

M A I N S T R E E T A P P R O A C H

Marketing an Image for Main Street

How to
Develop a
Compelling
Message
and
Identity for
Main Street



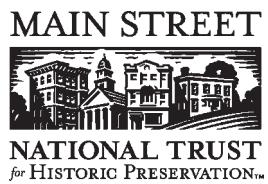
NATIONAL TRUST
for HISTORIC PRESERVATION®

MAIN STREET



MARKETING AN IMAGE FOR MAIN STREET

How to Develop a Compelling Message and Identity for Downtown



MacDuffie Nichols
Elizabeth Jackson
National Main Street Center of the
National Trust for Historic Preservation
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

MARKETING AN IMAGE FOR MAIN STREET:

How to Develop a Compelling Message and Identity for Downtown

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Since 1980, the National Trust's National Main Street Center, has helped business districts across the country build strong downtown economic development programs through historic preservation. The Center provides on-site technical assistance in downtown and neighborhood commercial revitalization to communities of all sizes. It also sponsors workshops and conferences, publishes training materials, offers a certification program in professional Main Street management, and facilitates a professional membership program that helps communities learn from each others' revitalization experiences.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Center's parent organization, is the only national, private nonprofit organization chartered by Congress with the responsibility for encouraging public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings and objects significant in American history and culture.

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Valley Arts Festival Poster, Downtown West Des Moines.

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chapter

WHAT'S IN AN IMAGE?

"Image Isn't Everything: It's the Only Thing"

(borrowed from Vince Lombardi)

While presenting the right image is very important, when it comes to downtown revitalization, it is not the only thing. Sorry Vince, but it doesn't even apply to winning. Image — and success — are meaningless if they are not based on a vision for both.

Image is the single most powerful tool for influencing people to support a position and to act. When harnessed, this tool is extremely effective. However, it is important to understand that the *power of image* is working all the time, particularly when it comes to our traditional commercial districts. Whether an organization is paying attention or not, the existing image of the district is influencing people to take a position and to act. Unfortunately, when we don't pay attention, we abdicate a role in controlling that response. More often than not, when we are in this "default mode," the image that is left for the public is negative. When people develop negative perceptions of a commercial district, they tend not to visit the area or shop at downtown businesses. All because we have not been paying attention to our image.

Unfortunately, accomplishment is not enough to guarantee an improved image and to change public attitudes and action. Downtown revitalization programs cannot simply move steadily along, improving the physical, economic and cultural offerings without telling people about it. The changes happen slowly, incrementally. If we don't use those changes to cre-

ate a new image for the district, the public may notice them, but won't necessarily attribute them to organized change. Again, a change in the image may occur, but it won't necessarily be the change desired.

Image development is everywhere and has been since the beginning of recorded history as seen with:

- music, art and literature;
- politics (the modern form of "empire building");
- Sports and entertainment;
- and most effectively, most manipulatively, in advertising.

Image development has three simple characteristics:

- Images evoke emotion.
- Emotions create action.
- Action precedes change.

WHO DOES WHAT IN IMAGE DEVELOPMENT?

The answer to this question is quite simple . . . and profound. In short, there are three primary players in image development: the *viewer*, the *object* and the *manipulator*. The last word, manipulator, is fraught with negative connotations, but must be understood and accepted when we set out to develop an image for something. Someone must select and control the images used, decide what emotions to elicit and communicate them in ways that produce the desired action. In short, someone must be willing to

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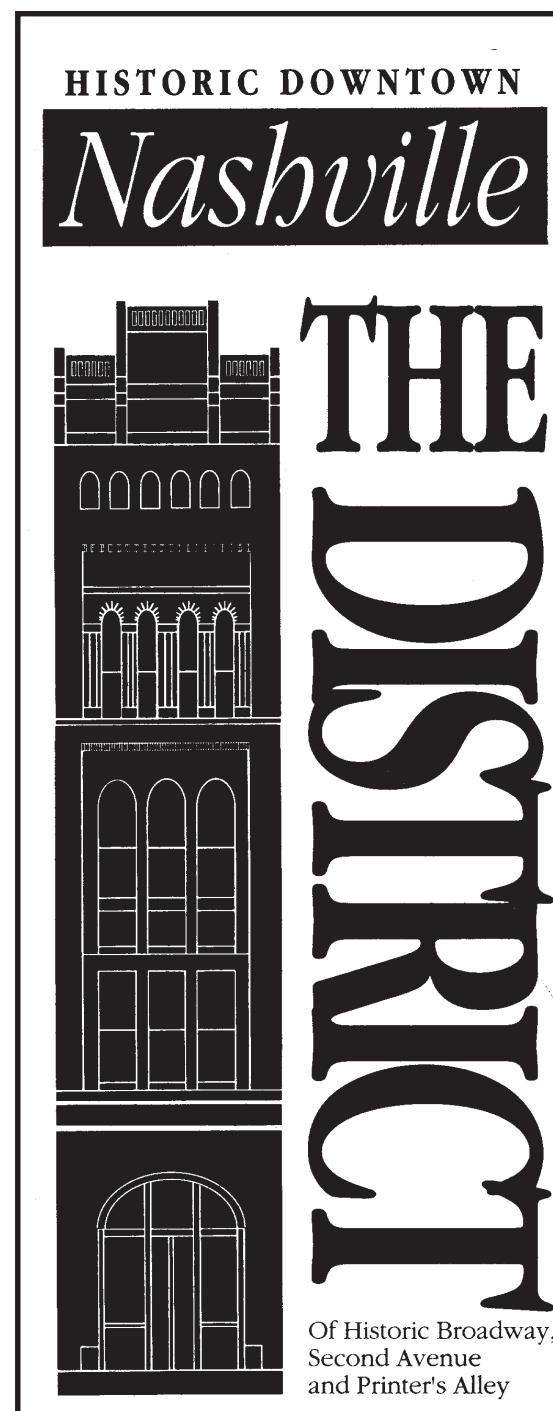
manipulate both the images and the viewer to produce change.

What does each "player" do in the process?

- The *viewer* "sees" the image and responds to the emotion produced. "Seeing," in the image game, can involve all of the five senses. An emotion and response can be caused by the smell, taste, sound or feel of something, just as easily as by the sight of it. This is very important to remember when assessing the image of a downtown or neighborhood district; what is felt, smelled, heard or touched can be just as influential as what is seen.
- The *object* simply *is*. When we are not involved in the development of the image, then the object "speaks" for itself. When we *are* involved in manipulating the object, then it is the object as interpreted by us that the viewer responds to. Therefore, picking the appropriate objects to manipulate is one of the first steps for successful image development.
- The *manipulator*; therefore, must be prepared to select the objects and control them to encourage not only the appropriate emotion in the viewer, but the desired action as well.

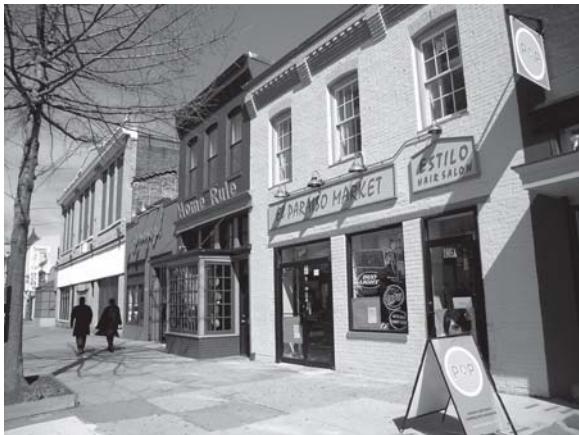
Without an organized effort to control and develop the appropriate images, the viewer is left to his/her own devices. In this "no controls" scenario, the viewer selects the object, the senses used to "see" it, the emotional response to it and the respondent action. In downtown revitalization, if images aren't developed with certain objectives in mind, then the viewer controls the outcome. *To gain — or regain — control of the district's image and to create change by encouraging positive action, the manipulator (YOU) must:*

- Identify the action desired; this requires **VISION**.
- Know the emotion required to get the desired action this requires knowing who you want to reach.
- Design an image that uses familiar objects that evoke emotion.
- Put forth an image.



Downtown brochure, Nashville, Tennessee.

Of course, numerous actions are required to create real revitalization. And many emotional responses will be needed to produce these actions. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that image development is:



Although traditional commercial districts are aesthetically more appealing, they need to still distinguish themselves from competition by promoting their assets and image.

- complicated — someone needs to be paying attention to the details
- psychological — after all, we are dealing with people's feelings
- time-consuming and long term — not to mention ongoing
- dependent on organized control, good information and **VISION**

HOW HAVE DOWNTOWNS DEALT WITH IMAGE IN THE PAST?

While it is dangerous to make broad generalizations about the way traditional commercial districts have dealt with their image, it is safe to make some observations that fit most American Main Streets. These observations about downtown's image fall into three basic categories:

- when downtown was the only game in town
- the competition and how downtown responded
- the "do nothing" scenario

WHEN DOWNTOWN WAS THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN

It is difficult to find examples of formal downtown image campaigns when there was no competition. Most of our images of that time are nostalgic; we reminisce that downtowns must have been just like

Norman Rockwell painted them or like the town that grandma and grandad lived in. These nostalgic — and for the most part accurate — images can be described using the following word pictures. Downtown was:

- clean and safe ("Never need to lock your door")
- friendly ("Everybody knows your name")
- full-service ("You need it? We've got it!")
- lively ("always something going on downtown")
- pretty ("quaint")

THE COMPETITION AND HOW DOWNTOWN RESPONDED

In many cases, downtowns didn't pay any attention to their image until competitors appeared. After World War II, with the advent of the Interstate Highway System and the proliferation of auto ownership, strip shopping centers were developed. With single ownership, controlled operations through lease agreements and managed advertising and promotion, the shopping centers overtook downtowns as the shopping area of choice. Images began to change as comparisons between the two were made.

The list goes on. If downtown responded at all, it typically responded by trying to be — or at least *appear* to be — just like the competition. The traditional commercial districts tried everything from aluminum siding on storefronts to blocking streets for pedestrian malls in an attempt to compete. The im-

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age? Downtowns were pretending to be something they were not and were communicating a sort of desperation to survive. Downtowns embraced the superficial features of shopping centers — like modern materials and pedestrian walkways — and never looked at the more significant features that created the shopping center's positive image: features like coordinated store hours, attractive advertising and promotion, good product mix and price. Without these qualities, downtown's imitation of the shopping center only reinforced its image as a second rate place to shop.

Since the days of the first shopping centers, development has exploded...and evolved. From shopping centers came enclosed malls. From malls, bigger malls. Malls then began differentiating, some specializing in discount outlet shopping and others featuring high-end or designer stores. Another trend that breaks away from traditional mall options are "lifestyle centers," which incorporate retail elements from outdoor malls and mixed-use elements from town centers.

Gaining popularity in the late 1990s, "Big Box" retail shopping has dominated the suburban marketplace and has began to move into urban environments, altering both the retail norms and physical landscape. Stores like Wal-Mart, appropriately nicknamed "power centers" or "category killers," and strip shopping centers with major stores that carry a single category of merchandise in large quantity (like Best Buy or PetsMart), are the latest forms of competition. Internet commerce gives customers more choices — without even leaving their homes. There are a variety of websites that sell specialized, niche or rare items and others that offer substantial discounts. But regardless of the type of competition, each new iteration of retail has carved out a particular niche for itself, created an image and communicated that image.

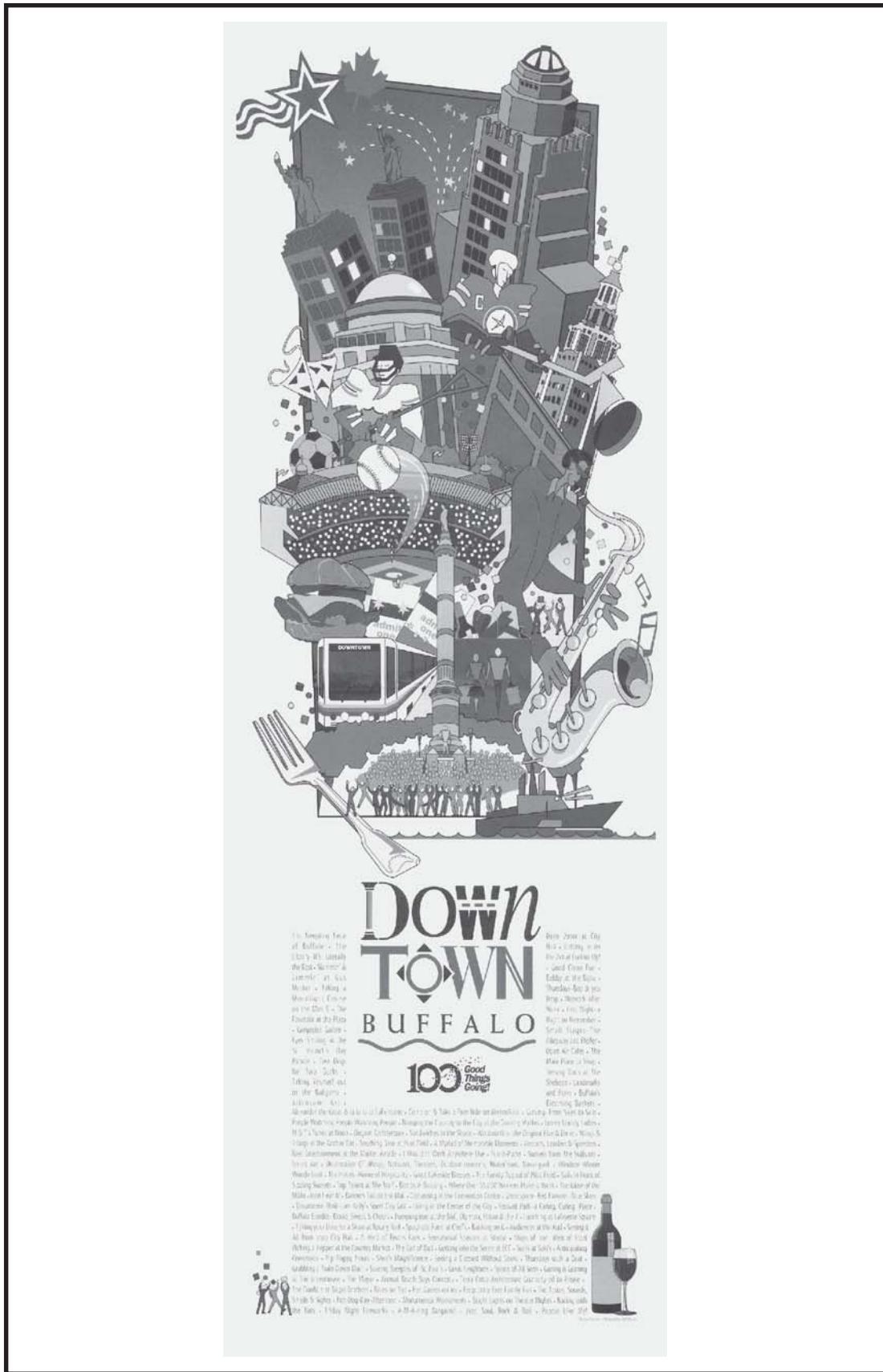
As a result, many downtowns and commercial districts that have not responded to these changes settle for the commercial scraps left behind by competitors who understand the value of image development. Sometimes, the most sincere attempts to improve advertising or promotion have often failed because the effort was not targeted to a niche in the

marketplace. Without that type of position established, any promotional effort will be hit or miss at best.

HOW COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS CAN RESPOND TODAY

Traditional commercial districts must now catch up to their competitors in the race to establish an image for themselves. To succeed, downtown organizers must:

- **Develop a vision** for the district.
- **Understand**, in the clearest possible terms, what the district offers and what the marketplace desires. The overlap of these two activities will provide the basis for the image defined.
- **Gain consensus** not only on the vision but also on the *position* that the district will take in the marketplace and the *strategy* for achieving it. It is consensus that will help take the sting out of the role as manipulator; agreement among the major players in the district about the future direction and image will make the activity of image development less coercive and more cooperative. With consensus, image development moves smoothly into image management.
- **Apply creativity** to the task of selecting words, pictures, colors and lines for the graphic images produced.
- **Apply the product** (the image, the message) in every way that successfully and persuasively describes the look, feel, taste, touch and smell of the place you call downtown.



Buffalo Place, Inc., began a public relations campaign featuring a contest entitled, "100 Good Things Going," for contestants to write about their favorite thing about the downtown.



Virginia Main Street initiated a joint retail promotions program with several main street communities and shopping centers. Participants pay to be listed in the brochure, which funds production and distribution of the brochure, advertising and other promotional projects. Shoppers can submit their receipts from participating stores for a small gift when they spend \$100, which is not only a good shopping incentive but also a great way to track the effectiveness of the program.

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YOU CAN'T SELL IT IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS

Like any product to be sold, the downtown has certain benefits and features that make it valuable to various markets. Before the commercial district's image can be developed and marketed, you must first determine its qualities. It is difficult to imagine how a successful marketing plan could be developed without product knowledge. Through an *asset inventory*, you will be able to determine the downtown's strengths and weaknesses relative to its competition.

The "supply" side of the equation concerns the district itself. In order to take stock of the commercial district's assets, you will need to have a thorough understanding of your downtown, its businesses and what they offer. Accordingly, you will then need to research the "demand" side by identifying your current and potential customers. Then you can analyze all of this hard data to figure out your district's image and target market you want to sell it to. The information you learn at this stage will determine your image, how to market that image, which businesses you should seek to recruit and which existing ones you should help to expand, what special events you should plan and all other activities that will effectively strengthen your businesses and the public perception of your city or town.

As the nation's population — and your district's market area — has grown more diverse, it has become more necessary to rely on the process of market segmentation to identify and appeal to the various

groups who are potential consumers. *Market segmentation* is the process of partitioning markets into segments of potential customers who have similar characteristics and are likely to exhibit similar purchase behavior. By identifying the "typical" consumer for the district's goods and services, you should be able to build a profile. Once the consumer profile has been identified, a *market position* can be developed. A market position is a unique strategy designed to appeal to customers in those segments you have targeted. Your market position will be expressed as a *position statement*.

DEVELOPING YOUR POSITION STATEMENT: DEFINING YOUR IMAGE

The process of developing a strategic market position for a commercial revitalization district requires the following steps:

- Establishing the objectives of the positioning strategy.
- Determining the district's current condition.
- Analyzing the demographics of the existing and potential markets.
- Conducting qualitative research.
- Conducting quantitative research.
- Designing a position statement.

Each step brings us closer to understanding the relationship between the needs and wants of the public and the mission of the local revitalization orga-

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zation. Through such an understanding, the organization can address the task of commercial revitalization in an environment of maximum support.

ESTABLISHING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE POSITIONING STRATEGY

The first step in establishing a strategy is to define the purpose, or mission, of the positioning campaign. Why are you going through the process? Will the strategy be used to market the shopping district or the entire area? You will want to refer to this statement of purpose throughout the process, as it will be necessary to make value decisions about the image developed and the campaign.

Try to get some consensus about the purpose and uses of the image campaign. At some point, you must be willing to define your commercial district in easy-to-understand images and language. It is best to get some agreement from others involved in the effort about the purpose and image. Do not assume that everyone in your organization and in the municipal government has the same mission and goals.

As a result of the consensus-building process, some policies will need to be established about the use of the strategy developed. How will the information collected through this process be used? Once developed, is there a reasonable assumption that the strategy will be implemented? Will the directors of your program have veto authority? There may be a possibility that some of the knowledge gained through the process will be unwelcome. Answering these questions at the beginning will save frustration and expense later.

DETERMINING THE DISTRICT'S CURRENT CONDITION

You may have walked through your commercial district a hundred times, but do you have a thorough understanding of it? Before you can figure out what your downtown can become, you need to know what it already is and what it offers now.

First conduct a business inventory. Draw up a list of all the businesses in your commercial area and look at all the services and products offered, from the doctor's offices to restaurants to car dealerships.

Make a note of the price point for each business, i.e. within its industry, is it high priced, moderately priced or low? Next compare the type of businesses and their price ranges. This information will yield which business clusters exist and which ones you can develop. These can be identified either by industry or by a particular price range. For example, a wealth of home furnishing and antique shops could indicate a strong furniture cluster, or a variety of businesses that offer high-end goods and services.

In order to analyze the market a commercial district can potentially attract, the downtown management program should first delineate the downtown's *trade area*. A trade area is the geographic area from which an actual or potential business or shopping center can expect to draw customers. Trade areas vary by size, depending on the type of goods sold. Trade area boundaries are typically determined through consumer and business surveys, media distribution patterns, geographic boundaries, transportation systems and the location of competing shopping centers. Determine how large the geographic area is from which your district might reasonably attract customers.

Your commercial district offers different products and services and, thus, has different trade areas for each. For example, shoppers may travel some distance for a major purchase, such as a car or refrigerator, but refuse to drive far for a quart of milk. The district's *primary trade area* is the area from which



Help your business district by learning about existing and potential customers and their shopping habits.

it draws customers for convenience shopping. Drug stores, dry cleaners, fast-food restaurants, card shops and gas stations are examples of businesses that attract these “regular” customers. The *secondary trade area* is the area from which it draws customers who are comparison-shopping for basic consumer goods, such as clothing, shoes and gifts. The *tertiary trade area* is the area from which the district draws customers for auto dealers and other businesses offering higher priced goods and services. Because downtown is more than just a place to shop, you should also determine the “trade area” for government, cultural, entertainment and other public uses.

Once you have identified the boundaries of the district, you can decide if you will be marketing the retail/service core or an expanded area.

Next, you should also conduct another inventory of your buildings. A downtown is the sum of its component parts, and the buildings are major elements. This can help you when you are trying to help businesses relocate to your commercial district or others to expand.

ANALYZING THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF EXISTING AND POTENTIAL MARKETS

It is rarely beneficial, or practical, for a commercial district to market itself to the entire consumer market. The practice of treating the general public as a potential customer is called *aggregation* and is a better strategy for companies with little competition, like utilities. Instead, select the most appropriate potential consumer groups and existing shoppers to target so that you can direct your communications and activities in the right direction — to the people most interested in what you offer. And who are these people? Groups within and outside your community that fit a certain profile, which can be identified through demographic research.

Studying *demographics* yields the data that combines population statistics with social and psychological behaviors. In other words, it includes the facts that define the various segments that make up the total market. Through demographic data, you will begin to develop profiles of the various groups to whom you should present your position statement.

Examine demographic trends. Demographic changes in the trade area may suggest new or diminishing commercial needs over the next few years on which the area businesses can build. For instance, an area where the number of new households is increasing more rapidly than the rate of overall population growth may have a growing need for furniture, appliances and other house wares — products typically purchased by new households.

Much of the information needed to understand the downtown’s market potential can be gathered and analyzed locally. In fact, local insight and interpretation are essential for an accurate analysis of the data and for the development and implementation of realistic business development strategies.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Market analysis is the tool that will help you target your business district’s development as well as measure your success. By understanding your businesses and learning who shops in your commercial corridor, as well as your potential customers, you will be able to shape your organization’s vision, create your strategy for realizing your vision, recruit target businesses and tailor your promotions efforts to attract target customers. Not having a clear picture of what your district offers and who spends money there (and how), your strategy for redeveloping your community will simply be a passive plan.

But you can turn a passive plan into an active strategy to reach your goals by simply collecting data through market analysis. Market analysis is a systematic evaluation of past trends, current conditions and future expectations about particular types of businesses and/or real estate activity within your defined trade area. It will help you understand what your commercial district’s market opportunities are and what the community can become, both economically and philosophically. From this knowledge you can devise your market statement, or goal for your district, and then incorporate that into your work plans, activities and communications.

This chapter will provide an overview of this process and will introduce you to the importance and

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types of information you need to collect. The National Trust's Main Street Center publication, *Step by Step Market Analysis*, provides detailed instruction on conducting market analysis and can be used as a companion to this section.

Just imagine if you are trying to recruit a new business into your retail mix. No business owner will consider relocating or opening a location in your neighborhood if you can't tell him or her anything about it. Therefore you will need to gather as much information as possible about the people who frequent your district and use its goods and services. Are you prepared right now to answer questions such as:

- Who are the customers shopping in the district?
- What are the commercial rental rates?
- What is the traffic flow on a Tuesday afternoon, or, perhaps, on a Saturday evening?
- What are the other businesses? Is there a particular business cluster in your commercial district?
- What is the total population of each market area?
- How many households are there?
- What is the average household size?
- What is the distribution of ages within the area?
- What racial or ethnic groups are included in the market area population?
- What are the household and per capita incomes of the population?
- How many wage earners does each household have?
- What do these people do for a living?

It will be infinitely easier to attract new businesses and retain current ones if you have a good idea of which ones can succeed in your shopping district. Your market analysis should indicate which businesses would do well by who shops there. Consider which factors affect your customers' buying habits: price, convenience, quality of merchandise, loyalty, added value, perception of safety, among others.

Learn what different groups of consumers like and dislike about shopping your commercial corridor and what they like and dislike about your competition. The tenet, "Know thine enemy," is particularly true in marketing. The downtown or neighborhood



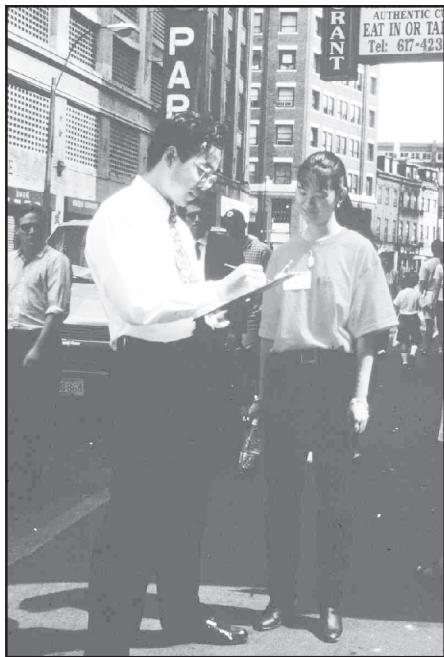
Form focus groups to learn the community's attitudes on the role of the downtown in their lives.

business district must know its position relative to the competition. Analyze your competitors' goods, services, amenities and position in the market. Think your strategic advantages as well as those of your competitors. In what ways is your business district prepared to compete with others? Perhaps you can't compete with a large Internet bookseller's rock-bottom prices, but your local bookstore can offer atmosphere and activities, like book signings or poetry readings, that a virtual store can't.

DATA SOURCES

Where can you find demographic information? There are a variety of sources. Some which you may find useful include:

- The ***Consumer Expenditure Survey***, published by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, is a free, comprehensive survey of the buying habits of households throughout the nation. Find this information on www.bls.gov or call 202.691.6900.



Have a clipboard ready for intercept survey participants to easily respond to questions.

- Two sections of the *Census of Population* are useful and can be obtained from www.census.gov or call 301.763.INFO. These are:

Census of Population: General Population Characteristics contains information on the age, race, household composition and ancestry of population groups in states, counties, cities, and other geographical units.

Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics provides more detailed information on educational, household, employment and income characteristics of population groups.

Both publications are available from the U.S. Printing Office.

- **Customer files.** Many of the businesses in your district will keep their own customer files containing information about the people who trade with them. This information can help you develop a composite profile of your existing customer base.
- **Surveys.** Surveys that your group, or others, may conduct from time to time should include basic demographic information, as well as specific questions about attitudes. Not only will you be able to

use this information for the profile, you'll also be measuring the integrity of the survey sample.

- **Existing market data.** Check with other groups and organizations that may have commissioned market analyses recently. Depending on what is available in your area, you can look to small business development centers, local universities, and business trade associations. If your state collects retail sales tax, contact your state office of taxation or revenue for copies of its report.
- **Media reports.** As a regular business activity, the various media conduct ratings and market-share studies. This information can be used not only to build the profile, but also to plan your marketing campaign strategy.
- **Private data sources.** Several companies provide market data for a fee. If you decide to use such a source, check references and be sure to buy only what you need. For accuracy, compare this information with the data you collect from other sources.

See the appendix at the end of this chapter for additional resources for collecting data.

CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is the process of analyzing groups in order to ascertain the nature of their attitudes and concerns. Those attitudes help to shape the motivation for purchase or affiliation and will be used in the construction and delivery of the positioning statement. The most common method used to determine concerns that motivate people is the *focus group*.

