

Heritage Ohio's
Revitalization Roadmap



Logan
March 16 -17, 2009

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Overview of Downtown Revitalization Today	5
What Is the Main Street Approach?	7
Should We Use the Main Street Approach?	11
Getting Started	13
STEP 1:	
Organizing People for Downtown Revitalization	14
Identifying Organizations	16
Identifying Individuals	19
Identifying a Steering Committee	20
Identifying Experts and Advisors	20
The Board of Directors...	21
Role & Responsibilities of Committees	22
The Downtown Program (Main Street) Manager	25
STEP 2:	
Downtown Revitalization Needs a Home	27
Creating a New Organization	27
STEP 3:	
Creating A Downtown Strategy & Action Plan	29
STEP 4:	
Show Me the Money	35
50 things you can do	44

Introduction

The goal of this *Roadmap for Revitalization Success* workbook is to assist communities with the initial steps necessary to examine the issues in thinking about business district revitalization. The workbook then is designed to assist a community to prepare a comprehensive strategy that will help them attain their vision of a healthy downtown or neighborhood commercial district and enable them to achieve that vision through an action-oriented program. The objectives of this workbook are:

1. To impress upon those interested in organizing a revitalization effort, the complexity of the task before them;
2. To stress the importance of creating a strong organization dedicated solely to the task of downtown or neighborhood commercial district revitalization;
3. To stress the importance of creating early and strong partnerships to insure the framework for the effort is solid and sustainable;
4. To provide a framework for examining the tasks to be completed in preparing for a revitalization effort and the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to the completion of those tasks.

This workbook is designed to take a community up to the point where they can make a rational and informed decision about how best to proceed with the revitalization process in their community.

For many communities in Ohio, that might mean applying for inclusion in the **Heritage Ohio Main Street Program**. And while this is, in the opinion of the Heritage Ohio, the best conceptual model, it is not the only avenue open to communities. It is important to note however, that this workbook does use the National Main Street Center's "**Four Point or Main Street Approach™**" as the basis for the development of the strategy for a successful revitalization effort.

It is crucial to understand this distinction between the **Main Street Approach™** and the **Main Street Program**. The **Approach** is a conceptual methodology for organizing a revitalization effort. Many communities around the country (more than 1,900 in the spring of 2008), both large (Boston, MA) and small (Shelby, NC.) have used the **Main Street Approach™** to organize their revitalization effort.

The **Heritage Ohio Main Street Program** is a mechanism to assist communities who have chosen to utilize the **Main Street Approach™** in Ohio, in preparing their own community's effort. Occasionally, communities will opt to work on only a

few of the four points. And while such a decision may have short-term benefits, the long-term results have tended to be less effective. Many communities in the 1970's and 1980's undertook streetscape and façade restoration programs but neglected to deal with the issues of promotion, business retention and recruitment and long-term sustainability.

Today many of these programs are seeking ways to deal with ramifications of those failed attempts. On the other hand many communities feel that they have issues that go beyond the organizational framework of the Main Street Approach. "Safe and Clean" issues, or social concerns (homelessness, panhandling, crime, vandalism, etc.), may be viewed as critical issues to be confronted before any revitalization based on the Main Street Approach can be implemented. Many of these communities have opted to create special improvement districts, which have historically tended to emphasize clean and safe as their primary issues. In fact, there is no reason why a community facing these issues cannot include a safe and clean component within its Main Street Approach effort. In cases such as these, it is more an issue of the timing of activities than the feeling that the communities must pick and chose between whether to undertake graffiti removal first or do storefronts first. Heritage Ohio prides itself in providing services that its members find critical to their revitalization efforts while maintaining a level of objectivity necessary to deal with complex revitalization strategies. Initiatives are developed that incorporate the unique social, economic, and political environment of each community and fit within potential resources. Heritage Ohio is leading this movement to ensure that downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts of all shapes and sizes continue to prosper. Heritage Ohio is committed to helping communities through education, training, strategic partnerships, and advocacy efforts. Heritage Ohio is the only statewide organization dedicated to downtown revitalization issues. Heritage Ohio is committed to providing affordable services which assist local groups with strategies and techniques to realize their downtown's full potential – while at the same time serving as the state's primary advocate for downtown initiatives at the regional, state, and federal levels.

Overview of Revitalization Today

In today's competitive market place, revitalization activities require on going professional management. This is the underlying philosophy of most technical assistance organizations and experts in the field. Downtown and neighborhood district improvement activities should be designed to impact all aspects of the downtown or neighborhood district, producing both tangible and intangible results.

Improving economic management, strengthening public participation, and making the district a fun place to visit are as critical to a district's future as recruiting new businesses, rehabilitating buildings, and expanding parking.

Increasingly, communities are adopting vision-based, or holistic approaches to revitalization as opposed to the old method of simply solving a problem, the band-aid approach. As an example many communities with deteriorated or blighted properties in their business districts in the 1960's chose to demolish these buildings under the old-style urban redevelopment project. And while such actions corrected the problem (i.e. eliminated the blighting influence) the resultant vacant lot often sat idle for years, as there was no vision in place to deal with the property after the demolition.

Today, downtowns and business districts are experiencing resurgence. In opposition to the doomsayer's, who only twenty years ago predicated the permanent decline of these areas with the coming of the computer age, downtowns and neighborhood districts as the focal point of the creativity of the New Economy are more important than ever. Communities with strong central and neighborhood business districts are those that serve as the glue of the New Economy.

These districts are focal points of culture, dining, services, and increasingly of residence for the innovators and entrepreneurs of the New Economy.

Whether a big city, like Cleveland or Cincinnati, a medium sized town like Wooster or Piqua, or a small community like Canal Winchester or Wellington, your community has a role to play in the regional economies of the 21st Century. As such, it is not just a matter of physical revitalization, but the ability to understand and adapt to the changing dynamics of the regional economy within which your community exists that are crucial to the success of your effort.

A Historic Perspective on Downtown

Downtowns have a special place in the minds of Americans – we often think fondly of such events as colorful 4th of July parades, shopping trips where we gazed at

wonderful storefront displays or merely strolled amid the hustle and bustle of pedestrian-filled sidewalks.

For many communities, these are more than just memories; they are the reality of today – vibrant downtowns that serve as the social, cultural, and economic centers of their communities. In this 21st century, community leaders and citizens across the state are working diligently to ensure that their downtowns remain viable centers of activity. Motivated by a strong desire to regain the sense of community lost to suburban sprawl, these citizens desire to live in places they are proud to call home.

What Happened to Downtown?

Many downtown and neighborhood business districts are no longer the primary providers of goods and services to their communities. Many of these commercial cores still suffer from a complicated cycle of disinvestments. Businesses have left, rental rates have slipped and many property owners have either reduced or stopped investing in their buildings, giving the district a shabby, uncared-for appearance. This cycle of disinvestments has made it even harder to attract new businesses.

Is There Hope for Downtown?

While many factors have contributed to economic decline, there are also trends and assets that support rejuvenation of our downtowns.

For instance:

1. Many consumers are tired of the homogeneity and impersonality of shopping malls and chain stores. People value personal attention, name recognition, and exemplary service - all potential features of traditional commercial districts.
2. A community's downtown/district represents a substantial share of its economy - jobs, tax base, municipal investment, and businesses.
3. Because consumers are more mobile today than several decades ago, the market area that a downtown or neighborhood district can potentially serve is much greater than it used to be.
4. More and more Americans enjoy visiting historic places - not just for vacation – but also for everyday needs, business and/or leisure activities. Traditional community centers offer unique, historic shopping environments that can satisfy all of these interests. A community's central business district may account for as much as 30 percent of the municipality's jobs and 40 percent of its tax base. But, downtown is more than an economic asset. It is also a community's crossroads, a place in our hearts and minds that evokes strong emotions and helps define our identity.

