



WEBINAR: Creating Resilient Small City Downtowns

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<http://ncrcrd.adobeconnect.com/ncrcrd>

About the webinar

Many small city downtowns throughout the country continue to struggle with shuttered storefronts, deteriorating buildings, and a disconnected mix of commercial tenants. Most are still ignored by major chain store site selectors, while edge – of – town development continues to migrate outward.

Despite these challenges, there are many resilient downtowns that have achieved turnaround by recognizing and building upon their assets. These small cities have reclaimed the importance of downtown to the broader community. Downtowns represent the central place in a community. They also offer a sense of place with history and character that cannot be replicated by cinderblock buildings on the edge of town. Finally, a vibrant downtown represents a healthy community, positioned to attract new investment and business development.

So what is Extension’s role in creating resilient downtowns? Most of our states have Main Street programs that provide a comprehensive approach to downtown development. However, in most states, only selected cities and villages are designated Main Street communities. Extension does not offer comprehensive “main street-like assistance.” However, it does offer a depth of research and resources in specific topics relevant to downtown development. These topics contribute to the efforts of Main Street and other downtown development groups. Extension offers objective, research – based programs and resources that contribute to the creation of vibrant and resilient downtowns in small cities. Examples of relevant areas of specialty in Extension include business development, customer service, leadership and organizations, marketing, place making, planning, real estate and financing, research, and tourism.

Given the challenges facing downtowns, two related projects were funded by NCRCRD.

1. Resilient Downtowns Case Study Series (IL, MN, WI) – designed to highlight best practices regarding small-city downtown development through case studies.
2. An Inventory of Extension Programs to Help Create Resilient Small City Downtowns (WI, IA, MN) -website created to connect Extension educators with colleagues in other states doing downtown development work.



Due to the shared objectives of these projects, we have joined together to create one Extension downtown revitalization website that will provide educators nationwide with access to valuable programming examples and case studies describing success factors that contribute to resilient and vibrant downtowns. <http://fyi.uwex.edu/resilientdowntowns/>

This webinar will assist educators who are planning on working with small city downtowns by providing an opportunity to explore the variety of educational programs and resources offered in other states.

Presented by:

Bill Ryan, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Center for Community and Economic Development. Bill has been with the University of Wisconsin-Extension since 1991 as a specialist in downtown and tourism business development. He assists economic development and business leaders in identifying realistic business and real estate development opportunities. He co-authored and maintains an on-line Downtown Market Analysis toolbox that is used nationwide.

Chuck Law, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Local Government Center. As Director of UW-Extension’s Local Government Center, Chuck’s educational programming on downtown redevelopment spans three decades. He is widely known for his Business Improvement District (BID) knowledge and educational programming on the subject. His work has been recognized both nationally and through state awards.

Zach Kennedy, University of Illinois-Extension, Community and Economic Development

Zach provides program leadership and support in community leadership development, participatory community planning, organizational development, and community economic development. He has worked with University of Illinois Extension since 2009. He has particular interests in helping local governments and non-profit organizations build their capacity to engage in data driven decision making and planning.

Registration: There is no registration and no fee for attending this webinar.

To join the webinar go to <http://ncrcrd.adobeconnect.com/ncrcrd>, “enter as a guest” is by default already chosen. Type your name into the text box provided, and click on “Enter Room”. You are now in the meeting room for the webinar.

To facilitate Q&A’s, **participants submit questions/comments via the Chat Function** in Adobe Connect.

The webinar will be recorded and archived at http://ncrcrd.msu.edu/ncrcrd/chronological_archive.

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