

MAKING DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE A REALITY

HyettPalma

**Creating
the
Future
Downtown**

SM

MAKING DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE A REALITY

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HyettPalma, is pleased to present the following professional development training course titled **Creating the Future Downtown.**

The course is designed to assist those who are seriously interested in the economic renaissance of their Downtown.



Doyle G. Hyett



Dolores P. Palma

HyettPalma

About the Firm

HyettPalma, Inc. is the only national firm specializing in the economic renaissance of Downtowns and older business districts. Since being formed in 1985, HyettPalma has restored confidence and stimulated investment in hundreds of Downtowns throughout all 50 states.

HyettPalma specializes in discovering the unique economic potentials dormant in every older business district – and in recommending action-oriented strategies which successfully activate those potentials and reinvent Downtown's economy.

Consulting services offered by the firm focus on bringing about the economic renaissance of older business districts. These services feature comprehensive economic enhancement strategies; market analysis; business retention, creation and attraction strategies; business clustering strategies; and business district audits.

The principals of the firm, Dolores Palma and Doyle Hyett, are nationally known and widely respected advisors, speakers, and authors with over 45 years of combined experience in the fields of business district transformation and city planning.

HyettPalma is known for its ability to bring a national perspective to local Downtown issues and for recommending implementation-oriented strategies that result in long-term economic success.

HyettPalma is dedicated to making Downtown renaissance a reality.

For more information

For additional information concerning the firm, please contact either Doyle Hyett or Dolores Palma at:

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Dull, inert cities, it is true, do contain the seeds of their own destruction and little else. But lively, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration, with energy enough to carry over for problems and needs outside themselves.

Jane Jacobs

The Death and Life of Great American Cities

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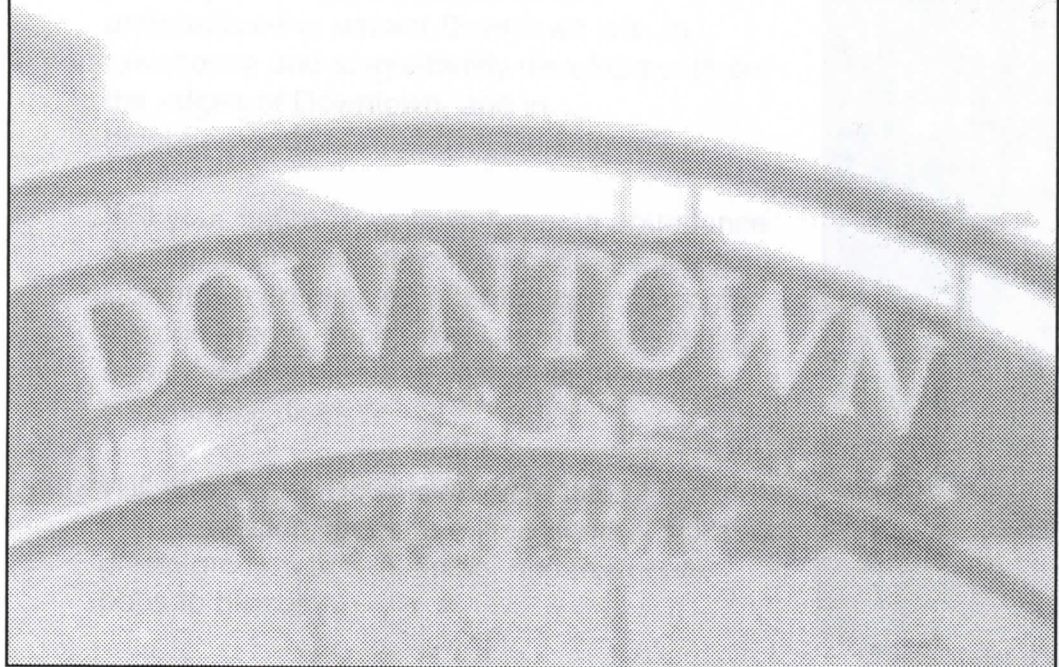
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Through a dedicated effort from this point forward, we can take the progressive steps necessary to create the future Downtown — a Downtown which we desire and a Downtown which is sustainable over time.

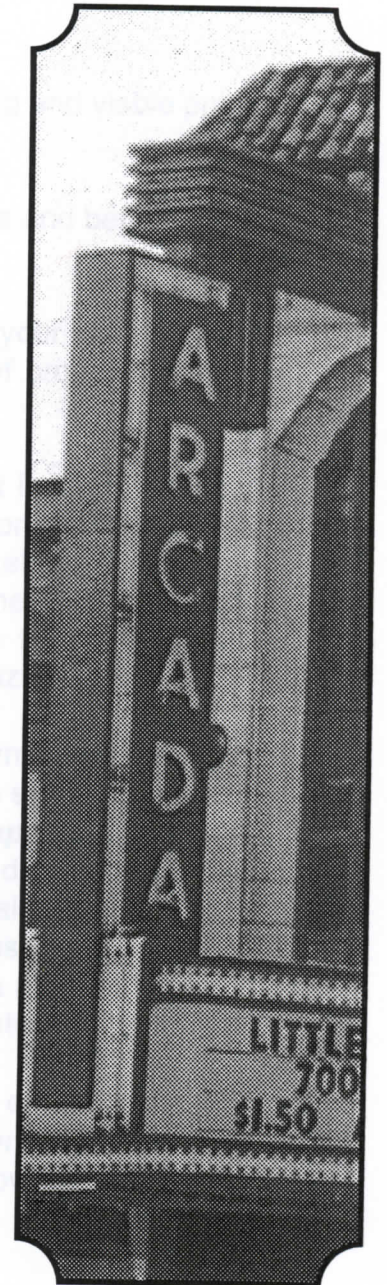
Overview



I. OVERVIEW

What will your future Downtown be like?

- Will your future Downtown have a multitude of successful retail businesses, giving life and vitality and street-level animation to the commercial district?
- Will your future Downtown have a host of professional office occupants, providing vital services to and jobs for the residents of your community?
- Will your future Downtown have housing, located above shops in existing historic buildings, in new low- and mid- and high-rise buildings constructed on previously underutilized or vacant Downtown lots, in townhouse and single-family developments on the edges of Downtown, and in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown?
- Will your future Downtown have an abundance of cultural and entertainment offerings, keeping Downtown employees after hours and bringing the community back Downtown in the evening, and attracting a host of visitors to the commercial district?
- Will your future Downtown have lots of food, from sandwich shops to coffee houses, from green grocers to fine dining, and from brew pubs to bistros?



- Will your future Downtown have the city hall and courthouse and post office and central library and art center and museum?
- Will your future Downtown continue to be the location of a multitude of religious institutions?
- Will your future Downtown have adequate parking and viable public transportation services and navigable streets?
- Will your future Downtown have trees and flowers and benches and water fountains and quiet places to just relax?
- Will your future Downtown be the focal point of your community; a bold symbol of who you are; reflect an image of prosperity; make one take notice and want to return?

Downtowns throughout the nation are at a critical point in their evolution. While the concept of Downtown revitalization in this nation is relatively new — only a serious concern since the 1960s — it has taken these past four decades for most to understand the course of action needed to address Downtown needs and potentials, and to design and follow a realistic course of action to ensure successful Downtown revitalization.

The time for a concentrated effort to improve our Downtowns has never been better. Unlike past times, however, we now have a significant degree of experience, we know what will work — **and just as important what will likely not work** — to improve these older commercial districts. And, we have a vast number of dedicated Downtown professionals, business leaders, elected officials, institutions, utilities, lenders, industrialists, and citizens who understand the merits of a healthy Downtown and are willing to devote the time and resources to further enhance Downtowns.

Through a dedicated effort from this point forward, we can take the progressive steps necessary to create our future Downtown — a Downtown which we desire and a Downtown which is sustainable over time.

Downtown revitalization efforts have been actively pursued in many communities across the country. What has evolved from these decades of Downtown efforts is a tried and true ethic for bringing success to declining Downtowns . . . an ethic that dispels old myths and breaks new ground. This ethic is known as The New Downtown Realism.

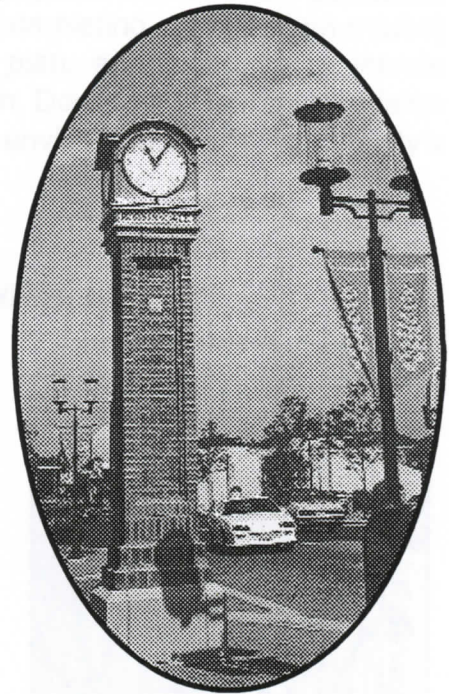
New Downtown Realism

II. THE ROAD TO SUCCESS: THE NEW DOWNTOWN REALISM

Today, the field of Downtown revitalization is far from new. Instead, for the last several decades, Downtown revitalization efforts have been actively implemented in many communities across the country. What has evolved from these decades of Downtown efforts is a tried and true ethic for bringing success to declining Downtowns . . . an ethic that dispels old myths and breaks new ground. This ethic is known as The New Downtown Realism and is built on the following tenets.

FACT: Downtown Success is Spelled E-C-O-N-O-M-I-C-S
FICTION: If We Build It They will Come

There are many reasons that communities decide to revitalize their ailing Downtowns. These include increasing the community's pride in Downtown, making Downtown more appealing to residents and visitors, and improving Downtown's image. To reach these goals, many communities have implemented Downtown enhancement programs that were primarily physical in nature — planting trees and flowers, renovating facades, improving signs, and installing banners. While it is important to keep Downtown physically appealing, the bottom line is this: a sick Downtown cannot be revitalized unless its economy is improved. Or, better yet, by definition:



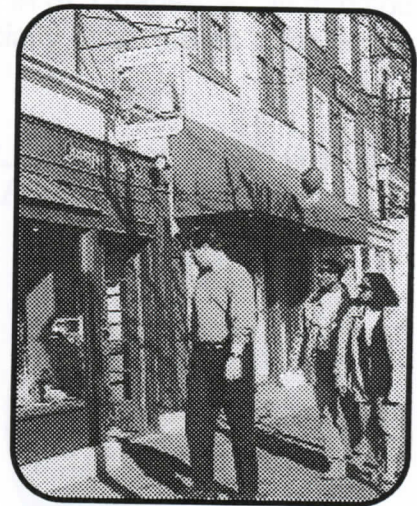
A successful Downtown is one whose investors (business owners, property owners, real estate developers, the local government, etc.) realize an increasing return on their investments.

Downtown Robbinsdale, MN, provides an example of The New Downtown Realism in its Downtown enhancement program. The Mayor and the City Council spearheaded making Downtown revitalization a priority in their community. The City's elected officials acted as the catalyst for Downtown's revitalization by having a comprehensive streetscape project designed and implemented along Downtown's West Broadway. The City was presented with a Merit Award for the project from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The streetscape project also won broad approval from the community...in a survey of area residents, 87% of those who had seen the newly completed improvements found them attractive. But, the Mayor and City Council members knew that streetscape improvements alone — a physically-driven approach — would not revitalize Downtown. Instead, the City and the Downtown business community worked together to take an economic approach to Downtown revitalization. By completing a Downtown market analysis, defining a Downtown business plan, and hiring an economic development director to implement that plan, Downtown Robbinsdale is on the road to becoming the symbol of pride envisioned by the community's residents.

FACT: Spenders Count

FICTION: Special Events will Save Downtown

A major goal of all Downtown enhancement programs is to attract additional people to Downtown. And, over the years, many communities have tried to accomplish this by holding numerous special events in Downtown. Special events are important since they "build community," position Downtown as the community's gathering place, and invite people to have fun in Downtown. However, typically, special event attendees do not spend money in Downtown's businesses.



Instead, if Downtown's investors are to become more financially successful, Downtown must offer things that attract spenders. Spenders that Downtown must attract include retail shoppers, professional service clients, diners, entertainment users, and apartment renters. Therefore, a Downtown enhancement program must include efforts to bring the community-at-large to Downtown for enjoyment AND efforts that bring spenders to Downtown.

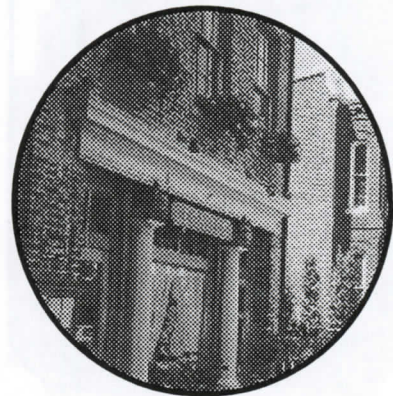
Downtowns that accomplish this have been enhanced as mixed-use areas with a new definition of "Downtown anchors." A mixed-use Downtown that offers retail businesses, service businesses, restaurants, entertainment, government offices, cultural activities, and housing becomes attractive to a variety of spenders. And, spenders attracted by a particular Downtown use often cross-over to other uses. In other words, a retail shopper who is attracted to Downtown by its shops, might also dine in a Downtown restaurant as a part of the shopping trip.

Non-traditional Downtown anchors — those that attract spenders and make Downtown a mixed-use area — include the Children's Discovery Museum in Downtown Augusta, ME.; a community college located in a former department store building in Monroe, NC; a farmer's market in Overland Park, KS; the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, VA — an art incubator; and a renovated historic movie theater in St. Charles, IL. In addition, it is important to remember that small, specialty retail stores often act as very strong Downtown anchors.

FACT: **Downtown Can Successfully Co-Exist with the Giants**

FICTION: **Downtown Can't Survive in an Age of Malls, Discounters, and Power Centers**

Many Downtowns across the country — that had once been in decline — are now flourishing economically despite the location of shopping malls, big boxes, discounters, and power centers right in their backyards. These Downtowns did not manage to accomplish this by



competing head-on with the giants or by continuing with “business as usual.” Instead, these Downtowns lived by the adage “evolve or die” and found ways to successfully co-exist with the giants.

The road to successful co-existence with the giants involves:

- First, defining a “niche” for which Downtown can become known;
- Second, clustering businesses in order to create that niche; and
- Third, ensuring that the clustered businesses are highly specialized and offer exceptional customer service — two things which the giants find it hard to offer spenders.

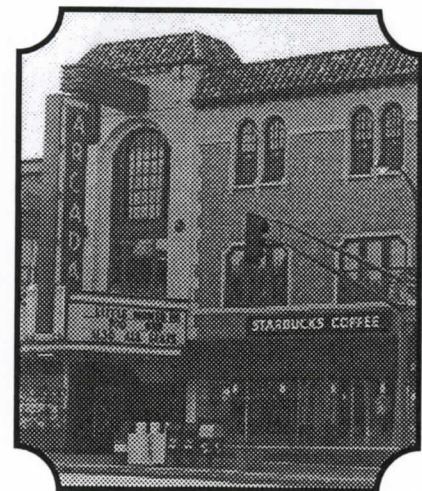
Examples of distinct niches that have been created in Downtowns by clustering specialty businesses include: a home furnishings cluster in Old Town Alexandria, VA.; the “fudge cluster” on Mackinac Island, MI; the art cluster in Soho; the antiques cluster in Pomona and Medford; the entertainment cluster on Santa Monica’s Third Street Promenade; the high-fashion cluster on Chicago’s Oak Street; and the restaurant cluster in Downtown West Palm Beach.

FACT: **You Can Create the Downtown You Want**

FICTION: **We Can’t Control the Future**

Downtowns whose leaders believe that the future is beyond their control are surely doomed. In these communities, both business and public sector leaders take a “wait and see” attitude that puts them forever in a reactionary mode.

In Downtowns where economic decline has been reversed, the prevailing attitude is “we can and will determine our



own fate.” In these Downtowns, leaders identify what is best about their Downtown . . . and what must be changed . . . then go about building on the former as they improve the latter.

In St. Charles, IL, this approach involves building on the Arcada Theater — a historic movie theater that is drawing 5,000 people to Downtown each week since its renovation. The owner of the theater leased its first floor space to businesses that will appeal to movie-goers — such as a Starbuck’s coffee house — and the Downtown organization encourages businesses to cross-advertise with the theater.

In Downtown Tupelo, MS, a bankrupt shopping mall had become a significant drain on Downtown’s image. The City of Tupelo purchased the mall and converted it into a coliseum/convention center. The Downtown organization has built on this new asset by aggressively recruiting restaurants and shops that appeal to day-time spenders as well as to evening coliseum-users.

FACT: **The Business Sector and the Public Sector Must Both Revitalize Downtown**

FICTION: **The Business Sector is Solely Responsible for Downtown’s Decline/Rebirth**
The Public Sector is Solely Responsible for Downtown’s Decline/Rebirth

Both the Downtown business sector and the local government have played a role in Downtown’s decline and both must play a part in Downtown’s enhancement — if it is to be enhanced. Downtowns that have been most successfully enhanced are those whose business and public leaders:

- First, agreed to agree that the “status quo” in Downtown was not acceptable;



- The leaders of Peabody, KS, have been able to use their revitalized Downtown to attract professionals who work in Wichita (60 miles away) as new residents.
- The executives of "Harry and David" (a fruit and gift firm of exceptional quality having an international mail order business) support the revitalization of Downtown Medford, OR, finding that a revitalized Downtown increases their ability to attract and keep high quality employees.
- City officials have found that bond rating companies include the health of Downtown as one criterion they consider when determining a City's bond rating.

All of these examples lead to the indisputable truth that the health of Downtown affects the health of the entire community.

FACT: **You Need the Tools that Every Business Needs to Succeed**

FICTION: **We Can Wing It**

Downtown enhancement is economic development. And, Downtown's economy cannot be strengthened without the necessary business tools. These include:



- A clear vision of Downtown's preferred future;
- A clear understanding of Downtown's market opportunities;
- A definite and appropriate course of action for capturing market opportunities and attaining the vision;

- A partnership of business and public sector leaders committed to implementing the course of action; and
- A stable source of funds with which to manage the enhancement effort.

