

Downtown Nanaimo

An Assessment of Downtown Nanaimo's Opportunities for Revitalisation

September 28 – 29, 2000

Nanaimo, British Columbia

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Introduction

Creating a New Vision for Downtown Nanaimo

Nanaimo, British Columbia – a beautiful harbour city on Vancouver Island; rising from the bluffs, attractive buildings, new and old; unique shops along Commercial Street; upper story residential condominiums and apartments brings life to the street day and night. Jazz clubs, the theatre, galleries and cafés provide a cultured, casually sophisticated air.

Downtown Nanaimo is no artificial “theme-park” city. Internet start-up companies provide an edgy, yet safe environment. Businesses enjoy easy access to major markets in the province and across the border, as well as an affordable, attractive location. High-speed ferries convey commuters and visitors to and from Vancouver. Downtown Nanaimo offers a high-quality living and business environment, different from the suburban lifestyle of the northern areas of the city.

Is this vision of Downtown Nanaimo too fanciful? Is the economic situation in Downtown so dire that this image is out of reach? Not only is this future possible, it can begin in less time than the district took to decline. Downtown’s location, essential institutions and existing facilities position it for success. The constraints to Downtown Nanaimo’s bright future include a negative image that is built on misperceptions and past mistakes, a lack of private sector leadership, development barriers and uncontrolled auto-oriented sprawl. The indispensable ingredients necessary to shape a positive future for Downtown Nanaimo are leadership and commitment. Public and private leadership is needed to focus public policy, economic development, and community energy on the essential position Downtown Nanaimo must play in the development of the entire city. That leadership must be committed to downtown’s revival. The revitalisation of downtown will take several years, a specific plan of action and a comprehensive approach to problem solving.

The Main Street Assessment

The City Council of Nanaimo contracted with the National Main Street Center at the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, DC to conduct an assessment of Downtown Nanaimo and to identify opportunities and barriers to its revitalisation. The assessment team received extensive background data and materials in advance of visiting Nanaimo. The team conducted an intensive on-site assessment that included tours, interviews, a public meeting and private discussions. The team presented its initial impressions to the City Council on September 29, 2000. Following the on-site assessment, team members have received several e-mails from Nanaimo residents containing insights, new ideas, concerns and visions. The team acknowledges the assistance and support of the Mayor and City Council of Nanaimo, the invaluable co-operation and aid of the city’s Planning Department and the members of the Downtown Strategy Team (DST).

The two-person assessment team included members of the Main Street staff, Sheri Stuart, Program Associate, and McDuffie (Mac) Nichols, Senior Program Manager. Ms. Stuart,

who formerly directed the Main Street revitalisation program in Port Townsend, Washington for several years, currently serves as the Main Street Center's primary staff person for programmes in a number of states. Mr. Nichols manages special projects for the Main Street Center. His range of work at the National Trust's Main Street Center has included managing its technical service staff.

This assessment was sponsored by the City of Nanaimo and organised by the Downtown Strategy Team and the Planning Department. The team owes its great appreciation to Brian Mehaffey and Sharon Fletcher for setting up such comprehensive interviews, and for assembling such an informative package of background materials.

This assessment intends to serve as a guide to opportunities in Downtown Nanaimo. It will isolate some specific barriers to the fulfilment of a positive vision for downtown. It will identify ways in which downtown can maximise its opportunities and reduce or eliminate the barriers. It will offer recommendations for actions, organisational models and policies that support a revitalisation of downtown.

The assessment cannot substitute for local decision-making or leadership. It cannot substitute for specific project feasibility studies, community vision planning, planning and policy review or local initiative. The assessment team offers observations and recommendations based on their respective experiences and the experience of the National Trust's Main Street Center. Specific recommendations should be weighed against local expertise and knowledge. Local, provincial and federal regulations and requirements make it necessary to review all recommendations in context.

Two critical questions form the basis of every Main Street Center assessment visit. The first question is *whether* a community should organise a local Main Street programme. The second is *how* the local programme should be structured and funded.

The community should organise a local Main Street programme only when certain conditions exist:

- **When there is a bona fide need for downtown revitalisation.** A Main Street effort is intended to be a public-private partnership. Representatives from both sides must (1) admit that the downtown needs help; (2) agree to co-operate with each other; and (3) agree to follow the Main Street structure. The Main Street approach does not work well in communities where leadership is complacent or unwilling to adhere to a proven structure for downtown revitalisation.
- **When the program has some chance of success.** Older downtowns are resilient, but some will never be revived. In those cases where the vast majority of the jobs, retailing and service sector activity, and major civic functions have already left the downtown, the Main Street Center recommends a long-term effort that reintroduces critical uses and focuses public policy on downtown's future.
- **When the core group of people organising the revitalisation effort understands and agrees with the basic principles of the Main Street programme.** The Main Street philosophy is summarised on the following pages.

The Main Street approach is inherently practical and based on common sense. The success of the Main Street strategy depends on the quality of local leadership, the

characteristics that make the city unique and the willingness of the community to rally around a common goal X the improvement of the commercial core.

The Main Street Approach

The National Main Street Center is a programme of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States. Created by a Congressional Charter in 1949, the National Trust is a leading advocate of historic preservation in the United States. The preservation movement involves more than saving historic buildings. Economic growth, downtown revitalisation, and the creation of new jobs are all issues the National Trust addresses through the rehabilitation of historic resources.

Established by the National Trust in 1980, the National Main Street Center has worked in 44 states and Puerto Rico, with more than 1,500 communities participating in the revitalisation of traditional downtown and neighbourhood commercial areas. Through these efforts, 51,000 new businesses and 193,000 net new jobs have been created, and \$12.8 billion (U.S.) has been reinvested in Main Street commercial districts. For every dollar spent to operate a local Main Street program, \$38.34 (U.S.) is reinvested in the downtown, making Main Street one of the most effective economic development programs in the U.S. These cumulative results are the work of the strong local organisations that have carried the Main Street movement.

In addition to downtown revitalisation assistance, the National Main Street Center also sponsors the National Main Street Network, a professional membership programme for organisations interested in commercial district revitalisation. It produces publications, newsletters, and special reports on revitalisation and preservation issues and serves as a clearinghouse for information on community redevelopment issues. The Main Street Center accomplishes its mission through the Main Street four-point approach.

The Four Point Approach

Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in downtown Nanaimo by directing attention to the improvement of all its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, parking, and traffic circulation. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality, and to expedite improvements in the downtown.

Promotion takes many forms, but the aim is to rekindle community pride in the commercial area by changing public perceptions of it from *negative* to *positive*. Promotion increases sales through special business merchandising and marketing events, brings new audiences to the district for festivals and celebrations, and builds the downtown's image through marketing campaigns. All of these serve to attract shoppers, but they equally serve to attract investors, developers, potential downtown residents and new businesses.

Economic Restructuring strengthens downtown Nanaimo's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding existing businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, by converting unused or under-utilised space into productive property, and by sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of the business community.

Organisation establishes consensus and co-operation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in Nanaimo's commercial core. This will allow the Main Street revitalisation programme to provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy of the downtown. Diverse groups from the public and private sectors (city government, residents, local bankers, merchants, and downtown organisations, property owners, and others) must work together to maintain a successful programme.

