

**Report on the Assessment
Marietta, Ohio**

June 8, 2005

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Thanks also goes to those attending the public meeting held during the assessment.

Introduction

Downtown Ohio, Inc. Downtown Assessment Resource Team spent one and a half days (June 7 & 8, 2005) in the City of Marietta to assess the downtown district's revitalization needs and opportunities. The assessment process had several functions:

- To identify some of the commercial district's major challenges, opportunities, and needs;
- To provide community members with information about the Main Street approach to commercial district revitalization;
- To learn whether the Main Street Approach is an appropriate strategy for the City of Marietta; and
- To determine Marietta's readiness and potential to embrace the Main Street program.

The assessment team included:

- **Pauline Eaton**, Director of Downtown Revitalization, Heritage Ohio/Downtown Ohio, Inc., Columbus, Ohio
- **Brett Peach**, Program Manager
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- **Doug Lynn**, Executive Director
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The team formed its comments, observations and recommendations based on documents, personal interviews, meetings with community leaders, walking and driving tours through the downtown district of Marietta, and the team's own experience in working with local programs and community development corporations throughout the state of Ohio.

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National Main Street Center

The National Main Street Center (NMSC) is a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (National Trust). Created by a Congressional Charter in 1949, the National Trust is a nonprofit organization with over 275,000 members. As a leading advocate of historic preservation in the United States, the National Trust is committed to saving America's diverse historic environments and to preserving and revitalizing the livability of communities nationwide. Economic growth, urban revitalization, and the creation of new jobs are all issues the National Trust addresses through the rehabilitation of historic resources.

Established in 1980 by the National Trust, the NMSC helps communities of all sizes to revitalize their downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. More than 1,700 towns and cities in 43 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have participated in Main Street's comprehensive commercial revitalization program. During this time, approximately \$12.8 billion has been reinvested in Main Street commercial districts, creating 193,000 net new jobs, 51,000 net new businesses, and spurring more than 62,000 building rehabilitation projects. Participating communities have leveraged more than \$38.34 in new investment for every dollar used to support the local revitalization effort – a reinvestment ratio that makes the Main Street program one of the most successful economic development strategies in the nation. The NMSC also sponsors the National Main Street Network™, a professional membership program for organizations interested in commercial revitalization. It produces publications, newsletters and special reports on revitalization and preservation issues and serves as a clearinghouse for information on community development issues. The NMSC accomplishes its mission through the Main Street Four-Point Approach™.

A Comprehensive Approach to Revitalization

The Main Street Program assists local partners to plan and implement a comprehensive revitalization strategy for their commercial districts. The foundation of the “Four Point” or “Main Street Approach” to downtown revitalization is preservation: using those elements of quality that have survived as assets upon which we can build a lasting, positive physical and emotional image for everyone who uses downtown. Historic Preservation is used as an economic development tool. It capitalizes on over-looked and underutilized assets, encourages imagination, sharpening of entrepreneurial skills and strong participation by the private sector.

The Four-Point Approach

The four point methodology works to create a total image for the community: Providing the retail/professional area with its necessary market niche, creating a cohesive visual identity unique to the community, and nurturing a cultural ambiance associated with the community's location, appearance, and way of life. The Main Street Approach gradually builds on existing resources and fosters improved community leadership and support on behalf of the Central Business District for the long term.

- **Organization** is the building of consensus and cooperation between the groups that play a role in the downtown. Many individuals and organizations in the community have a stake in the economic viability of the downtown.
- **Design** involves improving the downtown's image by improving its physical appearance – not just the appearance of buildings, but also of street lights, window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, streetscapes, landscaping, promotional materials and all other elements that convey a visual message about what the downtown is and what it has to offer.
- **Promotion** involves marketing the downtown's unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, tourists, and others. Effective promotion creates a positive image of the downtown through retail promotional activity and special events utilizing the downtown as a stage area of community activities.
- **Economic Restructuring** involves strengthening the existing economic base of the downtown while diversifying it. Economic Restructuring activities include helping existing downtown businesses expand, recruiting new businesses, providing a balanced mix, converting unused space into productive property, and sharpening the competitiveness of downtown merchants.

