocates tracked media coverage by posting every media mention on the Facebook page. The message was consistent (verbatim, even, in some cases) in these stories: Main Street revitalization in Washington is effective and saving the state program is necessary.

It is important to note that Facebook was an advocacy tool for informing and mobilizing a grassroots network. The resulting phone calls and letters from constituents allowed supporters to tell their elected officials what Main Street means to them. In her letter to her senator, a small business owner in Port Townsend, Jane Champion, shared her experience as president of the local Main Street program.

"I quickly realized the critical importance of the state Main Street program's role in helping us maintain, strengthen, and revitalize our distinct physical, economic, historical, and cultural characteristics," she said. "Our community, and in particular, our wonderful historic district, depends on a healthy, thriving local economy and the state Main Street program has provided invaluable attention and resources toward these ongoing efforts."

### The Power of Social Networking

Bishop believes it is a misconception that targeting large regional or state newspapers is more important than reaching the smaller local papers. He feels politicians read the local rags to get a feel for their constituents and, thus, they can have a greater impact.

If legislators missed a story in the news, they could find it on the Facebook page,

just to rant because that is not the image we wanted the Facebook page to convey. It isn't a place for an anti-tax rant; you are here to learn about the program and advance the cause."

The advocacy team used the Facebook page to house the movement's history and background information as well as to provide calls to action. In this vein, it is a simple tool for reporters to use because they can go to one place to find out everything that is happening. Many members

"It's the nature of social media that people wear their causes like a badge, and they share them with their friends," says Bishop.

which has a handful of elected officials as fans as well as two dozen legislative aides. Some of these people comment on posts to the wall. (One wall posting from Senator Craig Pridemore, "Since I'm a member of this group, you can also lobby me here. <smiley face>")

"This made us watch the tone of what we posted to the page," says Bishop. "From an administrative standpoint, we had to block a few users who were there

of the media are fans of the page or are fans of the pages of the local programs. Social media is making public relations and getting media coverage easier than ever. When local Main Street programs or Main Street supporters change their statuses about the advocacy effort or "tweet" (on Twitter) updates about the Main Street bills, members of the media see it instantly.

"It's the nature of social media that people wear their causes like a badge, and they

[continued on page 20](#)



## Using New Media to Save Old Buildings

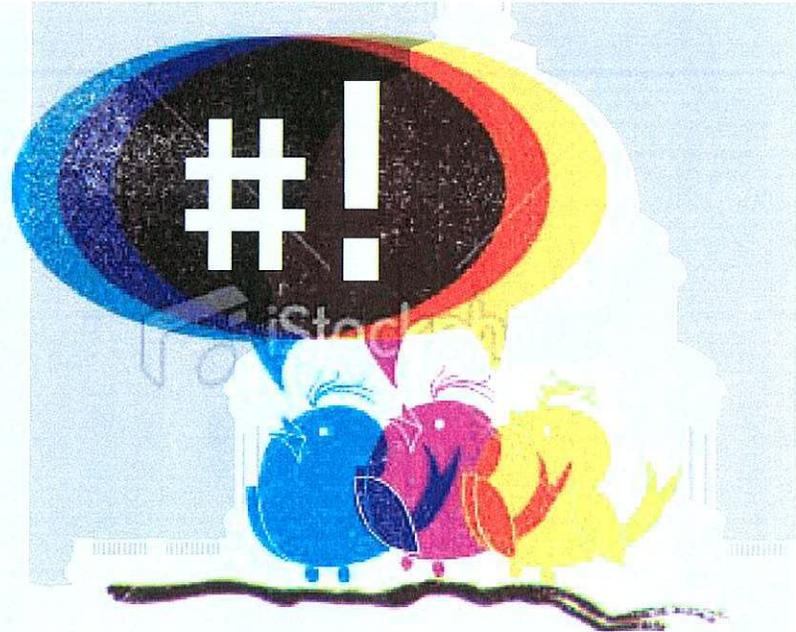
When the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) learned that federal funding for Preserve America and Save America's Treasures (SAT) was threatened, the organization sprang into quick action. Representatives from each department gathered to discuss strategy, and a task force was formed to lead the grassroots and "grasstops" (political term that means engaging elected officials instead of grassroots voters).

A frenzy of fact-finding and research helped identify key members of Congress and provide compelling arguments to get their support as well as that of the public. Some number-crunching, for example, revealed that Save America's Treasures grants have created well over 16,000 private-sector jobs in the past 11 years, spurred economic and community revitalization, and leveraged more than \$377 million in public and private matching funds, at a cost of less than \$14,000 per job. Yet the administration's 2011 budget proposes to eliminate all funding for this program. More than 200 SAT projects took place in Main Street communities and more than 200 Main Street towns overlap with Preserve America communities.

The NTHP launched a national grassroots campaign to raise public awareness and support for these critical programs and urge Congress to restore their funding. The campaign creativity combined traditional grassroots organizing with social and traditional media networking. For Lobby Day in March, for example, hundreds of preservation activists visited Washington, D.C., to encourage their elected officials to support preservation funding, while hundreds more spread the urgency of this national threat to preservation through Facebook and Twitter. To date, thousands of messages have been exchanged on social networking sites; and people all across the country are joining the viral campaign to secure funding for Save America's Treasures, Preserve America, and National Heritage Areas.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's social media gurus created a special interactive advocacy campaign website that had all the facts and calls to action in one place. A visitor to the website can learn the back story, read case studies that showcase projects and places that have benefited from the threatened programs, watch a video about SAT, send an e-mail to Congress, and access a social media toolkit.

The toolkit allowed the National Trust to extend its reach beyond its current network of members and supporters by making it easy for anyone to spread the word on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr. When you click on the Facebook icon, for instance, you can easily become a fan of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, share the campaign video on your profile



wall, or select from a variety of messages – such as “1,100 projects preserved and 16,000 jobs created – we can't lose Save America's Treasures. Check out this video and visit <http://bit.ly/savetreasures> to find out what you can do to help” – to post on your own wall. The status updates the National Trust wrote on its own wall sparked a dialog among fans but also gave the organization a chance to dispel myths and share facts to educate the public.

The website also teaches people how to use Twitter, including the use of hashtags (#) which Tweeters use to connect their 140-character-long messages to those that other people post on the same topic. This not only builds an online movement and makes people feel connected; it also helps the National Trust track what people are saying about the topic and analyze the success of the campaign.

The Twitter-content webpage links visitors to their congressional representatives so they can tweet their elected officials directly. Dozens of sample Tweets are available for people to use. Some examples: “Would you send Rosa Parks' bus to the landfill? <http://bit.ly/wouldnt>; #saveourtreasures”; and “Save America's Treasures = \$377 million in matching grants. Why is #congress cutting it? <http://bit.ly/savetreasures> #saveourtreasures.”

The viral nature of social media meant that these messages and, much to the National Trust's delight, new messages created by people who wanted to tweet about their own SAT project or Preserve America community bounced around the Internet for months.

It was very exciting to watch preservationists of all ages become involved in the social media campaign. It not only helped get the word out and build support for these programs in Congress; it also engaged people in new ways and exposed the National Trust for Historic Preservation to a new audience. How this campaign will affect the NTHP's membership and whether the programs will be saved are yet to be determined. But right now, the process of getting to those points has been both innovative and exciting.

*By Andrea L. Dono*



share them with their friends,” says Bishop. Their friends see each time another friend comments on a posting, which might interest them in the cause as well. The one-click ability for people to repost items also helps expose new people to the advocacy effort every day. Bishop says they know people’s friends are learning about the Main Street bill because when someone from a new community becomes a fan, they see dozens of new people from the same community join the page.

“The way the local advocates have been using Facebook to get their message across and to connect with state legislators has been stunning,” says Brooks. “It is a force that is bringing people together. I started using Facebook to connect with friends from 30 years ago and am amazed by its ability to improve real-time communication and to get people’s attention. With e-mails, you just read them. But with Facebook, you make a social connection and it has made all the difference.”

The advocacy team is concerned about sustaining their social media momentum; they realize there are only so many times they can reach out to their networks before they start seeing diminishing returns and burnout. They try to balance quick updates and congratulations for each victory with requests to do something.

“It’s about communicating enough so people feel they are in the loop and then mobilizing them when we need a call to action,” Bishop says. “We’re using all the tools we learned at last year’s National Main Street Conference, which focused on social media, to set up social media networks and opportunities – and it seems to be working. When we send out calls to actions, legislators say the response is almost immediate. When I call them to see if we are on track, they tell us they received 300 e-mails. We literally had the House bill’s sponsor say on the floor that he has never received this many e-mails supporting a single bill.”

### The Flexibility of Social Networking

Politics is often a numbers game, so empowering a large network of everyday citizens is an important resource for advocacy efforts. The advocacy effort has supporters all across the state, not just in one community. But timeliness is also a consideration.

The local Washington Main Street

programs had to fight last year for their state program and had already laid some groundwork for building relationships with their legislators. While they didn’t know if and when their program would be in trouble again, they knew they should be inviting officials to their business opening celebrations and keeping them informed about successes and their concerns. When they needed to shift gears into crisis mode, they were ready.

The lesson learned here? “Start early and don’t wait to respond to crisis. You need to have the relationships in place and the capacity to act quickly,” says Bishop. “You have to be organized but still flexible to respond quickly.” The advocates also packed economic ammo – the dollar signs and statistics their revitalization programs have been collecting since the day they incorporated to show their effectiveness.

“If we had started the dialog about what Main Street is and what we do on the first day of the session, we never would have been able to get the bill drafted and presented so quickly,” says Bishop. “We had to get in and out of committees quickly to be voted on by the end of the session. The cut off for the Senate’s Ways and Means was Monday, February 28. We would have missed our opportunity.”

He explains that the advocacy team might find out at 4:30 p.m. that there was a

hearing the next day at 8 a.m. They relied on Facebook and Twitter to mobilize their supporters by the next morning. Then they might not hear anything for days. During that time they could plan for possible next steps and then wait for the next legislative action to determine *their* next move.

For example, the Saturday during President’s Day weekend, the Main Street Bill made it out of the House Rules Committee and was scheduled for a House vote on Monday. A Facebook call to action was posted immediately asking people to call their representatives before the vote. And people did. The bill passed the House in a vote of 91 to 7, and headed to the Senate. The next call to action: now contact your senators. On Tuesday, March 2, the Senate passed the Main Street bill with unanimous support.

While the advocacy process and its wins thus far have proven to be amazing successes, the budget for the program remains uncertain in light of the state’s \$2.5 billion deficit, but the advocacy team won’t give up during the closing days of the 2010 legislative session.

“Passing this bill is important but voting on the budget is the last thing legislature does,” says Bishop. “When the gavel drops, we either have a budget for Main Street or we don’t.”



*Flanked by Main Street supporters, Washington Governor Christine Gregoire (center) signs the Main Street bill transferring the Washington Main Street Program to the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation.*



# Green Streets in Iowa

By Kathryn Craig

Downtown businesses in two Iowa communities have been seeing a new kind of green lately.

In 2008, the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) selected two Main Street communities to serve as pilots for its Green Streets Initiative. As pilots, the Main Streets of Woodbine and West Union will experiment with measures to achieve sustainable communities and serve as models for their colleagues in Iowa and others throughout the nation.

## WOODBINE

Rural Woodbine, located in the southwest region of Iowa, has a population of 1,500. Woodbine's downtown is made up of 50 buildings situated along two square blocks. The community is similar in size to many other Iowa towns, making it an ideal pilot community for the Green Streets Initiative. The City of Woodbine, Simonson & Associates Architects, and the IDED banded together to "develop a sustainable master plan, which incorporated energy-efficiency improvements, downtown revitalization, beautification, and streetscapes," says Main Street Woodbine Co-Director Darin Smith.

With the help of the city, IDED, and Cenergy, an independent and nationally certified building energy-use rating firm, Woodbine Main Street provided energy audits to all 50 of its downtown businesses. The audit assesses the amount of energy a building uses and suggests measures for improving energy efficiency.

Smith admits that the energy audit seemed complex to those unfamiliar with the technicalities of energy efficiency, but with the assistance of local contractors, the Main Street program was able to use the audit data to suggest reasonable improvements to business owners. Grants from several sources, including the Iowa Power

Fund Community Grant Program, the City of Woodbine, Woodbine Municipal Natural Gas, Woodbine Municipal Light & Power, the Missouri River Bright Energy Solutions, and USDA's Rural Energy for America Program, have provided funding for business owners who want to make some of those improvements.

Main Street Woodbine is currently working to promote the program and spread the initiative to its residential and industrial districts using funds saved from the energy cost reduction. To date, only a few businesses have made improvements to their properties. With new financial incentives, however, Smith foresees that 30 more businesses will make improvements in 2010.

Smith admits that at first there was some skepticism about becoming a green pilot community because of doubts on "return on investment." The skepticism was eventually outweighed by the value of the opportunity to revitalize the community.

Smith says they were able to get the business community on board simply by doing it. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained. If there is a way to help businesses improve by saving them money (by spending less on energy costs), it only makes sense to try whatever we can. Because [business owners] want to see a return on this investment, we will closely monitor savings along the way."



*Through the Iowa Green Streets Initiative, Main Street Woodbine provided energy audits for all 50 of its downtown businesses.*

So far, results look promising. One business has already seen savings after installing a gas furnace, improving ductwork, and sealing the foundation. Compared to February last year, the business owner has saved \$300 on utility bills this February. Cost of such improvements is defrayed by grant funds while the remaining balance will be financed by the city at zero percent.

Overall, the Green Streets Initiative is helping Woodbine create a sustainable community that Smith deems "especially important for a small town in rural Iowa that can do or die in a short period of time without tremendous leadership and



a willingness not only to revitalize but to maintain vitality.”