The Eight Principles of Main Street

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

- The Main Street programme is *incremental*. Older commercial districts deteriorate over time and the Main Street Center has discovered that they are revitalised the same way: slowly, through a series of small, well-planned steps.
- Commercial districts are complicated. They need attention in several different areas. Main Street acknowledges this complexity through its *comprehensive* four-point approach™: **Organisation, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring**. Simply stated a *comprehensive* approach to revitalisation means working on all four points simultaneously.
- Federal and provincial programmes are uncertain sources of assistance. Local Main Street programs must develop local leadership committed to *self-reliance*. In the experience of the Main Street Center, communities that raise funds from local sources have a higher probability of success than communities that rely on "other people's money."
- Every older commercial district has problems. It is not the nature or number of the problems that makes the community "unique." Rather, it is the act of identifying and building on *existing assets* X and developing solutions based on the downtown's strengths X that distinguishes one community from another and makes the difference between success and failure.
- Both the *public sector and the private sector* must participate if downtown revitalisation is to be successful. Often, the Main Street effort is initiated by one or the other; it is critical that both the public and private sectors "sign on" to the effort early in its development.
- There must be a universal commitment to *quality*. Revitalisation cannot occur if any part of the district is allowed to perform or be perceived as second-rate. Quality does not mean, "upscale." Quality means a business district that serves its customers and a Main Street programme whose efforts meet or exceed the community's standards of achievement.
- Downtown revitalisation requires *change*. Much of the Main Street approach involves changing local habits and attitudes, beginning with those of Main Street leadership. Cities X and city leaders X who are not ready for change should not embark on Main Street revitalisation.

- Main Street is *action-oriented*. Local leaders have a right X and an obligation X to make things happen. While many successful Main Street programmes do not have consensus about the direction of their efforts at the beginning, they all move to a place and an organisational system that endorses action. Without well-planned activities that move the organisation toward the goals established by its leaders, Main Street cannot survive.

The City Council in Nanaimo requested specifics. They want a candid assessment of opportunities in Downtown Nanaimo. This assessment report will identify positive things about downtown, but it will also name barriers to revitalisation. There is no purpose in assigning blame for downtown's condition, only in identifying the actions needed to improve the area. Barriers to development are identified not as criticism, but as opportunities for action.

Executive Summary

Downtown Nanaimo is at a crossroads. Years of decline, of loss of businesses, of suburban development have relegated downtown to a secondary rôle in the economy and life of the city. The City Council, concerned about the situation in downtown, has made a statement about the importance of the district's revitalisation by reorganising its committees to act for downtown. Many people and organisations in Nanaimo have different visions for downtown. It is time to consolidate a vision, develop a plan of action and proceed.

The City of Nanaimo asked the National Trust's Main Street Center to help it make decisions about strategies for downtown revitalisation. The Main Street assessment team, was impressed by the amount and quality of planning work Nanaimo had already done on its downtown and the entire city. The team quickly concluded, however, that despite having many components and tools useful to a downtown management and revitalisation program, a clear, *shared* vision was missing. Although many people in Nanaimo have an idea for reviving downtown, the public has accepted no single vision.

The team examined all the planning documents which Nanaimo has developed. These included the Plan Nanaimo which contains a progressive concept of growth and development management, downtown demographics and market research, downtown planning policies, tourism brochures and initiatives, events calendars, media coverage, design guidelines, heritage information and others. We concluded that Nanaimo does not lack raw materials – *Nanaimo has a great downtown*. And Nanaimo does not lack ideas for revitalisation. It lacks a unified strategy and an organisation to manage the effort.

The city leaders who invited the National Trust's Main Street Center to Nanaimo had heard of the success of the Main Street programme in the U.S. and of the results of an assessment of downtown London, Ontario. That assessment helped London begin to develop and implement a revitalisation program that is supported by the public sector and an assessment district.

Based on the existing situation in Nanaimo, we believe a Main Street programme, led by a partnership of city representatives, downtown merchants, downtown property owners, residents, and institutional leaders, can best serve as the co-ordinator of revitalisation and downtown management in Nanaimo's commercial core.

The team considered whether the Nanaimo Centre City Association might expand into the new downtown management and revitalisation programme. It also considered whether a new programme could be created in the city government or committee structure. The team met with several members of the Centre City Association board but not the staff. The team thinks that the City Centre Association may need time to develop the organisational capacity to manage a comprehensive revitalisation programme. The team recommends that the Downtown Strategy Team should serve as the initial organiser of the revitalisation effort with a plan to develop the Nanaimo City Centre Association into the eventual management organisation.

In the short term, establishing a Main Street programme will require a series of steps that can be accomplished in a few months. The Downtown Strategy Team should invite public participation in the organising process and it should set up a formal mechanism for establishing the final co-ordinating committees for strategies of the new effort. During this organising period, the Downtown Strategy Team should seek staff assistance from the City Planning Department or from the Centre City Association. It should begin to develop a plan for hiring a downtown programme manager, identifying funding sources and skills needed.

The organising process will invite public participation, but will not produce immediate results on the street. The team therefore suggests a few simple projects in the areas of design, promotion, and economic restructuring to assure some early, visible accomplishments.

Several times in this report the team emphasises the need for a long-term, phased approach to downtown revitalisation and downtown management. For those signing onto a Main Street program in Nanaimo, it's important to clarify that success requires work in the four Main Street points simultaneously and managing downtown on a permanent, ongoing basis.

The citizens of Nanaimo met during this assessment showed that they have interest in the future of downtown and want to be part of its redevelopment. They challenged the team with their insightful observations and their passion and enthusiasm for downtown. Nanaimo has no shortage of ideas and no shortage of articulate, talented willing to work on the revitalisation of downtown Nanaimo. With their help, the team has great confidence downtown Nanaimo will succeed.

Key Issues, Strategies & Tools

The breadth of issues that effect the health of a downtown district is great. Economic, social, political and physical forces shape its value and rôle in the community. While an assessment of Downtown Nanaimo could attempt to deal with the whole array of issues in play, the assessment team decided that there are key issues that offer the greatest opportunities for revitalisation or seem to be barriers to redevelopment. These key issues include:

- Commercial development in Nanaimo has followed the newest residential developments. Most of the business relocation has occurred as a result of the shift of middle and upper income residential development to other areas of the city, especially to the north. Businesses follow their markets. The growth in residential development away from the city centre has encouraged business to locate away from downtown.
- Even the retail developments built in the last ten years are beginning to experience a vacancy problem. It is likely that an analysis of the retail market in Nanaimo would indicate that there is a surplus of retail space in the city. Continuing to develop new retail space will only exacerbate the situation.
- The private sector cites regulatory constraints as barriers to downtown development. True or not, this perception among developers and business people that city presents a barrier to the development process through its regulations, policies and procedures

has taken on the mantle of an “urban myth”. This perception is an impediment to encouraging the innovative development that is needed in downtown. The City of Nanaimo can combat this “myth” by taking actions that clearly demonstrate that downtown Nanaimo “means business”.

These issues have developed over many years. Some are a result of market forces beyond our control. Others have developed as unintended outcomes of past public policy decisions. Taking steps to address these issues through a comprehensive revitalisation plan with specific strategies and projects that can encourage development in downtown, change negative perceptions, and support a new vision.