The Eight Principles of Main Street

While the Main Street approach provides the format for successful revitalization, implementation of the four-point approach is based on eight principles that pertain to all areas of the revitalization effort:

1. **Comprehensive.** Commercial district revitalization is a complex process and cannot be accomplished through a single project. For successful and lasting results, a comprehensive approach must be used. Simply stated, *comprehensive* means working on all four points simultaneously.
2. **Incremental.** Small projects and simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help develop skills so that more complex problems can be addressed and more ambitious projects undertaken. Starting with small projects creates progress and momentum at the same time.
3. **Self-help.** Local leaders must have the desire and the will to make the project successful. The NMSC provides direction, ideas and training; but continued and long-term success depends upon the involvement and commitment of the community.
4. **Public/Private Partnerships.** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical stability of the district. Each sector has a role to play, and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership can be forged.
5. **Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets.** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities – like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging or businesses that have become local institutions. Main Street cannot create new landmarks or institutions; existing local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
6. **Quality.** Quality must be emphasized in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies equally to each element of the program, from storefront design to promotional campaigns to educational programs.
7. **Change.** Changes in attitude and practice are necessary to improve current economic conditions. Public support for change will build as the program grows.
8. **Implementation-Oriented.** Activity creates confidence in the program and greater levels of participation. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization process is under way. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger activities as the revitalization effort matures.

Downtown Ohio, Inc.

Downtown Ohio, Inc. (DOI) is a non-profit corporation organized to encourage development, redevelopment, and improvement of downtown areas throughout Ohio.

DOI is the state-coordinating program for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Main Street" program in the State of Ohio. Since incorporation as a non-profit statewide organization in 1989, membership in DOI has increased to include over three hundred (300) cities, organizations, consultants, and downtown development professionals throughout the State of Ohio. The Board is dedicated to a statewide downtown revitalization program, and continues to work toward assisting self-motivated communities of all sizes. Downtown Ohio, Inc. provides technical assistance, training, and networking in all facets of downtown development.

The Board of Trustees for DOI is composed of thirteen members, including an ex-officio member from the Ohio Department of Development and the Ohio Historic Preservation Office. They represent a broad-based group of downtown professionals from small, medium and large cities throughout the State.

DOI is a member of the International Downtown Association (IDA) and the National Main Street Network. DOI also links its technical assistance services with the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) in two ways. First, DOI is working with the Office of Housing and Community Partnerships (OHCP) to develop fundable downtown-related projects in those communities interested in applying for the Downtown Revitalization Competitive Grant Program, Economic Development Loan Program, local Economic Development Revolving Loan Funds, and the Home Program. Second, DOI will act as a conduit for other ODOD programs and resources and as an advocate for downtown revitalization issues related to ODOD.

Members have the opportunity to share knowledge, common experiences, and problems concerning management, planning and development in downtown areas. DOI holds conferences annually across the state. Conferences focus on up-to-date downtown revitalization techniques and feature presentations from regional and/or nationally known speakers. A wide variety of downtown issues have been explored, including such topics as: competing with Wal-Mart; Special Improvement Districts; architectural design standards; parking; dealing with "white elephants"; and retail recruitment. DOI members also receive reduced rates for conference registration and *Windows*, an informational newsletter.

Ohio Main Street Program

Main Street is a comprehensive revitalization program that promotes historic and economic redevelopment of traditional business districts.

Established in 1997, the Ohio Main Street Program, administered by Downtown Ohio, Inc., is dedicated to empowering each community within the state to maintain, strengthen and revitalize the unique physical, economic, historical and cultural characteristics of its own Downtown or City center.