Sustainability allows communities to focus on what can be done to promote the longevity of a community. Woodbine also hopes to attract new residents and businesses through its improvements. In the next few months Woodbine plans to expand its energy plan, implement a whole town audit program, and assist community residents with weatherization improvements.

“Woodbine hopes ... to use the savings from energy-efficiency improvements downtown ... with other funding (like grants) to perform audits in our residential district,” says Smith. “At a minimum, Woodbine will be able to use thermal imaging to show homeowners where their homes can stand improvement, which is where a ‘weatherization blitz’ may come in and include more minor low-cost/no-cost fixes like sealing doors and windows with caulk and weather stripping. A weatherization blitz will be a quick and more affordable way to address the needs of many homeowners rather than investing in deep, costly retrofits on just a few homes.”

## WEST UNION

Like Woodbine, West Union is a rural agricultural community with a population of only 2,500. Downtown West Union has six blocks of service and retail businesses. Many of the buildings are historic structures that date back to the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The Main Street program began in 2006 and has enjoyed much success ever since. The program is described by the state as “the state baby that never learned to crawl,” says Robin Bostrom, program director of Main Street West Union and West Union Chamber of Commerce. “We just stood up and started to run.”

West Union was chosen to participate in the pilot program because it is similar to other Iowan towns, has successfully launched other community programs like a food and fitness initiative, and, most of all, because it was on the cusp of starting a master planning process. Thus, its greening focus is on sustainability planning. West Union began with a community visioning

meeting where local, state, and federal representatives discussed how sustainability measures could meet the town’s needs.<sup>1</sup>

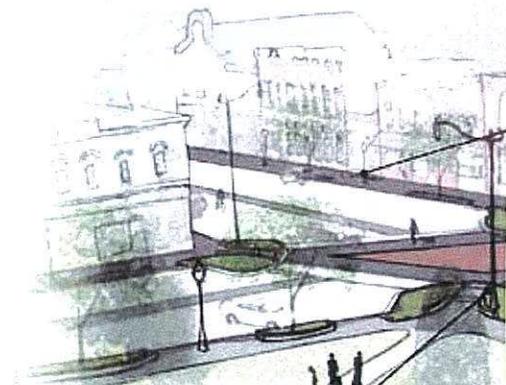
Fresh in the minds of residents was the severe flooding in 2008 that devastated towns throughout Iowa, and prompted the city to consider preventative measures. The economic importance of the freshwater creeks and trout streams made storm water management a priority because the area’s fishing destinations are important tourism attractions. Members of the community wanted to find an aesthetically pleasing, manageable solution that used durable, eco-friendly materials.

Energy audits, made possible by the local utility company, were conducted

<sup>1</sup> The West Union’s vision statement is included in the online version of *Main Street Now* at [www.MainStreet.org](http://www.MainStreet.org).



*West Union’s streetscape plan and strategy will make it eligible for state and federal stimulus programs.*



ENERGY EFFICIENT LED STREETLIGHTS will replace existing High Pressure Sodium lights, resulting in energy savings and improved light quality

RUNNELS made of salvaged brick pavers will direct rainwater into planters in an artistic fashion

DECORATIVE WALLS with limestone caps will provide seating for pedestrians

A DISTRICT-WIDE GEOTHERMAL SYSTEM will supply heating and cooling energy to downtown buildings resulting in long-term energy savings for residents

A SNOWMELT SYSTEM under the streets and sidewalks will reduce snow and ice hazards, support retail activities during the winter, and reduce the use of deicing agents such as rock salt

SPEED TABLES AND BUMPBONTS at intersections will improve pedestrian safety at vehicle crossings



throughout downtown, and more than 70 businesses took advantage of the opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint by making such improvements as replacing old doors, caulking windows to reduce drafts, and replacing coolers in restaurants with more energy-efficient ones.

Another component of West Union's green initiative plan is the use of a shared geothermal heating and cooling system that delivers heat extracted from the earth to heat or cool a building. All buildings will receive a "stub line" (which is similar to the way a city provides buildings with water or sewer lines) to the system free of charge; property owners can decide if or when they want to

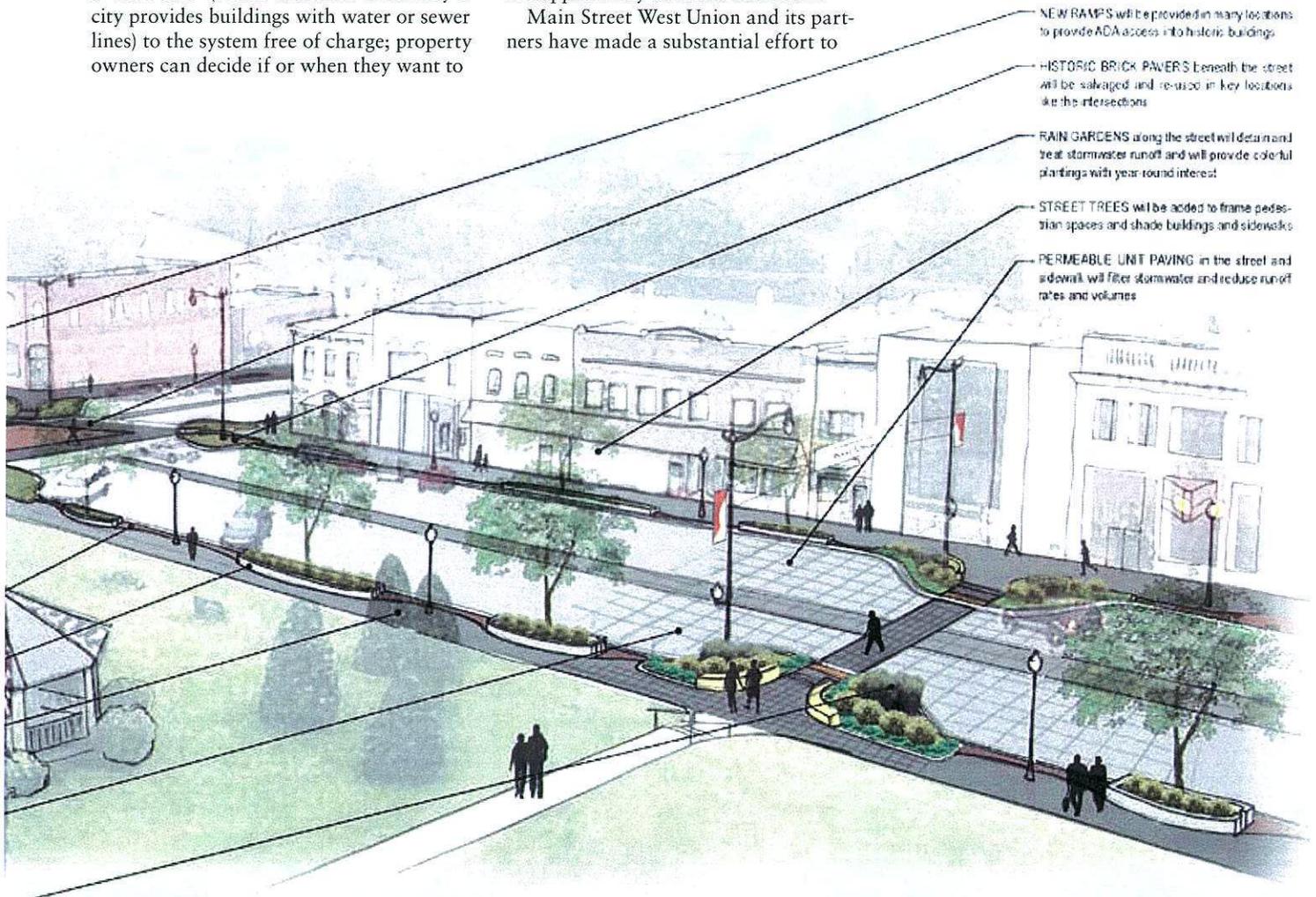


participate. Not every business will make the switch immediately, says Bostrom. Some may need to deal with other financial obligations, while others may have recently upgraded their furnaces or need to upgrade their building's current systems before they can connect to the new system. This system can significantly reduce heating and cooling costs while making the community more sustainable. By providing a stub line to all buildings now, the city will give future building owners or tenants the opportunity to make the switch.

Main Street West Union and its partners have made a substantial effort to

educate and assist the public. The Center on Sustainable Communities, a West Des Moines-based nonprofit, is hosting workshops funded through IDIED to educate professionals and homeowners on sustainable home building, maintenance, and renovation practices. Bostrom says that the workshops have been very well received so far and the professional series even had to be moved to a bigger locale because of high demand.

The sustainability initiative has even spread to West Union's schools. Bostrom says there is value in educating kids about



- NEW RAMPS will be provided in many locations to provide ADA access into historic buildings
- HISTORIC BRICK PAVERS beneath the street will be salvaged and re-used in key locations like the intersections
- RAIN GARDENS along the street will detain and treat stormwater runoff and will provide colorful plantings with year-round interest
- STREET TREES will be added to frame pedestrian spaces and shade buildings and sidewalks
- PERMEABLE UNIT PAVING in the street and sidewalk will filter stormwater and reduce runoff rates and volumes

**IOWA GREEN STREETS PILOT PROJECT - WEST UNION**



## STATE SIDE

The Green Streets Initiative was the brainchild of the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED), which formulated the program during a 2007 planning session that focused on ways to integrate green practices into community development. The initiative ties sustainability practices to economic development in Iowa by making public health, energy efficiency, water conservation, operational savings, and sustainable building practices a priority for housing projects, tourism efforts, CDBG projects, and Main Street revitalization. The IDED has also adopted its own “green” practices such as switching from printed to electronic communications, planning conferences to focus on reduction of waste and other eco-friendly practices, raising expectations for Iowa communities and businesses to use green practices and materials in revitalization efforts, and providing technical assistance to communities to promote environmental responsibility.

Jeff Geerts, IDED special projects manager, says that sustainability is especially important to the economic, social, and environmental future of Iowa as state and local budgets can't maintain the current way of life. Rising energy costs, threats to the water supply in parts of the state, the aging population, the degradation of streams and lakes, land-use decisions, the enormous number of miles driven by Iowans, and the interest expressed by Iowa communities and businesses that want to become more sustainable prompted the IDED to make sustainability a priority.

The IDED chose two Main Street communities, Woodbine and West Union, to serve as pilot communities for the Green Streets Initiative. The department is using a three-year matching grant from the USDA Rural Development program to promote green practices and bring technical assistance to its Main Street communities. According to Geerts, the pilots will serve as “on-the-ground models for other communities ... to assist them in their sustainability efforts.” Geerts adds that IDED hopes that the pilots will strengthen the sustainability of Iowa communities, improve the competitiveness of Iowa businesses, strengthen the cultural fabric of the communities, enhance the environment and quality of life in Iowa communities, and demonstrate that a thriving economy and protection of the environment are mutually supportive.

sustainability so that they can teach their parents. One school created a Wetland Restoration Project in a creek that runs through their school's property. A rain garden and bio retention cell demonstration site located in the downtown also serves as a hands-on lab for students. The students learned that the system absorbed the run-off instead of sending contaminated water into the trout streams – information, says Bostrom, that the kids thought was “very cool.”

Bostrom names funding as the biggest challenge West Union has faced throughout the process. Rural communities have limited resources, but so far the town has secured

more than \$5 million in grants for the \$8.6 million project. While some stakeholders showed little interest in the project because they didn't see why West Union should make sustainability a priority, Bostrom constantly reminded them why the changes would be good – that this project would improve the community for future generations. Bostrom also says that it was difficult to measure costs versus savings, but notes that while up-front costs may be large, there really are savings in the long run.

In the next few months, West Union will start the first of two construction phases. Meanwhile, the Main Street Program

Although many communities want to “go green,” Geerts admits that it isn't an easy task. The process involves extensive planning assistance, especially in small communities; securing grant money for green projects requires a lot of effort; and communities need a great deal of education about green practices and technology. It is also challenging, says Geerts, to switch from looking at up-front costs to surveying long-term savings. Communities must have strong leadership and widespread support for this type of initiative.

Steps to promote green practices can be taken at the state and local levels. Geerts suggests that cities and local organizations develop their own set of green standards, much like the IDED did. He also recommends that organizations focus on long-term savings over the first-cost approach, update plans and policies that make sustainability a greater priority, and give incentives to communities that practice sustainability.

The Main Street movement promotes sustainability through building preservation and reinvestment in existing communities. Geerts suggests a few simple improvements Main Street communities can make to further their sustainability efforts:

- Create a comprehensive vision for your Main Street district that incorporates public input and green practices;
- Improve energy efficiency;
- Improve pedestrian and bicyclist options through safety, accessibility, and visibility;
- Maintain aesthetically pleasing buildings and public spaces;
- Buy local; and
- Establish rain gardens and other measures to better manage storm water.

The pilot program has helped Woodbine and West Union tap new resources for projects for which they might not otherwise have been eligible. For example, West Union's streetscape plan and strategy will open it up to state and federal stimulus programs. West Union has also received more than \$300,000 from IDED to complete its streetscape schematic design and design documents, conduct a feasibility analysis for its heating/cooling and snow/ice melt plans, and offer energy-efficiency grants. Both pilot communities are off to a great start and, as their progress continues, it will be interesting to see how they realize their innovative ideas and serve as models for others to follow.

continues to educate the public on the initiative and look for ways to be more energy efficient.

Main Street West Union is very optimistic about the Green Streets Initiative. The community lost two major employers in 2009 but hopes to attract residents and business owners through participation in the pilot program. Main Street West Union also wishes to create a pleasing environment for residents because the downtown serves as a gathering area for the community. Because West Union is a conservative rural town that lacks wealth, says Bostrom, “if our community can do it, anyone can do it.”



## Going Green: Preservation Green Lab Update

By Liz Dunn, Consulting Director,  
Green Lab

The Preservation Green Lab, based in Seattle, is currently working on two policy initiatives that will help leverage the value of building reuse and retrofits to cities and states around the country.