Focus groups are simply directed conversations that allow a representative sample of people from a specific market segment to discuss what's important to them. This type of research will help you learn more detailed information beyond what can be collected from intercept or telephone surveys. During the course of the conversation, the person conducting the group will ask leading questions to encourage discussion about the impressions, opinions, concerns and values of the group. You will want to conduct

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focus groups from your existing market groups, as well as those groups identified as potential markets. When using the focus group method, you should:

- Schedule the meeting at a time that is convenient for respondents. Know your audience and schedule accordingly.
- Recruit a group that meets predetermined characteristics. While this is more important for a specific product, good or service — i.e. male golfers might be asked about a new golf ball — the group assembled to discuss downtown should also meet a market group profile.
- Hold the interview in a relaxed, informal setting to invite conversation. The session should last one to two hours to allow an in-depth discussion. Comfortable seats or couches may encourage panel members to engage in an open conversation.
- Use an experienced moderator working from topic discussion outlines to lead the session. The interviews are usually recorded, audio or videotaped.
- Conduct two to three discussion groups per market segment or topic since a single member of the group can change the dynamics of a session.
- Keep the market segment groups distinct so that trends or patterns will appear. If the group includes people of different ages or backgrounds, much time will be spent making people comfortable with each other and the group will be reluctant to have an open discussion.
- Consider giving focus group members small gifts to show appreciation for their participation.

Focus groups work because of their flexibility, speed and informal setting. The method can fail, however, if a dominant individual controls the session. Group dynamics are an important part of the process and must be considered when analyzing results. Focus groups typically range in size from eight to 12 people.

Some of the attitudes and concerns you will want to encourage as topics for discussion include:

- views and values about a sense of place
- role of the community in their lives

- downtown's role in their lives
- general impressions of the downtown
- qualities of a "successful" community
- downtown's place in the local economy
- downtown's competitive position relative to other areas
- shopping wants and needs
- value of heritage and traditional places
- general personal values and community concerns

Remember that the focus group process only reveals the opinions of those present. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the market segment as a whole. Insight gleaned from focus group sessions should be compared to information gathered through quantitative research.

CONDUCTING QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative research is the analysis of a market segment in order to determine the number and location of its members. The primary tools used to conduct quantitative research are surveys of the identified market segments. Surveys can provide you with firsthand information from members of the identified segment about how, when, where, why and for what they shop. You will also learn the concerns, values and motivations of the group and be able to compare those responses to the focus group results.

Two types of surveys should be conducted for quantitative research:

- **Intercept surveys** of people who are present in a specific location and possibly meet specific elements of a profile, such as downtown workers. You literally *intercept* them on the street and ask them to complete a survey.
- **Telephone surveys** of households that match the market profile. This method allows direct contact with a large number of segment members in a relatively short period of time.

By comparing the results of the surveys and the focus groups, you can determine the dominant attitudes, concerns, wants and needs of the market seg-

BEAUTIFICATION

Need benches.
 Plant trees, flowers, bushes.
 Install water fountain, more trash cans.
 Could be cleaner.
 Better weed control, good landscaping needed.
 Clean up 500 block of Main Street.
 More building restorations.

Get property owners to work on their buildings.
 Property owners should be willing to help renters improve building appearances or sell.
 Clean up second stories of buildings.
 Fix the sidewalks - 700 block sidewalk bad.
 Fix or demolish vacant buildings.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Sales clerks not cooperative or friendly. Take tips from Berry Hardware on how to treat customers, run a business, etc. I don't like to hear that I shouldn't go out of town to shop. Sometimes I go just for the fun of it-not that I couldn't buy in town if I looked around.
 When someone moves to town, make sure a representative from the business district contacts them. I moved here 3 years ago, and only the Newcomers Club contacted me.
 Need public restrooms.
 Make it fun to shop here.
 There should be more clerks on staff during lunch hour times when many people are rushed while running errands.

Rude police officers.
 Sales personnel could give more services with a smile and could be more hospitable in many instances. Some individuals offer these niceties and I find that I go back to those stores to purchase.
 Merchants need to treat "working" people in a better way. I feel disrespected by many merchants because my job doesn't require formal business attire like other downtown workers.
 Disappointed in attitude of sales personnel. Do not show a willingness to help customers in a friendly manner.
 Quit worrying about where Main St. is and give better service.

HOURS

Stay open after 5 PM to accommodate workers.
 More evening hours.
 Thursday night is a poor choice as the one night stores stay open late.
 People get paid on Friday. They go out of town to shop then.
 On cold days, close stores early.
 Open on Sundays.
 Merchants need consistent hours.
 Need longer library hours.
 I can't get to bank during regular hours.

TRAFFIC & PARKING

Improve traffic flow.
 Speed up traffic.
 4 lane entrance to town off Highway 20.
 Takes too long to go through town because of traffic lights.
 There are few left turn signals.
 More handicapped parking.
 More parking for employees.
 Keep employees and store owners out of the parking lots.
 Parking lots without landscaping look bad.
 It is hard to figure out where all-day parking lots are located.

Sample of survey responses from customers. Although customers may be fully aware of a major problem with bad customer service downtown, merchants may not be. Also note that a rude police officer, traffic problems, and the library's hours are all associated with downtown — all elements of downtown contribute to a negative or positive image.

SAMPLE PROFILE: WOMEN WHO WORK DOWNTOWN

Approximately 1,450 women work in ABC's downtown, representing 1,300 households (the other 150 have spouses who work downtown, too). With an average household income of \$46,000, the women who work downtown are likely to spend \$2.1 million this year on apparel, \$1.7 million on furniture and home furnishings, \$500,000 on health care, \$200,000 on books and magazines, \$3.5 million on groceries, and \$2.2 million eating in restaurants. We estimate that, right now, they're only making about 18 percent of these purchases downtown—even though they're here, within easy walking distance of every downtown business, every weekday from 9-to-5!

Here's some more information we have learned about downtown ABC's female workers from our market research:

- They make most of their purchases on Saturday mornings and on weekday evenings (particularly Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays) between 5-7 p.m.
- Although they appreciate bargains, they're willing to pay extra for convenience and good service.
- Only about 20 percent of downtown's working women listen to the radio at work—but, of those 20 percent, more than three-quarters listen to National Public Radio.
- The things they like best about downtown are its compact size, its ambiance, its historic buildings, and merchant friendliness.

ment. This information will make the market sement profile more accurate and complete. Keep the following in mind when you design your surveys:

- **Be objective.** Your questions should avoid leading the respondents to give you the answers they think you want. Don't imply an opinion or response by the phrasing of the question, such as, "Do you think the downtown corridor is unsafe?" A better option is to ask respondants to rate the

- The things they dislike most about downtown are limited store hours, the store window displays, and the poor condition of the parking lots.
- More than 80 percent of the women who work downtown and who are under 40 years of age primarily shop for clothes at the Metropolis Megamall; fewer than 10 percent shop for clothes downtown! Of those over 40 years of age, about half shop for clothes at the Metropolis Megamall, about one-quarter shop out of town, and about one-quarter shop downtown.

What can your business do to capture more of this enormous "captive" market?

- Shift your business hours! The women who work downtown tend to shop from 5-7 in the evening, when, unfortunately, most downtown businesses are closed.
- Change your window displays more frequently. The people who work downtown see your window displays more often than anyone else.
- Offer special services to make shopping and doing business easier. The women who work downtown feel stretched, with little time to shop or do errands. You might consider offering free delivery within the district, for instance, or extending hours on several week nights.

safety of the downtown on a scale of 1-5 with 1 indicating very safe and 5 indicating dangerous.

- **Keep it brief.** A survey should be completed in five minutes or less. You need to decide what information is important and construct the survey to get that information easily.
- **Make it easy to tabulate.** Code the questions so that the answers can be tabulated easily. The longer it takes to use the information, the less value it has.

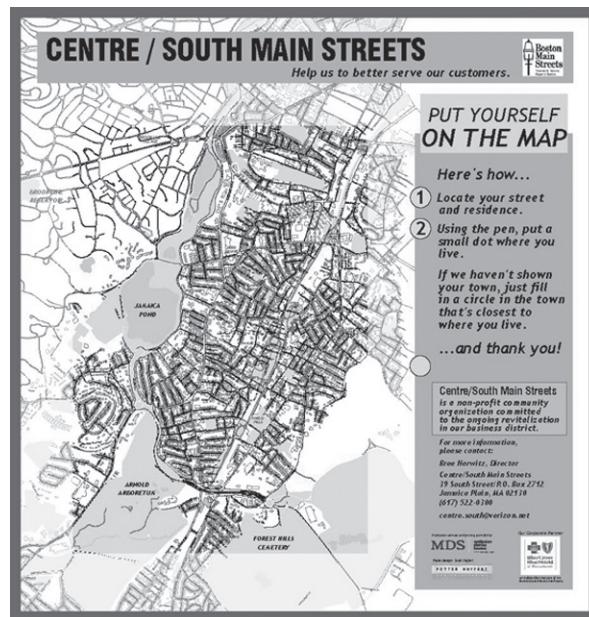
ADMINISTERING A SURVEY

The keys to administering a survey successfully are making sure your volunteers are well trained and ensuring that volunteers and respondents are comfortable. Keep the following points in mind when conducting a telephone survey:

- If possible, find a bank of telephones that will allow groups of volunteers to make phone calls at the same time. The camaraderie that develops makes the survey process more enjoyable for volunteers. Often, financial institutions, schools or utility companies have banks of four or five phones that they will let the revitalization organization use for conducting surveys.
- Be sure all volunteers understand the process for selecting numbers randomly — AND the importance of random selection.
- When a volunteer calls a household, he or she should:
 - briefly explain the purpose of the survey and mention the organization for which it is being conducted.
 - politely ask if the person answering the telephone can take five minutes to answer the survey questions.
 - explain that the telephone number was selected randomly, that the survey is completely anonymous and that responses will be kept confidential.
 - speak in a clear voice at all times.
 - at the end of the conversation, thank the person for taking time to complete the survey.

Keep the following points in mind when conducting an intercept survey:

- As with telephone surveys, be sure volunteers clearly understand both the process of selecting people randomly AND the importance of the random selection process.
- As with telephone surveys, it is usually helpful to have volunteers work in small groups. Small groups — no more than three people — are best, as this



The JP Centre/South Main Streets in Jamaica Plain in Boston wanted to know where its customers were from. It distributed 15 foam core maps of Jamaica Plain and surrounding areas to local restaurants and shops. Customers were asked to indicate with a pen where they were from. The information gathered was put to use along with other information from the rest of its market analysis.

number won't make the person being surveyed feel surrounded or outnumbered.

- Due to the sensitivity of some of the questions likely to be included in the survey (in particular, questions about age and household income), people will be more comfortable — and honest — if they can respond to intercept surveys confidentially. Or perhaps, generalize some of the information, such as giving age ranges instead of asking for a specific number. Have clipboards and plenty of pens available so the respondent can read the survey and write down his or her answers independently, instead of having the volunteer read the questions aloud. Allow respondents to deposit their completed survey into a sealed box with a slit cut in the top.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

The Lenoir Economic Development Board works with the department of Economic Development/Main Street for the City of Lenoir. We are conducting a brief citizens survey to get your input about the development of the city. Please complete the following questions that will be used to determine the needs for attracting new businesses to Lenoir.

1. Thinking about Uptown Lenoir, please rate the Uptown district from very poor to excellent on each of the following: (choose one for each)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
A. Variety of shopping	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Quality of shopping	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Quality of restaurants	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Variety of restaurants	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. Availability of housing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
F. Overall cleanliness	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
G. Availability of parking	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
H. Safety during the day	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I. Safety at night	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
J. Entertainment facilities	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. How many times per month do you or your family drive outside Caldwell County to shop? (Choose one)

- A. _____ Never
- B. _____ 1 to 2 times monthly
- C. _____ 3 to 4 times monthly
- D. _____ more than 4 times monthly

3. How many times per month do you or your family drive outside Caldwell County to visit a restaurant or for entertainment? (Choose one)

- A. _____ Never
- B. _____ 1 to 2 times monthly
- C. _____ 3 to 4 times monthly
- D. _____ more than 4 times monthly

4. If you travel outside Caldwell County to shop, visit a restaurant, or for entertainment, which area are you most likely to travel to? (Choose one)

- A. _____ Burke County/Morganton
- B. _____ Catawba County/Hickory
- C. _____ Wilkes County/North Wilkesboro
- D. _____ Watauga County/Boone/Blowing Rock
- E. _____ Charlotte
- F. _____ Concord
- G. _____ Asheville/Hendersonville

5. If there were additional retail stores, restaurants and entertainment amenities in Lenoir and Caldwell County, would you shop, dine and seek entertainment services outside the area? (Choose one)

- A. _____ Much less often
- B. _____ Less Often
- C. _____ Little Less
- D. _____ Same

6. How many times in the past 3 months have you visited Uptown Lenoir

- A. During the daytime (Choose one)

- (1) _____ Never
- (2) _____ 1 to 2 times
- (3) _____ 3 to 4 times
- (4) _____ 5 to 9 times
- (5) _____ 10 to 49 times

The Lenoir Economic Development Board in North Carolina used this simple, two-page survey to gauge the attitudes of people shopping downtown. The survey was also available online.

B. During the evening or on weekends: (Choose one)

- (1) Never
- (2) 1 to 2 times
- (3) 3 to 4 times
- (4) 5 to 9 times
- (5) 10 to 49 times

7. When thinking of places to shop, what is the most important factor to you and your family?
(Choose one)

- A. Variety of stores
- B. Having restaurants and entertainment available along with shopping
- C. Competitive prices
- D. Having everything close to home

8. Please rate the following factors in attracting you to come to Uptown Lenoir more often. (Choose one rating one for each factor)

	Very Important	Important	Fairly Important	Not Important
A. More Shopping	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. More Restaurants	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. More Parking	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Less Parallel Parking	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. Two-way Streets	_____	_____	_____	_____
F. Family Events	_____	_____	_____	_____
G. Banking Services	_____	_____	_____	_____
H. Coffee shops	_____	_____	_____	_____
I. Larger farmer's market	_____	_____	_____	_____

9. Please supply the following information:

A. Age:

- (1) 25 and under
 - (2) 26-35
 - (3) 36-45
 - (4) 46-55
 - (5) Over 55
- B. Gender
 - (1) Male
 - (2) Female
- C. Marital status:
 - (1) Married
 - (2) Separated or Divorced
 - (3) Widowed
 - (4) Never married
- D. How Many Children:
 - (1) None
 - (2) 1-2
 - (3) 3-4
 - (4) 5 or more

10. Do you have any comments concerning Uptown Lenoir?

To Have Your Survey Counted, It Must Be Received By Monday, FEBRUARY 1, 2004.

Surveys may be dropped off at the following locations:

Lenoir City Hall at 801 West Avenue NW

Lenoir News-Topic Advertising Building-302 Harper Avenue

or

Mail to: Economic Development

PO Box 958

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

- Instruct volunteers to approach people politely, with a brief introduction, such as "Excuse me, could you please help us?" (DON'T ask, "Do you have a moment?" People are likely to say "No," and the resulting responses won't be random.) Then, volunteers should *briefly* explain what they're doing and mention the name of the organization.
- Make the environment comfortable for the person completing the survey form. In warm weather, provide a shady spot; in cool weather, a sheltered area. Offer refreshments — lemonade or hot chocolate, for instance — and have a convenient area where the respondent can place any packages he or she may be carrying.
- Often, people who complete intercept surveys may ask for information on the revitalization program. Have brochures or information sheets available to hand out, and be sure volunteers know the name and telephone number of the revitalization program's office to distribute if needed.

TABULATING A SURVEY

Surveys can be tabulated either manually or on a computer. For a relatively small survey of 400 to 500 samples, computers are usually the easiest and most versatile tools for tabulating responses. Both database and spreadsheet programs are appropriate, but spreadsheets usually permit greater manipulation of data after it has been entered. LOTUS 1-2-3 and Microsoft Excel, for instance, have functions that display the minimum and maximum values for a range of numbers.

After the data from a survey has been entered into the computer, it should be sorted to create a demographic profile of all respondents. Then for each demographic group, the data should be sorted to reveal respondents' shopping habits and their impressions of the commercial district. In particular, you should sort the surveys to find:

- where people shop for various retail goods and services
- what they like — and dislike — about the commercial district

I DID THE SURVEY!

This Card Entitles Me to a...

Free Medium Soda at

Farran's Nevada Deli

or

Free Coffee or Iced Tea at

The Heritage Inn



Main Street Representative

Saying "thank you" to survey participants is important: Those who completed the consumer survey in Nevada, Missouri, received a free drink from a downtown business.

- what media they prefer (newspapers, radio)
- how often they visit the commercial district

At a minimum, sort the survey information according to the following demographic characteristics:

- household size
- household income
- age of respondent
- sex
- where the respondent lives
- where the respondent works

APPLYING YOUR DATA

Examine the survey results. Are there certain demographic groups or even subgroups that visit the district more than others? That dislike certain things about the district? That appear to shop more often in a competing commercial area? You will readily be able to answer these questions by developing a customer profile. This details important target groups by listing their typical age, gender, education, profession, income, shopping habits, hobbies and other information you think is valuable. There most likely will be several different market groups that you can tap into. Profile each of these groups separately and evaluate their potential impact on the district.

This information will be invaluable later, when determining what types of new businesses the district might support, how the district should promote itself to consumers and what features it should focus on — or try to change — in order to meet consumer needs and expectations.

Now that you have a handle on all there is to know about your commercial district, compose a market report to organize your findings and take certain elements into consideration to help you plan. These elements include:

- use (retail, office, housing, manufacturing, service, distribution);
- estimated level of demand for the intended use;
- timing of development (including potential for phasing);
- rent levels supported;
- space required (square feet); and
- special or ancillary requirements, e.g. parking, traffic, signs, storage.

There are uses for these applications in each of the four points of the Main Street approach. Coordinating the goals of each committee will ensure consistency in marketing an image. Although many of the points that will be listed below are explained in further detail in subsequent chapters, here is a basic overview of the uses of your research for each committee.

Promotion

Market data is essential to structuring promotional events that attract the types of visitors likely to support businesses in the commercial district. Although most of these points are covered in the following chapters, these are some specific uses for market information in promotional planning:

- targeting promotional activities to the appropriate customer segments;
- suggesting changes for in-store merchandising, advertising, customer service and display to better correspond to the needs and expectations of target customers;

- making decisions about how and where to advertise downtown or neighborhood business district events; and
- designing graphics promoting the commercial district revitalization effort in general and special events in particular.

Economic Restructuring

Market analysis also provides direction for the economic restructuring component of the Main Street program's activities. These include:

- developing an overall commercial district revitalization strategy;
- assisting existing business owners who may consider repositioning their firm in the marketplace by changing or expanding product lines;
- evaluating whether or not to proceed with a proposed development project;
- gathering data for marketing real estate projects for both rehabilitation and new construction;
- fulfilling lender requirements for financing;
- influencing public policy (such as land use/zoning, public improvements and services); and
- designing appropriate financial assistance and incentives based on needs.

Design

Market data can influence private and public design decisions in several ways:

- providing information on rents that can be supported;
- identifying other ways in which design will affect marketability, particularly project location and ancillary requirements; and
- helping the revitalization program suggest a level of public improvements that will generate increased business activity, rents and property values.

Organization

Finally, the conclusions of the market analysis should influence the organization of the Main Street program by:

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

- identifying key businesses, property owners, civic organizations, and others to involve in the Main Street program's board and committees;
- making decisions about the potential need for special task forces or committees; and
- making decisions about the level of financial commitment that should be anticipated for short- and long-term implementation of a revitalization program.

The purpose of all your research is to complete a profile of the targeted market segments. Once your consumer profile has been identified, you can develop your market position. A market position is a unique strategy designed to appeal to your target customers and will be expressed as a position statement. It breathes life into your mission or vision statement by saying who you are targeting and how you are uniquely providing what they want.

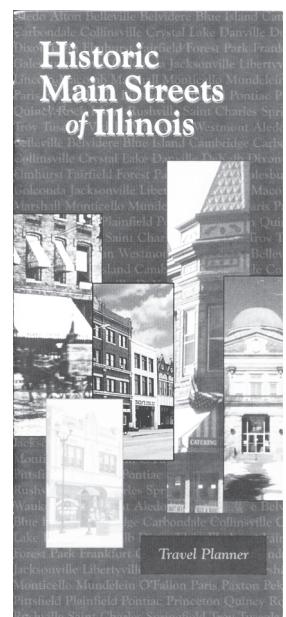
DESIGNING A POSITION STATEMENT

The position statement will sum up your district's place in the market. It should include those features and benefits that have been identified as primary motivators for your targeted markets and should be no longer than two sentences. Two sentences! Yes, it can be done — and must be done in order to ensure you aren't trying to be everything for everyone and keep your revitalization initiatives focused.

You must first decide on which aspect of your community your strategy will market. Are you trying to build your entertainment district to keep workers in the area after 5 p.m. or do you want to lure tourists there?

Perhaps you wish to change your image or create a new direction for your community not previously supported by past trends. In this case, you need to evaluate the potential your district has to support this new direction through economic restructuring or repositioning. This can be done in several ways, including:

- Recapturing sales leakage. Explore ways to encourage local customers to shop in your district instead of with your competition.



A thorough knowledge of your commercial district and its patrons will help craft collateral material that appropriately promotes your image.

- Develop new markets within your trade area that you haven't previously catered to, such as tourists or downtown housing.
- Identify types of businesses that would complement your desired image.

Regardless of whether you are attempting to re-create your image or strengthen your current one, when writing your positioning statement, involve other segments of the community in the process. Don't assume that local government and other associations agree share the same mission and goals. This isn't to say that if your organization is a true visionary and other groups in your community don't believe revitalization can be accomplished that you shouldn't push forward. Just keep the lines of communication open.

For example, "Downtown Funkytown — The only commercial district that offers unique clothing, eclectic furnishings, and upscale crafts for the shopper who doesn't want what everyone else has." This statement *differentiates* downtown from all other areas ("only") and identifies benefits that are important to a specific segment of the population. These segments can be anything from shoppers looking for certain

Positioning Statement Formula:

{Insert your town or city} offers {insert your target market} a {insert value proposition for target market} because {insert unique assets}.

types of goods and services; residents looking for a walkable community; corporations seeking high technology infrastructure; small businesses who want to be part of a retail cluster; or tourists interested in cultural programs. Be careful, however, not to lose the targeted nature of the process by trying to become all things for all people.

The position statement should identify the common areas of value and concern and differentiate the district from its competition. While you should take a positive, even aggressive, position and highlight your strengths, avoid exaggerations.

Therefore, you will want to first look at your commercial district's strengths and weaknesses. What are its major assets? What does it offer to various segments of the community, from residents to day-trippers? What is unique about your main street? Whittle your brainstorming list to about eight or 10 qualities. This list may be broad and general and can include such items as: variety of architecture, sense of heritage, convenience of services, or vibrant nightlife. It can also be helpful to list the strengths of your competitors as well. This can help you see more clearly the unique assets of your district and also know how your competitors position themselves.

Then match your target groups with your major assets. Think strategically about these market groups: analyze their demographics, learn their attitudes about the downtown, and consider the best modes of communication in which to reach them. Use your "two sentences" to tell a specific audience why they should come to your commercial district and for what.

Your organization cannot state a position that is your district can't support. This rings true for re-positioning statements as well. If you are trying to reposition your district, build off from your current assets and strengths. For example, if want to enliven your downtown's entertainment offerings and already

have several fine dining establishments, consider the types of cultural or nightlife places your current district's patrons would enjoy. If market analysis shows your existing customers would like to see performing arts and there is no other competition for a performing arts center, then write your positioning statement to meet the needs of this market.

With your positioning statement crafted you can now use it to develop a branding campaign, advertising, promotional material, special events and to guide other aspects of your revitalization plan through a consistent and unified message.

CHAPTER 2: APPENDICES

MEASURING SALES DEMAND

By Kennedy Smith, Director of the National Main Street Center

Reprinted from *Main Street News*, Volume 181, November 2001

For several years, residents of Anytown, a medium-sized southwestern community, have been saying that the downtown needs a new men's clothing store. In a customer survey conducted two years ago, people listed a men's store more often than any other type of business when asked what they would like to see downtown. Yet Johnson's, a popular men's store that had been in business downtown for more than 50 years, closed in 1984. Since then, most people have shopped for men's clothing at one of three stores in the Syphon Mall, 15 miles away.

Although consumers say they want a new men's store downtown, desire alone isn't enough to make a new store successful: there must be sufficient sales demand. Unless the community can economically support the new business, making an effort to recruit one will be useless.

ESTIMATING POTENTIAL SALES

Gauging the dollar volume of potential sales for a particular retail category is the first step in measuring sales demand. To estimate a community's potential sales demand, market analysts generally use the Consumer Expenditure Survey, a report prepared every few years by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The bureau surveys thousands of households throughout America, asking people to record how much they spend on a wide range of products and services, from heating oil to health insurance. It then divides the households completing the survey according to several characteristics:

- age of the householder
- race
- household income
- region of residence
- household size
- whether the respondent owns or rents a home

Finally, the bureau analyzes the amount that households in each category spend annually for a variety of goods and services. According to these characteristics, people spend money in diverse ways. Retired people rarely buy furniture, for instance, because they have already accumulated household furnishings. Young adults, on the other hand, buy furniture gradually, over the course of a decade or more, thus representing a stronger consumer market for furniture sales.

A downtown revitalization program can estimate potential sales for the downtown trade area in the following way: count the number of trade area households that fit into each of the Consumer Expenditure Survey's categories; then multiply this by the amount a household typically spends.

Example: Anytown has about 9,000 households (a total population of just over 24,000). It is the primary commercial center in Southwest County. About 6,000 people living in nearby Northeast and Central counties work in Anytown, thereby providing another group of potential downtown customers. Several of Anytown's businesses also draw shoppers from small towns throughout the region. In all, Anytown has a trade area that covers about 35 square miles and includes approximately 19,000 households. These households are distributed by income as follows:

Household Income	No. of Households
Under \$5,000	844
\$5,000-9,999	1,117
\$10,000-14,999	2,422
\$15,000-19,999	5,253
\$20,000-29,999	5,958
\$30,000-39,999	2,330
\$40,000 and over	1,059
TOTAL	18,983

<i>Typical Annual:</i>			
Household Income	Number of Households	Household Expenditures	Potential Demand
Under \$5,000	844	\$126	\$106,344
\$5,000-9,999	1,117	92	102,764
\$10,000-14,999	2,422	127	307,594
\$15,000-19,999	5,253	178	935,034
\$20,000-29,999	5,958	202	1,203,516
\$30,000-39,999	2,330	326	759,580
\$40,000 and over	1,059	606	641,754

TOTAL POTENTIAL SALES DEMAND: \$4,056,586

The Anytown Downtown Development Association (ADDA) wants to know what the potential demand for men's clothing might be. According to the Consumer Expenditure Survey, households typically spend between \$92 and \$606 annually for men's clothes, depending on household income. Using the number of households in each income group in Anytown's trade area and the typical per household expenditure figures listed in the Consumer Expenditure Survey, ADDA estimated total potential demand for men's clothing to be as listed in the table above.

COMPARING POTENTIAL SALES TO ACTUAL SALES

The potential sales demand for a retail category should then be compared to the trade area's actual sales for the most recent year that figures are available. If potential sales are greater than actual sales, there is probably a sales leakage, in other words, people are shopping outside of the trade area. If actual sales exceed potential demand, the community probably has a sales surplus, it's drawing in extra sales from outside the trade area.

Example: Anytown's actual sales for men's clothing last year totaled \$2,869,000. Because Anytown's potential sales (\$4,056,586) exceed its actual sales of men's clothing (\$2,869,000), it has a sales leakage (\$1,187,586), meaning that people are going outside the city's trade area to buy men's clothing.

INTERPRETING SALES LEAKAGE OR SURPLUS FIGURES

Logically, it would seem that a sales leakage offers an opportunity to add additional stores — or expand existing businesses — to capture sales that are leaving the community. And, usually, this is true. There are times, however, when a leakage may not represent a good retail opportunity. Imagine a town in a "dry" county — one that does not permit sales of liquor by the drink. An estimate of potential demand indicates that the community has a sales leakage of several million dollars in restaurant sales. If, just across the county line, there is a good restaurant that can sell liquor, people may routinely drive over there for dinner. Consequently, new restaurants in the dry county may never capture much of the sales leakage. Or, if there is an outstanding men's store 20 or 30 miles away, customer loyalty might prevent a new local business from ever recapturing lost sales.

Similarly, a sales surplus does not mean that the downtown cannot increase sales even more. If the outstanding men's store is local — and if it draws enough customers to capture more sales than the community itself would be expected to generate — it might be possible to add a second men's store, a men's shoe store or another business catering to those customers.

Because of the many ways a sales leakage or surplus can be interpreted, it is crucial that the people involved in the downtown revitalization program also participate in the process of analyzing potential sales

1.	Actual Sales	÷	Actual square footage	=	Average sales per sq. foot
	\$2,869,000	÷	14,500 square feet	=	\$198 per sq. ft.
2.	Unmet Demand	÷	Average sales per sq. foot	=	New Square Footage to be Captured
	\$250,000	÷	\$198 per sq. ft.	=	1,263 sq. ft. of new

demand. If a professional market analyst is hired to conduct a leakage analysis, be sure he or she is familiar with local and regional businesses, local shopping habits and other market characteristics. Better yet, conduct a leakage or surplus analysis locally then discuss possible interpretations before involving a professional market analyst.

