

Welcome Back Downtown:

*A Guide to Revitalizing
Pennsylvania's Small Downtowns*



THE CENTER FOR



Rural Pennsylvania

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Welcome Back Downtown: *A Guide to Revitalizing Pennsylvania's Small Downtowns*

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The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created in 1987 under Act 16, the Rural Revitalization Act, to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities.

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Chapter 1: WELCOME BACK DOWNTOWN

Across America and throughout Pennsylvania, many communities are taking another look at their downtowns and are actively working to remake them into the hub of activity they once were. The primary goals of these revitalization efforts are to improve the livability and quality of life in the community by expanding and attracting employment, shopping and social activities.

This manual is designed to help small town revitalization efforts. Building on several basic principles, the manual provides Pennsylvania's small communities with a variety of low-cost tools and strategies that may help them welcome their downtowns back to a more vibrant existence.

The What and Why of Revitalization

Downtown revitalization is strengthening the social, physical and economic value of a community's commercial center. Also called a central business district, a commercial center is where businesses have traditionally located. The primary goal of downtown revitalization efforts is to improve the livability and quality of life in a community by expanding and attracting employment, shopping and social activities to the commercial center.

It is important to point out that downtown revitalization is not simply retail development. Instead, it is community development, which fosters economic growth and improves the quality of life for residents.

To successfully revitalize its downtown, a community must have a long-term plan, some financial backing, and commitments from property and business owners, local government officials, and local residents. Most importantly, downtown revitalization requires a willingness to be innovative. (See Appendix 1 for a recommended reading list on downtown revitalization.)

Communities looking to revitalize their downtowns often do so for a variety of reasons. Revitalization helps to: improve the image of the downtown; make use of existing buildings; offer residents a more concrete sense of place; provide residents with more retail options and services; provide more employment opportunities, whether in retail, service, government, health care, or other sectors; expand the local tax base; prevent blight and abandonment; increase safety in the community; and keep money circulating within the community.

No Town Is Too Small

No town in Pennsylvania is too small to revitalize. Nor is any town too run-down or financially distressed to begin the revitalization process. Across the state, some of the greatest successes in downtown revitalization have been in small towns. The tools and techniques in this manual were specifically designed for towns with less than 5,000 residents and communities with a very limited budget. Revitalization efforts, however, may not work for every community. Before a community embarks on revitalization efforts, it must realize that revitalization takes time and requires a commitment from a group of individuals and organizations. By following the suggestions presented in this manual, communities can gain some important insights and ideas on downtown revitalization. The techniques outlined here may not work for every community, so communities should use the ones that make sense to them and discard those that don't.

Downtown revitalization is not simply retail development. It is community development, which fosters economic growth and improves the quality of life for residents.



Photo courtesy of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center.

CHAPTER 2: GETTING ORGANIZED

The very first step in downtown revitalization is to establish a “revitalization organization.” This organization may include a group of property owners or merchants, concerned citizens, the chamber of commerce, municipal government officials, an economic development association, or any other interested individuals or organizations. The purpose of the revitalization organization is to lay the groundwork for a long-term revitalization effort.

Once the core group is formed, it should establish a steering committee and get the community involved in the process.

Establishing a Steering Committee

A steering committee provides guidance and direction to the downtown revitalization effort. Its primary tasks are to develop a strategy, or plan, for revitalizing the downtown and to make sure that all tasks are completed.

The easiest way to form a steering committee is to contact individuals who “want to do something about the downtown.” These might be public officials, property owners, merchants, and consumers. Other people to consider are representatives from the local historical society, the chamber of commerce, banks, non-profit community organizations and civic groups, faith-based organizations, and youth/senior organizations.

In many communities, a like-minded organization may already exist that can be tapped to provide the nucleus of the steering committee.

Once you have identified individuals for the committee, schedule a meeting to discuss your downtown. At the first meeting, be prepared to discuss why you believe the downtown needs to be revitalized. Don’t spend time discussing who or what is to blame for the poor conditions or the amount of money needed to do the job. Instead, keep a positive focus and talk about the possibilities.

Three important tasks need to be accomplished at this first meeting: review the activities and responsibilities of the taskforce; get commitments from those who are willing to become members; and identify who is missing from the group. The missing individuals should be invited to the next meeting. As a rule, the steering committee should be as inclusive as possible to ensure that everyone has a voice in helping to revitalize the downtown.

Steering Committee Responsibilities

Revitalizing a downtown requires work and attention to details. The pay-off is a robust and viable downtown. Steering committee members should commit at least one year of service to the effort, be prepared to attend several meetings a month, and be prepared to work about three to four hours per month outside of meetings. Other important responsibilities of the committee members are outlined in the box at right.

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Additional Steering Committee Responsibilities

- ✓ Legitimize the revitalization efforts
- ✓ Identify participants
- ✓ Arrange, advertise and lead meetings
- ✓ Make the public aware of activities
- ✓ Identify and involve people outside the community
- ✓ Establish and distribute an agenda
- ✓ Secure initial funding or in-kind contributions for initial meetings
- ✓ Identify goals and objectives for revitalizing the downtown
- ✓ Establish and coordinate project committees and follow through with implementation

After the steering committee is established, members should identify a leader. This person will give the revitalization effort a focus and make sure tasks are completed. The leader should have strong organizational skills, be a consensus builder, show a commitment to fund-raising and be able to delegate responsibilities. Motivational skills are another important attribute since the leader must have genuine excitement and commitment to the project. Finally, the individual should be patient, understanding that downtown programs are time-consuming and full of stops and starts and that efforts may even fall flat.

After the leader is in place, establish an organizational structure. Following are some options on how to organize your efforts.

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

Consider Obtaining Non-profit / 501 C-3

Status: The steering committee may want to formalize the revitalization effort by incorporating the group as a non-profit entity and attaining tax-exempt status. There are both pros and cons to formal incorporation. On the pro side, organizations may want to incorporate for several reasons, including limits on liability, tax exempt status, reduced postage, access to media through free public service announcements, and increased organizational credibility. The disadvantages of incorporation include

Eight Principles for Success

According to the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, the non-profit, member-focused and service-oriented organization for Pennsylvania's downtowns, downtown revitalization has eight guiding principles that set it apart from other redevelopment strategies:

1. **Comprehensive:** Downtown revitalization is a complex process requiring a comprehensive strategy. No single project such as lavish public improvement, "name-brand" business recruitment, or endless promotional events can revitalize the downtown.
2. **Incremental:** Basic, simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help members of the community develop skills to tackle more complex problems and ambitious projects.
3. **Self-Help:** Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources. That means convincing residents and business owners alike of the rewards for their investment of time and money in the downtown as the heart of the community.
4. **Partnership:** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the downtown. Partnership means that all stakeholders are contributing time, money, and expertise—often individually, but sometimes sitting as a group around the same table.
5. **Assets:** To give people a sense of belonging and pride, downtown revitalization must capitalize on the unique assets it already has – distinctive buildings, neighborly shop owners, and human scale that cannot be copied at a strip or shopping mall.
6. **Quality:** A high standard of quality must be set for every aspect of the downtown district, from window displays to marketing brochures, and from public improvements to storefront renovations.
7. **Change:** Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite and essential. The "Main Street" approach often brings about a major shift in downtown's use, purpose and future. (See the box on page 6 for more on the Main Street approach.)
8. **Action-Oriented:** The downtown focus is to simultaneously plan for the future while creating visible change and activities now.

increased paperwork and additional costs. The bottom line is that the decision to incorporate should not be made lightly.