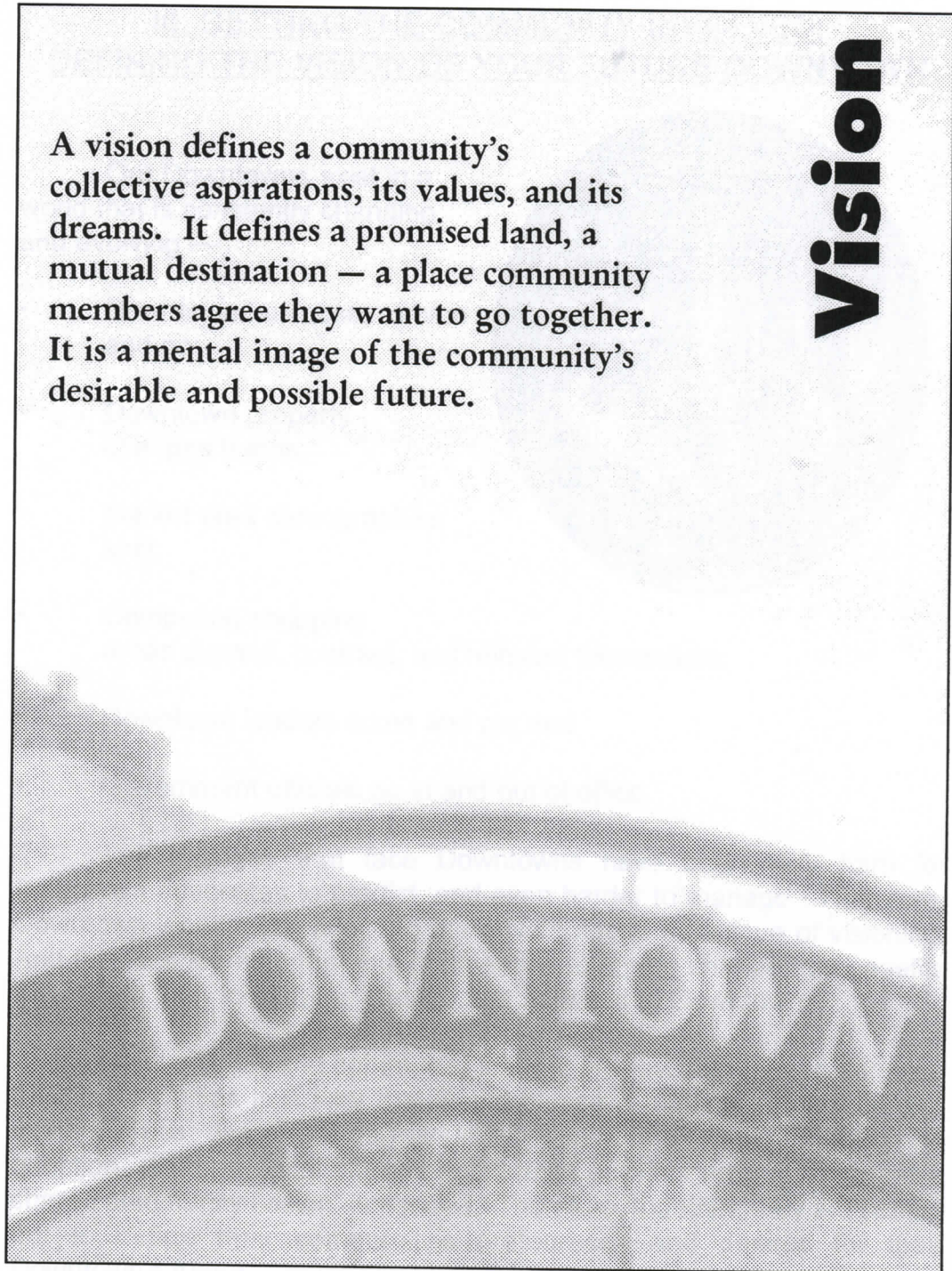
For too long, local leaders have tried to enhance their Downtowns by “winging it” — guessing about Downtown’s market, implementing projects without a clear vision of what they were trying to accomplish, accepting an “us against them” attitude between the business and public sectors, operating the program with only enough funding “to live from hand to mouth.” The commercial giants — shopping malls, discounters, power centers — would never operate in this fashion. Their economic success has been built on solid business tools. Without these same tools, Downtown cannot operate on a level playing field and, therefore, cannot be successfully enhanced.

The remainder of this text is designed to help Downtown leaders — from both the private and public sectors — create these tools for use in their own Downtowns.



Vision

A vision defines a community's collective aspirations, its values, and its dreams. It defines a promised land, a mutual destination — a place community members agree they want to go together. It is a mental image of the community's desirable and possible future.



III. GETTING THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED: DEFINING THE VISION OF YOUR FUTURE DOWNTOWN

Our Downtowns exist in a world that is constantly changing and evolving —

- Downtown businesses come and go;
- Downtown property changes hands;
- Market area demographics shift;
- Competing shopping areas expand, contract, and reinvent themselves;
- Downtown leaders come and go; and
- Government officials go in and out of office.



The changes that face Downtowns have been very hard for Downtown advocates to predict, and even harder to manage. Therefore, Downtown leaders are adopting the private sector technique of visioning. And they are learning that it is often easier to create change that benefits Downtown than to manage change that happens to Downtown.

Local officials and community leaders are realizing that, to enhance their communities in a way that would please a majority of citizens and make the best use of scarce resources, "business as usual" is out of the question. Instead, local officials and citizen activists are realizing that a shared community "vision" is needed. Therefore, together, they are setting out to define their community's preferences and desires for their Downtown's future.

Each community must ask itself:

Do we want our Downtown's future to be determined by chance, fear, and plans made by others or do we want it to be guided by our own preferences and self-determination?

By asking this question, community members often realize it is unthinkable not to define a vision of their preferred future Downtown.

The Vision

What is a vision? The dictionary defines "vision" as "an inspired revelation," "foresight" and "something delightful or beautiful." A community vision is all of these things and more.

A community vision defines a community's collective aspirations, its values, and its dreams. It defines a promised land, a mutual destination — a place community members agree they want to create together. It is a mental image of the community's desirable and possible future.

A community vision inspires, energizes and creates enthusiasm among community members. It unites them in an effort to reach a greater good for the whole community. It gives the community a rallying point and it builds on community pride and commitment. It is a beacon that beckons; the light at the end of the tunnel.

In short, a shared community vision:

- Involves the community in defining their dreams and preferences for Downtown;
- Builds a strong and active constituency for Downtown;
- Builds community between the public and private sectors; and

- Eliminates the “us against them” mentality and unites all sectors of the community as “we.”

Visioning

And what is visioning? Visioning is a way of defining the community's preferred future. Very simply put:

Visioning is a process that allows a community to define a preferred future for itself.

The words underlined in the sentence above are the keys to successful visioning and are explained below.

- **Process:**
Defining a Downtown vision involves a process — a series of steps, meetings, research gathering techniques, etc. — rather than a one-meeting discussion. Taking the time to carry out a comprehensive visioning process is important because it allows necessary data to be collected and necessary, depthful discussions to be held among Downtown constituents.
- **Community:**
The visioning process must include the community of constituents who are involved with, or who will be affected by, Downtown's future. This means that the visioning process, to be successful and defensible, must be open, inclusive, and democratic.
- **Preferred Future:**
A vision is a beacon that guides the way for any changes to be made Downtown. It is not a plan, but it is a step in the planning process. Your vision tells where you want to go — the future you want to create — and it should be part of a plan that tells how you intend to get there. Remember:

***A vision without a plan is folly;
A plan without a vision is drudgery!***

- **Itself**

A community's vision cannot be defined by an outsider — you cannot engage a savior on a white charger to ride into town and tell you what your vision of the future should be. Visioning is about self-determination. Therefore, community members must decide for themselves, through an open visioning process, what they would prefer their Downtown to be like in the future. They must articulate — as a community — the values, priorities, preferences and dreams they hold for their Downtown.

Defining Your Downtown Vision

And how exactly does a community go about defining its preferred Downtown vision? To define a shared community vision for Downtown's future, a growing number of communities across the country are using a simple visioning process. The process is one that is open, inclusive, democratic, and can be used in an almost limitless number of situations.

This visioning process involves the following three steps.

- **Step 1 — Preparing: Defining the Community Outreach Process**

Preparing a method — a “game plan” — to involve the community in the visioning process is an essential first step. The Community Outreach Process (COP) should answer the following questions:

- Who are the individuals and organizations (constituents) who must be engaged in the visioning process?

Consideration of who to include should entail individuals and organizations from four sectors. These are the:

- Business sector;
- Public sector;
- Non-profit sector; and
- Residential sector.

Who to involve should also be considered in terms of four types of constituents:

- Recognized leaders from throughout the community;
 - Official decision-makers whose approval will be essential during implementation;
 - Those who will be affected by the vision that results; and
 - "Alligators" — those who are negative about Downtown and its enhancement — who are often charged with being "all mouth and no ears."
- How should each of the constituents be engaged in the visioning process?

The "how" of the community outreach process is very important since constituents are more likely to participate if they can do so in a manner they find comfortable.

The "hows" of engaging constituents in the visioning process often include:

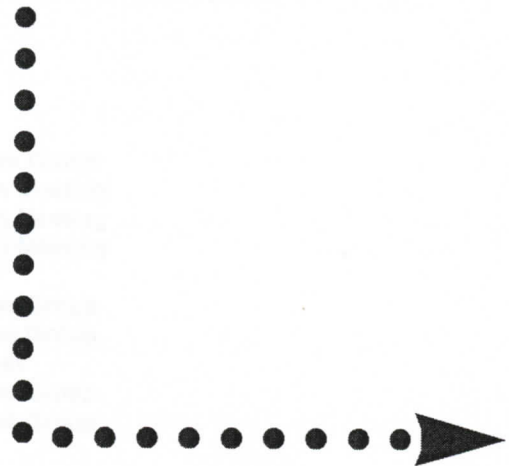
- Interviews;
 - Focus groups;
 - Work sessions;
 - Board meetings;
 - Joint board meetings; and
 - Town meetings.
- When — what is the best sequence or order for holding the sessions which will involve the identified constituents?

This entails scheduling all the sessions (the “hows”) that must be held to invite Downtown’s constituents (the “whos”) to the visioning process. There is no “right or wrong” way to schedule sessions except for one rule:

Be sure to know and follow local protocol in your community.

In some communities, protocol has it that recognized leaders are to be consulted as the first step in the vision process. In other communities, local protocol is to meet with City Council first, before engaging their constituents in vision discussions. And, in still other communities, the appropriate way to conduct the vision process is by holding a town meeting prior to meeting with recognized leaders or City Council. Whatever the scenario, local protocol must be observed since not doing so might jeopardize the success of the visioning process.

The COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS MATRIX, shown on the following page, can be used to complete Step 1 as described above — defining the who, how, and what of your Downtown visioning process.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS MATRIX

Who To Involve	How*	When
1. Mayor/Council	Work Session	
2. City Manager	Interview	
3. County Commission	Work Session	
4. City/County Boards, Depts., Commissions	Issue Session	
5. City/County Dept. Heads & Staff	Issue Session	
6. Business Orgs.	Issue Session	
a. Downtown Bus. Assoc.		
b. Chamber of Commerce		
c. DDA		
d. EDC		
7. Civic Orgs. Reps	Focus Groups	
a. Resident Orgs.		
b. Service Clubs		
c. Youth Orgs.		
8. Special Issue Gps. Reps	Focus Groups	
a. Historic Pres.		
b. Environment		
c. Social Services		
9. Key Leaders	Interviews/Focus Groups	
a. Business Owners		
b. Property Owners		
c. Developers		
d. Community Reps		
e. Institutional Reps		
10. Media (Management)	Focus Group	
11. Residents	Town Meeting	
12. Business Owners	Town Meeting	
13. Property Owners	Town Meeting	
14. Customers		
a. Retail Shopper	Focus Group	
b. Downtown Employee	Focus Group	
c. Visitors	Survey	
15. Lenders	Focus Group	
16. Funders	Focus Group	

* Suggested method of involving each constituency

- **Step 2 — Visioning: Carrying Out the Community Outreach Process**

The shared community vision itself is defined by implementing the Community Outreach Process. This is done by having a series of discussions with the local constituents who were identified in Step 1 of the process. In these discussions, constituents are asked what they would **prefer** the community to be like five or ten years from today.

The vision questions themselves, and the manner in which they are asked, must allow constituents to express their own hopes, dreams, preferences, and concerns about the future. Questions should be asked in a neutral manner so that they do not lead or bias constituent responses. To accomplish this, a number of communities have chosen to use a professional from outside the community to implement the Community Outreach Process. For best results, such a professional should be experienced in dealing with both Downtown enhancement issues and with consensus building.

Selecting the Vision Questions — Defining the “right” vision questions to ask constituents is one of the keys to successfully defining Downtown’s vision. Vision questions are typically structured to address a variety of topics or elements that exist Downtown — its preferred future visual character, uses, users, etc. Such questions will result in defining an overall and comprehensive vision for the business district. Typical vision questions include:

- What would you prefer the results of Downtown’s enhancement to be in 5 years?
- What would your ideal Downtown look like in 5 years?
- What types of uses would be in Downtown’s buildings and on Downtown land in 5 years?
- Who would Downtown’s preferred users be?

- What would your preferred Downtown's image be in 5 years?

The vision questions should be structured so that participants are asked what they would like to see accomplished or brought about in Downtown. Vision sessions should not be used to determine how to accomplish these items.

Holding the Vision Sessions — The vision sessions must be run in a manner that elicits participation from Downtown's constituents. The following guidelines can be used to ensure success:

- Keep each session to a maximum of 1-1/2 hours;
- Have a sign-in sheet at all sessions;
- Acknowledge participants as the experts on what they want to see accomplished in their Downtown;
- Ask participants to fill this role by voicing their preferences — rather than being concerned about what has been predicted or projected for Downtown's future;
- Ask participants to define their vision of Downtown as it would exist 5 to 10 years from today — most people are "present bound" and cannot successfully imagine their preferences beyond this timeline;
- Urge participants to speak up if they disagree with a point made during the session — it is unrealistic to expect all participants to agree on all aspects of the vision; and
- Free participants from the constraints of existing regulations — their visioning should not be bound by any restrictions that exist in terms of a master plan, comprehensive plan, land use plan, zoning ordinance, etc.

Moderating the Vision Sessions — The way in which vision questions are asked of constituents is as important as the questions themselves. Questions should be asked in a neutral manner so that they do not lead or bias constituent responses. To accomplish this, many communities use a professional moderator from outside the community — one who is experienced in consensus building, citizen participation and leading group discussions — to define and implement the Community Outreach Process. The advantages of using such a professional are that the professional:

- Is not aligned with any of the constituent groups;
- Does not have a personal stake or interest in the Downtown or in the resulting vision; and
- Is accomplished in eliciting citizen participation and in conducting group discussions.

The professional who leads the vision sessions must remain objective during the sessions and not substantively affect, in any way, the vision that results. It is also in the best interest of the community for the moderator to be an expert in the field of Downtown revitalization and enhancement. Such professionals serve the community and the Downtown enhancement effort best since they are able to:

- Keep participants focused on what they would like to see accomplished rather than on how to bring about those accomplishments;
- Alert participants of pitfalls — and steer them away from pitfalls — which they might suggest, such as creating a pedestrian mall in Downtown or roofing over Downtown's main street;
- Bring to the project a state-of-the-art knowledge of how to bring about the Downtown accomplishments which participants prefer;

- Realistically assess Downtown's potential to reach the defined vision; and
- Assist in defining a course of action that will enable Downtown to reach the defined vision.
- **Step 3 — Cementing: Documenting and Distributing the Shared Vision**

Once the Community Outreach Process has been implemented — and the shared, preferred community vision has been defined — it is time to document the vision in writing. The document must be scrupulously accurate in reflecting the views of the constituents who participated in the visioning process. The vision document should also specify the actions that should be taken to move the community to a very important next step — defining a course of action to reach the vision. In this way, the vision document can act as a bridge to the implementation of aggressive actions and strategies that will enable the community to reach its shared vision for the future. It is essential to remember that a vision is fruitless unless steps are taken to achieve the desired vision.

Completion of the vision document is often followed by a public presentation of the vision itself. This allows constituents to come together to hear the results of the process and to enjoy a sense of accomplishment. In addition, the vision should be officially adopted by both the private sector and public sector bodies that will be responsible for making it a reality. Copies of the vision document should be widely distributed throughout the community — certainly to constituents who participated in the vision sessions and to the media.

Using Your Vision — There is nothing worse than calling on constituents, getting them involved and enthusiastic about visioning, having them discuss their dreams and vision for Downtown, and then shoving the vision to the back of a shelf with all your other Downtown plans. This results in very disgruntled constituents and usually in the replacement of the person who initiated the visioning process. In other words —

USE IT OR LOSE IT!

The vision, once defined, must become an integral part of the management and operation of the Downtown. It must be institutionalized by being reiterated at board meetings and committee meetings of the Downtown organization; at every publicly held meeting; in discussions with government officials, volunteers, staff, funders, business owners, property owners, developers, realtors, and all other Downtown constituents; and in all discussions with the media.

Validating the Vision — It is essential that the vision be validated through a Downtown market analysis. The vision will describe what Downtown's constituents prefer. The market analysis will quantify what Downtown's market can support. These two types of data are both essential for Downtown's success.

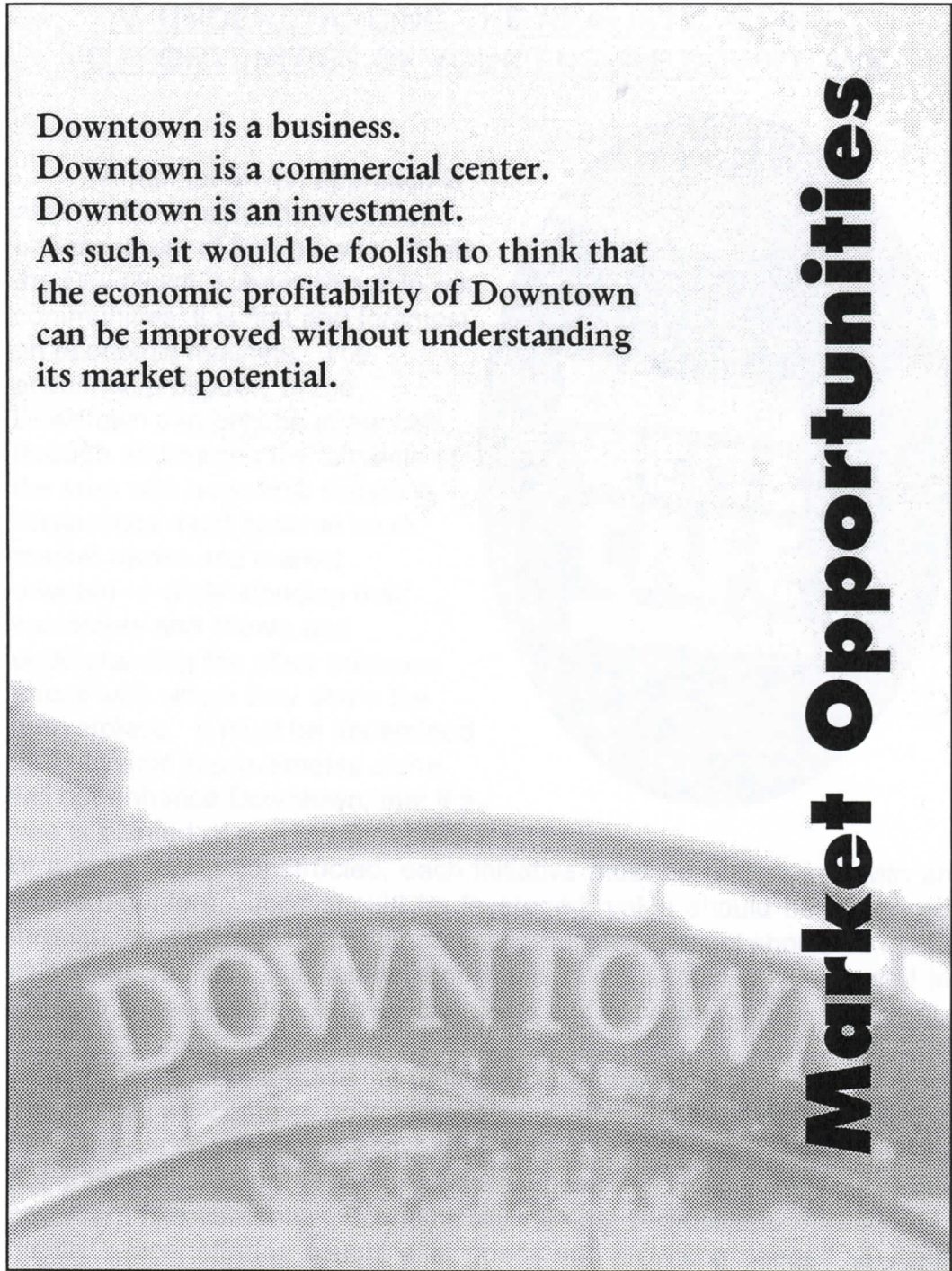
***A vision alone is simply a wish list.
A market analysis alone is simply statistics.***

Revitalizing Downtown to provide those things identified in both the vision and the market analysis — what the community prefers AND what the market can support — is the surest route to Downtown's economic success.