Strategies

An effective downtown revitalisation plan contains strategies that are based on market realities and opportunities. The Downtown Strategy Team, and later the City Centre Association, will need to pursue significant strategies that take advantage downtown Nanaimo’s assets and advantages. The team recommends the following strategies:

- 1)** Residential development – Residential development in Nanaimo has been focused in the northern, suburban areas of the city. Although new downtown residential development has been successful, more new housing is needed to create a downtown “neighbourhood” that will provide a ready market, attract new businesses and provide a new vitality. Downtown housing can include single family houses (especially rehabilitated heritage properties), multi-family rental and condominium developments. Downtown housing can appeal to a wide range of price-points and lifestyles.
- 2)** Business development using the city’s economic development priorities as a guide, including, small technology firms, tourism, arts and culture-oriented businesses, film and video production. Small-scale boutique retail, food and beverage service, neighbourhood serving retail and entertainment businesses will create a dynamic and exciting downtown.
- 3)** Arts and culture can be a winning strategy for downtown. Downtown Nanaimo already has heritage sites, the Port Theatre, an arts centre (in development), the museum and locations to stage events. An arts and culture strategy will position downtown as unique and differentiate it from its suburban competitors.

Each strategy can be dealt with through a comprehensive plan based on the Main Street “four-point approach” – organisation, design, promotion and economic restructuring. A sample “work plan” using the Main Street approach is included as an appendix.

Tools for Successful Development

Nanaimo already has many “tools” to assist in the revitalisation of downtown. In order to accelerate downtown’s development, some additional tools will have to be developed and refined. In this report, the team will focus on three ways to support the downtown effort.

- A comprehensive, phased action plan – The City of Nanaimo needs a clearly stated vision for downtown. That vision will be implemented in a phased, long-term fashion recognising that systemic downtown revitalisation is an incremental process that integrates several strategies. No single project alone can “save” downtown. While the development of a new convention centre, the redevelopment of the Malaspina Hotel

or the construction of a new hotel may contribute to downtown's rebirth, all projects and activities need to be considered and developed as parts of the whole downtown plan.

- A facilitated development process – Targeted incentives to encourage desired development and to discourage inappropriate development that does not support the vision for downtown can make downtown attractive to the development community. Phased incentives, a flexible regulatory environment and an approach that encourages development balancing a private desire for returns on investment with community needs and vision for downtown will create the right atmosphere for downtown revitalisation.
- A management system for the downtown revitalisation process – A city the size of Nanaimo needs to have a system for managing the downtown area and its development. Downtown development requires co-ordination of public and private interests and resources to ensure that process continues on the revitalisation strategies that make up the plan.

Residential Development

Strategy: Expanding Downtown's Residential Base

In the interviews that the assessment team conducted, one development strategy seemed to be universally embraced: the key to the future revitalisation of Downtown Nanaimo is getting people to live there. This strategy makes sense. The retail and service businesses in the northern areas of the city are supported by near-by residential developments. While downtown may be able to capture some of the suburban markets, most of the shopping needs of Northside residents are met at the malls and shopping centres located there. New downtown residents will be a basic market segment for downtown, with tourists, businesses (and their employees) and government workers rounding out the mix.

Residential Markets

Downtown Nanaimo already has several residential areas. While the majority of downtown residents are low and moderate-income households, there are middle and upper middle-income households in the area with a variety of housing options. Most middle to upper-market housing in downtown enjoys a high occupancy with waiting lists for space.

The assessment team recommends that a downtown residential development plan should be a primary strategy in the overall downtown revitalisation programme. Some reasons for this recommendation are:

- Current downtown middle and upper-middle market units are popular in the market
- Potential new high-speed ferry service makes downtown Nanaimo a convenient commuting location to downtown Vancouver
- Wide public support for downtown residential development suggests that there is market and political support for policy and regulatory changes that could make it easier to target incentives for residential development.

Observations, Barriers and Recommendations

Issues that may affect a downtown residential development strategy include:

- Product – While downtown should be a mixed income residential area, the greater downtown area is already dominated by low and moderate-income housing. Concentrate early downtown residential development on “market-rate” housing for middle and upper-income households rather than subsidised housing. Justified or not, the domination of lower-income housing options in downtown has skewed the image of downtown as a “low-rent” district.
- The probable markets for downtown housing will be:
 - Senior housing – independent, assisted and managed care formats
 - Student housing – smaller efficiency, one and two-bedroom apartments with Internet access and within short walking distances to the campus of Malaspina University-College.
 - Apartments and Condominiums – Most new residents in downtown will probably be singles and couples. Most of these projects will likely need to appeal to a middle and upper income market. While there will be some middle and upper-income families with children who will opt for a downtown lifestyle, most will continue to be attracted to the suburban-style, single family homes available in the other residential developments. The exception could be single-family heritage houses.
 - Artist live-work space – There is a large artistic community in the Nanaimo area. While some will want studio space in more isolated, rural locations, others may choose to locate in an area with other artists and arts facilities. This creative atmosphere is attractive to visual artists, as well as creative businesses such as graphic arts, computer and Internet businesses. The types of space that seems to be most attractive to these markets are lofts. Heritage buildings, warehouses and other commercial spaces sometimes are well suited to this market.
- There continues to be a market for *social* housing in Nanaimo. Because of its lower land and building values, downtown has become the default location for social housing. Limit the *concentration* of social housing in downtown. Scattered site housing is better for the residents in social housing as well as for the downtown area property values. Social housing providers are restricted in their ability to develop in other parts of the city because of constraints that are part of the provincial housing structure. A social housing strategy needs to be developed for *all* of Nanaimo, not just in downtown. If all social housing continues to only be found in downtown, low-income households become segregated from the rest of the city and downtown property values unfairly have to carry the cost of social housing for the whole city.

Use caution when reviewing projects in the primary commercial zone. Limit transitional housing in the primary core area. Downtown core residential units shape public perceptions about the value of downtown. Transitional housing can increase security concerns about living downtown. Although there is a need for transitional housing downtown is in a transitional state itself and cannot absorb negative images as well as other, more economically stable areas.

- Provide incentives to owners who rehabilitate downtown heritage housing. This product helps differentiate downtown’s residential options from the suburbs, provides an interesting architectural and cultural amenity and takes advantage of

an existing resource in downtown. Try to find ways to encourage owners to maintain these houses as residential units rather than conversions to commercial uses. Downtown needs to increase the number of quality residential product options, not to diminish them.