ESTIMATING THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RETAIL SPACE

If potential sales demand figures indicate that the downtown can support one or more new businesses or expansions, estimate how much additional retail space will be needed. To do so, figure out the amount of sales a particular type of business is likely to generate per square foot per year, then divide the total unmet demand by this figure.

Unfortunately, there is no precise way of estimating how much a downtown business is likely to generate per square foot annually. Shopping center developers can use Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers, published by the Urban Land Institute, to find actual sales per square foot statistics for stores in shopping centers and malls. Because most downtown businesses are individually owned and because downtown economic conditions vary widely throughout the country, it is impossible to use these figures for central business districts.

Instead, many professional market analysts look at the sales a community actually realized in a specific category and the number of square feet of existing retail space for that category. By dividing the existing square feet by existing sales, analysts can determine the amount local businesses generated per square foot. They can use this figure to estimate how much new retail space the community might be able to support.

Example: Anytown's sales demand analysis showed approximately \$1,000,000 of unmet demand for men's clothing. To be safe, ADDA leaders assumed that a new business could capture only one quarter of that unmet demand—about \$250,000. They estimated the amount of downtown sales space devoted to men's clothing to be about 14,500 square feet and they already knew that men's clothing sales totaled \$2,869,000 last year. Based on these calculations, ADDA leaders decided to recruit a new men's clothing store to fill about 1,200 square feet of retail space.

A word of caution: Being able to demonstrate unmet sales demand for a certain type of product or service does not guarantee the success of a new business in that category. Many factors affect how successful a new venture might be:

- how well the business is managed
- promotion and advertising
- proximity to supporting businesses that attract similar types of customers
- characteristics of the surrounding environment

A comprehensive downtown revitalization program can gradually address many of these factors. The program can help improve the appearance of the commercial district, share merchandising and advertising skills with retailers, promote the districts assets and recruit complementary businesses. Before beginning business recruitment activity however, the revitalization program should establish a solid foundation in these other areas. And by measuring sales demand the program should also know whether the local market has the potential to support new retail space.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

ADDITIONAL READING

Information on the number of households by category (age, household size, household income, race, housing tenure) is available in the Census of Population Characteristics and Census of Population Social and Economic Characteristics. Census data is available by volume by state with data then broken down by county SMSA (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area) city town unincorporated portions of counties and census tracts (available from the Government Printing Office; a typical state volume costs less than \$12). Census information can also be obtained from www.census.gov, as well as from libraries, city and county governments, councils of government (COGs) and regional planning agencies.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There are a number of ways a revitalization program can obtain the necessary information to examine the downtown's market potential. Useful sources of data include:

LOCAL SOURCES

- City hall: planning, economic and/or building inspection departments
 - Information on construction starts, location, valuation (see building permits)
 - General and specific demographic (U.S. Census of Population) information
 - Trends in retail sales tax collections (some available by type of retail operation)
 - Trends in parking fee/meter collections (possibly by location)
 - General economic trends in housing, retail, office and industrial activity
- County courthouse: county assessor, clerk and/or planning offices
 - Same information as above, but about areas outside of the city (especially important for development peripheral to the city)
 - Trends in property valuation by location for countywide area
 - Sources and value of county's public revenue production (sales, property, income tax) vis-a-vis city allocations
- Housing and redevelopment authorities
 - Much the same as above
 - Specific information on housing trends related to size, location, availability, condition, lifestyle and income of tenants
- Board of education
 - Local trends in family and household creation — size, location, age, lifestyle and income level
- Information on lifestyles of high school graduates and those who haven't completed secondary education (amount of permanent outmigration and status of those remaining in the area)
- Local utilities
 - Updated demographic information and growth trends by location
 - Population, income and growth trends as determined by new gas, telephone, and electric installations or removals (see also TV cable companies)
- Local or state employment service agencies (state department of labor)
 - Trends in local employment/unemployment by job classification
 - Sometimes additional information about salary levels by job classification
- Chambers of commerce and economic development corporations
 - General local economic trends
 - Employment trends by job classification
 - Past economic development studies
- Local media
 - Periodic local demographic updates
 - Information on areawide retail penetration (trade area) as reflected in advertising, subscription and broadcast distribution patterns

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLISHED SOURCES

- U.S. Census Bureau
 - www.census.gov
 - 301.763.4636
- *Census of Retail Trade*, published by the U.S. Department of Commerce
 - Published in state editions with an extensive compilation of state, county, city and SMSA retail sales information by retail sales classification
 - Published every five years for years ending in 2 and 7, and usually available to the public within two years
- *Dollars & Cents of Shopping Centers*, published by the Urban Land Institute, 1090 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20015, 2000 edition
 - A detailed compilation of American shopping center characteristics grouped by size of center (neighborhood, regional mall), store type (retail activity, chain, independent proprietorship) and region
- Editor & Publisher's Market Guide
 - Generalized, regional demographic information
 - Available at most local newspaper offices and larger regional reference libraries
- Area of Dominant Influence City Book
 - Published by Arbitron, the national television and radio demographic rating service
 - Available at no cost at most local television and radio stations
 - Good source of specialized local demographic and some psychographic information, although rarely comprehensive for any locale

SELF-HELP LOCAL DATA-GATHERING

TECHNIQUES

- Vehicle origin surveys
 - License plate surveys conducted with the assistance of state motor vehicle department registration lists
 - Used to determine the type of existing patronage for a specific business area (who, where from, cursory lifestyle insights) but not the array of customers potentially available
 - Usually conducted over a four-to-five-day period with a minimum of 2,000 vehicles to gain an accurate sample
- Point-of-sale surveys
 - Again, used to determine the type of existing patronage for a specific area for same reasons stated in vehicle origin surveys
 - Based on the analysis of the sources of checks and credit card and charge sales, provides greater insight into shopping habits and customer lifestyles if the type and amount of sales are also considered
- At-random and/or intercept customer surveys
 - Customer questionnaires used to determine individual and/or household shopping habits, needs, attitudes, lifestyles and market knowledge are also used to supplement information from other sources
 - Used to establish either a more thorough knowledge of the clientele already patronizing a specific commercial area (conducted as an intercept survey) or a clear knowledge of the average customer in the general trade area (conducted as an at-random survey) using mail or telephone techniques
 - Can be conducted by telephone sample or in-person interviews

- Business owner surveys
 - Similar in format to customer surveys (if designed to complement each other and conducted simultaneously, they are more valuable as corresponding sources of information)
 - Used to determine merchants' knowledge of customer shopping habits, needs, attitudes, lifestyles and market as well as insight into their own practices and services
 - Various sample survey forms are available from the National Trust. Some are designed to correspond directly with customer survey forms to provide insight into merchant knowledge of customers as well as consumer knowledge of available goods and services
- Business interviews and retail audits
 - Intensive business interviews used to develop a thorough understanding of the management practices of local business owners, market/customer knowledge, strengths and weaknesses and individual (and, by implication, collective market-place) economic potential
 - Interview forms are available from the Small Business Administration and many local business schools

D&B Small Business Solutions
sbs.dnb.com

Dakota Worldwide, Inc.
www.dakotaww.com
800.475.4505

GeoLytics, Inc.
www.geolytics.com
800.577.6717

MapBridge
www.mapbridge.com
585.276.6490

Scan/US
www.scanus.com
800.272.2687

Tetrad Computer Applications, Inc.
www.tetrad.com/pcensus/pcensus.html
800.663.1334

Woods & Poole Economics
www.woodsandpoole.com
800.786.1915

NATIONAL COMPUTER DATA COMPANIES

AGS
www.appliedgeographic.com
877.944.4AGS

EASI
www.easidemographics.com
800.469.3274

ESRI
www.esri.com
800.447.9778

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

BUILDING INVENTORY FORM TEMPLATE

MAIN STREET



NATIONAL TRUST
for HISTORIC PRESERVATION™

Building address _____
 Map/parcel _____
 Owner _____
 Address _____
 Telephone _____
 E-Mail _____

Floor	Sq. Feet	Use/Tenant	Annual Rent
Basement			
Ground Floor			
Upper Floors 2			
3			
4			

Overall condition

Assessed value:

Year _____ \$ _____ Annual taxes _____ Insurance premium _____
 Year _____ \$ _____ Annual taxes _____ Insurance premium _____
 Year _____ \$ _____ Annual taxes _____ Insurance premium _____

For sale? _____ For rent? _____ What price? _____ Phone _____
 Realtor _____

Terms/other information _____

Date of construction:

[Source _____]

Listed in National Register _____

Date _____

In N.R. historic district? _____

In local/state historic district _____

Historic information _____

Photo/map sources _____

PHOTO

RETAIL ASSESSMENT FORM

Use this form to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of existing retail businesses.

Name of business _____
 Address _____
 Owner _____ Phone: _____
 Owner's address _____
 Manager _____ Phone: _____
 Merchandise category _____ SIC #: _____
 Store concept _____
 Type of traffic: Destination Impulse Other: _____
 Date of assessment _____ Conducted by: _____

Physical characteristics

Size (in square feet) (1) Gross: _____ (2) Sales area: _____

Quality of:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Display fixtures _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Signs (interior) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs (exterior) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Layout _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Window displays _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Point of purchase displays _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Facade (exterior) _____ |

Target market/customer characteristics

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Area of residence _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Workplace _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Income range _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Service characteristics

- Sales staff knowledge of goods/services _____
- Sales staff friendliness _____
- Store return policy _____
- Product/service guarantee policy _____
- Credit available _____
- Convenience of hours for target market _____
- Delivery services _____
- Other: _____

Marketing/promotional characteristics

- Quality of advertising _____
- Frequency of advertising _____
- Overall advertising effectiveness _____

Inventory characteristics

- Breadth of merchandise available _____
- Depth of stock on hand _____
- Turnover frequency _____
- Overall quality/condition _____

Other comments/suggestions: _____

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING THE LEVEL OF SERVICE TO THE CUSTOMER

Many of the changes that should be made in downtown businesses cost money. Improving the level of service provided to the customer can improve the profitability of a business without increasing costs. Ask yourself the following questions when rating the level and quality of service that a business provides.

Rating range: 5 = excellent; 4 = good; 3 = fair; 2 = poor; 1 = terrible

Business

1. Convenience
 - hours and days of operation
 - various methods of payment
 - customer parking
 - accessible to customers
 - quick transactions
 - standard prices
 - website
 2. Product knowledge
 - sales personnel understand product
 - awareness of competitive advantages
 3. Environment
 - business cleanliness
 - exterior appearance
 - friendliness, courteous sales people
 - personal security
 - adequate lighting
 4. Personal services
 - special services
 - first-name identification of customers
 - free delivery

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR DETERMINING EXISTING BUSINESS CLUSTERS IN YOUR DOWNTOWN

Comparable Clusters

1. Income

- low income
- middle income
- upper income

2. Age

- elderly/retirees
- children
- teens
- college students
- middle age

3. Lifestyle

- working women
- families
- outdoor
- country look
- tourist
- rural/agricultural/ranch/industrial
- value-conscious
- professional
- conservative
- DINKS (double-income, no kids)
- YUPPIES (young urban professionals)

Typical Complementary Clusters

1. Women's apparel and accessories

- budget
- middle income/middle age
- retirees
- upper income
- career/working
- teen
- children

2. Men's and women's apparel

- same as for women

3. Department store type goods

- clothing
- housewares
- linens
- shoes
- cards and gifts
- food (restaurant, candy, bakery, ice cream)

4. Convenience

- groceries
- drug
- repair (tv, shoe, lamp, furniture, alterations)
- service (hair, printing, keys, dry cleaning)

5. Wedding/special occasion

- clothing (formal wear, custom sewing, fine apparel)
- jewelry/gift/china
- photography
- florist
- printing/stationary

6. Home furnishing

- furniture/accessories
- rug/carpet/tile/linoleum
- curtain/linen/bath
- appliances/stereo/video/records
- hardware/garden/paint/lumber/electric/plumbing

7. Courthouse cluster

- lawyers
- title insurance
- realtors
- insurance
- restaurant

Competitive Clusters

1. Furniture

- budget
- middle income

2. Jewelry

- budget
- middle income

3. Appliance

- budget
- middle income

4. Lenders/credit store

5. Automobile

- gas
- dealers

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING THE COMPETITION

Name of shopping center _____

City _____

Cross Streets _____

Size of center (square feet) _____ Hours of operation _____

Anchor of tenants _____

Owner/leasing agents _____

List of tenants _____

Competing downtown stores _____

Trade-area demographics for shopping area (1 mile) _____

Trade-area demographics for shopping area (3 mile) _____

Trade-area demographics for shopping area (5 mile) _____

Rent \$ _____ /square foot (low) to \$ _____ /square foot (high)

Problems/deficiencies _____

Strengths and assets _____

ASSESSMENT FORM FOR EVALUATING DOWNTOWN AND ITS COMPETITION

List all of the downtown stores by category. Check stores duplicated by the competition.

ASSESSING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF AND ATTITUDES ABOUT YOUR MAIN STREET AND THE COMPETITION

Market group: _____

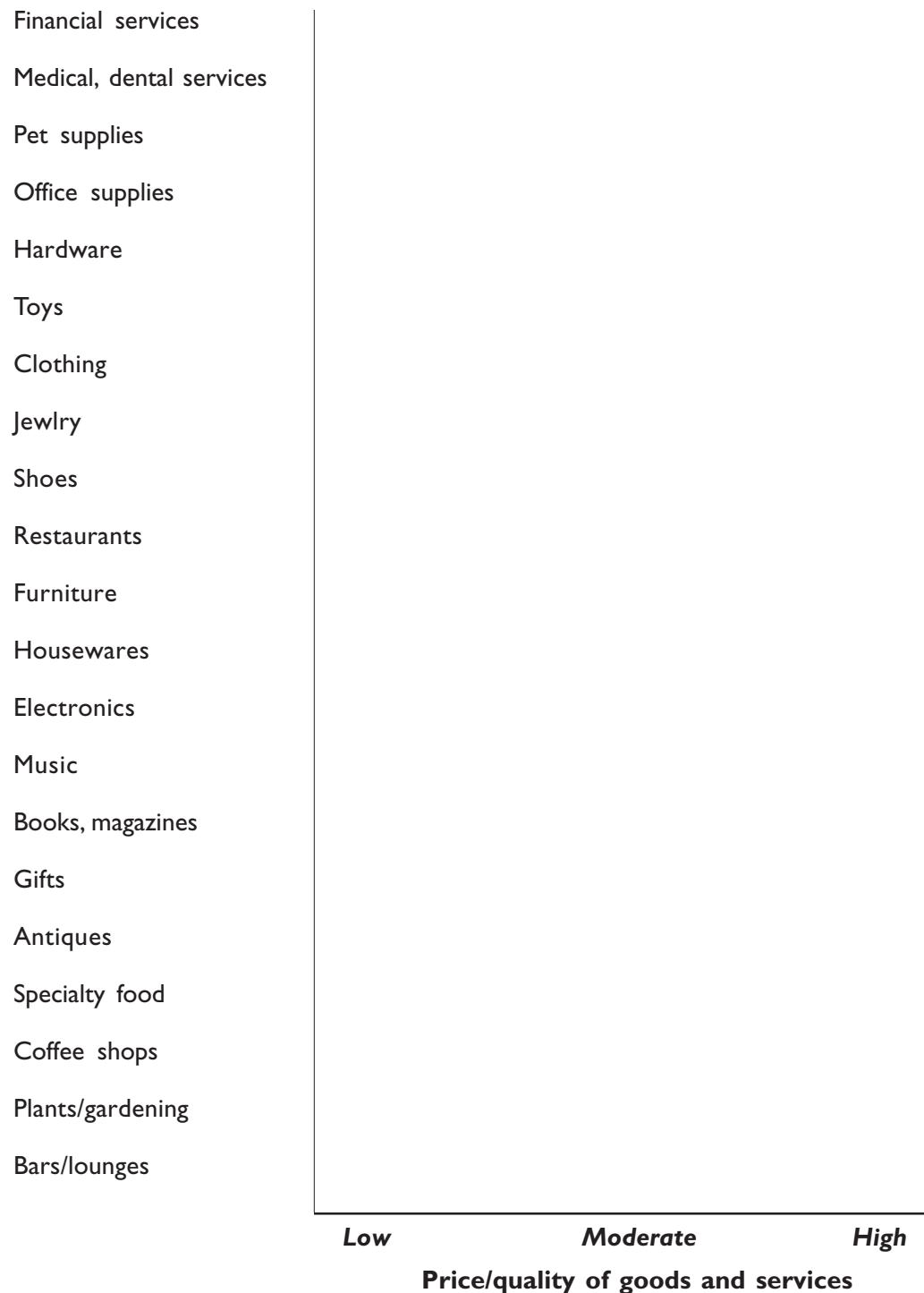
Characteristic	Your downtown	Competing shopping alternatives
Attractiveness		
Cleanliness		
Parking convenience		
Traffic flow		
Shopping hours		
Level of customer service		
Safety		
Variety of goods/services		
Cost of goods/services		
Quality of goods/services		
Special events and festivals		
Ambience		
Historic environment		
Quality of architecture		

Rating scale:

- 5 = Very positive
- 4 = Somewhat positive
- 3 = Neutral
- 2 = Somewhat negative
- 1 = Very negative
- N/A = Not applicable

IDENTIFYING MARKET NICHES

On the graph below, outline and shade the area(s) in which you believe your downtown is prominent. Then, outline and shade the area(s) where you believe the major competition is prominent. Where do the downtown and its competition overlap? Which market niches are being overlooked and thus not provided by any shopping option?





Attractive banners adorn the lampposts in San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter, the city's original downtown, which help to reinforce the district's image.

3

chapter

PACKAGING THE IMAGE

Once you have conducted sufficient research, analyzed it, and developed the positioning statement, you must devise a strategy to communicate the district's image to the targeted markets. It is now time to package your district's image into a brand — into the images, phrases and perceptions people will associate with your downtown. Effective branding campaigns build a relationship with your target market, create name recognition, associate your assets with consumers, help your community sell itself and differentiate your commercial district from your competition.

BRAND IDENTITY

When your target consumers think about your town or see your logo you want them to make associations of positive images and your assets. For example, if your town has a strong antiques cluster, you want shoppers to immediately think of your main street as their first destination in their search for an Art Deco mirror or if your district caters to a high-end clientele, they should think of your city for fine dining on a Friday night. Your brand has to trigger an emotional response with your target market by choosing the right words and images that strike a cord with them.

Once you figure out your positioning statement and your audience, you have to think creatively of ways to consistently get your message out. Your brand will be the thread that ties all of your communication and activities together. This includes everything from creating a logo and tagline to developing a strategic plan.

The first step in packaging the image is the creative process.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Now you're having fun! The creative process is the point at which you let your imagination run, not freely, but within the lines indicated by the demographic data, qualitative and quantitative research and the position that you have identified. What message do you want to communicate about your shopping district? What images evoke the emotions, concerns and values of your target markets? Keep your audience in mind when you are crafting your messages, especially since you may have more than one target group. Promoting your brand to local shoppers will be done differently than how you will promote your brand to recruit new businesses or to fill office space. Characteristics that should be included in the image are:

- **Motivation or emotion.** How do you want people to *feel* about your downtown? What do you want them to *do*? Make sure your offerings and events give your target market what they want and need regarding both merchandise and positive experiences.
- **Discrete identity.** The district has unique characteristics, such as business clusters, architecture or entertainment options. Your district also has certain price points that reflect the budget of your shoppers. If your commercial district is more family-oriented that appeals to the middle price points, then the interior and exterior of your businesses should create an environment conducive to that type of consumer. Elaborate store displays

and pricey merchandise would make these consumers feel uncomfortable. Similarly, a sidewalk sale for a high-price point district would look out of place.

- **Interesting.** The highlighted aspects of the district should be of genuine interest to the targeted markets.
- **Consistency.** Messages and images should possess an overall consistency in spite of multiple traits and development over time. This involves tight control over the graphics and taglines. By working with local business owners, government and neighborhood groups as partners, you can achieve sending cohesive messages and avoid confusing audiences or undermining branding efforts.

Your positioning statement may evolve over time with new goals and accomplishments, but your brand is a long-term element of your image campaign. You must be ready to commit to it. Although certain aspects of your image campaign will have a beginning and end, a strong program continues. One principle of the main street approach indicates that change is incremental and builds on each gradual success. This is true of building your branding campaign. While the effects of your campaign can be felt in the first few years, changing the general public's perceptions about your district takes time. Success is more appropriately measured in decades. Don't decide your branding campaign is unsuccessful if you don't see measurable results in the first few years. Consistency is crucial and changing your brand after a year is a mistake.

- **Multidimensional.** The images must be flexible enough to carry varied messages. Can your message be conveyed through a variety of media?
- **Honest.** There must be a nexus between the image you are creating and reality. Don't promise your target market something your district can't provide.

At the end of the creative process, you should have a concise, clear phrase or phrases that state your market position in an interesting way.

CRAFTING A TAGLINE

Just like your preferred brand of cola or favorite clothing store, your organization needs to craft a creative and succinct tagline. This is a catchy sentence or a few words that delivers a compelling message to your target audience about what your district offers and why they want it. It is a phase that is meant to help your community stand out from your competitors and reach your target market on an emotional level.

Remember the tourism campaign for Virginia, "Virginia is for Lovers"? That very successful campaign contained many of the elements you should look for in your own program. It contained a concise message that piqued the interest of the reader. Its message was distinct. It could be used in a variety of media and as an umbrella for other, unrelated messages and images.

When creating your tagline, think about the message you are communicating with your target audience in the positioning statement and play with the wording until it delivers your message in a way that will reach them. . . and resonates with them. Try to listen to your message from their point of view. Test out your tagline in focus groups to make sure you got it right.

DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Your district's image will be communicated through various delivery systems, or *distribution channels*. A distribution channel is any specific method of delivering a message to the targeted markets. The images of a commercial district are delivered in five ways:

- **The district itself.** The physical appearance (including design and cleanliness), the business and services mix, the atmosphere or ambience, the friendliness of employees will either support or undermine the images you create.

A very important part of this element includes having the support of business owners, local government agencies and other associations in your district. If they are not working with you, they could be (inadvertently) working against you. The main street approach stresses forming partnerships with key stakeholders to ensure the economic health and physical viability of downtown. Both the pub-



The Lewisburg Downtown (Pennsylvania) Partnership developed its logo using focus groups to identify the images that best represent the community visually. The Design Committee markets this appealing logo on high quality aprons, mugs, magnets and tote bags, which all correspond to the kitchen retailing cluster. The logo represents the town so well that a board member who was carrying her totebag in England one year was approached by someone who recognized the lampposts.

lic and private sectors have a role to play in promoting the brand.

- **Managed impressions.** These are images that are transmitted through such channels as advertisements, street banners, special events, logos, taglines, public relations efforts, special events and other planned activities. The purpose of managed impressions is to stimulate emotion, affiliation and action by the targeted market.
- **Unmanaged impressions.** Included in this form are news articles that are not generated by news releases, editorials and comments by others over whom you have little or no control or influence.
- **Mentions.** Impressions of the downtown created through feature articles, reporters and others. While some mentions are unarranged and authentic, many can be planted in order to appear spontaneous.
- **Products.** These are physical objects carrying the image of the district, the logo or name (buttons, t-shirts, bumper stickers, etc.).

One of your goals will be to manage the image as much as possible while still gaining maximum exposure. This management sometimes requires a delicate balance. With higher visibility comes a lessening of control over the image.

CAMPAIGN BUDGET

Money talks . . . well, you know the rest. The fact is that an effective image campaign costs money. You will be spending money on graphic design, advertising, printing and mailing promotional material and anything else needed to get the message out. If you find you need help with your brand or maybe are stuck trying to word your tagline, you might consider hiring a professional marketing or advertising firm. When budgeting for your image campaign, keep a few things in mind:

- **It costs more to alter an existing image than to reinforce that image.** If the current image of your district is positive and you are already attracting the market segments you want, then you will be working to reinforce that image. On the other hand, a major change in image will require a sustained effort with a large initial push. In the beginning, plan to spend three, four or more times the amount you are now spending and to do so for a longer period. Before changing your current image, see what is salvageable in order to save money.
- **Don't be cheap when it comes to graphic design.** Money spent on high-quality, flexible and consistent design is well spent. First impressions of your district can be based on the quality of your design. Too often, in an attempt to save funds, a downtown organization will spend less on the up-front costs. Unfortunately, the results are often unsatisfactory, costing the program money, time and momentum.
- **You will never be certain of the effects of your advertising.** John Wanamaker said, "I know that half of my advertising is wasted, I just don't know which half." While models have been developed to gauge the effectiveness of specific campaigns, absolute certainty isn't possible.
- **Spend money for things you need.** This may seem simple, but organizations often buy broadcast time and print ad space or stage events for other reasons. If you are serious about image development campaigns, purchase in a businesslike manner.

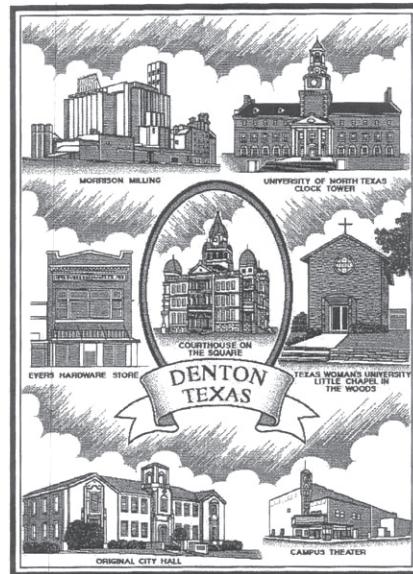
MERCHANDISING YOUR IMAGE

You're at a rock concert. Outside of the auditorium, vendors are hawking their wares — posters, T-shirts, buttons, squeeze bottles — all with the images of members of the band emblazoned on them. Are you buying a soft drink? You'll want one in a plastic cup with the lead singer's picture on it. The graphics, items and selling techniques are all part of a sophisticated image merchandising campaign. Celebrities make careful decisions about the use of their images on merchandise, having spent considerable sums developing those images. You should be as careful with the image you are developing for your downtown.

As it becomes known that you are developing a marketing campaign, you'll be inundated with catalogs from specialty advertising companies claiming that simply putting your downtown's name or logo on one of their items will gain high visibility. Even if such claims were true, you know by now that your decisions will be driven by what is right for your image. It is true that you can support the image of your district by a well-thought-out merchandising program. It is also true that poor merchandising decisions can be costly to your image program as well as your budget.

PLANNING A MERCHANDISING CAMPAIGN

A merchandising campaign doesn't stand alone. Rather, it is a component of your larger image plan. Does merchandise have a logical place in the plan? Establish some objectives for the merchandising campaign. What do you want it to do? It could act as a way to introduce a new graphic or phrase. Maybe you want to find a way to highlight the revitalization activities of your group. Also, keep in mind your target market groups. What kind of items do they use? Senior citizens might not want to buy compact disk cases but might find canvas tote bags appealing. As in all elements of an image program, the markets must be paramount in your mind.



Denton (Texas) Main Street sells cozy afghans featuring downtown landmark buildings for \$49.95. These hot sellers are available at several stores in town and are available in three different colors. The Main Street program outsourced the design and production of this item to a fund-raising company, which only needed pictures of the buildings.

USES FOR MERCHANDISE

Typically, merchandise campaigns are associated with special events or activities, although this doesn't have to be the case. Items that might be suitable for a particular event, a picnic blanket for a concert in the park, would not be appropriate for all activities. Thus, you must first consider the use of the item to be merchandised. This does not mean you can't be creative in selecting merchandise, but you should always choose products that are desirable and not something people will only throw away. It is not enough just to feature your image or logo; the item must have some intrinsic value if the image and message are to be valued and, most importantly, kept and displayed.

Of course, the use of merchandise at special events can add to your bottom line while supporting your image. Match the item to the event and the markets. Squeeze bottles at a 10K race make sense, coasters don't. If you choose to sell your merchandise, keep the quality and price in line with the markets. Be careful of the amount you purchase, as imprinted merchandise has a limited use. You may want to find a way to share the purchasing risk by selling the items

to downtown businesses for retailing. You can then take orders in advance and you won't seem to be competing with your business supporters.

You may decide to use items as giveaways. Why would you want to give merchandise away? You can give gifts to financial supporters during a fund-raising drive, for example, or as tokens of appreciation to dedicated volunteers. The items could also be used as mementos of an event or simply to remind people of the downtown. A free balloon imprinted with your logo can mean a lot to a young child's impressions of downtown (not to mention that child's parents). Whatever the use of the merchandise, maintain control of the images, sales and items.

PROTECTING YOUR OWNERSHIP RIGHTS

You've put a lot of effort and money into your image campaign. You've paid a qualified designer to develop a unique graphic image that reflects your purpose and your markets. Every decision is measured against the images you've developed. Don't make the mistake of leaving your work unprotected. Written materials should be copyrighted; logos, names and symbols are trademarked. In addition to the registration of your materials, you'll want to pursue a vigorous protection policy to prohibit the unauthorized use of your graphics and copy. If an image is particularly sought after, you might consider licensing its use to derive some income from it.