As a first step, some downtown revitalization efforts operate for a number of years under the umbrella of an existing organization like a chamber of commerce, municipal government, or another non-profit organization. The existing organization acts as a fiscal agent for the new downtown group and allows them to indirectly obtain the benefits of being non-profit.

Elect officers: The steering committee should select a treasurer, secretary, and any other officer it needs. While these officers will initially have few duties, their responsibilities will increase as the organization begins its projects.

Schedule regular meetings: Regular meetings should be scheduled to keep the revitalization efforts on track. These meetings should have an agenda and minutes should be recorded.

The *Main Street* Approach to Downtown Revitalization

Main Street is a comprehensive, community-based revitalization approach, developed in 1980 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Communities across the U.S. apply its four key components with great success:

Design means getting Main Street in top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets such as historic buildings and the traditional downtown layout is just a part of the story. An inviting atmosphere can be created through window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping; good design conveys a visual message about what Main Street is and what it has to offer.

Promotion means selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects. By marketing the district's unique characteristics through advertising, retail promotional activities, special events,

and marketing campaigns, an effective promotion strategy forges a positive image among shoppers, investors, new businesses and visitors.

Organization means getting everyone working towards common goals. The common-sense formula of a volunteer-driven program and an organizational structure of board and committees assisting professional management can ease the difficult work of building consensus and cooperation among the varied groups that have a stake in the district.

Economic Restructuring means finding new or better purposes for Main Street enterprises. By helping existing downtown businesses to expand and helping to recruit new ones, a successful Main Street converts unused space into productive property and sharpens the competitiveness of its businesses

The Pennsylvania Main Street Program is one of

the community and economic development strategies of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). The success of the program over the last 20 years has helped keep downtown revitalization as a priority for the department in their efforts to support and build the commonwealth's diverse communities.

The five-year program encourages revitalization by leveraging private dollars and requiring ongoing, local support evidenced by the establishment of an organization and documented financial commitment from the community. Program guidelines are available by calling your regional DCED contact or by calling the Pennsylvania Downtown Center at (717) 233-4675. The Single Application for Assistance can be accessed on DCED's website at www.inventpa.com.

Engage the Community Early On

It is important to enlist the support of the community early on. The steering committee should hold a public meeting to describe the group's intentions and solicit support. This meeting should be open to the entire community, and time and effort should be given to getting as many residents, shop owners, property owners, and municipal officials to attend as possible. This meeting is important because it will set the tone of the revitalization effort. Consequently, the steering committee needs to be well prepared.

The agenda for the first meeting should establish the purpose of the revitalization effort by focusing on the five following questions:

Why a steering committee? At the first meeting, be prepared to talk about why the

steering committee was formed, who is on the committee, and the committee's goals. These goals can be as simple as "making downtown a better place." Citizens should be invited to comment on the effort as well as offer suggestions.

Where do we want to go? During this part of the meeting, considerable time should be given to participants to express their hopes and dreams for the downtown. The committee should also be prepared to express what its vision is for the downtown.

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

group adopt? What resources will the group need to implement the strategies? How will we pay for it? How long will it take? How will we know it is done?

What's next? The committee needs to present a basic plan for the long-term effort. This plan does not need to be very specific, but it should set up a basic structure for addressing the broad issue of revitalization.

Chapter 3: UNDERSTANDING YOUR DOWNTOWN

Your downtown is more than just a collection of shops, restaurants, and offices, or a grouping of buildings, sidewalks, and parking spaces, or a place where people go to the post office or gather to watch a parade. Your downtown represents the investment of generations. To capitalize on this investment, you will need to make an honest assessment of your downtown to understand its strengths and weakness and the role it plays within your region. Most importantly, you will need to identify areas of opportunity.

Evaluate and Assess

To get a better understanding of the services and amenities that are available in the downtown, the revitalization committee needs to objectively evaluate, or assess, the downtown's problems, assets, needs and windows of opportunity. This evaluation or assessment should go beyond anecdotes and perceptions, which can be misleading. Instead, the current resources available, the users of downtown, potential markets and competing communities must be known.

Assessing your downtown is not difficult or expensive. However, it does take time and it requires your committee to develop and analyze data. Once this information is in place, your committee will be in a much better position to make decisions about your downtown. Once you have collected the information, updating it will be relatively easy.

Three assessment tools commonly used by downtown consultants are explained below. Select the tool(s) that will best fit the needs of your downtown and will provide the most information.

Assessment Tool 1: SWOT Analysis

Tool: SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This assessment tool is an inexpensive way to evaluate conditions in the downtown. SWOT analysis requires you to identify the strengths of the downtown, its weaknesses, the opportunities, and finally the threats. Information gleaned from the SWOT analysis can provide the committee with a clearer understanding of the environment in which they are working.

How to Use the Method: SWOT analysis should be done in a small group setting and downtown stakeholders should be invited to participate in the analysis. If there is a large number of individuals, participants may be split into small groups.

A moderator should ask participants to first identify the strengths of their downtown. Examples are a good mix of retail and service businesses, good traffic flow, plenty of historic buildings, etc. Participants should identify as many strengths as possible before moving on to "weaknesses." Using the same method, participants should identify the weaknesses of the downtown, such as not enough parking, vacant storefronts, and high property taxes. The same procedure should be used to identify opportunities for the downtown and threats to the downtown. As a rule of thumb, the strengths and weaknesses should be perceived as internal to the downtown, while opportunities and threats are external.

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Once the basic SWOT analysis is completed, the group should then be asked the following questions:

- How do we protect and/or enhance our strengths?
- How can we overcome our weaknesses?
- How do we capitalize on the opportunities?
- How can we minimize the threats?

(Appendix 4 provides a sample SWOT Analysis Worksheet that may be used by your committee.)

Outcome: The information from the SWOT analysis can provide the committee with a clearer understanding of the downtown environment, which can then be used to develop an action plan. Obviously, this plan should be designed to build on internal strengths and overcome local weaknesses. Such a plan will put the group in a better position to take advantage of opportunities and reduce threats.

Cost: Less than \$25 for flip charts, markers, tape, and refreshments.

Assessment Tool 2: Downtown Inventory

Tool: A downtown inventory helps determine what types of businesses and services are available downtown. The inventory also assesses the number of commercial buildings and their current condition. This information provides the basis for more objective and effective decision-making. The three most commonly used inventory methods are: Walk-Through Survey, Visual Imaging, and Commercial Space Inventory.

How to Use the Method: Each of the three methods described below has a different way of collecting and analyzing information. Some are more involved than others. Regardless of which you select, it is important that more than one person or a small taskforce complete the task. Try to have as many people involved in information collection as possible. This increases awareness of the issues the downtown

faces and helps build support for developing a plan.

