



Downtown Manchester Strategic Planning Workshop

Manchester, Connecticut



Workshop Summary
March 2017

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D O W N T O





Introduction

Introduction

On February 25, 2017, the Downtown Special Services District Board of Commissioners (SSD), the Town of Manchester, and Live Work Learn Play (LWLP) organized and hosted a Downtown Manchester Strategic Planning Workshop in order to engage a group of stakeholders in discussions on shaping the future of Downtown Manchester.

The over 40 stakeholders in attendance represented a diversity of organizations, constituencies and businesses within the town, including but not limited to the following:

- Town of Manchester staff
- Downtown Manchester Special Services District Board members
- Town of Manchester Board of Directors members
- Manchester Redevelopment Agency members
- Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce members
- Manchester Economic Development Commission members
- Downtown business owners
- Representatives from major town institutions
- Other community leaders and stewards

Goals & Objectives

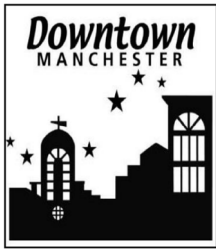
The goals and objectives of the Downtown Manchester Workshop were to:

- 1 Outline Downtown Manchester's strengths and weaknesses
- 2 Identify who is currently spending time and money in Downtown Manchester, and who should be targeted to spend more time and money in Downtown Manchester
- 3 Begin to develop a strategic vision for both the downtown and core area of Manchester
- 4 Explore and prioritize potential strategies and tactics necessary to achieve the vision for Downtown Manchester
- 5 Identify the resources and next steps necessary to achieve the vision for Downtown Manchester

The following report provides an overview of the workshop, explains and summarizes the key findings from each of the six facilitated activities, and presents a series of priority next steps that should be pursued in order to begin implementing strategies and tactics that will support the revitalization of downtown and Manchester's core.



The Team



Downtown Special Services District

The Downtown SSD is a special downtown taxing district that was created in 1991. The goal of the Downtown SSD is to promote the economic and general welfare of the citizens of Manchester and especially the property owners and tenants of the downtown district. It is governed by a Board of Commissioners and is responsible for promoting and marketing the District, business recruitment, parking management, and certain maintenance and beautification efforts.



Town of Manchester

The Town of Manchester's Planning and Economic Development Department's mission is to work in partnership with residents, town departments and the private sector to build, sustain and manage a high quality of life in Manchester. The department provides policy analysis, administrative support, project management, and technical expertise to public and private groups and individuals. In partnership with the Manchester Board of Directors and other boards and commissions, the Department works to encourage and guide development that meets the current and future needs of the community.

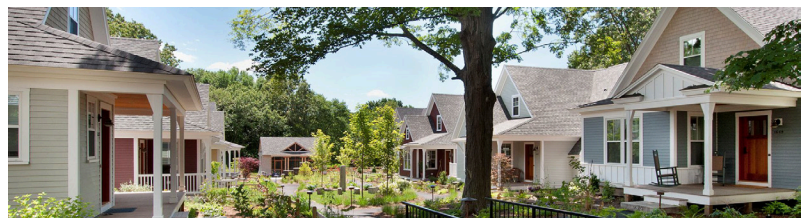
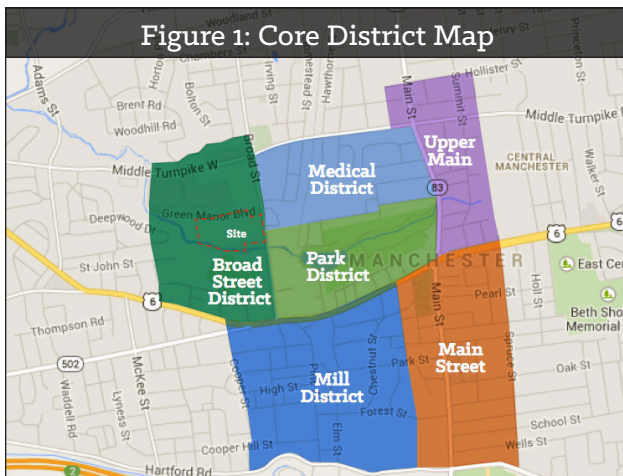