CASE STUDY: THE BRANDING OF DOWNTOWN BOULDER

By Jeff Cohn and Jane Jenkins

Reprinted from *Main Street News*, Volume 181, November 2001

Image development campaigns have long been used by Main Street district leaders struggling to improve the public perception of downtown. But the task of creating a compelling image for your main streets is a continuing priority, for even the most successful of revitalization programs. The popular buzzword "branding" is now being applied to whole commercial districts, not just the familiar "products" that are sold over the counter. In this article, we will explore how an established, successful downtown program in Boulder, Colorado, has, in the face of new retail competition, begun to reshape the public's image of the downtown through the process of "branding."

WHAT IS A BRAND?

What is a brand? It is the relationship between a customer and a product. The brand is the sum total of what the customer thinks and feels and how he or she interacts with the brand. It is incumbent upon the marketer to try to influence this behavior. Brands held in high esteem by the customer get used more frequently and therefore capture a greater share of the customer's spending.

Using a classic retail example, if we say "Nordstrom" to a typical upscale female consumer, her opinion of the Nordstrom brand will immediately come to mind. She will no doubt mention the store's strong commitment to customer service, depth of merchandise, sense of style, and comfortable shopping atmosphere. She most certainly will not use classifications such as dirty, unfriendly, low-end, etc. The customer's image of the store is the result of Nordstrom's branding excellence. And Nordstrom is



famous for understanding that the brand is created at every customer interaction, from advertising to full shelves (inventory) to educated and friendly sales professionals on the floor. The company manages its brand by managing every experience the customer may have with the company.

At this point, we must emphasize that a logo, or tagline, is not a brand. The brand is the relationship

customers express when they see that logo or tagline. In the Main Street context, consider the branding of a famous American city such as San Francisco. When we mention that town, what comes to mind? From our perspective, we're likely to think about hills, cable cars, great restaurants, maybe the Gold Rush era, or perhaps the new urban developments in the Yerba Buena area. That's the San Francisco brand, helped along by a few Rice a Roni commercials along the way! And if that makes you want to take a quick trip to the Golden Gate City, then they've done a great job of creating that brand image in your mind.

Try this exercise with your town. When you say the name of the community, what images come to mind? Are they positive or negative? What are people missing in the context of your brand? This can be a very enlightening process.

DEFINING DOWNTOWN BOULDER

Downtown Boulder is a 40-square-block area of Boulder, Colorado. Nestled against the beautiful Flatiron Mountains, Boulder is a component of the Denver metropolitan area; it is located 30 miles from Denver but has its own political, social, and economic systems. Many Boulderites never leave town if they

can help it and prefer to use Boulder-based businesses whenever possible.

The City of Boulder formed a business improvement district (BID) in 2000. The hub of the district is the Pearl Street Mall, which was closed to vehicular traffic in 1977. (There is, however, vehicular access to Pearl Street on the horizontal streets running perpendicular to the mall.)

Downtown Boulder has many distinguishing characteristics. The commercial district offers more than 250 retail, food, and service businesses and many anchor tenants that can be defined as "one of a kind." Total retail square footage equals that of a typical suburban mall, less the department stores. Our merchant mix is strong, made up of apparel, gift, and service businesses, and people love to stroll along the mall and see the new and ever-changing shops. Boulder loves to support independent businesses although our retail mix does include some well-known nationals such as Ann Taylor, Borders, and the Cheesecake Factory.

Our town's restaurant collection is among the best in the entire region, and the total package offers an experience that combines unique shopping, great food, and the sights and sounds of a downtown experience that cannot be found at the local mall. Of course, that includes some less than favorable descriptors as well, including parking difficulties and an increasing level of street kids that offend some customers. But, in the end, people look on Downtown Boulder with a positive point of view and we intend to increase that over time.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM BRINGS NEW CHALLENGES

The year 2000 was a challenging one for Downtown Boulder. First and foremost, a new shopping mall, Flatiron Crossing, opened just seven miles down the main access road to Boulder, in the town of Broomfield. A high-tech wonderland not unlike California's

Silicon Valley, Broomfield, which lies halfway between Boulder and Denver on the Boulder Turnpike, is full of technology and telecom firms that have moved in over the last few years.

Flatiron Crossing is a new hybrid mall that contains many well-known anchors, including Nordstrom, Foleys (May Company), Dillards, and Lord and Taylor. The interior portion of the mall contains a strong mix of retailers ranging from Old Navy to Pottery Barn, plus a large food court. The center also contains an outdoor "village" concept that will be anchored in 2002 by a large stadium-seating movieplex. The village contains a strong mix of sit-down restaurants, Border, Crate and Barrel, and a long list of small, independent businesses, many of which were once exclusive to Downtown Boulder. In short, the mall was trying to "one up" downtown by providing an entertaining outdoor shopping destination in a clean, secure environment with an outstanding mix of stores.

Our mission was clear. We needed to build and enhance the value of our marketing expenditures and to maximize the visibility of both consumer marketing campaigns and programs executed by the BID on behalf of our stakeholders.

Our strategy focused on managing the customer's experience of downtown at all levels in every place that we could control, including operations, marketing, special events, internal and stakeholder communications, and sense-of-place attributes. Our goal was simple and important: maximize every customer to minimize the sales erosion that was sure to occur as a result of the new mall. Later, we also needed to address the nation's falling economy, the



Downtown Boulder uses brochures to communicate its diverse offerings.

failure of many companies in the tech sector, and a slow tourism summer in Colorado. The challenges were great but we put together the right team to deal with the situation.

1. Develop the brand team.

The first step in developing a brand is to put together the brand team. Who is responsible for the process? In our case, we invited the two members of the BID board of directors who were responsible for marketing to join the BID's executive director, Jane Jenkins, and the marketing consultant in developing the program. We also established Jenkins as the "brand keeper," with final say on whether a program or communication was consistent with our brand strategy. In addition, we sought buy-in at every step of the way from BID board and other key stakeholders, such as the city manager and key property owners.

2. Assess the current situation.

The next step in our process was to assess how customers use the BID's offerings and determine how Downtown Boulder was perceived by core customer segments, including stakeholders. We reviewed our research, as well as information gathered by other parties such as the daily newspaper, talked with customers from all segments, spoke with merchants and other stakeholders, and determined if there was a need for any additional research.

We also tried to get a handle on what Boulder is not. This can be just as illuminating as what the district is. We found that we have three key customer segments, and each group uses our product differently: residents of Boulder and Boulder County (frequent users); Denver metro residents (experience seekers with periodic frequency); and visitors from Denver area hotels (experience seekers as part of their visit to Colorado).



We also came to the conclusion that Flatiron Crossing was going to be a formidable competitor for the experience seeker as well as the average shopper, that our customers and stakeholders are very opinionated, and that our product is inconsistent. We also determined what we are not: our product is not contrived, not wholesome, and not for everyone.

3. Develop the brand promise.

The goal here is to identify and reach a consensus about what the brand stands for and what it offers your targeted customers. You will have to answer such questions as:

- What business are we really in?
- What do we provide?
- What differentiates our product from the competition?
- What do we do better than anyone else?

From this, you can develop your brand promises. In Boulder, we answered the questions as follows:

- What business are we in? Creating an entertaining retail/shopping destination that offers "a sense

of place" that is unsurpassed in the region and that is realized through physical attributes and our mix of stores and restaurants.

- What do we provide? An experience that is real, not a contrived sterile environment.
- What differentiates our product from the competition? Independent businesses, outdoor lifestyle, ice rink (seasonal), and a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- What do we deliver in a superior fashion? An outdoor shopping and dining experience that is supplemented by the physical and environmental factors that are distinct to Boulder—i.e., the Flatiron Mountains, the Pearl Street Mall, etc.

Finally, take those promises and express them as though your targeted customer groups are doing the talking. The following are three examples from our plan, one for each of our targeted customer segments.

- Boulder resident: "As a resident of Boulder, I love going down to the mall. It's the center point of life here in Boulder. I run into friends and family there, the kids love to play on the rocks, I find things I'd never find at the mall, and it's great to be outside."

- Denver resident: "We went up to Boulder last Sunday just for the afternoon. It was great. You know, they have stores I don't see anywhere else, like Peppercorn. It was great to be outside and enjoy the Colorado weather. Yeah, there are some different types of people hanging out on the mall, but hey, that's Boulder."

- Visitor to the metro area: "I'm so glad the concierge suggested we go up to Boulder while we were in Denver. There's nothing like it at home—great stores, great outdoor cafes. You should go there next summer. Quite a different experience from shopping at the local mall."

4. Create the brand communications plan.

This is the part where you get to decide how consumers and stakeholders will view your brand. Developing a powerful logo and identity program is the first step and can be a difficult process. Remember, you

want your communications to bring your brand personality to life. Once you've created the logo, other graphics should follow, including a graphic standards manual, color palette, and the development of an advertising campaign and collateral materials for your district.

One mistake some people make is to think that all advertising must look exactly the same. We disagree with this approach. We believe that your advertising campaign elements, including radio copy and television spots, must be consistent with your brand promise. While they must convey the brand's personality, the actual look may vary. As long as you are strategically consistent, there is no problem making some shifts in approach along the way. In Boulder, our first radio spot was for the holiday season. The spot was soft, ephemeral, and gentle—a reminder of simpler holiday seasons in days gone by. Our second radio commercial was edgy, offbeat, and funny. Both of these spots did a wonderful job of conveying what was right for the targeted market (Denver daytrippers) at that particular season. Both reflected the personality of Downtown Boulder, yet they sounded decidedly different. And because they were consistent with our brand personality, that difference was welcomed.

Another good example of bringing the brand to life is our new web site, www.boulderdowntown.com. As mentioned earlier, Boulder's customer is high-tech driven and well educated. It was critical that our new site be as technologically advanced as possible for a downtown district while having the visual and textual flair of Downtown Boulder's personality. The site has many features and components, but one of the most valuable is the itinerary-building function that we call "My Itinerary." It allows customers to build their own personalized itineraries of Downtown Boulder shops, eating establishments, galleries, and service businesses; print them out; and take them on their shopping excursions. That functionality, too, represents our intention to manage our customers' perceptions of our brand.

5. Build the brand for stakeholders.

Equally important is the process of building the program's brand for your stakeholders. You want them to have a positive image of the organization and to know everything you are doing on their behalf. In Downtown Boulder, we do this through constant communication and by keeping our logo front and center at all times—on our staff uniforms, on our memos, on equipment, etc. We want the BID to represent energy and efficiency, and we do this by staying in touch with our stakeholders on a weekly and sometimes a daily basis. Building your organization's brand internally is just as important as building it externally.

THE NEXT FRONTIER

Once you've completed your consumer and stakeholder branding program, you can begin to adopt and live the brand at every level of your organization. You have to audit all areas of performance and ask yourself if you are performing to the level of the brand promise. Is your operations program up to speed? Do your staff members understand the brand you are trying to create? What is their role in taking the brand to its next level? From there, you can begin to leverage your brand for additional income and visibility through economic development programming, sponsorship development, and creation of new events.

MEASURING YOUR BRAND'S PERFORMANCE

Whether it's through planned market research studies, customer feedback, informal focus groups, feedback from stakeholders, or other sources of research, you must continuously measure your brand's performance. In Downtown Boulder, our efforts have helped us minimize the loss of businesses over the last year; in fact, we actually increased sales over the previous year's holiday season. Moreover, the weakened national and local economies, as well as competitive forces in our market, have not stopped us from hav-

ing a successful summer season, partially as a result of our summer advertising campaign.

Our ability to weather an economic storm stems not only from our outstanding product, but more importantly, from the brand image we've been able to build in the hearts and minds of our targeted customers.

Saturday August 16, 2003

3-9 pm

Ventura's Downtown Cultural District



Fatima Ronquillo, "Self-portrait Painting," 2002, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"

Over 150 Ventura County Artists exhibit artwork at more than 70 downtown locations, plus roving musicians, kids' activities and free shuttle service.

ArtWalk
SUMMER
2003

Meet Featured Artist
Fatima Ronquillo
during the ArtWalk at
Accolades Gallery
451 E. Main Street #3, Ventura

Presented by the City of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division.

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The city of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division organizes the ArtWalks event that attracts almost 30,000 visitors to its historic downtown. ArtWalks brings together nearby artists, studios, galleries, merchants and visitors to celebrate visual art and local culture.

Southwest Center City

A close community in every sense of the word.

It's the brownstone of your dreams or the little brick row house with the big possibilities. It's roof deck summer nights with a skyline view and a window box full of fresh herbs outside your kitchen window. It's close friends and friendly neighbors, the little shop around the corner and the historic church across the street. Whatever defines your ideal place to live, you can't get much closer to it than here in Center City's next door neighborhood. *Welcome to Southwest Center City.*

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The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation encourage people to "make yourself at home" by using photographs and descriptive text to illustrate the image of each urban neighborhood and make an emotional appeal to potential new residents.

4

chapter

CREATING THE RIGHT IMAGE WITH GRAPHICS

It should be clear by now that image is more than a snappy slogan, the use of some clip art and the placement of a few newspaper ads. Image is the ongoing, comprehensive effort to change the attitudes of consumers by appealing to their needs and encouraging positive action. Slogans and graphics, even great promotional events and materials will not create the change desired if they are not preceded by:

- An understanding of the *niche* that the district can serve in the marketplace. This understanding must be clearly articulated and agreed upon by the major players in commercial revitalization in the community.
- Detailed knowledge of the district's *assets*. Assets are more than just businesses and buildings; they are the positive features of the district that make it (1) unique from the competition; and (2) attractive to the niche targeted. Again, these assets must be articulated and agreed upon.
- A clear, concise statement of the district's *position in the marketplace*. As you have already learned, a market position is a strategy designed to make the district uniquely appealing to customers in desired market segments. This strategy, your position statement, will be one of the most important tools for creating a compelling graphic image.

Until you are confident about the vision, the niche, the district's assets and its position in the marketplace, applying the tools of good graphic design will be premature . . . and most likely unsuccessful. Your revitalization organization must take responsi-

bility for reinforcing your graphic identity consistently in every vehicle you use to communicate with the public.

Graphic design visually delivers a message by incorporating a combination of artwork and images, text, layout, fonts, and color. It paints a picture in the minds of your target audiences. Good graphic design is as important to your business cards as it is to your website or presentations. Everything that you produce adds or detracts from your organization's and your town's image. Graphic design will infiltrate every type of communication your organization will produce, including:

Logos	Brochures
Television graphics	Annual reports
Business cards	Calendars
Charts and graphs	Signs
Street banners	Catalogs
Forms/applications	Posters
Maps	Directories
Name badges	Newsletters
Billboards	Promotional items
Games	Books
Advertisements	Exhibits

It is important to remember that graphic design can be effective without the use of words. Not all design that is "read" involves words or text. Through high-quality design you are attempting to influence your audiences and encourage your target market to respond positively to your visual messages. Because of this, poor graphic design will not be received well,

or perhaps not even noticed, and can conjure negative perceptions in the minds of your readers.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

Even though we have five senses, when it comes to “sensing” an area like a commercial district or making choices about where to shop, people rely on their ability to see the area in question. In fact, 50 to 60 percent of all human reactions and decisions are made using nonverbal, visual means.

Society takes advantage of this fact every day, by bombarding us with images that ask us to decide and to act. It is said that the average American is confronted with 10,000 or more images daily. And our message very often is not even among them!

Therefore, it is important that the graphic design you choose gets your communication piece noticed, whether it is in print or electronic format. Even if your Main Street program created its most exciting special event yet, people will walk right by a poster or brochure if the design isn't as exciting. The same is true for website design. If your homepage isn't eye-catching or if it is hard to use, the average viewer will click away and find one that is more attractive and easier to navigate.

In most cases, the competition has the jump on us when it comes to communicating graphically. Most of downtown's commercial competitors already know their niche in the marketplace, already have a corporate graphic identity and already have the financial resources and administrative control to promote themselves widely.

Traditional commercial districts can never “catch up” with the major regional malls, power centers or discounters, nor should they. Downtown's niche will be different from the other commercial operators in the community. As a result, its techniques for creating and communicating its graphic image will differ. Two major features will differentiate downtown graphic design and communication from other commercial operators:

- Graphic design for downtown will need to **target, target, target**. It is mandatory to target the

audiences most likely to be attracted to the district. You will also need to pinpoint the assets most likely to encourage those audiences. And the message — the emotion and action desired — must be refined to a much greater degree than what the mass market competition needs to achieve.

- Graphic design will need to be applied discreetly. Because you have chosen a precise market position for the district, it is critical to select the appropriate communication systems. Commercial districts cannot afford to waste precious finances on mass marketing techniques that do not reach the desired audiences. Graphics can and should be designed to reflect the best, most effective means of dissemination.

Good design is a necessity. It can enhance communication by helping people understand the message. By employing good design you should also reach more people, so therefore, it must respond to human needs.

Designers must have two fundamental skills in order to proceed:

- They must be able to discover the variety of options available to address the need. Design almost always has more than one “right” answer.
- They must then be able to find the best option within the limitations of the project. The limitations are typically ones of cost, time and special need.

While the designer must have these skills, it is equally important that the client — you — pay attention to these same issues. A designer is effective only if the client is able to clearly articulate the message and the methods for communicating that message. The more specific the client is, the more the designer can explore the options and identify the best choices.

The Main Street approach to downtown revitalization relies heavily on good graphic design and visual communication. While good design is integral to both promotion and design in the Main Street methodology, it is also important in developing the

professional, results-oriented image required for the organization. We cannot afford to let graphics "just happen."

USES OF GOOD GRAPHIC DESIGN

Developing an identity for the downtown district most often begins with developing an identity for the organization. This is basically the creation of a *corporate identity* and *collateral system*, similar to the graphic systems designed for major companies like Dell or Coca-Cola.

Corporate identity is the visible essence of a corporation, government, institution or organization. Identity, unified and controlled, gives an organization a positive image in the eyes of the public. Over time, a consistent graphic identity results in the target audience's attention, retention and action, yielding increased recognition and improved image. The development of a corporate identity has two major components — *research* and *logo design*.

Research depends on the steps articulated in previous chapters, with one notable addition. Once you have determined the vision of the district, its assets and its market niche, and have articulated its optimum market position, it's time to decide what the role and purpose of the organization will be within the district. Before settling on a corporate identity for the organization, answer the following questions:

- What part does the organization play in achieving the vision?
- How do you want the organization to be perceived? As the "spearhead"? As the "liaison"? As the "coordinator"? Or something else?
- Is there any historic feature or fact about the area that can be used to describe the organization?
- What image are you prepared to live up to as an organization?

Logo design is often misunderstood. A logo is a symbol used to increase visual awareness. Logos can simply be short like "Ford" or "Coke." *Word logos* make excellent identity devices because they are part of the corporation's name. A symbol like the CBS "eye" or the Coca-Cola "wave" is a mark without

type. Their major asset is that they are unique and make a quick impact. In most cases, logos for Main Street organizations must use type. A type-only logo works quite well for downtown revitalization organizations, but a symbol-only mark is less effective because it cannot possibly get the type of mass distribution required to make it a "household" image. Because type is integral, it must be selected with care. Different typestyles can contribute to the image. For example, a modern typestyle can convey a progressive image or an Art Deco font can reflect your town's abundance of 1920s architecture. There is more information on fonts later in this chapter. There are six characteristics for successful logo design:

- **Abstraction level.** Avoid complex logos and symbols that will be expensive to duplicate.
- **Reduction ability.** A good logo is designed to be enlarged or reduced without losing clarity or precision of the image.
- **Versatile.** A good logo should be designed to work with a variety of different media in a number of different ways. If you plan to use the logo for special events or promotions that will have their own slogan, choose a logo that is flexible.
- **Positive association.** It may go without saying, but it is important that the logo reflects on the organization in favorable ways. It is unwise to select a graphic image that might be perceived as controversial, like a vacant hotel for example, or another icon that can stir negative connotations.
- **Easy identification.** The design should be easily recognized and remembered after a few exposures.



Logos need to be easily reproduced on a number of mediums. Select a design that looks good in color and in black and white.

At the same time, do not choose a design that incorporates an image or font used by another group. This will only confuse people into thinking the two groups are associated in some way.

- **Weight.** The logo's "visual weight" should be heavy. When a logo is too light and airy, it does not reproduce or reduce well. Not only are heavier marks easier to reproduce, they are usually simpler in design and more cost effective. Think about the ways you will use the logo, such as on business cards, posters, and street banners.

CORPORATE COLLATERAL

Corporate collateral are those items produced to provide a link between the organization and its activities. Four categories of the most common corporate collateral for downtown revitalization organizations are:

- **Business stationery.** The letterhead, envelope and business card are often the first and most visible means of image development. That makes business stationery a critical area in which to employ good graphic design and production principles. Some tips:
 - Use a good quality paper stock and subtle, dark ink color. Business stationery is not the place to experiment.
 - Standard sizes and page orientations are the most economical, and practical too, especially for mailing and filing purposes.
 - Graphics should be designed with the "white space" in mind. The graphics should not interfere with the space needed to write a business letter.
- **Office signs.** This is another important identity tool for the organization. An office sign should:



Main Street Libertyville attracts attention with appealing graphics and the enticing slogan "Indulge Here."

- Be visible and easily readable from across the street.

- Incorporate the same typestyle and graphic elements as appear on the business stationery, as long as those elements are legible when enlarged.
- Conform to the materials and dimension that are appropriate to the building.

- **Newsletter.** This is the ongoing communication vehicle for the organization. As such, it should:

- Be simple in design and informal in content; it should impart a relaxed, friendly impression to the reader.

- Have a consistent system of page layouts (columns and headings) that recur from issue to issue.

- Have a well-designed nameplate. The nameplate does not have to use the same logo as the organization. If designed with the logo in mind, the nameplate will coordinate with and support the image created by the organization.

- Use photos and graphics in every edition. Try to include images with people in them as well.

- Avoid plain type written copy; instead, use typeset or desktop-published copy.

- **Promotional Items.** These add a dimension of fun to the overall corporate identity and increase awareness of the local effort. Promotional items can include key chains, shopping bags, t-shirts or hats, little toys and balloons. Make sure that you select items that typify the image you are trying to project. If you want to be perceived as an upscale shopping area, you won't want to invest in those hats with the beer can holders on the top!

Even with these restrictions, an infinite number of creative options exist. Experienced designers can creatively express your image on your corporate collateral material and still maintain a professional look.

GRAPHICS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS AND OVERALL IMAGE DEVELOPMENT

It should be evident by now that everything that attracts people to the district is an image builder, whether it is an art fair, concert, holiday event, festival, or contest. The level of graphic design for the materials used for these events and for the vehicles for promoting the event must be of high quality to communicate it is a worthwhile event and to draw people's attention to it. Your logo should appear on these materials, but should not necessarily dominate the graphic image of the event. If you develop a particularly fantastic slogan, logo, layout, or icon for an annual special event, it is perfectly fine to use it again for the next few years. But make sure that your materials that reuse this design look distinct enough from those from the previous year, otherwise you are running the risk of causing people to overlook your event. If done well, it can create a familiar identity for the event that people look for each year.

RETAIL PROMOTION

Every retail promotion, whether it is sponsored by the organization or merely produced by a few downtown merchants, should be graphically coordinated. To ensure a successful promotion, you should:

- Combine retailers' ads into a joint ad, which can be less expensive and more effectively designed.
- Work with local ad representatives and newspaper art departments on graphics for ads. This area of ad design should not be left to the art department alone; every ad should be designed and produced in collaboration with the organization.
- Display your corporate logo in a prominent, coordinated way, in every group advertisement, event poster or other collateral item produced. Encourage merchants to use the logo in approved ways in their individual advertisements as well.



Chippewa Falls, WI

Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, designed a specific logo for its Brush Bash event that gives the event its own identity as well as including elements from its main street program's logo.

Chapter Six explores these advertising techniques in greater detail.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Electronic communication, like websites and electronic newsletters, has created more opportunities for Main Street organizations to reach a broader audience more quickly. Websites can keep local residents and business owners informed and connected while also extending its reach to potential tourists and business recruits from around the country. And e-newsletters can be a low-cost way to promote your organization and events.

WEBSITES

It is no longer enough for Main Street organizations to simply just have a website. There are too many online resources that compete for your audience's attention. Internet users can quickly click-away from yours if they can find better information elsewhere.

Although it is possible you have creative volunteers who are proficient with Internet technology and graphic design software, for best results, outsource your project to a designer. In order to make sure you get the website you want, there are several concepts you need to think about before meeting with a designer.

First decide what you want the site to accomplish. There are many factors you will need to consider when building or redesigning your website; there-

fore knowing your purpose will give direction for the content and design of the site. Equally as important is choosing your audience. For example, do you want to attract tourists or new businesses to your district? Then decide on your objectives. Which aspects of your town's brand or image do you want to emphasize? Do you want to link all of your local businesses from your site? Do you want your site to become a one-stop shop for all relevant downtown information?

Now communicate your needs and ideas with your designer. Telling the designer what you need from your website and what content must be included will direct the organization and design of the site and indicate which features, or functionality, you will need. A site designed for tourists will have a different look and feel than one looking to recruit new businesses. Perhaps you will want a site that can accommodate both audiences. If you want to add an online store, you will have to plan on adding e-commerce and security features to your site.

Although you can develop your content while your designer is working on the website, you need a good idea of what information will be included and how it will be updated. Your programmer or designer can handle frequently updated information and static information, which refers to content that generally remains the same, differently to make updating information easier. Your designer can also help you plan the organization of your site so users can find exactly what they are looking for quickly.

Although you don't want to re-create another website, surf the web for examples of good design and identify your favorite elements of various sites. Perhaps you like certain color schemes, layouts, styles of artwork, or drop-down menus. The designer can get an idea of your design preferences and let you know if they can work for your site. Be as specific as possible as it will only frustrate and slow down your designer if you constantly change your mind.

Engage your visitors with interesting images of your commercial district. Your designer can scan print photographs and use digital images as well. Try to select images that sell the aspect of your community that you wish to market or that further promotes your brand. However, be sure not to clutter your site with

too many images. Good design is good aesthetics. Here are some tips to good design:

- Don't make your homepage too busy by choosing multiple colors and too many pictures or icons.
- Keep the design simple and leave a lot of white space.
- Avoid using high-contrast fonts. They are more difficult to read.
- Edit your text to minimize scrolling and wordiness. Reducing word count to about a third of what you would have in print is a good rule of thumb.
- Don't use really big type, excessive exclamation marks, video introductions, blinking icons or text, or music. These are elements that will only take away from your design.

For organizations that have the luxury of a large budget or for redesigns that will add advanced functionality, there are many interactive tools you can consider. The possibilities are endless, but some examples include e-cards with images of your commercial district, virtual walking tours, online stores featuring your local businesses, and search engines. Even if your organization can't build a sophisticated online store right now, you can begin with posting clear images of your merchandise and provide a downloadable form for customers to fax orders. You can upgrade your store later.

However, be careful about selecting complex functionalities. Don't let your site get so big that it is more expensive or difficult to maintain and increases the load time, which always risks driving away visitors. Keep in mind as well that websites need to be compatible with both Microsoft Explorer and Netscape Navigator, two commonly used web browsers.

It will be worth your time to shop around for a designer whose work you like and with whom you feel you can communicate well. Find out how much he or she charges and be up front about the timeline and your budget.

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS

A mode of communication that can be quickly disseminated and produced without the added costs of printing is the e-newsletter. It is a great way to send out timely information, like calls for action on pressing issues, solicit volunteers, current news, business promotions, coupons, or events.

The design of such a tool must remain simple because not all e-mail users have software that can handle graphic-intensive or complex formatting. You can give subscribers the option of receiving HTML or a text-only format or send out a PDF version.

When designing an e-newsletter with graphics, use the same principles as noted for website design. It is best to keep content brief and provide links to more information online if the recipient cares to learn more. Be sure to not spam your recipients; you should include a way for them to opt-out of receiving communication from you. Also consider the frequency of your e-mails. Many people have full inboxes and don't want to be bombarded with too many e-mails.

PRINT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Graphic design is a partnership between the user — your organization — and the creator. Depending on your financial resources and the local availability of design professionals, you may need to become part designer and part client. In any event, it is important to understand the tools of the trade, in order to be a better consumer of professional assistance and get a better graphic product.

A desktop publishing system is a useful and relatively low-cost addition to any Main Street program office. Design and layout programs such as Adobe PageMaker and QuarkXPress can allow you to produce newsletters, brochures, and other graphic materials more quickly and cheaply. In some cases, these tools should be used in conjunction with a professional graphic designer. If your organization publishes a monthly newsletter, you can contract with a designer to create a template so you can achieve a clean, professional look at a lower cost than if you outsourced each issue.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT TECHNIQUES

The design process follows these four steps:

- **thumbnails:** preliminary sketches that illustrate a design concept. They are rough sketches done very quickly. Many thumbnails will be drawn before one sketch is pursued.
- **Roughs:** more refined thumbnail sketches, usually larger and more detailed. Often, typestyles are considered at this point.
- **Comps:** one or two roughs will be drawn as comps, which are final sketches with a high degree of detail. The client will pick the final graphic design from usually no more than two or three comps.
- **Mechanicals:** the black and white, camera-ready art ready for reproduction. This is the final product from the graphic designer that is sent to the printer. It is also known as *layout art* or the *keyline*. The mechanical will have the specific instructions — known as specifications or specs — on the board for the printer to read before they print the graphic.