Each year the Ohio Main Street Program will select communities on a competitive basis to become official state Main Street programs. These communities will receive technical support and training needed to restore their Main Street to centers of community activity and commerce. Communities selected to participate in the Ohio Main Street Program will receive technical assistance, including:

- Volunteer and program manager training
- Advanced training on specific Downtown issues, such as marketing and promotion, business recruitment, volunteer development, market analysis, design, historic preservation and fundraising.
- On-site visits to help each community develop its strengths and plan for success
- Materials such as manuals and slide programs
- Linkages to other national and state Main Street communities
- When a community participates in the revitalization effort, its Downtown will experience renewed vitality and enhanced economic performance. Benefits of the Main Street Program include:
 - Protecting and strengthening the existing tax base
 - Increasing sales and returning revenues to the community
 - Creating a positive community image
 - Creating visually appealing and functional buildings
 - Attracting new businesses
 - Developing new housing opportunities in historic buildings
 - Creating new jobs
 - Increasing investment in the Downtown
 - Preserving historic resources

Organization

Organization

A strong organization is the cornerstone of a successful revitalization program; without the strong foundation a good organization provides, all other projects, however well intentioned, will falter. The City of Marietta does not have a downtown manager in place to facilitate the activities of a board and committees of a local revitalization program.

Observations

The following describes the Resource Team's observations of the organizational situation in downtown Marietta.

- 1) Washington County/Marietta has 17 agencies currently engaged in economic development. Turf issues are evident.
- 2) There are currently 3 separate merchant associations, with separate funding.
- 3) The mayor is a strong advocate for downtown revitalization and the Main Street Approach.
- 4) There were no current city council members or county commissioners present at the DART visit. One current city council member came at the end of the day to show her support.
- 5) Broad-based community support for revitalization was evident through public representation and the interest expressed by residents, building owners and business owners throughout the course of the DART Visit.
- 6) The existing tourism market may be the strongest component, with much organization of resources and marketing already underway.
- 7) Marietta's strong local history is perhaps its greatest asset.
- 8) Tourism accounts for nearly \$180 million to the local economy; most of that tourism is centered in or around the downtown area.
- 9) Marietta's primary services are located in or near the core of downtown: town hall, library, post office, financial centers, county courthouse, churches, etc. Keeping these services downtown shouldn't be taken for granted.
- 10) There are beautiful green spaces in downtown.

Recommendations

- 1) Investigate and consider applying for Ohio Main Street status. The fees are \$3,000 per year. This amount would need to be raised in order to apply for the Ohio Main Street Program. The technical assistance, training, materials, networking and on-going support from Downtown Ohio would greatly benefit Marietta in its efforts to move forward its downtown revitalization program. Several current Ohio Main Street Programs have a company that sponsors their OMSP fees annually and are recognized on all their supporting materials and events.
- 2) Attend one of the June Call For Applications Workshops.
- 3) If Marietta decides to pursue Main Street application: task out the application components. There is an excellent example and spreadsheet for this on the application page of the Downtown Ohio, Inc. website:
<http://www.downtownohio.org/application/OMSPApplicationTask%20List.xls>

The Organization Committee has four main areas of responsibility: Fundraising; Volunteer Management; Communications; and Resource Management (human and financial).

- 1) An organizational structure needs to be identified. Will this be under one of the current economic development organizations, or will a new organization be formed that will bring several existing entities together; especially the 3 separate merchant associations. There is possibly already a \$30-\$40,000 budget with these 3 entities combining. Funding from the city government, county government, membership fees and fundraising need to be looked at, as well as in-kind goods and services donated.
- 2) By laws need to be established and board members elected. Officers need to be elected to serve as the executive committee. There are sample by-laws listed in the resource center of the Downtown Ohio, Inc. website:
<http://www.downtownohio.org/resourcedocuments.htm#org>
- 3) All Committees need to be established, and committee chairs appointed. All committees will need to look for volunteers to fill committees. DART participants would be the best place to start in staffing these committees. Also ask committee members to bring others they feel may be interested.
- 4) Consider holding a work-planning session so that each committee is coordinating the same goals. Utilize the assets and challenges to formulate the beginning of goals and objectives to address those issues. First year Ohio Main Street Programs receive a work planning session during March as part of their participation in the program.
- 5) Establish an annual review/meeting to recognize progress. Downtown Ohio, Inc. staff reviews Ohio Main Street Programs each year to ensure they are making progress and meeting program guidelines, as part of their participation in the Ohio Main Street Program.