1) *Walk-Through Survey:* Take a long walk through your downtown and look closely at its appearance. Notice the current businesses, their types, the number and location of empty storefronts, the condition of the sidewalks and roadways, and the amount of automobile or pedestrian traffic. Using either the worksheet provided in Appendix 4 or one that is custom-made to suit your needs, record what you see. The downtown group can use this inventory to better understand how the downtown looks and operates. The cost for this survey is usually less than \$20 for photocopying and clipboards.

2) *Visual Imaging:* This method makes use of photographs to evaluate the downtown and is a good method for those who are pressed for time. Photographs should be taken on a clear day, when lighting is sufficient, to record the downtown's permanent conditions and attributes. Photos should then be categorized according to building use, such as residential, commercial, recreational, and mixed land-use, and infrastructure. Dissect and record what you see. The cost of visual imaging may be in the range of \$25 to \$50 for disposable cameras, film development, and display boards.

3) *Commercial Space Inventory:* Gather information on all local commercial property and try to include information about the type of industry that is housed in each building. Initially, the database can be used as a catalog of existing properties. Later on, it may be useful when the downtown committee attempts to attract new businesses. Other information that the committee may include in the database is the location of the property, the occupant(s) and contact information, and the amount of commercial space. Much of this information is

readily available at the county courthouse. The cost of the inventory may be in the range of \$25 to \$50 for phone calls and trips to the courthouse. If the committee does not have access to database software and needs to purchase it, the cost will be considerably higher.

Outcome: Any of the downtown inventories mentioned above should provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical development of the downtown; the downtown's role in the region; local transportation patterns and modes; local infrastructure (sewage, water, telecommunications, electric, etc.); current landuse and zoning; public facilities and services; existing buildings; and the streetscape.

Assessment Tool 3: Market Analysis

Tool: Market analysis identifies consumer needs and determines what types of retail and service establishments a downtown can sustain. The analysis should include opinions and perceptions of business and property owners, customers, and residents. It should also include general demographic information about the community and surrounding areas.

The four key components in a market analysis are the identification of trade areas; a physical business inventory; an understanding of residents' retail needs and shopping patterns; and identification of competition, projects, and developments that impact retail in the downtown.

Identification of Trade Areas: "Trade areas" are geographical areas from which customers are drawn. By identifying these areas, the downtown committee will better understand where the downtown consumers are coming from and what types of products and services they are purchasing. The committee can then use this information to identify other potential consumers that could be attracted to shopping in the downtown.

To identify your downtown's trade areas you will need a map of your region. In most instances, a county street map is sufficient. (These maps can be obtained through your county planning office or the state Department of Transportation at little or no cost.) Using three different colored markers, color in the three geographical regions that may comprise your downtown's trade areas. These regions are:

Trade Area A: Downtown area (or central business district) where shops and businesses are located.

Trade Area B: The area immediately surrounding the central business district, or the remainder of the community.

Trade Area C: Businesses and residents in contiguous communities surrounding your town.

Physical Business Inventory: After mapping the trade area, catalog the existing retail and service businesses available in each trade area. This inventory provides data on existing businesses and allows for a preliminary assessment of the goods and services that are lacking as well as those that are well provided for in the community. For instance, the inventory may

reveal an enormous unmet demand for a supermarket. A partial example summary is shown below in Table 1. A complete physical business inventory worksheet is included in Appendix 4.

The information for the physical business inventory may be obtained through telephone books, the chamber of commerce membership list, or by simply driving through all three trade areas.

Needs & Shopping Patterns Survey: What do residents and shoppers in all three trade areas want in their downtown? The best way to answer this question is with a survey. The survey can help determine retail needs and shopping patterns as well as perceptions about the downtown. Survey information complements the inventory in determining market gaps; identifying existing businesses that do not meet customer needs; and identifying the goods and services residents feel the area lacks.

Four types of questions you want to use in the survey are:

1. Demographic information (age, gender, occupation, income, etc.)

2. Current shopping habits (Where do residents shop? What do they shop for? And how often?)
3. Any preferences for new retail and service businesses in the downtown
4. Perceptions about the downtown (What do residents like and dislike? Are there parking issues, etc.)

As a rule, this survey should be about one page, printed front and back, and be easy to fill out.

Accurately surveying residents and shoppers can be challenging and expensive. To save money on conducting the survey, consider the following:

- Contact the business department at a local university or community college. It may be willing to make the survey a student project.
- Ask merchants to place the survey and a drop-off box next to their cash register and to encourage each customer to complete the survey before leaving the shop.
- Place the survey in a weekly shopping newspaper and ask respondents to mail the survey to the committee.
- Select four or five dates over a two-week period and conduct a face-to-face survey on key street corners in the downtown.
- Have the local supermarket place the survey in shopping bags and have a drop-off box at the supermarket.

The following surveys may also be helpful.

- 1) Perceptions Survey: What perceptions of the downtown do citizens and businesses have? Knowing how citizens and shopkeepers feel about the downtown provides insights that cannot be obtained through secondary data analysis. Information from this type of survey might include: (a) frequency and use of downtown; (b) perceptions of the downtown; (c) reasons for not using the downtown; and (d) desires for the downtown.

Table 1: Sample Physical Business Inventory Summary by Area

	Trade Area A (# Establishments)	Trade Area B (# Establishments)	Trade Area C (# Establishments)
Food—At Home			
Bakery	1	0	2
Grocery	0	1	3
Convenience store	2	3	8
Food—Away			
Restaurant—Fast Food	1	2	4
Restaurant—Sit-Down	3	1	5
Take-Out Only (Ice cream, etc.)	1	0	3

2) Purchasing Survey: What goods and services are purchased in the downtown and outside of town, where are goods purchased, and why? Information from such a survey can help identify the existing support of local businesses and the goods and services that people may wish to purchase in their home community, but must buy outside of town because they are not available at the local level. It will also provide some indication of how far people are willing to travel to obtain the desired good or service. A sample survey is in Appendix 4.

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

Identifying Competition, Projects, Programs and Developments: Your downtown is not isolated from the rest of the world. It is important to recognize that economic development programs and plans may be in place elsewhere that will affect your community. For instance, a neighboring town may be in the process of building an outlet mall, or infrastructure changes may be in the works, such as a new expressway. Therefore, it is important to be aware of and understand the factors that influence your community and to plan accordingly. To find out what other plans and projects may be in the works, contact your county planning and/or economic development department; your local development district; your local PennDOT district engineer (see blue pages of your phonebook); your local, county, and state elected officials; and your local chamber of commerce.

Chapter 4: REVITALIZATION PLANNING

To make your downtown revitalization a success, you must have a plan. The plan will help guide you and will offer a clear idea of your priorities. It will also act as a yardstick to help you measure your successes, something that is critical when looking for funding sources.

After you analyze your downtown, the revitalization group will need to generate a vision for its future. Creating a vision is like painting a picture of the ideal downtown. The group works on a blank canvas, and can be as creative as it wants. Through collaboration and consensus building, the visioning process brings together diverse interests to determine what the downtown should be in 10, 15 or even 20 years.

For more information on the visioning process and how to develop a visioning statement, get a copy of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's publication, *Planning for the Future: A Handbook on Community Visioning*.

A Plan for Action

Once you have the market analysis and vision statement completed, the next step is to develop an action plan. An action plan is a road map for making the vision statement a reality. It will provide a systematic description of how to revitalize the downtown.