Four-Point Approach

The “Four Point” or “Main Street” Approach offers a comprehensive, conceptual framework for revitalization that has been successful in more than a nineteen hundred (1,900+) towns and cities throughout the country. The *four points* described below are the keys to the success of the Main Street Approach:

1. ORGANIZATION means getting everyone working toward the same goal. Using the common-sense formula of a volunteer-driven program and an organizational structure of board and committees can ease the tough work of building consensus and cooperation among the groups that have an important stake in the downtown area.
2. PROMOTION means selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects. By marketing the downtown's unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors, an effective promotion strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by the local volunteers.
3. DESIGN means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets - such as historic buildings and traditional downtown layout is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere created through attractive window displays, accessible parking areas, professional signage, well-maintained sidewalks, appropriate streetlights, and inviting landscaping conveys a visual message about what Main Street is and what it has to offer.
4. ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING means finding a new purpose for Main Street's enterprises. By helping existing downtown businesses expand and recruiting new ones to respond to today's market, Main Street programs help convert unused space into productive property and sharpen the competitiveness of business enterprises.

The Eight Principles of the Main Street Approach?

The Main Street approach has eight guiding principles that set it apart from other redevelopment strategies. These principles are as follows:

1. **Comprehensive.** Take off the blinders. No single project such as lavish public improvements, "name-brand" business recruitment, or endless promotional events can do the job. Commercial district revitalization is a complex process requiring a comprehensive strategy.
2. **Incremental.** Baby steps come before walking. Basic, simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help members of the community develop the skills needed to tackle more complex problems and ambitious projects.
3. **Self-Help.** Nobody else will save Main Street. 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 Main Street as the heart of their community.
4. **Partnerships.** Stop pointing fingers. Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the commercial district. Partnership means that all stakeholders are contributing time, money, and expertise - often individually, but sometimes sitting around the same table - Main Street's table.
5. **Assets.** History is on our side. To give people a sense of belonging and pride, Main Street must capitalize on the unique assets it already has - distinctive buildings, neighborly shop owners, and a human scale that can't be copied out on the strip.
6. **Quality.** Built-to-last. Shoestring budgets and "cut-and-paste" efforts won't do the job. A high standard of quality must be set for every aspect of the commercial district: from window displays to marketing brochures, from public improvements to storefront renovation.
7. **Change.** Skeptics turn into believers. Almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around...at first. 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 vitality.
8. **Action-Oriented.** Make a difference **TODAY**. Most communities have enough plans collecting dust on shelves to last them through the next century. Main Street's focus is to simultaneously plan for the future while creating visible change and activity **NOW!**

Why Downtowns Are Important!

Main Street managers and other downtown advocates are commonly asked by city governments and businesses, "Why should we invest in the central business district?" In response, here are a few reasons why your downtown or neighborhood commercial district is an important and worthwhile investment in the economic health and quality of life in your community.

1. **Main Street is the most important symbol of a community's economic health, local quality of life, sense of pride, and preservation of community history.** These are all critical factors in attempting to influence industrial, commercial and professional business decision-makers to invest in your community.
2. **A vital Main Street retains and creates jobs, which also means a stronger tax base.** Long-term revitalization promotes the growth of profitable businesses that hire local residents. These businesses not only enhance the local tax base but they consume public services at a rate less than that of local residents. Thus, they have a positive impact on the local tax structure.
3. **Main Street is a good incubator for new small businesses - the building blocks of a healthy economy.** Strip centers and malls are often too expensive for new entrepreneurs.
4. **A vital Main Street area battles sprawl by concentrating retail in one area and using community resources wisely.** Tax dollars have already been spent on the existing infrastructure of downtown; the continued use, and reuse, of land in downtown protects precious greenfields and open space.
5. **A healthy Main Street core protects property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods.** Decay and blight are like a disease. Once blight begins in one area of a town, the decay can, and often does spread to adjacent areas.
6. **The traditional commercial district is an ideal location for independent businesses, which:**
 - a. Keep profits in town. Chain businesses send profits out of town.
 - b. Support local, family-owned businesses.
 - c. Support local community projects, such as ball teams and schools.
 - d. Provide an extremely stable economic foundation, as opposed to a few large businesses and chains with no ties to, or commitment to stay in, the community

7. **A revitalized Main Street increases the community's options for goods and services:** whether for basic staples like clothing, food and professional services or housing and entertainment.
8. **Main Street provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate.** Parades, special events and celebrations held there reinforce a sense of community. Private developments like malls can and do restrict free speech and access.
9. **Many Main Street districts become tourist attractions by virtue of the character of buildings, location, selection of unique businesses, and events held there.**

While the Main Street Approach is generally considered to be the best model for a business district revitalization effort, not every downtown is ready to undertake the effort. For many communities, the hardest question many will be the first question:

Should our community follow Main Street's Four Point Approach?

Using the *Main Street Approach* may NOT be for your community if...

- You seek a quick fix for a problem;
- A single individual is driving the process;
- A single organization is driving the process;
- A single issue is driving the process;
- Downtown stakeholders are not willing to commit time, talent and money to the process;
- Everyone is sure they know what the problem is and no one is open to new ideas;
- There is no support from the municipality for downtown revitalization.

If your community is not yet ready to utilize the Main Street Approach, don't go away mad. There are things you can do to build capacity and prepare for the future.

- Urge community leaders to attend Heritage Ohio's Annual Conference and other statewide trainings, to learn more about how the Main Street Approach works.
- Tackle specific projects to create energy, experience and a taste of success.
- Develop personal connections with other local organizations and leaders to build a consensus on the use of the Main Street Approach in your downtown or neighborhood district.

What If We Already Have A Plan to Revitalize Downtown?

An existing plan can be an excellent starting point. If you have one, dust it off and get folks to read it again. Review the items below. If the plan does not fit in one or more of the categories below then jump ahead to "Getting Started" on page 11. Consider initiating a new planning process, or undertaking a major revision to your existing plan when:

- You know the plan exists but no one can find a copy.
- The plan is not being used. People are aware of the plan, but they do not refer to it or use it in their activities. It truly is "on the shelf."
- The plan was not developed with an action-strategy orientation, meaning it does not list priorities, responsibilities, time lines, and estimated costs.
- The plan is not appropriate. It has been 3 to 5 years since the community went through the process, the environment has changed and the plan does not allow for new realities.
- The people never supported the plan. It was a top-down plan pulled together by technical staff or consultants and a few community leaders, but never really garnered the support of the business district stakeholders.
- A true sense of urgency (an incentive) exists, either because there are serious threats to the district or you've had rousing success that now creates its own pressures.
- The plan is not considered adequate in the eyes of a significant number of stakeholders, your partners or your funding sources.

What If We Don't Have A Downtown Revitalization Plan?

Then it's a good thing you're reading this workbook! But before you jump into planning, go back to "Should We Do Main Street?" and honestly consider whether your community is ready.

Still interested?

Turn the page and get started ...

