

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
What Makes A Vibrant Town Center Presentation Notes
THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2015 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL

PRESENT: See Sign-in Sheet

Vice Chairman Bill Bohan welcomed everyone, explained that the Economic Development Commission has worked with Connecticut Main Street in the past and introduced John Burdick.

John Burdick thanked everyone for coming and expressed thanks to individuals who helped make the evening happen. He also explained that the mission of the Economic Development Commission is to support current businesses and cultivate growth in accordance with the Plan of Conservation and Development. He briefly highlighted the Rails to Trails Initiative, development of marketing materials and enhancement of the social media presence and marketing the town. He further highlighted the purpose of Connecticut Main Street and introduced Kim Parsons-Whitaker as a native of the Northwest Corner who attended NW Regional 7.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker described the Main Street approach as a nationwide program and detailed the general membership program that New Hartford will be participating in. The Connecticut program has launched a format that is different from the national program that allows towns to become part of the program and implement at their own pace. She continued to detail the resources available to us as new members of the Connecticut Main Street program.

Historically, “Main Street” is a generic term for the heart of the community that is a mixed use district. Major highways and interstates changed the face of Main Streets and destroyed neighborhoods in our historic downtowns. American attitude of “newer is better” also helped to destroy the historic downtown. The Main Street Four Point Approach addresses the four areas that Main Streets had lost: Organization (Civic value), Design (Physical Value), Promotion (Social Value), and Economic Vitality (Economic Value). Main Street utilizes a preservation and place-based economic development strategy that addresses the restoration of these values simultaneously.

Main Street Districts must be managed. This can be difficult when working with volunteers such as an Economic Development Commission or Planning & Zoning Commission, certainly it is easier with a paid professional – but it is possible and resources are available in the form of other towns who have successfully completed the process. The power of people being involved creates energy to keep the process moving.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker continued to describe the actions of other communities who have implemented the Connecticut Main Street Program including Westville area of New Haven, Waterbury, and Sandy Hook. She complimented the town brand of “A Town for All Seasons” and showed images that she had found on the web in support of that theme by simply entering New Hartford photos in a web search.

A Brand Statement is a destination marketing approach where local businesses can find their place within it. It is a chance to tell the history of the town center. It is important to analyze and understand your market and then develop your branding statement.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker asked for suggestions of problems and challenges from the audience. The following items were suggested:

- Recreational opportunities
- A clear view of the Farmington River
- A great library
- Clean up blighted properties
- Lack of parking – slowing the traffic down
- Residential opportunities
- Infrastructure issues
- Lack of underground power
- No places to stop and talk on the street
- Rich History
- Kiosk/ A community billboard – electronic notice for events
- Natural Assets – Ski Sundown/Brodie Park impact
- Signage not consistent in leading one thru the district
- Elderly housing
- More entertainment
- Enticing people downtown – more foot traffic.
- Better sidewalks
- Need to bring the town together
- Everyone needs to recognize importance of town center.
- Need more density in retail.
- Fishing, canoeing, kayaking and tubing
- Rails to Trails
- Farms
- Rest of town needs to see value of the town center
- Bring back or start a Farmers' Market
- Process to resolve tension between bigger and better versus enough is enough.
- New Hartford Zoning Regulations – challenge or positive?
- Marketing/Advertising our assets
- Property at the gateway – Rte 219 & Rte 44
- Retain the spirit/atmosphere of New Hartford – respect scale & authenticity
- Focus on Arts & Crafts
- Provide starting/finish locations for bicycle, motorcycle and walking tours
- Natural riverwalk
- Promoting Jones Mountain trails
- Communication of information

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker wrote these items on a flip chart breaking them up into the 4 points of the Main Street program (See Exhibit A) and then listed collaborating organizations who can help address each of the 4 points (See Exhibit B). In order to thrive, Town Centers need people living in the Town Center.

Mr. Burdick wrapped up the evening by introducing the members of the EDC and thanking everyone for their input.

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Clerk**

Exhibit A – Flip Chart

Organization	Design
Bring the town together Other Side of Town - Value	Clean Up Blight Lack of Parking Slowing traffic Underground Utilities Walkability – Places to gather Signage not cohesive Better Sidewalks Rails to Trails Density – How Much? Zoning Changes Density Scale, respect the scale Riverwalk
Promotion	Economic Vitality
Recreational Opps Farmington River – visibility Great Library Ski Sundown, Brodie Park, West Hill Lake, Impact Rich History Kiosk More Entertainment More foot traffic needed Marketing Assets/Events Arts & Crafts Jones Mountain Communications	Residential Opps Elderly Water, Sewer Infrastructure Ski Sundown More Retail River – fishing etc Farms, Farmers Market Vacant/Gateway Lot

Exhibit B – Collaborating Organizations

Organization	Design
Library Civic Organizations Faith – Based School System Colleges/Universities (interns)	Planning & Zoning Architectural Review Committee Historic District Conservation Commission Rails to Trails Committee Garden Club
Promotion	Economic Vitality
EDC Recreation Department Destinations Other Organizations	Economic Development Commission Business Council Housing Authority Local Banks Realtors