Action plans generally have the following five components:

- 1) Clearly Stated Goals and Objectives: The plan should have goals that come directly from the vision statement and objectives that describe the projects needed to meet the goals.
- 2) A Description of How Each Objective Will Be Completed and by Whom: Provide as much detail as possible on how each objective (or project) will be completed and who is responsible for completing the project.
- 3) Timeline: Take a long-term approach to improve the downtown and complete projects over time. Complete low-cost projects that are highly visible for the early years and major or expensive projects in the later years.
- 4) Cost Estimates: Estimate the costs of each project so that you have a better understanding of the scope of each project and how much financial support may be necessary.
- 5) Evaluation: Evaluation helps keep your organization on track and provides a good record of your successes.

To put together an action plan, consider using taskforces. Assign each taskforce a component of the vision statement and charge each one with developing a 10-year plan to address their specific topic area. The taskforces can then be given the responsibility to complete their specific projects.

The downtown organization is responsible for making sure that each taskforce's components fit together.

Revitalization Techniques

There is a variety of techniques for revitalizing your downtown. Some focus on outcomes or products, while others focus on process and may require additional data collection and analysis. Use these techniques as a starting point for discussion or to generate new ideas. Some of these techniques may work in your downtown, and others will not. Use what makes sense to your community.

Improving Appearances

Appearance matters: downtowns that offer a sense of place and well-being draw people to them. Improving the appearance of the downtown may only require a little clean up work or a façade improvement program. Try the following suggestions to improve the appearance of your downtown.

Clean It Up: Creating and maintaining a clean appearance is an essential step.

- If possible, develop and implement a public space maintenance plan.
- Honor merchants who clean up their own spaces.
- Research and apply for government façade rebate programs.
- Declare a community pride day with organized clean-up efforts completed by volunteers.
- Install garbage cans and recycling bins in strategic locations throughout downtown.
- Offer incentives, such as trophies or gift certificates, to individuals who display leadership and commitment to the effort.
- Design an “adoption” plan for maintaining the cleanliness of public areas.

Improve Store Windows & Building Facades: To make buildings, whether occupied or vacant, look livelier, try these low-cost suggestions. Recognize that they will require the cooperation of the property owner.

- Decorate and light the windows of vacant buildings while they are waiting to attract new tenants; display photos or drawings illustrating local attractions or annual events or a documentation of the ongoing revitalization process.
- Ask volunteer organizations to adopt windows and stores for holiday decorating; encourage local retailers to donate materials for the displays.
- Showcase the downtown art scene in other-

wise vacant windows; this can be the work of professionals, amateurs, or beginners of any age.

- Consider using the sides of buildings for murals that represent the business or community as a whole.
- Encourage physical improvements, such as planters and flower boxes, benches, and awnings. These items may be donated from local nurseries, gardeners, carpenters, banks or other businesses.

Add Beauty and Safety: Spaces between buildings and along streets and specific design features may be improved to make downtown visually dramatic, convenient, and safe. You’ll need the cooperation of community members, whether through donations or volunteer activities, to make these suggestions cost effective.

- Plant trees, which are low cost and low maintenance, to enhance beauty and shelter pedestrians.
- Create small “pocket” parks in open spaces between buildings.
- Install and use exterior lighting; antique lampposts, trees decorated with white lights, or a lighted water fountain can create a beautifully dramatic, yet safe atmosphere.
- Raise crosswalks as speed bumps for safety and to keep walking areas dry. Paint lines bright colors to increase the safety of both pedestrians and motorists.
- Offer seating by providing benches and picnic tables where appropriate.

Improve Signage and Directional Assistance: Signs, banners, and maps help market the downtown to residents and visitors. Signs offer a welcoming appearance and showcase the community’s heritage. Work closely with your municipal government, the state Department of Transportation

(PennDOT), and in some cases, utility companies in developing a signage program.

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

Improve Parking and Traffic Flow: Congestion and inadequate parking may discourage downtown travel. Analyze the amount, type, use, and location of parking spaces as well as traffic routing, and then work with your municipality, PennDOT, and property owners to develop a parking strategy. Remember that surface parking lots should not be located directly along the main street, but behind main street buildings, and that both surface parking lots and buildings should be well managed, structurally maintained, clean, and well landscaped. You may also want to consider on-street parking alternatives, such as parallel parking along narrow streets or drive-in parking along wide streets.

In addition to location and availability of parking

spaces, safe and efficient traffic flow of both vehicles and pedestrians must be encouraged. Techniques include:

- Voluntary reservation of the most convenient parking spaces for business patrons.
- Further signage that identifies and directs motorists to all the parking facilities located within the town.
- Pedestrian-friendly streets that offer walkways and crosswalks

Improving Local Business Practices

As retail markets evolve, small business owners often face the problem of adapting. Confined to relatively small spaces and lacking access to large

Consider decorating streetlights or electric poles with banners or flags that represent the season or history of the community.



Photo courtesy of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center.

sums of capital, local businesses are often unable to compete with large retailers with respect to variety or “one-stop” convenience. Still, many small retailers thrive in the shadow of retail giants.

Ken Stone, a professor at Iowa State University and an expert in rural retail markets, has identified four areas in which merchants can focus to improve their businesses. The downtown group may help merchants by encouraging them to attend a training session in improved business practices or by developing a handout describing some of Professor Stone’s ideas, which are highlighted below.

1) *Develop Superior Service:* Many small retailers find superior service is an important competitive advantage. Larger stores often do not have the flexibility to offer extra service. Small retailers should emphasize expert advice; offer delivery on large items and on-site repairs of certain items; develop special order capabilities and a customer friendly return policy; and identify services that may be offered for an additional fee, such as maintenance contracts.

2) *Better Manage Inventory:* Downtown retailers should carefully select the items they sell by buying smarter and working closely with suppliers. Retailers should avoid handling the exact same merchandise as a mass discounter and should offer complementary merchandise instead. They should also look for gaps in the local market or find a special niche that they can fill (for more information on niches see below).

3) *Improve Marketing:* Marketing practices can always be improved. Retailers might want to consider updating their operating hours to better accommodate shoppers; sharpening pricing practices by incorporating different markups in a variable pricing strategy or by keeping prices low on frequently purchased items; and stressing the quality of products, service and competitive advantage available.

4) *Improve Customer Relations:* Most of us have refused to return to a store because of the way we were treated as customers. Retailers should consider greeting customers when they enter the store. Studies suggest that customers are offended if they are forced to find a store employee for help. Other ideas are to get to know the names of frequent customers and send them thank you notes periodically; have employees wear nametags; schedule a customer appreciation day; and solicit complaints since feedback from customers will help to uncover potential problems.

Developing Niches

Downtown retailers have found a way to successfully compete with retail giants by establishing a distinct retail niche. A niche is a specialization that allows a business to gain prominence in certain retail categories. Such businesses offer highly specialized products or services and commit themselves to exceptional customer service and quality.

A goal of many downtown organizations is to establish a competitive advantage in a particular segment of the retail market. In many places, a unique market may already exist, and downtown stakeholders can work together to recognize and build upon this pre-existing niche.

In other places, potential niches can be determined via marketing analysis research. The downtown group should work with businesses to define specific niches appropriate for the community and assess their viability. There may be a potential to work within the current marketing framework or it may be necessary to create a new niche.