Getting Started

Downtown revitalization efforts begin with a couple of people, **The Organizers**, who believe that a comprehensive approach, (i.e the Four Point Approach) is the first step toward a healthy downtown. The **Organizers'** first job is to produce a list of good reasons to start a downtown revitalization effort to go forward at this time and then to share these reasons with others. If you are reading this book, you are probably one of, or maybe the only, **Organizer**. Reach out to business associates, residents, property and business owners. Talk to the more visible leaders, but also talk to people who are used to working quietly behind the scenes. Ask them the following questions:

- Do you think our downtown/district could benefit from a comprehensive revitalization effort? (Note their issues.)
- Would you be willing to serve on a steering committee to guide the revitalization process? (Note their skills and interests.)
- Ask those folks to talk to others. Float the idea of a revitalization effort in as many circles as you can in your downtown or district, and let word-of-mouth do its work. Not everyone will rally around the idea. Some will come around slowly, and some never will. LISTEN to what people tell you, and note what is said.

After floating the idea and listening to reactions, the **organizers** must decide if the downtown is ready. You have a "green light" to go if ...

- The organizers have read this workbook and understand the Main Street Approach.
- Three or more organizers are willing to start the Steering Committee.
- A "critical mass" of stakeholders agrees that a revitalization plan is needed.
- More than one organization has agreed that a plan is needed.
- Your downtown has a track record of successfully completing projects.

If your light is green, then move on to Step 1!

Step 1: Organizing People For Downtown Revitalization

Everyone in your community has a stake in downtown's future. Residents, businesses, property owners, government officials and non-profit organizations are part of your downtown universe. Some you may like. Some you may not. However, in order to be successful the local downtown revitalization program must involve as many interested groups and individuals as possible from throughout the community.

Downtown revitalization requires the operation and commitment of a broad-based coalition of public and private groups, including:

- businesses
- civic groups
- local government
- financial institutions
- consumers / customers / visitors
- and many others.

It also involves mobilizing a large number of volunteers to implement activities. Different groups have different interests in the downtown. And, while each may have a particular focus, all groups must ultimately share the **common goal** of revitalizing the commercial business district. By involving a broad range of constituents in the process, the downtown program can help each group realize that this **common goal** exists and that cooperation is essential for a successful revitalization effort.

Furthermore, by identifying each organization's greatest strengths, the revitalization program can help focus that group's energy in the area(s) where it will be most effective and make the greatest contribution.

From this universe of people you will need to identify three "categories" of people to help organize the downtown revitalization effort.

- **Key Stakeholders** - Representatives of segments in the community at large who will be called upon for opinions about current conditions, suggestions for what the future of downtown should be, and with connections back to the broader universe of your community.

- **Steering Committee** - A group of 9 to 13 key stakeholders, who are willing to facilitate the initial stages of the revitalization effort.
- **Experts** – People who may be the staff of community organizations, representatives from larger institutions, government agency personnel, consultants or representatives from regional or national organizations, who can assist you with analyses and help you devise solutions.

Now it's time to move from this very informal overview to a more methodical approach.

Identifying Organizations

To begin the search for stakeholders, compile a comprehensive list of groups working in your downtown. Groups typically represented and involved in successful local downtown revitalization efforts include:

- **Merchants.** Retail activity is an important part of the downtown's economic base; consequently, merchants have a vested interest in the success of the downtown revitalization initiative. Merchants are often most interested in - and the most valuable contributors to - downtown promotional activities, but their involvement in the other aspects of the revitalization effort can also be extremely beneficial.
- **Property owners.** Since they literally own the parcels that comprise the downtown, property owners have a direct interest in the downtown effort's success and often become active participants in the revitalization process. Though absentee owners may show little or no interest, *they should be kept informed about revitalization activities.* As the downtown revitalization organization develops greater competency in directing downtown's economic growth, the property owners should continue to be invited to take part in its projects.
- **Chamber of Commerce.** The chamber of commerce is an important player in most downtown revitalization programs because of its interest in the community's commercial development. The chamber can help the downtown revitalization organization by providing liaison with local and regional economic development agencies, helping local businesses to expand, recruiting new businesses and sharing information resources. Remember, though, that the chamber may also be concerned with community-wide, or - increasingly - regional-development. Focusing too much on the downtown may contradict its direct mission.
- **Financial institutions.** Local financial institutions benefit from a revitalized downtown in many ways, from making new business loans to being able to attract new industry to the community. Banks and savings and loans can support the revitalization program by helping to package loans, taking part in the buy down of interest rates and materially supporting other financial incentive programs, providing leadership for the revitalization organization and seeking innovative ways to stimulate downtown economic development. Many financial institutions also find that participating in the local downtown revitalization effort helps satisfy their directives under the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA).

Identifying Key Stakeholders and Revitalization Partners

- **Civic clubs.** By taking part in the revitalization program, civic clubs can help improve the community's quality of life and make the downtown a more pleasant and vibrant place for community activities.
- **Historic societies and historic preservation organizations.** These groups can contribute expertise in local history, preservation technology and related fields to the downtown revitalization program.
- **Consumers.** In many ways, consumers stand to benefit the most from a revitalized downtown that offers goods and services, which meet their needs. Many local consumers who may not belong to an existing community organization will still be interested in participating in the revitalization effort and in helping make the downtown - and the community – a livelier place to be.
- **City and county government.** Without the support and involvement of local government, it is doubtful that a downtown revitalization program will achieve long-lasting success. Local government can help provide financial and informational resources, technical skills and leadership to the revitalization effort. Because local government plays a major role in directing the community's economic growth, it must be an active participant in restructuring the downtown's economic base and developing innovative solutions to downtown issues.
- **Regional planning commissions and councils of government.** These groups can provide the local revitalization program with market data and other technical information about the downtown's market area. They can also help the program identify resources and establish relationships with regional, state and national economic development agencies.
- **Schools.** Schools can contribute to successful downtown revitalization in several ways. First, by involving young people in the revitalization process, the downtown or Main Street organization can reach a segment of the community that may not be familiar with the central business district. Second, they can help students become positive contributors to the community's quality of life. Finally, by giving students opportunities to use their academic skills in a "real world" environment, they can help the downtown revitalization effort implement programs and activities.
- **Media.** Downtown revitalization means creating new jobs, generating new investments and bringing more money into the community - all newsworthy activities. Thus, the media are usually major supporters of a downtown

revitalization effort. In addition to publicizing the local program's successes, media can provide information about local market characteristics to help the revitalization effort find better ways to meet consumer needs.

For each of these groups, identify one or more organization(s) and list at least **two** key people that are readily identifiable as representatives from that organization. They might be staff, a board member, a longtime volunteer or a client.

Identifying Individuals

Sometimes leaders are duly elected or appointed to serve an organization. Sometimes people lead without a title after their name, and without an organizational affiliation. They may not even think of themselves as leaders, but nevertheless, have influence within their neighborhood.

- Have the **organizers** brainstorm a list of 10 people who are **not** prominent members of one or more of the organizations identified in Step 1. A but who are active and widely known in your community. On a sheet of paper list them in column 1. Ask each of these individuals, so identified, to name two persons, in the same manner, who are not obvious choices, but who they consider community leaders and who should be included in planning. List them in column 2.
- Contact the people in column 2 and ask them the same question. List their answers in column 3.
- Take the three names that appear most often in columns 2 and 3 and recruit them as "Key Stakeholders."
- At a meeting of Key Stakeholders, give each person an index card. Ask each person to write down one key person or organization in the community that is not represented at the meeting. Collect the cards and recruit the three persons mentioned most often.

Here is a Method for Identifying Key, Non-Organizational Stakeholders

Identify A Steering Committee That Could Potentially Serve As Potential Board of Directors

The members of the Steering Committee are catalysts, explorers, and consensus builders. The committee's overall job is to guide the development of a broad, implemental plan that will truly serve the downtown. The Steering Committee will be called upon to involve community residents, business people and other downtown stakeholders in a process to discover issues of importance, to reveal opportunities for positive change, and to find ways to make change happen. Steering Committee members should be convinced of the wisdom of the Main Street Approach to downtown revitalization and be willing to commit their time and talents to make this happen.