- Target areas “up bowl” for more downtown housing. Be careful not to segregate downtown housing to specific areas. There should be housing options throughout the downtown. The mix of housing, commercial and institutional uses will make downtown living an attractive alternative and will provide a mutually supportive environment.
- Review the current parking regulations in downtown. Consider flexible requirements. Senior and student housing may need few vehicles. Developers may be able to make off-site arrangements with commercial and religious properties to share parking facilities. Evening parking stickers for residents can also help manage space needs.
- Develop policies on the scale of downtown housing. While high-rise, waterfront condominiums are popular, the view of the harbour is one of Nanaimo’s greatest assets. Avoid allowing the construction of a “wall” of high-rise buildings in the harbour basin. Vary the heights, designs and orientations of residential developments to take advantage of the unique location of downtown Nanaimo. Step back developments to limit the “tower effect”.
- Be careful not to overwhelm the market for downtown residential properties by flooding the market in a short time frame. Better to introduce new projects in smaller numbers and rehabilitate heritage housing first than to over-produce new, large developments that will weaken market values. The downtown housing strategy needs to be a long-term plan implemented over several years.
- The City should consider targeting incentives to encourage downtown housing. In order to “prime the pump”, the development community will likely need some inducements such as tax relief, flexible development rules, transfers of development rights, façade grants or loans or other tools to attract investment. Target areas within downtown or housing types for specified periods. Limiting the time the incentives are available will create an urgency to use the incentives. An education programme for developers and realtors will need to accompany incentives. Some tax-related incentives can only be used for heritage properties, but regulatory relief can be used for newer developments.

Business Development

Strategy: Restructuring Downtown's Business Mix

Various business development objectives are possible for downtown Nanaimo. Keep in mind, however, that the possible over-saturation of the mid-priced retail market by the shopping centres and malls makes it difficult for downtown to be competitive in all retail categories. Downtown Nanaimo must re-evaluate its rôle in the city's economy. Restructuring Downtown's economy to be more than a retail centre is imperative to future growth and success. Each proposed project should be evaluated as to its respective place within the larger business development strategy and the vision for Downtown Nanaimo.

Office uses

While Downtown Nanaimo is no longer the primary retail centre of the city, it still contains a significant number of services, professional offices and civic institutions. Unfortunately, the financial sector has already begun to abandon Downtown Nanaimo. In as much as possible, the Downtown Nanaimo revitalisation effort and civic leaders should encourage the remaining banking institutions to remain downtown. Review the current zoning and regulations concerning office uses and requirements. Determine if some office uses could be encouraged downtown through favourable zoning in the downtown and restrictions in other areas of the city.

Government Centre

Downtown Nanaimo *must* maintain its status as the centre of government. As the population of the city has shifted away from the downtown area, some people may think that government offices should shift as well. This has happened in many towns and cities in the U.S. Maintain the downtown's position as the seat of government and resist efforts to move facilities away from the core area.

Keying on Nanaimo's Economic Development Priorities

The City's Economic Development Priorities can fit well with the downtown vision. Of the five priorities the Economic Development office uses, four relate directly to downtown and the fifth could relate. Those priorities are:

- 1) Small technology firms – attracting small technology firms to downtown can work well for Nanaimo. The downtown has unique spaces that can be adapted for open office and loft environments. It is already wired to access the Internet. Seaplanes and future high-speed ferry service makes downtown easily accessible to Vancouver, Victoria

and US-based customers and clients. Downtown Nanaimo should be promoted as a primary location for such businesses that are interested in locating in the city.

- 2) Tourism** – Although Nanaimo has few attractions, Downtown contains the Bastion and the museum. It also has an attractive harbour, the Port Theatre and a potential arts centre and the casino are tourist draws. Special events can also attract visitors.

If more hotel rooms are built in downtown, it can become a “hub” for travellers to Vancouver Island to use as a base from which they travel to other attractions in the area. Nanaimo’s convenient location to highways makes it a good “base camp” for visitors planning to go to several areas.

Avoid relying on false historicism and themes to promote downtown Nanaimo. If a visitor is looking for a “theme park”, he or she will not be coming to Nanaimo. The visitor Nanaimo wants to attract is a “lifestyle” tourist – someone who is interested in cultural and heritage sites, interesting cities and a comfortable pace. This type of visitor spends more and could be a potential investor, business owner or resident. Use the authenticity of the place and the beauty of the setting to attract tourism.

- 3) Arts & culture** – Downtown has arts and culture facilities such as the Port Theatre. If an arts & culture business development effort is pursued, it needs to be supported by the residential development strategy and more activities in the form of festivals, visual arts and theatre. Artist live-work space can support arts & culture-oriented businesses. Night-clubs, restaurants presenting live music and other venues can bring excitement and energy to the district. Such entertainment-oriented businesses need to develop within a district management structure to offset the impact of such uses on the residential area. Consider the model used in San Diego, California with its Hospitality Resource Panel as a hospitality business (bar, restaurant, club) management form.
- 4) Film & video production** – Film and video producers could locate in downtown and take advantage of potential high-speed ferry service and seaplane service for easy access to downtown Vancouver and the film and video production industry there.
- 5) Value-added manufacturing** – While the potential of using a value-added manufacturing strategy may have limited use in downtown, it could be a possible strategy for some areas of the district with some careful flexible zoning.

The downtown revitalisation effort – through the Downtown Strategy Team and the Nanaimo Centre City Association – should work closely with the Economic Development Office to ensure that downtown remains a key location for businesses coming to Nanaimo. In fact, the City Council needs to make downtown’s revitalisation a high priority and indicate that downtown locations should be highlighted in marketing efforts. Given the development encouragement the northern areas of the city received for so many years, more attention, and programmes and funding needs to be focused downtown.

Arts & Culture

Strategy: Making Arts & Culture Downtown's Niche

One way to differentiate Downtown Nanaimo from other areas of the city is to highlight its rôle in the arts and cultural activities. City centres more than auto-oriented, suburban locations provide the creative and attractive environment that the arts need to thrive. By positioning Downtown Nanaimo as the centre of arts and culture for the city, you gain the opportunity to develop civic, cultural and business activities that will be mutually supportive. Some ways to highlight the arts and culture in downtown could include:

- A downtown arts centre for visual arts
- Continuing to promote the Port Theatre as the city's premier performing arts venue
- Staging arts and cultural festivals and special events – such as the Jazz Festival – in downtown
- Encouraging arts-oriented businesses (galleries, auction houses, arts supplies, music stores, dance studios, etc.) to located in downtown
- Allowing artist's "live-work" studio space and residential developments in the downtown area

Downtown Arts Centre

The team does not think that it should make a specific recommendation about the proposed site for the arts centre. The site decision should be made on a financial and business plan. However, the establishment of a single umbrella arts and culture group and location in downtown has much to recommend it. Such a single-site arts and culture centre accomplishes several valuable objectives:

- It makes a statement about the rôle of the arts in downtown as a key part of the revitalisation program.
 - It serves the same function as a business "anchor", attracting visitors and increasing foot traffic for surrounding businesses. It can be a catalyst for arts and
-

culture-related businesses to develop in the section of downtown near the arts centre.

- It reduces operating expenses, thus reducing the number of requests for public support for arts and culture programs and provides more stable organisations.
- It offers the opportunity to provide an organisational capacity-building structure to foster smaller, developing arts and culture organisations. The smaller, new groups can learn and develop under the umbrella organisation while avoiding the financial burden that facilities sometimes place on nascent groups.

Whether the former bank location is ultimately selected or another site is used, a single-site arts and culture entity can be supportive of downtown revitalisation.

A Comprehensive, Phased Strategy

A key element to any downtown revitalisation effort is a comprehensive, phased strategy. Downtown's successes will not be the result of any single project, but in the overall vision you establish for the district and the way that vision is to be implemented. A *comprehensive* strategy ensures that all aspects of the downtown will be addressed and that each component project or system supports the total programme objectives. By phasing the strategy you will be able to build local capacity and avoid artificially skewing the market. In some revitalisation projects, too many large projects come "on line" simultaneously and saturate the market.