The first, in partnership with the City of Seattle, is a new model for energy codes based on performance outcomes rather than rules that dictate how buildings should be retrofitted. This will give the owners of existing and historic buildings the flexibility to use their retrofit dollars in ways that are cost-effective and architecturally appropriate for their individual buildings. We will be selecting two demonstration projects in Seattle in 2010 to test various aspects of this new code framework.

43% of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions come from the construction and operation of buildings.

The second project examines the building code policies and financing models that cities will need to integrate district energy systems into neighborhoods of existing and historic buildings. Used in many American cities in the early 1900s and still prevalent throughout northern Europe, district energy systems employ one plant for the entire

district to deliver hot and cold water to each building economically and efficiently.

District energy plants can be based on any number of renewable fuel sources (biomass, geothermal, and waste heat, among others); in fact the Olympic Village in Vancouver, British Columbia, captures waste heat from its sewer pipes for its new district energy system. We believe that district energy can play a significant role in helping urban buildings meet aggressive carbon reduction targets in the future and that cities must start planning for such systems now. Our project will document case studies throughout North America – including Dubuque, Iowa; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Toronto, Canada – and provide policy guidance to cities about the specific challenges of integrating such systems into neighborhoods of existing and historic buildings.

The Green Lab is also evaluating policy projects in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Austin, Charleston, and Kansas City and will select at least one more policy project for 2010.

### Helping Historic Buildings Go Green

The City of Seattle and the National Trust for Historic Preservation launched the Preservation Green Lab in March 2009. Its goals are to promote building reuse, reinvest in older communities, and “green” existing buildings to combat climate change. Preservation Green Lab serves as a resource for sustainable development policy and helps local and state governments reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the operation of existing buildings, as well as reducing transportation-related emissions arising from irresponsible land use.

### Building Partnerships

The Green Lab is partnering with selected municipalities, states, and preservation partners throughout the country to create innovative sustainable development policies that incorporate principles supporting the reuse of buildings in zoning ordinances, municipal plans, building and energy codes, and “climate action plans.” Green Lab will also identify and work with owners of historic buildings to implement retrofits that demonstrate new policy initiatives.

### Creating Jobs

Preservation-based activities create more jobs than those associated with new construction. Rehabilitation projects generally use 20 percent more and produce a greater number of jobs than new construction.

Every \$1 million spent to rehabilitate a building, as opposed to new construction, results in \$120,000 more dollars initially remaining in the community, five to nine more construction jobs created, and 4.7 more new permanent jobs.

Building retrofits create jobs for:

- Electricians;
- Heating/air conditioning installers;
- Carpenters and craftspeople;
- Roofers;
- Installation workers;
- Construction managers;
- Building inspectors; and
- Energy efficiency auditors.



# SHOPTALK

By Margie Johnson



## THE TREND – NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL!

Shop Talk is a continuing series of consumer-oriented retail articles by Margie Johnson, president of Shop Talk, a retail consulting firm that specializes in showing organizations how to become leaders in their marketplaces and industries through customer-centered training. Over the past 15 years, Margie has worked in many Main Street towns throughout the nation. She is passionate about helping small business owners succeed.

Now and in the near future, all businesses need to adopt the premise to “prepare for business as **unusual**.” From Madison Avenue to Main Street and around the world, many trends and forces are at work, and they’re affecting how consumers think about shopping and making purchase decisions. These choices span from buying a car to food delivery at your doorstep to custom-designed products just for you. The vast array of choices and the proliferation of web and social media, coupled with a more practical and time-constrained customer, give all retailers reason to stop and carefully evaluate how they can adapt these trends to their business model. Every business needs to explore how best to leverage the bonanza of opportunities out there!

As a consultant working with a wide array of both small and large businesses, I have a unique perspective from which to observe how some owners have found recession-proof ways to grow their businesses. The most successful merchants exhibit a willingness to rethink and make changes in their business model. They seek to turn inspiration into a profitable innovation strategy. The term “monetized” resonates with savvy business operators.

A recurring common denominator that I see with successful small businesses is their willingness to embrace trends. Trends present themselves in many ways – from macro to micro trends, from a trend to a counter-trend. Ultimately, consumers dictate all trends as they express their preferences and desires by what they buy or choose not to buy.

### From Infolust to Perkonomics: Trends that are Dictating the Future

Over the past year, I have studied several trends that are profoundly affecting small businesses. For this article, I have chosen to define a few trends that are not only affecting/dictating the future, but are easy and affordable for small businesses to **embrace**. These trends interconnect in ways that make them easily adaptable. Remember, a strong trend will have a profound impact on how we do business for several years.

Let’s explore . . .

- The expectation economy;
- The world wide web (click and order);
- The impact of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.);
- Cause-related and socially responsible marketing;
- Greenest/eco-friendly; and
- Perkonomics.

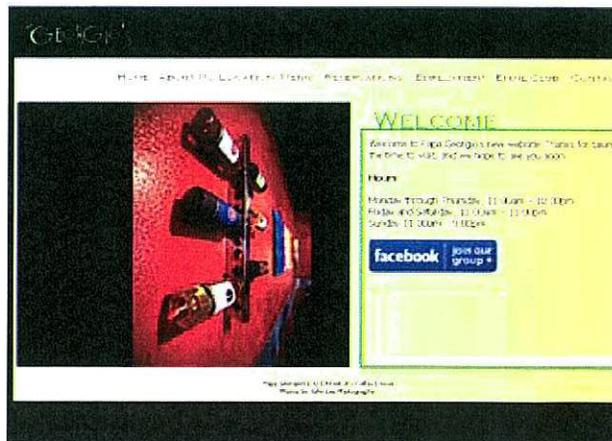
Clearly, the expectation economy is based on years of hyper-consumption. These consumers are well informed and have a long list of expectations. I refer to this as the E-Gap (what did the customer **expect** from a business versus what did the customer **experience**). Great businesses understand the need to narrow the gap between expectation and focus on delivering memorable experiences. This trend is fueled by social media, which enables people to spread their opinions around the world in a flash! If a busi-

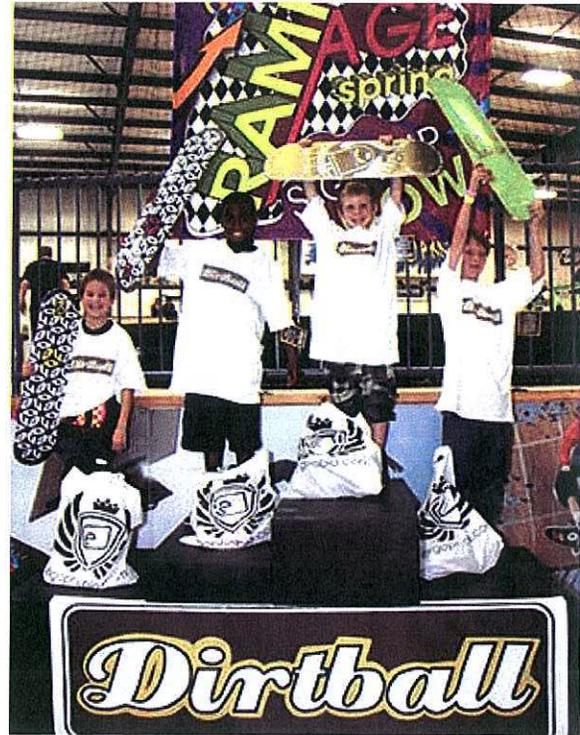
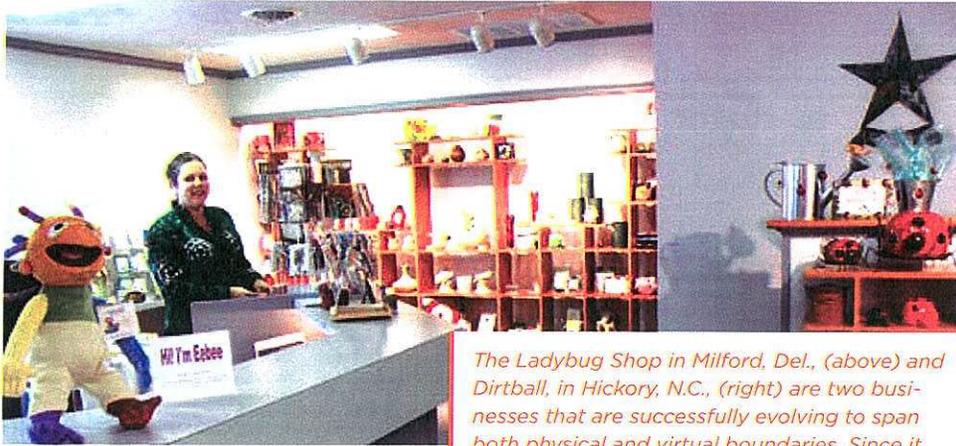
ness is indifferent, or irritates a customer, this dissatisfaction can be voiced quickly and heard by many.

Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs, provide instant platforms for reviews of your brand. The statistics on these reviews are staggering. Nearly 72 percent of social media users say that after an online search, they communicate with others about a product or service with face-to-face communication. (Source: RAMA) The online statistics are staggering. For more information, search BIGresearch.com, Facebook.com, and Hubspot.com.

The trend described as “infolust” refers to consumers who lust after detailed information on everything – products, people, places, etc. This trend is being driven by the basic human need for power and empowerment. Information is power. Millions of consumers are able to access information in seconds in this new transparent world of information distribution. This appetite for “infolust” is being fueled by an explosion of new sites, tools, and applications that give customers access to instantaneous answers, directions, ratings, tracking, etc. The “infolust” trend offers many opportunities, from websites to Facebook to GPS applications, for businesses to delight their customers and fulfill their desires.

The “eco-friendly/greenest” trend continues to gain momentum – from recycling to offering more sustainable products, be it green buildings or a ban on plastic bags and bottles. Many small businesses are looking for ways to tune in to this trend and instill in the consumers’ minds their passion to eliminate any negative direct or indirect environmental impact by products and services. This trend offers many venues for business owners to explore and adapt and thereby brand businesses as socially responsible in their community.





*The Ladybug Shop in Milford, Del., (above) and Dirtball, in Hickory, N.C., (right) are two businesses that are successfully evolving to span both physical and virtual boundaries. Since it opened in 2003, the Ladybug Shop's web sales have grown exponentially, now accounting for more than 70% of its sales. Dirtball focuses on cause-related marketing, using the web and social media to market its products and spread its message of socially responsible consumerism.*



Another trend that small businesses can easily embrace is that of “perkonomics.” Americans continue to be infatuated with perks and privileges. This trend was pioneered by airlines, hotels, credit card companies, and banks, which rewarded their most valuable customers with benefits, status, and convenience. Now, it is fast becoming a part of the consumer society, based on all of the above, plus experiences. At the core of this trend is *convenience* – thus, the “perk” of more time.

*Time*, or the lack of it, is still one of the most powerful trends around. With only 168 hours in a week, today’s consumers don’t have enough time to do all they want to do. Therefore, businesses that strive to save consumers precious time will be ahead of the curve. There are many statistics that support the fact that trends are driven by this “time-starved” marketplace.

All businesses need to revisit their “perks” (current and potential) and review the ways they are recognizing and giving consumers “time advantages.” Empathy with customers’ hassles and struggles need always to be a guiding force in business regardless of the economy.

All of these trends are rooted in motivators that drive consumerism – paramount among these motivators are adding balance to life, time versus money, the new value equation (whatever the consumer values), the quest for convenience, dissatisfaction with store shopping, and a smarter shopper.

### From Physical to Virtual: How Main Street Businesses Are Evolving

There are many examples of how small businesses in Main Streets across the county have taken initiatives to embrace these

trends. The examples are endless. In Milford, Delaware, Dan and Rhonda Bond opened the Ladybug Shop, a store dedicated to gifts with a ladybug design theme (see their website, [www.ladybug-shop.com](http://www.ladybug-shop.com), to find out what inspired them to focus on ladybugs). Their main street shop has grown rapidly since they first opened in 2003, but their web business has expanded exponentially and now accounts for more than 70 percent of their sales. Today, Dan teaches other Delaware small-business owners how to make the web an integral part of their business model. I have visited this store and was wowed by the enthusiasm and momentum!

Another great example is how Papa Georgios, a restaurant in Colfax, Iowa, in just a few years has been voted as #21 in the “Top 100 List of Greater Metro Des Moines, Iowa’s Best Places to Dine.” Owner Pam Weigle adapted her business marketing to a focused mix of e-mail, Facebook fans, and Twitter.

These mediums, plus consistently great food and service, have spurred the growth of this restaurant. Pam also ties her business to the green trend by sending compost to a local worm farm. She taps cause-related marketing by hosting events for breast cancer. Pam is thoughtfully applying these new trends and mediums, including a website – [www.papageorgios.com](http://www.papageorgios.com) – to communicate with her clients. I recently dined there and can personally attest to the great food and wonderful ambience.

In just 18 months, Joe Fox, president of Dirtball, located in the Hickory, North Carolina, Main Street district, has taken a start-up business from a thought to a storefront to wholesale distribution. Dirtball is an eco-friendly skate, surf, and snowboard eco-clothing and accessories company for

men, women, and children. This company has embraced the web and social media, and amassed press on television, radio, and print. Dirtball is committed to using re-cycled cotton fabrics. To be socially responsible and to tap cause-related marketing, Joe donates \$1 of each purchase to the charity of the customer’s choice. I interviewed Joe and was extremely impressed with his plans to expand his business. His foresight includes tapping into all of the trends previously mentioned while seeking to create a supply chain that focuses on products made in the United States. Go to the website [www.dirtballfashion.com](http://www.dirtballfashion.com) to learn about this “small company with big plans.”