Consider choosing people who are good listeners with the ability to see multiple perspectives. While it may be important in the planning stage to involve people who are focused on single issues, these may not be best suited for the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee should be composed of roughly nine to thirteen people. You may have more, or less, according to your downtown's individual size and needs. The list of Key Stakeholders from the previous exercises will provide a good pool of candidates for the Steering Committee.

Identifying Experts for Possible Board of Advisors

Communities that excel at downtown revitalization are communities that have good relationships with people and organizations outside of their downtown, as well as within. Many of these "outside" people or organizations will have skills and abilities that may qualify them as experts on the subject of downtown revitalization.

Use these outside experts to your full advantage. As you get deeper into planning discussions, the table of experts that you develop can be called upon to clarify problems and reveal opportunities. Others are expert at running programs, and may be helpful when it comes time to implement your action plan. Involve your experts early, particularly if you're going to ask them for help with implementation later.

Experts can come from many circles. Some experts will be available at no cost. For example, some non-profits and universities are already funded to provide the services that you need. Local government and businesses may be able to lend you

a staff member for specific tasks. But others are in the business of providing their expertise, and will expect to be paid for their services.

Here are some suggestions for where to look for experts:

- Local Government
- Planning Department
- Public Works Department
- Mayor's Office
- City or Town Council
- City or Municipal Manager
- County Commissioners
- State and National Government
- Economic Development Authorities
- Developers
- School Faculty and Staff
- Universities, Hospitals and Other Institutions' Community Relations Department
- Consultants
- Businesses, Corporations and Financial Institutions
- Business Technical Assistance Agencies, Loan Funds
- Professional and Trade Associations
- Funding Sources

A key component of the Main Street Approach to downtown revitalization is the creation or expansion of a downtown management organization. Experience has shown that the Main Street Approach works if properly implemented. Experience has also shown that often-new communities do not realize the amount of time that will be required of volunteers in order to create, develop and manage a successful downtown revitalization organization and Main Street Program. It is essential that the board members realize what is expected of them.

Typical Time Commitments

Monthly board meeting 60-90 minutes

Active participation on at least one committee 3-5 hours monthly

Active participation in specific activities or 3-5 hours monthly

Projects promoted by the board may include:

- fundraising
- membership recruitment
- representation on behalf of the program at meetings and/or events
- training and workshop attendance

Total Hours: (assuming monthly meetings)

Board members serving on one committee 7 –11.5 hours/mo.

Committee member 6-10 hours/mo.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, POTENTIAL MEMBERS, TYPICAL ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Collectively, the board of directors assumes the philosophical, legal and fiduciary responsibilities for all of the projects, program and administrative activities of the organization. The board of directors is solely responsible for establishing program policy, approving the annual program budget and determining the goals for the organization. The board:

- Establishes the legal existence of the program, and fulfills legal requirements in the conduct of its business and affairs
 - Adopts and administers by-laws
 - Adopts policies that determine the organization's purposes, goals, governing principles, functions, activities, and course of action
 - Approves and monitors the finances of the organization.
 - Helps raise sufficient funds to ensure that the organization can meet its objectives.
 - Assumes responsibility for all expenditures necessary for the operation of the organization as well as its programs and projects.
 - Understands the services and program or work of the organization and interprets these to others.
 - Gives sponsorship and prestige to the organization inspiring confidence in its activities
 - Monitors the organization's activities
 - Selects, hires, and evaluates the downtown manager
 - Participates in the recruitment, selection, and development of individuals to serve on the board of directors as advised by the nominating committee
- The board should be a decisive, action-oriented group, small enough to easily establish a quorum and large enough to include broad community representation. Ideally, the board should have between 7 and 11 members.

Typical roles, and responsibilities of the committees

Committees of a downtown revitalization program using the Main Street Approach are typically made up of five to seven people who meet at least once a month to plan and prepare activities. These activities usually create additional demands for time and volunteers. The committee should consider forming ad hoc groups to involve others in the effort for specific projects and activities.

- Commits to at least one year of service.
- Commits to monthly committee meetings and to subcommittee meetings when appropriate.
- Works 3 to 5 hours per month outside of committee meetings.
- Attends all appropriate training sessions related to the work of the committee.
- Reads selected orientation materials
- Learns about the Main Street Approach to downtown revitalization
- Recruits/orients new members
- Prepares in advance for meetings
- Assists in drafting an annual committee work plan in cooperation with other members.
- Takes responsibility for projects.
- Always presents the organization positively to the public.

The Promotion Committee

The Promotion Committee markets a unified, quality image of the business district as the center of activities, goods and services to retailers, shoppers, investors, and tourists. This committee:

- Reverses negative images of downtown
- Helps build retail sales and increase foot traffic in the district
- Implements special events
- Coordinates advertising
- Coordinates with Heritage Tourism venues to complement the visitors experience during a community visit
- Maintains good media relations
- Develops both the organization and the downtown logo (this activity may also fall under the Design Committee and this function should be assigned by the Board of Directors)

Likely candidates for service on this committee are: downtown merchants, chamber of commerce members, civic groups involved in the arts, school board members, library staff, teachers of marketing or design, marketing/advertising professionals, staff in advertising or tourism offices, reporters and editors, graphic designers and artists, and people who just want to be part of the action.

The Design Committee

The Design Committee creates an attractive, coordinated and quality visual image of the downtown by capitalizing on its unique physical assets and architectural heritage.

- Examines all aspects of design that affect downtown's physical image.
- Encourages the rehabilitation of traditional commercial buildings.
- Encourages effective window displays.
- Provides design services as a resource for property owners.
- Helps to establish either a grant or a low-interest loan program for façade renovations (with Economic Restructuring Committee).
- Prepares materials and activities to educate the community about their historic resources

Likely committee candidates are: architects, history buffs, real estate agents, interior designers and florists, contractors, graphic designers and artists, downtown property owners, architecture students, landscapers, sign painters, contractors, and people who just want to be part of the action.

The Economic Restructuring Committee

The "ER" Committee works to develop a market strategy that will result in an improved retail mix, a stronger tax base, increased investor confidence, and a stable role for the downtown as a major component of the city's economy. This committee:

- Collects data on downtown buildings as part of a retail recruitment program.
- Collects, reviews and summarizes existing market data, and obtains additional data as needed.
- Initiates and maintains business recruitment, expansion and retention program.
- May become directly involved in building redevelopment

Likely candidates are: merchants, downtown property owners, realtors, mortgage brokers, consumers, marketing professionals and teachers, developers, stock brokers, business students, Small Business Development Center (SBDC) representatives, the members of the City's economic development staff and the Economic Development Council (EDC).

The Organization Committee

The Organization Committee works to recruit new leadership for the downtown revitalization organization and develop partnerships to assist with the implementation of its programs and projects. This committee stays in close touch with its supporters, works to mobilize a large number of volunteers and raises funds for the ongoing operations of the downtown revitalization effort. The Organization Committee:

- Plans and conducts fund-raising activities and ensures that adequate funding is in place at all times.
- Helps the design, promotion and economic restructuring committees to recruit new members.
- Promotes the development of a strong volunteer network.
- Encourages partnership development with all stakeholders in downtown.
- Develops the vehicles to ensure lines of communication are always open such as newsletter, websites, etc.

Likely candidates are: merchants, downtown property owners, chamber of commerce, city government, foundation representatives, other non-profit staff, local hospital staff, teachers, attorneys, accountants and local residents.