Identifying Existing Niches: For many communities, niches already exist. In these instances, the challenge is to improve organization and visibility. The first step is to collect data pertaining to the

downtown strengths and the economic activity that draws people to those businesses. Review any previous market studies and then carry out your own survey research as needed. Survey shoppers to find out who is shopping downtown and why. A survey of residents living in the trade area can look more broadly at the attitudes and preferences of the local population with respect to downtown.

The second step is to organize this information into a comprehensive promotional and marketing campaign.

Identifying Potential Niches: Though riskier than enhancing existing niches, it is also possible to create a new niche for your downtown. New niches can be successful, but their development demands broader participation and investment by all community members. When exploring this option, keep in mind that needs and risks may be reduced if an existing niche is used to develop another. In this regard, developing a new niche means capitalizing on customers that are already drawn downtown. For instance, if downtown activity is based on the local restaurant scene, an entertainment niche may be pursued since it may appeal to a similar customer base. Other ideas to help define potential niches are to:

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

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

Other Types of Niche Markets: In addition to niches based on consumer type, the downtown can develop niches focusing on various goods and services, creating a specialty business character downtown. Successful business clusters in other towns include those based on antiques, fudge, women's apparel, home furnishings, and baby and maternity shops.

Historic Preservation

Pennsylvania communities have a rich assortment of properties with architectural, historical, archeological and cultural significance. Preserving buildings, bridges, and other structures is often a central component of downtown revitalization programs. Historic preservation may help to stabilize neighborhoods and create viable business districts. Historic downtowns also provide a diversity of space and rent levels not found elsewhere in the community.

Before beginning any historic preservation effort, it is best to develop a plan. This plan should include an inventory of historic resources in the community and identify what steps will be taken to designate specific buildings and other structures. The plan can also outline a strategy to establish an historic district and the legal format this district will incorporate.

The downtown committee may also help to create an historic resource commission, which is established by local ordinance and whose members

are usually appointed by the municipal government to oversee implementation of the local preservation ordinances. The commission's primary purposes are to survey and designate local historic districts and landmarks, to restrict their demolition and to ensure their character is protected through design review.

The downtown committee may also consider creating a downtown historic district. A community may only have one property of historic significance or it may have several historic properties that together may constitute an historic district. The presence of these properties helps foster a special sense of place and identify. The most common way to establish an historic designation is to list building(s)

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places was established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The National Register includes properties of national, state, and local interest. To be listed on the register, a property should be at least 50 years old, should not have been significantly altered and must meet at least one of five criteria:

- Has association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history.
- Has association with the lives of persons significant in the past.
- Has architectural significance, including distinctive characteristics or methods of construction.
- Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- Yields, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

with the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places. This is the official list of the nation's cultural resources that are worthy of preservation (See box on page 13).

Once a building is listed on the register, there are substantial tax incentives available for rehabilitation. (Of course, there are some restrictions.) Two federal tax incentive programs currently apply to preservation activities in Pennsylvania: the rehabilitation investment tax credit and the charitable contribution deduction. Individuals interested in the tax credits or the availability of grants should contact the State's Bureau for Historic Preservation before beginning rehabilitation plans.

More information on creating an historic preservation commission or creating an historic district is available from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. (See Appendix 2 for contact information.)

Local Business Development

Downtown revitalization requires a commitment to retaining existing businesses and attracting new ones.

To retain and expand existing businesses, the downtown committee and other local leaders may consider the following ideas

- Convene a forum where businesses can discuss actions to be taken.
- Survey existing retailers to find out their complaints and get their thoughts on the types of retailers to be located downtown.
- Contact the local Small Business Development Center and develop a joint program to interview local businesses to help identify and resolve business-specific problems.
- Secure regional revolving loans as a revenue source for upgrading existing facilities.
- Develop an internship program between the local university and local businesses. This

provides students with hands-on training and experience in a variety of fields, while providing businesses with low-cost employment.

- Host a discussion on the resources available to micro-businesses and provide possible networking opportunities.

To recruit new businesses, the downtown committee may partner with an existing organization that is already doing business recruitment. Typically, these organizations include the county economic development authority, chamber of commerce, and local development district. If you are unsure which organization you should partner with, contact your local state legislator or county commissioner for guidance. Below are some issues on recruitment to keep in mind:

- Not all businesses are suitable to the downtown.
- Think small. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2000, over half of the business establishments in Pennsylvania had fewer than five employees.
- A business is not a charity. Remember, profit is the bottom line for all businesses. The downtown group will need to show businesses that the downtown location is a good business move.
- Downtown business-to-business directories may help to recruit and retain businesses. Several downtowns have created these by working with their local telephone company. The directory is designed for CEOs, office managers, and purchasing agents to help them become familiar with other downtown businesses and use the services available. The local utility company often underwrites costs.
- Build a network of referrals. Successful recruitment programs generate leads from its "network of referrals." When volunteers make retention visits, they should ask if the business

knows of anyone who might be interested in locating downtown. Volunteers follow up with a face-to-face meeting.

- Adaptive re-use: As the prime location of older or historic buildings in their regions, many downtowns are eager to capitalize on their ambiance by adaptively re-using the space within.

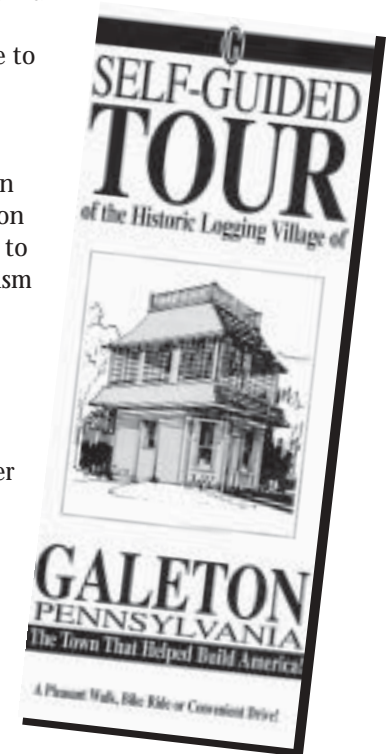
Tapping into Tourism

In Pennsylvania, tourism is big business. In 2000, travelers to the state spent an estimated \$20 billion. For small towns, tourism can be an additional source of revenue. While tourism dollars alone may not be sufficient to maintain a business, they can provide enough additional revenue to allow a business to remain profitable.

Contact your county or regional tourism promotion agency for more information and an analysis on visitors to the region. The local tourism office may also offer assistance in promoting the downtown.

To take advantage of tourism dollars, the downtown group should consider the following:

Know Your Visitors: Get to know who your visitors are and where they come from so that businesses can expand their products and services to meet visitors' unique needs. Conduct a brief survey,



distributed at restaurants, motels or attractions, if you need to get a better idea of who the 'typical' tourist is.

Understand What Activities Tourists Are Seeking: Get an understanding of the activities that tourists are interested in so that businesses can work together to develop appropriately targeted promotional activities. For example, some tourists may be focused on outdoor adventures, while others are focused on the heritage or natural surroundings of the area.

Provide Products that Appeal to Visitors: Retailers who have been successful in targeting tourists manage their inventories and are mindful of visitor needs and expectations.