The good client will be involved in all stages of the design process. The client is responsible for much of the research phase and may even supply his/her own thumbnails to guide the graphic designer. From there, the designer takes initiative and creative control, and the client serves as reviewer. Changes and modifications can be made through the comps phase, but are difficult and expensive to make once the mechanical has been completed. Finally, the client should be involved in reviewing and proofreading the mechanical before it goes to the printer.

TYPE

As mentioned earlier, products that are typeset or produced using high-quality desktop publishing systems are superior to products that are typewritten. Hundreds of typestyles exist; however, not all are truly appropriate for the purposes of corporate identity. To work well with a designer or printer, you should know the following terms:

- **Presstype:** Type that you manually press down letter by letter. Use only for headlines or a few words. *Not appropriate for body copy.*
- **Typestyle or typeface:** The term for a particular style of type; for example, Trump Medieval.
- **Display Type:** Used for headlines and slogans. Almost all type can be used for headlines.
- **Body type or text type:** Small type, ranging from 9 to 12 points, used for the bulk of printed material. There are relatively few excellent body typefaces, but among them are:

SERIF	SAN SERIF
Baskerville	Arial
Caslon	Eras Light
Century	Future Face
Cooper	Franklin Gothic
Garamond	Gill Sans
Goudy	Helvetica
Palatino	Tahoma
Times New Roman	Universal
	Verdana

Type can be set in the following ways: flush left, justified, flush right, or centered. In general, serif typefaces are more readable than san serif styles. It is not productive to set body copy in all capital letters; that can reduce reading speed by 15 percent. And reverse type (white letters on a black background) reduces reading speed even more.

THE USE OF ARTWORK AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs and original artwork not only complement the text but makes a publication more engaging for the reader as well as more aesthetic. Images are another important element to bolstering your message *and* your image. Here are some helpful hints when working with photos and art:

- **Learn to crop artwork and photos** to make them more dramatic and blend them more effectively with text.
- **Line art can be reproduced as is.** Photographs need to be processed into halftones, building an

Illinois Main Street's newsletter designed a clean layout and includes photographs of the town.

image using a series of tiny dots, or duotones, creating an image using black and up to three other colors, before they can be printed.

- **Edit images.** Whenever more than one image is used, as in a newsletter, edit the images so that one becomes dominant.
- **Cluster small or less interesting pictures** to give them greater visibility.
- **Manipulate the image** for symbolic or dramatic purposes. One example is to cut out the background of a photograph to give the image more contrast.
- **Avoid cliche photographs** like head shots and people shaking hands. Concentrate on action shots and fresh angles.
- **Custom art versus existing art.** When money is no object, original art is always preferable. Even when budgets are limited, custom art should still

be considered for major image activities like annual festivals and collateral development.

Build a collection of digital or print photographs to have on hand when needed.

- **Stock photography** is a useful service when you need images that don't have to be from your community.
- **Public domain artwork.** Works of art 75 years old or older are within the public domain and can be used without seeking permission. *When in doubt, check with the artist, agent or museum listed;* copyright infringement should be avoided at all cost.
- **Picture archives and clipping services** collect line art and photos and offer them for reproduction.

USE OF COLOR

The color of paper stock and ink is the most often misused tool of graphic design. When making color decisions, learn more about:

- **Pantone Matching System (PMS):** A universal ink color system used by designers and printers. Color chips are used in the design process to determine the best color options.
- **The product and the audience:** Choose colors that are appropriate for the subject and the audience. Dark colors for children's events are probably not appropriate.
- **Color as secondary element:** In most cases, color is a highlighting feature of the design, not the most important element. But because it sup-

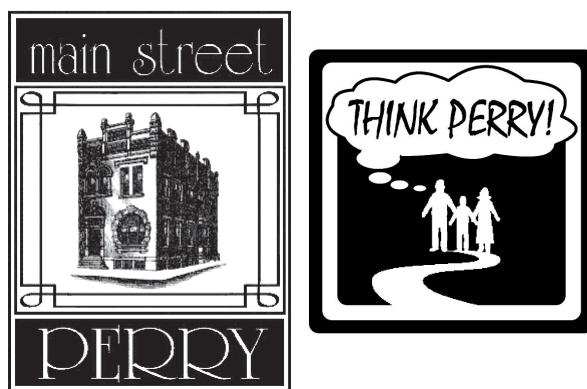
ports other design elements, color selection can enhance or detract from an otherwise good graphic.

- **Color for function, not preference:** Color should never be selected strictly because it is someone's "favorite." A designer will give the client a number of color options, all of which will be functional, so the client can apply preference to the selection. But remember: *function before preference.*

PAPER STOCK

While color and graphic style are visual, the selection of paper stock is both visual and tactile. When selecting paper, consider the following:

- **Color:** In almost every instance, paper stock in a neutral color is superior to a color-saturated or pastel paper. *Do not be tempted to use the paper for your color statement;* it typically cheapens the product.
- **Weight:** Paper comes in weights, described in pounds. Certain paper weights are better suited for cover stock as opposed to interior pages or fold out brochures. The weight and the finish contribute most to the tactile quality of the product.
- **Finish:** The surface texture of the paper is called the finish. Several finishes are available, including wove, linen and laid. When the product has a great deal of copy, it is best to select one of the smoother finishes; texture can interfere with ink coverage and make the text difficult to read.



Perry, Oklahoma, added its "Think Perry" logo to its logo collection. "Think Perry" is an advertising campaign to get people to think about shopping in its commercial district to support the local economy. The campaign plans a community activity or a newspaper article each week to stay in the public's mind.

- **Feel:** The feel of a paper is determined by whether it is coated (“glossy”) or uncoated (“matte”). Selection of a coated or uncoated stock is often a matter of preference and budget.
- **Rely on your designer and printer for advice.** They should be able to advise you on the best paper selection for your project within budget.

A NOTE ABOUT COPY

While this chapter focuses on graphic design, the importance of good copy must be mentioned. If the design succeeds in capturing the viewer’s attention, then the copy will be called upon to “close the deal.” Since much of your communication will be asking the support community members and stakeholders; soliciting for donations, funds or volunteers; and other types of persuasive writing, you need to write in a style that fits your purpose.

As a rule, keep it simple. Write short sentences and short paragraphs. Limit the number of difficult words. If you have done your research and know your target audience, you can determine the appropriate reading level and write copy that engages them.

Also, keep it conversational. The language and tone should be friendly and comfortable to read. Just as you wouldn’t want to bore anyone you speak with, make your copy interesting. For example, holding the attention of your stakeholders when trying to win their support would require pertinent information and facts they can use to make their own decisions. But if you are trying to grab the attention of window shoppers, writing fun or amusing text for flyers would be appropriate.

When communicating your organization’s accomplishments, don’t hesitate to take credit, but balance it with explanations of what the success means to the community. Always recognize contributions of other community groups, stakeholders, or volunteers. This not only builds goodwill but helps your audience associate broad-based support for your initiatives.

WORKING WITH A GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND PRINTER

Good graphic design is achieved as a combined effort between you and your graphic designer and printer. It is your job to find the best professionals to work with and it is your responsibility to communicate your expectations for your project. How should you start your hunt for the best designer and printer?

Begin by collecting printed pieces that appeal to you — find out who designed them and make a list. The same is true when looking for a website designer. Ask friends and colleagues to recommend designers or firms they have enjoyed working with before.

Once you have a short list of designers, interview them. They should show you their portfolios and explain how each item was conceived and produced. You should also discuss your project and budget. A good designer should be prepared to discuss his/her fee structure; however, it is unrealistic to expect a firm proposal or fee by the end of the interview. Discuss how the designer likes to work and gauge how well you communicate. If you don’t think you will be able to work well together, find a designer with whom



Art on the Avenue
flyer and
corresponding
walking
tour map.

you are more compatible. You can ask for referrals and speak with previous clients to find out what working with that designer or firm is like.

It is preferable to get multiple bids for a project. This gives you options from which you can select the designer who provides the best combination of price, demonstrated quality and a communication style that suits you. *Do not undermine your effort by selecting the lowest bid if that firm is not the best one for the job.*

A good design can be completely ruined by an inferior printing job. Therefore, don't make the mistake of spending money on hiring a talented designer and then skimp on the printing costs. There are a variety of printers, from instant print shops to quality book publishers that can produce your product or publication. Additionally, there are also a number of firms that can produce merchandise with your design on it, including mugs, t-shirts and other creative promotional items. Your designer should be familiar with most of the local printers and will know who is capable of printing the product. Some designers and printers form partnerships and perhaps your designer can quote you a price for designing and printing the whole job — perhaps even saving you money!

Shop around for the best printer for your project and take quality into consideration as well as price. Just like when you were shopping for a designer, ask to see samples. Visit and interview the printers; ask about turnaround time. Then you can discuss your project and the price. A good printer cannot substitute for a graphic designer, but the printer can educate you about most of the design and print process, thereby making you a better client.

Remember: all prices are negotiable. Printers or designers most likely will want your business and might be able to reduce their price. If you still want to work with a printer or designer whose bids came in a bit high, work with them to figure out if your project can be modified to lower the price.

CONCLUSION

Investing in the image of the organization is certainly one of the most important commitments you can make. A thoughtful graphic image, targeted to the audiences desired, communicates that the organization is professional and accessible and that the product — downtown revitalization — is meant to benefit the community as a whole. Remember: Good design communicates what words alone cannot and serves to appeal to emotions of your target audience. To recap:

- **Consider yourself a partner with the designer and printer.** You provide the vision and the purpose, and they provide the creativity and production. Good communication will produce the best results.
- **Experiment with different graphic techniques and images for different purposes.** Not every piece of literature or every poster has to look exactly alike.
- **Insist on consistent, high-quality products.** Every product that comes out of your organization should communicate the same high standard. When looking over many different materials, a reader should be able to recognize your organization's pieces by their graphic appeal and compelling message.
- **Constantly check the effectiveness of your work.** Are you appealing to the targeted groups? Is the message right, but the delivery wrong? Over the course of a year, what changes could you make to *parts* of your image program that would improve the *whole*?
- **Have fun with graphic design.** It may be one of the most liberating and creative experiences you will have with this program!



A collection of various promotional brochures for the Taste of Eastie event held in partnership with East Boston Main Streets.

chapter 5

MARKETING YOUR IMAGE THROUGH SPECIAL EVENTS

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL EVENTS

A successful promotional strategy must be based on a clear understanding of your district's economic base. With that in hand, you'll be able to identify an appropriate mix of activities that will appeal both to potential customers and participating businesses. As with all promotional campaigns, an adequate lead time is essential to develop ideas, generate support and market the activity so that it will achieve expected results.

Special events can serve several purposes while promoting your downtown image. They can:

- Attract specific targeted market segments
- Introduce the district's businesses and amenities to new markets
- Herald a repositioning of downtown
- Reinforce the downtown's economic and cultural role in area
- Dispel the myth that "there is nothing to do downtown"

An important point to communicate to business owners is the role Main Street can play in luring potential customers. Through promotional activities, Main Street can build foot traffic for the district; however, while it can bring shoppers to the door of a business, once they cross the threshold, it is up to the merchant to offer the products and services people want. Although your Promotion Committee may be responsible for producing special events, the Economic Restructuring Committee needs to educate merchants

on best practices so the image doesn't fall short on their side.

Special events can be valuable promotional tools to support your image campaign. There is an important difference between *promotion* and *advertising*. Promotion is used as a stimulus for short-term behavior. Promotions reward "loyal" downtown supporters while encouraging users of other shopping districts to be "disloyal." Advertising is intended to create the overall image, evoke emotional involvement and motivate the consumer to act in a certain way.

Studies show that promotional events alone rarely change established behavior patterns. It is critical to develop a strategic plan to build the image over the long term to make sure all of your efforts and those of your stakeholders are coordinated. Use advertising and plan consumer-oriented promotions; but have a tactical plan in place to tie promotions to specific events and groups in order to gain short-term visibility and to reinforce the images created.

Before you create any special event as a part of a campaign, ask yourself: what is the purpose of this event? Which of the target market segments will the event attract? Most importantly, how does this event support and reinforce the image your organization is creating? Without clear answers, your special event can do as much to thwart the image strategy as advance it.

Special events have evolved over the years. Participants want and expect an experience that is engaging and interactive. Therefore, a pet costume parade won't suffice as a major event. Because festival goers expect more from their outing, many Main Street



MainStreet London (Ontario) sponsored the *Main Street Express* in conjunction with Ontario's annual Snowfest. This train transported festival participants around the downtown so they could not only enjoy the daily events but also the local businesses.

programs are retooling their activities. For example, Oklahoma's Ardmore Main Street Authority expanding its popular chili cook-off as a way to engage the entire community. As always, chefs set up booths to cook chili and offer samples of their creations as they wait to win prizes for the best concoctions. Then new activities were added to entertain the entire family as children and adults participated in armadillo races, jalapeno-eating contests, line dancing and cowboy poetry readings.

It is not always necessary for events to appeal to only one of your targeted markets. At times, it may be appropriate to stage events that will combine multiple segments. For example, a themed Independence Day celebration may have wide-ranging appeal. To ensure that your targeted market segments come to the event, create activities that will appeal especially to them. Games for children will attract families. Traditional patriotic images and activities will appeal to the older market. But be prepared to accept the fact that there may be some market segments that should not be part of the mix.

Entire books have been devoted to planning festivals and special events, but this chapter is intended to give you an overview of how your image fits into the process.

IMAGE CONSISTENCY

As stated earlier, it is necessary to maintain a consistent image at all times. Also, your event planners will need to gear activities to appeal to your target market. Has your market research revealed if your target

audience values educational or cultural activities over physical ones? Would a blues band be better received than a rock group? Review all current special events for continuity. Measure your events' potential to support the image. For example, if you have determined a market position that appeals to families with children, your events should be aimed at that audience. The various activities should encourage families to participate. The music or foods offered should appeal to kids and parents. Celebrities associated with the event should attract a young audience.

The sponsors of the event will also have an impact on the image. Your family-oriented event would be undermined by a beer or tobacco sponsor. A soft drink distributor or ice-cream vendor might be more consistent. There should be mutual support between your event's image and those of your sponsors.

When developing a strategy for promoting your district, make sure that each committee is working on projects that complement each other. An example of good synergy among committees is Downtown Encinitas Main Street Association's (DEMA) strategy to promote its district as the premier cultural and art center for North San Diego County. The four Main Street committees focused their work plans on realizing this vision. The Design Committee tailored its streetscape plan to reflect aspects of the community's heritage, such as sidewalk medallions and tree grates. The Design and Organization Committees, jointly produce the Arts Alive! banner project, which serves both as a fund raiser and street decorations that promote the arts vision. The Economic Restructuring Commit-

tee was charged with developing artist studios and gallery space in a once-perennially vacant building. The Promotion Committee's activities are developed to both enhance the arts and promote the overall economic development of the downtown. Its Art of Dessert event, deemed "an indulgence of the culinary and visual arts," teams artists and local restaurants to create art displays, dessert samples, and related demonstrations. Participants spend an evening sampling delectable morsels of sweets while soaking up culture and being exposed to new restaurants and artists.

The graphics used for your events must be compatible with those you are using throughout your image campaign. That means using similar styles of illustrations, typefaces and phrases. However, you aren't restricted to using your logo and just adding the name of the event. Just remember that contradictory graphic images confuse the consumer and wear away the linkages that you have been building. If your image promotes the quaint and traditional, using a modern art design most likely would detract from your image.

PLANNING SPECIAL EVENTS

There are countless types of special events that can promote downtown's image. For festivals alone there are dozens of reasons to celebrate such as ethnic and cultural heritage, arts, food, the local economic base, seasonal celebrations, holidays, sporting events, charitable benefits, and community celebrations, to name a few. No matter what type of event you produce, you must plan every detail to maximize the opportunities to reinforce your image.

If you are coordinating your event with other organizations, choose to work with groups whose image is consistent with yours. Each partner, whether it is a merchants association, chamber of commerce, nonprofit group or even government, has an image that, if associated with your event, will add to or detract from the image you are trying to project. Merchant associations and chambers of commerce will give the event a business orientation. Schools and hospitals have a family or community-based image. Working with your municipal government or even associations aligned with a particular cause or political view will have a direct impact on your event and

how the public will perceive your organization and image. Don't let negative or controversial images of other groups become yours; be careful who you align your organization with.

While it is important to distribute the work load and credit to other partnering groups and volunteers, maintain as much control as possible over the elements that have a direct impact on the image. Some of these items might include:

- Approval of commercial sponsors
- Graphic images and their applications
- Marketing campaigns
- Ancillary items (posters, souvenirs, t-shirts, give-away items, etc.)
- Music and other entertainment
- Vendors (merchandise quality and price point)

If you are sharing the planning responsibilities with another group that is attracting markets other than those you have targeted, try to maintain control over activities that directly appeal to your markets.

When choosing a date for your events, find out if there are other competing events planned for the same time. Consider the season as well. If your event is geared toward out-of-town visitors, think twice about holding it during the off-season.

Adding events to your calendar doesn't imply you need to re-invent the wheel. Keeping your schedule of events exciting and offering a variety of events is as important as having annual events that build a loyal following of participants who look forward to it each year. But don't discredit something that has been done before. You can celebrate your community's heritage and local flavor by researching events held earlier in your town or city's history. For example, the Port Townsend (Washington) Main Street Program revived a clambake that was started by the town's first mayor in 1867. It has evolved into a large community celebration and a strong fund raiser known as the Uptown Street Fair. It was rescheduled from October to August to take advantage of the late summer weather and is no longer a standalone event as it now also includes an antique car show and outdoor movies.

FRIENDS OF MAIN STREET WINSTED

The last few weekends preceding Christmas tend to get pretty hectic, as shoppers race around searching for the last few (or all) gifts. But Friends of Main Street Winsted (Connecticut) found a way to both relax customers and entice them to its shopping district by offering free lunch.

The organization developed a promotion to offer a buy-one-get-one free lunch special at any downtown restaurant from noon until 4 p.m. on the four Saturdays preceding Christmas. To get the deal, shoppers were required to show a receipt as proof of purchase from a main street shop that day.

"It was a slow start, but a huge success by Christmas," says Barbara DeBellis, the executive di-

CASE STUDY: THERE IS FREE LUNCH!

WINSTED, CONNECTICUT FIGHTS CLICHÉ WITH HOLIDAY PROMOTION

rector of Friends of Main Street. "Some restaurants offered specific items on a board, and others used their entire menu. Everyone got a few tables out of it and no one had to give away the house. Main Street bustled with shoppers."

The organization sold the concept door-to-door and was able to get all 12 of the local sit-down restaurants to participate as well as all 29 retailers. Stores were asked to offer special gift items for under \$10 on the Saturdays.

Friends of Main Street advertised the event in the local paper five times but also distributed flyers in every school, religious institution, doctor's office, store and restaurant in addition to talking it up at every public meeting, most of which are broadcasted on the local cable channel.

DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS

You'll find that the bigger the event, the greater the number of details that will demand your attention. These small details add up to collectively produce the overall image of the event. The best way to manage the details is through competent working committees or subcommittees that report to a central coordinating group or chair. Generally, the committees will have to handle publicity, entertainment, food and vending, merchandising, sanitation and clean up, public liaison (traffic and crowd control, security and safety, permits), contracts and finance.

Brief your volunteers on the primary purpose for staging the event. Explain how the activity fits within the established market strategy of the organization and why the event is important to the overall revitalization process. People work best when they understand their roles in the process.

ADVERTISING FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Remember the profile of your target markets when planning event advertising. What radio and television

stations do they listen to? Are particular shows good places to present your message? How about newspapers? Look again at your market area. Do other communities have media that should be carrying ads for your event? Each event and market segment has different advertising requirements; however, some of the options you have include:

- radio (AM or FM; format; public or commercial)
- television (local cable; public access; commercial; area or local)
- website (yours or those of other community groups or tourism boards)
- newspaper (local daily or weekly; regional)
- newsletter (yours, others)
- direct mail (sent to identified market area to profiled addresses)
- billboards
- flyers and brochures
- magazines (local or regional)

- state or regional tourism publications and visitor centers
- part of sponsors' regular advertising

Free publicity for your event can really make a difference. Make it easy for the media to cover your event. Provide public service announcements (PSAs) and news releases in the formats they prefer. Provide support material in press kits which could include:

- media advisory statement
- fact sheet
- program or schedule of events
- release of a straight news story
- release featuring two or three feature story ideas
- list of potential photo opportunities (still and television)
- list of participating groups
- black and white glossy photos and other visuals
- publicity materials from any celebrities appearing at the event.

Don't think that publicity substitutes for a marketing campaign. A well managed event will include both. There's no such thing as "over-planning" for an event. The best special events don't just happen. Finally, keep five things in mind:

1. Plan well and in advance. Anticipate your opportunities and problems.
2. Don't lose sight of the purpose of the event.
3. Invest in quality graphics that support your desired image.
4. Don't substitute public relations for marketing.
5. Measure all decisions against your image statement. Are you consistent?

KPIX 5 & Livermore Main Street
presents the Eighth Annual

Days of Wine & Honey Festival

Historic Downtown Livermore
May 1 & 2, 1999
Saturday 10-6 • Sunday 10-5
Featuring Wines of the Livermore Valley

Artisans & Craftsmen • Continuous Entertainment • Cooking Demonstration Stage • Wine Tasting • Commercial Vendors • Great Food • Thriller Bee Show • Free Admission • Fun For The Entire Family

SPONSORED BY

The Valley Times	Wizard Brewing Company	City of Livermore
Groth Bros./Chevrolet	Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream	Livermore-Dublin Disposal
Iking's Culigan Water	Best Western Monarch	Altamont Landfill
Pepsi	Bay Knights Professional Protection	KKIQ, 101.7
Moreland & Davis, CPA's	Panama Bay Coffee Co.	KFOX Radio

THE VALLEY TIMES
Celebrating 150 years of winemaking in the Valley

Poster advertising Livermore (California) Main Street's Wine and Honey Festival. See the case study that follows for details on how the program successfully nabbed dozens of sponsors.

Case Study: LIVERMORE WINE AND HONEY FESTIVAL: TOPPING THE HALF-MILLION DOLLAR MARK

By Barbara Mason

Reprinted from *Main Street News*, Volume 160, December 1999

This year, Livermore, Calif., topped the half-million dollar mark in corporate sponsorships for its annual Wine & Honey Festival! The event, now eight years old, started as a one-day affair with 20,000 in attendance. Since then, Livermore Main Street (LMS) has worked hard to enhance the quality of the festival as well as address the significant needs of the attendees. This hard work has paid off with an event that has grown to two days, attracts an audience of more than 80,000, and, this year, netted Livermore Main Street just over \$54,000. How did Livermore accomplish this feat? Read on...

The days of corporations writing checks to sponsor your downtown event out of the goodness of their hearts is over. Every sponsor—or potential sponsor—expects something in return; corporations see your event, or “property” as they now call it, as an investment. For most companies, this investment is in advertising and image development, but not always. LMS has now forgone the standard “sponsorship package.” Although we do admit to owning one, we seldom use it, for we have found that different companies have different needs and are looking for different ways to partner with events. For instance, Pepsi wanted exclusive carbonated beverage rights so that cups with its logos would be the only soda containers on site; the company was less interested in having its corporate name in the advertising or on the festival T-shirt. On the other hand, Bulls-Eye BBQ Sauce wanted its name on everything as well as the opportunity to give away product samples. As a result, we now write individual sponsorship proposals for each company. I can hear your groans, but really it wasn’t that hard!

MAKING CONTACT

Our first step was to put together a letter of introduction about Livermore Main Street, with a description of the event and ways we thought each company could help. Caution: Do not write a blanket letter and send

it to every corporation in town. Marketing executives can smell these a mile off and they usually end up in the wastebasket. Corporations often receive 100 or more proposals a month, so yours will need to stand out.

One of the best ways to find out the types of investments companies are making is to attend other special events in your state. Livermore Main Street collects data from 20 or more events each year. Find out who the sponsors are; then call a few weeks after the event and ask the event coordinator what each corporation did for the event. Most event coordinators are willing to relay this information, and some will even give you a contact name.

Next, take your event budget, and line item by line item, discuss potential sponsors for each category. Livermore Main Street has gotten sponsors for a lot of event services, such as dumpsters, trash cans and liners, port-a-potties, walkie-talkies, etc.—items we would have had to spend money on otherwise. When drawing up a list of potential sponsors, make sure the corporations you plan to contact are appropriate for your event. For instance, if you are celebrating the “Say No to Drugs” week in October, you won’t want an alcoholic beverage company as a sponsor. In reverse, some companies, such as McDonald’s, will not sponsor any event—even if it has a large children’s component—that includes alcohol. It all comes down to doing your homework.

One method of collecting data about potential sponsors is to send each company a survey. Believe it or not, we have gotten an 80 percent return on this item. The survey asks the following types of questions:

- When does the company need the proposal in order to meet its budgeting deadlines?
- Is the company planning to launch a new product in the next year?
- Is a sampling area required?

- What demographics must the community—and the attendees—have in order to participate?
- Is the company looking for advertising opportunities?

The information you get back can prove invaluable. For example, we learned that our proposals were going out too late. We were sending them out in December for our May event, thinking that a five-month window offered plenty of time. Instead, we found out that most companies project their marketing budgets in October; we needed to get our proposals in by September to meet their deadlines. This early deadline forced our core committees and 28 subcommittees to become more organized and implement an 11-month work plan for each event. In working with larger companies, we've found that they usually request not only our event work plan but also our last annual report and a copy of our 990 form (application for 501 (c)(3) tax exemption). To reiterate, the days of companies handing over a check just to create goodwill in the community are over.

ASSIGNING VALUE

One of the most challenging aspects of seeking corporate sponsors is assigning value to the items you can offer them. The best strategy is to hold a brainstorming session with your committee as a whole. Discuss what you can offer:

- Will you let the sponsor put a corporate logo on the back of the event T-shirt?
- Will you put the sponsor's name on posters, flyers, ads and other printed collateral?
- Will you allow the company to display a banner?
- Will you give the company booth space?
- Will you mention the sponsor in radio ads?
- Will you produce a plaque to recognize the corporation's contribution?

Once you've made your list, you'll need to assign values to each item. For example, suppose your local newspaper has a circulation of 10,000 and you've contracted to purchase (or, hopefully, they've agreed to donate) eight quarter-page ads during the two weeks leading up to the event. Each ad will average one and a half "hits" or readers. From this, you can extrapolate the following:

If XYZ company sponsors the event, it will get 10,000 circulation x 1.5 exposure x 8 ads = 120,000 hits. You can do the same for flyers 1,000 flyers x 1.5 exposure = 1,500 hits and posters. Assuming posters are put up 25 days before the event, the exposure would be: 25 days x 500 posters x 1.5 exposure = 18,750 hits. Companies use these numbers to determine whether investing in your event meets their marketing goals.

Another important tip when strategizing about potential sponsors is to think about their market position. Are they number one in their markets? In Livermore, there is fierce competition among the cable television stations. FOX is the number one station in our market area. Our strategy was to contact the stations that were trying to improve their market share—the underdogs, you might say. This strategy worked superbly, enabling us to get commercials on the CBS station in the San Francisco market. We would never have been able to afford this kind of advertising on our limited budget. CBS has been with the festival for four years now and has become an important community partner. It not only sponsors the Wine & Honey Festival; it has also donated \$5,000 toward the town clock, sponsored Halloween and Christmas events, provided talent to host community functions, filmed local news live from Livermore, and assigned some-



one from their marketing department to sit on our promotion committee. That's what "partnering" is all about.

PARTNERING FOR THE FUTURE

During the event itself, sponsors are given the royal treatment. We try to assist them with all their needs, whether it be finding an extension cord, feeding their staff, or picking people up from the airport. We need each other, and both parties recognize that fact.

Once a company decides to work with us, we encourage it to look at the whole Main Street concept. We educate the company's representatives about our organization's mission and how their company can become more involved with our community. We send them our monthly newsletter, invite them to our annual dinner, and present them with a large "thank you" box after every event. These boxes, which we prefer to present in person if the corporate headquarters is nearby, contain tokens of our appreciation as well as everything we produced with their company name or logo, i.e., T-shirts, mugs, wine glasses, programs, flyers, ads, etc. A handsome thank-you plaque from our organization, honey, wine, and a personal thank-you note to the company make a great impression. It takes a lot of work to recruit these sponsors and we want them to come back next year. We usually send the gift box about 30 days after the event. It always generates phone calls of surprise and interest in helping the next year. Thanking sponsors is extremely important; it not only makes them feel appreciated but also part of our community and our mission.