Fundraising

- 1) The Executive Committee may need to be involved in the development of the initial funding strategy, then turn it over to the Organization Committee to implement.
- 2) Create a fundraising package including: mission; committee structure and short and long term goals; board members; chronology of activities; DART visit summary; current budget, and three year budget.
- 3) Preferred funding mix is very do-able in Marietta 1/3-1/3-1/3. First third from city of Marietta and Washington County, 1/3 from memberships and corporate donations, final third from foundations, grants and any other types of fundraising.
- 4) Ask the city for a multi-year commitment (3 years); ask donors for multi-year gifts. Mayor might consider co-signing the corporate and foundation letters of request
- 5) Set meeting with the community foundation, ask for them to sit on advisory board, ask for multi-year donations.
- 6) Meet with Port Authority; ask for a representative to sit on advisory board. Port Authorities have broad economic development abilities, developing a relationship will expand opportunities.
- 7) Identify corporate donors; assign teams to visit and present fundraising package. Ask for multi-year financial support
- 8) Help identify corporate sponsors for any major Promotions Committee events (or other committees). Fundraising committee ‘controls’ these solicitations too, but acts in partnership with promotion committee needs,
- 9) Put membership-structure in place that pulls together all merchants, building owners, individuals...get marketing volunteers to establish strategy for attracting members. DO NOT get major donors confused with membership campaign.
- 10) Establish firm recognition and thank you program for all solicitation appointments (funded or not) and all pledges and gifts.
- 11) Keep those who declined solicitation visits or donation opportunities well informed, they may say yes next time, as you prove yourselves through this establishment phase.

Volunteer Management

- 1) Board development; analyze strength and weaknesses of board, recruit new members as needed. There are excellent examples of board analysis. DOI has some materials on our website: www.downtownohio.org but there are others at www.marcsmile.com.
- 2) Determine if board will want an advisory board
- 3) Prepare recruitment and training materials for board

- 4) Define job description roles and responsibilities for all board members. There are also examples of these in the Board Members Handbook on our resource center page of the Downtown Ohio, Inc. website.
- 5) Sub-chair assignment can determine how best to recruit, assign, train, and recognize initial volunteer corps.
- 6) Begin a system to log volunteer hours. There is a federal dollar amount listed for these hours and they can be used to show the level of commitment of the board, and how they are assisting in economic development.

Communications

- 1) The distinction needs to be clear that the Organization Committee communicates about the organization. The promotion committee communicates about downtown events and activities.
- 2) Communication Strategies- Plan to keep news flowing to the community, whether it's about a building rehab, and upcoming event, new businesses, or exceptional volunteer stories. Plan to keep the organization in the news each week.
- 3) How will you communicate with donors, merchants, members, and the community at large? Newsletter; E-news; web site; press releases to media
- 4) Consider establishing an on-going newspaper column to engage and educate the public.
- 5) Provide a press/photo opportunity with each of your donors: perhaps at the \$1,000 or above giving level.
- 6) Communications strategy with regional partners such as Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, Convention and Visitors Bureau should be developed.
- 7) The number one 'Challenge' identified by Marietta citizens at the DART visit was local government. These issues are assigned to the Organization Committee under the Main Street Approach. The importance of education of public officials as to the benefits, and especially the economic ones involved in this initiative is of utmost importance. . In this case, you might consider assigning a special task force as government oversight to attend council meetings, work to educate council members and bring them into the process as potential committee members serving on each of the four committees. The future program manager, and possibly the board chair should attend at least one council meeting a month to keep them informed of the progress of the organization.
- 8) The number two 'challenge' at the DART visit was the turf issues with having 17 different economic development agencies. This is another opportunity for the Organization Committee. A spreadsheet covering what each of these entities missions, scope of services and potential outcomes are needs to be done, and a real effort to streamline these agencies into a maximum of 4-5 needs to be undertaken. Again, this may be a short-term special task force that initiates this process under the Organization Committee.