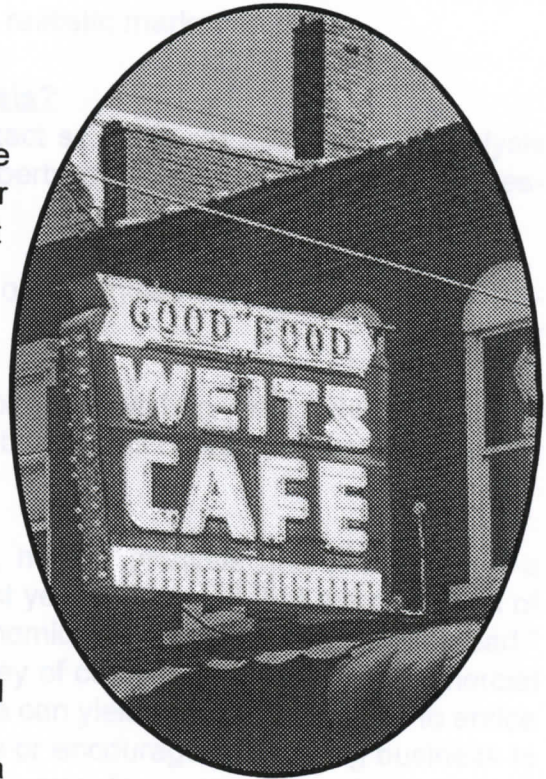
Downtown is a business.
Downtown is a commercial center.
Downtown is an investment.
As such, it would be foolish to think that
the economic profitability of Downtown
can be improved without understanding
its market potential.

Market Opportunities



IV. UNDERSTANDING THE REALISTIC MARKET OPPORTUNITIES OF YOUR FUTURE DOWNTOWN

A market-driven approach is essential to ensure the successful enhancement of Downtowns. While the Downtown is many things to our communities, it is first and foremost an economic machine. The economic prosperity of the Downtown can only be enhanced through addressing the ailments of the area with economic initiatives. Businesses must become more market aware and market oriented — understanding their customers and clients and understanding the other business forces with whom they share the marketplace. It must be understood that physical improvements alone will not enhance Downtown; that if a tree is planted or a sidewalk repaired or a civic center constructed, each initiative must be undertaken with an economic intent. Jobs should be leveraged, value should be enhanced through the attraction of greater revenue, more investment should be made in businesses and real estate, and more taxes should be generated in order to finance other vital public projects and services.



The “field of dreams” approach to Downtown revitalization — if we build it they will come — no longer works. Communities have built it — the park, the parking deck, the convention center, the museum — and they did not come; at least not likely to the extent desired to justify the cost of the physical improvements. Economically healthy businesses, operating in quality space, offering sought after goods and providing needed services bring customers and clients and revenue to Downtowns today.

In order to ensure the successful enhancement of our future Downtown, it is essential that we have a clear understanding of the economic potentials of these older commercial districts. This understanding is gained through the completion of a realistic market analysis.

What is Market Downtown Analysis?

Market analysis is not an exact science. At best, market analysis gives the business owner, the property owner, and the individual investor/developer:

- More insight into the opportunities that exist in the marketplace; and
- Most importantly, more information with which to make informed and confident decisions concerning a new or further investment.

In the case of a Downtown, market analysis has always been a rather vague concept. Many, in past years, have felt that the collection of market demographic and socio-economic data constituted a "market read." Some have felt that an intense survey of customers within the commercial district and throughout the trade area can yield the insight needed to entice a new business to locate in the area or encourage an existing business to expand or retool. Many, today, are using focus groups and visioning to gain a higher degree of knowledge relative to the opportunities and customer desires which exist in the Downtown marketplace.

Each of these approaches has helped in efforts to better understand the Downtown marketplace and economic opportunities within Downtown. But, the essence of market analysis is not gained through one or two or three discreet sources of data or data gathering techniques or projection methods. The true patina of market analysis is captured through the blending of many sources of data and many varied opinions. The very essence of quality market analysis rests in a diverse mixture of data sources and research approaches.

Quality market research should be completed in a manner similar to the construction of a stone house. The strength of the stone house is

found in the integrity of each stone, but its worth and longevity lies solely in the combined strength of all the stones. Without even one of the stones, the house will not be as sound.

Quality market research, particularly for a Downtown, relies on many varied sources of information. And, when varied sources of knowledge are combined, the whole of the market research is much more valid, useful, and usable than the sum of the individual bits and pieces of varied information.

As a minimum, as we work to create our viable future Downtown, it is essential that we gain a higher degree of knowledge concerning the retail, office and housing opportunities of our future Downtown.

Why Bother to Do a Downtown Market Analysis?

It is simply amazing that many of this nation's Downtown organizations continue to function in the realm of the unknown, or unknowing. Year after year, they complete simple project after simple project, get a business here and a business there, watch a business leave here and leave there, watch volunteers come and volunteers go. Throughout the course of business, from day-to-day and month-to-month and year-to-year, these same unknowing organizations wonder why the little town a few miles away or the big city in the northern part of the state is able to attract so many businesses, get results from their advertising campaigns, get so many corporate funders to give money to their programs, and, of all things, get so much great press coverage about all the great things happening in their Downtowns.

When these same questioning Downtown organizations finally take the time and make the effort to visit one or more of these successful Downtown enhancement organizations, they will likely find many enhancement tools in place and a solid organization behind the effort. They will also likely find that the Downtown community of businesses, elected officials, property owners, and even customers, are very aware of their position in the marketplace. They know who their customer base is, where they come from, what they earn, what they have the ability to buy, what services they need, what types of housing they would like Downtown, who the competitive businesses or business districts are, and what the business district

market niche is or niches are. It will certainly be a fact in each of these successful Downtowns that they did not simply dream or guess or speculate to acquire this market knowledge. In all likelihood, these successful Downtowns, one would find, have not only completed a market analysis, but these same successful Downtowns likely seek additional market information on a constant basis — with market analysis and knowledge not being a product as much as a process of learning and re-learning.

So, *why bother to do a market analysis?* The answer should be simple. You cannot expect to make gains or even stay in the game of Downtown enhancement today unless you play by the same rules as the best in the business — the chains, the malls, the discounters, the power centers, the strip centers and the successful Downtowns . . .

***You must understand the market
in order to take advantage
of opportunities
in the marketplace.***

What Happens if a Market Analysis is Not Completed for the Future Downtown?

If a market analysis is not completed, opportunities will not be identified, opportunities will not be realized, and opportunities will be enjoyed by others in the marketplace — translated as other businesses in other business districts or shopping centers capturing the business which could be enjoyed by your Downtown.

The time has come in our Downtowns for the businessperson to take a much more indepth look at the market served. While Downtown businesses once enjoyed a relatively unchallenged position in the marketplace, we all know that this comfort zone has eroded over the past four plus decades. Today, the profitable Downtown merchant plays by the same rules that guide the best in the business. And, as noted above, these are the chains, the malls, the discounters, the power centers, the strip centers and the successful Downtowns. The successful Downtown merchant that expects maximum return on investment knows the market served, or which can be served.

Rather than simply asking the customers what they think or want or wish for — which is still and will always remain an important source of market information — the market savvy Downtown merchant constantly strives to understand the demographic composition of the marketplace, the earnings and associated spending potential of Downtown's customers, and, most importantly, keeps pace with the changing character and nature of this vital information in order to react to opportunities resulting from growth, decline and/or shifts in the characteristics or preferences of the customer base.

Completing a Retail Market Analysis

The contemporary approach to identifying retail market opportunities and retail market orientation for a Downtown is rather simple. Every effort is made to understand the realistic retail potentials of the area based on the needs and desires of those the Downtown can realistically expect to serve.

The first step in analyzing the Downtown retail market is to gain a better understanding of the Downtown and how it functions as an economic unit today.

While there are many things similar in any Downtown, every Downtown functions, from a market perspective, a little differently. Some Downtowns continue to serve as the primary district of commerce for a community or trade area. In these cases, it is likely that such Downtowns can support a range of traditional retail goods and services — like an apparel store, shoe repair shop, hardware store and drug store. Also, in these primary commercial districts, offices, banks, government facilities, museums, and churches often continue to thrive. And, in many cases, housing is still a viable use in or near the center of these Downtowns.

For many other Downtowns, the commercial market forces have shifted within the community. Outlying retail centers have been constructed — taking with them many of the traditional retail businesses which were once the backbone of these Downtowns. Discount stores have been developed in strip centers near the new retail center or near the new bypass. Office development has moved to the edges of Downtown, in new

buildings and in former houses, and new office centers have been developed near the outlying retail complexes. Government, looking for more room to expand and to develop more parking for employees and the public, has moved from these Downtowns to more remote quarters. And, due to the lack of vibrancy in these Downtowns, most of the housing has been abandoned, leaving vacant upper-story space for some future commercial use or left to decay.

Still other Downtowns have experienced some degree of decline and market shift, but have also seen a reasonable degree of recent interest in renovation and new business development. In these Downtowns, new retail businesses are finding that the real estate is reasonably priced and ideal for a unique small business. Restaurant and entertainment business owners are discovering that these Downtowns contain structures and character which speaks to the varied tastes of those seeking something a little different and eclectic. Many small service businesses have found that these Downtowns have a vast amount of office space which is ideal for a new business — space which is flexible enough to enable growth and much more cost-effective for a business venture short on capital in its early years. And, for a few daring pioneers, these Downtowns provide one-of-a-kind dwellings, with high ceilings, large windows and a taste of “urban” found only in Downtown.

Regardless of the retail market orientation, focus, or status of a particular Downtown, including the three described above, retail market analysis can help identify what to enhance, or simply retain, what is currently in a Downtown.

An adequate understanding of the retail market served by a Downtown must be attained. Without this, it is virtually impossible to:

- Identify the best ways to enhance Downtown’s retail income; and
- Present an acceptable level of retail activity which will be supported by the customers who currently patronize, and those that are desired for, Downtown.

Who Benefits from Retail Market Analysis?

The findings of retail market analysis are beneficial to a broad range of Downtown constituents, including:

- **The owners of businesses in Downtown** — who find that the market analysis results can help them make informed decisions about restructuring their businesses, expanding business space, revamping merchandise lines, marketing their businesses, setting business hours, and opening new businesses designed to serve those who live in the trade area;
- **The owners of property in Downtown** — who find that the market analysis results can help them identify the types of tenants who can best serve the market and, therefore, lease Downtown space on a long-term basis;
- **Downtown's employees** — who find that Downtown's increased economic health makes Downtown a more appealing place to work;
- **Downtown's employers** — who find that it is easier to attract and retain quality employees when a business is located in a commercial district that is vibrant;
- **Local utilities** — which realize greater income as Downtown's vacant spaces are filled and new space is developed;
- **Local lending institutions** — which find their deposits increase and their loans become more secure as Downtown's economic health increases;
- **Local government** — which experiences increased local tax receipts from an enhanced Downtown, and which finds that an improved Downtown improves the image and quality-of-life of the entire community; and

- **The general public** — who are provided more choices by an enhanced Downtown and who find that their level of pride in the community grows in direct proportion to Downtown's new economic health.

The Retail Market Analysis Model

Following is a model for completing a retail market analysis for a commercial district. The model is designed to present a realistic picture of a commercial district's retail potential, serve as a foundation of knowledge to guide commercial area enhancement efforts, and enable the creation of a viable commercial district which provides maximum economic benefits to those associated with the operation of the commercial district.

- **Defining the Trade Area**

The primary purpose of defining the trade area of a commercial district is to establish an area within which data can be compiled to identify the characteristics of the customers and project the economic potentials of the commercial district.

The geographic limits of the commercial district's PRIMARY trade area should be identified. The primary trade area of a commercial district is defined, for the purposes of retail market analysis, as the geographic area within which the majority of the commercial district patrons are located. The customers may include residents of the primary trade area, employers and employees who work within the primary trade area, students, and visitors.

For the purposes of retail market analysis, the customers within the primary trade area are of utmost importance to the analyst since these are the individuals who provide the majority of the economic support for the commercial district.

Several key factors should be considered in the delineation of the primary trade area, including:

- Knowledge of customer movement by the analyst;

- Knowledge of customer shopping patterns determined by survey;
- Major barriers which restrict or enhance the movement of customers, such as thoroughfares, rail lines, public transit routes, and natural barriers such as rivers, and mountains;
- Major attractors of customers within the commercial district which draw customers from a broad geographic area, such as a unique restaurant, a quality department store, or an unusual specialty shop;
- Knowledge of the merchants within the commercial district; and
- Location of major competition.

Once the primary trade area has been delineated, the following information should be obtained concerning customers within the trade area:

- Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of residents within the primary trade area; and
- Numbers of employees, students, tourists, transit riders, etc., in and passing through the district.

Specific sources of information concerning population and income can be obtained from:

- Local planning, economic development and/or chamber of commerce organizations;
- Business departments, community affairs or economics departments of universities and colleges;
- United States census of population and labor publications;

- Commercial data corporations — such as CACI, Claritas, etc.; and
- Original surveys.
- **Assessment of Competing Shopping Facilities within the Trade Area**

An inventory of the competing shopping facilities within the primary trade area should be undertaken. The inventory should include an identification of other shopping facilities by location, size and type of businesses which compete with the commercial district for which the retail market analysis is being completed.

The purpose of the competition inventory is to gain a broader understanding of the market area dynamics and enable a realistic computation of the economic potentials of the commercial district for which the market analysis is being completed.

As a minimum, the assessment should address the following points.

Description of Commercial Area

- Where is the commercial area located?
- What type of commercial center is it (Downtown, enclosed mall, shopping center, commercial strip, etc.)?
- What types of stores are found in the commercial center?
- Approximately how many stores are there?
- What are the anchors?
- Cite any concentration of particular goods or services offered.
- Cite approximate square footage, if applicable.

Physical Condition of Shopping Facility

- Give the approximate age of the plant.
- Describe the condition of the buildings, signs, infrastructure and parking.
- Describe the maintenance and visual appeal of the center.

Market Position

- What is the economic role or niche of the commercial area?
- Who are the area's targeted customer groups?

Merchandise Presentation

- Describe the interiors and exteriors of the retail stores.
- Describe business practices found in the commercial area.

Marketing

- Describe any apparent marketing being done by individual stores or by the commercial center as a whole.

- **Description of Downtown's Business Climate**

An analysis of the current business climate of Downtown should be completed which characterizes the district and the overall market appeal of the area.

A thorough inventory of all existing businesses within Downtown should also be completed. Businesses should be identified by name, address, SIC classification, square footage of building and, if possible, total gross annual sales volume or average sales per square foot of floor space.

- **Resident and Business Owner Surveys**

A representative sample of residents within the trade area should be surveyed to determine where they shop and why, what they feel about the commercial district, and what they would like to see changed within the commercial district to increase their patronage.

If possible, all business owners within the district should be surveyed to determine their concerns about the district, their expansion plans within the district, and their desires for the retention of existing businesses and the opening of new businesses.

- **Conducting Focus Groups**

A relatively new technique of providing customer desire information to existing businesses is through the use of Customer Focus Groups. A Customer Focus Group consists of a group of 7 to 11 people who represent a cross-section of the commercial center's typical customers. The group is assembled periodically and asked their opinions concerning the operations of the commercial district or individual businesses of the district.

The following checklist will assist in running a successful focus group.

Moderating the Group — There are three ways of moderating a focus group. First, the group can be tightly controlled by asking each participant to take a turn responding to each question, with no interaction allowed among participants.

Second, the group can be less controlled, allowing participants to interact and discuss their views with each other as they respond to the questions.

And, third, the group can be run by combining these two styles of moderating — in response to some questions, each participant can be asked to comment in turn without interaction, and other questions can be posed to encourage group discussion.

While all three methods of moderating a focus group can be successful, depending on the skills of the moderator, it should be noted that a less controlled and more interactive discussion will involve more time than a controlled discussion. Therefore, if an interactive discussion is desired, the session should be structured to involve fewer questions than would be raised at a tightly controlled group.

Questions — Questions asked of focus group participants should be tailored to the purpose of the group, the composition of the group and the skills of the moderator. The sponsor and moderator should meet well in advance of the session and determine the specific questions to be asked.

While there are no hard and fast rules in terms of questions that should be asked, care should be taken to ensure that questions are structured to:

- Not be leading or biased;
- Not irritate or intimidate participants; and
- Not ask for sensitive information (such as age, income, etc).

- **Calculation of Sales Potential**

Based on the findings of the trade area analysis, assessment of competing shopping facilities within the trade area, and analysis of the economic conditions within the commercial district, the sales potential within the commercial district's trade area should be computed. Based on this estimation of potential, new retail sales which could be made through business expansions or new business openings in the commercial district should be projected, with results expressed in total dollar volume and square footage of floor area.

- **Potential for Existing Business Enhancement and Recruitment of Additional Businesses**

Based on the findings of the sales potential analysis, the analysis of existing business operations within the trade area and within the commercial district, the surveys of customers/merchants/property owners/residents, and the professional opinion of the market analyst(s), a listing of potentially successful new retail businesses for the commercial district and retail businesses which could be enhanced through expansion should be prepared. This listing should be used as the basis for efforts to encourage the expansion of existing retail businesses within and to recruit new retail businesses for the commercial district.

A common myth of retail market analysis is that the data which is “scientifically” generated through the analysis process will lead to the ultimate conclusion of specific types of businesses which can successfully survive within a commercial district. Market analysis gives the analyst a frame of reference. Market analysis is not an exacting science. The results of retail market analysis gives the analyst information upon which to draw conclusions of what might happen or which opportunities appear to exist. The analysis provides information which can be used to develop retail programs which address the potentials of the market as indicated by sales trends, district operations, and the overall dynamics of the market area.

The analyst must make a decision based on information generated through the analysis process and based on the best judgement of the analyst. Market analysis conclusions are based, to a great extent, on the experiences of the analyst.