Obviously, there are hundreds of examples that illustrate how “early adaptors” are using these trends and new mediums to excel in their niches, stay competitive, and communicate without borders. I urge/challenge each business owner reading this article to re-examine ways to better meet the needs not only of local customers but also how to evolve the business to span the physical and virtual boundaries. Perhaps it is time to Re-think, Re-tool, and Re-gear your business!

I look forward to continuing my trend tips in subsequent articles. Meanwhile, unleash your creative juices, embrace the new technology, and most of all listen to your customers.

Great retailing to you in 2010!

Margie Johnson can be reached at 757-491-1411, by e-mail at [shoptalk@shoptalk.org](mailto:shoptalk@shoptalk.org), or by visiting her website, <http://www.shoptalk.org>.



# PROFITABLE SOLUTIONS

By Tom Shay



## OWNERS, MANAGERS, AND ENTREPRENEURS

Our column on retail solutions offers Main Street directors insight and information so they can provide the necessary tools to help retailers become more profitable and actively participate in the improvement of their district. This column is written by Tom Shay, principal of Profits Plus and a fourth generation retailer. His company specializes in working with retailers to help them increase their profits as well as build their businesses for the future.

In the last issue of *Main Street Now*, this column discussed three individuals – Jeff, Jerry, and David – who had closed businesses that had been in their family for many years. The question I asked was about their entrepreneurial skills.

While speaking at a conference this past week, I heard George Whalin, author of the new book *Retail Superstars*, make a comment that helps me elaborate on the observations in my last article.

George said there are differences between business owners who think like a manager, like an owner, and like an entrepreneur. The person who thinks like a manager uses the word, “I”; the person who thinks like an owner uses “my”; and the person who thinks like an entrepreneur uses “it.” This installment of Profitable Solutions will help Main Street staff and volunteers understand and assist all of these business owners.

### The Manager: “I Have to Do All the Work”

Our first look is at the person we’ve described as a “manager.” Managers are often engulfed in the day-to-day process of operating the business. We refer to these people

as “managers” because they often consider these responsibilities the most important component of their work day.

While not making light of the components of operating a business, these are tasks that should be delegated to employees. As an example, the “manager” often thinks that he or she is the only one – or the best one who can sell merchandise. As a result, the “manager” believes it’s important to be on the sales floor as much as possible. If there is a problem in the store, this person is more likely to resolve the issue personally instead of creating a process that will engage employees and permit them to participate in the resolution.

If the sales floor needs to be swept or vacuumed, the “manager” is more likely to perform this task rather than getting an employee to do it.

The “manager” is likely to be so wrapped up in the day-to-day business work that he or she has little time left to handle other responsibilities. You may see this happening when one of these “managers” misses a Main Street meeting because an employee is absent.

An owner sometimes takes on the role of “manager” because he or she previously had the actual job title of “manager.” These owners may have been next in line to take over the family business. Unfortunately, the parents did not teach the next generation all of the components necessary for success.

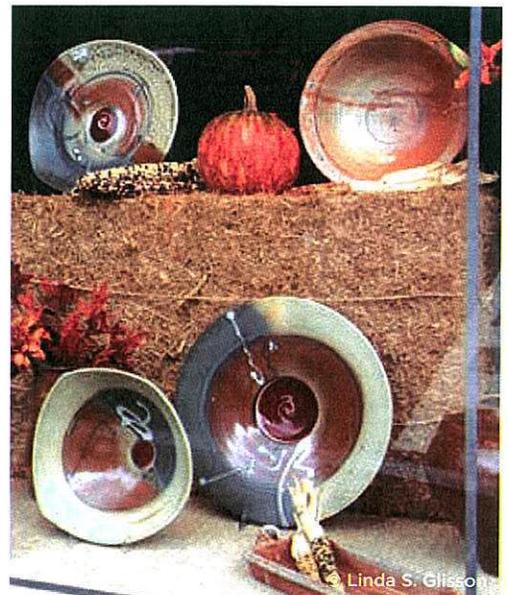
Another case occurs when the manager of a business purchases it from the individual who was previously his or her employer. Perhaps this person was never told that the job description would change when financial ownership of the business changed hands. The current owner needs to teach the new owner the financial aspects of the business so that it will continue to be successful and the new owner can make the monthly payments for the business.

Our “manager” looks at the business with an “I” viewpoint because: “I have to do so much of the work.”

### The Owner: “I Really Like This”

The second person we want look at is the one that we have given the title of “owner.” One of the leading characteristics of these people and their businesses is that they become the focal point of the business. The business becomes a reflection of the “owner.” It starts with the merchandise the business sells.

If we were to ask the “owner” to give us a tour of the business, we would probably hear how much he or she likes all of the items the store sells. Starting when the merchandise was purchased at a trade show or through a sales representative, we would likely see the “owner” looking at an item and making comments such as, “I really like this.” Merchandise selection centers on the likes and dislikes of the “owner” instead of concerns about how well an item will sell. The “owner” believes in his or her ability to make the right choices. The main problem with this business format is that the “owner” will need to spend time and effort finding customers with the same taste in merchandise.



Many times a business becomes a reflection of the owner. This usually starts with the merchandise selection, which reflects the likes and dislikes of the store owner.

The physical appearance of the business also is a reflection of the “owner.” You can see this from several aspects. If the Main Street district has placed planters in front of the businesses, for example, you will quickly know whether the “owner” likes flowers and other greenery just by looking at the condition of the planter.

Visiting several Main Street communities while I was working on this column, I noticed another aspect of an “owner-centric” business. The staff, as well as the merchandise, frequently reflects the “owner.” As an example, we were walking into a Main Street business and I was cautioned that the owner of the business had a very poor attitude.

Two sentences into the introduction, the owner of the business proved my hosts to be on target with their assessment. As we continued to wander the aisles of the business, other employees mirrored the owner’s attitude. This happens because the “owner” displays a “my” attitude about the business. It may be good or it may be bad, but it’s the owner’s attitude that permeates the business.

The same holds true for how the store looks and what the store sells. The appearance and/or inventory selection can be great or poor, but they are a reflection of the “my” aspect of the business “owner.”

### The Entrepreneur: Voting with Your Head Not Your Heart

Our third and final type of business owner is the “entrepreneur.” The word we expect the “entrepreneur” to use in describing his or her business is “it.” This description shouldn’t be taken as cold and impersonal; instead it represents the viewpoint of a person who is focused on the profitability of the business. Over the years, this individual may have owned several different types of businesses – perhaps a bookstore at one point and a restaurant at another.

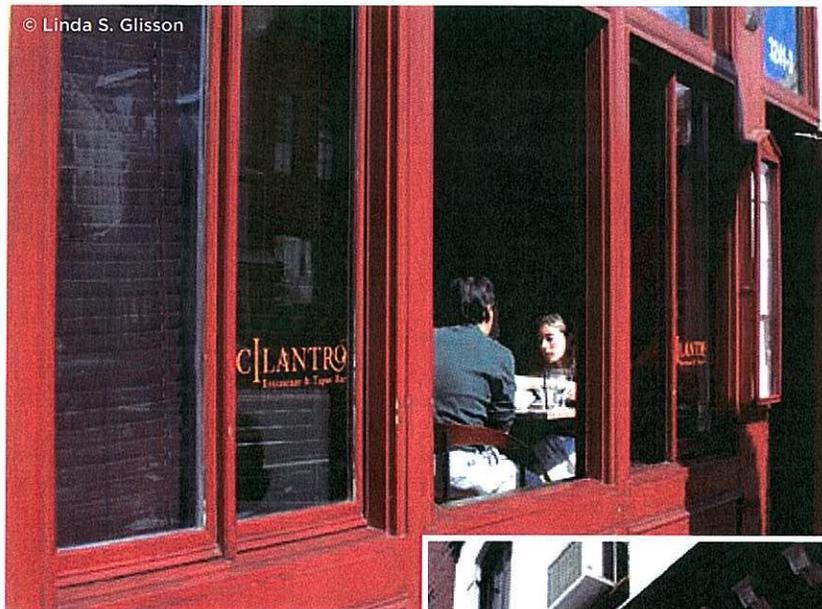
When an “entrepreneur” first visits a Main Street district to look at a potential location for a business, he or she probably doesn’t have a specific type of business in mind. Instead, the “entrepreneur” will be thinking about the type of business with the highest potential for success. This type of business owner is more likely to be drawn to statistics and information about the community than a favorite business concept. “Entrepreneurs” usually vote with their heads or their wallets instead of their hearts. If a proposal does not make sense from a business standpoint – in the short

or long run – the “entrepreneur” probably won’t support it.

Our “entrepreneur” is likely to be the most profitable of the three types of business owners, as well as the one who spends the fewest hours in the business each week. “Entrepreneurs” are less likely to view a store or business as an extension of themselves, unlike the “owners.” “Entrepreneurs” are passionate about business first and the businesses they own are vehicles for that passion.

Through a Main Street revitalization program, we have an opportunity, and responsibility to help business owners move from “managers” to “owners” to “entrepreneurs” – a transition that will surely improve the quality of businesses within the district.

Tom can be reached at 727-823-7205, by e-mail at [tomshay@profitsplus.org](mailto:tomshay@profitsplus.org), or by visiting his website, [www.profitsplus.org](http://www.profitsplus.org).



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*“Entrepreneurs” vote with their heads and their wallets, not their hearts. They focus on the potential of the business first and are likely to have owned different types of businesses over the years, perhaps a restaurant at one point and a clothing store at another.*



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# NETWORK NOTES

“Network Notes” is compiled and written monthly by **Andrea L. Dono** and **Linda Glisson**. If you have interesting projects or ideas you would like to share, e-mail us at [andrea\\_dono@nthp.org](mailto:andrea_dono@nthp.org) or [linda\\_glisson@nthp.org](mailto:linda_glisson@nthp.org).

## Preservation Creates Jobs. Period.

Numbers don't lie – especially when they are crunched by the smart folks at **Rutgers University**. During this year's Lobby Week, Rutgers released a report that analyzes the economic impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credit since its inception in 1976. *The First Annual Report on the Economic Impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credit*, produced in conjunction with the Historic Tax Credit Coalition and the National Trust Community Investment Corporation, proves historic preservation is a successful economic development tool.

The groundbreaking report concludes that the Federal Historic Tax Credit is a highly efficient creator of jobs – pointing to 1.8 million new jobs over the life of the program. The report also finds that the credit has generated jobs more efficiently than other stimulus options; and, in fact, the study demonstrates that the economic activity leveraged by the credit returns more tax revenue to the U.S. Treasury than the cost of implementing the program.

Additional key findings:

- In inflation-adjusted (2008) dollars, \$16.6 billion in Federal Historic Tax Credit expenditures by the Treasury to date have encouraged a five times greater amount of historic rehabilitation activity (\$85 billion).
- This \$85 billion in rehabilitation activity has generated about 1.8 million new jobs (measured in job years) – 58,000 jobs in 2008 alone. These jobs have been concentrated in the construction, manufacturing, service, and retail sectors.
- Jobs generated by historic rehabilitation require higher skill levels and pay better wages than those generated by new construction.

- About 75 percent of the Federal Historic Tax Credit's economic effects are retained in the localities and states where the projects are located.
- The economic impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credit is highly targeted to the areas that need it most. Since 2002, National Park Service statistics have indicated that about two-thirds of all Federal Historic Tax Credit projects have been located in Qualified Low-Income Census Tracts.

- The Federal Historic Tax Credit is a highly efficient producer of jobs. Dividing \$16.6 billion in aggregate tax expenditures by the 1,815,000 in jobs generated yields a cost per job of less than \$10,000, which compares quite favorably to other forms of economic stimulus.
- The economic impacts of the Federal Historic Tax Credit are likely understated by the Rutgers study. Left uncounted are the jobs, wages, and taxes generated by heritage tourists who are attracted by historic sites and districts. Also not factored into this study is the economic impact of the additional rehabilitation work that typically follows the initial investment as confidence in the area's future rises.

The report also underscores the need for additional legislation to strengthen the federal credits, making them more widely available for smaller, rural projects and also encouraging their use for green and sustainable rehab projects. Enacted by Congress in 1981 as part of an economic stimulus package, the Federal Historic Tax Credit provides a 20 percent income tax credit for the rehabilitation of certified income-producing historic properties.

Download a copy of this report (<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/community-revitalization/jobs/Rutgers-Report.pdf>) and keep it handy next time someone questions the value of preservation in your community!

## Cool Tools

As part of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Clean, Safe, and Green strategy, it has published *Going Green Downtown: A*

*Sustainability Guide for Maryland's Main Street* in partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. If you are thinking, what does Maryland have to do with me, then rest assured that this online PDF is packed with tips and strategies that are specific to Main Street communities *anywhere* – and includes a wealth of resources and green Main Street projects and initiatives. Learn about green roofs, storm water management and water conservation, street trees and green spaces, managing parking, encouraging biking, recycling programs, and more. Share this link with your volunteers and partners: [www.mdhousing.org/website/documents/green\\_guide.pdf](http://www.mdhousing.org/website/documents/green_guide.pdf).

Wouldn't it be great if there was a way you could show the evolution of your Main Street district over time? Or maybe track your program's major successes or initiatives since its incorporation? Well, there is – and it's free! Enter **Dipity**, an **online visual timeline** that imports text and photos from a variety of sources you already use – Blogger, Picasa, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube, and others – and drops it into a timeline that you can embed in your website and use to show what's been happening. This tool helps viewers track an issue, your program, or anything else for that matter so they can get the back story and see what's happening now, visually, in one place: [www.dipity.com](http://www.dipity.com).

If you've been wondering how to write a killer press release quote, trying to think of cool April promotions (National Deep Dish Pizza Day, anyone?), or need 23 great direct mail tips for small businesses, you may want to check out **Understanding Marketing**. This blog has several categories of marketing tips, ideas, and strategies that can help you with your public relations – online and offline: [www.understandingmarketing.com](http://www.understandingmarketing.com).