Vision

The first step in developing a strategy is to come to an agreement on a common vision for downtown's development. The vision should be clearly and simply stated. The effort's leadership should stick to the vision, as consistency is essential to success. The vision should be supported by the OCP and zoning regulations. There should be no inconsistency between the vision and the day-to-day application of the regulations that implement the vision.

The team recommends that the downtown vision should recognise that the waterfront and harbour area is downtown's primary asset. Strategies and activities should support the enhancement and maintenance of the waterfront. The vision should also recognise that the history of downtown Nanaimo and the heritage buildings still found there have economic, social and cultural value in the community. Rehabilitated heritage buildings will enhance the image of downtown and differentiate the district from other, non-heritage areas.

Projects

Malaspina Hotel

The Malaspina Hotel is an important project for downtown. Although the downtown economy was not responsible for the project being incomplete, the unfinished building casts a pall over downtown. The downtown revitalisation effort should target this project for assistance. Investigate whether any assistance could be used to facilitate the transfer of the property to a development group that will produce a project. Could the City offer some incentives or facilitate the resolution of the property ownership? Movement on the hotel project can have a positive effect on the image of downtown. Assign a small task group to this project to investigate and develop options that the city or a public-private partnership can take.

Conference Centre

The City Council has assigned funds to the development of a conference centre on the waterfront. Sites in consideration include one adjacent to the Port Theatre and the museum and one at the foundry area. The site near the theatre has constraints because of the footprint that could fit into the land area. The foundry site may present environmental problems and could, if not designed sensitively, block harbour views. While a formal feasibility study of each site should be conducted before making a decision to proceed, issues to consider include:

- Can a hotel be part of the development? If so, can the hotel developer also develop the centre? The city's rôle might be to provide the land in a public-private development with the private partner assuming the development and management of the centre.
- Consider that conference attendees will need "something to do" besides meet. The centre should be phased to open after some development and business recruitment is successful in the Commercial Street area. Right now, downtown hasn't enough attractions and shopping to offer conference visitors. Perhaps the conference centre is the right project but it should be timed to be developed later in the strategy after supporting amenities are available.

Pedestrian Street on Commercial Street

Some residents have suggested that Commercial Street should be closed to vehicular traffic and made into a pedestrian mall. In the National Main Street Center's experience, pedestrian malls have generally been unsuccessful. Hundreds of such developments were built across North America but only a few could be called a success. Most of these developments resulted in higher vacancies, particularly of buildings in the centre of the block. Businesses lose exposure to "drive-by" shoppers who want close-by parking and visual reminders. Rather than spend large sums on such an artificial environment, public funds would be better spent encouraging arts and culture facilities and other amenities that generate activity and commerce. The National Trust's Main Street Center doesn't recommend pedestrian malls.

High-speed Ferry Service

The proposed high-speed ferry service can have a major impact on the future of businesses in Downtown Nanaimo. Downtown advocates, property owners, business owners and city officials should work closely with the Port Authority to support the development of the ferry. The high-speed ferry could make a Downtown Nanaimo location very attractive for many businesses. Establish a small task force to act as a liaison to the Port Authority and its plans for the ferry. Determine how the entire downtown community can support the project.

The Development Process

Improving the Development Process

Many private sector developers and realtors suggested that the City of Nanaimo acts as a barrier to the development process. Whenever one hears such a comment, one must consider that many people in the real estate development community would prefer few regulations. Yet, the government must protect the community interests in life safety, economic and community development. A totally unregulated development environment is actually not in any one's interests. The ideal development environment is one where the government and the private sector can be supportive partners that help each other meet their respective goals and objectives.

Barriers to Downtown Development

Quality development occurs in an atmosphere of certainty. Uncertainty about regulations and the time that a project will need to take to come to fruition discourages investment. Investment thrives in an area with clear, well-developed plans that have a basis in market realities and regulations that are consistently applied in a timely fashion to provide a level of security that encourages investment. Perceived barriers to investment in downtown include:

- The developments cost charges (DCC) in Nanaimo are considered excessive by developers working in the city and in other areas in the province. Although the DCC is actually no more in downtown Nanaimo than in the other areas of the city or in Vancouver and Victoria, the depressed rental rate market in downtown makes it difficult for developers to recoup their investment with a reasonable return. Consider a moratorium on the DCC in downtown. Although the funds lost may pose a short-term loss, the subsequent investment may be able to offset some of that loss in the form of future property taxes and increased property values in downtown. The moratorium should be for a limited period and targeted for specific types of development (such as residential development). Use this tool to encourage adaptive uses of heritage properties.
- Building codes issues were raised as common barriers to development. Actually, the issues may be categorised as:
 - Seismic issues – The Local Government Act of British Columbia developed new strategies that relax some seismic requirements and provides some incentives not yet adopted by Nanaimo. Many developers and building owners think that Nanaimo takes too strict a position on seismic retrofitting. Explore the options offered by the province. Investigate the regulations used by Victoria and Vancouver. Nanaimo's seismic requirements should not be stricter than its neighbours' requirements.
 - Building codes – Too often, building codes do not take into account the differences between new construction and the unique situations presented by existing buildings. It is often unrealistic to apply new construction standards to older structures. Most codes allow some flexibility on the part of codes officials,

but codes officers are often reluctant to use that flexibility. There is a movement to develop rehabilitation building codes that consider the circumstances of existing buildings while protecting the life safety of people using the structures. The states of New Jersey and Maryland and the City of Wilmington, Delaware have adopted such rehabilitation codes. Investigate whether such a code is compatible and legally allowed as a sub-code of your building code. An example of such a code is included as an appendix.

- The Heritage Plan remains unaccepted. There seems to be some concerns that the plan will discourage developers although there is nothing in the plan that should do so. Actually, adopting the plan will create some incentives. Typically, heritage designation can increase perceptions of property value.

Building a Development Partnership

Create a “development team” environment for downtown. The team will be an internal work group in city government that reviews and coordinates development review. Approach each project from a problem-solving perspective. If a development fits within the downtown vision and plan, try to facilitate projects with a “can do” attitude. Ways to do so include:

- Establish a “fast track” system for downtown development projects review. Hold a pre-development meeting of the various city departments with developers to review the project plans. Identify potential problems and negotiate changes. Consider what equivalent designs can be used to resolve areas of disagreement.
- Use public sector development tools and incentives to encourage the type of development that supports the downtown development vision. Some public sector participation tools include:
 - DCC moratorium with specified time available, districts and uses
 - Special valuation tax assessment freezing tax valuation for a specified period for specific uses. Heritage property rehabilitation for residential development or heritage commercial property redevelopment should be such specified uses.
 - Sign or façade improvement grants and/or loans
 - Transfer of development rights from downtown to suburbs to manage heights and development types
 - Land assembly with low-price sale in exchange for concessions for public purposes or desired amenities.

Although the public sector cannot develop revolving loan funds for non-heritage projects, private financial institutions can create a loan pool to help finance larger new developments. A public revolving fund can be created for heritage properties.