Strengthen the Local Shopping Experience: In small towns, a unique shopping experience has helped businesses successfully capture tourist dollars. These businesses provide shoppers with memories that help make their store an attraction rather than just a place to buy goods. By talking to visitors, making shopping easy for visitors, and even providing samples of a product, businesses can provide a special experience that tourists will appreciate and remember.

Improve Local Hospitality: Retailers that stress hospitality have had great success at capturing tourism dollars. Some techniques retailers might want to consider include providing visitor information; keeping regular hours; offering free gift-wrapping; and developing and following a mission statement that recognizes hospitality.

Promoting the Downtown

Successful downtowns present a unified image to keep investors, consumers and visitors coming. This image is based on the quality and value of local goods, a unique physical environment, and the community's present and historical culture. This

mix of ingredients is what makes no two places exactly alike. Promotional image building shows the downtown in a positive manner. Downtown organizers should create events and activities that reveal many different views and aspects of the community. Efforts should focus on developing community pride and heightening awareness of what is distinctive about the community and its downtown. The key is to create a healthy mix of retail promotions, special events and festivals, and public relations. Following are some ideas.

Create a Heritage Day or Festival: Heritage days allow residents to celebrate and share the community's character. Heritage celebrations should have flexible content and structure.

Complementary Activities: Complementary activities help a community discover its unique history and character, while using that distinctiveness to breed economic and social liveliness in the downtown. Some ideas: produce a community play; display community photographs or local artists' work; conduct a storytelling session that focuses on the history, colorful characters, or major events of the downtown.

Community Brochure: Produce a brochure that highlights some of the distinctive features of the community to help attract new businesses and tourists. The brochure should be simple, displaying some photographs, providing a map with points of interest, and even offering historical stories.

Ideas for promoting downtown are only limited by imagination. The key is to add your own touch depending on the character of the local downtown and surrounding community. For more ideas, see the box at right.

More Ideas to Promote Your Downtown

Ideas for promoting your downtown are only limited by imagination – here are a few that other communities have tried:

- Establish a collaborative downtown marketing plan. Keep national trends in mind while focusing on steady progress and small, yet visible results. A consultant or even a local college marketing class can help develop a plan.
- Issue press releases and public service announcements, as appropriate, about achievements and events. Write and submit news stories to local newspapers and television stations about the building of downtown, its progress, and accompanying events.
- Develop and advertise special events to add more activity to the downtown, such as a farmers' market. Special events should entail a few, high quality, signature events that grow in attendance each year.
- Develop a downtown web site in conjunction with the chamber of commerce, the merchants' association, or other local and regional groups.
- Ask each downtown business owner to accept personal responsibility for marketing his/her own enterprises, using cooperative ads, direct ads, and any other means possible.
- Develop a distinct identity for the downtown by developing a logo for printed materials, posters, and banners advertising downtown events. Find inspiration by visiting other downtowns.
- Let the community know that something is happening downtown. Items such as t-shirts, buttons, posters, and brochures can be used to promote the revitalization process.

Chapter 5: CASE STUDIES

While this manual offers a number of approaches for downtown revitalization, there is no single method that will work for every downtown. Lessons learned in communities that have already initiated downtown programs might help with your program. Following are three case studies of small town revitalization programs in Pennsylvania.

Newport Borough, Perry County: Leveraging Success

In 1990, in Newport Borough, Perry County, a handful of residents established Newport Revitalization, Inc. (NRI) to combat the decline of downtown. Since then, NRI has gained wide support and in 2001 included about 400 members. The group has obtained both non-profit and 501(C)(3) status, which has enabled it to obtain outside financial resources. The group's activities are guided by a strategic plan, which was developed in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. The planning process contained several elements that are described in this manual, including: a consumer survey and market analysis, a business owner survey and analysis, and a preliminary historic sites survey. The information was used to guide the implementation plan, which offered guidance on marketing, physical rehabilitation, business development and the organization of the effort. A notable achievement has been the façade improvements to many downtown buildings, many of which were supported by a \$25,000 grant from a local utility company and a matching grant from local businesses. A local bank also provided low interest loans to businesses enrolled in the façade program.

Other efforts of NRI include an annual community clean-up day (with local school participation); flower planting, which helps build community ownership of the revitalization process; and a yearly Christmas House Tour of the interesting and historic homes of Newport.

After enlisting the help of a consultant to design a streetscape, NRI also helped the borough secure nearly \$800,000 in TEA-21 (Transportation Enhancement Act-21) funding from the state Department of Transportation's (PennDOT) Sustainable Streets Program. The money was earmarked to help reconstruct the main street by adding new crosswalks, lighting, and landscaping.

For more information, contact: Newport Revitalization, Inc., PO Box 13, Newport, PA 17074, or www.tricounty.net/nri/default.htm.

Laceyville Borough, Wyoming County: Persistence and Progress

Laceyville Borough, located between Route 6 and the Susquehanna River in northwestern Wyoming County, is home to approximately 450 residents. In 1997, the Laceyville Revitalization Association (LRA) set out to improve the appearance of the downtown. While progress has been slow, the group has attracted several new businesses to the downtown with the help of the local bank. The bank bought the upper block of the business district, which at the time consisted of three vacant storefronts, and conducted extensive renovations. To attract tenants, the bank offered potential clients low rent to help reduce their costs of doing business.

LRA also encouraged the borough to seek TEA-21 money for infrastructure improvements. Based on the borough's comprehensive plan (developed from a grant-financed consulting report), PennDOT awarded \$91,000 for curbing, sidewalks, trees, light posts and benches.



A local business association has been reactivated and hosts events designed to “foster community togetherness,” including an annual community day. The association also developed a local business brochure, which provides a directory of local businesses, schools, churches and other organizations.

For more information, contact: Laceyville Revitalization Association, 24 E. Main St., Laceyville, PA 18623, or www.laceyville.com.

Belleville, Mifflin County: Enabling Change

Downtown revitalization is just a piece of the broader efforts of the group, Village Pride (VP), which was organized to revitalize Belleville, a village in Union Township, Mifflin County.

VP sees itself as an enabling organization and has served as a catalyst for broader economic development efforts. Project Impact, a cornerstone of the VPs program, has set out to mitigate the periodic flooding of Kish Creek that affects downtown. VP helped to obtain a \$300,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which has enabled the community to increase the creek’s capacity to carry flood waters; help property owners better prepare for and deal with floods; and continue with efforts to restore the creek as the focal point of the community. By removing the risk of flooding, VP’s hopes are for downtown Belleville to become a more attractive location and for existing buildings to become more commercially viable candidates for adaptive reuse.

With the help of Penn State’s Cooperative Extension Service, VP also created the Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program, which encourages local businesses to remain in place and grow. By surveying the business community, the group identified a number of important issues facing local businesses and, in turn, local governing bodies

are now using the information to make businesses more competitive by removing some of the obstacles they face.

VP also sponsors an Annual Clean-Up Day; secured a \$2,100 grant from the Pennsylvania Urban and Forestry Council, which was matched locally by more than \$3,000 in donations, to

purchase and plant trees; built a new walking path; installed welcome signs in the village; and formed a community wide library committee to oversee the efforts of the Mifflin County library to move into larger quarters.