Identifying Opportunities for Downtown Offices and Housing

Downtown office space is a strong economic element of most Downtowns throughout the nation today. While retail development, in many of America's Downtowns, lost much of its once dominant position, offices have continued to serve as a significant use in most Downtowns throughout the nation. In fact, office uses appear to be the most stable economic component of Downtowns throughout the United States of America today — regardless of the size of the community or geographic location of the Downtown.

Nothing in the crystal ball would suggest that offices will not continue to be a strong element in the Downtown of the future.

Housing, on the other hand, has lost much of its once pronounced position in the Downtown marketplace of most American communities over the past half century. Once a key element of Downtown's mix of uses, the number of housing units in the central business district has been drastically reduced over time, with a significant number of the nation's families, singles, and elderly opting, over the past few decades, for housing in locations

on the fringe of the Downtown and beyond.

But, today, housing is once again emerging as a viable use in an increasing number of the nation's Downtowns -- in communities of all sizes and in all locations throughout the nation. And, by all accounts, housing will be a major player in the mix of uses found in the Downtown of the future.

Downtown Office Opportunities of the Future

Most Downtown organizations and many Downtown property owners and agents today have a difficult time determining specific enhancement opportunities for Downtown office space and, as a result, have a difficult time determining exactly how to design and implement progressive actions to enhance the amount and quality of office space and the number of office occupants in Downtown.

The following facts should be kept in mind relative to Downtown office users and office space and the current state of the American Downtown office market.

- The Downtown of most communities presents an ideal opportunity for those office users who desire the integrity presented only in a traditional commercial district — the Downtown.
- Downtown is the primary office location of the major financial institutions of the nation — giving Downtown the aura of “lender confidence” even in periods of decline.
- The Downtown office occupant is a captive customer for many Downtown businesses — providing, as documented by the International Council of Shopping Centers, over \$1,500 per year per office employee in much needed revenue for retail businesses, services businesses and restaurants.
- The Downtown office occupant is an ideal resident and growing prospect for Downtown housing units.

- Downtown is the primary location for most of the nation's governmental bodies — except for the recent mass exodus by the U.S. Postal Service.
- Downtown is the primary location for the small office user — with much of the older Downtown office space originally designed for the small businesses of a century or longer ago.
- Downtown is the ideal location for the start-up office — with rents ranging from \$2.00 to \$15.00 per square foot for older office space in many of the nation's Downtowns.
- Downtown has experienced its share of newer office space development in many of our nation's intermediate and larger communities — particularly during the 1970s to 1990s — and Downtown is the only location in most communities which offers a unique blend of older and newer office space.
- Downtown is virtually the only place in a community which offers historic commercial building space — which is particularly attractive to the creative business and professional user seeking the unique image offered only in historic properties.
- On the whole, America's Downtowns have relatively high office space occupancy rates — particularly on the first floors of buildings — and occupancy should increase as more and more office users seek affordable accommodations in vibrant Downtowns.
- The upper floors of many Downtown buildings have vacant office space which currently produces nothing in terms of return to the building owners, but which presents an ideal opportunity for future revenue if the space were reconditioned to accommodate the office user.
- Downtown is the location for most of the nation's personal service businesses, including travel agencies, financial services institutions, insurance agencies, securities brokers, real

estate agencies, legal services, government services, social services, human services, membership organizations, and educational services.

- Downtown is the only office location in most communities which offers the office occupant proximity to a sound offering of many retail and service businesses that can satisfy the needs of both the office occupant and their clients/customers.

Downtown Housing Opportunities of the Future

A growing trend within Downtowns throughout America is the introduction of housing to the commercial fabric of the business district.

While, historically, housing has been one of the traditional uses found in Downtowns, today it is a use which requires a high degree of developer and lender confidence in most older commercial districts and, to some extent, a pioneering spirit. However, the market for Downtown housing has been proven throughout America in Downtowns of all sizes, including those of large, intermediate and small cities.

In successful and healthy Downtowns throughout the nation, housing is mixed with retail, restaurants, offices, entertainment, and recreational facilities. The convenience and ambience found in a healthy older commercial district presents an ideal environment for a 24/7/365 working, living, and playing lifestyle. And, the value of housing in healthy Downtowns throughout America validates the security of the real estate investment.

Without question, Downtown can offer an excellent environment conducive to a higher degree of housing development. It is unlikely, however, that a viable market for Downtown housing can be created unless the housing is introduced to the marketplace in conjunction with other efforts to enhance the overall quality of the retail, office, food, and cultural offerings of the Downtown, and unless efforts are made to improve the overall infrastructure of the Downtown, including streetscape and parking facility improvements, and ensure that Downtown is safe during all hours.

Based on current development patterns in Downtowns throughout America, several significant points/trends which should be considered in

future efforts to strengthen the housing market of Downtown include the following.

- Downtown was once the location for all housing in most communities and, as such, most Downtowns still have a significant amount of building space which was originally designed for housing — space which has been, in many cases, converted to office or retail uses, or space which is currently vacant. This space is being recognized as viable, cost-effective housing space, again, in many communities throughout the nation.
- If undertaken with a degree of reasonableness, the cost of renovating existing building space for housing within Downtowns is comparable to the cost of renovating space in outlying areas and, when compared to new construction of a similar nature, the cost of Downtown housing is often less per square foot.
- In the largest cities of the nation — including New York City, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle — Downtown housing is among the most sought after and valuable housing in the marketplace.
- In many of the nation's intermediate and smaller cities — including Portland (OR), Pittsburgh, Columbus (OH), Richmond, Nashville, Memphis, Newark (DE), Alexandria (VA), Boise, Anniston (AL), Plymouth (MI), Millbrae (CA), Tupelo, Leavenworth (KS), West Palm Beach (FL), and Millbrae (CA) — housing is a significant element of the Downtown economic fabric.
- Lending funds for Downtown housing is an ideal method for lending institutions to contribute to the economic enhancement of a community — consistent with the objectives of the Community Reinvestment Act.

- Many Downtowns throughout the nation — particularly larger urban centers — are experiencing an increase in demand for Downtown housing by second and multiple home owners.
- Many of the nation's Downtowns have a vast amount of surplus public property — including underutilized surface parking lots, air space above public facilities, and residual urban renewal land — which is ideal for the development of housing.
- Downtown has been the location for a significant number of the elderly housing projects developed in this country during the past five decades — particularly assisted housing projects — and, on the whole, these projects have been very successful.
- During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, a significant number of communities modified zoning ordinances to prohibit housing development within Downtowns — supporting, to a significant extent, the reduction of housing in Downtown and encouraging the development of housing in outlying areas. And, during the late 1980s and 1990s, many of these same cities have been revising their zoning ordinances to once again allow housing development in Downtown.

While defining a vision for your future Downtown and completing a market analysis, a variety of issues will be uncovered — issues that must be addressed and resolved if the community's vision is to be attained and identified market opportunities are to be realized.

**STRATEGIES, SOLUTIONS,
AND ACTIONS**

V. STRATEGIES, SOLUTIONS, AND ACTIONS: CREATING YOUR DOWNTOWN'S SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

While defining a vision for your future Downtown and completing a market analysis, a variety of issues will be uncovered — issues that must be addressed and resolved if the community's vision is to be attained and identified market opportunities are to be realized.

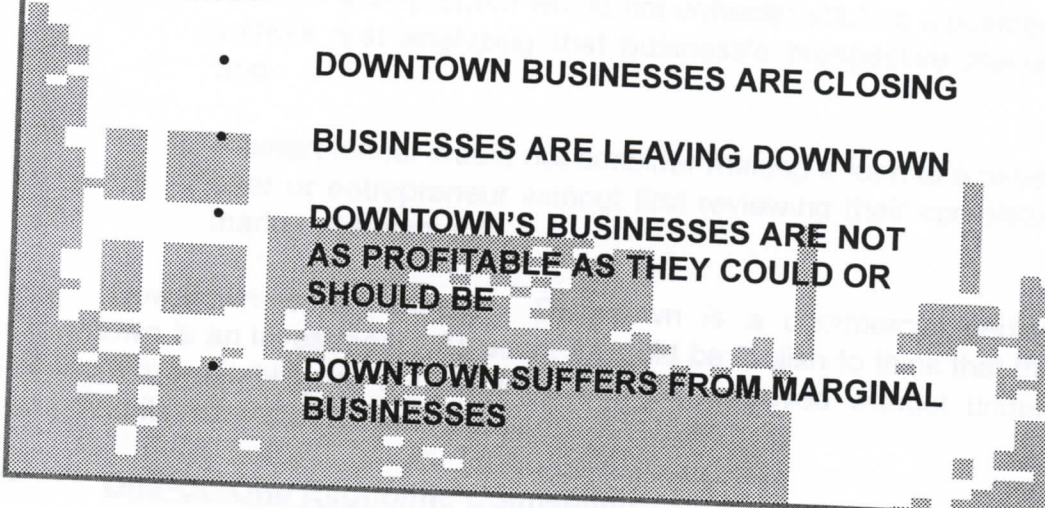
In this chapter, those issues most commonly found in Downtowns — and the strategies and approaches that are the most effective in resolving those issues — are discussed by issue category.



ISSUE:

**THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN AND RETAIN
DOWNTOWN'S EXISTING BUSINESSES**

SYMPTOMS:

- 
- **DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES ARE CLOSING**
 - **BUSINESSES ARE LEAVING DOWNTOWN**
 - **DOWNTOWN'S BUSINESSES ARE NOT
AS PROFITABLE AS THEY COULD OR
SHOULD BE**
 - **DOWNTOWN SUFFERS FROM MARGINAL
BUSINESSES**

Existing businesses are the foundation of Downtown's economic strength and will continue to occupy this position in the future. The most progressive Downtown programs today are those that make the retention and expansion of existing businesses their top priority — before placing emphasis on recruiting or creating additional businesses Downtown.

The most effective methods in use today to strengthen existing Downtown businesses include the following.

- **Comprehensive Market Analysis**
The importance of completing a market analysis for Downtown — as early into the Downtown program as possible — cannot be overstated.

The most successful Downtown enhancement programs in the country — without exception — are those that were started by completing a market analysis and use the results to drive the enhancement effort.

Why is a comprehensive market analysis so important for the economic success of Downtown? Consider this:

- A smart developer would not consider building a shopping center without first completing a market analysis;
- A smart entrepreneur would not consider starting a business without first analyzing that business's prospective market; and
- A smart lender would not consider making a loan to a developer or entrepreneur without first reviewing their completed market assessments.

Downtown is a business. Downtown is a commercial center. Downtown is an investment. As such, it would be foolish to think that the economic profitability of a Downtown can be improved without understanding its market potential.

- **One-On-One Economic Counseling**

One of the most beneficial services which can be provided to small business owners and property owners is customized, one-on-one technical assistance that focuses on helping them better serve and understand their market.

One-on-one business consultations are being used to offer assistance on economic issues that affect the success of Downtown's business owners and property owners. The topics found to be of most interest and use to Downtown small business owners and property owners, who participate in the consultations, are discussed below.



Market Information — Making the findings of the market analysis available to Downtown business owners and property owners is critical. This has proven to be essential information in helping existing business owners better serve and capture the identified market and helping property owners make informed leasing decisions.

Merchandise Testing, Expansion and Contraction — Using the findings of the market analysis, business owners can be encouraged, advised, and assisted to experiment with new merchandise lines or revise current lines so that the business is repositioned to better serve the market. This has proven to be a very cost effective method of introducing new products to the area without having to recruit additional businesses. In addition, it gives existing businesses the first opportunity to capitalize on opportunities revealed in the market analysis.

Business Plans — One-on-one consultations are a very affective way to help an existing Downtown business owner write a business plan that would interest a lender or investor. In writing the business plan, the market analysis information — regarding potential customers and sales revenues — is invaluable.

Financial Applications — Small business owners and property owners often have little time — and experience — in dealing with the “red tape” that goes along with applying for funding — whether from a lending institution or a government agency. This means that credit worthy owners might pass on applying for — or might be refused — financing that could be used to expand a Downtown business or rehabilitate a Downtown structure. This can be averted — and Downtown economic investment can be spurred — by using one-on-one consultations to help the owner fill out the necessary paperwork. Going further, the consultations often include visiting the lender with the applicant to assist in making the case for financing. The motto here is “make it simple and not time intensive” for Downtown owners to obtain financing and they will be much more likely to participate in economic development activities.

- **Market-Driven Business Hours**

Downtown businesses must strive to maintain hours which are convenient for their customers. Many Downtown programs have encouraged Downtown business owners to keep uniform hours. These attempts have been dismal failures.



Rather than attempt to operate all Downtown businesses during the same hours, it has been found to be much more productive and profitable for Downtown businesses to keep hours that mirror their customers' available shopping times.

For example, if a Downtown restaurant intends to attract evening adult diners and visitors, the restaurant will have to maintain later evening hours and weekend hours. If a bookstore intends to attract families, the bookstore will have to maintain evening, Saturday and, possibly, Sunday hours. If a hardware store desires to attract those who work, weekend hours are essential for the do-it-yourself person.

Again, the market analysis results are invaluable in helping Downtown businesses determine the most affective hours of operation. Using this data, each Downtown business owner can examine their customer base and regulate hours so that they are most convenient for the customer base being targeted. This is essential to experience the highest degree of customer satisfaction and, in turn, economic profitability.

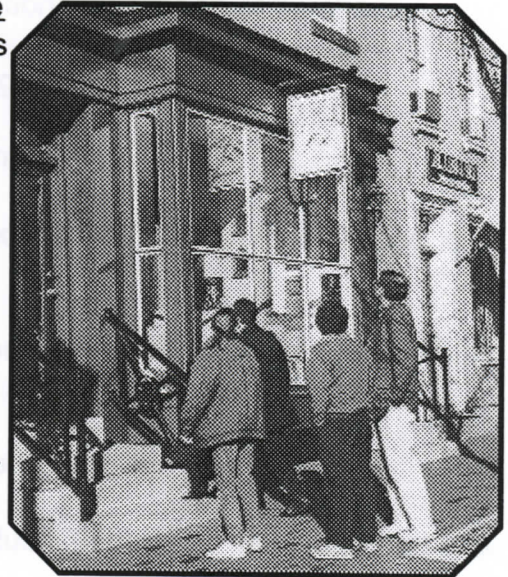
Often, this effort results not in longer business hours for Downtown businesses but in different business hours.

Taking this one step further, the most progressive Downtowns are those where businesses clustered together — to serve the same customer groups — keep coordinated business hours.

- **Memorable Customer Service**

One of the most significant tools that can be used to set Downtown apart from other commercial districts is exceptional customer service. The most profitable Downtown businesses today are those that provide the highest levels of customer service — and continuously promote the fact that they do.

In a Downtown where the majority of businesses become known for exceptional customer service, customers become conditioned to regard Downtown as the place one can expect to find this amenity.



It must be noted that, for a Downtown to earn this reputation, the customer service provided must be memorable — and not simply run-of-the-mill, “same as everywhere else” customer service.

Memorable customer service has come to include:

- Displaying a greater interest in helping and satisfying the customer than in making the sale;
- Keeping hours that are convenient for the customer, rather than for the business owner;
- Cherishing employees who are “problem solvers” and “people people” rather than merely “sales help;”
- Hiring employees who are knowledgeable about the products and services offered by the business;
- Training employees well before they are put on the floor;

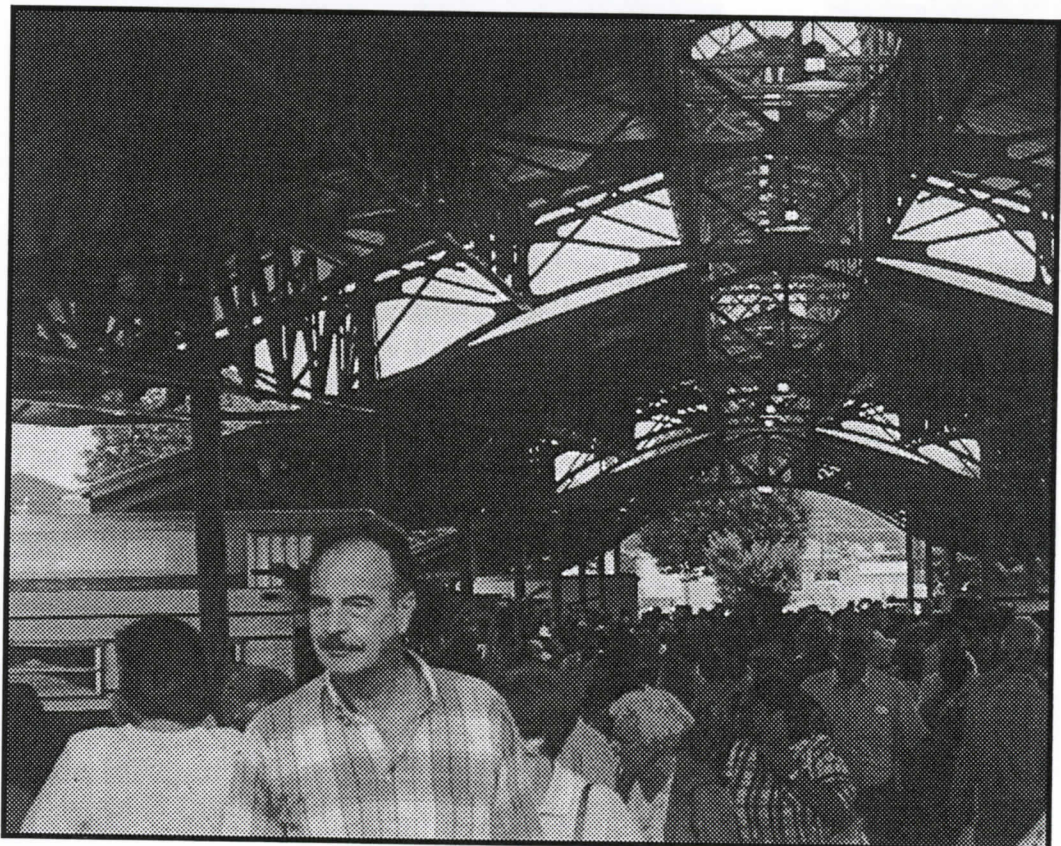
- Offering free minor alterations and repair of purchases;
- Offering free gift wrapping;
- Offering reasonable return policies;
- Accepting all major credit cards (without an added surcharge);
- Faxing product information to the customer immediately after the request is made;
- Delivering or shipping products to the purchaser;
- Special ordering of products requested by individual customers;
- Buying at market with specific customer needs and desires in mind;
- Calling frequent customers when new merchandise arrives;
- Holding a "private sale" for frequent customers a few days prior to a "public sale;"
- Matching a competitor's lower price on a particular item when a customer points out the price difference;
- Opening before or after regular business hours to meet the special needs of loyal customers;
- Making purchasing easy for busy loyal customers by bringing an array of products to their home or office so they can make their selections without making a trip to the business;
- Offering customer use of an in-store telephone;

- Offering customer use of in-store rest rooms;
 - Offering soft drinks, coffee, tea, water or other beverages to customers while they shop;
 - “Feeding” the customer’s parking meter while they are doing business with you;
 - Paying a parking ticket which a customer receives while doing business with you;
 - Sending a thank you note to the customer after the sale is made;
 - Telephoning the customer one week after the sale to ask if they are pleased with their purchase;
 - Standing behind the product long after the sale is made;
 - Continually looking for new ways to serve and thank loyal customers;
 - Referring customers to other area businesses when customers express an interest in goods and services that are not available at your business;
 - And, of course, providing a business environment that is clean, convenient, and appealing both inside and out.
- **Referrals to Service Providers**
Many Downtown organizations provide assistance to existing businesses by referring them to appropriate local service providers such as a Small Business Development Center, a SCORE chapter, municipal government agencies, etc. The rationale here is that the Downtown organization cannot be all things to all people and should not try to reinvent the wheel. Instead, business owners and local service providers both benefit if the Downtown organization acts as a liaison between the two.

