Creative Solutions to Enhancing Your Downtown’s Sense of Place

19 October 2011
The Center for Historic Preservation

Center for Historic Preservation, BSU

- The outreach arm of the graduate program in historic preservation at Ball State
- Graduate students work on “real world” projects while completing their studies in preservation, architecture or urban planning
Center for Historic Preservation, BSU

- Our students work all over Indiana and the Midwest helping communities, Main Street organizations, non-profits and state/local governments with a variety of preservation-related issues
Creative Solutions

Goals of this session?

• Examine how communities are using creative events, programs, and grants to achieve downtown revitalization
  • Design/Appearance
  • Arts Programs
  • Historic Preservation Programs
  • Grants $$
Design on a Dime

Enhancing Your Downtown on a Budget

• Some oldies but goodies:
  • Planting programs
  • Community clean-up days
  • Design assistance days
Planting Programs

• Flowers and plantings can make a big impact in a community

• Plants give visitors the feeling that the downtown is alive
Planting Programs

• High school shop programs can build flower boxes

• Local garden shops can donate materials or provide them at cost

• Community/Main Street group can purchase planters/flowers, OR

• Community members/businesses can purchase ($50-$100 per planter)
Design on a Dime

Planting Programs

• Watering??

• Business owners

• Volunteer groups (scouts, garden clubs) – Can rotate throughout the summer

• Giant water tubs make it easier
Blossoms on Main – Canon City, Colorado

• Elementary students plant hanging baskets – about 100 throughout the community

• Youth are paired with adult volunteers to water and tend the baskets

• Funded by a combination of grants and public funding
Blossoms on Main – Canon City, Colorado

• “To provide a safe and supervised environment for children” to volunteer for their community

• “The enhance the beauty of the downtown”

• “To provide positive role models”

• “To encourage better relations between the business community and young people”
But spend your $$ wisely...

- Avoid purchasing planters that are going to deteriorate quickly

- Avoid placing planters where they are going to be hit by cars

- Avoid plantings/mulch in the middle of very busy streets
Scotts Miracle-Gro Grassroots Grants

• Up to $1,500 to help develop gardens and green spaces

• “The grants are being given to deserving communities and organizations in the hopes it will get people involved in creating more community gardens and green spaces where they call home.”
Community Clean Up Days

• Don’t let a visitor’s first impression be a dirty one

• An easy way to clean up your community and bring community members together

• Supplies (garbage bags, gloves) can be donated or purchased by the Main Street group

• Clean inside AND out
20 Minute Clean-Up

- Howard County, Maryland
- Community members form teams
- Each team assigned to a region of the downtown or a neighborhood
- Each team is only asked to work 20 minutes
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20 Minute Clean-Up

• Toronto does have a similar event

• Community members form teams

• Teams register online and choose a clean-up location

• At a certain time on a set date, each team is asked to go out and clean up for 20 minutes
Graffiti Hurts Program

• Funded by Keep America Beautiful, Inc. and Sherwin-Williams

• Grant support “Paint Out” programs to eliminate graffiti
Decorating Contests

• Storefront displays or freestanding displays

• Farmland has a fun fall contest downtown

• Building owners generally responsible for any expenses
Vacant Storefronts?

• Decorate vacant storefronts

• Need to get permission from the building owner

• Local non-profits, school groups, local artists
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Highland Park, Illinois

• Local ordinance MAKES property owners decorate vacant storefronts
  • “Vacant Store Decorative Code”
  • Owners are fined each day that the storefront remains empty
    • $150 to $500 per day
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Greensboro, NC

- Allows local non-profits to decorate storefronts for the holidays
- The downtown looks more inviting to visitors
- Allows these non-profits to spread their message/mission
Painting Grants

• Small grants can make a big impact

• Community groups can help with the painting

• Make your $$ count – use quality paint and scrape first
Cleaning Grants

• Cleaning grants can also make a big impact

• Clean masonry using the gentlest means possible

• The National Park Service offers suggestions
  • [http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm)
Design Days

• Do you have building owners who need design assistance?

• Partner with local architects or other design professionals to offer free design days

• Can also use the assistance of Ball State’s College of Architecture and Planning
Studies

• Can help a community or investor envision future appearances/uses of a building/neighborhood/downtown
Façade Designs

• Good for buildings that are for sale
  • Especially those that are particularly “muddled”

• Can help investors see a building’s potential

• Can also help to convince current building owners to rehab a storefront
Charrettes

• Planning events that last 2-3 days

• Include community meetings – brainstorm about wants, needs, goals

• Final document includes suggested objectives/timelines to meet community goals

• Also usually includes a series of sketches
OPTION FOR "THEATER DISTRICT"

NORTHWEST SKETCHES

ball state university - department of architecture - january 2007
Historic Preservation

National Register of Historic Places

• The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government’s list of historic properties that are significant to our history
  • Buildings, structures, landscapes, etc.
  • Associated with important events or persons
  • Architecturally significant
  • Potential for archaeology
National Register of Historic Places

• The Register is maintained by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior

• Part of a national program to coordinate public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources
Nominations