Other Issues

Image

Downtown Nanaimo needs to change its image. Even people who support downtown revitalisation agree that Nanaimo in general, and downtown in particular, has a poor image among people in other parts of the province and in other areas of the country. Additionally, the citizens of Nanaimo seem to have a poor self-image of downtown. In order to help to develop downtown, the revitalisation effort must address this image problem.

Identifying & addressing the Negatives

- 1) Although untrue, the perception that downtown is unsafe damages the district's residential and business development strategies. RCMP officials say that downtown is not unsafe and that most complaints are associated with closing time at bars. The assessment team heard accounts of realtors and taxi drivers steering people from downtown saying the area is "dangerous". The security issue must be addressed directly with meetings with realtors and other groups who have the opportunity to shape the opinions of new residents. Tout the downtown's safety record verses other areas in the city.
- 2) Nanaimo is part of a sophisticated market area. Images, activities, graphics and messages about downtown need to reinforce positive images of the area. Develop a marketing plan that includes checking listings in area tourism and travel guides. Use video and photographs of the harbour to promote the beauty of the area to off-island media outlets. In particular, target a campaign at the Victoria and Vancouver markets. These markets are affluent and close by. They also seem to carry negative images of downtown Nanaimo and need to be reintroduced to the downtown's charms. Court the Vancouver press for feature stories on Nanaimo.
- 3) Use events to shape the image of downtown Nanaimo. Jazz festivals give a sophisticated air to downtown. Consider a sports event, such as a triathlon, to garner publicity for the city and the downtown area.

Parking

No discussion of downtown would be complete without a comment about parking. Parking is often cited as the primary reason for the decline of downtown Nanaimo. However there are many successful business districts – North America's most successful – with little available parking. Parking becomes a focus as *the* issue for downtown when there are few shops or other reasons to go downtown. This is not to say that parking is important to the development of downtown but just to say that its importance should be kept in perspective. Parking management is necessary to ensure there is sufficient parking to meet the needs of downtown.

Downtown can never offer the abundance of parking found in suburban shopping centres. The illusion of “free parking” is just that – an illusion. There is no such thing as “free” parking. The cost of the parking lot is borne by tenants in the centre who pass the cost on to customers and by the community in the form of the environmental costs of large expanses of asphalt that require storm water management and increase pollution.

Some suggestions for parking management include:

- Review the pricing of downtown parking. Perhaps the parking could be free in the evenings and weekends to encourage evening use of downtown. Review this pricing strategy once downtown has rebuilt its evening business environment.
- Offer parking vouchers at downtown restaurants on weekends or evenings to encourage use.
- Review the time limits. Different zones may require different time limits.
- While the city cannot discourage enforcement by traffic enforcement officers, encourage them to adopt a friendlier demeanour.
- Promote available parking through attractive, easily read signs.
- Review opportunities for diagonal parking on some roads. Although the number of additional spaces created will not be very great, many suburban drivers are uncomfortable parallel parking.
- Employee parking needs to be managed better. Too many employees and business owners are parking in spaces needed by customers. An employee-parking plan may include a subsidy or discount for downtown employees who park in a designated area. Stickers can be used to identify those who are eligible for the discount. Parking can be free in satellite lots away from the close-in spaces. A promotional programme may be necessary to campaign for use of designated areas and support for customer spaces.

Downtown Management

Creating a Downtown Management Structure

Based on our observations of downtown Nanaimo and the current organisational climate, the evidence suggests to us that the best model for initial action and leading revitalisation in the downtown area is probably a city government-sponsored Main Street revitalisation programme based with the Downtown Strategy Team. While the other obvious location for the downtown effort would be the City Centre Association, that group may need time to build its capacity and to evolve into a comprehensive programme group beyond its current activities. If the group has the capacity to mount the type of comprehensive redevelopment programme that is needed, it could house a public-private partnership once the funding and staff is identified.

Step One – Confirm the Team

Formalise the membership of the Downtown Strategy Team. This team will be responsible for moving the Main Street effort through its initial phases. Poll the team members to ensure that each is ready to take on a new rôle. It should publicly announce and identify its members and its expanded responsibilities.

Step Two – Interim Management

Get an interim downtown director. We see two options for this: The city can designate a staff member of the planning department to spend one-half of his or her time on Main Street organising for the next few months (or until a full-time director is hired), or the City Centre Association can share the cost of a temporary, half-time director until the funds are available for a full-time director.

We recognise that the City of Nanaimo and the Downtown Strategy Team are very eager to hire the person who will help make Nanaimo's Main Street programme come to life. However, you should hire the staff person after an operating budget has been approved and secured. If the managing director is an employee of the CCA, the board of directors of that organisation should hire the staff.

Step Three – Train the Team

The entire Downtown Strategy Team should become well versed in the Main Street approach (as described in the introduction to this report). Each member of the team should be able to speak informally about the general goals and characteristics of a Main Street programme and specifically about how it will function in Nanaimo. Cultivate two or three people who will serve as spokespersons from the Downtown Strategy Team and can go out and build support at public meetings.

Step Four – Develop a Budget

Develop a preliminary budget for the Main Street programme. The budget should include salary for a downtown manager, administrative assistant, fringe, office expenses, insurance, travel for conferences, and a best-guess budget of programmatic expenses. If the Main Street programme is housed in the City Centre Association, the downtown manager should be the supervisor for any staff of the organisation such as events planners, street cleaning or security staff.

We recommend that the Main Street programme eventually become the downtown management organisation. In that capacity, the Main Street program would also be responsible for sidewalk cleaning, plantings, and decorations. It would do this work as part of a special assessment district. The Main Street budget should therefore include staff and expenses for these maintenance programs in the future.

Step Five – Raise Funds

Figure out the funding side of the budget; raise money and negotiate contracts, if needed. Initially, we recommend the bulk of funding for the Main Street program and the services it provides to downtown should come from the City or, if housed in the City Centre Association, from the assessments. The Main Street program, if housed the CCA, should negotiate a contract with the City for downtown management and revitalisation services. If a City-based programme, a contract arrangement with the CCA for promotional and other programming may be useful.

In addition to its public funding, the Main Street should seek voluntary contributions from all downtown stakeholders. The major Nanaimo institutions (university, hospital, chamber, and other associations) – whether they are located downtown or not – should be approached for support. Residents from all parts of the city – but especially downtown residents – should be invited to become contributing members of the Main Street program.

Contributions from a variety of sources demonstrate partnership and underscore the importance of each sector as an important component in the Main Street effort. Diversified revenue sources mean the program is accountable to multiple stakeholders and it means the organisation is better able to sustain its operations should any one revenue source dry up. The dollar amount should be a significant contribution in the eyes of the person or institution donating. Eventually, the funding will likely have to be part of a downtown-wide assessment.

Step Six – Attract Public Support

Hold more public informational meetings about the Main Street programme. Publicise these meetings through the media, as was done for the public meeting last September. In addition, place posters and flyers in each business in downtown. Be sure to get contact information for each person who attends. These will be people who can later volunteer for committees and/or contribute money to the effort.