It is essential that copies of the Downtown market analysis be given to each of the involved service providers. Doing so will enable the service providers to provide technical assistance that is based on sound economic information.

- **Financial Incentives**

Local efforts aimed at the retention and expansion of small businesses often focus on providing technical assistance and financial counseling prior to — or along with — providing financial assistance. The reason for this is that while financial incentives can provide businesses with a competitive edge, they do not normally help businesses develop the human and technological skills needed for long-term gains in competitiveness. In addition, offering solely financial incentives (in the absence of technical assistance) creates an additional danger: businesses that are severely undercapitalized and financially marginal might be attracted to Downtown simply for a short-term financial "crutch."



ISSUE:**THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL BUSINESSES IN DOWNTOWN****SYMPTOMS:**

- VACANCIES EXIST IN DOWNTOWN BUILDING SPACE
- DOWNTOWN'S BUSINESS MIX IS NOT ATTRACTING SPENDERS
- DOWNTOWN PROPERTY OWNERS ARE NOT AGGRESSIVELY MARKETING THEIR VACANT SPACE

While business retention is important, every Downtown in decline is in need of developing additional businesses to complement its existing businesses, improve its business mix, and add to the attractions which lure spenders to the area. The most successful business development tools are discussed below.

- **Investment Opportunities Packet**

A packet of information should be prepared that can be provided to existing Downtown business owners and prospects. The goal of the packet should be to induce business owners — both those currently in Downtown and prospects — to further invest in and enhance Downtown's business mix. At a minimum, the packet should contain a summary of the market analysis findings, an overview of enhancement efforts being undertaken Downtown, and a listing of technical and financial incentives available to those doing business in Downtown.



- **"Recruit" Businesses without Leaving Downtown**

Often the goals of recruiting additional businesses are to fill Downtown vacancies and improve Downtown's business mix. Both of these goals can be met by working with Downtown's existing businesses. Using the following techniques, a handful of progressive businesses and a current market analysis are all that's needed to accomplish these goals without ever leaving Downtown.

In-Store Diversification — Based on the market analysis, Downtown business owners can consider strengthening their business through diversification — experimenting with new products and services within the walls of their existing businesses. Retail business owners can accomplish this by allotting a small percentage of their "buy budget" for buying new lines/products when they go to market. Service business owners can do this by adding new or modified levels of service. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that the new items and services are of the types recommended in the market analysis and that their customer appeal is tracked.

Often, when in-store diversification becomes very successful, businesses will take the next step and expand beyond their current square footage.

Opening Additional "Doors" — Once they have a clearer understanding of Downtown's market potentials, Downtown's current businesses often see that there is more money to be made by opening additional "doors." This can mean taking a highly profitable in-store department and "spinning it out" into a separate storefront -- as a new Downtown specialty store. Or, opening an additional Downtown business that is in no way related to the owner's original business.

Owner Match Programs — An emerging Downtown business retention/recruitment initiative is one that involves linking soon-to-retire business owners with entrepreneurial individuals who are interested in becoming business owners. This is a particularly important business retention issue since many Downtowns lose

their most successful businesses when their independent owners retire without heirs who are interested in taking over the business. The key to this match effort is to identify future retirees early so that prospective successors can be found and nurtured before the business is closed. Ideally, prospective buyers are found early enough so that they can join the current owners in running the business for a year or two and be groomed by the successful owners before they retire.

- **Finding New Prospects**

Once Downtown's current businesses have been shown the market potentials — and encouraged to take advantage of them — then it's time to go beyond Downtown's boundaries to seek additional business prospects. This involves primarily two techniques: networking and scouting.

Networking — In short, networking means getting the word out about the specific types of businesses that are being sought for Downtown. It must be noted that networking is very different from advertising. The former involves using local and area-wide contacts and is highly effective. The latter involves impersonal mass marketing which is very costly and has proven highly ineffective in attracting small business prospects to Downtowns.

Networking to uncover Downtown prospects should include getting the word out about the types of businesses being sought for Downtown via:

- Keeping in close touch with area realtors, brokers, and Downtown property owners;
- Speaking engagements at the regular meetings of business organizations (such as the Chamber of Commerce), service clubs (such as Lions and Rotary), professional organizations, etc.; and

- Talking with those who provide professional services or advice to business owners -- e.g., accountants, attorneys, bankers, SCORE, SBDC, etc.

Scouting — Scouting entails getting into a car, driving to other business districts, and looking for quality businesses that would be appropriate for your Downtown — based on the results of the Downtown market analysis. The most successful form of scouting is the "inside-out" approach — starting by visiting business districts and businesses located closest to Downtown and working outward.

Once appropriate businesses have been identified, their owners should be contacted, invited on a guided tour of specific Downtown properties, and given the investment opportunities packet.

It must be noted that care should be taken to work closely with Downtown property owners and their representatives — realtors, brokers, etc. — throughout the recruitment process.

- **Creating Businesses**

Entrepreneurs and new businesses are important to the on-going vitality of a Downtown. In many progressive programs across the country, opportunities for business creation are being defined. This includes identifying potential entrepreneurs from the pool of local residents and businesses. Emphasis is often placed on creating businesses that would be owned by local residents and entrepreneurs.

The Downtown enhancement program must be sure to specifically address the needs of newly created businesses. For example, information or training courses dealing with business management, access to capital, budgeting, and marketing techniques might be of particular interest to such firms.

Another concept employed in Downtowns is that of developing Downtown incubator space. An incubator provides entrepreneurs, or new firms, with affordable space and a wide range of services. Prior to developing a Downtown incubator, the desirability and feasibility of developing such a facility should be explored. This would include market research, an

analysis of local demand for the facility, and local support for the concept. In addition, for Downtown settings, the approach of an “incubator without walls” is often desirable.

- **Business Clustering — The Downtown Leasing Plan of the Future**

Business clustering is an economic development tool long used by suburban shopping malls. It involves grouping together a certain mix of businesses in ways that enable them to benefit from each other’s sales, customers and markets. The success of America’s shopping malls has proven that an appropriate mix of businesses, clustered strategically, has the effect of increasing the market which the shopping mall can draw and, therefore, the potential market of each business within the mall.

Possibly the best example of this concept is what has become known in shopping malls as the “food court.” Here, a variety of food establishments are clustered side by side without interruption from any other type of business. Rather than placing these food businesses in competition with each other, and dividing the potential market among them, their clustering has the effect of increasing the size of the market each establishment could hope to draw on its own. The reason this multiplier effect occurs is twofold. First, the food court offers convenience to customers. Therefore, knowing they can find a broad selection in a single location, customers will come to the food court in larger numbers, and more often, than to an individual, destination-point restaurant. Second, once at the food court, the customer might purchase food from more than one vendor. Both of these factors — increased number of customers and multiple purchases by those customers — result in leveraged sales for the clustered businesses.



When developing a new commercial center, businesses can normally be clustered with relative ease since the new commercial space is most often controlled by one owner or agent. Businesses can be positioned in accordance with a leasing plan designed to maximize the market opportunities for all businesses by clustering stores which enhance each other's sales or markets. The clustering strengthens the entire operation.

In older commercial centers — like Downtowns — it normally takes a considerable amount of time and effort to create a cluster, or clusters, of stores. Ownership is normally scattered among many different individuals and, in most cases, building space is controlled by numerous leasing/management agents. Lease terms are generally spread over many years, which lengthens the time required to reposition businesses even if control of building space is gained.

In either case — newly developed commercial centers or older commercial centers — attention to the clustering of appropriate businesses will increase the center's chances for economic success.



ISSUE:

THE NEED TO STIMULATE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

SYMPTOMS:

- **DOWNTOWN'S BUILDINGS HAVE REMAINED DETERIORATED AND NOT OCCUPIABLE**
- **DOWNTOWN'S LARGE PROPERTIES HAVE REMAINED VACANT**
- **DOWNTOWN'S VACANT LAND HAS REMAINED UNDEVELOPED**
- **PROPERTY OWNERS/DEVELOPERS HAVE NOT SHOWN AN INTEREST IN INVESTING IN DOWNTOWN PROPERTIES**

For Downtown to succeed, it is often necessary to improve its properties so that they are able to accommodate tenants and spenders. The following tools are most effective in addressing this issue.

- **Packaging and Marketing Vacant Buildings and Property**

If Downtown has large buildings and properties which are vacant, or are vacated in the future, appropriate uses which will enhance Downtown's overall mix of uses should be sought. One of the most progressive methods of stimulating interest in large-scale development projects and in marketing vacant buildings could be through



the formal packaging of real estate projects. Once packaged, qualified private developers or buyers could be sought through a formal request for proposals to develop the space or reuse existing buildings. The goal of this effort would be to recruit qualified private buyers and developers to undertake adaptive use projects in vacant buildings and/or to build new facilities on vacant property within the Downtown. This is a very progressive means currently being employed throughout the United States to develop central city real estate — particularly large or problem sites.

The developer recruitment process should be considered as follows [this approach assumes that control of the property has been gained].

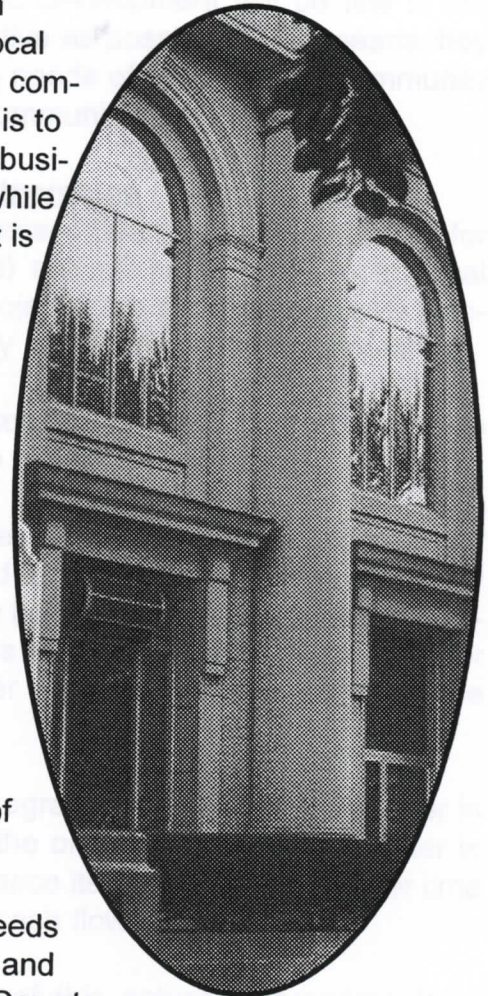
- A plan is prepared for the site. The plan should include a graphic design of the facilities desired for the site, design standards for the site's structures and an identification of the desired uses for the site.
- A prospectus should be prepared which gives an overview of the plan, proposed business deal, method of transferring ownership and market potentials of the development project.
- A formal request for proposals should be prepared and issued to solicit proposals from qualified developers.
- A listing of qualified developers should be prepared.
- Developers should be requested to submit proposals for the project consistent with the RFP.
- After all proposals are reviewed, a qualified developer should be selected, contracted with and the project should be implemented.

- **Lender Consortiums**

The most progressive Downtown programs today are bringing together local lenders to form a consortium or lending committee. The primary intent of this effort is to encourage lender participation in small business and older building improvements while spreading the risk. The secondary intent is to encourage lender participation in the Downtown program by working with them to define Downtown's financial needs and to create programs that address these needs.

Taking this approach typically involves the following:

- Establishing a Downtown investment advisory group that is comprised primarily of lenders;
- Establishing the purpose of the group as being to:
 - Assess the credit needs of business owners and property owners in Downtown;
 - Assess the adequacy of existing local financial resources to meet those credit needs;
 - Create appropriate additional financial resources to meet unmet credit needs; and
 - Work with the Downtown program to market all existing and new financial resources so that Downtown building and business improvements are stimulated.



This collective approach is being taken today because financial incentives to encourage local economic development will be few in the future, therefore, they must be as effective as possible. This means they must be both specifically tailored to the needs of the business community and to the preferences of the lending community.

- **Forming Local Investment Partnerships**

In an effort to create viable businesses (identified as appropriate for Downtown in a recent market analysis) and stimulate grass-roots, local investment in Downtown real estate projects, the most progressive communities are forming one or more locally owned investment partnerships.

The purpose of the partnerships is often to purchase property, develop property, open businesses, and operate businesses in Downtown.

For example, if a certain type of business were desired for Downtown, several local investors could form a partnership to collectively acquire or lease a building, renovate the building, and hire a qualified management partner to operate a business in that building. Each investor would share in the profits, the tax shelter and, most importantly, share the risk.

In some cases, the Downtown program itself becomes a partner in each such project which it initiates. If the organization were a partner in these deals, the organization could enhance its financial stability over time by receiving a portion of each project's cash flow.

Prior to attempting any venture of this nature, appropriate legal counsel should be obtained to ensure that the specific approach taken is consistent with applicable state and U.S. securities laws.

ISSUE:

THE NEED TO ADDRESS DOWNTOWN PARKING

SYMPTOMS:

- **BUSINESS OWNERS BELIEVE DOWNTOWN HAS A HUGE "PARKING PROBLEM"**
- **DOWNTOWN'S CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS FIND PARKING SPACES INCONVENIENT OR HARD TO FIND**
- **DOWNTOWN USERS — CUSTOMERS, CLIENTS, WORKERS, RESIDENTS — ARE COMPETING FOR PARKING SPACES**
- **DOWNTOWN ACTUALLY HAS A SHORTAGE OF PARKING SUPPLY**

In almost every Downtown that has experienced an economic decline, it is all too common to hear members of the Downtown business community proclaim "We have a parking problem." And, the most common rejoinder to this claim is "We need more parking!" However, on close inspection, Downtown's "parking problem" is usually found to be one of parking management and not a shortage of parking supply.



Communities nationwide are struggling with the question of how to make better use of the parking spaces that exist in Downtown — so that these spaces remain convenient and available for Downtown's spenders.

Those involved in Downtown enhancement efforts often find that it is much more productive and cost-effective to improve the management of existing parking spaces first, before constructing additional parking. And, at the very least, it is wise to address parking management in conjunction with creating additional parking.

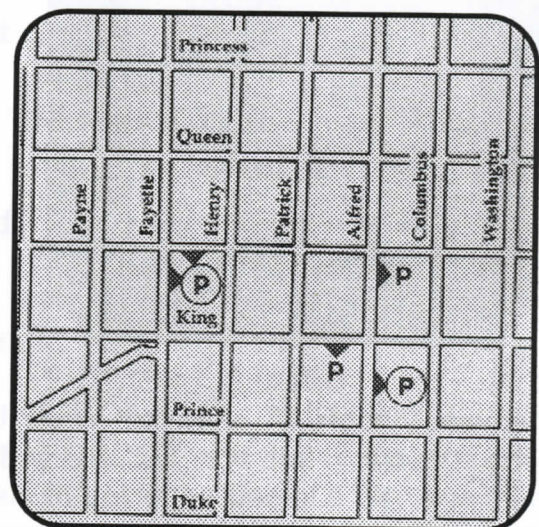
- **Parking Management**

The goal of improving parking management is often to ensure that Downtown offers convenient, available, and reasonably priced parking — that is close to Downtown businesses — for business patrons, including customers, clients, diners, etc. Following are examples of communities that have improved the management of Downtown parking — making spaces more convenient for Downtown spenders — as part of an overall Downtown enhancement strategy.

Old Town Alexandria, VA/Parking Maps — The Alexandria Economic Development Program (AEDP) is a private-public partnership with a strong track

record in business development. Several years ago, the AEDP, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and the City of Alexandria determined that the parking garages in Old Town — the city's historic Downtown — were underutilized. Given the pedestrian-scale and historic buildings of Old Town, customers and visitors tend to think of

Alexandria as a small town, despite the fact that the City's population is over 120,000. Old Town's small-town feeling leads patrons to

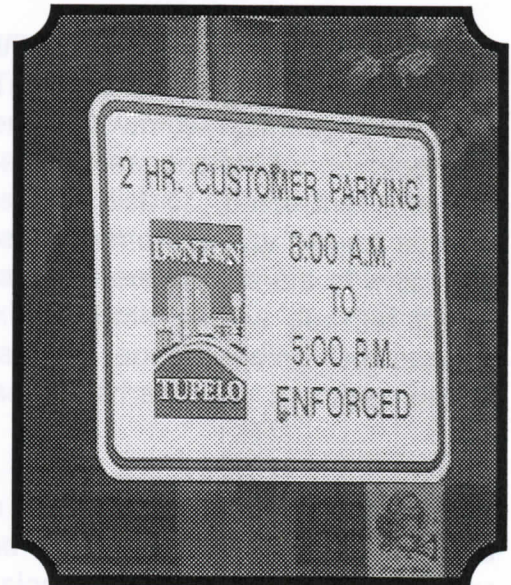


expect parking to be offered on-street (which it is) rather than in garages. To inform the public that garage parking was available — and to encourage its use — the AEDP promoted creation of a parking map, in use today.

This map shows the location of all parking garages in the Old Town area, indicates when they are open, and recaps the City's parking regulations. The map is printed and distributed by the City to all Old Town business owners, who then give the map to their patrons. And, the Alexandria Economic Development Program and the Chamber of Commerce include the map in all information they distribute about Old Town.

Downtown Tupelo, MS/Parking Signs — To enhance Downtown, the City of Tupelo formed a Downtown private-public partnership called Tupelo Main Street. A goal of the City and the Main Street group was to make on-street parking in the core of Downtown — those spaces closest to Downtown's retail shops and restaurants — as accessible and convenient as possible for Downtown customers.

The City and Tupelo Main Street decided this goal could be accomplished using signs that clearly identify on-street spaces as being for customers.



The City of Tupelo installed signs that read "2 Hour Customer Parking 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM ENFORCED" and that include the colorful and attractive Tupelo Main Street logo. Use of a City sign that shows the Main Street logo emphasizes the fact that the public and private sectors are working together for a better Downtown.

Downtown Americus, GA/Pro-Customer Parking Fines — The City of Americus formed a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to act as that city's Downtown private-public partnership. At the request of the DDA, the City addressed the issue of Downtown parking and arrived at a creative way to ensure that on-street parking is reserved for customers. Local legislation was passed which states that Downtown business owners, employees, and residents cannot park on-street during normal business hours, since on-street spaces are to be reserved for customers. And, any Downtown business owner, employee, or resident found in violation of this law is fined \$52 for each offense. Interestingly, Americus's Downtown business owners support this regulation. They do so because they understand that every time an on-street parking space is taken by a Downtown business owner or employee, the Downtown — and every business in it — loses customer revenue.