## Economic Indicators

“Not as bad as the new good,” said **Colliers International** when it released its **2010 Retail Trends and Opportunities** report in March. What? That doesn't drive you to do the Snoopy happy dance? Well, listen to this: because new retail construction appears to be virtually nil and lease rates have dropped 25 to 40 percent from peak levels, the report suggests downtown should be the first to recover.

There are some interesting trends throughout the United States, some of which you may have seen in your own community:

- Pop-up and temporary stores taking on short-term leases;
- Dollar stores on the rise;
- Nontraditional uses taking over vacant big-box stores (indoor go-kart racing, DMV outlet, and museum space);
- Expectations that more regional and local banks will fail (hurting mom and pops more than the national retailers, unfortunately);
- More fast-food and casual dining restaurants; and
- More drugstores, convenience stores, and big-box stores to sell groceries.

The last dozen pages of the report list the expansion plans of national businesses so you can see if any are looking at your state. You can find this report on [www.colliers.com](http://www.colliers.com).

On the *Wall Street Journal's* blog, Kelly Evans discussed "How America Now Shops: Dollar Stores, Online Retailers (Watch out, Walmart)," on March 23. Turns out WSL found that consumers are spending a little more nowadays, but are still being very cost conscious. Oftentimes, shoppers will drive out of their way and make more

frequent shopping trips rather than buying bulk goods (which is so 2008). They're also shopping for the best prices online, but that's nothing new. Interesting to note, too, that these guys think Dollar Stores are all the rage as well.

What does that mean for Main Street? Not to be flip, but who knows? I'd wager a guess that basic consumer goods are probably where people are going to pinch pennies, but when I see earnings reports for retailers of nonessential items on the rise, I think your local boutiques and niche markets have a chance to see an uptick in sales, too. (Are they boosting their marketing and are you helping them with retail events?) For example, look at the home goods market. Fourth-quarter profits for Williams-Sonoma, Inc., exceeded investor expectations, and earnings at its West Elm and Pottery Barn shops went up, too. Competitors Pier 1 and Bed, Bath & Beyond are singing the same tune. Analysts are betting that shoppers didn't need a melon-baller – but they bought it anyway – and that could mean consumers are digging out their wish lists finally.

And by the way, if your community doesn't have design guidelines in place, get to it. Various Main Street communities have had success convincing their dollar store chains to follow downtown-friendly infill guidelines. But they can't follow them if you don't have them.

## Free Book!

April showers bring... flood damage to historic buildings? Unfortunately, sometimes they do. Get your free copy of *Treatment of Flood-Damaged Older and Historic Buildings* by Jim Sewell, Richard Wagner, and Claudette Hanks Reichel from [PreservationBooks.org](http://PreservationBooks.org). And while you're there, check out the Main Street section – especially the comprehensive book on the Main Street approach that everyone should own: *Revitalizing Main Street*. This one isn't free, but with your member's discount, it's the best \$37.50 you'll spend.

## Be a Virtual Attendee at the 2010 Main Streets Conference



Can't make it to Oklahoma City and the 2010 Main Streets Conference? You can still be a part of the experience! Go to [www.mainstreet.org/conference](http://www.mainstreet.org/conference) to ex-

perience the 2010 Main Streets Conference from home.

Participate remotely through Facebook and Twitter; live webcasts; photos, videos, and blog postings; and live session chats.

### Live webcasts from Oklahoma City

This year, the Main Streets Conference will be doing three live webcasts:

#### Opening Session, Monday, May 3, 10:00 a.m.

Join in as the *New York Times* best-selling author of *\$20 per Gallon* and Senior Writer for *Forbes Magazine*, Chris Steiner tells us how increasingly tighter energy supplies could be good news for Main Street. In the future, Steiner says, more communities will embrace dense, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods that bundle commerce, jobs, and schools within compact development. More than ever, small towns will re-center toward Main Street as energy

efficiency encourages more local products and denser living. Join us for this exciting and thought-provoking address.

#### Main Street Awards, Tuesday, May 4, 5:00 p.m.

Even if you can't be there in person, you can still be among the first to hear the names of the five winners of the 2010 Great American Main Street Awards®. You can also hear the stories of the two 2010 Main Street Leadership Award winners.

#### Closing Session, Wednesday, May 5, 11:45 a.m.

No worries about getting a cab to the airport to catch your flight after the closing session – watch it live online at [www.mainstreet.org/conference](http://www.mainstreet.org/conference). Author of *Green Building and Remodeling for Dummies* and green architect Eric Corey Freed will walk us through his creative and bizarre world of sustainable design. Experience the rapid advancements in green buildings and discover the latest systems to save energy, water, and resources. You will laugh, cry, and never look at your world quite the same way again.

#### Live Educational Session Chats

Throughout the conference, Main Street staff will be doing live chats from select sessions. Check the conference website for a listing of sessions.

#### Follow the conference on Twitter and Facebook.

Find links to the conference Facebook and Twitter pages on the conference website or search the hash tag #msconf and follow what's happening in Oklahoma City.

While we'd love to see everyone in person, we hope that these new features will help those of you who could not swing the trip this time to participate in the 2010 Main Streets Conference.

# Main Street

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## Parting Shot



### Turtle Place Park Mural

by Timothy Bishop, CMSM

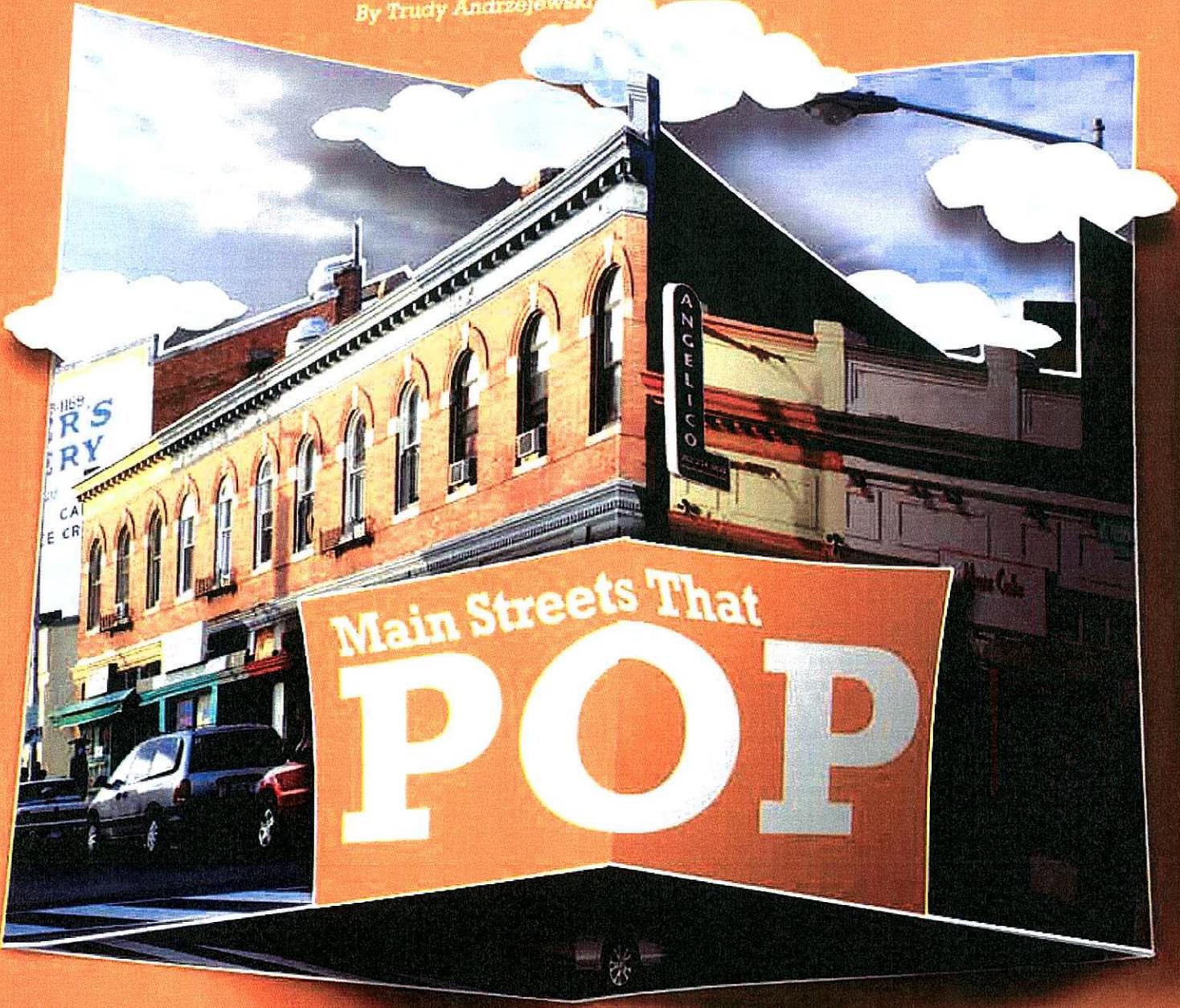
A model of sustainability and urban beauty in Vancouver, Wash., Turtle Place Park opened in 2009. Vancouver's Downtown Association, in partnership with C-TRAN and the City of Vancouver, transformed an underused bus mall into an urban plaza rich with public art, lighting, seating, and other amenities. The park was constructed from recycled materials and the water in the fountain is collected from nearby rooftops and recycled.

If you have a photo that captures the essence of your Main Street, e-mail it to [mainstreet@nthp.org](mailto:mainstreet@nthp.org) and we'll consider it for next issue's Parting Shot. Please make sure the image file is at least 5"x6" at 300 dpi. Let your imagination run wild. We're looking for unusual, artistic shots that capture the spirit of your Main Street District.

Main Street programs are always on the lookout for ways to build the buzz about their communities and to boost foot traffic – often by planning special events or image-building campaigns. But wouldn't you love another way to animate the street and build excitement for local businesses in your community?

# Building entrepreneurs and excitement with pop ups

By Trudy Andrzejewski



In a field where we all want to make a lasting, positive change, a temporary endeavor might seem counter-intuitive, but “pop-ups” have the power to really make your Main Street “pop.”

Also known as “flash-retailing,” a pop up is a temporary installation meant to attract visitors to an otherwise vacant or underutilized space. Generally, pop ups are temporary retail destinations set up in vacant storefronts for a limited time, from two hours to two months, but creative minds are applying the concept to everything from mobile restaurants to temporary dog parks to new street configurations (more on these later).

Pop ups are nothing new. Halloween and Christmas stores have been popping up suddenly in malls for years during the holiday season only to vanish January 1st. While traditional commercial districts and downtowns are just beginning to experiment with this concept, big-box retailers have adopted pop-up retailing concepts for a few years now.

In what look like cleverly disguised, splashy marketing stunts, Target has been opening mini versions of its stores in vacant and often bizarre locations since 2002. It once promoted a new clothing line for women in a 1,500-square-foot space in New York City’s Rockefeller Center and even turned a barge into a floating advertisement by covering it



© Noel Y

Big-box retailers have used pop-up retailing concepts for several years. Target, for example, has been opening mini-versions of its stores since 2002, including this year’s pop-up shop in New York City where the store unveiled its Missoni collection.

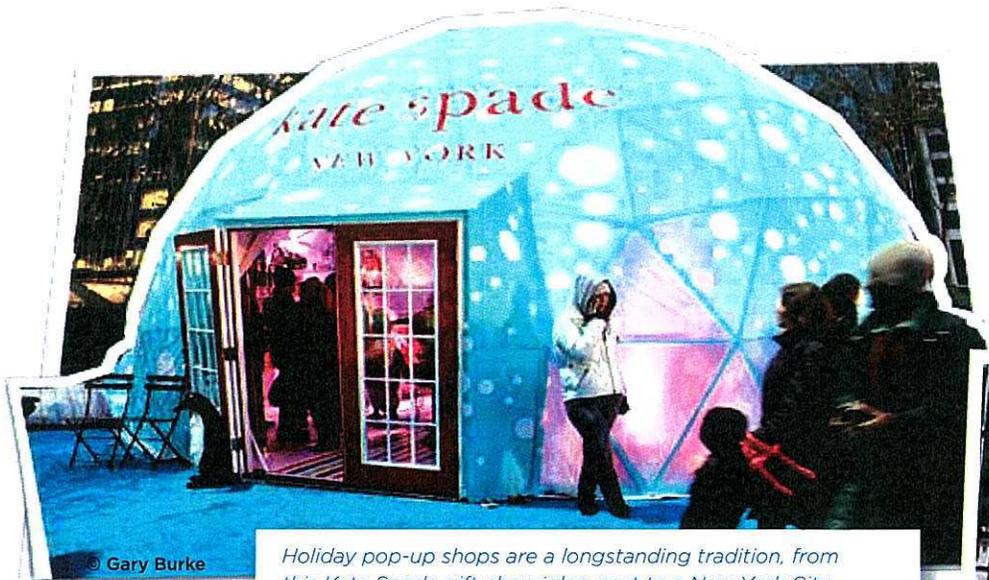
with holiday decorations and a giant bulls-eye logo while selling gifts and gadgets to excited shoppers on board. Major retailers have embraced this innovative trend and now it’s Main Street’s turn.

The rise in pop-up popularity is partly attributable to the recession. According to blogger Jonna McKone, creativity and in-

novation are a must for retailers to survive in today’s economy. On *The City Fix*, an urban sustainability website, McKone explains that “reshaping space for changing needs, encouraging the use of blighted locations in creative ways, and creating a vibrant street culture improves the economic competitiveness of a city”—all outcomes achieved by pop ups. Offering a range of amenities and entertainment, a pop up done well is exciting and engages the community through its design, events, and here-today-gone-tomorrow approach to retailing.

### Benefits to Main Street

Why would you bring pop ups to Main Street? First, they can help recruit new bricks-and-mortar businesses to vacant storefronts, which is a win-win situation for the property owners and the entrepreneurs.