Resource Management

- 1) Office Space may be donated. Determine how to furnish and equip office.

Staff

- 2) Marietta does not currently have a paid downtown manager in place to focus on the downtown. The identification and placement of a part-time/volunteer manager may provide the needed catalyst to coordinate activities while funding options to secure a paid manager are pursued.
- 3) Set a goal date for hiring a paid manager. Set the amount of money banked and pledged, necessary to make that step.
- 4) Write a job description and set personnel policies prior to hiring. These are available on the DOI website: www.downtownohio.org.

Budget/Financial Reporting

- 5) With executive committee and committee chairs, the Treasurer should draw-up a one-year and three-year budget.
- 6) Determination should be made what style of financial reports will be presented and on what frequency to the board.
- 7) Procedures for expending funds should be in the form of a written policy.

Finally, Have Fun!

What you are doing should be personally rewarding, as you act and plan on a vision for Marietta's future.

Promotion

Promotion

As one of the four points of the Main Street Approach, promotion is essential to the success of the revitalization effort. It describes the progress and vitality of the central business district to the general public; including investors, shoppers, visitors, and residents. It also describes the success of the revitalization program by providing a communication link between the revitalization program and the public.

Observations

The following describes the Resource Team's observations of the promotional situation in downtown Marietta.

- 1) The target area for the downtown seems to be up for discussion, and not clearly defined. This lack of definition has brought with it a number of organizations that have specific functions, possibly making it more difficult to have a unified image and promotions program for downtown Marietta.
- 2) From all accounts the Merchants and Artists walk is very successful during the months of June, July and August. It is great to be able to host a retail event for your merchants and disguise it as nothing more than a good time to walk through the downtown enjoying local art and refreshments.
- 3) Heritage tourism is quickly becoming a top tourism attraction, and Marietta is leaps and bounds ahead of most communities in promoting their heritage. The tour given to the DART Group is a wonderful way for tourists to experience the downtown and the areas surrounding the downtown.
- 4) The river is also one of the best promotional tools available to the community. Having a body of water so near the downtown leaves the door wide open to large-scale promotional events.
- 5) The citizens of Marietta exhibited the most hospitable attitude that we have seen in Ohio. The mayor's mantra of calling Marietta the "Charleston of Ohio" is truly correct. We have never felt more welcome and been treated with more "southern charm" as we were in Marietta. The fact that even the children stopped their play on the playground to wave at the trolley shows a grace and charm not always evident in Ohio's small towns. Every citizen we came in contact with smiled, waved and said, "hello" or "welcome". This is definitely something worth promoting...it is truly unique!

Recommendations

Image Development

- 1) As mentioned in the observations section the downtown doesn't seem to be clearly defined. In addition, there are a number of groups involved in the downtown, and at times serving only small parts of the entire downtown. The organization portion of this report outlines the need to become part of the Ohio

Main Street Program. This is extremely important in clearly defining the boundaries of the downtown and developing an image (logo, etc.) for the *entire* downtown district.

- 2) When it comes to downtown revitalization, public perception is extremely important, when a unified image is created use it on *everything*. With boundaries defined, one organization formed, and an identity created, constantly remind the public of the unification. This includes signage, brochures, and news releases.
 - a. For examples of what other communities are using as logos or branding material simply refer to the Downtown Ohio, Inc. website: www.downtownohio.org or the National Trust's Main Street Center website: www.mainstreet.org

Market Analysis

- 1) By conducting a survey of the retailers, two important things could be accomplished. First it is important to understand what the downtown merchants offer to consumers. Such information will point out the products and services that the downtown does not have and the groups of people not being attracted to the downtown. This information acts as a guide to the economic restructuring committee and points out areas for potential growth. Secondly, a survey would also allow input from the merchants as to what they want from the organization itself.