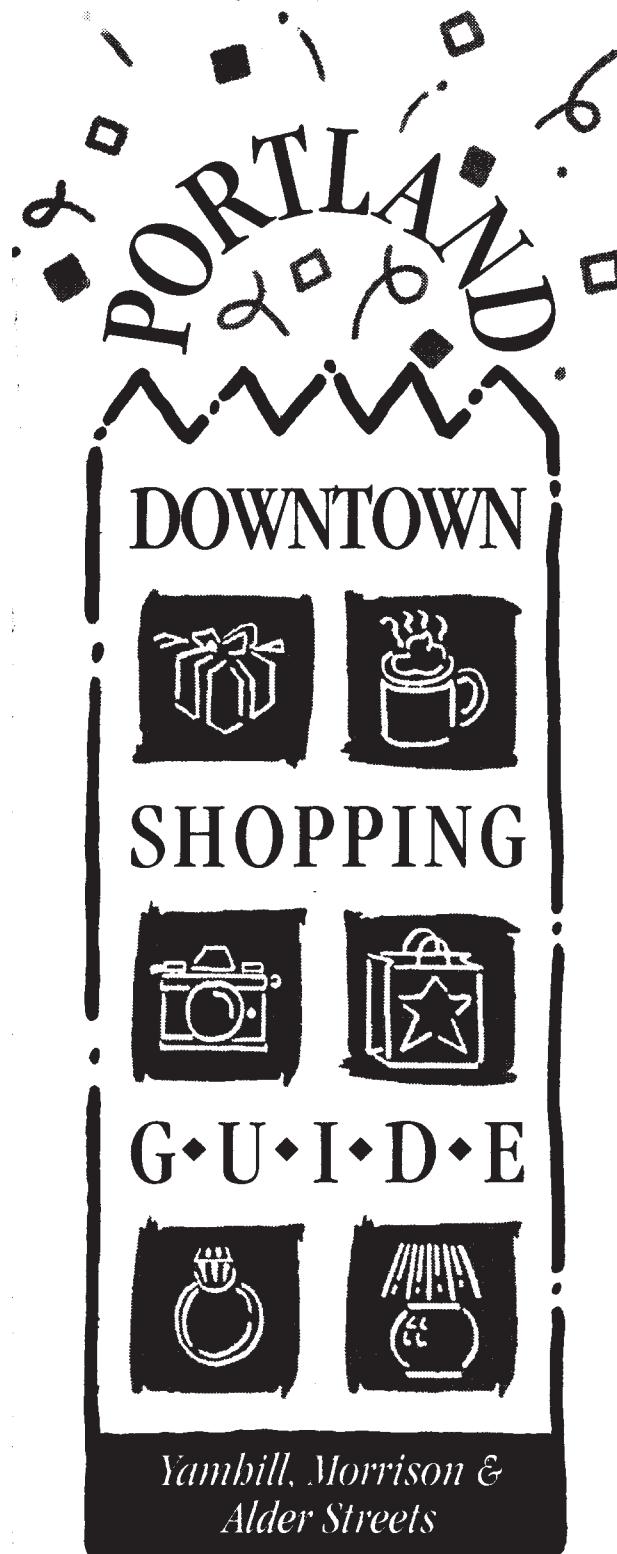
TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Every sponsorship should be confirmed in writing. Let me repeat: in writing. A written confirmation prevents communication errors or misunderstandings in the future. It details what the sponsor will provide and what the Main Street program will provide and is signed by the event chair as well as the chair of the board of directors. Be sure the promotion committee and the

board of directors are the ones making the decisions about exclusive rights and first rights of refusal. It will streamline the process. Remember: awarding sponsorship status is never the decision of the executive director; it is the promotion committee's job to recommend sponsors to the board, which then makes the final decisions.

As you seek sponsorships, you're bound to get rejection letters along the way. Do not file these letters away and remove the companies from your contact list. Call every one of these companies and ask why you were turned down. In many cases, a "no" will turn into a "yes" if you take the time to answer a few questions. Although we had explained our status in our initial contact letter, one company turned us down because it thought Livermore Main Street was a chamber of commerce (a 501(c)(6) nonprofit) and it only gave to 501(c)(3) organizations. LMS is a 501(c)(3) and, once we explained that, we got the sponsorship.

Remember, never pay for anything you don't have to. Find a sponsor!



The Association for Portland Progress produced this downtown shopping guide. It includes visitor information on parking, late night shopping, points of interest, as well as a complete listing of merchants.

CHAPTER 5: APPENDICES

PROMOTIONAL PROGRAM PLANNING

Name of Event

Date _____

Time _____

Date _____

Time _____

Date _____

Time _____

Type of Event:

- Retail sale or sales event
- Other retail promotional event
- Special event

- Festival
- Image-building event
- Other

Target Audience(s):

Brief Description of Event/Program:

Committees Involved:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Committee _____ | Committee chairperson _____ |
| E-mail address _____ | Phone _____ |
| Committee _____ | Committee chairperson _____ |
| E-mail address _____ | Phone _____ |
| Committee _____ | Committee chairperson _____ |
| E-mail address _____ | Phone _____ |

Entertainment:

Logistics:

- Security _____
- Sites _____
- Parking _____
- City permits _____
-

Publicity:

Schedule:**Allied Activities**

- Activity* _____
Coordinator/sponsor _____
- Comments _____
- Activity* _____
Coordinator/sponsor _____
- Comments _____
- Activity* _____
Coordinator/sponsor _____
- Comments _____

Budget: Income Expenses

Item	Expense	Donated?
_____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	_____

AMERICA:



OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood & Economic Development

The city of Baltimore, Maryland, launched an advertising campaign designed to remind workers and residents of the city to shop locally.

6

chapter

TAPPING THE CUSTOMER BASE

For many people in the community, a change in image for the downtown district will be believed when the retail reflect this change. For the purposes of this chapter, we will use the words retailer, business operator and business owner interchangeably. In each case, we will be talking about all operators of businesses that sell goods or services to customers from a neighborhood business district.

Most of the negative images people have of downtown can be traced back to the businesses operating there. “There’s nothing to do downtown”; “there’s no place to go”; “people aren’t friendly”; “downtown merchants don’t want my business”; “the service is lousy”; “it’s like a ghost town after 5:00 p.m.” and so on, relate more to the performance of the business sector than they apply to the civic functions of the district. The image you choose must, must, must be applied to the business sector if the effort is to succeed.

If you look closely at these statements, you can see where businesses fall short and where they limit their ability to improve their image:

- **General lack of presentation, advertising and promotion** — “There’s nothing to do downtown.” People can’t act on what they don’t know: this stereotype won’t change until people are told differently.
- **Poor, inadequate and/or outdated business practices** — “Stores are closed by time I get home from work”; “They always carry the same old stuff.” Unfortunately, these negative images are

often earned. Reversing them will require changing business practices.

- **Limit their return customer base.** By trying to attract every type of customer to their stores, retailers reduce the likelihood of repeat visits. Targeting consumer groups cultivates repeat shoppers.
- **Do not develop focused merchandise groups.** This is directly linked to the previous observation. By trying to nab every disposable dollar in the community, merchants force themselves to buy widely divergent merchandise. If instead, merchants targeted their audiences and focused merchandise to appeal to those audiences, then their visibility — and image — would improve.

Each of these four flaws is complicated by downtown merchants’ unwillingness to coordinate their efforts. Improvements in all four areas of retailing will need to take place if downtown businesses are going to contribute to the improvement of the district’s image. Change can only happen when businesses begin to share information and coordinate business decisions.

DEVELOPING THE FOCUS

Retailers must be involved in identifying the image and the market position from the very beginning. Practically speaking, they are the sector of the district with the most knowledge about the status quo users of downtown — people who currently shop in their stores. Inclusion of these stakeholders will also help generate their support for and involvement with

the image-building effort. However, in order to apply the position statement for the district to their stores, business owners will need to probe a little more deeply into their own operations and share their findings with other businesses in the district.

Before revitalization leaders can help businesses improve their images, the merchants need to help you learn more about:

- **Product lines.** We are all grossly uninformed about the true depth and breadth of merchandise and services within our districts. Merchants need to cooperate by itemizing the product lines they sell, the ranges or sizes of goods and the number of times they “turn” their inventory. The purpose for knowing this is to uncover product overlaps, duplications and areas of product compatibility. It will also help in scheduling promotions and advertising to know when inventories change.
- **Existing customer characteristics.** Many downtown retailers share customers and don’t even know it! Get to know the district’s customers, as well as potential customers. Business operators will need to share what they know about:
 - who shops in their stores
 - how often
 - what is an average sale per visit
 - where do they live/what do they do for a living and for recreation
 - what are their typical complaints
 - what do they look for that the owner does not carry

In finding out information about customers, also get to know your competition from other shopping centers and malls. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of your businesses and theirs and find out their market positions in addition to identifying their target consumer groups.

- **Existing sales patterns.** Retailers will need to assess the sales histories of their stores. Which quarter is the best? Which is the worst? When do they discount merchandise for clearance? Are there any sales peculiarities that can be attributed to

their customer base (like tourists or college students)? Traditional commercial districts in a university town may find the holiday shopping season begins later because students and faculty are preoccupied with final exams. Chart the peak sales times during the year and look for opportunities to plan retail events during the strongest sales times.

- **Existing downtown events.** Each business operator will need to assess the effectiveness of existing promotional events. Does the business profit from the event? Does the business attempt to tie-in to the event in some way? Do any events hamper business? It is important to acknowledge that not every event is designed to make money for the merchant and that a positive image for the district will be built upon the blend of nonretail and retail events. Analyze the components of each retail event — timing, publicity, cost, and sales results — to determine its effectiveness. Try to identify reasons for each event’s success and failure.
- **Existing businesses’ practices and policies.** It is imperative that the organization find out how each business treats its customers. What is the return policy? Do they accept personal checks or take credit cards? What are the store hours? Are they applied consistently? Amassing this information will unearth many fascinating opportunities . . . and problems. Typically such an in-depth investigation will reveal that stores:
 - have more product variety than expected;
 - sell product lines that are complementary to other shops;
 - are part of a subset of businesses that sell the same categories of merchandise, making comparative shopping an option;
 - do not sell whole categories of merchandise;
 - suffer from severe inconsistencies in business practices, including store hours, check writing and return policies, alterations, credit, etc.

By weeding through the results, the organization can begin to focus on the image development tools that are (1) best suited to the nature and char-

acter of the stores in the district; and (2) most likely to attract the desired market segments. This exercise will also help the organization identify and begin to address shortcomings in the practices and policies of downtown business operators, so that programs, activities, incentives and perhaps even penalties can be created to encourage greater coordination.

PROMOTIONAL OPTIONS

Depending on the outcome of this investigation, your program will be able to create retail events that attract the desired market segments and expose your local businesses. Three basic event options exist in most traditional business districts:

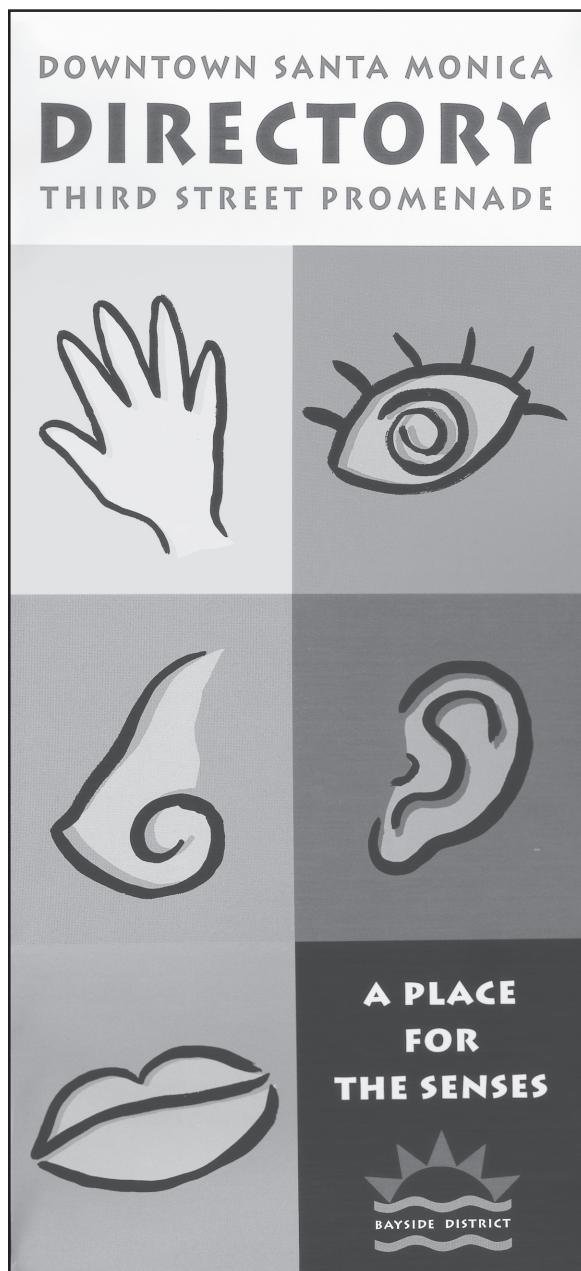
- **Cooperative retail events**
- **Cross-retail promotions**
- **Individual store promotion**

COOPERATIVE RETAIL EVENTS

The unifying element of cooperative retail events is the *comparability of goods*. Cooperative events feature stores that sell similar merchandise — furniture, automotive supplies, antiques, food. A district doesn't need five kitchen accessory stores to take advantage of this tool. Because you have done your homework, you will know that there are actually 15 stores that carry cooking and kitchen gadgets somewhere in their product mix. The trick is to find a way to highlight merchandise in stores that are probably not adjacent to each other. How is that accomplished?

- **Start with a theme that describes the merchandise category.** If the product is kitchen accessories, consider a theme that is lighthearted like "Cook Up a Storm Downtown," or "Galloping Gourmets Gather Here."
- **Work with the merchants to physically highlight the products in the category.** This will require moving inventory, changing window and interior displays and adding thematic signs in the store to direct the shopper to the select merchandise.

- **Create a graphic system for the event.** It may be no more than a typestyle and a set of colors, or it could use its own logo or design scheme, but it must be used in everything from advertising to signs to the colors of in-store decorations.
- **ADVERTISE!** More about this in the Advertising section of this chapter.



Local businesses can display business directories to encourage shoppers to investigate other neighborhood stores.

Home Repair	Special Event	Arts and Entertainment
Hardware Furniture Furnishings Interior design services Housewares Lawn and garden supplies Architectural services	Restaurant Bars and club Florist Inns and hotel Shoes and accessories Clothing Jewelry Beauty salon/spa Bridal shop Pet shop	Art supply store Arts gallery Museum/library Clubs/theater Film Restaurants Photographic services Limousine service Bookstore Coffee/tea shop
Women	Men	Children
Clothing Shoes Jewelry Beauty and skincare supplies	Shoes Accessories Barber Electronics Sporting goods	Day care Bookstore Toys Clothing Sweets shop

If a business district needed a *Restaurant Row* or *Antiques Alley* in order to take advantage of this type of promotion, there would be very few cooperative retail events. Instead, since retailers often sell a variety of goods, they can feature one category of their merchandise that they all have in common.

CROSS-RETAIL PROMOTION

Cross-retail events feature businesses with products that complement each other. Because full-service department stores are quickly becoming a thing of the past, particularly in downtown, promote those stores that, when combined, provide merchandise that can be coordinated. This method is basically cluster retailing — a *leasing* technique of the malls — applied to downtowns. Since you can't physically move existing businesses around your commercial district in order to cluster their merchandise, devise promotional events that can build the shopping environment that people look for.

In addition to events, promotional materials such as business directories and website listings are especially helpful for consumers to identify what stores can be found in your community and what they offer.

Greenville Main Street in Texas created an online business directory organized by business cluster and includes a brief description of each and a map to easily locate them. Merchants with a website can link to the site as well so consumers can get even more information.

What are some merchandise clusters that can typically be found in the downtown?

The chart above is only a short list of the ways you can cluster businesses around their complementary merchandise. With this array of business clusters, you can create promotional events that accomplish your goals for driving revenue.

Take advantage of established holidays.

Your goal should be to get customers to think of your commercial district first when making seasonal or holiday purchases. By combining what the businesses in your area offer and knowing their peak demands during the year, your program can develop a series of promotions for different business clusters throughout the year. Clustering luxury goods and services around a “Be Lavish on Valentines Day” theme is one creative option that could incorporate everything from limousine rentals to massage. Promotional events can

also take advantage of traditional merchandising events such as President's Day, Columbus Day and Memorial Day. These are all good times to involve community groups to tie in festivities or music.

The December holiday season presents opportunities for important merchandising events and special events and should be treated differently from the rest of your retail calendar. For many retailers, as much as 60 percent of the year's sales will occur then. Although many retailers plan their own holiday sales and events, Main Street programs can help implement longer store hours, hang decorations, develop special events like merchant open houses, and build an atmosphere that adds to the festive spirit. See the case study on page 80 to read about Monahans Main Street's clever holiday promotion.

Be careful, however, to make sure the merchandise remains at the center of the event. Do not schedule major activities during peak sales times, which will take away from ringing the cash registers. Use events to draw customers to your traditional commercial district during slower hours. Also, limit the kinds of events that restrict vehicular traffic and parking in the area.

Utilize seasonal merchandising. Whole retail promotions can be built around seasonal purchasing. A simple Spring Cleanup event can be expanded to take on a "do-it-yourself" theme, thereby incorporating many, if not all, of the retailers listed on the previous page under Home Repair. Winter or summer clearance events can also be effective seasonal merchandising techniques.

Target discrete audiences. This is a perfect way to test out market assumptions. By clustering products that appeal to a market segment you are interested in attracting, you can let the promotion help tell you about the potential. Retail events geared to young teenagers might feature casual clothes, certain lines of sporting equipment like skateboards and rollerblades, CDs and tapes, etc. Response to the event can help the organization assess the long-range potential of the audience.

Businesses can also track customers. That can be done as easily as leaving a "guest register" book on the check out counter or by developing a frequent

shopper or customer rewards program. For example, businesses can distribute member cards that offer special sale prices or have frequent buyer cards for loyal customers. Individual businesses can develop their own programs or a district-wide program can be created. The Dundee (Illinois) Main Street program created a frequent shopper program where customers get their cards stamped by participating businesses and then receive a discount after getting the required number of stamps. Shoppers who fill out a small survey on the back of the card get entered into a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate. The information Dundee collects gets entered into a customer database for targeting future promotions.

Simply promote the merchandise groupings. It doesn't take a gimmick to produce a retail event. Make your own list of merchandise clusters, match them to your information about target markets and retailers needs and you can come up with several built-in options.

Generate foot traffic. The Promotion and Economic Restructuring Committees need to work together to help local businesses improve the shopping experience by creating a pleasing and welcoming environment. Having beverages or cookies on hand, allowing customers to use restrooms, designating a small play area for children, or putting chairs out so people can rest are some quick and easy ways to make customers feel more comfortable. This can be done individually by each store or through collective events. At Dragonwings Bookstore in Waupaca, Wisconsin, the owners have created an environment especially for young people. In a special reading area for pre-teens, a bubbling waterfall splashes down moss-covered rocks. The store's centerpiece is a treehouse carved from a cottonwood tree by local artist Bill McKee, which kids are invited to explore inside and out or just use it as a quiet place to read. The store also provides special services, such as one-on-one tutoring programs for young children.

The Main Street program can supplement the efforts of a local business, like Dragonwings, with events that add an element of excitement and entertainment. These events can serve to move people

through the district and lure them into participating stores or cafes.

Get creative to accomplish these goals! One Main Street program's imagination led to its hosting of a "Who Done It?" murder mystery event. The mystery began at the crime scene in the Belleville (Illinois) Main Street office. Participants investigated the "victim" and the "evidence" left behind before hunting out "witnesses" and "suspects" in local stores. These

consumers-turned-detectives had to interview at least 90 percent of the characters and correctly fill out a fact sheet and identify the culprit. The winner received a cash award, but there were also random drawings for gifts as well.

Another creative event, Chocolate Lover's Fantasy, was dreamed up by the Main Street program in Frankfort, Illinois, to give adults a chance to trick-or-treat again. Participants visited the local Main Street

CASE STUDY: "SHOP MONAHANS FIRST" HOLIDAY AUCTION

By Sheri Stuart

Reprinted from *Main Street News*, Volume 192, December 2002

Designed to reward the hometown shopper, "Shop Monahans First" is a joint promotion organized by Monahans (Texas) Main Street and the Monahans Chamber of Commerce. While it requires a great deal of work, the promotion is a terrific way to expand the downtown's customer base. Simply put, the promotion asks shoppers to save sales receipts from local businesses for a specified period of time. These receipts are then redeemed for vouchers that let customers bid on donated items at a live auction.

In 2001, Monahans' sales tax revenue increased \$35,483.83 over the same three months during the previous year. The first year the event was held, 53 merchants donated 79 items; \$112,000 dollars in receipts were redeemed for vouchers and more than \$94,000 was bid at the two-and-a-half-hour auction.

To build interest in the activity, Main Street and the Chamber sent letters explaining the promotion to all of their members. Because of the complexity of the activity, organizers found they needed to visit each business to explain how the promotion would work. The groups felt it was very important to get all businesses involved, especially the grocery stores because groceries are a major expenditure for most people.

The time period for saving receipts (which had to show the date and name of store) from par-

ticipating merchants ran from early October to early December. To participate, each business had to donate one or more items to the auction, which was held in early December. To encourage large-ticket donations, organizers established different levels of participation (e.g., Platinum \$100 and above, Gold \$75 to \$99.99, Silver \$50 to \$74.99, Bronze \$25 to \$49.99). Platinum level contributors received top billing on all advertising.

To promote the event, the local radio station and newspaper ran specially priced ads for the participating merchants. In addition, the Chamber, Main Street, Monahans News, and KLBO radio each contributed \$125 to help with advertising. "Shop Monahans" signs were put on whiskey barrels and given to storeowners to put in their front windows so people would know who was participating. Merchants were encouraged to talk up the event to everyone who came in their stores.

Receipts were redeemed during the week before the auction. Shoppers took their receipts to the Chamber to be added up, verified, and listed on a spreadsheet in alphabetical order. No receipts were redeemed at the auction. Each participant was given a postcard that had the amount redeemed on front, along with the signatures of the Main Street and Chamber executive directors, and a listing of the sponsors on the back — Platinum listed first, of course!

office for their map of participating businesses, who stay open late that night, and a decorated bag to collect their loot. Merchants decorate their shops, offer in-store "sweet deals," and pass out sweet treats.

Your community can collaborate with other nearby towns or cities to plan regional events. To boost tourism, three Missouri towns formed the Provenance Project to lure target markets to their towns. Clarksville, Louisiana and Hannibal recognized that they share similar assets that attract similar tourists and customers. Their slogan, "50 Miles of Fine Arts and Crafts," draws people to their traditional business areas to watch artisans work, buy hand-crafted specialty items, dine in restaurants, shop in antique shops and enjoy scenic river bluffs. The three towns developed a detailed website that provides information about up-coming events for tourists and information for prospective businesses to learn more about relocating in their districts and even offers links to available properties to rent or buy.

INDIVIDUAL STORE PROMOTION

With the information generated by your organization, individual retailers should be able to improve their own in-store promotions. Your revitalization program should offer retailers advice to help them get started. This section provides some tips to build in-store promotions.

Rotate promotions in the store based upon categories of merchandise. The research is bound to show that most retailers have two or more "departments" within their merchandise mix. Rather than settle for the simple (and tired) storewide clearance sale, urge the owner to consider at least two in-store promotions per "department"— one that previews the new merchandise and one that discounts it. That way, if the merchant has three strong categories of merchandise, he or she will have at least six targeted promotions during the year. That represents six times that the retailer gives existing customers and new prospects a reason to visit the store.

Rotate in-store promotions according to targeted customer segments. Again, the research should indicate at least a few distinct consumer groups at which the business owner can aim promotions.



Main Street Libertyville grabs the attention of any passerby with an engaging image and simple design.

Even if the merchandise is the same, conducting "exclusive" in-store events will make these different customer groups feel that they are special and will give the owner more than one opportunity to move the goods. This option is particularly effective if the merchant carries a line of merchandise that covers a wide price range; the events can be promoted to different customers based upon their price point.

Develop events that introduce new or little-known features of the business. While retailers will naturally play to their strongest market segments and merchandise lines, they should not overlook the opportunity to promote the less obvious features that make them unique. If your jewelry store makes custom rings for championship sports teams, why not have an in-store demonstration and exhibit during Super Bowl Week? If you have the best tailor in the business, why not have him or her do a workshop on clothing care during the Fall Trunk Show? You get the picture: bring out some of your best hidden or little-known treasures and highlight them. It is precisely this type of uniqueness that the malls cannot imitate.

Each of these promotional options require that some basic steps be followed:

- **You've got to find a "peg" for the event.** Whether it's the comparability or complementary nature of the goods, a theme or reason for the event must be established by the participating businesses. **BE CREATIVE!** Remember, you have plenty of angles

- the merchandise itself, the season, the customer base, the unique features of the operation.
- **You've got to give it a name.** Whether it is whimsical or direct, the title for the event — if it is being shared by several retailers — must help shoppers identify the participating stores.
- **It has got to have some graphic “punch.”** Again, downtown stores are at a disadvantage because we cannot expect shoppers to simply know which stores will participate in which promotional events. A graphic image must be designed to incorporate the name of the event. It must also stick to a color “palette.” It is the combination of the graphic, the name of the event and the colors that will tell shoppers — especially new ones — which stores are participating. This is compulsory for any participating retailer: cooperation begins here.
- **The participating stores must redesign their merchandise layout to highlight the goods being promoted.** It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that out, right? You would be surprised by the number of retailers who place the ad and wait for the crowds and never do another thing to move the merchandise. When promoting cooperatively, the merchant must:
 - Incorporate the name, graphic and colors of the event in the store window display, the interior displays and at the cashier area. For added impact, the staff could wear the colors on the day of the event or buttons with the event theme or logo (if there is one).

Hampton Main Street's “Service is Our Signature” ad campaign highlighted local businesses and provided a consistent format to showcase downtown merchant's variety of products. The campaign also promoted the quality customer service available from the downtown stores.

- Rearrange the store to bring the featured merchandise up front and use interior displays to tie these products to the regular stock. These events are not meant to move everything in the store. However, smart retailers can sell more than just the featured merchandise by grouping and positioning other products with it.
- Devote the store windows to the featured event. Use merchandise and props to give your theme or event name a visual element. Do not empty the window and plaster it with the event graphic; that's lazy. Instead, take the graphic and the colors and translate them with the products being featured.
- Consider other “little touches.” Little details can make a BIG impression on customers — details like shopping bags printed with a special design or price tags for featured merchan-

**Rx AROUND
THE CLOCK**

Koerner-Whipple Pharmacies in Hampton are the only pharmacies in the area to schedule a professional pharmacist after hours, over the weekends and on holidays to care for the needs of their regular prescription customers.

Koerner-Whipple provides patient education sheets, special orders and home delivery.

Shouldn't you be a prescription customer at Koerner-Whipple pharmacies?

**KOERNER-WHIPPLE
Rx PHARMACIES**

Downtown - Park Clinic Medical Center
456-3171 456-4146
Quality & Service with DISCOUNT Prices

Service is our signature

MAIN STREET HAMPTON

dise that coordinate the colors, graphic and name of the retail event. These details may sound like luxuries, but they can be inexpensive when several stores cooperate with each other and share the costs.

- **Organize a sidewalk sale.** Work with business owners to merchandise both sale and non-discounted items for the event. Keep the flow of shoppers moving by encouraging other businesses to participate. This will fill in the gaps in the retail landscape and also leave room for making the sale more of an event. Businesses can plan activities and programs — even create small festivals. Historic Manassas, Inc., holds a Victorian Sidewalk Sale each September in the Old Town historic district. Merchants in this Virginian town dress up in Victorian clothing and set up tables in front of their shops. The street was also decorated with balloons and flowers and an antique car show also highlighted the sale. The Manassas sidewalk sale offered more than a few clothing racks outside of a shop — it engaged the community.
- **Offer an educational or interactive element to the shopping experience.** Shoppers can also find out more about what a store sells or the services it offers by attending demonstrations or lectures. Bookstores frequently hold author book signings, lectures and "Staff Recommendations" sections in their stores. Cooking supply stores can offer recipes or demonstrations on how to use the latest gadget.

Remember that promotions are intended to create a sense of liveliness in the district, build community and provide a safe, inviting atmosphere for people to have fun. Shopping needs to be entertaining, fun and innovative and merchants need to figure out ways to get and keep customers through new and different promotions. Businesses should go beyond holding sales in order to keep your downtown from becoming synonymous with bargain shopping; they should instead offer value-added activities and incentives not available from malls, Internet shopping or strip malls.