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

Lessons Learned

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

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

Enlist the community. Hold several well-publicized meetings early on in the process to generate community interest and secure additional volunteer support.

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

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

Get local government support. Only local governments can apply for many of the appropriate grants. Recruit sympathetic supervisors and council members to serve on the board. Understand that local governments operate with very tight budgets. When pitching your ideas, make sure officials know exactly the role you want them to play and resources you hope they will provide.

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

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

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

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

Appendix 1: Recommended Reading List

Books and Reports

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): Tool for Economic Development

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

Developing Downtown Design Guidelines

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

The Pennsylvania Non-Profit Handbook

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

Downtown Development Handbook

An updated version, this book reflects the development environment of the 1990s. The strategies required to rebuild downtowns are presented along with examples of cities that have succeeded. Written by Susanna McBee, et al. and available through the National Main Street Center at www.mainst.org.

Downtown Management: An Economic Development Strategy

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

Economic Development on Main Street

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

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

A how-to guidebook for the citizens and practitioners of small communities. Topics covered include: rethinking economic development; getting started on community visioning and strategic planning; retaining and expanding existing businesses; recruiting business and industry; attracting tourists

and retirees; managing growth, innovative partnerships for economic development (research report), and resource organizations for economic development (appendix). Available through the National Center for Small Communities at www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm.

Market Analysis on Main Street

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

Revitalizing Downtown

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

Finding the Funds You Need: A Guide for Grant Seekers

Outlines the basic steps of the grant writing process. It includes information on how to identify potential funding sources, as well as how to structure and write proposals. Penn State Cooperative Extension, College of Agricultural Sciences, Penn State University. More information is available at www.aers.psu.edu/cedev/grantwriting.

Appendix 1 (continued)

Funding Downtown Promotions

A step-by-step guide to raising the money needed for downtown marketing and promotions. Available through the Downtown Research and Development Center at www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html.

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

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

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

This book provides an overview of ways to finance downtown management development organizations, programs and capital projects. Peter Mosbacher and Carol Patrylick, 1991. Available through the International Downtown Association at www.ida-downtown.org.

Parking Handbook for Smaller Communities

Examines the issues affecting parking in communities with population between 5,000 and 50,000. Covers parking supply, management, maintenance and development in the context of preserving the built environment of the traditional commercial

core. The National Trust for Historic Preservation. Washington, DC: National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1992.

PA Blueprints: Best Land Use Principles & Results Interactively Shown

The CD-ROM contains a series of exemplary regulatory approaches supplemented by dynamic illustrations and pictures of actual examples of how a community can retain characteristics and direct growth through comprehensive planning and appropriate zoning regulations. Published by the Pennsylvania State University's Department of Landscape Architecture at www.larch.psu.edu/

Niche Strategies for Downtown Revitalization

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

Newsletters/Journals

Downtown Idea Exchange

This twice-monthly publication brings you detailed case studies, practical news reports, how-to information and hundreds of real-world examples of how

downtowns are growing and prospering. It also includes ideas, insights and solid information that may be converted into tangible improvements for your downtown. Available through the Downtown Research and Development Center at www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html.

Downtown News Briefs, International Downtown Association (IDA) Fax News and Legislative Updates

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

Downtown Promotion Reporter

Downtown Promotion Reporter is the monthly, illustrated promotion service from the Downtown Research and Development Center. It offers information on how to plan and carry out an entire promotional program for your downtown by providing details on some of the best events, sales, public relations, image building and other programs taking place around the country. The Downtown Promotion Reporter explains how these programs are organized, funded and staffed. It also includes samples of successful ads, posters, flyers, maps, press releases, brochures, banners, logos, and surveys. More information is available at www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html.

Appendix 2: RESOURCES

State Agencies

Certified Local Government Program

Historic District Designation
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bureau of Historic Preservation
2nd Floor, Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North St.
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Phone: (717) 787-0771
www.phmc.state.pa.us

Commercial Reinvestment Programs

Center for Community Development
Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
4th Floor, Commonwealth Keystone Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Phone: (717) 720-7411
www.inventpa.com

New Communities/Main Street Program

Center for Community Development
Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
4th Floor, Commonwealth Keystone Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Phone: (717) 720-7411
www.inventpa.com

Pennsylvania Community Development Bank

Center for Community Development
Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
4th Floor, Commonwealth Keystone Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Phone: (717) 720-7468
www.inventpa.com

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

300 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120
(717) 787-3362
fax: (717) 783-9924
www.phmc.state.pa.us

Transportation Enhancement Program

Center for Program Development & Management
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 3365
400 North St., 6th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0064
www.dot.state.pa.us

Federal Agencies

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Wanamaker Building
100 Penn Square East
Philadelphia PA 19107
Phone: (215) 656-0600
www.hud.gov

U.S. Small Business Administration

Regional Office
475 Allendale Road, Suite 201
King of Prussia, PA 19406
Phone: (215) 962-3700
www.sbaonline.sba.gov

Statewide Organizations

Hamer Center for Community Design Assistance

Pennsylvania State University
227 East Calder Way
University Park, PA 16801
Phone: (814) 865-5300
Email: hamercenter@psu.edu
www.sala.psu.edu/hamercenter

Pennsylvania Downtown Center

130 Locust St., Suite 101
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2020
Phone: (717) 233-4675
www.padowntown.org

Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations

400 North Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-0053
Phone: (717) 787-3253
www.pamuseums.org

Penn State Extension Urban Forestry Program

School of Forest Resources
The Pennsylvania State University
108 Ferguson St.
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: (814) 863-7941
http://4trees.cas.psu.edu/index.html

Pennsylvania State University

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

Appendix 2 (continued)

Preservation Pennsylvania

257 North St.
Harrisburg, PA 17107
Phone: (717) 234-2310
www.preservationpa.org

National Organizations

Downtown Research & Development Center

215 Park Ave. South, Suite 1301
New York, NY 10003
Phone: (212) 228-0246
www.alexcommgrp.com/drdc/drdchome.html

International Downtown Association

915 15th St., NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 783-4693
www.ida-downtown.org

National Center for Small Communities

444 N. Capitol Street, NW, Suite 208
Washington, DC 20001-1202
Phone: (202) 624-3550
www.natat.org/ncsc/default.htm

National Main Street Center

1785 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 673-4219
www.mainst.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation

1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone: (800) 315-6847
www.nthp.org

Appendix 3: Funding Sources

When looking for funds to finance downtown projects, remember three things:

1) Start Small: Low cost projects help build support and demonstrate to others that downtown projects can be successfully completed.

2) Develop Long-Term Goals: It will likely take many years to realize all of the goals of your downtown revitalization efforts. Have long-term goals in seeking funds. Don't try to obtain all the money you need for all the projects before you start.

3) Seek Out Multiple Funding Sources: It is extremely unlikely that you will obtain all of the downtown improvement funding from one source. The funds will likely come from a mixture of government and private funds as well as grants and loans. This mixture is useful when presenting projects to potential funders. It shows that others are supporting your project.