Retail Promotions/ Special Events

- 1) When the organization knows the target audience of downtown merchants it makes it easier to create promotional opportunities for merchants. Merchants who offer products and services appealing to the local population may be interested in an advertising package targeting the residents of Marietta. In Cambridge, membership in Cambridge Main Street makes available low cost advertising packages.
- 2) However, those businesses that cater to tourists would benefit from advertising done outside of the community. There are numerous tourist publications that circulate throughout the state, be on the lookout for opportunities to do some cooperative advertising.
- 3) Continue building on the success of the Merchants and Artists Walk! Maybe it would be beneficial to do something similar close to the Christmas season to boost holiday sales. The perfect time to do this would be the annual Christmas parade. You already have the people downtown, find a way to make it a retail event as well! Be careful not to add too much, it is better to do a limited number of events really well than operating a large number of mediocre events.

Heritage Tourism

- 1) Kudos to Marietta for the wonderful trolley tour showcasing the history and heritage of the community! Many communities never get organized enough to host anything but a self-guided walking tour. Partner with the VCB to make the tour part of a group tour package for the downtown and the entire county. Once again, this is another opportunity to introduce tourists to the merchants; make a few well-planned stops in the retail district during the tour. Even consider giving all trolley riders packets with shopping guides, coupons, or special gifts (maybe a flower or pin?) to entice them to visit the downtown area.
- 2) When an image or brand is developed for the downtown it will also allow you to maximize the benefit of promotional events (either retail or tourism related) to all involved
 - a) In particular, it seems as though the Harmar Village area is generally not a part of any activities occurring across the river. Even though recent flooding has had a large part in the deterioration of Harmar's retail economy it still has some wonderful tourist attractions and every effort should be made to promote and showcase those attractions.
- 3) The annual Sternwheeler Festival as a special event and heritage attraction is yet another event that brings large amounts of people to the downtown. Take advantage of it by adding some retail activity prior to or after the event. It is another opportunity to generate retail activity without adding another event.

Design

Design

Good design is more than just the appearance of Marietta's storefronts. Design refers to all of the visual aspects of the business district, from buildings and pedestrian areas, to merchandising and advertising graphics used in promotion. A consistently high level of quality in all aspects of design will improve local attitudes towards revitalization.

Observations

The following describes the Resource Team's observations of the design elements within the downtown district of Marietta.

- 1) The downtown Marietta district can be characterized as having a high percentage of intact historic commercial buildings.
- 2) The downtown district is a National Register Historic District. Although there are some examples of remuddling present, most of these cases are reversible.
- 3) The Mayor of Marietta has been supportive of downtown redevelopment efforts. The cooperative relationship with the local government is vital to the success of Marietta's downtown redevelopment. City officials need to be educated about the need for protection of these unique architectural treasures to ensure their future.
- 4) It is amazing that a community with such marvelous history and historic structures does not have current preservation legislation or a design review ordinance. This protection needs to be put into place immediately to protect current and future property values and to ensure the economic viability derived from the tourism business these resources bring to the community.
- 5) Talented professionals in the community have the skills to lead an effective design program.
- 6) The Armory has a wonderful presence in the downtown and may be a wonderful staging area as the centerpiece for downtown activities and events.
- 7) There are several vacant buildings in downtown Marietta, some are in a state of renovation, but others need to be addressed. Filling these storefronts is the responsibility of the economic restructuring committee, however the storefront design is a function of the design committee.
- 8) Signs to direct vehicular traffic into and through the downtown area were not easily identified. The downtown revitalization organization must envision the needs of first-time visitors, and satisfy those needs. First-time visitors to downtown Marietta will need visible signage directing them downtown. Particularly since the desire is to capitalize on the large tourist market. A unified image, consistently used that includes graphics, colors, fonts, etc. as part of an entire way finding system should be explored.
- 9) Preservation tools such as easements, tax credits, and CLG (certified local government) funds need to be communicated to property owners.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered and, when adopted, communicated to committee chairs and organizational members.