Downtown Traverse City, MI/Private Sector Management — Several years ago, the City of Traverse City and the Traverse City DDA decided to shift management of Downtown parking to the DDA — an arm of the City of Traverse City, responsible for development and marketing of the central business district. Since that time, the Traverse City DDA has managed Downtown's city-owned surface parking lots — some of which have meters and others of which are used for employee permit parking. Both parties decided that it made sense for the group that was spearheading Downtown's enhancement (the DDA) to also spearhead the management of Downtown's parking lots.

In this role, the DDA decides on capital improvements to be made, sets meter and permit fees, and establishes staffing levels. The DDA must receive City Commission approval of the budget, meter fees, and permit fees recommended by the DDA.

In its management role, the DDA has made the following major pro-user improvements related to Downtown parking:

- New "user-friendly" signs — all having the same logo and coordinated colors — have been installed to better identify parking areas and to better direct motorists to those parking areas;
- A welcome packet is given by the DDA to all new Downtown business owners and includes a description of the parking permits which are available to Downtown employees, an illustration of where employee permit parking areas are located, and an explanation of why employees parking in front of a business is bad for business;
- The DDA started a monthly parking award program in which one employee permit holder is selected each month — at random — and the permit user receives gift certificates from Downtown businesses, is recognized in the DDA's newsletter, and is featured in a local newspaper ad that includes their photo; and
- Downtown employees now get their permits at the DDA's office, instead of at the City Treasurer's office, where the DDA staff's offering of personalized and convenient service — such as calling permit holders who leave their vehicle lights on — has caused the number of permits purchased to jump from 600 to over 800.

According to the Traverse City DDA, these changes have resulted in a more cost-effective parking system as well as in an attitudinal change — Downtown business people and employees look at parking differently now, since they view the DDA as a concerned partner.

The DDA's long-range parking goals include acquiring land, building parking decks on that land, and selling surface lots for redevelopment — especially those lots along the Boardman River, which flows through Downtown Traverse City.

- **Parking Management Economics**

It should be noted that, while numbers vary from shopping district to shopping district, it is widely held that the value of a prime parking space is approximately \$150 to \$300 in retail sales per day.

Therefore, when employees and business owners park in prime Downtown spaces, the result could potentially be a loss of \$45,000 to \$90,000 per year in retail revenue per prime parking. Stated differently, for every prime parking space occupied by a business owner or employee within Downtown:

- One or two jobs are potentially being lost;
- The tax revenue which would result from \$45,000 to \$90,000 in potential retail sales is being foregone; and
- Businesses are not realizing the profits that would result from increased retail transactions.

- **Parking Perception**

The perception that Downtown has a parking problem can be dispelled by marketing efforts that include:

- Showing the location of all parking areas on any brochures printed about Downtown;
- Showing the location of parking in all ads placed about Downtown; and
- Ensuring that Downtown business owners, employees, and others do not perpetuate the negative perception by complaining about parking to Downtown's users.

- **Increasing Parking Supply**

If there exists a deficiency in the number of parking spaces within the Downtown, obviously steps must be taken to provide the deficient spaces at the earliest possible date.

ISSUE:

THE NEED TO IMPROVE DOWNTOWN'S PHYSICAL APPEAL

SYMPTOMS:

- DOWNTOWN IS UNATTRACTIVE
- DOWNTOWN'S PUBLIC SPACES ARE DETERIORATED
- DOWNTOWN'S PRIVATE PROPERTIES ARE DETERIORATED
- DOWNTOWN'S PHYSICAL CONDITION HAS CREATED A NEGATIVE IMAGE FOR THE AREA

Along with the economic adjustments that are necessary Downtown, it is also important to ensure that Downtown is physically appealing. In fact, there is a direct relationship between Downtown's physical appeal and its economic health. The following strategies are most effective in enhancing Downtown's physical appeal.

- **Investor Confidence and Curb Appeal**

Traditionally, Downtown programs have placed a high priority on improving Downtown's physical condition. In the past, this priority was considered important for so-called "soft" reasons — such as to enhance community pride and to create a sense of place. Making physical improvements for the purpose of enhancing community pride and creating a sense of place are still extremely important.



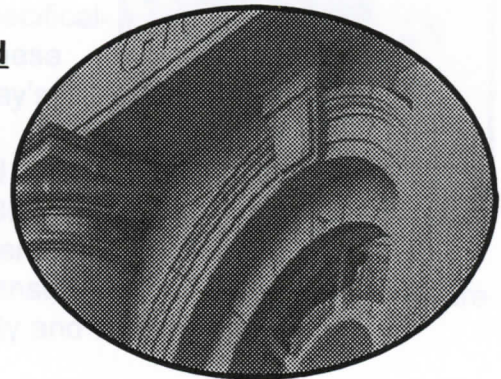
Today, however, improving Downtown's physical condition tends to be viewed as important for economic development reasons. This means there is a growing realization that, by enhancing Downtown's curb appeal, we are increasing Downtown's chances to attract investors — whether these be lenders, developers, business prospects, customers, or other Downtown users.

Because of this, steps being taken to enhance Downtown's curb appeal tend to be based on economics. In other words, not just any kind of physical improvements are appropriate. Instead, in order to help Downtown better appeal to investors, physical improvements must:

- Be of high quality;
- Be in keeping with the vision for Downtown;
- Be in keeping with the image of Downtown that is being marketed;
- Meet the needs and desires of the customer groups identified in the market analysis;
- Be appropriate for a viable commercial center;
- Be in keeping with Downtown's architectural character; and
- Be cost-effective in terms of yielding a reasonable return on investment.

- **Downtown's Architectural and Historic Character**

Recognition and respect for the architectural and historic character of the buildings of our past continues to increase. Individual buildings and entire Downtowns are gaining new customers because of their physical



appearance and the aggressive marketing of their historic character. By taking this approach, many Downtown programs across the country have proven that local residents and tourists alike can be attracted to older commercial areas whose structures have been rehabilitated in a quality and appropriate manner. In fact, "heritage tourism" is the fastest growing segment of the hospitality industry today.

Using Downtown's older buildings as an asset which can spur local economic development should not be overlooked when considering the scope, quality, and style of Downtown physical improvements. Historic character should be recognized and retained through quality Downtown improvement projects.

Property owners should be informed of the important role Downtown's older buildings play in creating Downtown's unique character and economic success. This architectural character gives Downtown an appeal that cannot be recreated. All across the country, the most successful business districts — and the most valuable Downtown real estate — are those where the architectural character of the area has been recognized as an economic asset, maintained and enhanced. Downtown property owners must be made aware that Downtown has the opportunity to turn its older buildings into visual and economic assets.

- **Building Codes**

A common misconception is that building codes dictate procedures which make cost-effective use of Downtown's older structures difficult. The fact is that the Standard and Uniform Building Codes, used by most municipalities, both contain sections specifically directed toward historic buildings. These sections allow flexibility in applying today's code requirements to older buildings.

Progressive communities have adopted these sections of the Standard and Uniform Building Codes. These communities work cooperatively with Downtown property owners to ensure that code requirements are reasonable while protecting public safety and welfare.



- **Building Renovation and Maintenance Standards**

Downtown property owners have the responsibility of improving and maintaining their property to basic standards of cleanliness and structural soundness. Every failure to do so perpetuates a negative identity of Downtown and, therefore, has a negative affect on the value of that property and on the economic health of the area as a whole.

The renovation and maintenance of buildings — both interior and exterior areas — is being encouraged by Downtown programs that establish and market clear, uniform standards which encourage **quality** private property improvements in the business district.

In doing so, a checklist of building improvement standards should be prepared which addresses the appropriate maintenance and renovation of all existing buildings throughout the area. The checklist of standards should be published and distributed throughout Downtown.

These standards must be developed with technical assistance provided by an experienced architect skilled in the appropriate renovation of older buildings and established business districts.

- **Design Assistance**

Once building renovation and maintenance standards have been established, design assistance should be provided to property owners who are interested in making physical improvements to their buildings. The purpose of this design assistance would be to assist property owners in



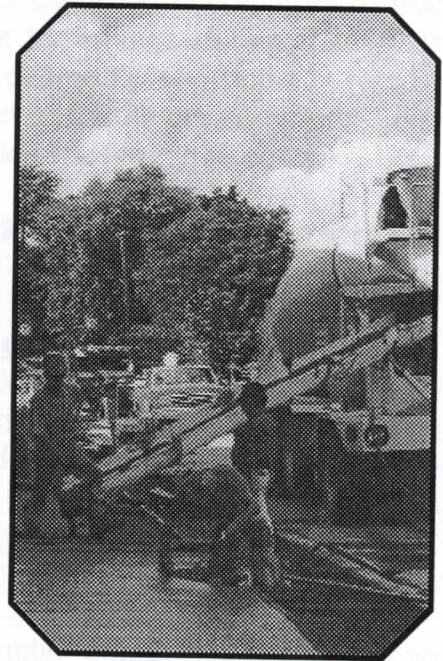
making improvements that are appropriate for the architectural style of the building and that create a degree of coordination among private property improvements made in the area, thereby enhancing the value of the area's property. Such guidance is often provided through free architectural services or subsidized architectural fees.

- **“Smart” Streetscape Improvements**

In the future, many Downtowns will most likely find that some streetscape improvements will continue to be needed, if only for on-going maintenance purposes. The implementation of needed improvements can add tremendous value to the aesthetic quality of Downtown, if undertaken in a manner that creates a unique Downtown atmosphere.

To ensure the best return on investment:

- Any streetscape improvements undertaken should not detract from or obscure the visibility of Downtown's buildings and businesses; and
- All streetscape improvements should be consistent with the character of Downtown's architecture — and not attempt to create a physical theme which is not original to the area.



Examples of communities which have respected their Downtown character with quality streetscape include: Alexandria (VA); Boise (ID); Columbus (OH); Danbury (CT); Davis (CA); Longmont (CO); Neenah (WI); Overland Park (KS); Robbinsdale (MN); Traverse City (MI); Santa Monica (CA); and Coeur d'Alene (WA).

The trend in Downtowns throughout America today is to install a minimum amount of quality landscaping and street fixtures to create clean, attractive, and low-maintenance public spaces. This approach places maximum attention on Downtown's buildings and businesses, rather than on Downtown's streetscape. This contemporary move is being prompted by aesthetic concerns, but is also the result of reduced installation and maintenance budgets due to tighter local tax revenue and limited federal or state funding for such improvements. In fact, many of the communities that installed elaborate landscaping and street furnishings during the 1970s and 1980s are now rethinking these improvements and actually removing/redoing many of the projects in an effort to retrofit the commercial districts to a more traditional style and to reduce maintenance costs.

In addition, priority should be placed on streetscape improvements which do not create safety problems.

- **Maintaining Downtown's Curb Appeal**

The condition of a Downtown's public spaces has a great affect on that Downtown's economic health. A Downtown whose public spaces are not regularly cleaned, or have been left to decay, is often seen by the public as having been abandoned. This sends the message that Downtown is not valued or valuable. And this message, in turn, sends investor, lender, and consumer confidence plummeting.

Given the potential impact of public space maintenance on Downtown's overall economic outlook, many communities are implementing strategies to deal with this issue — as part of a comprehensive, overall Downtown enhancement program. There are a wide variety of ways that Downtown public space maintenance issues can be addressed. These range from:

- Comprehensive, complex, multi-dimensional programs to single-track efforts;
- Varied staffing that includes the use of maintenance crews, private contractors, municipal employees, non-profit groups, volunteers, and social service agency clients;

- Municipal governments paying Downtown organizations for services and vice versa; and
- The use of varied funding sources that include special assessments, tax increment financing, state grants, and general funds.

The examples that follow illustrate that there truly are a myriad of ways to maintain Downtown's public spaces — and we can learn from each other's creativity and innovations as we tackle an issue common to all Downtowns.

Most importantly, it must be said that — while this issue must be addressed in all Downtowns — no two Downtowns are exactly alike. Therefore, the methods used to maintain public spaces in your Downtown must be chosen based on individual needs, resources, and realities.

Public Parking Signs — Public parking lots often play an important role in Downtown's economy. And, many local governments are taking steps to make these public spaces more appealing and attractive. An excellent example of this pro-consumer approach can be seen in the City of Barberton, Ohio. In Downtown Barberton, the City has installed signs which identify public parking lots and make them easy to use. However, the City realized that a posted sign does not only convey information to the public — it also conveys an image. Therefore, signs in Downtown's parking lots are attractively designed, include the City's logo, and are beautifully landscaped.

This attention to detail conveys the message that the City of Barberton values its Downtown, Downtown patrons, and Downtown's continued vitality.

Spring Spruce-Up — The Village of Cobleskill, New York was the first community in the nation to complete a Downtown Audit using the technical assistance program entitled ***America Downtown: New Thinking. New Life.*** One of the Audit's recommendations was to "organize and hold a Spring Spruce-Up to clean-up and paint-up Downtown's public and private property." The event took

place on a Saturday morning in April, lasted 4 hours and involved over 100 volunteers who cleaned public and private lots, washed storefront windows, swept sidewalks, and hauled off debris. The Village government provided crews to help haul trash and over 40 students from Cobleskill College turned out to participate in the event.

The spruce-up was spearheaded by the Cobleskill Partnership, a group of private and public sector representatives whose top priority is Downtown's enhancement. According to Cobleskill's then Mayor Gregory Flanagan, the spruce-up was such a huge success that it will become an annual event in Downtown Cobleskill.

Downtown Plymouth DDA Takes the Lead — In 1983, the City of Plymouth, Michigan created its Downtown Development Authority (DDA), funded by a Tax Increment Financing district, to issue bonds and service debt for a Downtown parking garage. At that time, the City's Department of Public Works continued to provide maintenance services to Downtown. However, in 1993, the DDA (which is an arm of the City) began to manage Downtown maintenance for the City, an efficiency that resulted in cost savings in the very first year.

Downtown's older infrastructure has been fairly inexpensive to maintain. During the summer months, the DDA contracts with local college students for intensive litter pick-up that is required when more people are using Downtown's outside public spaces. From autumn through spring, the DDA contracts with a private maintenance contractor. Maintenance workers are uniformed and highly visible, adding an official presence to Downtown's streets. The City's Department of Public Works supplies labor and equipment in Downtown to remove snow, sweep streets, empty litter receptacles, recycle cardboard boxes, and plant and maintain flower beds.

Approximately \$28,000 is spent annually by the DDA for payroll, supplies and equipment related to maintenance, which includes a walk-behind vacuum to clean Downtown's sidewalks 3 times each week. The always-present vacuum also contributes to the appear-

ance of cleanliness and efficiency. Customers know that someone cares about Downtown, and they perceive the environment as neater and cleaner.

The DDA issued bonds for a \$2.8 million streetscape improvement project, completed in the 1990s. As a result, Downtown Plymouth now has new concrete curbs and brick pavers at every intersection, new sidewalks, street trees with protective grates, street lights, planter boxes at every intersection, information kiosks, drinking fountains, benches, and litter receptacles.

“Dedicated” Robbinsdale City Employee — Robbinsdale, Minnesota's development dates back to the 1880s, with Downtown being rebuilt with masonry buildings in the 1920s and 1930s. In the early 1990s, the business community and other civic groups participated in the process of developing a shared vision for the future of Downtown Robbinsdale. As a result, the Robbinsdale City Council adopted a streetscape improvement plan for a three-block long section of West Broadway, Downtown's historic main street.

Design of the improvements was based on a thorough analysis of entryways to the district, history, development patterns, pedestrian and vehicular movements, parking, landmarks, and scenic views. The \$1.7 million program provided for an open space network of organized and cohesive elements including streetlights, brick sidewalks, seasonal and special event banners, benches, trash receptacles, street trees and annual planting beds, a kiosk and a new town clock. These customer amenities link Downtown commercial areas to neighboring residential, institutional, and recreational areas.

Maintenance of the improved district is the responsibility of the City of Robbinsdale's Department of Public Works, which delivers a variety of services to keep the area neat and clean. In addition to emptying trash receptacles and removing snow from sidewalks and streets, the Department has dedicated one part-time worker to conduct daily inspections for litter and debris. Once each week, before daybreak, this worker moves through the area with a high-velocity

blower and moves any trash into the curb where it is immediately picked up by a mechanical sweeper. The worker also maintains the new fountain and waters and weeds flower beds, which are planted annually by the Diggers Club, a local gardening group. New street trees are watered and pruned by the City. Quarterly maintenance of the town clock and periodic maintenance of the new streetlights, including bulb changing, are responsibilities of independent contractors or the local utility, Northern States Power.

The improvement project was so successfully that the City extended the new design treatment to 6 additional blocks of West Broadway and to 1 block of a parallel street.

- **Accessibility**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is a federal law that protects the rights of persons with disabilities in an effort to assure that they have equal access to public services and accommodations. Privately owned establishments, such as commercial businesses, restaurants, and motels, provide public accommodation and are subject to the requirements of ADA. It is essential that Downtown improvement programs educate business and property owners on ADA requirements and assist with feasible and appropriate improvements necessary for compliance. All new improvement projects must be designed for compliance with ADA requirements. Information concerning compliance with ADA can be obtained in a publication of the U.S. Department of Justice titled ADA Guide for Small Businesses. This and other publications of the department can be obtained, free of charge, by calling 1-800-514-0301.



ISSUE:

THE NEED TO ADDRESS DOWNTOWN SAFETY

SYMPTOMS:

- **DOWNTOWN IS PERCEIVED TO BE UNSAFE**
- **BUSINESS PROSPECTS AND SPENDERS ARE AFRAID TO COME DOWNTOWN**
- **DOWNTOWN ACTUALLY IS UNSAFE**

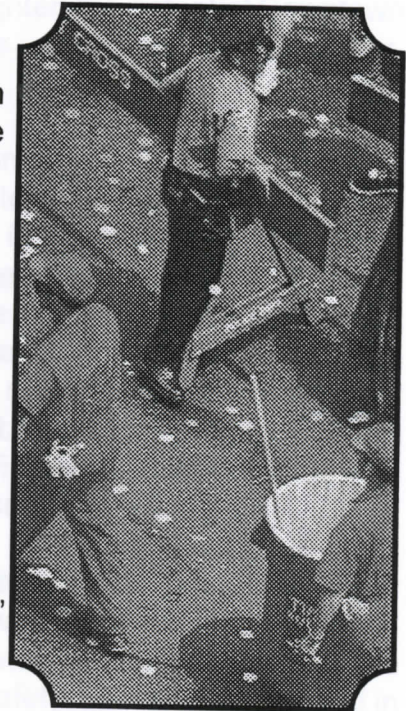
As noted by the HyettPalma publication titled *Downtown Safety: Addressing the Myths and the Realities*, the reality in most communities is that the Downtown crime rate is actually lower than the crime rate in the remainder of a community. However, due to a variety of factors, community residents often perceive Downtown to be a “high crime” area.

At the same time, Downtowns throughout the country — particularly those in larger cities and urbanized areas — are experiencing real safety problems. However, it should be noted that, where real safety problems exist in Downtowns, the crimes that predominantly occur tend to involve crimes against property (such as vandalism of buildings, public space, and cars) and crimes against businesses (such as shoplifting, bad checks, etc.) as opposed to crimes against individuals (such as muggings, rape, etc.).

Through conducting surveys and focus groups, HyettPalma has found that a variety of items contribute to the perception that a Downtown is unsafe. These items tend to fall into the following three categories.