Government Funding Sources

Pennsylvania Main Street Program

Housing and Community Development Unit
Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
Office of Community Development and Housing
502 Forum Building
Harrisburg PA 17120
Phone: (717) 787-5327
Fax: (717) 234-4560
www.dced.state.pa.us

This program provides grants to municipalities and redevelopment authorities to foster economic growth, promote and preserve the commonwealth's existing community centers, help develop local capacity for creating public/private partnerships and community ownership as a mechanism for revitalization, and improve the quality of life for residents.

The program has two components: the Main Street Manager component partners with local governments to fund "downtown managers" to coordinate downtown revitalization strategies and commerce activities; and Community Reinvestment, which provides funds for bricks-and-sticks activities.

Community Revitalization Program

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)
Strategic Planning and Operations Office
318 Forum Building
Harrisburg PA 17120
Phone: (717) 720-7352
Fax: (717) 234-4560
www.dced.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/DCED/community/economic.htm

This program supports local initiatives that improve the stability of communities and enhance local economic conditions. It targets local governments, municipal and redevelopment authorities and agencies, industrial development authorities and agencies, and nonprofit corporations.

Municipal Governments

Whether the downtown is in a borough, township or city, it can benefit from the involvement of the municipal government, which is often a useful ally in financing revitalization projects. The municipality can assist by funding the project through its own revenue sources (i.e. taxes, fines, fees, etc.) or by acting as an intermediary for funding from county, state or federal agencies. When working with the local government, remember that many do not have full-time staff and must follow specific procedures. To assist in the project, the downtown group will need to be very clear on its project goals and objectives, how projects are going to be completed,

and who is accountable. Also, keep in mind that for large projects, the local government may need to go through a formal bidding process.

Private Sources

Local Banks— Community Reinvestment Act (CRA)

Federal law requires banks to reinvest a certain percentage of their income back into the community they serve. By working closely with your local bankers, you may be able to identify and develop a project that meets the bank's CRA requirements as well as your downtown improvement goals.

Public Utilities

Generally speaking, many public utilities realize that an economically healthy downtown is good for future business. The types of utilities that most frequently become involved in downtown projects are gas, telecommunications, and electric companies. Some utilities have established a grant or loan program to assist in project development. When approaching a utility for assistance, keep in mind that most have a regional view and that one of its top priorities is increased business growth. As much as possible, the downtown project should mirror these priorities.

Foundations

More than 12,000 charitable foundations with assets in excess of \$71 billion are located in Pennsylvania. While many foundations focus on specific issues, such as health care, education, and the environment, others focus on community development projects. To identify these foundations, check your local library for directories and websites that list foundations and their goals. The downtown group should also check with county or state officials to identify foundations that are likely to provide assistance.

Community Groups

Community groups often provide great assistance to downtown development projects. Instead of cash, these groups provide sweat equity by hanging flower planters, cleaning abandoned lots, and helping to restore public buildings like train stations and parks. To work successfully with a community group, explain why the downtown project is important and why it is important for the community as a whole; demonstrate that the downtown group is a responsible group to work with and that if a Saturday morning project is planned, the mulch will show up on time, and the right tools will be available. Thank the community group for the work it does.

Appendix 4: WORKSHEETS

SWOT Worksheet

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

What are the downtown's Strengths?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What are the Opportunities?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How do we protect and enhance our strengths?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How do we capitalize on opportunities?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What are its Weaknesses?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What are the Threats?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How can we overcome local weaknesses?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How can we minimize threats?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Walk Through Inventory Worksheet

This worksheet is designed for you to rate attributes within your downtown. Have as many people as possible walk through the downtown and rate the attributes below on a score of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very poor” and 5 “excellent.” As a practical matter, fill out one worksheet per block and then add the scores for an overall rating. After the inventory is complete, determine the average score for each attribute. This will give you a better understanding of your downtown’s strengths as well as areas that need to be improved.

	Excellent(5 Points)	Good(4 Points)	Adequate(3 Points)	Poor(2 Points)	Very Poor(1 Point)
Streetscape					
Cleanliness (trash & litter)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Placement of utilities (wires/poles)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Landscaping (trees, plantings)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Appropriateness of street lighting	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Street banners/public decoration	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Benches	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Trash cans	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Buildings & Architecture					
Condition of building facades	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Appropriateness of architectural styles	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Appearance of buildings	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Utilization of building upper floors	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Parking					
Availability of parking spaces	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Availability of handicapped parking	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Convenience of parking	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Safety of accessing & exiting parking	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

(Continued on next page.)

Walk Through Inventory Worksheet (Continued)

	Excellent (5 Points)	Good (4 Points)	Adequate (3 Points)	Poor (2 Points)	Very Poor (1 Point)
Signage					
Appropriateness of commercial signs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Appropriateness of public signs (No parking, speed limits, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Quality & condition of signs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Businesses					
Mix of commercial businesses	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hours of operation	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Product selection	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Availability of eating & drinking establishments	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Quality of window displays	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Store front appearance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sidewalks & Traffic					
Condition of sidewalks	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Condition of street crossings	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Condition of street crossing lines	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Condition of street curbs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Volume of traffic	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Public Amenities					
Condition of parks/green spaces	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Condition of memorials/statues	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Post office	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Municipal buildings	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Score _____					

Other Comments/Observations:

Physical Business Inventory Worksheet

This worksheet is designed for you to catalog the number of businesses that are located in the various trade areas of your downtown. This inventory will provide data concerning existing businesses, allowing for a preliminary assessment of the goods and services that the community has or needs. For example, after adding the scores, the inventory may reveal the need for a grocery store in a specific trade area.

	Trade Area A	Trade Area B	Trade Area C
Food - At Home	Bakery _____ Grocery _____ Convenience store _____	Bakery _____ Grocery _____ Convenience store _____	Bakery _____ Grocery _____ Convenience store _____
Food - Away From Home	Restaurant _____ Take-out only _____ Bars/Taverns _____	Restaurant _____ Take-out only _____ Bars/Taverns _____	Restaurant _____ Take-out only _____ Bars/Taverns _____
Personal Care Products & Services	Beauty shop _____ Pharmacy _____	Beauty shop _____ Pharmacy _____	Beauty shop _____ Pharmacy _____
Apparel & Apparel Services	Apparel store _____ Dry cleaning _____ Laundromat _____ Sporting goods _____	Apparel store _____ Dry cleaning _____ Laundromat _____ Sporting goods _____	Apparel store _____ Dry cleaning _____ Laundromat _____ Sporting goods _____
Transportation	Auto repair _____ Auto dealer _____ Gas station _____	Auto repair _____ Auto dealer _____ Gas station _____	Auto repair _____ Auto dealer _____ Gas station _____
Household Furnishings & Equipment	Appliances _____ Furniture store _____ Hardware store _____	Appliances _____ Furniture store _____ Hardware store _____	Appliances _____ Furniture store _____ Hardware store _____
Other	Bank _____ Funeral home _____ Gift shop _____ Music store _____ Variety store _____	Bank _____ Funeral home _____ Gift shop _____ Music store _____ Variety store _____	Bank _____ Funeral home _____ Gift shop _____ Music store _____ Variety store _____

Physical Business/Service Inventory Worksheet

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

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

Purchasing Survey Worksheet

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

Item purchased	On average, how much do you spend on this item?	Where is this item usually acquired?	Why do you acquire this item at this particular place?
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____	_____
11. _____	_____	_____	_____
12. _____	_____	_____	_____

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