- 1) It would be a high priority for the Promotion Committee to develop an image for Marietta, they would then coordinate with the Design Committee how that image can best be represented through signs and related graphic products that will be repeated in a consistent campaign for the community. Don't go overboard in the beginning, adopt an incremental plan that can be added to or adjusted as you begin to see results or weaknesses in the plan.
- 2) Develop Design Guidelines. This can be done whether or not you pursue a design review ordinance. Pictorial Do's and Don'ts of building styles and acceptable modifications should be shown. This should be thought of as a friendly educational tool to help building owners see the potential of their buildings.
- 3) Consider writing a Design Review Ordinance with the City of Marietta. This is a tool to help your downtown property owners increase and maintain their property values through thoughtful, rather than haphazard building modifications. Ensuring these architectural treasures are protected for future generations is paramount to the continued success of tourism in your community.
- 4) Consider helping the City of Marietta apply for status as a CLG (Certified Local Government). This is done through the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, (contact Glenn Harper). The primary requirement being, you must have a design review ordinance. Becoming a CLG has the benefit of making additional grant money available through the city government (the CLG). This is also an opportunity to provide on-going training for the Design Review Board members.
- 5) To deal with a high level of remuddled buildings the Design Committee could develop a building improvements education campaign. Teams could be organized as in Wilmington, Ohio to spend a day tearing off a slipcover or other inappropriate materials.
- 6) Give a high degree of publicity to project successes. Newspaper articles, public access TV show. Partner with the Organization Committee to develop an Annual Meeting with Rehabilitation Awards or the Design Committee could organize to create a special Historic Preservation Week Celebration (3rd week of May)
- 7) As the Design Committee works into a comfortable work-pace various education programs can be adopted including one on financial incentives, so that building owners can more easily take advantage of underutilized opportunities.

- 8) In the future you may want to bring a consultant to Marietta to work with the Merchants on window display design. This is a fun way to provide assistance to your merchants.
- 9) There is much potential for downtown living and upper floor development. This also needs to be an important part of your downtown plan. Building incentives, such as HUD programs, tax credits, CLG funding, etc. need to be explored with property owners/developers. If the CRA has expired, you need to have this reenacted so that it is another tool in the preservation toolbox for investors. Downtown residents will create more markets that are sustainable and help to ensure a year-round business environment for business owners. It will also help to open up other businesses to serve the needs of the residents.
- 10) The flowers in the downtown area are beautiful. However, doing more “wow” in the downtown will also help to enhance the area. Using the local talents of artists to make unique features such as tree grates, umbrella stands, benches, trash receptacles, signage, sidewalk features, etc...anywhere you can infuse a unique, creative feel to the area and make downtown Marietta look and feel like nowhere else will add to the visitor appeal.
- 11) It may be helpful to ask Mayor Riley from Charleston to come for a visit. Have him share how he helped his city become the huge tourist attraction that it is. He is wonderful and may help to educate the community about what can be accomplished.

Economic Restructuring

Economic Restructuring

Economic Restructuring is a long-term process to strengthen the community's downtown core of existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is normally accomplished by retaining and expanding existing business, recruiting new business to provide a balanced commercial mix, converting underutilized and vacant space into productive new uses, and sharpening the entrepreneurial skill of merchants. Economic Restructuring will be an on-going task for Marietta.

Observations

The following describes the Resource Team's observations of the economic conditions of Marietta. They are the result of interaction with community representatives, tours of the downtown and discussions with current business owners in the downtown area.

- 1) The downtown is typical of many small communities with a mix of government, financial, and small retail businesses.
- 2) The district has been well maintained by the city with landscaping in place, attractive period lighting, and ample parking.
- 3) There are some vacancies in buildings but most are occupied. Upper floor utilization is sporadic but efforts are underway by some building owners to develop second and third stories having multiple tenet mixes.
- 4) There are many groups/organizations doing economic development. During group discussions it became apparent that there was no one voice for downtown economic development. The various groups need to come together and determine who is now doing what and why. This information should then be reviewed with a goal of establishing an Economic Restructuring Committee to coordinate economic development in the downtown.
- 5) We were told that legislation was being developed for historic preservation and design. However, there is currently nothing in place to protect the historic assets in the downtown.
- 6) The downtown benefits from local tourism. Several individuals and community leaders brought up this issue on many occasions. As Marietta considers its downtown's future direction care should be given as how to best attract additional tourists. Many business owners indicated that tourism was down about 30% or more from prior years.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered and, when adopted, communicated to committee chairs and members