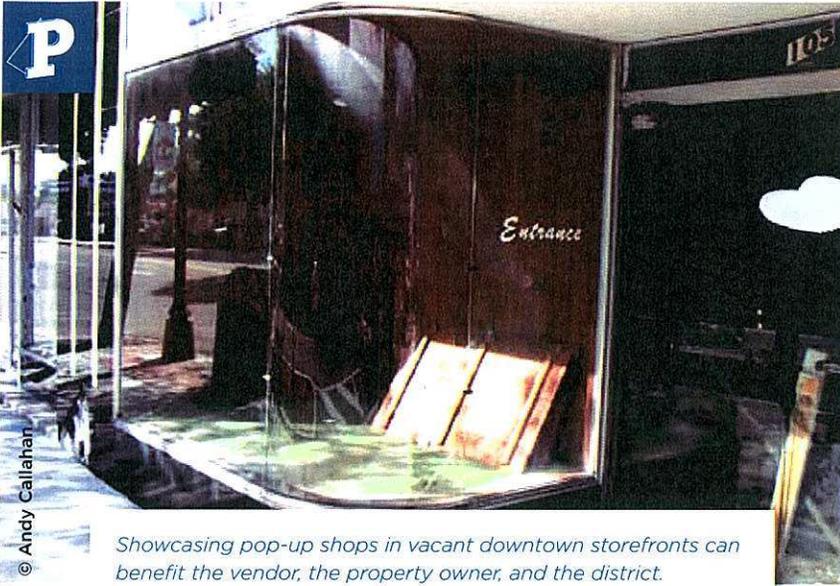


© Gary Burke

Holiday pop-up shops are a longstanding tradition, from this Kate Spade gift-shop igloo next to a New York City ice-skating rink to this Main Street holiday shop (right).



© Ken L. Katz



© Andy Callahan

Showcasing pop-up shops in vacant downtown storefronts can benefit the vendor, the property owner, and the district.

## Pop ups help market the available commercial space better than a vacancy does by itself.

In the case of Boonton Main Street in New Jersey, the economic restructuring committee tested pop ups for two years running. As part of a long-range goal of filling downtown vacancies, and also to get more retail on the street during peak shopping seasons, Boonton's Holiday Boutique was created. During its first year, a vacant storefront was given to a local artist who wanted to test out a bigger space for her merchandise. The space was offered rent-free from November 15, 2009, to January 15, 2010, and the pop up was managed by one paid employee and a large volunteer staff. In its second year, the pop-up boutique was given to a tenant who thought

a location on Main Street would offer better exposure for her products. This pop up ran from November 15, 2010, to January 6, 2011, and instead of hiring an employee to manage the boutique, Boonton Main Street required the vendor to staff the register for a certain number of hours. Volunteer staff tallied the sales and made bank deposits.

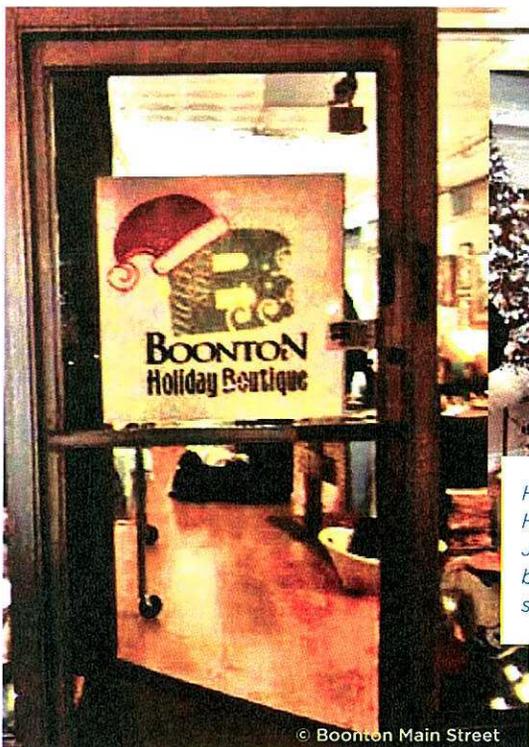
In both years, Boonton's long-range goal was met: both tenants agreed the venture was successful and made the pop-up storefronts their permanent homes. Now a dress boutique, Robin's Closet, has been added to the retail mix, and the second space is under contract with Savannah Hope Vintage, a consignment shop that wanted to move closer into town.

Other pop-up businesses have become permanent fixtures on Main Street, as well. After the Rochester Downtown Development Authority (DDA) in Michigan hosted its first pop-up shop in the winter of 2010, one participating vendor, Will Cole Chocolates, decided to relocate its business downtown. Kristi Trevarrow, Rochester DDA's executive director, says that the chocolate shop was a successful business whose original storefront outside of the downtown had recently closed. The business owner was interested in the pop up for the holiday season, but after deeming the downtown location a success, Trevarrow says Will Cole Chocolates "is on the lookout for a permanent space downtown, but has become a regular fixture at the farmers market in the meantime."

Pop ups not only draw prospective tenants to the space, but they improve the space as well. This helps market the available commercial space better than the vacancy does by itself. Karen Korinda, executive director of Boonton Main Street, concurs. "Both of Boonton's spaces are leased today because an occupied space is easier [for business owners] to visualize."

Property owners of empty spaces, especially ones with untidy interiors that are unappealing to prospective tenants, benefit from the free maintenance that is necessary to prepare the storefront for temporary business. Pop-up tenants often spruce up the space with a bit of paint and cleaning, leaving it in a better marketing condition than when the property owner handed it over.

Mark Klockner, a temporary lease specialist from Retail Infusion, agrees that a pop up can definitely enliven a property. For the landlords, "that is the biggest advantage," he says. "It makes it look like their property is not condemned. It's a trend that property owners shouldn't pass up."



© Boonton Main Street



Boonton Main Street

Held two years running, the Holiday Boutique in Boonton, New Jersey, produced two permanent businesses that made the pop-up storefronts their home.

Owners of empty storefront spaces, especially those that are neglected and unappealing to prospective tenants, benefit from the free maintenance required to turn the space into a temporary business.



## Since new business owners can experiment with their business plans with fewer risks, there is lots of room for creativity.

Klockner notes that there is a greater acceptance of pop ups today. “With the economic downturn and vacancy upswing, landlords are looking for new opportunities to make their properties attractive and viable,” he says. “The key is not to be reluctant to fill that hole quickly, even if it is a temporary lease.” While it may not ring in a lot of cash for the property owner immediately, filling a vacancy with a business that looks good in your district can make the space more marketable and benefit the neighborhood at large.

Another benefit to Main Street is the ability to use the space to support or incubate new entrepreneurs. The low-risk, no-overhead approach to starting a new business or bringing an online-only business to a physical storefront can be very attractive to entrepreneurs. A pop up can help your economic restructuring committee make your district more entrepreneur friendly, especially if the pop-up project comes with other business assistance and resources that your program offers, either through its committee work or through partnerships with the chamber of commerce, SBDC, SCORE, or other groups.

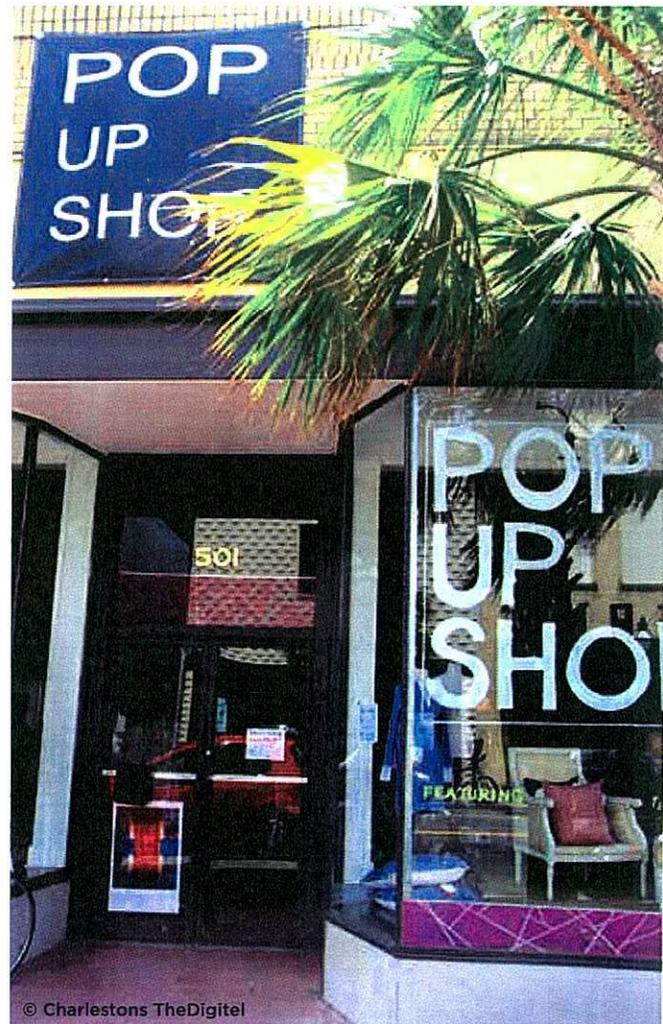
Since new business owners can experiment with their business plans with fewer risks,

there is lots of room for creativity. First-time tenants can experience what it’s like to have a storefront. Established business owners can test their product in a specific location, gain exposure, and build their customer base. Of the two established businesses that participated in Rochester’s pop-up shop, Trevarrow says that both had a positive experience. “They received great feedback from the community and definitely raised awareness of their products.”

### Are Pop Ups Right for Your District?

While pop ups are an innovative tool for economic development, they require a lot of volunteer support. According to Kennedy Smith, principal of CLUE Group, “They are relatively easy to put together. All the community needs is a vacant storefront and a willing property owner.”

While Smith would encourage newer Main Street organizations,



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along with mature ones, to explore pop ups, she cautions that a key component to their success is having a willing group of volunteers. Getting their buy-in and energy will make the difference in a pop up that contributes to the vibrancy of your district and one that looks like an indoor yard sale. You cannot take a lackadaisical approach and simply fill a vacant storefront. You must motivate your creative volunteers to take design and promotion seriously throughout the entire project, from window design to in-store programming. (Tips on how to do this in a minute.)

While an economic restructuring committee can be at any stage of maturity before taking on a pop-up venture, Smith recommends knowing the district's property owners first. "People own buildings in downtowns for radically different reasons. Some people believe the district will improve in value and are waiting for that to happen; others inherited their properties and have an emotional connection to the community, even if they no longer live there."

She says that when trying to sell the idea of a pop up, "It's really important to get to know the property owners, understand what motivates them, and what they're hoping to get out of their properties."

Smith points out another benefit to your economic restructuring committee volunteers and the Main Street program at large: "It's fun and active, and you have something very tangible to show for your efforts." An almost-instant gratification project like a pop up can balance multi-year, multi-phase projects or months of market analysis that take longer to complete.

### Making Pop Ups Work

If your program determines that your district is conducive to pop ups, you'll need to locate a space. The best way to get started is to ask. "We approached landlords with available space to see if they would even consider it," says Trevarrow.

Jessica Scheuerman, senior program officer at Partners for Livable Communities and chair of the Economic Development Committee at Mount Pleasant Main Street in Washington, D.C., was the project manager of a very popular 24-day-long pop up, the Mount Pleasant Temporium. The pop up was located in an older

commercial district whose main amenity was cafes and restaurants. But the neighborhood was hungry for innovative, hand-crafted retail. The Temporium offered art and merchandise from 30 local artists.

Scheuerman admits that securing a space was a struggle and that "the most difficult part about this project was finding the location, finding someone to host the project." She advocates going out and pitching the idea over and over. "There were a lot of obstacles at the onset; you have to get someone who owns the property to take a risk as well."

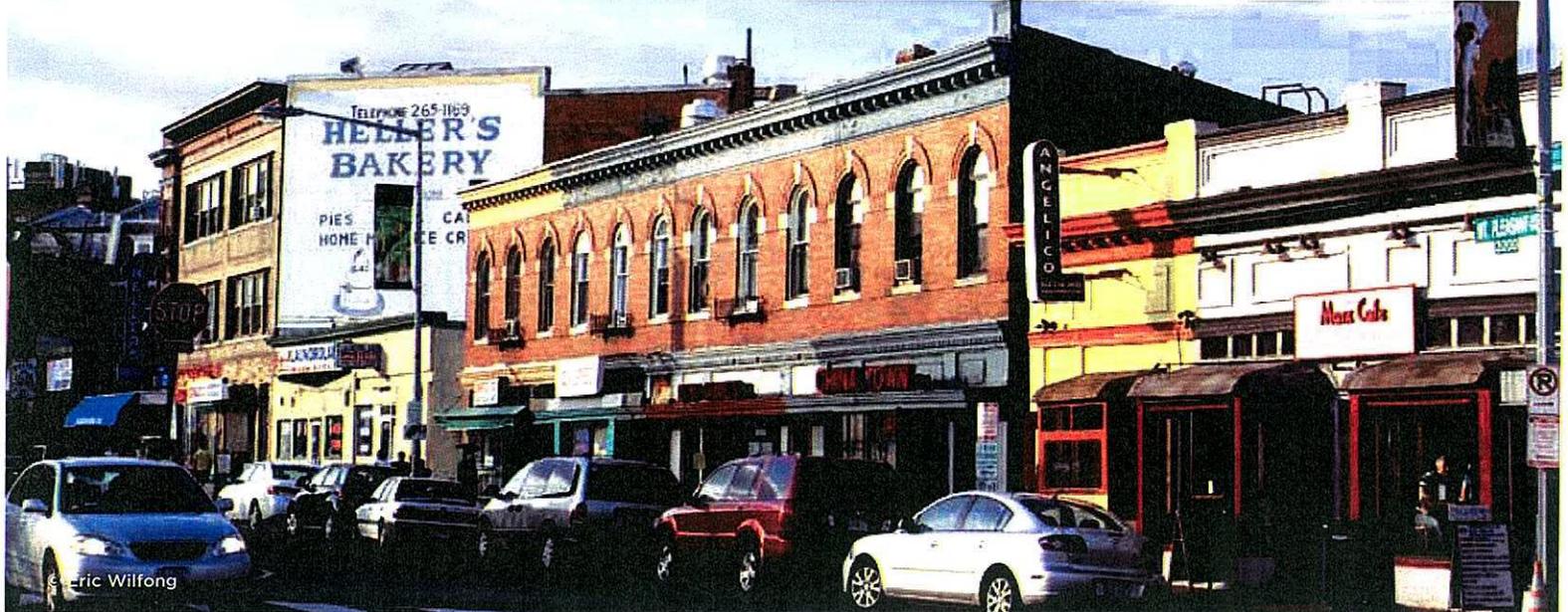
The risks were well worth taking. By the time the Temporium closed, it saw more than 6,800 visitors, 1,030 of whom were customers. The shop grossed more than \$31,000 in sales.