Step Seven – Define Boundaries

Define the geographic boundaries for the Nanaimo Main Street program's target area. We recommend that the entire City Centre Association downtown area be used as the working boundaries for the program. Sub-districts such as the Old City Quarter and the Harbour can be used for promotional purposes and to target specific incentive

programmes and efforts. The endpoints should reflect the “natural” commercial boundaries of the downtown; that is, the Main Street area should coincide with the area its users perceive as the commercial centre. The program should begin with as tightly defined an area as possible. The board can decide at a future date to expand the perimeter, if there are compelling reasons to do so.

Step Eight – Form Hiring Committee

Form a hiring committee. This committee should consist of three (no more than four) individuals who will review resumes, interview candidates, and make a recommendation to the City for a hiring decision. The committee should be diverse, even in its small number. It should include people of different backgrounds and constituencies. The committee should recommend two or three candidates to the City and call those candidates back for final interviews.

Step Nine – Secure office

Secure office space. In general, a Main Street programme with a storefront office has greater visibility and an easier time building local support and recognition than one whose offices are not visible to the public. It is especially important to have a storefront office on Commercial Street.

Step Ten – Hire Manager

Make staff decisions. Paid professional staff does not single-handedly “do” Main Street, but is essential in guiding the work of the volunteer committees. The Main Street *Board Members’ Handbook* describes the manager’s role and the desired qualities and characteristics; there is no one specific set of experiences or education which qualifies any individual for the job. The Appendix includes a job description and a copy of the *Board Members Handbook* to explain the position and its relationship with the Team. In Nanaimo’s case, if the programme is housed in city government, the Action Team will serve the same function described for the Board.

Because downtown revitalisation involves such a wide range of projects and constituencies, the manager must be a good communicator, someone who is able to build collaborative relationships, and someone who is able to manage the many projects of the organisation.

Hire someone from within the community or outside it? Both backgrounds have advantages and disadvantages. Managers who are hired from within the community have the advantage of knowing the turf, the players, and the history. At the same time, they often come with established allies and enemies. Outsiders lack the familiarity, but they bring a fresh perspective with fewer preconceived ideas of what is or is not possible. They have no long-standing detractors, but they have to work hard to meet people and build relationships.

Step Eleven – Develop Work Plan

Produce a detailed work plan for the organisation. A work plan serves as the “road map” for the Main Street effort. It makes the organisation internally accountable among its committees and externally accountable to the community by setting out clear directions, prioritised activities, time lines, and a budget. Because a work plan requires that a cost be identified for each project, the planning process provides another opportunity to give the proposed budget a “reality check.”

The Main Street programme should invite public input in the creation of the work plan. This is especially important given the interest expressed at the public meeting that citizens help create the agenda. The general work plan must be adopted by the board and then based to the committees to be refined and implemented.

Step Twelve – Establish Committees

Establish committees for each of the key strategies. Committees, with assistance from staff, carry out the bulk of the Main Street program’s projects. Committee training and orientation helps bring more people into the process. You may choose to use the existing committees. If so, divide the major strategies and activities among those committees. Significant projects – such as the high-speed ferry – may require special “task groups” to provide focus and to keep the rest of the group from becoming bogged down in a long term and detailed activity and from neglecting other issues.

Conclusion

Downtown Nanaimo declined over many years for many reasons. The changes in retailing, the auto-orientation and suburbanization of North American society have contributed to this decline. But downtown has suffered from the rapid expansion of commercial zoning in Nanaimo and failure to manage growth and development. The centre of the city has effectively shifted to the north. Downtown has not served as the retail or residential centres of the community for many years. Downtown Nanaimo needs a new rôle and a new vision.

Steps have already been taken to revive the downtown area. The successful revitalisation of the Old City Quarter shows that visitors and suburban shoppers will come to Downtown Nanaimo is given quality choices in an inviting atmosphere. The Cameron Island development shows that new residential development can be successful in the downtown area. The Port Theatre brings Island-wide entertainment and cultural opportunities. The City Council has expressed its commitment to downtown by restructuring its committee system and engaging in this assessment process.

Now the hard work of downtown revitalisation has to begin. Three ingredients will be required:

- 1)** Patience – Downtown revitalisation is a long-term process. No single project will “save” downtown, but only the accumulating momentum that each project – no matter how small – and each accomplishment brings to the process. There can never be an announcement that “downtown’s revitalisation is complete”. This is an ongoing and constantly evolving process.
- 2)** Vision – We all need to look beyond our petty differences and day-to-day concerns and see the vision for Downtown Nanaimo. A shared vision of Nanaimo is needed to be able to achieve that vision. Share the vision with fellow citizens, visitors and business contacts. Promote the future of Nanaimo by celebrating its history and imaging its potential.
- 3)** Commitment – The revitalisation of Downtown Nanaimo will require public policy commitment to downtown. This commitment may have to be expressed in growth management in other areas of the city, an re-examination of zoning and down-zoning to truly reflect the economy’s carrying capacity of commercially-zoned property or providing a flexibility for more residential rehabilitation in the downtown. Funds, staff time and programs will need to be focused on downtown. Cities are judged by the quality of their central business districts and downtown areas, not by the quality of their suburbs.

Downtown revitalisation opportunities abound in Nanaimo. The question yet to be answered is whether Nanaimo will seize those opportunities or allow outside development forces to plan and shape the city and its future.

Appendix A

Main Street Manager Position Description

Work Objectives

The Main Street programme director co-ordinates activities within a downtown revitalisation program that utilises historic preservation as an integral foundation for downtown economic development. He/she is responsible for the development, conduct, execution and documentation of the Main Street program. The program director is the principal on-site staff person responsible for co-ordinating all program activities and volunteers, as well as representing the community regionally and nationally as appropriate. In addition, the program director should help guide the organisation as its objectives evolve.

Full Range of Duties to be Performed

The program director should carry out the following tasks:

Co-ordinate the activity of the Main Street program committees, ensuring that communication among committees is well established; assist committee volunteers with implementation of work plan items.

Manage all administrative aspects of the Main Street program, including purchasing, record keeping, budget development, accounting, preparing all reports required by the local Main Street program, assisting with the preparation of reports to funding agencies, and supervising employees or consultants.

Develop, in conjunction with the Main Street program's board of directors, downtown economic development strategies that are based on historic preservation and utilise the community's human and economic resources. Become familiar with all persons and groups directly and indirectly involved in the downtown. Mindful of the roles of various downtown interest groups, assist the Main Street program's board of directors and committees in developing an annual action plan for implementing a downtown revitalisation program focused on four areas: design/historic preservation; promotion and marketing; organisation/management; and economic restructuring/development.

Develop and conduct on-going public awareness and education programs designed to enhance appreciation of the downtown's assets and to foster an understanding of the Main Street program's goals and objectives. Use speaking engagements, media interviews, and personal appearances to keep the program in the public eye.

Assist individual tenants or property owners with physical improvement projects through personal consultation or by obtaining and supervising professional design consultants; assist in locating appropriate contractors and materials; when possible, participate in construction supervision; provide advice and guidance on necessary financial mechanisms for physical improvements.

Assess the management capacity of major downtown organisations and encourage improvements in the downtown community's ability to carry out joint activities such as promotional events, advertising, appropriate store hours, special events, business assistance, business recruitment, parking management, and so on. Provide advice and information on successful downtown management. Encourage a co-operative climate among downtown interests and local public officials.