The Downtown Program (Main Street) Manager

The Downtown, or Main Street Manager, requires multidimensional skills and experience. This person is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the complex downtown revitalization strategy. The position requires considerable independent judgment and initiative, under the guidance of a board of directors, as well as excellent communication skills with all members of the community.

Typical Duties to be Performed:

- Familiarizing public officials, retailers, community groups, the general public and others with the nature and orientation of the downtown revitalization effort.
- Interpreting previous studies and reports that analyze the community and CBD resources to refine the strategy for achieving revitalization goals.
- Working cooperatively with the local community to develop and implement a local action plan and timetable, which includes public, non-profit and private sector activities and support.
- Implementing local objectives through the development of revitalization tools, such as rehabilitation programs; existing state and federal funding sources and other grant programs; administrative procedures; political mechanisms; and legal processes, as appropriate.

- Assisting individual business and property owners with design and construction management aspects of physical restoration projects.
- Developing, monitoring, and assessing economic strategies to increase business in the downtown, attracting new users into existing facilities and expanding market opportunities in compliance with the community's vision for downtown.
- Preparing and maintaining a continuous record of the accomplishments of the organization's programs and projects. (This includes filing required funding source reports accurately and on a timely basis.)
- Acting as an information and data resource on central business district issues for downtown stakeholders, the media and other interested parties in the community.
- Developing and maintaining contracts with media sources to disseminate project information to the community.
- Recruiting, directing and rewarding volunteers.
- Attends trainings and networkings to bring the best practices to the local revitalization program.

Likely candidates are managers come from a wide variety of backgrounds: planning, banking; government services, business owner. They may be a home-grown manager, or someone from out-of-town who has developed an enthusiasm for the revitalization process.

Step 2: Downtown Revitalization Needs A Home

While a downtown revitalization program can be housed in any one of a number of agencies and organizations, the ideal vehicle is a strong, independent, private non-profit organization whose express purpose is downtown revitalization - with no other conflicting agenda.

By becoming an independent organization, the downtown program is almost always better able to bring together public and private sector interests in an objective environment, to establish an agenda exclusively for downtown revitalization and to maintain a clear focus on the issues that affect downtown. It is imperative then; that all of the available organizational options be evaluated and that the option chosen be the one that offers the best opportunity to reach the community's vision for downtown.

A. Creating A New Organization

In most instances, creating a new, non-profit organization to implement the downtown revitalization program is the best option. The new organization can:

- Establish a clear focus, unhindered by past history.
- Develop a consistent program, unhampered by the constraints of local politics.
- Serve as a visible symbol of renewal, new activity and a new future for the downtown. A new organization is often able to accomplish many things that an existing organization with an established agenda cannot. A new organization can set up a board with a broad based constituency, clearly define an independent mission, create new goals and infuse a fresh spirit of change into the community. And, a new group can forge all of the partnerships and adopt all of the principles necessary to galvanize the downtown organization into a successful, working unit.
- Ask your merchants, business owners, property owners, and residents about the idea.
- Be sure the municipality is a partner.
- Consider holding a town-hall type meeting. Call the Heritage Ohio office at 614-258-6200 for advice and possible attendance at the meeting. Introduce the Four-Point Approach via power point.
- Ask the local newspaper(s) to run a story about the possibilities of starting a downtown revitalization program. Be a guest on the local radio station to help educate folks about starting a program. This workbook has a sample press release.
- Involve the local or regional chamber of commerce from the outset. It is important that the Chamber understand the differences between what your new organization will do as a downtown revitalization organization and what

chambers of commerce normally due as a business advocacy organization. This early involvement may save many headaches down the road.

AFTER GETTING FEEDBACK AND IDEAS, IF YOU DECIDE TO MOVE AHEAD...

- Identify possible board members and supporters. Create an interim board of directors.
- Contact the IRS for a Taxpayer Identification Number. Also obtain an application from them for 501(c)(3) – non-profit - designation. See category options in the booklet. Most comprehensive downtown programs focusing on the Main Street Approach seek to be designated as a 501(c) 3 corporation.
- Work with an attorney to write organizational by-laws, and articles of incorporation as an Ohio based corporation.
- Identify an address or post office box for mail, as well as a contact person for phone and electronic communications.
- Create a realistic first year budget. Create a system of pledging support as well as banking donations.
- Get press releases out to the newspapers for FREE publicity. "Letters to the Editor" are worth gold; don't forget them!
- Plan some low-cost, high visibility projects.

Checklist for Starting a Comprehensive Downtown Program

- Contact your municipality. Municipalities are partners in the application process for the Main Street program.
- Develop broad-based community support for the downtown commercial district revitalization process from both the public and private sectors.
- Develop vision and mission statements relevant to community conditions and to the local Main Street program's organizational stage.
- Create a comprehensive downtown "vision-action strategy" based on the Four Point Approach of the National Main Street Center.
- Nurture a historic preservation ethic.
- Engage an active board of directors and functioning committees.
- Raise and manage an adequate operating budget.
- Create a program of ongoing training for volunteers.
- Hire a paid profession revitalization manager
- Establish the ability to develop and report on key statistics.
- Become a current member of the Heritage Ohio.

Step 3. CREATING A DOWNTOWN STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

A successful downtown revitalization program is created by leaders who:

- Understand its purpose.
- Develop realistic goals.
- Establish priorities.
- Assess its progress.

A crucial element in planning the direction of the downtown revitalization effort is the development of an annual Action Plan. To be a useful document that facilitates implementation, the action strategy must:

- Clearly list the activities that need to take place by goals and objectives.
- Assign deadlines for each objective.
- Assign responsibilities for each objective.

The four purposes of the good Action Plan are:

1. To manage the wide range of activities that must take place for a revitalization effort to succeed.
2. To develop a timetable and budget for those activities.
3. To explain the organization's purpose and activities to the public.
4. To help measure - in quantifiable terms - the downtown revitalization program's successes.

The Action Plan

- Should reflect the organization's biggest priorities.
- Be realistic in its scope.
- Exclude items that cannot be accomplished in one year.
- Should focus its efforts - do not force activities that do not fit the program's purpose.

A. DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Before making any decisions about the downtown revitalization program's priorities, it is helpful to identify the downtown's assets and liabilities. By examining the downtown's strengths and weaknesses, the downtown revitalization or Main Street program will be able to single out areas of immediate need and develop a clear sense of direction. There are a number of ways to identify the downtown's strong points and weak areas. Two of the more successful techniques are:

- **VISUALIZATION EXERCISES**

- Volunteers think about, then describe, their vision of what downtown could be like in five or ten years.
- Working from the assumption that their visions have become reality, discuss:
 - How the Main Street program was organized.
 - What its initial priorities were.
 - What its biggest achievements have been.
 - What steps it took to accomplish its goals.
 - Which groups and individuals were involved in the revitalization process.

- **FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS**

- Brainstorm and list all the positive and negative factors about the downtown.
- Analyze each negative characteristic to see how its impact can be minimized or eliminated.
- Repeat the process for positive characteristics with volunteers identifying ways to enhance these assets or use them to combat negatives
- When the positive and negative characteristics have been identified and some broad priorities for action specified, the Main Street program can begin developing goals, objectives and activities.

Once you have completed one or both of these exercises, you will have a much better understanding of the assets and strengths you have to build upon and the weakness and threats that pose challenges to you downtown revitalization effort. With this understanding you will now be able to develop an action plan that capitalizes on the assets and enhances the chances for realizing the opportunities and the assets while proposing steps to mitigate the weaknesses and eliminate or minimize the threats.