What do experts advise in terms of location? It is clear that major retailers are searching to locate their pop ups in areas with

*Open for almost a month in the Mount Pleasant Main Street district in Washington, D.C., the Temporium attracted more than 7,000 visitors and grossed more than \$30,000 in sales.*



© Doan Nguyen



© Eric Wilfong

high foot traffic. Kennedy Smith agrees. “In most cases, there has to be some retail density. Unless you are promoting and programming actively, which you always should, you’ve got to have enough people on the streets who will pop in to your pop up.”

Creating the space to be more than retail is essential in making any location work. “Your pop up should provide a social outlet, not just retail,” she says. “Have events and product demonstrations, and stay open during happy hour so that community members can trickle in after work.” This way, you can make the most of any location.

Securing and optimizing your space is only one step of the pop-up equation. Tenant-landlord negotiations can be tricky, even in traditional leasing agreements. Main Street managers with experience doing pop ups have experimented with different agreements, but generally it is best to keep the agreements simple. In Boonton, artists paid a percentage of their sales to Boonton Main Street as “consignment rent.” Korinda says that the space was provided rent free by the landlord, but consignment rent was used to offset the costs of utilities, for which the Main Street program was responsible.

As reported in the January/February 2011 issue of *Main Street Now*, when Cambridge Main Street in Maryland hosted a two-month holiday pop-up project, dubbed H-PUP, in 2010, its lease agreement looked similar. Entrepreneurs entered into a contest to get a storefront on Main Street during the holiday season. Rent was free, but winners had to agree to pay for utility costs and licensing fees. Both contest winners ended up staying in the storefront for at least a third month.

When downtown Rochester hosted its holiday pop up, which featured two businesses in a single storefront, Main Street chose to take a more removed role. “We stayed out of the negotiations and simply made the connection between the landlord and the pop-up merchant,” says Trearrow. What occurred after that was simple. The landlord wanted the space filled, so the landlord and tenants negotiated a greatly reduced lease rate.

Klockner proposes another, but still basic, option. As entrepreneurs and local artisans typically don’t have the funds of other retail giants dabbling in pop ups like Target, Nike, and Levi’s, lease agreements need to be affordable and flexible. He says “a straight

percentage rent is probably the safest bet. The more the vendor sells, the more the property owner gets.”

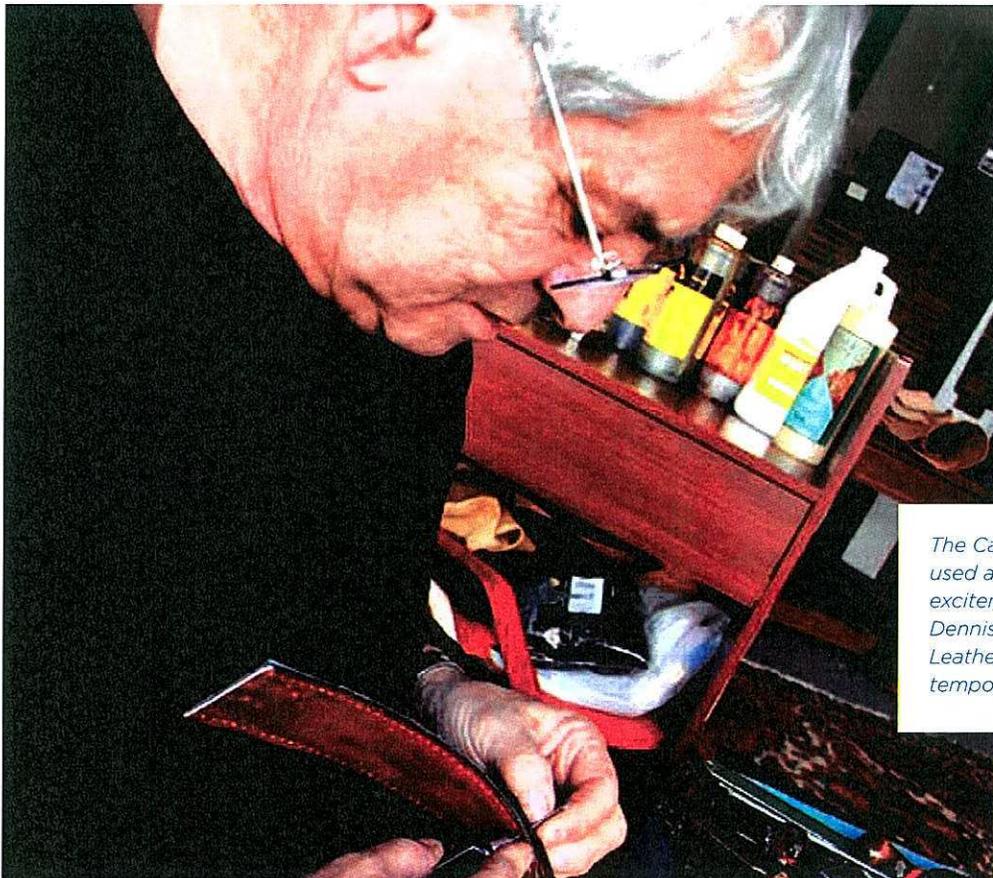
When property rent for a pop up is based on the vendor’s sales, the percentage is often more equitable. Katharine Watson, a merchant who specializes in block-printing, says that “the percentage [at the Mount Pleasant Temporium] was smaller than selling wholesale or in consignment shops so it’s a great deal for the artists.”

Watson was also pleased with the publicity she gained through the pop up. “I’ve been contacted by a lot of people who saw my work at the Temporium,” she says. “That exposure is a great way to build your customer base.”

How can Main Street accomplish all of these tasks? Sheuerman says it is fundamental to build partnerships with other organizations if you want your pop up to succeed.

“We are not in the business of selecting vendors and curating spaces so we needed to partner with someone who was an expert in this,” she says. Therefore, they teamed up with Hello Craft, an organization that supports local crafters, which took charge of inviting vendors to participate in Mount Pleasant’s pop up.

Mount Pleasant didn’t stop searching for partners there. “When we wrote the grant, we really wanted to partner with somebody who could complement the project and had expertise in the theme of storytelling,” says Scheuerman. The Mount Pleasant Temporium worked with numerous community businesses and ultimately teamed up with six official partners, which included Partners for Livable Communities (where Scheuerman works). These partners played a key role in securing funding.



*The Cambridge, Maryland, Main Street program used a pop-up shop contest to generate holiday excitement and to help reduce storefront vacancies. Dennis Napolitan, (left) owner of Malina Custom Leather, was one of two winners that received a temporary storefront for two months.*



© Daquella Manera

*The Temporium on H Street NE, another Washington, D.C., Main Street district, was housed in a vacant library located on a very busy street corner. Over four weekends, the artists who exhibited in this Temporium took in more than \$11,000 in sales revenue.*



© Daquella Manera

The Temporium, however, took a different route for establishing its pop up. The D.C. Office of Planning, under its Temporary Urbanism Initiative, offers grants to organizations interested in hosting pop ups. The goal is to develop and manage temporary retail outlets in vacant spaces on emerging commercial corridors in D.C. Mount Pleasant Main Street applied for the grant with the idea that residents wanted a unique retail option and would support a pop up's here-today-gone-tomorrow energy.

According to Kimberly Driggins, associate director in the D.C. Office of Planning which funded the Temporium, "Given the down market, we knew there was vacant and underutilized space. Artists/entrepreneurs are always looking for below-market or free space; so we thought if we matched the two it could be successful. It had the potential to be a win-win for all stakeholders—artists, property owners, and citizens."

The Office of Planning, says Driggins, aims to leverage opportunities that can support artistic entrepreneurs in the city. "Creative industries are at the heart of the small business economy. Talented, smart workers

can adapt to a unique space such as this," she says. "We can look to them to fill space, and add to the unique flavor of our neighborhoods."

In addition to the Mount Pleasant Temporium, Shaw and H Street NE neighborhoods also created pop-up shops after receiving grants from the D.C. Office of Planning's Temporary Urbanism Initiative. The Office of Planning is very selective in deciding which neighborhoods can host successful pop ups. Driggins says that many residents leave their D.C. communities to meet their shopping needs and about \$1 billion retail dollars are lost to surrounding suburbs.

"In the H Street NE area alone, about \$200 million of retail spending is leaked each year," she explains. But some of these areas show potential. "Temporiums offer a unique experiment to support our creative entrepreneurs, fill a physical gap in this otherwise very vibrant arts and entertainment district, and offer residents and visitors a unique shopping experience."

H Street NE, the Office of Planning's first pop-up location, was an emerging commer-

cial district with a library that had been vacant for a year before the pop up took it over. The library was a unique space located on a highly trafficked street corner and area residents showed a lot of interest in revitalizing the space. Local artists were commissioned to create a vibrant mural along the exterior of the building and use repurposed materials to convert the interior into a design shop. Over four weekends, 20 local artists who occupied the H Street NE Temporium earned more than \$11,000 in sales. Free Wi-Fi and live music contributed to its draw.

### Marketing and Promoting Your Pop Up

Klockner says the success of a pop up heavily relies on foot traffic, but not on that alone. He suggests thinking about "your promotional budget to get this thing off the

ground.” Because pop ups are surprises to the community, you need a marketing plan to get the word out. People need to be told that something new and exciting is happening in your district. If done effectively, Klockner says, “other retailers will start gravitating to the area and people will look at your district as a destination.”

In-store promotions are one key to attracting visitors to your pop up. Consumers want more than shopping; they want entertainment and engagement. At the Temporium, 23 free events took place over 24 days. Events ranged from live music to button making to an after school screen-printing workshop for local elementary students. The most successful events, though, revolved around the Temporium’s theme of storytelling.

Community Powered Radio is a Mount Pleasant group that hosted an event to capture stories from Mount Pleasant residents. Two three-hour workshops taught Temporium visitors about collecting stories, the art of audio recording, and methods for archiving. Beyond these in-store entertainments, the



© Tom LeGro

Temporium also hosted two events at neighboring businesses as well as a guided tour of the neighborhood.

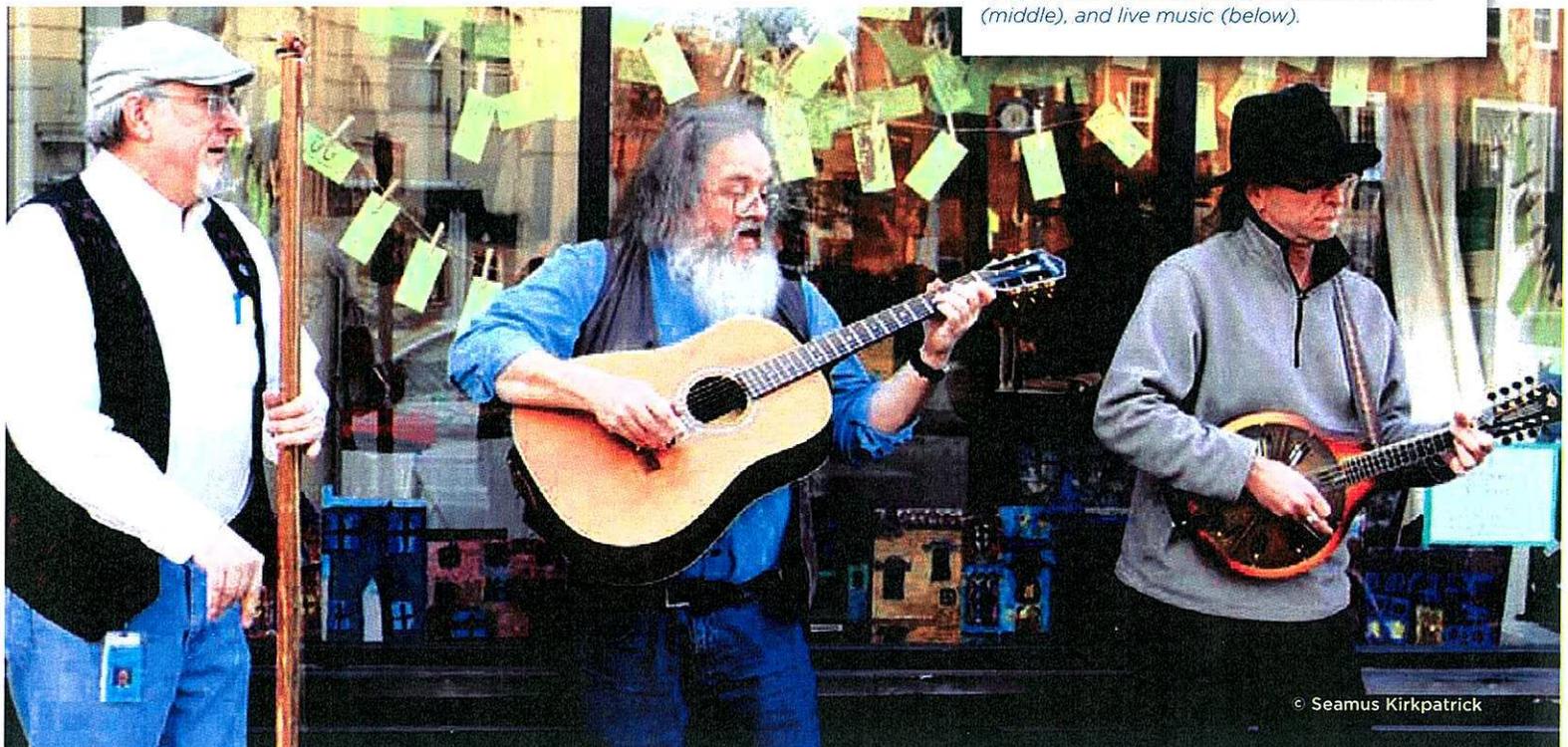
Events aren’t the only way to keep a pop-up space alive. Marketing is also achieved by interior design and storefront window displays. As you’ve probably heard a million times, a storefront’s windows are a business’s best billboard.