ADVERTISING

In the absence of an organized revitalization effort, advertising is often the only item of promotion conducted in a downtown district —and often is the only mechanism for promoting an image for the district. Think about the quality, frequency and placement of advertising for your downtown businesses in the past and you might shudder. It is no wonder that some downtowns have a bad image. Or no image at all.

Businesses on Main Street and the revitalization program itself should consider advertising as an investment. Effective advertising can reap great rewards in terms of consumer dollars and image development. Advertisers need to come up with a plan for the year, as well as an advertising budget, and decide early on the goals of the ad campaign. Setting goals will help measure success. Armed with market analysis and positioning statements, advertisers are poised to craft their message to their target audience. There are three key ways to do build an image for a downtown:

- **Individual advertising:** Local businesses must advertise their products or services and can't expect people to simply find them. Merchants need to consider who they are targeting and develop an advertising plan that communicates what they offer in a way that draws their target audience.
- **Joint advertising:** Businesses that are part of a cluster can advertise their cluster or promote any joint events they have planned. Well organized businesses will know what promotions and events they will be holding or participating in and can plan advertising in advance.
- **Image advertising:** Businesses on Main Street and the revitalization organization can't expect the image to sell itself. The image needs to be threaded into advertising and deserves its own image promotion ads to ensure a unified message and consistency.

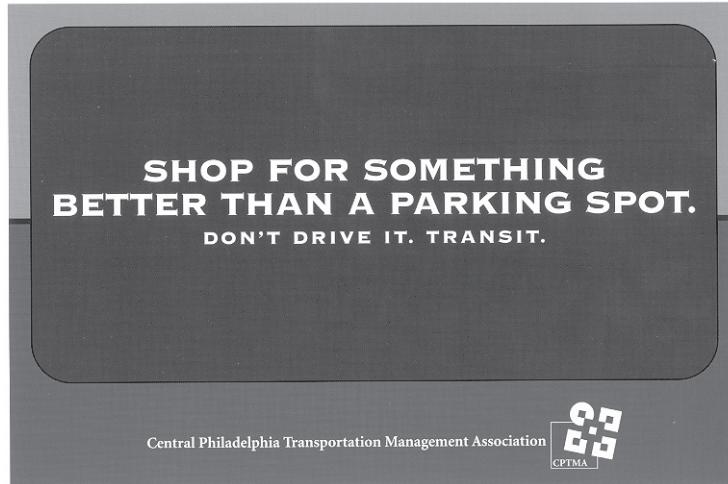
ADVERTISING FUNDAMENTALS

There is no secret to individual advertising: If you don't do it, your business will falter and die. However, if you do advertise, there are about 100 things you can do wrong. So let's concentrate on those items in advertising that are right:

- **Place ads where they will reach the target market.** You advertisements need to be where your target audience is. Keeping this in mind frees you from using only traditional forms of advertising; perhaps your ads will be effective found on grocery store carts, bathroom stalls or other creative options. If you intend to target your promotional program to specific market segments, then

a restaurant one night and find out there is an event happening. Therefore, all participating businesses in an event need to promote it on-site, whether it is a display announcing the up-coming event, flyers placed in shopping bags, posters or balloons and other decorations. They must let their customers know in advance what's coming up so they can plan to come back.

- **Design ads that grab your target market.** Create advertisements with messages and graphics that speak to your intended audience. It is more effective to design ads that engage a specific group or groups of people instead of creating broad-sweeping messages that just won't mean much to everyone.



Central Philadelphia Transportation Management Association's "Don't Drive It. Transit" campaign encourages the people of Center City Philadelphia to use public transportation with its catchy slogans.

investing most of your ad budget in mass media advertising is a waste. You wouldn't buy an ad on a radio station that your target market doesn't listen to. Figure out which media are compatible with your advertising goals and who you are trying to reach. Advertisers should create an advertising plan that identifies which advertising tools — like newspaper ads, direct mail or e-mails — will best promote your events

- **Make sure all participants are getting the word out.** Don't let shoppers be surprised to walk into

The Central Philadelphia Transportation Management Association (CPTMA) developed an ad campaign to encourage residents and visitors to use public transportation. The campaign used a series of catchy slogans with professionally designed ads to deliver a more edgy approach to promoting transit. They include:

"Make tracks for the Reading Terminal";
"Beat the clock, not the dashboard";
"Shop for something better than a parking spot"; and
"Success comes to those who are driven."

Each of these clever, commuter-oriented slogans is punctuated with the tagline "Don't Drive It. Transit." They were placed at bus and rail stations and in transit shelters.

- **Eye-catching and high quality design is critical.** Consumers are bombarded with messages every day. It is your job as the advertiser to make sure your message isn't the one of hundreds they ignore. Therefore, hiring the best graphic designer you can afford is critical. It is simply not effective to throw your logo into a sea of text and expect people to notice it. Event advertisements must take into account the district's image, the target



Unique banners were designed by local Colorado artists to promote the Annual Arts for the Parks exhibition in Canon City. Artists were given canvas to decorate with national parks and recreation scenes. A local seamstress sewed their designs to another canvas bearing the event logo.

advertising budget to promote the district and leave advertising retail events to the participating businesses.

- **Transcend the traditional directory-type ads.** Although joint advertising is important, creativity in group advertising is even more so. The ads must sizzle. They must reflect the theme, the audience and the overall quality of the merchandise *first* and the specifics of the individual businesses *second*. Directories are useful, however they are better used in downtown brochures or on the town or city's website. In joint ads, cooperation and quality are more important than individuality. Your store's uniqueness can shine through your individual advertising.

Advertising is a long-term element of promotions and its success will build over time. Unless an advertiser offers a coupon or a limited-time promotion, the effects may not be measurable immediately. Providing something for a customer to bring back to the advertiser, like a survey or coupon, can help the advertiser know if a particular ad was effective. Unless you ask a customer how she or he heard about the particular store, event or commercial district, you may never be able to quantify the effects of your advertising campaign. But if done well, you should be able to see the results of it with increased foot traffic, event attendance and increased patronage at area businesses.

ADVERTISING THE IMAGE

Very few downtown retail districts take the time or invest in advertising that promotes the district as a whole. Advertising the district's image supplements the individual and joint retail advertising done by the merchants themselves.

audience's characteristics, the event details, and its theme. Merchandise advertisements also need to accommodate the audience and image but also the quality of the merchandise. Sounds like a tall order, doesn't it? That's why it's important to leave it up to a design professional.

- **Plan ahead for joint advertising and image advertising for the district.** Well-organized merchants know how many in-store events they will conduct in a year and the Main Street program knows what's on its calendar of events. Therefore, organization and planning will give advertisers ample time to design an ad and have it ready to meet the deadline of the medium they are using, especially if multiple groups are involved. Organization is key to creating a budget for both individual ads, which are meant to sell a business' products and services, and joint advertising, which should promote specific joint events and/or the district as a whole. If your Main Street program is a 501(c)3 organization, any promotion of retailing must be sponsored by the merchants themselves. It also might be a better idea to use your

But what is image advertising? Image ads are offered to the community, or to the targeted market segments, as a means of educating the reader about the *breadth, depth, quality, convenience and/or uniqueness* of the product offerings within the district. Image ads:

- Leave the reader with a sense of the district as a retail center; they don't necessarily provide specific product or event information.
- Focus on the market position that downtown can deliver; unless it is true, retail image ads should not claim that they have something for everyone. Instead, they should highlight the variety of things available to target market segment or segments.
- Should be produced as a series, so that the variety and character of the district as a retail center can be offered to the reader over time. Attempting to shove all of downtown's wonderful retail qualities into one or two advertisements is not wise. You want people to look forward to the next advertisement as they would the next chapter of a good book.
- Focus on *faces*. Part of what makes downtown retailing unique, no matter what the product or the target market, is that it is run by people we recognize. Image ads should capitalize on this advantage over the competition and feature the faces and the stories behind the businesses. Make the connection between the district and the rest of the community by making the *human connection*.

Because the retail community has been involved in the development of the position statement and the image for the district from the very beginning, they must be prepared to further that image in every way possible. One simple way is work together to incorporate the image in individual, group and image advertising. By using the concepts, graphic quality and the targeting techniques, retailers will be telling their customers that theirs is a coordinated part of the overall downtown revitalization effort.

ADVERTISING MEDIA

Each form of advertising has its advantages and disadvantages. When developing your advertising plan, choose a combination of media so you can hit your target audience more than once with your message. Since you have gotten to know your target market from all the research, you should also be able to select which mode of communication they will be most receptive to. As suggested above, advertisers do not have to limit themselves to advertising in the traditional ways. You can get creative with where and how you advertise, but here are some of the pros and cons of some of your options:

- **Television.** Buying television ads can be a great way to deliver your message using both visual cues and sound. A TV ad can reach a broad range of people in a short amount of time, but you need to consider if your target market is too small to warrant the costs of creating the ad and buying air time. Obviously advertising with network or cable channels costs millions of dollars, but your local stations would be more affordable options. Also, video recording technology, like TiVo, lets viewers cut out advertisements entirely from their programs.
- **Radio.** Just like television ads, the radio provides opportunities for sending out your message quickly to many people. It will require clever writing to develop an ad that can't use visual images. Many radio stations have different programs on their schedule that will allow you to reach a listening audience that fits in with your target market's demographics.
- **Internet banners.** The Internet can be effective, but tricky. Many web users get annoyed by certain ads that blink, have a lot of animation or pop-up. It has become easy to block or ignore ads online and web surfers have short attention spans. Use the ability to make your banner interactive to draw attention to it; consider promoting a free prize or some kind of incentive for people to take a survey about your downtown. If you can find an appropriate or complementary website whose viewers would be interested in your product, event or the

downtown as a whole, it can be a great way to deliver your message. Make sure you include the graphic design cost in your budget.

- **E-newsletters.** Many associations or community groups allow sponsors or advertisers to place ads (some only in the form of text and others allow for images) in their e-newsletters. Sometimes these ads can get buried in the text of the newsletter and there is the potential a recipient might just delete it from an already cluttered inbox, but it is also another quick way to send your message.
- **Newspapers.** Local newspapers will most likely be affordable in comparison to national ones. Daily or weekly newspapers will let you send your message in a timely fashion and reach a broad range of people in your community. Good graphic design is important since your ad will be placed next to many others competing for a reader's attention. Also, don't discredit school newspapers or other smaller community publications, like a church bulletin.
- **Magazines.** Regional magazines could be a great way to announce your event or the assets of your downtown. Similar to newspaper ads, yours will have to look good to capture the readers' attention on the page. Be careful of high costs to place an ad and the need to get it to the publisher months before the issue hits the newsstand.
- **Direct Mail.** Similar to a full inbox on someone's computer, your direct mail message may not be a welcomed piece of mail. Although many people toss out "junk mail," an eye-catching piece or an ad that offers more value to the recipient can be effective. Remember that keeping your customer database current will be costly and printing and mailing costs will also have to be provided for in the budget.

ROYAL OAK ADVERTISING COOPERATIVE BUYS PRIME TV ADVERTISING SLOTS

The Royal Oak, Michigan, Main Street program knows marketing its downtown shouldn't only be done for just special events. The Main Street program and the Downtown Development Authority decided to fight post-holiday shopping lulls with a consistent, year-round advertising campaign for its commercial district.

The Promotion Committee tapped into the creative and strategic mind of a marketing consultant and spearheaded a network television advertising campaign. The television ad promotes "Downtown Royal Oak is Your Destination...All Seasons—All Reasons" on WJBK FOX 2. The Main Street program, while it hasn't already gone through a branding process, sees this tagline as a good start to promoting a consistent image.

Getting local businesses to participate wasn't a problem. Holding a meeting early on in the process at the television station sufficiently peaked the

interest of business owners. The 12 participants shared the cost for the \$30,000 media buy. With the good thinking of the consultant, the network affiliate became a partner and provided a rotation of extra spots and free production. The ad ran during the morning and evening newscasts in addition to early prime time programming. For as little as \$2,000 per business owner, the collective advertisers reached 1.8 million television households, which is more than 70% of Detroit's market. The value of the campaign easily exceeded \$100,000, a price tag the local businesses most likely couldn't afford independently. That is quite a bang for their buck.



- **Billboards.** Outdoor advertisements can be a useful tool when used in combination with other advertisements. Like radio ads, you need to be clever because your viewer will most likely speed passed it at 50 m.p.h. and can't read lengthy text or grasp complex composition. But on the up-side, people most likely will see it every day or at least a few times as they drive around their community.
- **Nontraditional Advertising.** The sky is your limit. If you can identify a new place or a way that reaches your target audience, then go for it! Of course, if no one has ever done this before, it will be hard to know how effective this advertising method can be. But no advertising provides a guarantee. Just be careful to not advertise in places or ways that is distracting or disruptive to the people you are trying to reach. Then it can have the reverse effect.

BUILDING AN ADVERTISING BUDGET

There are two ways the Main Street organization can help lower advertising costs for itself and local businesses: establishing an advertising cooperative or consortium. Both ways pool together dollars of participating advertisers to split the cost of a block of ads and simplify billing for a number of ads on one statement sent to one person.

A cooperative only takes two or more participants to build an advertising fund for promoting the same special events, like a "First Thursday" art gallery event or a holiday open houses, or to lower the cost for buying individual ads that promote only their business. Cooperative participants pay a certain amount each year. They should know what special events or foot-traffic building events are planned for the year and can collectively decide which ones to promote just as they should know how many ads they want to place to advertise their own products or services separately. Sharing the cost of buying a block of ads will reduce the cost per advertiser and deliver the same message each would have paid for anyway. Also, deciding up-front how many ads will be placed in which medium can reduce the cost for the advertising campaign. Media outlets reduce the rate per ad when



Paso Robles (California) Main Street Association uses an information kiosk as a public bulletin board to promote downtown events.

buying more than one. Benefiting from buying in bulk also forms the basis of a consortium.

A consortium differs in that it allows a Main Street organization to buy large blocks of advertising for rates cheaper than could be purchased individually and then sells ad space to participating businesses.

When setting up a consortium, identify which medium is best for your members and negotiate a one-year contract with that media outlet. Hold a meeting for interested businesses to learn more about the medium and details of the contract. For example, if you are selling ads for a newspaper, tell them about readership, available ad sizes, frequency of ad placement, specifications (like color or black and white) and also be sure to emphasize how much they will save by buying the ad through you. Participants should sign an agreement for joining the consortium. Be clear about billing terms. Your program is responsible for paying the bill and in turn will bill the merchants accordingly. If one of your members is late with payment, then that business' privileges must be suspended. Taking responsibility for the bill will be an added value of what you offer local businesses as the revitalization organization in your city or town. It also allows you to charge an administrative fee that can add up over time to (hopefully) make money for your program. Managing the consortium gives you some control over promoting the image, and the high quality and consistency of ads. Also, it allows you to track

MICHIGAN BOOKSTORE BUILDS CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY



The McLean & Eakin Bookstore in Petoskey, a town on Lake Michigan, hosts a variety of different events all year that not only helps sales but also strengthens its ties to the community. One of its events, Cabin Fever, entices people to fight the urge to hibernate during the winter to learn about various adventures of local residents. Each week, close to 50 participants of all ages register to attend a lecture lead by a local expert in a cultural or environmental issue. For example,

one session with the local watershed council's water quality director discussed his travels around the world researching other countries' initiatives to solve water problems. Participants turn the event into a night out by signing up for the lecture at the bookstore and receiving a coupon for a discounted dinner at the café next door, which builds stronger alliances between businesses in the commercial district. The registration also helps McLean & Eakin track its customers.

sales trends for retail events or attendance at special events to offer your consortium members feedback on the effectiveness of advertising.

When buying ads in bulk, negotiation is key. Discuss up-front pricing and special conditions of sale with the advertising sales manager. Keep in mind that each is competing for your business. Requesting certain stipulations such as requiring consortium advertisers a downtown logo, slogan or other identifier. These stipulations will help the media outlet justify charging you a "special rate" that can't be offered to others. You will need to be able to offer local businesses the lowest rate available to advertisers downtown to make joining the consortium worth it and to allow you to charge an administrative fee.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Image development is a daily responsibility. Nowhere is that more true than in retailing. Because many of the negative images of the district deal with the treatment and environment inside the stores, retailers must carry their image development activities into their

day-to-day business practices. **The Top Four Image Faux Pas** for downtown retailers include:

- **Customer service.** In every customer category, at every price point, consumers are looking for and demanding service as part of the shopping experience. Are your independent business owners boasting excellent service but not delivering it? Service training programs should be offered to all personnel and owners. Service should be the *number one* product sold in every store.
- **Store policies.** Particularly from store to store, policies are inconsistent and sometimes down-right antagonizing. Store policies should be stated in "can" terms, not "cannot." Policies should be as flexible as possible and should be made uniform throughout the district. How much can it hurt for all stores to offer a 30-day return policy? It takes a little sacrifice of independence and a whole lot of cooperation.
- **Window display, interior display and store layout.** Shoppers are creatures of habit and envi-

ronment. As such, they will seek out the familiar. Today's shoppers don't find store layouts and window displays that haven't been updated in decades appealing. Those store owners who insist on ignoring the trends in retail display and store design are creating a major image faux pas. Business owners who invest in themselves and learn how to transfer new techniques to a downtown environment will be making a huge contribution to an improved image for themselves and their district.

- **Convenience.** While convenience is really just another service item, it is so important to today's consumer that it is a live-or-die element of doing business. Today, convenience means:
 - being open when people have time to shop — during the evening and on weekends.
 - offering time-saving services like pick up and delivery, "on approval" purchases, shipping and special ordering. Business owners should think about what special treatment they could give their customers that they won't find in malls, big box stores or from other competitors. Challenge your business owners to find ways to stand out in the crowd.

If your retailers are not seeking ways to be consistently convenient for their customers, then they are not building a foundation for the future of their stores or your district. A revitalization organization can assist retailers in this day-to-day responsibility to boost the image of the district by:

- Hold evening trainings and seminars for business owners and employees on topics like record-keeping, inventory, budget and cash-flow management; visual merchandising; customer service; market analysis; and advertising basics. Downtown Thomasville (Georgia) Main Street hosted a town meeting breakfast featuring an expert guest speaker to present ways local businesses could improve their business practices. The speaker, a university professor and head of a small business center, even offered to come back to Thomasville to provide free assistance to interested merchants.

- Offer technical assistance in window and interior display design and store layout.
- Provide recognition and reward for retail establishments that exhibit superlative customer service.
- Negotiate with downtown businesses to establish uniform policies and consistent "core" hours.
- Keep retailers informed about trends in retail technology and business practices. Put them in touch with organizations that offer free or low-cost assistance, like the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA); Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), which work in partnership with the SBA, state and local colleges and other local organizations; The Service Core of Retired Executives and the Active Core of Executives (SCORE/ACE); and local Chamber of Commerce offices. Your coordinating state Main Street program may have other local resources or staff members that could be of assistance.
- Put together a library on related topics that business owners can easily access.
- Using information gathered from the market analysis, help businesses reposition themselves to offer products and services that tap the target market better.
- Help businesses expand into larger spaces or open another location to offer more targeted products and services.
- Help your merchants tap into their creativity. As pointed out before in this book, customers want to have a shopping or dining *experience* in your city or town. Your business owners must capitalize on this need. Local businesses in McPherson, Kansas, thought of a number of ways to go the extra mile and make shopping on Main Street more than just a transaction. Some stores offer play areas for children, cooking or craft classes, handmade bows and attractive gift wrapping for all purchases. Another McPherson store built a meeting space, which can be closed off, that can be rented for private meetings or parties within the

store. The owner also can contract with a local caterer to provide food and drinks.

The relationship between the organization and downtown merchants is one of mutual dependence. The downtown cannot thrive if the businesses suffer, and the retail operators cannot concentrate on their stores if there no one is looking out for the whole district. Finding the tools and techniques for reorganizing, promoting and improving the businesses downtown should be the organization's project. Putting those tools to productive — and profitable — use is the retailers' job. When they work together, COOPERATIVELY, an improved retail image is bound to follow.

FUNDING RETAIL PROGRAMS

There are several ways to fund a retail program. Probably the best way is to develop an annual budget containing specific line items for a fully developed campaign, with the merchants sharing a percentage of the cost. To lessen the financial demand, the merchants can be billed quarterly.

Another method of financing a retail program is with a promotion fund, in which merchants pay a specific amount annually. The campaign is then planned based upon the total funds available. The funds may come in the form of merchant association dues, benefit district receipts (if legislation allows) or some other regular payment method. While both methods require extensive administration, they also offer quality control, (because the events are planned in advance and with all the merchants in mind); a comprehensive program; and reduced advertising and design costs (by buying in bulk). Another method of funding, and probably the most common, is by individual event. Though a workable alternative, the pay-as-you-go method requires good participant support and a constant selling effort.

EVALUATING YOUR EFFORTS

There is one last element of retail image development to be discussed. Because image development is a daily responsibility of downtown merchants, their employees and everyone involved in the revitalization of the district, it is imperative that all involved take

the time to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. That sounds like another obvious fact, right? Sometimes, the most obvious tasks slip right by us as we struggle to keep up all of our other responsibilities.

Evaluation and assessment cannot be overlooked. Whenever a cooperative promotion is launched, it needs to be analyzed *immediately afterward*. The same is true for cross-retail promotions and in-store offerings. Did we reach our target audience? Did we deliver the goods and services promised? Was the product mix interesting? Was it visually appealing? What should we change next time? Will there be a next time, or should we shift gears and look in another direction? What was the amount of sales generated?

Evaluation also applies to business practices. It is critical that each and every merchant offer the highest quality service possible. The organization and the merchants must police themselves and make corrections when flaws are found. Likewise, we must applaud the excellent business and the excellent employee when they get it right.

Finally, evaluation means asking the customer how you are doing. Sales data, periodic surveys, merchant surveys and focus groups will tell us when we are hitting the target and when we are missing the mark.

CONCLUSION

This is hard work. But the good news is that everything described in this chapter can be achieved by taking small, measured steps. Small steps like improving customer service, extending evening business hours, planning retail events and creating joint promotions with other local businesses can lead to change. Even if some of these steps don't work, they can be modified to make work. And each time they do work, the next effort will multiply the impression they make for the entire district. This incremental approach to improving the image of the retail sector will yield lasting image results for the district as a whole.



A variety of methods can help capture media attention, including staged events like ribbon cutting ceremonies.

chapter

CREATING MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

The organization that takes responsibility for commercial revitalization must also take responsibility for promoting the process of revitalization. All too often, this aspect of promotion is overlooked in an effort to make sure that all the “parts” of the process are being promoted. Downtown revitalization is greater than the sum of its parts; if we focus only on the parts, we lose the opportunity to tell the community how those parts fit together and form change.

A good public relations program helps sell the concept of commercial revitalization to the public while it dispels confusion, skepticism and misunderstanding. Building sustained, positive media coverage relies on clearly outlining communications objectives, getting to know news people, understanding how media work and making the revitalization process interesting to the public.

Media relations is not an option; the organization cannot function without the coverage that the local media can provide. Your program needs the media much more than they need you. Without a public relations campaign, all the hard work done on performing a market analysis is wasted because you aren't actively sending your message (positioning statement) to your target audience. If you don't promote the revitalization and your organization, there are two detrimental outcomes:

- **The public at large won't know who has been responsible for change.** People who do not use downtown regularly will not experience the changes, relying instead on their old, and often negative, images of the district. Any improvements

that are acknowledged will be taken for granted because you haven't established a context for change. And finally, the public will feel no need to support the effort with either time or money because no “effort” will have been communicated to them; they won't know what it took to accomplish the first steps to revitalization and what it will take to continue.

- **Your initial supporters will lose sight of the big picture** and the reasons they joined the effort at the beginning. Because they don't know how their individual efforts fit into the overall program, their commitment to the institution could lag; they may become fractionalized or could lose interest entirely and drop out.

It is crucial that both the informed stakeholders and the uninitiated general public are told again and again not only what and how things are happening in the district, but why they are happening and what those things mean to them.

WHO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH DETERMINES WHAT YOU SAY AND HOW YOU SAY IT

Regardless of which market position you choose for downtown, it will be necessary to communicate with the following three groups on a regular basis:

- **The immediate constituents of the district.** These individuals and groups have the most to gain or lose. Typically, this group includes busi-

ness owners, property owners and primary users of downtown — residents and downtown workers. Mass media techniques, for the most part, are not the most effective means of reaching this group.

- **The public sector.** In most communities, city and county governments provide substantial political, technical and financial support for the ef-

fort. Their need for information will be specific and distinct from the other interest groups.

- **The public-at-large.** These people provide the long-term payoff to the revitalization effort because they:
 - patronize downtown businesses
 - support the organization financially and personally

Interest Group	Motivation	Messages	Mechanisms
Immediate Constituents	Profit Property enhancement Protection of investment Improvement of living/ working environment	Revitalization makes good fiscal sense. Revitalization is a partnership between public and private sector — not just <i>your</i> burden. Revitalization makes the district a better place to live.	Newsletters Media coverage One-on-one communication General information brochure Walk-in office Events that bring constituents together. E-mails
Public Sector	Reelection Keeping constituents happy Avoiding controversy Information that supports a previous political position or justifies <i>changing</i> a previous position	Revitalization is government's best return on investment (jobs, new businesses, increased private investment, increased sales). Reinvestment brings private sector to the table Revitalization protects the public sector investment in infrastructure and public services. Reinvestment improves the quality of life.	Newsletters Media coverage One-on-one communication Festivities Regularly scheduled written and verbal reports Lists, statistics, facts and figures Coordination with city staff E-mails
General Public	Options Uniqueness Value Orientation to the individual's interests Safety Familiarity Experiences	Revitalization creates interesting, convenient, well-operated businesses. Revitalization welcomes family activities. Revitalization returns downtown to center stage of community life. Improves quality of life. Revitalization brings traditional notion of downtown into the 21st century.	Newsletters Media coverage One-on-one communication High-quality retail and special events Focus groups Advertising Volunteer opportunities Website

Each of community group is motivated by different interests and each will require different communications systems to reach them.

- attend events
- reestablish downtown as a part of their life

Each of these groups is motivated by different interests. And each will require different communications systems to reach them. While this chapter focuses on the mass media techniques needed to reach the general public, it is important to recognize that your program must communicate with all three groups in the fashion that is most likely to get results. The table on the previous page gives examples of the interest group, their motivations, the message and the mechanisms for reaching each group.

PRESS TOOLS

Let's face it: a successful public relations campaign will benefit your commercial district but is a cheaper way to get publicity. But you have to do it right. Knowing how to increase news media coverage of your commercial district and its revitalization is an art in itself. It requires a lot of planning, follow-up and creativity. Most importantly, it requires an understanding of what makes news and how to package it to the right person in the right medium.

Generally speaking, news is timely. It is something that has just happened or is about to happen. News is of interest to the general public; it is unusual, entertaining, has human interest, arouses emotions or causes people to talk. News educates and informs: it tells us about local issues, trends and events. Packaging news about your program and its achievements takes forethought and preparation.

Before starting a public relations program, take the time to map out the messages you want to convey and the kinds of results you want to achieve. The key to a successful campaign is pinpointing specific messages that meet your objectives and are unique or newsworthy enough to appeal to editors of various media. How to plan your campaign will be discussed in the next section.

When getting started, have a clear communication objective in mind. What exactly do you want editors to do and/or know after they have read the release? Write down all of your objectives for the news item you are promoting and gather all supporting facts and necessary information.

Next, you will need to identify the media outlets that will best help you reach your objectives. Work with the media that can help you the most. While you can't push the media to cover your news or come to your events, you can give them plenty of information with ample lead time. And after you make initial contact, via one of the press tools that will be explained below, follow up with the editor to offer more information, interviews, free tickets to your events, and creative ideas for story angles. Have all the contact information available and additional information ready for reporters if they call you.

The media does not have a responsibility to care about your organization, your mission or good works. *It is up to you to make your story compelling enough for the media to cover it.* The following are a few of the most common and effective tools to use in your publicity campaign.

THE NEWS RELEASE

The most common form of regular communication with the media is the press release and is a communication tool worth mastering. Press releases are most commonly sent to newspaper and magazine staff. There are a wide variety of newspapers, from daily to local weeklies to special interest papers. Magazines range from regional interest to specialty magazines. They generally have two major categories of coverage: feature articles, which cover special interest or news; and calendars and other shorter listings.

Journalists will not be able to cover all of your events or write up all of your announcements; therefore, select only the most interesting and newsworthy items for writing press releases. You don't want to send out press releases that aren't newsworthy, because over time, reporters will start to ignore them and miss the ones that are truly important. But you can still have fun with writing them; a creative, catchy headline will get noticed over ones that are really basic and not engaging.

Find out who is the appropriate contact at each publication you are sending your release to and how they prefer to receive it. It is important to also tailor each press release to each publication, emphasizing the element of your news item or event that would be

of interest to their readers. Remember that most journalists get bombarded with numerous releases a day. It is your job to make sure you are sending it to the right person, at the right time, as well as to make yours stand out.