- Physical and Environmental — These items involve the condition of property, the presence of litter and graffiti, the physical layout of public spaces, and Downtown lighting levels.

- Social — These items involve the presence of homeless individuals, people “hanging out” on the street, the public use or sale of drugs and alcohol, and the presence of panhandlers.
- Image-Related — These items involve the frequency of media reports and the message conveyed in these reports concerning safety issues in and related to Downtown.



The following observations and remarks, regarding the above three categories, were collected by HyettPalma from survey respondents and focus group participants:

- A Downtown that is not well-maintained is perceived as being “abandoned” and, therefore, is assumed to be unsafe;
- Public space that is laid out so that portions are not clearly visible — due to blind corners or dense landscaping, for example — are perceived to be unsafe;
- Downtown streets and parking areas that are not brightly lighted tend to be viewed as “scary” and, therefore, are avoided by those on foot;
- The presence of homeless people, panhandlers, and individuals or groups “hanging out” in Downtown public spaces are intimidating to customers — even if these individuals make no approach to the customer — and, therefore, customers try to avoid the areas of Downtown where this presence occurs; and

- Media reports of Downtown heighten the potential Downtown customer's awareness of what is — and what is not — occurring in Downtown.

It is ironic that the physical, environmental, social, and image-related items discussed above often carry greater weight — in terms of a Downtown being viewed as unsafe — than incidents of real Downtown crime. This is because the items above are extremely visible in a declining Downtown. Downtown's customers, clients, and visitors see these items on a daily basis and, therefore, constantly have their perceptions reinforced of Downtown as abandoned, scary, or intimidating. On the other hand, real Downtown crime (muggings, robberies, bad checks, etc.) is comparatively invisible — it occurs in a very finite time period and all visible evidence of the occurrence is often gone immediately.

For these reasons, it is as important to address perceived safety issues as well as real safety issues in Downtown. And, because the physical, social and image-related elements of Downtown are so related to the perception of Downtown's safety, Downtown safety cannot be addressed in a vacuum. Instead, Downtown safety must be tackled as only one element of a comprehensive Downtown enhancement effort.

- **Community Policing**
A discussion of safety and security issues cannot take place today without a discussion of community policing.

Community policing, in its simplest form, is getting back to the basics — to local police personnel and citizens working together to address and resolve the problems facing their community. Community policing is a "user-friendly" form of policing that is based on the philosophy that the community, as well as the local police force,



have a responsibility and a role in preventing crime. This partnership between community and police force creates a strong community which is the best weapon against crime.

Community policing is centered on a philosophy that a primary mission of a local police force is crime prevention — and not merely responding to calls. The success of the community policing approach is partially dependent upon the administrative side of law enforcement. It generally requires visionary leadership, participative management, and support of police officers spending time to personally get to know the people — residents, business owners, etc. — who are in the area they patrol.

Community policing typically involves establishing and maintaining a highly visible and personal police presence. Common ways of accomplishing this often include making a shift from car patrols to:

- Foot and bicycle patrols;
- Police sub-stations; and
- Crime “watch” programs.

Developing a personal relationship between police officers and area residents and business owners is an integral part of community policing. This approach has been embraced based on the belief that an individual’s feeling of safety is enhanced by knowing police officers personally. Community policing is being used in business districts to afford business owners and employees an active role in both controlling criminal activity and addressing the public’s fear of crime.

- **Effective Safety Strategies**

Without a doubt, the community policing movement has had an impact on the way in which Downtown safety concerns are being addressed today. The primary evidence of this impact is the emergence of new partnerships between the Downtown business community and local police. Through these partnerships, Downtown business people and the local police force work together to cooperatively:

- Identify the real and perceived safety issues that are facing Downtown;
- Select the best strategies for resolving those issues; and
- Define the roles of the parties that must be involved in implementing the strategies chosen.

The wide range of strategies being implemented by these business-police partnerships tend to fall into the following categories:

- Communication and networking efforts;
 - Educational and training programs;
 - Physical and environmental improvements;
 - Addressing social issues;
 - Enhancing police presence;
 - Augmenting police presence;
 - Stepped up legislation and enforcement; and
 - Tackling drug activity.
- **Several Examples of the Best**
Innovative communities have devised innovative strategies for improving the perception and reality of Downtown safety. Here are a few examples of the "best of the best."

Miamisburg, Ohio's Bike Patrol — A few years ago, Miamisburg started a bike patrol with 3 trained officers. Today, the force has 7 officers who attended a rigorous one-week bike patrol training session. The training includes instruction on how to ride patrol bikes in all kinds of situations, how to ride up and down stairs, and firearms training -- so officers know how to cope with using firearms

while their pulse and heart rates are elevated from bike use.

Miamisburg City officials decided to start the bike patrol primarily for three reasons. The main reason was to make the City's officers more accessible to the public. Bike patrols are a positive police presence that allow officers to build face-to-face relationships with Downtown business people and neighborhood residents. The other two primary reasons for the bike patrol include the fact that it provides officers a good "on-the-job" physical fitness program and it affords the City's police force an element of surprise — law breakers don't expect police officers to be cruising along on bikes.

Public reaction to the bike patrol has been overwhelmingly positive. The City has received many favorable comments about the patrol and found it is especially popular with kids.

Curfew and "Door Shakes" in Morris, Illinois — Several years ago, the main street of Downtown Morris became a popular hang-out for local teens, as well as for teens from neighboring communities. The situation became so critical that in excess of 200 teens could be found congregating there on weekend nights during the school year and on most nights during the summer. Traffic would be bumper-to-bumper as kids honked, waved, and visited with friends.

According to police officials, the large numbers of kids encouraged their bringing alcohol, which led to fights, breaking of store windows, and other forms of vandalism. To keep the situation under control required the Morris Police Department to assign one squad car and 4-8 foot walkers specifically to Downtown on weekend nights.

The City of Morris began to enforce curfew legislation requiring teens under 16 to be home by 9 PM seven days a week and teens from 16 up to 18 years old to be in by 10 PM. Teen attendance at school activities, church activities, and work are not restricted by the curfew. The curfew was put into place on a Saturday night — and not one person violated the curfew on that first night. Since then, there have been very few curfew violations, kids no longer congregate Downtown, and the Morris Police Department has found it no

longer necessary to assign patrols specifically to Downtown. And, Police Department personnel routinely work with parents and local schools to find alternative activities for the community's teens.

To further enhance safety in Downtown Morris, police conduct a "door shake" every night between 10 PM and 7 AM. This entails two officers walking Downtown and shaking every front and back door of every Downtown business once a night at varying times.

Halifax, Nova Scotia's Downtown Safety Audit — In order to address Downtown safety problems -- and dispel inaccurate perceptions — the Downtown Halifax Business Commission decided to conduct a Downtown safety audit. The Commission assembled 18 individuals to be the "safety auditors." The 18 auditors were divided into groups of three, and conducted the audit over the course of three evenings.

The auditors were instructed to pretend they had just come from having dinner or seeing a show in Downtown and were walking to the bus stop or to a parked vehicle on their way home. The auditors were also instructed to take a variety of routes — through pedestrian walkways, along the waterfront — so that the entire Downtown area would be audited.

The auditors were instructed to ask themselves along their walks "how safe do I feel here," "if I were a tourist, how safe would I feel," and "what kinds of safety concerns do I have in this part of Downtown?" Each group was given a clip board and asked to jot down their feelings and concerns regarding Downtown safety.

The results of the audit contained one major surprise — the vast majority of safety problems identified were items that could be very easily corrected, such as shrubbery that was too high or dense, lighting levels that were too low, directional signs to Downtown attractions that were missing, and blind corners along pedestrian walkways that could be corrected with mirrors. The Downtown Commission contacted the owners of properties identified as having safety problems to inform them of the audit results, offer sugges-

tions, and ask them to fix the problems. The Commission found that most of the owners had not realized the problems existed and were very willing to correct them.



ISSUE:

THE NEED FOR CITY HALL TO BE PRO-DOWNTOWN, PRO-BUSINESS, AND PRO-QUALITY

SYMPTOMS:

- GOVERNMENT ORDINANCES AND POLICIES HINDER DOWNTOWN'S REVITALIZATION
- GOVERNMENT PROCEDURES DETER DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT

Often, an array of municipal policies and procedures effect the success of Downtown's enhancement. The following strategies can be used to ensure that these policies and procedures are pro-Downtown, pro-business, and pro-quality.

- **Updating Planning Policies**
A growing number of local officials, community leaders, and Downtown professionals are realizing that local ordinances and processes often hinder Downtown from attaining the community vision and taking advantage of market opportunities. This is often caused by dated regulations and procedures — and is totally unintentional.

Therefore, there is the beginning of a movement across the country to revise and update these regulations and procedures — and to adopt new policies — that are aimed at protecting the future economic health of Downtown. To date, this movement has tended to include the following.

Guiding Sound Downtown Development — Efforts are being made to adopt sound, market-driven planning policies which will guide the future development of all Downtown property and the placement of uses throughout Downtown.

Local governing bodies are formally adopting the Downtown business plans — that are defined through a private-public partnership — as the Downtown element of the community's Comprehensive Plan. This sets the stage for using the Downtown element to officially and legally guide the future placement of uses and buildings throughout Downtown, the revitalization of appropriate buildings within the area, and the development of vacant property throughout Downtown.

Reserving First Floors for Non-Office Uses — Efforts are being made to reserve the first floors of buildings within appropriate areas of the Downtown — normally the core of most Downtowns — for retail uses. As a first step, building owners are being encouraged to voluntarily honor this policy — since it is in their best economic interest. In the most progressive communities, this policy is being formally adopted as a stipulation in the local zoning ordinance.

Keeping Public Uses Downtown — Most Downtowns are and should remain the center for a multitude of public uses, including general governmental uses, utility systems and companies, library facilities, cultural facilities, the post office, court facilities, and public open spaces. Each of these uses not only brings people to Downtown, but enables Downtown to maintain its position as the center of business and social life in a community. As has been found in communities throughout the nation, when any of these facilities are removed from the fabric of a Downtown, the area's significance as the community center is weakened.

Progressive communities are implementing policies and taking steps to ensure that a broad range of public uses are maintained within Downtown and afforded the opportunity to grow, when appropriate.

Managing and Containing Development — As a Downtown becomes healthier through enhancement efforts, pressure will likely surface to expand the boundaries of Downtown to accommodate growth. This will result in a protraction of the critical mass of commercial development and require, in many cases, the potential

demolition of housing or other non-commercial uses adjacent to Downtown — both of which may not be good for the Downtown or adjacent neighborhoods. Progressive communities are adopting policies to contain development of a Downtown within its current boundaries for the maximum period of time. This protects two of the most valuable characteristics of a healthy Downtown — its compactness and its critical mass — while at the same time protecting nearby neighborhoods which house a valuable Downtown customer base.

- **One-Stop-Shop**

In many progressive Downtowns, the office of the Downtown program serves as a clearing house for all information on Downtown. This “one-stop” service often includes information on applicable government regulations and policies, design standards and guidance available, local resource providers, and local incentives available.

A one-stop-shop constitutes a single location where business and investor prospects can go to:

- Learn about reviews and regulations that apply to Downtown;
- Get help with quickly and successfully navigating through these processes; and
- Get any help needed to locate in Downtown as quickly as possible.

Optimally, the one-stop-shop means that a business or investor prospect could work with just one individual in order to comply with all reviews and regulations affecting Downtown and to locate in Downtown. In communities where one-stop-shops have been formed, the result is greater efficiency, a shorter timeline for compliance and investment, and very satisfied clients. Creating a one-stop-shop causes Downtown to become known as one of the easiest places in the community to do business.

- **Streamlining Government Processes**

Municipal governments across the nation are streamlining their review and permitting processes. Understanding that “time is money”, especially for the small business owner, streamlined processes are aimed at helping investors get into business as quickly as possible. Often, streamlining procedures can be accomplished by simply increasing the administrative authority given municipal staff — allowing staff to routinely approve applications that meet all plans and guidelines — rather than requiring such projects to go before the planning board or other municipal commissions.



ISSUE:

**THE NEED TO IMPROVE DOWNTOWN'S
IMAGE AND DRAW**

SYMPTOMS:

- DOWNTOWN HAS A NEGATIVE IMAGE
- DOWNTOWN HAS AN UNCLEAR IMAGE
- DOWNTOWN'S BUSINESSES NEED MORE SPENDERS
- DOWNTOWN'S POTENTIAL SPENDERS DON'T KNOW WHAT DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES OFFER

For Downtown to be economically successful, it is often critical to improve its image and to attract additional users to the area. The following strategies can be used to most effectively address this issue.

- **Public Relations Campaign**

Typically, one of the first elements of a Downtown enhancement program includes steps to improve Downtown's image. This is often accomplished by:

- Issuing frequent press releases to area media on a continual basis;
- Compiling a Downtown "in-house" mailing list to enable target marketing;
- Producing a newsletter, on the part of the Downtown organization or in association with others, that is widely distributed; and

- Producing a Downtown brochure that discusses the enhancement program and lists all of Downtown's offerings.

- **Professional Marketing Campaign**

Downtown's customers and potential customers are sophisticated and smart consumers who have many shopping options. And, they are constantly being bombarded with sophisticated marketing messages. The most progressive Downtown efforts in the country today are those that have realized the need to implement a formal marketing campaign that is every bit as professional and comprehensive as the competition's.

The most progressive Downtown efforts today — such as the ones in Medford (OR), Plymouth (MI), and West Palm Beach (FL) — are implementing sophisticated marketing campaigns which are designed by marketing professionals and which are based on a recent market analysis. These campaigns include the following principles.

Stress Economic Themes — The most progressive Downtowns today are beginning to implement campaigns that stress the economic niches and clusters defined for the Downtown through market analysis.

Be Professional — Because Downtown's customers are sophisticated and smart, the Downtown marketing campaign must be professionally crafted and of very high quality. Volunteer efforts, no matter how well-meaning, will fail to lure these consumers if they are executed in an amateur way.

Be Comprehensive — The campaign should be comprehensive by being multi-faceted, setting out goals and strategies for image development, direct marketing, special events, business events, and business advertising.

Clearly Stress Image — Every facet of the campaign should reinforce the image of Downtown as a whole, and the economic identity of each area of Downtown. In this way, each part of Downtown can be positioned as being unique, yet an overall identity for the entire Downtown can also be created.

- **Business Advertising**

In addition to advertising conducted by individual businesses, a Downtown enhancement program typically encourages Downtown businesses to participate in the following types of advertising:

- Co-op advertising that promotes Downtown and its collection of businesses as a convenient one-stop-shopping experience;
- Cross-advertising among businesses that can exchange customers — such as a movie theater and an ice cream parlor or restaurants and hotels; and
- Category advertising by businesses that are of the same type and that can share customers, such as antique shops and art galleries.

- **Multi-Language Marketing Efforts**

Cultural diversity is becoming more and more a way of life in our country. In creating the successful Downtown of the future, Downtown leaders must go out of their way to become aware of all the different languages spoken by Downtown's customers, users, and patrons. And, then, the Downtown marketing campaign must include ways to communicate with these individuals in their native languages.

- **Downtown Events**

Special events are important in bringing people to Downtown to have fun. However, given the fact that they are tremendously labor intensive, special events can overwhelm those involved in the Downtown enhancement effort. Therefore, the following guidelines should be used in order to keep special events in perspective and ensure their success:

- It is far better to sponsor a small number of high-quality special events than a large number of mediocre events;
- This small number of special events should be held annually and their attendance levels should be grown annually — rather than holding one-time events or adding new events each year, that draw small crowds;
- To draw the biggest crowds, special events should be family-oriented;
- Downtown should become known for one “signature event” that is held annually and captures the image of Downtown;
- Whenever possible, special events should include a “business tie-in” — a tactic for drawing event-goers into Downtown’s businesses;
- Whenever possible, the Downtown organization should seek other groups to sponsor and produce the special events; and
- Planning and implementing the special events should not be the sole responsibility of Downtown staff — instead, this should be the responsibility of a large number of dedicated, active volunteers.



- **Downtown on the Web**

Increasingly, Downtowns are showing up on the Worldwide Web -- either with their own free-standing Web sites or as part of Web sites created by City Halls, local Chambers of Commerce, public libraries, etc.

Why are Downtowns going on-line? The reasons are many. The most prevalent reasons are shown below.

- City Halls, Downtown business organizations, Downtown Development Authorities and other groups are using the Web as a way of improving, strengthening, and re-creating Downtown's image -- as part of an overall Downtown marketing campaign.
- Web sites are being structured to keep local and area residents informed about what they can find, buy, and do in their Downtown -- and to attract tourists, from far outside of the local community, to Downtown.
- To attract investors -- including business prospects, building purchasers and real estate developers -- who might be interested in buying or leasing Downtown properties.

It's a good idea to determine exactly what you hope to accomplish with a Downtown Web site before you create one. However, more and more Downtowns, merchants association, and City Halls are creating Web sites for one simple reason:

***Their constituents
expect to be able
to find them on the Internet.***

Having a Web site is becoming so prevalent, in fact, that not being "on the Web" can make a Downtown organization or a City Hall appear to be behind the times.

To get the most out of a Downtown Web site, it's not enough to simply be on-line. Instead, the site must be appealing so that it attracts visitors and keeps their interest -- making them want to both spend a longer time at the site and return often.