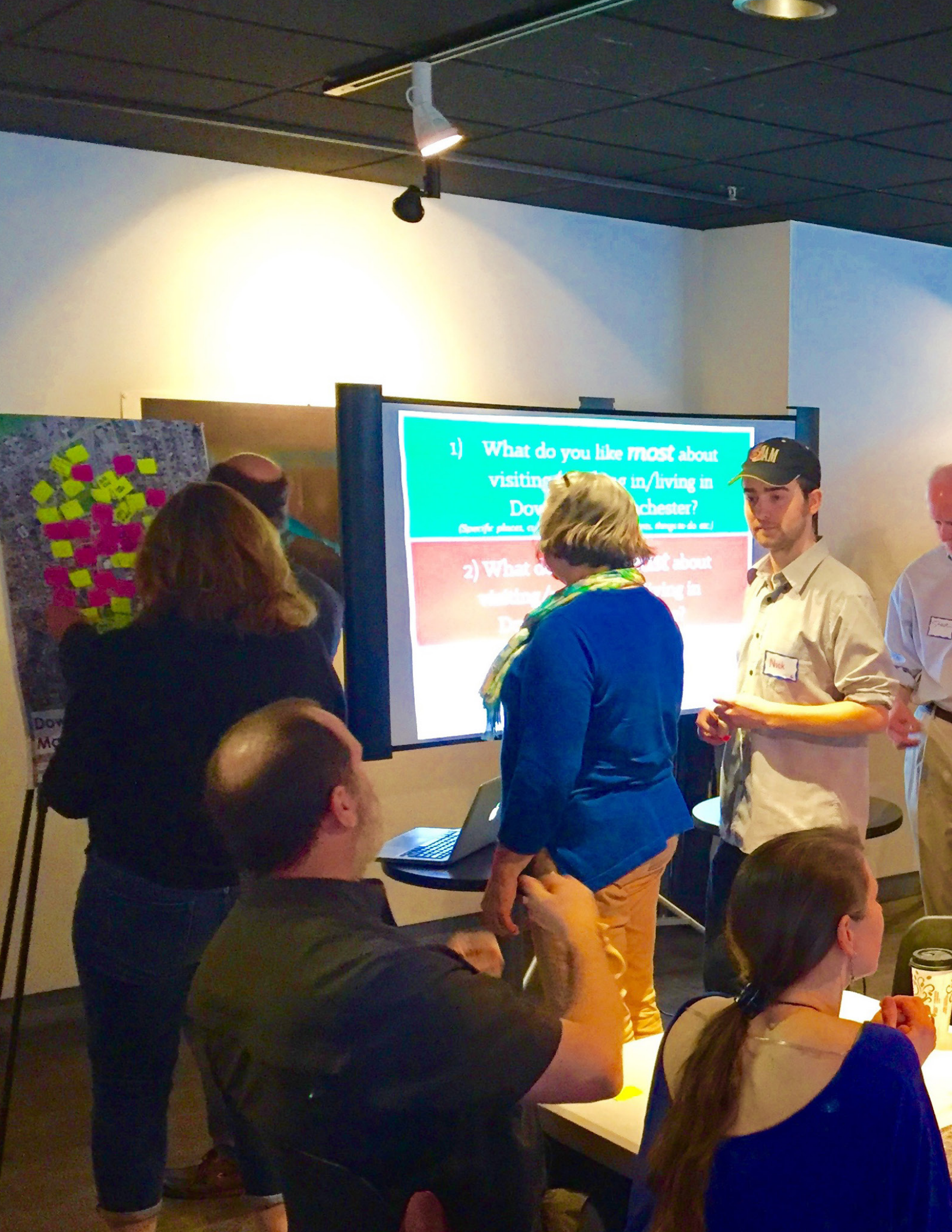
Live Work Learn Play

LWLP is an international real estate development and advisory firm, based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. LWLP works to create iconic, enduring and vibrant places that foster economic vitality, memorable experiences and thriving healthy communities for generations to come. LWLP is also the town's selected developer of the former Broad Street Parkade site.

LWLP began working in Manchester in 2014 with the Manchester Redevelopment Agency (RDA) to begin testing the development potential of the Broad Street Parkade Site and surrounding Redevelopment Area. That work culminated in a vision and development direction for the site to become a thriving, mixed-use health and wellness district. LWLP's holistic approach to the development of the site included the envisioning of a larger core of inter-connected districts that would not only maximize the potential of the site, but would also create an overall richer fabric and vibrant core area (see Figure 1: Core District Map). Taking such an approach means that improvements to the downtown will improve and promote continued growth within the entire core district.