Consider the audience you are trying to reach and which members of the media would be best to send this press release to in order to reach them. Think about different angles of your news item. For example, if your revitalization group helped a local business owner rehabilitate his historic building and reposition his business to be a strong retail competitor, there are two potential angles. A local newspaper might be interested in writing a profile feature on this member of your community. Also, a business trade magazine might be interested in the merchant's success story.

Regardless of who you send it to, the basic elements of a press release include:

- **Contact information.**

Make sure you provide all contact information so you are accessible.

- **The lead:** Craft one sentence that is interesting or intriguing that compels the reader *want* to continue.

The lead does not have to summarize the whole release.

- **The body copy:** The body of the release must include

the who, what, when, where and why and should be concisely written. Only include information reporters need to know; leave the editorializing to them. Simple, short sentences will work best. The most important information has to come first. Some editors like to use quotes from the release and others might lift entire copy

from it. Keep your press releases short, one page is best, and don't announce several pieces of information at once. Provide contact information, websites and any other additional resources for more information on your topic.

- **Boilerplate:** This is the last paragraph that provides a short background on your organization.

The top of your press release should read "Press Release," or "For Immediate Release," or "Embargoed Until Date X" (in case you are sending out information early that can't be published until a certain date) and your contact information. Don't forget to put the date on it. Below that, write a short yet interesting headline. Use your organization's letterhead and pick a standard press release formula, like the press release sample on the next page.

Make sure you use a standard font that is easy to read and double space the copy. Indicate the end of the release with "###" or "-30-" or "-end-." If there is more than one page, write "-more-" at the bottom of each page and be sure to number the pages. When appropriate, include print or digital photographs with captions.

After you write your first draft, double check the accuracy of dates, facts, statistics, grammar and spelling. A clean and factually accurate release will tell your media contacts they are dealing with a professional. It will also build credibility.

In general, your news releases should never be technical or full of jargon. However, as your program matures and the issues become more complex, technical information may be required. Always provide contact information and additional resources for more detailed information.

10 SUREFIRE WAYS TO MAKE AN ENEMY OF THE PRESS

1. Keep reporters waiting past deadline by not returning phone calls.
2. Lose your cool because a story, even though accurate, doesn't go your way.
3. Expect that all coverage about your program will be a glowing write-up.
4. Cooperate when media coverage puts you in a good light, then refuse to be available for stories that don't.
5. Protect key spokespeople from media interviews.
6. Ask for specific questions in advance.
7. Ask to see an article before it is published.
8. Tell a reporter that the interview is off the record after you've completed it.
9. Take a reporter to lunch, then ask for a positive slant to an upcoming story.
10. Talk down to reporters.



August 26, 2003

For Immediate Release
Contact, Michele Talwani
 603.223.9942 ext. 107

\$50,000 INVESTMENT KEEPS REVITALIZATION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE'S DOWNTOWNS ALIVE

CONCORD, NH — On Tuesday, August 26, 2003, Robert Grappone of the Grappone Companies presented the New Hampshire Main Street Center with a \$50,000 check at the Grappone Toyota showroom in Bow, N.H. The Center will use the money to provide technical assistance and training to the 19 local Main Street communities. Representatives from the local Main Street communities, members of the Center's Board of Directors, and staff attended the event.

"Quality of life doesn't just happen," said Robert Grappone, owner of Grappone Companies. "It takes vision, passion, and hard work. When a program possesses these qualities, it's hard not to support it. That's why the Main Street Program impresses me."

"The Grappone Companies investment gives the Main Street Center the opportunity to provide the local Main Street communities with up to date, comprehensive training tools to operate an effective and permanent Downtown revitalization program," said Kathy La Plante, director of the New Hampshire Main Street Center.

The 19 New Hampshire Main Street Communities include: Berlin, Concord, Claremont, Colebrook, Derry, Dover, Durham, Enfield, Goffstown, Hillsborough, Jaffrey, Laconia, Littleton, Meredith, Milford, Plymouth, Somersworth, Tilton, and Wilton. Since the inception of the New Hampshire Main Street program in 1996 to 2002, between the public and private sectors, nearly \$79 million has been invested into the Downtowns of the Main Street Communities. This was done through building rehabilitations, new construction, and public improvements. There has also been a net gain of 457 new businesses and more than 1,100 new jobs.

The Main Street Program is a comprehensive revitalization program that promotes the historic and economic redevelopment of traditional business districts in New Hampshire. The Center provides each Main Street community over \$50,000 worth of Downtown revitalization training and education over their first five years in the Main Street program. The NHMSC was established in 1996 to encourage and support the revitalization of downtowns in New Hampshire. It is a statewide initiative supported by the NH Community Development Finance Authority and private investment dollars.

###

14 Dixon Avenue, Suite 102, Concord, NH 03301 Tel: 603.223.9942 Fax: 603.226.2816
www.nhcdfa.org/mainstreet.html

A sample press release from the New Hampshire Main Street Center that announces a significant donation to the program. The release was written on letterhead and was sent out to various members of the media according to their preferred mode of communication. Two pictures with captions were also included.

NEWS RELEASE CHECKLIST

Sending the release is just the beginning. Successful placement requires cultivating interest in your story through ongoing contact. Media personnel change fairly often, so personalize the list as you go along and scrupulously update it.

Use this checklist to proof your news release. If you can answer 'yes' to each question, then your release is ready to be sent out according to the recipient's preference. If you answer 'no' to any of the questions, you still have work to do.

	Yes	No
<i>Is the lead direct? Does it contain the most important and interesting aspects of the story?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Did you answer who, what, when, where, and why in the first paragraph or two?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Are sentences concise and written in active-tense? Paragraphs short? Words common and specific?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is editorial comment in quotation marks and attributed to the appropriate person?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Have all the statements of fact been double-checked for accuracy?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is your name and contact information in the upper corner of the first page for further information?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Have you checked accuracy of each name, phone number and address?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is the punctuation correct? Are all words spelled correctly?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is the release dated? Is a release time indicated?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If there is more than one page, have you written "MORE" at the bottom and numbered the following pages?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Have you included your organization's "boilerplate," a brief description of who you are and what you do, as your last paragraph?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Have you indicated the end by "###" or "-30-?"</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Timing is equally as important as sending only newsworthy releases. Different types of media have different deadlines and lead times. Know the deadlines of all your contacts. Websites that post daily news would be best contacted first thing in the morning or the afternoon before the release date. Similarly, newspaper reporters may not take cold calls after a certain hour in the day once they start writing the next day's article. Magazine staff can send you their editorial calendar that lists the year's planned articles and deadlines, which will be a few months before the issue hits the newsstands. See if any of the up-coming articles would be a good match for your organization and then contact the writer and tell him or her why. Just don't call the month before or the month the issue is due out on the newsstand, because most likely, the publication is already being printed.

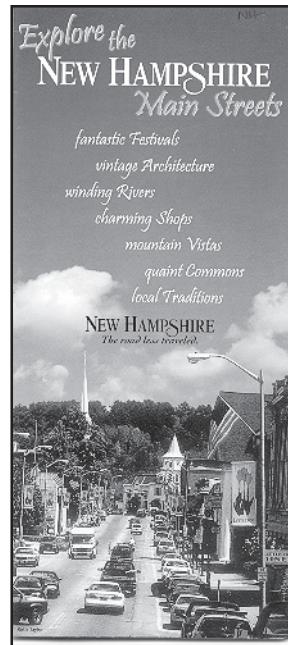
THE MEDIA ADVISORY

Save this type of communication for "breaking news," media invitations and changes to information you have already disseminated. A media advisory is meant to be kept brief and shouldn't exceed one page. The information should only be facts delivered in short sentences and not contain any editorial content. A media advisory:

- **is brief:** usually not more than two or three paragraphs.
- **provides photo/video opportunities:** including a description of the photo-worthy event and the times, location and names and titles those people to be present.
- **provides follow-up options:** these options are critical to a media advisory because it is so brief and usually submitted on short notice. The advisory should list persons available for follow-up interviews, including names, titles and contact information.

THE PRESS KIT

If the media advisory is the briefest form of communication, then the press kit is the most detailed. A press kit is used to introduce new initiatives, explain complex projects or provide detailed background on



Include promotional materials in the press kits you send to your media contacts.

an issue. Your organization should have dozens of kits on hand, ready to go, with current information. Also, send kits to new reporters that have been assigned to your "beat" to introduce your organization. Since many press kits can end up on a shelf, a follow up call could be helpful to complete the introduction. Press kits can include all or some of the following:

- **news releases**
- **background information**
- **fact sheet**
- **collateral material**
- **photographs and suggested captions**
- **Q&A-style report:** very useful for issues that are particularly complicated, technical or controversial.;
- **news articles:** "clips" are a nice addition to a press kit because they provide additional perspectives on the topic.
- **list of additional contacts**

September 12, 2004

Media Contact:

Elise Smithson

(555) 444-3333

esmithson@oms.org

MEDIA ADVISORY

WHO:	Governor Patrick Smith
WHAT:	Address to kick off a two-day Main Street festival.
WHERE:	Oakridge Court House Plaza (west steps), Main and 3rd streets, Oakridge, Colorado.
WHEN:	Saturday, September 24, 2004, 10 a.m.
WHY:	To pay tribute to the citizens and business leaders of Oakridge who contributed to the success of the Main Street program. Since its initiation in 1988, the revitalization and historic preservation program has led to the expansion or location of at least six new businesses in the downtown area and attracted approximately \$5 million in investment.
INTERVIEW POSSIBILITIES:	Governor Patrick Smith Warren Rashleigh, director, Main Street Members of the Oakridge City Council
VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES:	Ribbon cutting ceremonies Tour of revitalized Main Street area Main Street festival activities (see attached calendar of events)

Sample media advisory.

LOCAL TELEVISION AND RADIO STATIONS

Regularly scheduled programs highlighting community events, business, real estate, the arts and local government all provide good opportunities to promote the district and the program.

WEEKLY/MONTHLY COLUMNS

A weekly column is a particularly effective tool when the downtown director or board president writes it.

COMMUNITY CALENDARS

This tool is relevant for print, online and broadcast media. It is a good tool when promoting events and other scheduled activities, but is not that effective in communicating programmatic issues.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

This section of the paper is often overlooked as a regular source of coverage. However, if used shrewdly, letters to the editor can provide readers with a sense of the process of revitalization, particularly through acknowledgement of the contribution of community leaders to the program.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSA)

While PSAs are no longer required by the FCC, many media still provide space or air time for nonprofit organizations and social/cultural programs. Distributing attractive, interesting PSAs allows the media to "drop" them into open space and time when it comes available.

ADVERTISING

Organizations must be prepared to pay for some of the mass media exposure they desire. Display advertising should be considered part of the media campaign, particularly when major announcements or recognition is scheduled. Some programs even purchase classified ads to communicate the progress of the organization. See Chapter Six for more information on advertising.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PRESS

Tools are only as good as the people who use them. What makes media relations work are the *relationships* established between the organization and the reporters, editors and publishers. Getting to know the media you will be working with will not only build familiarity and trust, but it will help you understand them better.

The importance of relationship building is exemplified by Okmulgee's Main Street program. This rural Oklahoma town, population 13,000, has received positive coverage from *Time Magazine*, *Southern Living*, in a BBC documentary and more. How? The organization has made media relations a top priority and uses a variety of ways to get its message out. They meet with the people at their local newspaper regularly, constantly send out information to keep their contacts informed and never underestimates the ability to get big time coverage. When the town gets coverage, thank you notes are sent out to the reporters. They believe special touches will keep the media from forgetting you. Perhaps the goodie baskets *Southern Living* received in the years before including Okmulgee in its food festivals feature kept this small town on its radar. When the magazine staff visited Okmulgee, the special treatment didn't end there; they received welcome bags with goodies and information packets.

Good working relationships between the program and the decision makers will make the tools work. This relationship will depend on:

- **Understanding the position of the media**
- **Sound preparation for media contact**
- **Responsiveness by the organization**

UNDERSTANDING THE POSITION OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Nonprofit organizations are often frustrated when local media do not jump at the chance to cover their activities. For some reason, nonprofits often believe the media are there to promote them, when in fact the media's sole purpose is to report news and provide information.

When contacting a member of the media, do your homework to know who is most appropriate to contact. Don't send everyone the same press releases either. Some news will be appropriate for only certain media outlets. Consider the angle of your news item before selecting a media professional to contact. For example, local newspapers and broadcasters care more about news and events happening at home than those that have a broader audience.

We can bridge this gap of misunderstanding by learning more about the professional responsibilities of each of the major players in a local media company:

- **The reporter.** Every reporter works on deadline and is expected to supply completely accurate stories; these two features of the job contribute to a daily environment of pressure. Some reporters are given their assignments by editors and are not responsible for selecting topics they cover. Many media organizations hold editorial meetings with all staff members who can contribute ideas of potential topics or themes. Most reporters cover a "beat" and therefore develop a specialty in one or more areas. In smaller communities, reporters may be generalists. Reporters are also extremely transient; you must be prepared to establish new working relationships as they come and go.
- **The editor.** Editors also work under deadlines and oversee the output of many different reporters. They rely on the accuracy and timeliness of the reporter. The editor typically makes story assignments and final decisions about story placement. And as the title suggests, the editor edits the copy before it appears in print or broadcast. In general, editors of local media are very accessible and willing to discuss ways to make your message more newsworthy.
- **The publisher or station manager.** The size of the newspaper or station will determine how much the publisher participates in day-to-day decisions. Basically, the publisher is the chief executive officer of the newspaper. As such, she or he is somewhat removed from daily decision making regarding story assignments, editing and place-

ment. Often, the publisher **does** write one or more of the paper's editorials, thereby setting the tone of the institution. Finally, the publisher maintains a high profile in the community, which could make her or him a candidate for board membership. *But remember: Representation on your board does not guarantee positive media coverage.* Getting media coverage is your job.

PREPARING FOR MEDIA CONTACT

Media relations are often derailed because the leaders of the organization are intimidated by or unprepared to meet with reporters and editors. Preparation can boost confidence. Here are some suggestions for preparing for the media:

- **Know your communication objectives in advance.** It is important to you know what you want out of the each meeting with the media. Each time you meet, make sure that you present your message early and often.
- **Anticipate questions and rehearse answers.** This advice may sound silly, but one of the biggest confidence-busters is being flustered or speechless when asked a question by the media. Because you already know the premise of the interview



Be prepared to answer an interviewer's questions and have your facts ready.

and your objectives, you can brainstorm the variety of questions you are likely to be asked and come up with the strategic answers that will reinforce your program objectives. Always answer the questions you are asked, but find ways to work in your message too. If you are asked something you don't know, tell him or her you will get back to them with the answer right away...and do so!

- **Accentuate the positive . . . within reason.** This does not mean that you should disregard setbacks or controversies, or sugarcoat the truth. You must learn how to address problems with honesty and present positive solutions.
- **Take control of the interview.** There are several techniques that will build your confidence during an interview and get the results you want:
 - **be relaxed, but alert.**
 - **establish the tone of the interview:** get the key points on the table early and link them to original and follow-up questions.
 - **Answer all questions.** And answer in a simple and direct manner.
 - **do not use jargon:** it rarely impresses anyone, particularly reporters! Jargon would only confuse the general public anyway.
 - **stress positives**
 - **Look and speak like a professional:** try to control nervous habits, especially stammering or vocal pauses such as "uh" or "like."
 - **prepare for "land-mine" questions:** occasionally, you will run into an interviewer looking for a scandal. The reporter may try to derail your confidence with one of the following types of questions: rumor or speculation; "black or white" questions of choice; rapid fire questions or frequent interruptions; the terminal silence; or feigned boredom with or ignorance of the issue. Be mindful of these tactics and don't let them fluster you. Also, do not fall into the trap of arguing with a reporter.

If you find it necessary to contradict the reporter, do it respectfully. Don't get drawn into making negative statements or letting someone put words in your mouth.

RESPONSIVENESS

Given your needs from the media and the constraints reporters and editors work under, your organization needs to commit its energy to follow up. Four important features of follow up are:

- **Make follow-up phone calls.**
- **Provide additional information as it becomes available.** Always be ready to supply requested information. Journalists contact you for your expertise or information they can't get anywhere else. Make sure you can get them the information immediately. Reporters on deadline will stop asking your organization for information if they can't get it in time.
- **make other people available for interviews and follow-up, especially "experts" and program leaders.** It may be better to designate one person in your organization as the spokesperson, especially if he or she is the most informed, charismatic and well-spoken. However, journalists are generally are on deadline and could pass over your story if they can't get information easily.
- **be flexible and available for requests like photos, detailed information, tours, etc.**

ESTABLISHING THE CAMPAIGN

A media campaign is simply a plan of action for communication. Too often, groups don't establish a strategy for why, when and how they will use the media. Instead, they throw together a news release just before an event and hope for the best.

Your revitalization efforts deserve a coordinated media plan. Such a plan is dependent upon a vision for the district and a stated mission for the organization. It also requires an annual work plan, from which the media strategy is derived. When developing one, don't forget to be creative. Send queries and invitations to travel writers. Apply for awards and distinc-

tions, they are not only great for getting local coverage but will make your community stand out.

Media campaigns for downtown revitalization should include the following components:

- stated communications objectives, built upon the goals and objectives of the organization;
- a schedule of “target activities”;
- a list of selected press tools;
- a targeted media list;
- staff and board assignments; and
- a budget.

As you push forward with your campaign, don't expect the media to be your booster. Although members of the media have opinions about their community and the stories they write, edit and publish, they are professionally committed to objectivity and are ethically bound to separate their personal perspectives from their product. Even if you know they support your organization, don't automatically assume that they will write-up every press release, attend all of your events and always write positive stories. Their struggle for objectivity needs to be respected.

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

A good media plan requires a framework by which to judge its effectiveness. Establishing communications objectives gives the organization *benchmarks*. Typical objectives could include:

- Improve the public understanding of the organization by publishing a (predetermined) number of news articles, editorials and feature stories.
- Obtain advance coverage of a (predetermined) number of special events during the year.
- Suggest a (predetermined) number of special interest feature stories during the year.
- Prepare four quarterly reports and provide them to all local media.
- Budget for a (predetermined) number of full-page display advertisements to promote the program and educate the public about the organization's activities and progress.

- Write at least one letter to the editor each quarter to recognize volunteer achievement or highlight program results.
- Schedule four quarterly meetings with the editorial staff of each local news source in order “to touch base.”

TARGETED ACTIVITIES

Not every action of the organization is equally worthy of media attention. The board and staff need to select the most important activities and focus their media campaign on them. How do you decide which activities to highlight? Answer the following questions and you will begin to pare down the list:

- **Which events or activities NEED the public in attendance?** This won't eliminate many programs, but it is the basic reason for using the media to promote events.
- **Which activities are designed to bring new target groups into the district?** Now you will begin to weed out some activities.
- **Which activities help reverse negative images through entertainment or education?** This is a very important objective for targeting media attention.
- **Which activities give the organization the highest visibility?** Naturally, you will want to focus on these activities.

Some events and activities will score well in more than one of these categories. The projects that satisfy several of these objectives should form the pool of activities targeted for primary media emphasis.

Targeting certain activities for media attention does *not* mean that others are totally ignored. Targeting simply means that selected activities will receive more visibility in the organization's media campaign than others. The media should be told about every public activity of the organization, but targeted activities will be more aggressively promoted.

TARGETED MEDIA

Before you can promote your “message” of downtown revitalization, you need to do your homework by learning about the media options in your commu-

nity. While putting together a media list, you may want to group media as follows:

- **Most frequently used media.** This category typically includes daily and weekly local newspapers, local radio and television stations and local cable companies.
- **Occasionally used media.** This category includes regional newspapers and magazines, direct mail and novelty media like special circulars or tab sections.
- **Special interest media.** These are media sources that will be interested in only a narrow portion of your program. Examples are tourism publications and specialty magazines (history, recreation, antiques, etc.).

A good media list will include *every* media option available to you. For each media entry on the list, information should include:

- **Business name, website, address and general telephone number.**
- **Listing of all pertinent editors and reporters, by beat** — Lifestyle, Entertainment, Business, Government, Arts, etc. This list should have the correct name, title, contact information and brief description of the person's responsibilities as you understand them.
- **Deadlines organized by division.** Different departments of a radio station, television station or newspaper have different deadlines. In most departments, there are *two deadlines* — the *information deadline*, the time by which you can provide story ideas or follow-up information, and the *copy deadline*, the time by which the reporter must submit the story to her or his editors.
- **Circulation and market penetration statistics.** It is critical to know which audiences each local media company reaches. For the print media, circulation figures are important. Try to get a breakdown by delivery zone or zip code, so that you can analyze how well the print source is reaching your target audiences. Find out which days have the highest readership so you can reach



the most people. They typically are Sundays and Wednesdays. For broadcast and cable media, gather information on viewership and listenership. The electronic media can provide you with *psychographic* data describing the types of people listening or watching their programs. *All media keep these statistics for marketing and sales purposes:* You should have no trouble retrieving them for your purposes.

- **Listing of the sales director and account executive.** You will purchase advertising as part of your media campaign. Therefore it is important to have the sales staff on your media list. Advertising departments also live by deadlines; gather the same information about the contact persons in sales as you collect about news reporters and editors. *Remember:* Do not confuse the functions of the sales office with the editorial division. There is no credit system by which you receive a certain amount of "free advertising" on the news pages simply because you have purchased some "real advertising."

Let's take a look at what a typical media list entry might look like:

THE MAYVILLE CITY COURIER
499 Cross Avenue
Mayville City, USA 12345-6789
General Information: (111) 123-4567
www.m-citycourier.com

Mr. Jonathon Snigby, Publisher
Direct line: (111) 123-1234
jsnigby@m-citycourier.com
Writes weekly "From Where I Sit" editorial

Deadline: Friday, 1:00 p.m. for Sunday edition.

NOTE: Mr. Snigby usually writes his column by 3 p.m.

Ms. Sondra Sorensen, Editor

Direct line: (111) 123-2345

ssorensen@m-citycourier.com

Edits *all* news and feature copy; makes all story assignments; relies heavily on story recommendations from staff.

Deadlines: info only — 10:00 a.m. daily copy only — 1:30 p.m. daily.

Mr. Bob Roberts, Cityside Reporter (since Mar. 95)

Direct line: (111) 123-3456

rroberts@m-citycourier.com

Deadlines: info only — 10:00 a.m. copy only — 1:30 p.m., unless it is council, Tuesday, when copy deadline is extended to 10 p.m.

Ms. Stephanie Stephens, LIVING! Reporter

Direct line: (111) 123-5678

sstephens@m-citycourier.com

Deadlines: info only — 10:00 a.m. copy only — 1:30 p.m.

NOTE: Stephanie also assigns, writes and edits the weekly "This Week" weekend section.

Deadlines: info only — 9:00 a.m. Wednesday copy only — NOON Thursday.

Circulation Information: Daily circ. — 12,345;

Saturday/Sunday — 13,456. Highest penetration in Zones 7,8 and 9. Highest advertising days are Wednesday and Sunday.

Ms. Buffy Buffington, Sales Manager

Mr. Dan Black, Downtown Sales

Associate

Direct line: (111) 123-6789

Deadlines: orders placed — Friday noon for following Wednesday (three working days lead on any day placement); graphics and copy submitted — 9:00 a.m. of day prior to run.

Because media professionals are highly mobile, this list will need to be updated monthly. It is also important to format the list in two ways: one list that will provide complete information and another that will be formatted so you can generate personalized print or e-mail correspondence and mailing labels.

SELECTED TOOLS

Once you know your communications objectives — and the primary projects to promote — and have researched the media providers in your market, you can begin to select the best media tools for the cam-

paign. To recap: the right media tool (news release, media advisory, press kit, press conference, etc) will depend on:

- **the project**
- **the immediacy of the activity**
- **the target audience**
- **the selected media sources**

Media tools are used differently depending on whether the revitalization group is brand new, or well established. The table on the following page is offered as basic guidance.

ASSIGNMENTS

A media plan cannot be conceived, designed or executed without the involvement of at least three players:

- **Staff.** The executive director, if there is one, and the support staff, if there are any, are responsible for administering the media campaign. Administration includes:

- participating in all planning and design
- conducting or overseeing all research
- establishing all media contacts and interviews
- producing all media tools
- following the progress and assessing the effectiveness of media choices and story placement

Your staff members are, in essence, the first and most consistent point of contact for the media source, and it is with them that media relationships should be established. Your staff and spokesperson(s) must keep in mind that most members of the media do not have a background in economic revitalization nor do they know or remember everything going on in your community. Always provide context and background information and keep evidence of your successes handy, like reinvestment statistics.

- **Board president.** The president formally represents the organization and its activities. The board



president, with the participation of the board members and staff, will establish the objectives and direction for the media campaign, select the targeted activities for special emphasis and identify the strategy for reporting to and meeting with media decision-makers. The board president must be prepared to serve as spokesperson for the organization on any subject brought to the media's attention. This means that the president and executive director must work closely, in order to ensure that the president is well informed on issues of potential media interest. The director must have confidence that the president can effectively represent the organization on virtually all subjects.

- **Committee chairpersons.** The committees actually produce the activities that the organization wishes to promote to the media. Therefore, the committee chairpersons serve the media campaign as *technical spokespersons*. The media campaign should actively involve these chairpersons for the purposes of:
 - providing additional detailed information
 - scheduling photo opportunities, additional interviews and any other logistics required to give media access to the event or activity.

Committee chairpersons are rarely asked to serve in this fashion. But in a well organized revitalization program, it is the chairperson who holds the best, most current, day-to-day information about projects within his or her domain.

These volunteer leaders must be incorporated into the media scheme.

There are several other valuable players in the media campaign, if the organization has the resources to employ them. One is the *graphic designer*, who produces the images that will attract media attention. Another is the *copy writer*, who assists the effort by writing energetic and informative copy for releases, advisories and press kits. Still others, known as *technical advisers*, support the media campaign by making themselves available to answer follow-up questions. As a local revitalization program evolves, the issues brought to the media will be more complex. Technical advisers can help clarify complicated programs and ensure that the coverage is clear and accurate.

BUDGET

A media campaign is a plan of action. It has a set of yearly objectives, targeted activities and measures of success. It also has costs. The organization must make a commitment to spend funds if it wants to reap the rewards of a coordinated media campaign.

Typical budget items for a yearly media campaign include:

- **Graphics and printing:** For letterhead, press kit folders, promotional items and ads.
- **Postage:** While you can save money by sending press releases via e-mail, other postage costs can add up, such as mailing press kits or promotional items to members of the media.
- **Photography services:** It is helpful to have a digital camera, or at least a regular camera, to visually document your activities and provide images to media. If using film, you must include the costs for roles of film and processing. Using a professional photographer will add even more to your budget.
- **Copy writing/editing:** Should you require it, set aside some money for professional writing and editing. Freelance writers and editors are available as well as public relations firms.

- **Advertising:** The largest portion of your media campaign budget will be spent on advertising and will be determined by how many ads you wish to run, of what size and in how many media. Depending on your budget and goals, you may plan to spend money on professional advertising or marketing firms.

The budget for the media campaign should be itemized when the campaign is being designed. The cost of the media campaign should be an operational line item in the organization's budget.

CONCLUSION

Very few revitalization programs conduct effective media campaigns. An occasional news release and the hit-or-miss phone call to a reporter summarize what most local nonprofits call media relations. You must plan to use the media as a critical facet of your image development campaign. This includes outlining clear objectives from media coverage, identifying media outlets, using the right press tools correctly, forming partnerships with members of the media, and continually assessing the effectiveness of your plan.

A well-planned media campaign has many valuable returns, from sustaining stakeholders' enthusiasm, attracting new volunteers, keeping your progress in the public's mind and building your credibility in the community.

Your organization has worked hard to create a vision for the commercial district and mission for your revitalization program. It has also put considerable effort into creating noticeable change in your district, working with local merchants and producing interesting events and activities. It is your media campaign that needs to find ways to best communicate the results of this hard work and continue promoting your image so your business district is vibrant and bustling!

CHAPTER 7: APPENDICES

SELECTING TARGETED ACTIVITIES
FOR
YOUR MEDIA CAMPAIGN

This is an example of one way to organize your activities and determine which ones address the greatest number of your image objectives. Please see Chapter 2 for further details of the process. The following page is a blank template.

Activity	Needs Public Attendance	Will Attract New Target Audiences	Helps Reverse Negative Images	Gives Organization High Visibility
Special Tab Section in Newspaper		●	●	●
Halloween Party	●	●	●	
Christmas in July Retail Event	●	?	●	
Summer Concert Series (noon)	●	●	●	●
Fall Heritage Walk	●	●	●	●
Easter Egg Hunt	●	●	●	●
Image Ad Campaign Aimed at Downtown Workers		●	●	●
Business Directory		?	●	●
Parking Promotion		?	●	●
Welcome Back to College Block Party	●	●	●	●
Volunteer Appreciation Dinner			●	●

SELECTING TARGETED ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR MEDIA CAMPAIGN

National Main Street Center
National Trust for Historic Preservation
1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
www.mainstreet.org