

CREATING RESILIENT SMALL CITY DOWNTOWNS



NCRCRD projects to inventory, share and apply Extension programs and resources nationwide



Presented by Bill Ryan and Chuck Law, University of Wisconsin – Extension and Zach Kennedy, University of Illinois - Extension

Merging of Two Grants

1. Inventory of Downtown Development Programs and Resources

A website created to connect Extension educators with colleagues in other states doing downtown development work.

2. Case Studies of Resilient Downtowns

Designed to highlight best practices regarding small-city downtowns.



Team Members from Two Grants

1. Inventory of Downtown Development Programs and Resources

- Wisconsin:
- Jessica Beckendorf
 - Todd Johnson
 - Chuck Law
 - Bill Ryan
 - Chris Stark
 - Emily Lutz-project assistant
 - Chrissy Dilhunt-web design

- Minnesota:
- Bruce Schwartau
 - Ryan Pesch

- Iowa:
- Lisa Bates
 - Susan Erickson
 - Jon Wolseth

- Project Guidance:
- Karl Martin, PI, Wisconsin
 - Greg Wise, Wisconsin
 - Gary Taylor, Iowa
 - Matt Kane, Minnesota

2. Case Studies of Resilient Downtowns

- Wisconsin:
- Anna Haines
 - Todd Johnson

- Minnesota:
- Ryan Pesch
 - Bruce Schwartau

- Illinois:
- Raha Behnam
 - Kathie Brown
 - Russell Medley
 - Zach Kennedy



Definitions

Vibrant

full of energy and enthusiasm.

"a vibrant cosmopolitan city"

synonyms: spirited, lively, full of life, energetic, vigorous, ...

Resilient

Tending to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change

"the local economy is remarkably resilient"

synonyms: bouncy, flexible, elastic, rubberlike, springy, stretch, stretchable, stretchy, supple, ...

Poll Question

Have you ever or do you expect to work on a project related to downtown revitalization?

- Yes
- No

Why Downtowns are Important

1. Central place in the community
2. Sense of place with its character, history, and uniqueness
3. Describes the overall health of the community and its economic development potential

Some of the Issues Facing Downtowns

1. Changing uses for downtown buildings
2. Deliberate consumers expecting price, quality, and value
3. Changing retail landscape from big box stores to gray boxes
4. Most downtowns are overlooked by chains
5. Increasing competition from Amazon and e-commerce

Examples of Downtown Responses

1. Change uses of buildings to include more housing and restaurants
2. Be aware of cautious consumer decision-making
3. Coexist with big-box stores by developing your own niche
4. Embrace homegrown businesses through incubators, pop-up shops, buy local efforts,...Chains have their own problems
5. Develop an Internet or mobile presence
6. Think beyond business – downtown’s role as a central social district.

Big and Small Cities are Different

- Larger cities often have in-house economic development planners or can afford consultants
- Smaller cities and villages often lack resources to help their downtown

Who Provides Services to Downtowns?



Grant 1: A Web-Based Inventory of Extension Programs and Resources

1. Posting programs and resources to learn what others are doing (scholarship).
2. Encourage cross-state programming.
3. Help us define our roles vis-a-vie Main Street, consultants, and other organizations.

Website Homepage

Search by Topic, State or Keyword

Nine topics

<https://fyi.uwex.edu/resilientdowntowns/>

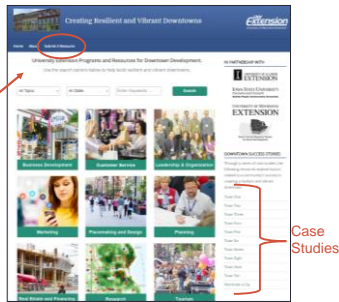
Next Steps

1. Continue adding to the inventory
2. Add additional case studies
3. Promote site to potential users
 - Community development colleagues nationwide
 - Main Street programs nationwide



Submit Your Scholarship

Click the "submit" button to upload a link to your work.



Grant 2: Case Studies of Resilient Downtowns

Purpose:

1. To understand and document small communities with successful downtowns.
2. Identify best practices for local governance and downtown development.

Communities

Illinois:

- Canton
- Farmington
- Silvis
- Galva



Wisconsin:

- Mineral Point
- Viroqua



Minnesota:

- Alexandria
- Lindstrom

Community Selection

Convenience Sampling & Research Team Familiarity

- Does the downtown area have a high building occupancy rate?
- Does the downtown area capture dollars from tourists and neighboring communities?
- Does the downtown area look nice aesthetically?



Findings

Lessons from Farmington

1. Private investments and public improvements
2. Historic Capital
3. Marketing and Communication
4. Small Business and Main Street Retail
5. Public Events and Programs

Thank you!
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