B. ELEMENTS OF AN ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan should contain:

- A clear mission statement explaining the purpose of the organization.
- One or more goals for each of the four points of the Main Street Approach.
- The specific objectives that must be met to reach each goal.
- A list of activities necessary to accomplish each objective.
- A timetable for completing each activity; the name of the committee, group, or individual responsible for implementing it; a measurable goal indicator for evaluation; and the estimated cost to complete the activity.

MISSION STATEMENT

- The mission statement has one clear and simple message – it states the purpose of the organization.
- The mission statement should be used to explain the downtown revitalization's program in press releases, publications, media interviews and at meetings and conferences.
- The mission statement does not include the actual goals or activities needed to accomplish the organization's purposes.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, TASKS

The goals, objectives, and activities define the projects the Main Street program will implement in order to fulfill the directives of its mission statement

- **Goals** state broadly what the program wants to accomplish in each of the four points of the Main Street approach.
 - Suggestion - each committee should have only 1 goal.
 - Goal should reflect general purpose or mission of committee
- **Objectives** outline what the organization needs to do to accomplish each goal.
 - Suggestion – state how the goal will be reached.
 - Turn issues into positive action statements.
 - Outline major responsibility for committees.
 - Give structure to numerous activities.
- **Activities** are specific projects that have an identified time frame. When finished they are the tangible accomplishments.
- **Tasks** are specific steps required to complete an activity.

TIMETABLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Assign deadlines and responsibilities for every activity identified.
- Make deadlines realistic, taking into account committee meeting schedules, holidays, and other busy times of the year.
- Activities that rely on earlier activities - for instance, a facade improvement program that will not be announced until a low-interest loan pool is established - should reflect this in their time-lines.
- An individual or team should be assigned responsibility for implementing each activity on the action plan.
- Responsibility might be shared by one or more people in the organization, including members of the board of directors, a standing subcommittee, or a special task force created for that particular activity.

- When assigning tasks, remember that the Main Street or downtown manager's role is to **coordinate** volunteer activity, not take its place.
- Be careful not to overload any one individual or group - whether staff or volunteer - with too many responsibilities.

ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITIES - WHO DOES WHAT

- **Goals**

- The board of directors should establish goals for each of the four points of the Main Street Approach.
- This task should not be delegated to a committee or task force because, ultimately, the board is responsible for the downtown revitalization efforts direction and thus is accountable for its activities.

- **Objectives**

- One or more objectives for each goal should be developed by the appropriate standing committee, and approved by the board.
- The committee and board should list as many objectives as required to obtain the goal(s).
- To ensure as productive a discussion as possible on objectives, the committee chairperson should:
 - Encourage participants to suggest all their ideas: everyone should feel that his or her suggestions are valid.
 - Discuss which objectives can be combined. Often, objectives will overlap and it may be possible to consolidate them.
 - Give participants the time to advocate for the objectives they feel are the most important.
 - Vote to establish priorities; each participant should vote for only half the objectives. For example, 12 possible objectives means six votes for each participant.
 - Rank the objectives according to number of votes to establish priorities for the action plan.
- It is helpful to have one person serve as facilitator, recording the group's decisions on chart paper and keeping the group on schedule.

- **ACTIVITIES**

- Developing activities to achieve the objectives should be the job of the standing committees that will be implementing them, thus fostering a strong sense of involvement and commitment among participants.
- If specific tasks are assigned to smaller ad hoc groups, these groups should also be involved in the planning process.
- The committees should then submit to the board the list of activities they have developed for each objective along with recommended deadlines and responsibilities for each activity an estimated cost to

- complete each activity and a quantifiable measure for the activity in question
- The board then reviews the entire action plan and ensures that:
 - Projects are realistic and can be achieved within one year. If a project is long-term, the portion that will be accomplished within the year should be included in the action plan.
 - Committee activities do not duplicate one another. Sometimes a committee will develop activities that are similar or identical to those outlined by other Main Street committees. While a small amount of overlap indicates that committees are working in the same direction, too much overlap can cause confusion and dilute the Main Street program's focus.
 - Activities are quantifiable. Objectives and activities must be measurable if a Main Street program is to gauge its progress, set standards for future activities and demonstrate its successes. Almost all projects can be measured in quantifiable terms - for instance, rather than adopting the objective "increase volunteer involvement," a Main Street Program might decide that "increasing volunteer involvement by 15 percent" is a reasonable and measurable expectation.
 - Board should develop an overall time-line for all of the activities in all four areas of the Main Street approach, then review the completed action plan with each standing committee.
 - It is crucial that each committee know what the others will be doing.
 - The action plan should be published. It might need condensing or editing, depending on how detailed the activity descriptions are.
 - All individuals and organizations that participate in the Main Street program should receive a copy of the overall plan. In some towns, the Main Street or downtown revitalization organization distributes the plan throughout the community; some even publish it in local newspapers.

Updating the Action Plan

- The action plan should be updated each year after the board has reviewed the goals to see if they are still relevant or if they need to be modified.
- During this process, the board, committees, and ad hoc groups go through the same process of identifying objectives and defining activities as they did the year before.

SAMPLE STRATEGIC PLAN – ANNUAL ACTION PLAN RELATIONSHIP ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

GOAL # 1: To understand the downtown’s economic development needs and recognize opportunities for directing and managing positive downtown economic change.

Objective A: Understand the retail market conditions that have an impact on the downtown

Activities: (Should be detailed as part of the *Annual Work Plan*)

- Gather the most recent census reports for the community
- Conduct customer and merchant surveys
- Obtain copies of market studies from the city planning office and other public and private sources
- Review studies to determine current relevance and obtain useful data
- Obtain copies of state sales tax reports for the past five years
- Conduct a preliminary retail market analysis for the downtown

Objective B: Complete and maintain a downtown real estate inventory database

Activities: (Should be detailed as part of the *Annual Work Plan*)

- Develop a base map that shows all downtown buildings
- Develop a downtown building inventory system
- Collect downtown real estate data from the tax office
- Examine each building and put information on square footage, condition, tenancy, and use in the downtown building inventory
- Collect historical data (maps, photographs, directories) about the downtown.

Step 4 – Show Me The Money

The following is an example showing a start-up budget for a mid-sized community. The largest single line item will probably be administrative and personnel expenses necessary to carry out a downtown revitalization effort. The Main Street budget for a larger (urban) community may be more than the suggested example to allow for a higher cost area. Conversely, the budget for a small (rural) community may be less.

Income

City	25,000
County	5,000
Community/Corp Foundations	10,000
Memberships	14,000
Sponsorships	15,000
Fundraising Event	10,000
Merchandise	<u>1,000</u>
Total	\$ 80,000

Expense

Salary	37,000
Employee Related Expenses (34%)	12,600
Clerical/Bookkeeping	5,000
Professional Development/Training	2,000
Travel	3,000
Office Supplies, Copies	2,000
Postage	800
Events	1,500
Committee Allocations (4)	1,000
Audit /Insurance	2,500
Design Assistance	2,000
Office Rent	3,600
Utilities/phone	1,900
Computer/repair/software	600
Website/Internet Service Provider Fees	600
Membership/Dues/Subscriptions	600
Main Street Fee	<u>3,300</u>
Total	\$ 80,000

*expenses could be reduced if in-kind contributions to the program are an option.

Potential Funding Sources

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Municipal Government can be a partner in funding basic operating expenses and often also contributes dollars to specific downtown projects. Basically there are two funding pots from which you can solicit money from city government - the general fund, and special dedicated funds. Within these funds the city government has a certain amount of money that must be allocated for particular projects. For instance one special dedicated fund is made up of money from gas taxes. This money must be allocated to street projects. Municipal dollars can be applied to downtown management, public improvements, public facilities, technical assistance, and possibly promotions.