• Nominations are completed by individuals, local governments, historical societies and other organizations

• Multi-part nomination

  • Architectural description
  • Statement of Significance
  • Photos
  • Sketch maps and USGS map
  • Form
Nominations

• Nominations must be reviewed and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology in Indiana (DHPA)
  http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/

• Then reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Review Board

• Then reviewed by the National Park Service
Some Myths

• DOES NOT restrict alterations
• DOES NOT protect from demolitions
• Properties ARE NOT required to be open to the public
• DOES NOT affect your property tax
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Benefits

• DOES allow commercial buildings to qualify for rehabilitation investment tax credits

• DOES aid in the planning for Federal or federally-assisted projects ("Section 106")

• DOES help you qualify for certain grants, helps bump you to the top of the list for others (Most only available to local government and non-profits)
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Benefits

• Life and safety code alternatives in the International Building Code

• National Park Service website has a wealth of information about the National Register
  http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/

• DHPA also has good info
  http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/11841.htm
  http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/10861.htm
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Expenses

• Inexpensive to complete a nomination

• Might need to hire a consultant if no one is available locally

• Digital photos on a gold CD

• $15 map
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Façade Rehab Grants

• If you don’t have a façade rehabilitation grant program, find a way to fund one

  • Will make a big impact on your community

  • Even a small grant program can leverage substantial private dollars
Façade Grant Programs

• Provides $$ to building owners to rehab storefronts

• Can be a match or an outright grant

• Can be the catalyst for major rejuvenation in a downtown
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Funding???

• Budgets from city governments/Main Street organizations

• Community Development Block Grants

• Tax increment financing and other tax programs

• Downtown Enhancement Grant
The Solution

• City of Muncie is an entitlement community and receives CDBG funding each year

• Borrowed $$ from local banks to start a large façade grant program

• Started a rehab blitz downtown

• Paid bank back with CBDG funds over several years
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Arts Programs can enhance your sense of place

• Arts are increasingly being used to revitalize communities – “The Creative Class”

• Increase in the number of galleries, public arts programs, arts districts, live/work spaces for artists, etc.

• National average: $7 generated for every $1 invested
Denver SCFD

• Scientific and Cultural Facilities District started in 1989

• Local citizens voted and approved a 0.01% sales tax increase

• By 2007, raised $42 million that has catalyzed $1.7 billion in total economic activity in the region
Miami Art Basel

• A handful of art collectors convinced the directors or Art Basel (a prestigious art fair) to locate a 2\textsuperscript{nd} fair in Miami
• 2010: 40,000 attendees during the five-day event
• Generated $500 million of economic activity
  • Hotel stays
  • Retail
  • Restaurants
NEA Grants in Arkansas

- U of A Community Design Center and the Downtown Little Rock DCD received $30,000 from NEA to create the Pettaway Neighborhood Revitalization Plan

- Will plan for community revitalization through the arts
NEA Grants in Arkansas

- U of A Community Design Center received a $20,000 Access to Artistic Excellence grants to develop the Transit Scenario Plan for Fayetteville
NEA Grants in Arkansas

- Downtown Little Rock CDC received a $150,000 Our Town grant to fund the initial design phase of a new Creative Corridor on Main Street.
Grants

What grants are available?

- Grants available from the Indiana Office of Rural and Community Affairs
- Also the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology
- And the National Trust for Historic Preservation
NEA Challenge America: Reaching Every Community Fast-Track Review

- Applicant: Local Unit of Government, Non-Profit Org.
- For developing the arts through community development
- Up to $10,000
- Can be used for public art programs or “civic design activities” that renovate cultural facilities
Neighborhood Stabilization Program Grants (NSP)

- Applicant: Local Unit of Government
- HUD program for the acquisition and redevelopment of foreclosed or abandoned properties.
- Grants can be used to purchase, rehabilitate, and resell real estate – redevelop vacant properties
- Governments can transfer the grant funds to local community development corporations (CDC’s) as part of economic development and revitalization efforts.
National Endowment for the Humanities

- Interpreting America’s Historic Places Grants – National Endowment for the Humanities
- Applicant: Local Unit of Government, Non-Profit Organizations
- Usually around $50,000-$100,000
- Signage, videos, podcasts, websites, or other tangible public materials and interpret history
Grants

Safe Routes to School

- Federal Highway Administration
- Applicant: Local Unit of Government
- Aimed at creating safe sidewalks and bikeways for students to walk or bike to school.
- Projects must occur within two miles of a K-8 school, on projects in the public right-of-way.
- Includes Sidewalk improvements and pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements.
Grants

Farmers Market Promotion Program

- US Department of Agriculture
- $2,500 to $100,000
- No match required
- Aimed to expand and increase awareness of farmers markets
- Also for improving access to marketing and business plans, and food safety
SIA Foundation

- Applicant: Non-profit organizations, Indiana governments, Indiana governmental institutions
- Grants to non-profits who improve quality of life of Indiana residents
- $1,000 and $10,000 – no match
- Grants must be used for investments in facilities, real estate, or equipment
- Arts and culture, education, health and welfare
Questions???

Thank you!!