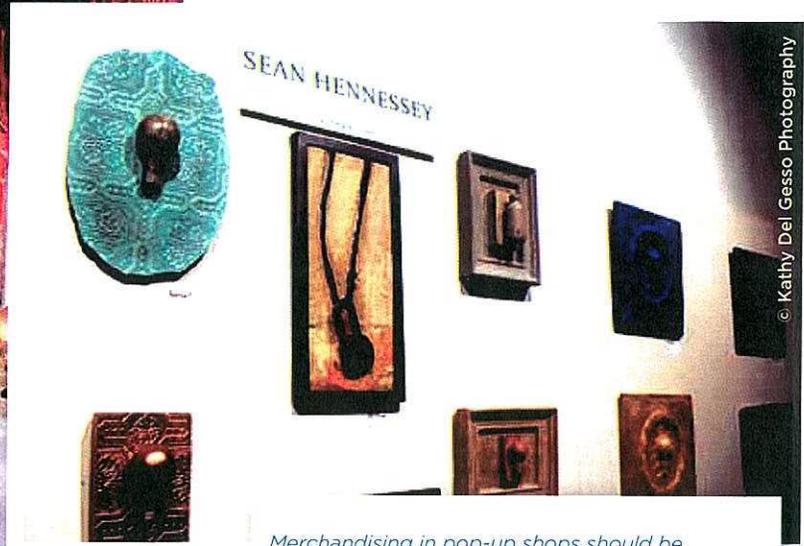
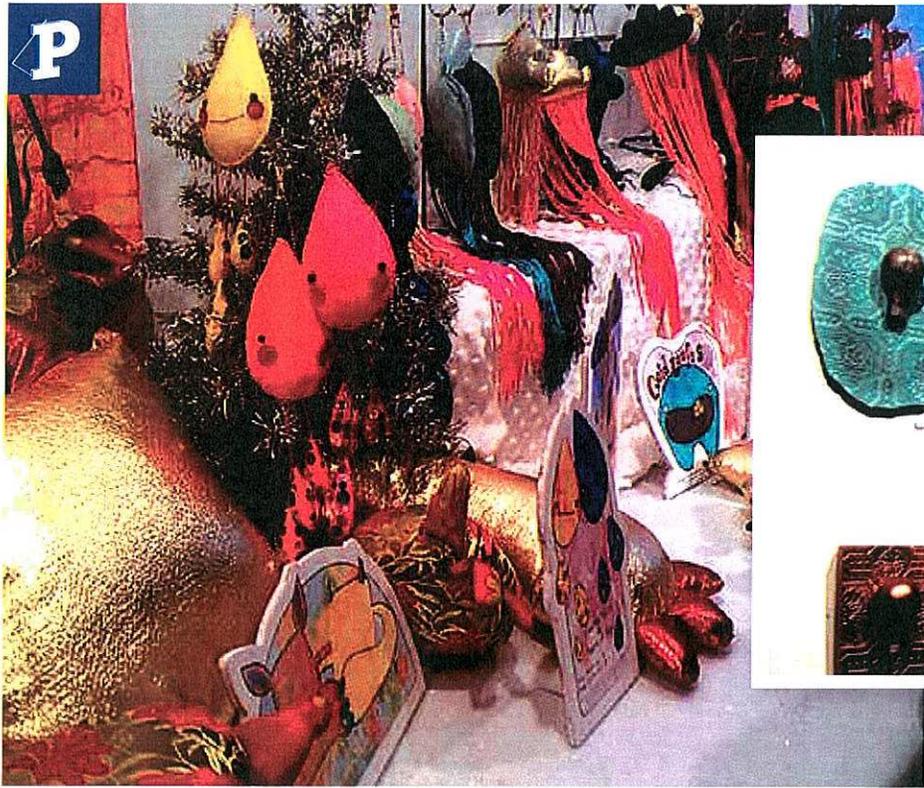
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## Your pop up should provide a social outlet as well as a retail venue.

Consumers today want more than shopping; they want an experience. The Mount Pleasant Temporium offered 23 events over 24 days, including two storytelling workshops (top), an after-school screen printing workshop for kids (middle), and live music (below).



© Seamus Kirkpatrick



*Merchandising in pop-up shops should be displayed for maximum exposure, using lighting, temporary walls, and platforms to focus customers' attention on the products for sale.*

© Kathy Del Gesso Photography

How do you know which type of space is best? Amy Meadows, a senior manager at Marshall Fields with over 25 years of experience in retail design, says, "Carefully consider the scale and scope of the content when matching occupants to potential space." Well, Main Street pop ups may not always have that option, but you can make the space you get work by taking design into consideration.

Meadows cautions pop-up designers not to spread their inventory too thin. "Do not attempt to s-t-r-e-t-c-h the exhibit or inventory to fill the available space. Plan your space for optimal exposure and minimal distraction with lighting, temporary walls, and platforms to create areas of focus within the empty space." Customers are more likely to purchase goods when they are displayed in an attractive, accessible way. Also, the

space should be easy to navigate and promote circulation, drawing customers to focal points throughout the store.

Another tip is to keep the space clean and clutter-free. Avoid a garage-sale appearance. "While it may seem counterintuitive, it's very hard to execute a flea market/boutique environment without creating something closer to a yard sale," says Meadows. "Avoid mismatched signing, hand-lettered information, and other obviously low-cost solutions."

Even though a pop up is temporary, the space needs to be presentable. "You can take shortcuts, just don't make them visible," Meadows cautions.

In Cambridge, Maryland, business owners had minimal resources to figure out their own store design. Main Street assigned volunteers to provide a brief consultation on the layout

of the space, advising the new pop-up tenants how to get the biggest bang for their buck in terms of cosmetic changes.

Interactive displays have also proven successful. At the Mount Pleasant Temporium, visitors were invited to add to the window display, which consisted of papier-mache trees and "leaves" made from green note cards. The leaves illustrated the vision for the community; visitors wrote and drew sketches of what they wanted to see happen in Mount Pleasant.

While your window display themes have to be catchy, the street also needs to have people you can entice to come in. Getting the word out about your retail and events is critical to the success of a pop up. Social media has played a large role in promoting many temporary retail shops and events, including

*Interactive displays, such as this Idea Tree at the Mount Pleasant Temporium, engage visitors and make them feel part of the community.*



© Kevin H.

## Pop-up restaurants and food trucks rank among the top six hottest start-up trends in 2011.

those in Washington, D.C. The Temporium projects have all had their own websites, and many chose to make a Facebook page with consistently updated products and events. They also used Twitter to build a buzz and Flickr pages to allow visitors to post pictures.

### Beyond Retail

Walk-in stores are not the only option. Walk-by stands and mobile vendors like food trucks can achieve similar results as pop-up retail shops. According to Meadows, “both pop-up types have value for energizing or activating a space.”

McKone mentioned this on her sustainability blog, too. “Recently, local governments in the U.S. have started to support policies that encourage the temporary usage of buildings and empty lots to prevent eyesores that lower property values.” And according to YoungEntrepreneur, a business site geared toward young professionals, pop-up restaur-

rants and food trucks rank among the top six hottest start-up trends in 2011.

Outside the United States, food trucks are becoming all the rage. In April of this year, the City of Vancouver approved 19 vendors to join its popular food cart fleet. Vancouver’s city government sees value in bringing cultural diversity and creativity to its streets through on-the-go food options, and these new vendors fit the mark: they offer dishes ranging from Mexican to Indian to Vietnamese.

Cambridge Main Street Manager Jim Duffy has noticed mobile versions of downtown stores that park by regional special events, festivals, and fund raisers. These can act as both sales outlets and marketing tools. He points out that in nearby Easton, Maryland, a store called Bliss launched BlissMobile in an RV. “Our pop-up project was about testing a business concept,” he says, “but many established businesses regard it more as a marketing project.”

That trend is coming to Cambridge, too. “I’ve got a new business coming in, Crabi Gras, with a business plan that includes transforming an old crab truck into a fun-looking mobile store.”

Pop ups can also address foot-traffic issues. If a community doesn’t have a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, it can temporarily adapt “complete streets” strategies. With the goal of making communities more livable, complete streets allow easy access for everyone in the neighborhood: cars, public transit, bikers, pedestrians, and even pets.

Jaime Lerner, the former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, now famous for his innovation in sustainable city design, is a supporter of this complete streets vision. A proponent of mobile vendors, Lerner calls this practice “portable streets.”

According to an interview with Lerner from the American Society of Landscape Architects’ weekly blog, *The Dirt*, “Some places in some cities have become decayed. There’s no life. When that happens, it’s very difficult to bring back life because people don’t want to live in a place like that. However, the moment we bring street life, people will want to live there again. That’s why we designed the portable streets. On a Friday night, we can deliver a portable street and remove it Monday morning.”

In Oak Cliff, Texas, neighborhood activists wanted to show their local officials that permanent street modification could work in their area so they dove into an experiment called the Better Block Project. In one day, locals temporarily transformed a desolate stretch of buildings into a thriving, *complete* street. Lasting just one weekend, the street was brought to life by residents who painted

*Outside the United States, pop-up restaurants and food trucks are a growing trend. Vancouver, Canada, recently added 19 vendors to its popular and culturally diverse food cart fleet.*





*In Oak Cliff, Texas, residents temporarily transformed a desolate street into a thriving area with planters, lighting, seating, and pop-up shops and galleries. Called the Better Block Project, it has become a national model for creating more livable neighborhoods.*

storefronts, strategically placed planters and lighting, created safe seating and walking areas alongside the road, painted bike-lanes, and filled all of the street's vacancies with pop-up shops and galleries. After its success in Oak Cliff, the Better Block Project is now a national demonstration tool for communities that want to increase sustainable transportation options and create more exciting, livable neighborhoods.

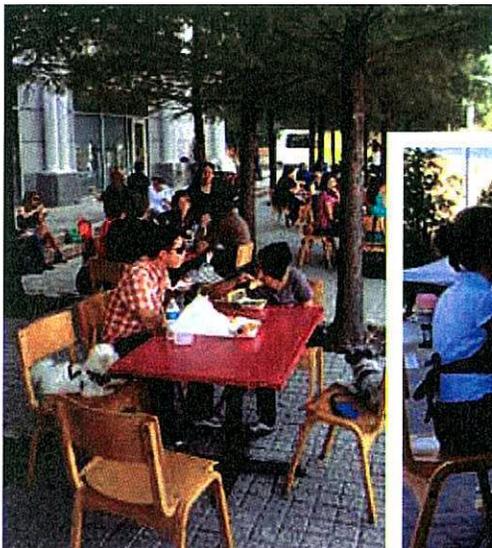
The same Dallas team also created The Better Food Block, a five-hour project where gourmet food vendors lined a single street to prove to City Hall that mobile vendors could be a valuable asset to the community. Better Block Project volunteers positioned colorful

tables across the sidewalks and brought both a giant chessboard and a yellow polka-dotted piano with a sign reading, "Play Me!" for all visitors to enjoy, but made sure to leave a clear path for visitors/gastronomes to get to the food.

Finally, one other option deserves to be mentioned—pop-up dog parks! Cities like Cleveland, Ohio, have executed this idea to promote public health and community. Pop-Up City, an organization focused on revitalizing underutilized areas of downtown Cleveland, created a pop-up dog park in 2009 by placing plants, woodchips, and grass squares on a stretch of concrete in an area that otherwise wasn't known to draw visitors.

Offering live music, games, and raffles, the one-day event thrilled pups and humans alike. (Learn more about other pop-up uses in Oyster Bay, New York, in the article on page 18).

*Trudy Andrzejewski was an intern with the National Trust Main Street Center. She is from Cleveland Heights, Ohio, and attends Kenyon College, where she is majoring in American Studies. After graduating, Trudy plans to pursue work in the fields of adaptive re-use of historic structures and community revitalization.*



*A spin-off of the Better Block Project, the Better Food Block lined a street with gourmet food vendors to show local government that mobile vendors could be an asset to the community.*

## Online Resources

**The Better Block Project blog** includes great tips on how to attempt a similar project in your neighborhood: <http://better-block.org/how-to-build-a-better-block/>

**The D.C. Office of Planning's Temporary Urbanism Initiative** includes project goals, applicant eligibility, and links to their pop-up projects. <http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/Across+the+City/Other+Citywide+Initiatives/Temporary+Urbanism+Initiative>

**Pop Up City Cleveland** has completed numerous temporary events and installations ranging from public art to ice sculpting competitions to pop-up shops: <http://www.popupcleveland.com/>

**Pop Up Insider Blog**, hosted by two pop-up retailing experts, showcases new pop-up examples mostly in major cities in the United States: <http://www.popupinsider.com/blog>