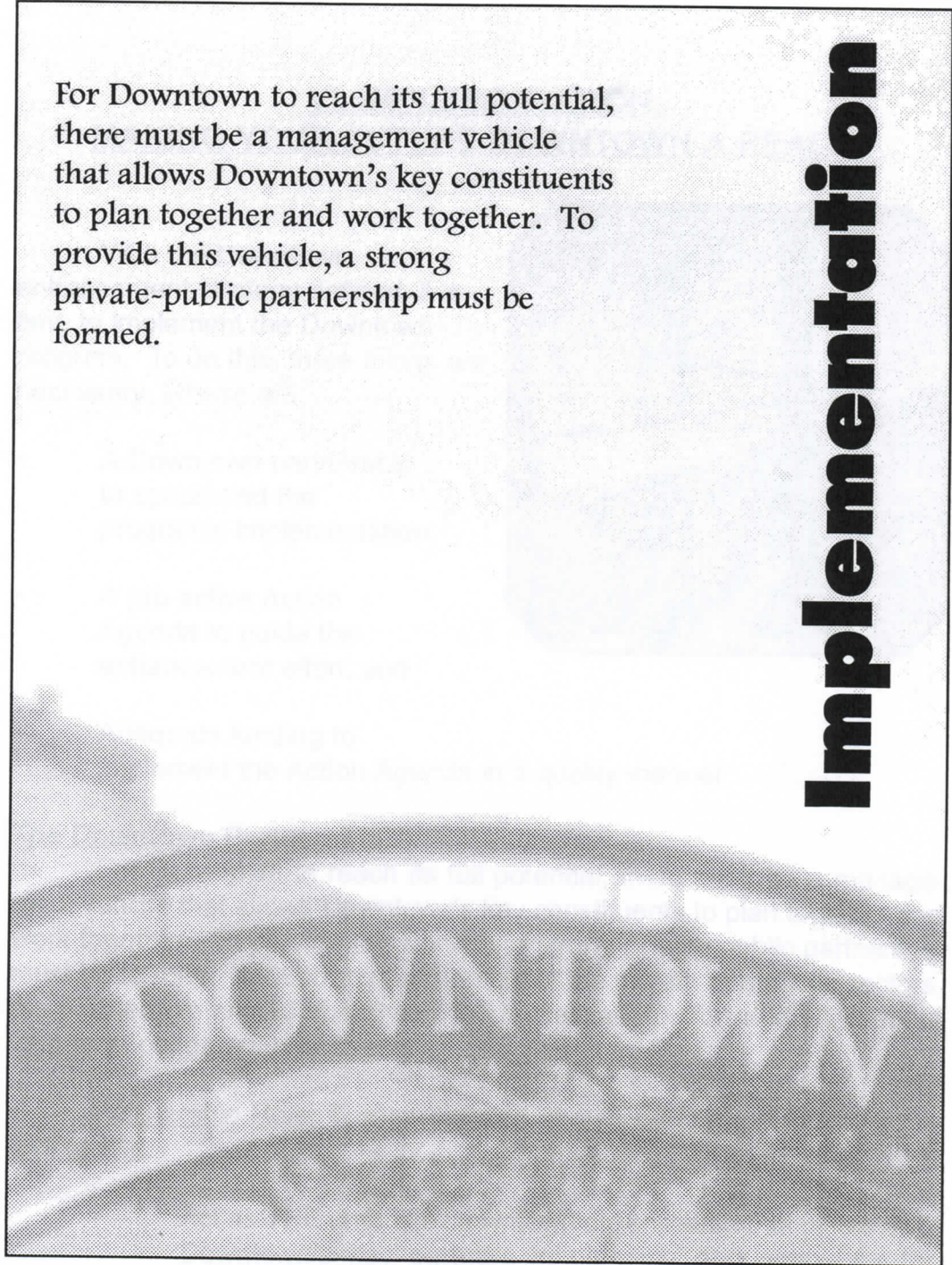
The following tips will make any Downtown Web site more appealing.

- **No "Under Construction" Signs** -- There's nothing more frustrating than contacting a Web site, waiting to enter the site, and then finding out there's no information there -- only an "under construction" sign! Don't discourage visitors by opening your Web site before it's ready for company.
- **No Stale Sites** -- Update your Web site regularly. Daily is not too often. Nothing makes a worse first impression than a site that contains dated information or lists special events that occurred months ago.
- **No Static Sites** -- Make your Web site interactive. The Internet is a new medium that allows you to interact with the public. So, don't just take your current printed material -- brochures, directories, etc. -- and put them on your Web site. Instead, make your site dynamic with "clickable" maps, three-dimensional buildings, guest books, etc.
- **Be Reachable** -- Make sure your Web site includes a variety of ways that visitors to the site can contact you. Your Web site should include your e-mail address, phone number, and fax number. This will allow your Web site visitors to contact you personally, ask questions, and request more information.
- **Use the Web Wisely**
It's clear that there are a great many ways to use a Downtown Web site -- and a vast variety of information that such sites can include. An ultimate goal of any Downtown Web site is to attract investors, whether they be business prospects, real estate developers, or patrons. The best way to accomplish this goal is to tout your Downtown's unique attributes and

underscore its magnetism. After making this type of information the crux of your Web site, then it's appropriate to include information about available Downtown property and business opportunities. Designing your Web site in reverse is sure to defeat its purpose by making Downtown look desperate.

For Downtown to reach its full potential, there must be a management vehicle that allows Downtown's key constituents to plan together and work together. To provide this vehicle, a strong private-public partnership must be formed.

Implementation



VI. IMPLEMENTATION: MAKING YOUR FUTURE DOWNTOWN A REALITY

With the Downtown enhancement strategy defined, it is time to implement the Downtown program. To do this, three things are necessary. These are:

- A Downtown partnership to spearhead the program's implementation;
- A pro-active Action Agenda to guide the enhancement effort; and
- Adequate funding to implement the Action Agenda in a quality manner.



The Downtown Partnership

For Downtown to reach its full potential, there must be a management vehicle that allows Downtown's key constituents to plan together and work together. To provide this vehicle, a strong private-public partnership must be formed. As a strong partnership of the private and public sectors, the partnership should spearhead the revitalization effort and bring about long-term cooperation and results.

- Partnership Role: The partnership should be created to fill the following role:
 - Act as THE umbrella Downtown organization that unites all of Downtown's key partners in planning and acting for the betterment of the Downtown as a whole;

- Spearhead implementation of the Downtown Action Agenda;
 - Provide and cultivate the leadership necessary to implement the Action Agenda;
 - Garner an adequate level of resources — staff, volunteers, funds — to successfully implement the Action Agenda;
 - Reach out to and include Downtown's key constituents and the community as a whole in the revitalization effort;
 - Inform, educate, and communicate with Downtown's key constituents, with the community, and with Downtown's users;
 - Set a high standard of quality for others to follow; and
 - Act and stimulate action by others.
- Partnership Structure: The partnership should bring together, coordinate and leverage the work of Downtown's key constituents. To accomplish this, Downtown partnerships are often structured to have the following elements:
- A board of directors, comprised of representatives from the private and public sectors, to manage, oversee, and implement the Downtown program;
 - Programmatic standing committees, comprised of volunteers, and responsible for implementing the various parts of the Action Agenda;
 - Temporary task forces created to resolve special issues facing Downtown and disbanded when their work is complete; and

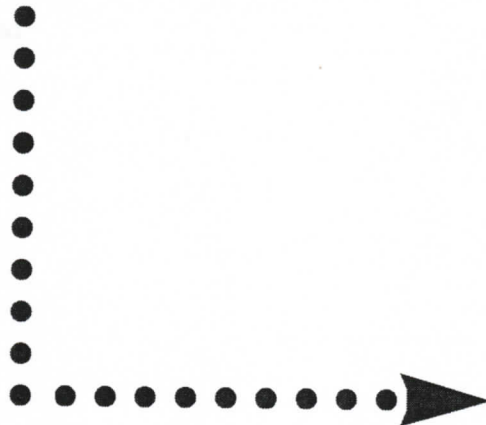
- Professional staff to provide the technical and management expertise necessary so that the board, committees, task forces, and volunteers of the partnership can successfully implement the Action Agenda.

The Action Agenda: A Critical Implementation Tool

The Action Agenda is a critical management tool used to guide the implementation of the Downtown enhancement program. The Action Agenda normally results in the identification of specific tasks, responsible parties, specific timelines for action, costs, funding sources, and parties responsible for funding.

The Action Agenda is normally completed for one year, with one year updates as the Downtown enhancement program is implemented. This one year timeline allows for constant program monitoring and enables program modifications/adjustments, if needed.

Following is an example of an Action Agenda prepared for Downtown Medford, Oregon. The Action Agenda was designed as part of the Vision Plan for City Center Medford. The Action Agenda was intended to guide the first year of a long-range strategy to further enhance Medford's Downtown City Center. That strategy was designed by HyettPalma, Inc., in association with Quinn/Evans Architects and John Edwards, PE.



MEDFORD'S DOWNTOWN CITY CENTER ACTION AGENDA

The chart on the following pages shows a twelve-month Action Agenda recommended for implementation by the Medford Urban Renewal Agency, the City of Medford, and Medford's Downtown business and property owners. The following legend pertains to abbreviations shown in the chart.

\$1K	\$1,000
ASAP	As Soon As Possible
BO	Business Owners
C	City of Medford
H	Heart of Medford Association
M	Month
MR	Medford Urban Renewal Agency
NA	Not Applicable
PO	Property Owners
TBD	To Be Determined

**MEDFORD'S DOWNTOWN CITY CENTER
YEAR-1 ACTION AGENDA**

<u>Responsible Parties and Actions to Be Implemented</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>	<u>Est. Cost</u>	<u>Sources of Funds</u>
<u>Medford Urban Renewal Agency Board</u>				
1. Adopt Vision Plan	M - 1	M - 1	-0-	NA
2. Form Committees & Roundtables	M - 1	M - 1	-0-	NA
3. Spearhead Implementation of the Vision Plan	M - 1	On-going	-0-	NA
4. Update Action Agenda	M - 10	M - 11	-0-	NA
<u>Outreach Committee (Volunteers)</u>				
1. Meet with Committees to Determine Volunteers Needed	M - 2	M - 2	-0-	NA
2. Define Volunteer Recruitment Strategy and List of Prospects	M - 2	M - 2	-0-	NA
4. Compile & Print Needed Info	M - 3	M - 3	\$200	MR
5. Call on Prospects	M - 3	On-going	-0-	NA
6. Obtain Commitment from Prospects	M - 3	On-going	-0-	NA
7. Send Thank You Letters	M - 3	On-going	\$100	MR
8. Follow-Up with Prospects, As Needed	M - 3	On-going	-0-	NA
9. Evaluate Strategy and Revise, As Needed	M - 10	M - 11	-0-	NA
<u>Outreach Committee (Communication)</u>				
1. Hold Quarterly Forums	M - 3	On-going	\$500	MR
2. Speaking Engagements	M - 1	On-going	-0-	NA
3. Contact Meeting Attendees	M - 1	On-going	-0-	NA
4. Printing and Distributing Documents	M - 2	On-going	\$3K	MR
<u>Physical Appeal Committee</u>				
1. Recruit Members	M - 3	M - 3	-0-	NA
2. Review and Adopt Cleanliness and Maintenance Program as Prepared by Quinn Evans Architects	M - 4	ASAP	-0-	NA
3. Implement Cleanliness and Maintenance Program	ASAP	On-going	TBD	C,PO, BO,MR
4. Review and Adopt Public Improvements Plan as Prepared by Quinn Evans Architects	M - 4	ASAP	-0-	NA

MEDFORD'S DOWNTOWN CITY CENTER
YEAR-1 ACTION AGENDA (Continued)

<u>Responsible Parties and Actions to Be Implemented</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>	<u>Est. Cost</u>	<u>Sources of Funds</u>
<u>Physical Appeal Committee(Continued)</u>				
5. Implement Public Improvements Plan	ASAP	On-going	TBD	C,PO, BO,MR NA
6. Review and Adopt Traffic, Parking and Pedestrian Access Plan as Prepared by John Edwards, PE	M - 4	ASAP	-0-	NA
7. Implement Traffic, Parking and Pedestrian Access Plan	ASAP	On-going	TBD	C,PO BO,MR MR
8. Present Awards for Quality Work	M - 12	M - 12	\$1K	
<u>Business Retention Roundtable</u>				
1. Recruit Members	M - 4	M - 4	-0-	NA
2. Hold Roundtable Discussions	M - 5	ASAP	-0-	NA
3. Implement Recommendations of Roundtable	ASAP	Until Completed	TBD	TBD
<u>Public Safety Roundtable</u>				
1. Recruit Members	M - 4	M - 4	-0-	NA
2. Hold Roundtable Discussions	M - 5	ASAP	-0-	NA
3. Implement Recommendations of Roundtable	ASAP	Until Completed	TBD	TBD
<u>Downtown City Center Investment Consortium</u>				
1. Recruit Members	M - 4	M - 5	-0-	NA
2. Examine Credit Needs	M - 5	M - 8	-0-	NA
3. Publish Credit Needs Statement	M - 8	M - 8	\$3K	MR
4. Identify Public and Private Capital Resources	M - 9	M - 9	-0-	NA
5. Prepare Investment Plan	M - 10	M - 12	\$10K	MR
<u>Marketing Committee</u>				
1. Recruit Members	M - 3	M - 3	-0-	NA
2. Define Marketing Campaign Consistent with Enhancement Strategy Recommendations	M - 3	M - 5	\$10K	MR,H
3. Implement Public Relations Effort	M - 5	On-going	\$5K	MR,H
4. Implement Collective Advertising Program	M - 5	On-going	TBD	MR,H BO
5. Implement Events Tie-Ins	M - 5	On-going	TBD	MR,H BO
6. Prepare Downtown Directory	M - 6	M - 9	\$7.5K	MR,H

MEDFORD'S DOWNTOWN CITY CENTER
YEAR-1 ACTION AGENDA (Continued)

<u>Responsible Parties and Actions to Be Implemented</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>	<u>Est. Cost</u>	<u>Sources of Funds</u>
<u>Downtown Property Owners</u>				
1. Make Needed Building Improvements	ASAP		TBD	PO
2. Participate in Business Recruitment & Clustering Effort	M - 1	On-going	TBD	PO
3. Contribute Financially to Enhancement Effort	M - 1	Annually	TBD	PO
4. Be a Downtown Ambassador	M - 1	On-going	-0-	NA
<u>Downtown Business Owners</u>				
1. Be a Downtown Ambassador	M - 1	On-going	-0-	NA
2. Participate in One-On-One Counseling Sessions	M - 3	As Needed	-0-	NA
3. Use Market Analysis Findings	M - 1	On-going	-0-	NA
4. Advertise Individually	M - 1	On-going	TBD	BO
5. Contribute Financially to the Enhancement Effort	M - 1	Annually	TBD	BO
6. Participate in Enhancement Efforts	M - 1	On-going	TBD	BO
7. Participate in Co-Op Ad Program	On-going	On-going	TBD	BO
8. Make Needed Business Improvements	ASAP		TBD	BO
<u>Medford Urban Renewal Director (General)</u>				
1. Provide Support to Board and All Committees and Task Forces	ASAP	On-going	-0-	NA
<u>Medford Urban Renewal Director (Business Retention)</u>				
1. Market-Driven Business Hours: Ongoing Discussions with Owners	M - 3	On-going	-0-	NA
2. Improve Merchandise Variety: Provide Market Analysis Findings One-On-One Counseling Coordinate Annual Awards	M - 3	On-going	-0-	NA
3. Improve Merchandise Presentation: If Feasible, Implement Mentoring Observation Trip to Ashland One-On-One Counseling Design Assistance Coordination Organize Demonstrations Implement Demonstrations Coordinate Annual Awards	M - 4	On-going	-0-	NA

MEDFORD'S DOWNTOWN CITY CENTER
YEAR-1 ACTION AGENDA (Continued)

<u>Responsible Parties and Actions to Be Implemented</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>	<u>Est. Cost</u>	<u>Sources of Funds</u>
<u>Medford Urban Renewal Director (Business Retention Continued)</u>				
4. Work with Business Owners to Open Restrooms for Customer Use	M - 5	On-going	-0-	NA
<u>Medford Urban Renewal Director (Business Recruitment)</u>				
1. Prepare Recruitment Packet	M - 6	M - 7	\$5K	MR
2. Develop and Maintain Inventory of Available Downtown Space	M - 6	On-going	-0-	NA
3. Identify Businesses to Be Recruited, Consistent with Market Analysis	M - 6	On-going	-0-	NA
4. Review Prospects with Owners and Agents	M - 6	On-going	-0-	NA
5. Prospect and Recruit	M - 6	On-going	\$10K	MR
6. Engage Real Estate Community	M - 6	On-going	-0-	NA
7. Enlist Property Owner Cooperation and Property Preparation	M - 6	On-going	-0-	NA
8. Place Businesses in Appropriate Building Space Consistent with Clustering Plan	M - 6	On-going	-0-	NA
9. Conduct Entrepreneur Community Forums	M - 9	On-going	\$2.5K	MR
11. Annual Evaluation of Recruitment	M - 11	M - 12	-0-	NA
<u>City of Medford</u>				
1. Adopt Vision Plan	M - 1	M - 1	-0-	NA
2. Consider Zoning Changes Residential as Use by Right Banning Topless Businesses	M - 2	ASAP	-0-	NA
3. Implement Zoning Changes, If Approved	ASAP	ASAP	-0-	NA

Financing Downtown's Renaissance

Garnering an adequate level of funding — that is, a level that allows the implementation of the Downtown enhancement program in a timely and quality manner — is critical for success. Therefore, immediate and aggressive fundraising from both the private and public sectors should be a high priority of the Downtown enhancement effort.

- **Key Components of the Downtown Funding Strategy**

The Downtown's funding strategy usually entails the following:

- The Downtown management organization creates a standing resource development committee of the organization;
- Those on the committee are typically influential members of the community — whether located in Downtown or in the greater community — who have the capacity and connections to raise the level of funding that will allow the partnership to operate successfully;
- Using the Downtown enhancement strategy and working with the Downtown organization's committees, the resource development committee develops an annual budget for operating expenses and project expenses;
- An annual funding goal is established, based on the projected budget;
- A fundraising strategy — how the goal will be met — is developed by the committee;
- The first step in the private sector fundraising effort should be for every member of the Downtown organization's board of directors to make a contribution of personal significance;

- The Downtown organization's staff should not be required to *fundraise* — doing so would appear self-serving and lessen the likelihood of receiving contributions — however, staff should provide the technical assistance and information which committee members need to *successfully fundraise*; and
- A goal of the Downtown organization often is to petition City Hall to create a Downtown improvement district which would provide a stable, annual and predictable funding source.

Funding Sources

The Downtown organization's fundraising strategy must be comprehensive and include raising funds from both the private and public sectors.

Sources of private sector funding that should be considered include:

- *Downtown business owners, property owners, professionals, employers, institutions, developers, etc.;*
- Developers;
- *Financial institutions;*
- Utilities;
- Area corporations, industries, colleges, universities, etc.;
- Community foundations and other area foundations;
- Special assessment or business improvement district funds;
- Area residents;
- Individuals; and

- Any person, business, organization, or institution that stands to benefit from a healthier center city.

Sources of public sector funds that should be considered include:

- General funds;
- General obligation and revenue bonds;
- Tax increment financing;
- Community Development Block Grants;
- Funds available through the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (Tea 21);
- Residual federal funds (UDAG and CDBG paybacks);
- Lottery funds;
- Fines and license fees;
- Bed tax; and
- State Historic Preservation Office funds.

There are pros and cons associated with each type of funding shown above. Most important, when structuring the financial strategy for the enhancement of Downtown, is to ensure that the budget is not built upon a single or limited number of funding sources. Instead, the Downtown program should be funded by a diversified and well-balanced range of funding sources so that it is not dependent on any single source for its existence or continued efforts.

- **The Twelve Rules of Successful Fundraising**

In the future, when seeking funds to advance the cause of Downtown revitalization, those who use the following twelve simple rules of fundraising will be more successful.

1. ***Don't Let the Tail Wag the Dog — Have a Solid Plan for the Kind of Funds You Need and for the Use of Those Funds.***
2. ***There's No Place Like Home — Start Your Fundraising Efforts in Your Own Backyard.***
3. ***Be Persistent, but Never Pushy.***
4. ***Play to the Self-Interest of Your Prospect.***
5. ***Never Apologize for or Belittle Your Organization.***
6. ***Be an Expert on Your Organization, on How It Will Use the Funds Raised, and on How it Has Successfully Used Funds in the Past — Toot Your Organization's Horn.***
7. ***Don't Let Prospects Get Cold.***
8. ***Don't Make the Staff Go Prospecting.***
9. ***Avoid Crisis-to-Crisis Fundraising.***
10. ***If They Gave Once, They're Likely to Give Again.***
11. ***It Sounds Crass, but It Works: The George Bush Method of Fundraising — "You Stroke 'Em, You Pluck 'Em, You Thank 'Em."***
12. ***Say "Thank You" — Say It Often, Say It Publicly, and Say It Once Again.***