Figure 1: Core District Map





1) What do you like *most* about visiting/working in/living in Dover, Massachusetts?
(Specify places, experiences, things to do, etc.)

2) What do you like *least* about visiting/working in/living in Dover, Massachusetts?
(Specify places, experiences, things to do, etc.)

A photograph of a workshop in progress. In the foreground, a woman with glasses and a grey sweatshirt with a 'UCON' logo is seated at a table, gesturing with her hands while looking at a large map or document. Next to her, a man in a green and white plaid shirt is also seated, looking down at the table. In the background, several other people are standing and talking. A woman in a bright red jacket is prominent in the middle ground. The room has a dark ceiling with track lighting and a blue wall with a red 'EXIT' sign. A semi-transparent dark blue box with white text is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

Workshop Overview

LWLP planned and moderated six interactive activities for the workshop. This following section explains these activities and summarizes the key findings from each.

Activity #1 - My Manchester

Goal

The goal of this activity was to stimulate discussion regarding people's feelings and perceptions about their downtown.

Activity Description

This exercise asked participants to consider the following two questions:

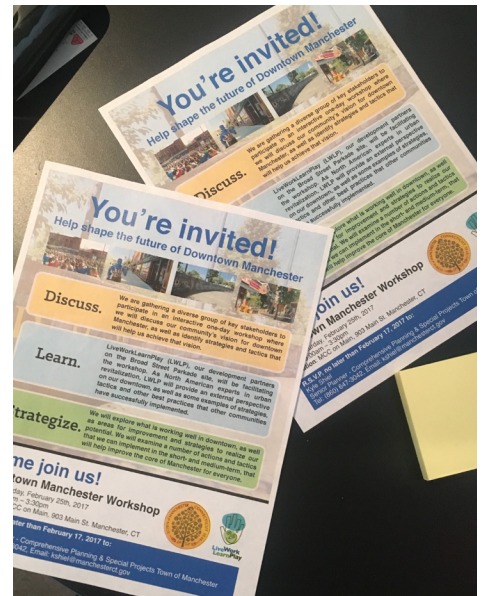
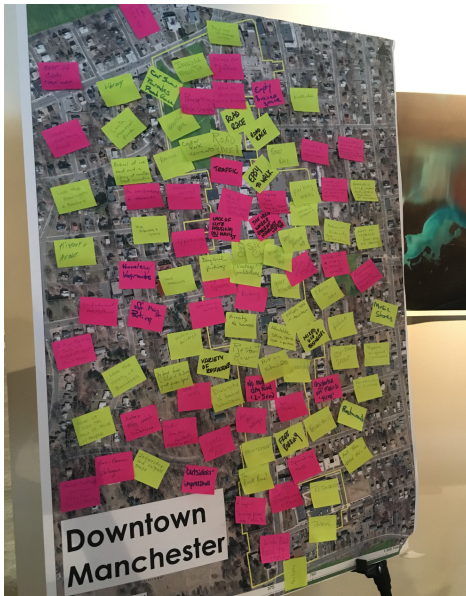
1. What do you like the **most** about visiting/working in/living in Downtown Manchester (specific places, culture/community, restaurants, things to do, etc.)?
2. What do you like the **least** about visiting/working in/living in Downtown Manchester?

Participants were instructed to use green and pink post-it notes to answer each question, and if answers corresponded to a specific geographic location, to place them on the provided maps on display at the front of the room. Answers that were not tied to a specific geographic location could be placed on a blank board adjacent to the maps.