Advise downtown merchants' organisations and/or chamber of commerce retail committees on Main Street program activities and goals; help co-ordinate joint promotional events, such as festivals or business promotions, to improve the quality and success of events and attract people to downtown; work closely with local media to ensure maximum coverage of promotional activities; encourage design excellence in all aspects of promotion in order to advance an image of quality for the downtown.

Help build strong and productive relationships with appropriate public agencies at the local and provincial levels.

Utilising the Main Street program format, develop and maintain data systems to track the progress of the local Main Street program. These systems should include economic monitoring, individual building files, photographic documentation of physical changes, and statistics on job creation and business retention.

Represent the community to important constituencies at the local, provincial, and national levels. Speak effectively on the program's directions and work, mindful of the need to improve provincial and national economic development policies as they relate to commercial districts.

Resource Management Responsibilities

The program director supervises any necessary temporary or permanent employees, as well as professional consultants. He/she participates in personnel and project evaluations. The program director maintains local Main Street program records and reports, establishes technical resource files and libraries, and prepares regular reports for the City Council. The program director monitors the annual program budget and maintains financial records.

Job Knowledge and Skills Required

The program director should have education and/or experience in one or more of the following areas: commercial district management, economics, finance, public relations, planning, business administration, public administration, retailing, volunteer or non-profit administration, architecture, historic preservation, and/or small business development. The program director must be sensitive to design and preservation issues and must understand the issues confronting downtown business people, property owners, public agencies, and community organisations. The director must be entrepreneurial, energetic, imaginative, well organised and capable of functioning effectively in an independent environment. Excellent written and verbal communication skills are essential. Supervisory skills are desirable.

Appendix B

Work Plans

The “four points” of the Main Street approach – design, organisation, promotion and economic restructuring – are an integrated package, not for separate categories into which all activities are arbitrarily assigned. The overarching *strategies* the revitalisation programme adopts must cut across all four areas. This gives the programme balance and ensures that activities in each part of the organisation are tightly integrated with all other parts.

The revitalisation organisation’s rôle is to coördinate a *community-wide* agenda, carried out by dozens of other organisations, rather than to single-handedly tackle the revitalisation effort on its own. The revitalisation organisation focuses on the agenda for improving the commercial district, *not* on the agenda for the revitalisation organisation itself. It’s a subtle, but important, distinction. In essence, it means that the revitalisation of the district could, theoretically, be carried out completely by existing groups working closely with the revitalisation organisation serving as a framework for pulling these groups together. For example, the Downtown Strategy Team could coördinate the work of other groups such as the Nanaimo City Centre Association, the Old City Quarter Association and others. This means that such a structure, when carefully implemented, eliminates “turf battles”, since it’s the entire community – not just the DST – that is improving downtown.

Getting started

Start the work planning process with the three primary *strategies* for downtown’s revitalisation. A *strategy* is a major directive describing one of the fundamental changes you want to accomplish in downtown. While the team has already identified three strategies that seem to be right for Downtown Nanaimo, ideally each strategy should be *market-focused*. This means that each strategy should be (1) based on a fundamental understanding of the downtown’s best economic opportunities and (2) reflects the community’s vision for the downtown’s future.

The fact that a strategy is market based is, in essence, what distinguishes it from a goal. A programme may have a “goal” of reducing crime, but, unless the programme wants to reduce crime for an explicit, stated economic or social reason, such as fostering a safe environment for residential or business development, it’s a “goal” and not a “strategy”. The strategies recommended by the assessment team are:

Strategies, Objectives & Activities

- *Strategy* – a major program directive that describes a fundamental change you plan to bring about.
- *Objective* – a category of activities that need to occur to fulfil a strategy
- *Activity* – a specific task that needs to take place to accomplish an objective.

Strategy: Make downtown the premier arts district

Objectives:

- Convert bank into arts centre
- Produce annual calendar of arts & culture events downtown

- Create a vibrant residential community downtown, with housing available at all price levels and a good range of nearby jobs, activities and services for the district's residents.
- Make Downtown Nanaimo the premier arts and cultural district in the city.
- Develop the region's highest concentration of small high-tech start-up, entertainment, arts, cultural and boutique businesses.

ACTIVITY CHART (*diagram 1*)

DESIGN	ORGANISATION	PROMOTION	ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING
Building Renovation	Partnerships	Special Events	Business Assistance
New Construction	Volunteer Development	Business Promotion	Business Development
Streetscape Improvement	Communication	Image Development	Finance & Development Financial Incentives
Planning & Zoning	Funding		New Economic Uses
Parking & Transportation			-housing
Visual Merchandising			-arts & culture
Graphics			-high-tech
			-etc

Building Partnerships

Next, develop a diagram of a “generic” Main Street programme (*see diagram 1*). The four points of the Main Street approach provide an ideal framework for organising revitalisation activities. Draw your diagram in a large enough format to insert a lot of information. As a minimum, your diagram should include a box or heading for each of Main Street's four points – design, organisation, promotion and economic restructuring – and the following subcategories:

- Under **Design**, put subcategories for *building renovation, new construction, streetscape improvements, planning and zoning, parking and transportation, and graphics.*
- Under **Organisation**, put subcategories for *partnerships, volunteer development, and funding.*
- Under **Promotion**, put subcategories for *special events and festivals, business promotion and image development.*
- Under **Economic Restructuring**, put subcategories for *business assistance, business recruitment, development finance and financial incentives, and new economic uses (housing, arts and culture, high-tech start-ups, etc.)*

If there are other major categories important to downtown, include these also. This will become your *activity chart*.

Make a list of every single community organisation, agency, club and contingency that might conceivably be involved in the downtown. Think broadly. Your list should go far beyond the “usual suspects”, encompassing every public agency, civic group, business association, and development authority you can think of. Consider informal groups as well. Be creative in making your list. Invite others in the community – people who know people other than those you and your group typically interacts with – to help identify potential partners.

Next, think about each of these organisations, agencies, clubs and constituencies and about their respective goals. For each group, try to think of a potential link between its activities and mission and the revitalisation of the downtown. Do any of these groups perform community service activities? Do they (or their members) have a special expertise in business development, marketing, or historic preservation? Do any of them organise festivals? Do they have access to information or financial resources that might benefit the revitalisation effort? Whenever you find a potential match, add them to the activity chart next to the appropriate activity (or activities —some groups may appear more than once). Some of the matches will be obvious. Others might not be so obvious, but there are endless possibilities.

Once you've listed as many organisations, agencies and constituencies as you can think of, enlist their support. *People usually support organisations because they are asked to do so by someone they know.* Stretch the boundaries and enlist as many partners as possible and ask them to participate in specific ways to assist with specific activities.

After enlisting your partners' support, engage them in discussions to outline activities that need to be accomplished. Better yet, invite all of the groups with expertise in each objective to a meeting and develop a plan to proceed.

A sample activity sheet for a downtown arts strategy follows:

Appendix C

Main Street Board Members Handbook

[Include copy of 32-page *Board Members Handbook* publication]

Appendix D

Rehabilitation Building Codes Provisions

[Copy of US Department of Housing & Urban Development Nationally Applicable Recommended Rehabilitation Provisions (NARRP) including seismic retrofitting requirements from the HUD web site @ www.hud.gov]