MEMBERSHIPS

Fees paid for membership to an organization can be a source of funding for most all aspects of downtown revitalization. In order for membership dues to be a strong source of funding for a program, a well-thought out strategy and campaign must be administered.

This form of fundraising is on-going and can only succeed with a good chair to spur the board on. Follow-through is essential to a good membership campaign.

CORPORATION DONATIONS

Corporate donations may be distinguished from membership dues primarily by the size of contribution. Many statewide and regional corporations have actively supported commercial revitalization efforts through donations of money, services, and equipment. Most corporations look upon donations to social and economic development causes as investments in the community. Their willingness to give will be directly proportional to their existing or future corporate presence in the community. The typical corporation will evaluate a donation in terms of return on investment (though this return could be in dollars, publicity, human betterment, or economic growth). Downtown management, promotions, technical assistance, and possibly public improvements and public facilities could be financed by corporate donations.

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Fundraising events are a good source of revenue for downtown management, promotions, public improvements, and public facilities. They differ from special events in that they occur regularly, they are conceived and run like a business, and they are regarded as a business venture by the sponsoring organization. The whole purpose of putting on a fundraiser is to make money, therefore it is critical that goals, plans, and budget are thoroughly worked out, or the fundraiser may end up being much less than profitable.

PRODUCT SALES

A budget can be subsidized by selling products related to the organization, community, or promotion. Some examples of these are t-shirts and sweatshirts, posters, specialized game boards, and bricks for streetscape projects. Product variety is only as limited as the imagination. Before going into special product sales, there must be a well thought out plan in place for actually selling the items. Don't depend on product sales to make ends meet.

SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (SID)

A SID is a local self-help funding mechanism authorized by state law that allows businesses and property owners within a defined area to establish a special assessment district. Funds raised can be used to provide management, services, facilities, and programs to the district. SID's may not be the right funding mechanism for your organization. They require a lot of effort and time to put together, and can be very politically sensitive.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships are a good source of funding for special events and promotions. Suppliers of many of the products used in special events as well as media are willing to donate a portion of their product to be listed as a sponsor of the event. Like corporate donations, potential sponsors evaluate such contributions in terms of return on investment. Businesses seldom sponsor anything from a totally philanthropic viewpoint.

RETAIL FEES

The primary beneficiaries of a particular promotion or group of promotions pay retail fees. Usually the promotion is thought of, a budget is developed, and then a fee is determined by dividing the total budget by the projected number of participants.

FOUNDATION DONATIONS

Foundation donations are grants given by foundations to aid social, educational, charitable, religious, and other activities that serve the common welfare. Foundations are non-governmental, nonprofit organizations that, primarily through investment of their assets, have produced income that is awarded as grants. Foundations generally have restrictions concerning what they will and will not support. In order to qualify for a foundation grant you must be a tax-exempt organization recognized by the IRS. Foundation grants can be used to fund public improvements, public facilities, technical assistance, promotions, and downtown management depending on the purpose, activities, and area of interest of the foundation.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are an often-overlooked means of funding many commercial revitalization projects. Volunteers can provide many services that might otherwise require cash resources well beyond the means of the organization. Volunteers might sell spots in a coordinated advertising campaign; they might provide part-time office help or clerical support; volunteers might help solicit donations and memberships; they might help paint a building or sweep a sidewalk, prepare a financial statement or submit a tax return, design a logo or print the newsletter. Given correct motivation and correct management, volunteers can do almost anything.

SERVICE FEES

Service fees are a common source of funds for many nonprofit organizations, but are not often used in the commercial revitalization field. Service fees might be generated for professional services such as commercial building design assistance, parking management or enforcement, property management, real estate negotiation or packaging, retail promotion packaging, advertising, or business recruitment. Service fees are a dependable and self-perpetuating source of income, but can be deceptive. Many nonprofit organizations have started profit producing services to subsidize their basic mission driven projects, only later to learn that the services were not actually producing income, but sapping the resources of the organization

SUBSIDY FROM PROFITABLE BUSINESS

A number of very entrepreneurial nonprofit organizations have started for-profit arms to make money and subsidize their basic programs. Examples related to a commercial revitalization effort might include a real estate development company subsidizing a commercial district management nonprofit, or a nonprofit leasing its real estate to for profit businesses to generate income to support the nonprofit's activities. Subsidies from profitable businesses can be another source of ongoing and dependable operating support, but should be viewed with similar cautions to income service fees.

"What's in it for Me?"

How to answer this question from ...

...LOCAL RESIDENTS/CONSUMERS

- enhanced marketplace (better shopping and the benefits of shopping locally)
- sense of pride in downtown
- social/cultural activities
- opportunities to keep kids in town
- sense of hometown community
- historical awareness (preservation of architecture and human history)
- tax dollars stay in the community
- opportunity to participate/volunteer

- better communication (newsletter)
- political advocate
- home values increase

...PROPERTY OWNERS

- increased occupancy rates
- rent stability
- increased property values
- increased stability
- reduced vandalism/crime deterrent
- assistance with tax credits, grants, loan programs, design, and co-op maintenance
- communication medium with other property owners
- better image
- new uses, especially on upper floors

...MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

- increased tax base
- more tourism
- increased property values
- increased number of jobs
- better goals and vision
- healthy economy
- better services available
- positive perception of downtown and community
- better relations between city hall and private sector
- increased volunteer base for city
- impetus for public improvements and city grant dollars

...RETAIL BUSINESS OWNERS

- increased sales
- improved image
- increased value of business
- coordinated efforts between local business and franchises
- quality of business life
- educational opportunities (seminar and workshops)
- increased traffic
- district marketing strategies promotion and advertising
- better business mix
- new market groups downtown
- community pride
- have needs issues addressed

...SERVICE BUSINESS OWNERS

- image building/improvement
- pride
- new/renewed/repeated exposure
- increased variety of services

- healthier economy generates new/more businesses
- increased competition means more aggressive business styles
- tapping sales leakage
- increased population, new customers
- improved image, creates new market

...FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

- community reinvestment act (federal government requirement)
- potential for loans, deposits, and other services (bank cards, financial services)
- improved image and good will
- survival of community critical to bank success and economic stability
- central location more cost effective

...PRESERVATIONISTS

- The Main Street Approach reinforces common goal of preservation
- increases coalition
- increased awareness and credibility
- education of public and group
- improved public image
- improved economic feasibility of preservation

...COUNTY GOVERNMENT

- increased public relations for county
- viable downtown increases tax base
- rippling effect
- viable downtown is a draw for industry and county-wide area businesses
- common partnership with city hall
- county/community pride
- heritage preservation
- alternative to a redevelopment district
- quality of life issues especially for employees
- help with parking issues

...UTILITY COMPANIES

- additional business
- longer business hours
- more employees
- healthy businesses feel freer to increase utility usage
- healthy economy causes community to grow
- overcome bad guy image
- proof of new products
- quality in main street public improvements

Getting Ready to Raise Money

The first thing to understand is the difference between **public** and **private** funds. Here are some definitions.

Public Sector Funds

Government support for nonprofit groups usually consists of revenue collected through fees, licenses, services, taxes and assessments. These funds are generally administered by a government entity, sometimes with a board, council or commission of private citizens who advise during the decision-making process.

Examples of public sources of money include:

- Direct appropriations from a city's general fund or from the county or state;
- Lodging, restaurant, liquor and/or entertainment taxes;
- Special assessment districts (SID);
- Tax-increment financing (TIF);
- Government grants and loans;
- In-kind services, which might be in the form of police help at a festival.