Summary of Responses

Responses from this activity coalesced around a series of common themes, which are summarized here:

Questions	Responses
1) What do you like the most about visiting/working in/living in Downtown Manchester (specific places, culture/community, restaurants, things to do, etc.)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity of excellent restaurants, small businesses and events (Road Race, Cruisin' on Main, etc.)• Design features that enhance the public realm (downtown walkability & wide sidewalks, lighting, benches, green space, etc.)• Great architecture• Great parks and trails, especially Center Springs Park• Sufficient amount of parking• Strong sense of community
2) What do you like the least about visiting/working in/living in Downtown Manchester?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing/building stock aging - some buildings in poor condition with code compliance issues• Vacancies along Main Street• Concerns over safety, especially at night (panhandling, drug use, signs of poverty, etc.)• High speed of traffic• Challenges crossing the street due to limited crosswalks and width of the street• Limited connections between downtown and other districts in Manchester



Activity #2 - Macro Overview of Manchester

Goal

The goal of this activity was to provide attendees with important market and strategic context, in order to enhance their general understanding of the town, and to offer some “outsider” observations and perspective in order to inform and inspire their thinking about the workshop activities that followed.

Activity Description

LWLP presented an overview of the local market, including both Hartford County and Manchester specifically. LWLP paid specific attention to the downtown area and market, providing overviews of the retail, office and residential real estate situation, as well as a perspective on the downtown’s strengths and weaknesses. Key findings from a telephone survey conducted by the Downtown SSD in 2011 were also discussed. A brief summary of the content LWLP presented is provided in **Appendix A: Macro Overview of Manchester**, and the presentation in its entirety has been provided separately.

Summary of Challenges & Opportunities for Downtown

LWLP identified and outlined the following series of key challenges and opportunities for Downtown Manchester:

Challenges

Existing Retail Competition



- \$1.3M leakage in sales from 1-mile trade area (*AMS Consulting, 2011*)
- Existing retail district along I-84 corridor means people are spending time and money outside of downtown (Evergreen Walk & Buckland Hills)

Lack of Destination “People-Drivers”



- Few anchor tenants (e.g., university, cinema, market hall, etc.)
- Lack of strong clusters of retail operators
- Uncertainty regarding Mary Cheney Library

Lack of Ground Floor Activation



- Many ground floor tenants are service-based and only 31% (56,000 SF) of ground floor commercial space used for retail (*AMS Consulting, 2011*)
- Underutilized public space fronting the businesses (e.g., lack of patios)

Physicality

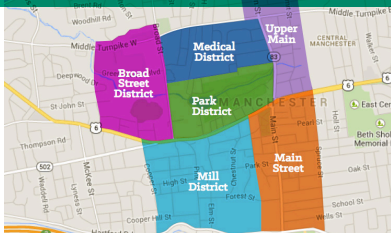


- Gaps in urban fabric, one-sided retail
- Few development sites or vacant parcels for new construction
- Building code issues
- Lack of elevators to upper floors



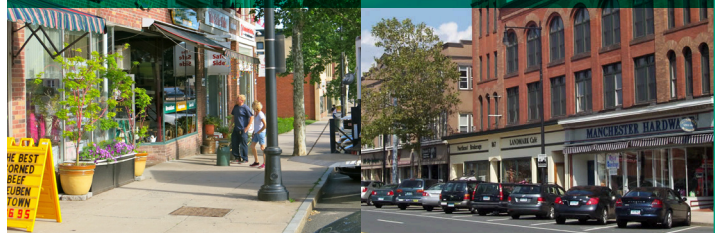
Opportunities

Consider Manchester's core as a collection of unique, complementary and connected districts



- Parks and trails connections
- Branding and signage
- Reinvestment opportunities

Build Off Existing Great "Bones"



- Historic building stock
- Wide sidewalks
- Compact and walkable
- Parking resources

Capitalize on the "Return of Main Streets" Occurring Across the Country



- Beginning to concentrate uses in Downtown Manchester (MCC, restaurants, proposed library revitalization, etc.)
- Food and beverage sector serving as an anchor
- Town-wide interest in ensuring downtown's success

Continue to Promote Community Pride & Events



- Manchester regarded as a nice, affordable place to live and raise a family
- Events are well attended and enjoyed by many

Activity #3 - Downtown Manchester End-Users

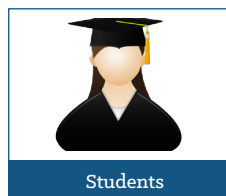
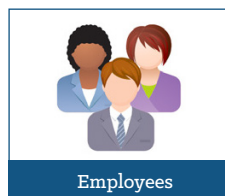
Goal

The goal of this activity was to get participants to consider who the downtown currently serves, what is preventing targeted end-users from visiting the downtown and spending more time and money there, and who the downtown should serve in the future.