- 1) Every effort should be made to capitalize on the area's tourism. Market and consumer studies should be undertaken by the CVB to determine what needs to be done to attract more tourists to the area. Do not make assumptions on what may or may not work without studies in place. Most of the downtown businesses we visited indicated a heavy reliance on tourists---especially the restaurants. This segment of the economy is critical to the growth on Front Street.
- 2) Some tools need to be put in place before new businesses can effectively be recruited. While historic district designation and design review are often associated only with design aspects of a downtown they are also critical to economic restructuring. Real estate professionals indicate that for individuals and businesses to consider an area for investment they require zoning protections in one form or another. Historic tax credits also rely on these same criteria. Marietta needs to work toward getting these tools in place.
- 3) One cannot overlook the disconnect of the downtown and the Harmar area in terms of both organizational and physical. Improving the bridge access was mentioned in many discussions as a way of getting tourists to visit. Perhaps some thought could be given to creating a water connection, like the very nice land trolley one you already have, that could link the downtown, the river museum, Becky Thatcher, historic points of interest and downtown. This water connection would also serve to get people out onto the river. Baltimore, Maryland has water taxis that link 17 different areas of their inland harbor. This would be a great model for Marietta to follow.
- 4) As mentioned above the various groups involved in the downtown need to get together and look at what each is doing and figure out best to meet common goals. The downtown is too small to support all of these organizations and when a new business is considering a location it is important that it see a coordinated effort by the local groups and city government.

Attachments

Assets

Variety of Retail-9
Development Advisory Board-Comprehensive Plan-3

Significant historic structures-15

Administration
Safe Environment-2
Appalachian Funding
River w/free public access-7
HUB Zone
Community Spirit-4
Marietta College-6
Green Space-1
Colony Theatre-7
Existing promotional events-2
Walkability-2
Good streetscape
Parking
Friendly-4
Trolley
Supportive of one another-8
Potential-1
Large pool of volunteers-1

Physically Attractive-14

Human Scale
Wide streets

Brick streets-10

Local history-15

Two rivers-10

Lafayette Hotel-7
B&Bs
Churches
Bars
Riverboats-3
Museums-1
New bridges
Harmar Walking bridge-3
Artist Co-op
Farmer's Market
Fine Dining-2
Fairgrounds within walking distance-1
Trail-1
Boat docking
Tourism market-12
Armory-7
Local theatre groups-1
Volunteer opportunities-1
Service clubs

Downtown Post Office
 Congressional offices
 County seat-1
 Regional airport
 Aquatic center
 Cemetery-1
 Unique products available
 Good events-3
 Good Transportation

Challenges

Flooding
 FEMA-2
 Zoning as it relates to parking requirements-1
Preservation-13
 Revitalization-1
 Parking/Parking meters-2
 Keeping tourists here longer-2
 Signage (no overall signage system)-4
 Transportation-1
 Low net income/residents and businesses-3
 Ugly rear entrances
 More support for cultural activities
 Pedestrian unfriendliness/Wide street-4
 Commitment to Quality-2
 Park Maintenance
 Interest from Industry-2
 Street traffic
 No mid-range housing
 Better gateways
 Environmental problems
Not unified/fragmentation-10
Vacant buildings-13
 Public schools-2
 City 1.7%-2
 Reaching residents to shop downtown
 Effective use of media-6
Economic Development (17 entities)-Turf Issues-19
 Divisive city issues-6
 Lack of planning-comprehensive plan not legislatively adopted-7
 CLG Funding-2
 Developing unified coalitions
 Public restrooms-7
 Upper floor utilization-3
 Lack of college housing
Hard to open a business-9

Army Corps of Engineers Site-2
(Talk to Congressmen)-Trade Property Sites
Communication of events-1
Entitlement Funding
Electric deregulation-1
Isolation-being in southeast Ohio-ignored-1
Lack of political clout-2
Lack of use of preservation toolbox
No preservation legislation
No design review
Local Government-City council/county commissioners-22