Private Sector Funds

Funding from private sources consists of earned income or money contributed by individuals or organizations.

Examples of private funding sources include:

- memberships,
- pledges,
- donations,
- corporate gifts or sponsorships,
- product revenues,
- entry fees,
- proceeds from auctions,
- booth fees
- grants from private foundations.

NEXT:

The type of fundraising you do in the first few years of the revitalization effort is different than in later years, as the program matures. So, before going further, let's outline the general stages of revitalization work. Revitalization programs typically go through three distinct organizational phases.

- Catalyst Phase
- Growth Phase
- Management Phase

What do these three phases mean for the organization's fund-raising strategies?

- In the **catalyst phase**, revitalization programs usually raise money by securing unrestricted pledges and commitments from both the public and private sectors. Since the new program has not yet established a track

record, it gets funding commitments by getting people excited about the possibilities - in essence, by selling a vision.

- By the time the organization moves into the **growth phase**, it better have something to show for its efforts. People will want to see some tangible progress and, more importantly, a sound, achievable plan for the next few years – before investing more money in the revitalization program. In essence, they want to see a business plan.
- When the organization shifts its focus from revitalization to **management**, it will need several sources of ongoing, earned income or another constant, reliable revenue stream. It is unlikely that people will feel as passionate a need to contribute to a healthy, vibrant district as they did to one that was suffering.
- In your revitalization program's early years - the catalyst phase - start-up funds for the program's administrative costs are *usually* contributed by both the public and private sectors. There's not much magic involved in raising this start-up money, just lots of elbow grease and persuasiveness:
 - Go to the city council and ask for a commitment
 - Go to members of the community and ask them for commitments.
 - Shoot to raise 50 percent from each sector.
 - Get up-front pledges, good for the first three or four years of the program's work.
 - Make sure the revitalization program makes great progress in its first few years.
 - Keep your contributors informed about this progress.
 - Be diligent about calling in the pledges.

"How Should My Income Budget Be Obtained?"

Recommended Main Street Program Funding Formula

Private Sources	30%
Fundraising (Sponsorships, Events, Merchandising, etc.)	30%
Public Sources	30%

Materials Needed For Fund-Raising

Contributors need a packet of materials, which should include:

1. A description of your downtown revitalization/Main Street Program, with mission, and the four-point approach described.
2. A brief description of past accomplishments.
3. A description of future projects.
4. A budget, including income as well as expenses.
5. Names of those involved in the program – include testimonials, if pertinent.
6. A registration card or form. "Yes, I want to be a part of our downtown's future!"
7. A receipt, for tax purposes.
8. A membership card, decal, pin, certificate, plaque or other form of "recognition."

Campaign volunteers need:

1. The membership/donor packet, created by the fund-raising committee.
2. Questions and answer sheets about the program.
3. A "how to ask" crib sheet.
4. A deadline.
5. An incentive.
6. Instructions on how, when, and where to turn in the forms and money.
7. Recognition.

50 Things You can Do for Downtown

1. Hold a town meeting. Figure out the strengths and weaknesses of your town. Set some goals.
2. Form groups to brain storm. Write down your ideas...and share them. Encourage others to do the same.
3. Start raising money or support for specific projects.
4. Ask more downtown merchants to become involved in the revitalization process.
5. Develop a good relationship with your local news media.
6. Publish a newsletter or write a regular column for your newspaper to keep your community informed. Get on the Main Street Ohio mailing list to find out what's happening in other cities.
7. Ask for help from the chamber of commerce, the regional planning commission, local colleges or vo-tech schools, the Co-operative Extension Service, the Small Business Development Center, utility companies and others.
8. Work with your local financial institutions. Ask them to make a commitment to downtown revitalization.
9. Apply for status as a Certified Local Government through the Ohio Historic Preservation Program. CLG status can protect your historic downtown and potentially provide funding for projects to enhance the downtown.
10. Visit downtowns with Main Street programs to find out what others are doing.
11. Stop complaining and start doing.
12. Develop a slide show about your downtown. Take it to civic clubs, schools, the chamber of commerce, and the city council.
13. Develop a program to encourage small physical improvements to downtown buildings such as new or repaired signs, paint, or awnings.
14. Look for a building that can be dramatically improved with a relatively small cash outlay. Repair or remove torn awnings, fix broken windows, and repair broken signs.
15. Deal with the parking issue: Count your parking spaces. Add signs to your public parking lots. Develop a voluntary contract to get business owners and employees to agree to leave prime parking places for the customers.
16. Take "before" photos and develop "after" drawings of buildings to encourage renovation.
17. Encourage building rehabilitation that respects the heritage of each building and the downtown.
18. Work with property owners to clean and maintain vacant buildings. Nobody will rent a building filled with junk if any other alternatives exist. Ask community groups to install and change displays in vacant windows.
19. Pretend you are a visitor; really look at your downtown. What do you see?

20. Take into account handicapped access to your sidewalks, public buildings, and stores.
21. Is your street lighting adequate? Encourage merchants to light their windows as a low cost advertisement to passers-by.
22. See business owners on the importance of attractive window displays. Ask a creative person to work with merchants monthly to change window displays.
23. Hold a downtown clean up. Repeat it quarterly.
24. Buy or build good quality trash receptacles. Put them where the trash is and empty them regularly.
25. Keep sidewalks and alleys free of trash. Plant and water flowers, pull or cut weeds.
26. Replace hand-lettered signs with professional graphics.
27. Invent a retail promotion (that's not a sale).
28. Organize a festival. Have food, music, something for children, a free souvenir, and overlapping events.
29. Prepare a promotion calendar that allows plenty of time to plan for promotions and name a separate chairman for each promotion activity.
30. Make it easy for things to happen downtown and encourage community groups to plan their activities downtown.
31. Develop a downtown logo and use it on stationery, newspaper ads, shopping bags, posters, and flyers.
32. Promote your downtown history through a walking tour, a brochure, or school programs. Hold an architectural treasure hunt.
33. Work with the schools to display student's artwork or awards inside downtown businesses. Today's children are tomorrow's customers.
34. Develop a business directory that lists the kinds of goods and services available and shows where to park. Distribute the directory through the chamber of commerce, the utility companies, and motels.
35. Talk about what's good in your downtown.
36. Develop a downtown slogan and encourage all downtown businesses to use it.
37. Survey your downtown businesses to find out what they sell and to whom. Identify customer needs that aren't being met. These are business opportunities.
38. Complete a building inventory that includes size, ownership, cost of rent or lease, and availability.
39. Gather census information on your community and trade area.
40. Learn what superior customer service means in today's market and stress its importance downtown. Encourage your downtown merchants to visit stores in the area and learn from the competition.
41. Learn about your downtown's zoning regulations.
42. Count how many people work downtown. Downtown is one your town's biggest employers.

43. Renovate upper floors and recruit services or professional businesses. Upper floor housing increases downtown's customer base.
44. Hold an advertising and marketing seminar.
45. Hold regular get-acquainted coffees for merchants hosted by a different store each month.
46. Ask the city how it is working to strengthen the downtown. Ask local industries how they feel about downtown. Discuss the results with others interested in downtown revitalization.
47. Calculate financial projections on vacant buildings. Rental costs will determine how much can be spent on building rehabilitation.
48. Be informed about free or low-cost business assistance that could benefit your downtown merchants.
49. Establish uniform hours for downtown stores. Make it convenient for your customers to shop on their way home from work.
50. Recognize that downtown businesses are important. Let the owners know it.