Activity Description

For this activity, LWLP provided participants with the following definition of a targeted end user:

A targeted end user is defined as an individual who could spend time and money in Downtown Manchester. In identifying potential end-users, it is important to not only consider who should be targeted, but to also consider the experiences each segment of end-users is seeking, and when and where they are seeking them. Potential end-user segments include:



Participants discussed the following questions in small groups, before sharing concise answers with the larger group:

1. Who currently spends time and money in Downtown Manchester?
2. Are there currently barriers to spending time and money in Downtown Manchester?
3. Who should we encourage to spend time and money in Downtown Manchester in the future?



Summary of Responses

Responses from this activity are summarized below.

Questions	Responses
1) Who currently spends time and money in Downtown Manchester?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals visiting Main Street establishments (restaurants, daily conveniences, professional services - often single-use visitors) • Manchester residents • Regional residents • Local employees • Job seekers • Library users
2) Are there currently barriers to spending time and money in Downtown Manchester?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of diverse experiences (not enough things to do, few entertainment options, lack of upscale offerings - e.g. galleries and restaurants) • Limited business hours • Lack of cohesive marketing strategy • Poor wayfinding strategy and poor highway signage • Poor physicality (unappealing building façades, challenges to updating/renovating buildings due to downtown district taxes, code compliance issues, one-sided retail) • Lack of market rate housing • Poor street design - not multi-modal, limited bike infrastructure (bike lanes, bike racks, etc.), high speed of traffic, limited crosswalks • Concerns over safety (poor lighting, public nuisances, panhandling, Center Springs Park, etc.) • 3-hour parking time restrictions (recently changed from 2 hours)
3) Who should we encourage to spend time and money in Downtown Manchester in the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Manchester population (residents living within 1-mile from downtown, residents living in and visiting other districts - e.g. Mills Apartment residents) • Customers currently spending time and money elsewhere in the region • Existing downtown customers (provide more reasons for people to come more often, and stay longer) • Regional residents (commuters, residents of neighboring towns (Glastonbury, Hebron, Bolton, Coventry, etc.)) • Multi-use customers • Different demographic segments of the population (seniors and baby boomers, young families, millennials, students from MCC & UCONN) • East Coast Greenway trail users & cyclists • Entrepreneurs (start-up and tech companies)

Activity #4 - Downtown Manchester Vision

Goal

The goal of this activity was to get participants to think about their vision for Downtown Manchester and generate the words, feelings and experiences that might serve as the foundation of a vision statement.

Activity Description

For this activity, LWLP provided participants with the following definition of a vision for a place:

A vision is an aspirational description of the personality of a place, and what it would like to be or embody. A vision should include descriptive language to explain the goals, unique experiences, feelings and human behaviors that characterize the place and communicate its essence.

With that in mind, participants were asked to begin thinking of their own vision for Downtown Manchester by reflecting on and discussing the following three questions:

1. What descriptive **words** would you incorporate into your vision for Downtown Manchester?
2. What kind of **feelings** do you want your vision for Downtown Manchester to evoke?
3. What kind of downtown **experiences** do you want to highlight?

Participants were then instructed to write their answers on post-it notes and stick them on the labeled (words, feelings and experiences) boards located around the room.

Summary of Responses

Participants generated a diversity of common words and statements regarding their vision for Downtown Manchester, which are summarized below:

Diverse	Welcoming, Friendly	Comfortable
Fun, Social	Walkable	Enriching
Innovative, Progressive	Hip	Connected
Vibrant, Energetic	Desirable	Inviting
Inclusive	Destination Gathering Place	Safe
Fun, Happy, Joyful,	Stimulating	Family Friendly
Relaxing, Comfortable	Proud	Creative, Artistic
Special		Business-friendly

Downtown Manchester - Preliminary Vision Statement

Based on the thoughts and responses generated during this activity, and additional input provided throughout the workshop, LWLP drafted a preliminary vision statement for Downtown Manchester. This preliminary vision is intended to serve as a starting point, which residents and stakeholders can build upon in order to evolve, refine, and ultimately make their own.



Downtown Manchester is the **welcoming** and **lively** neighborhood at the heart of Manchester. Centered around a beautiful and historic New England Main Street, Downtown Manchester offers its residents and visitors a welcoming place to **eat**, **shop** and **socialize**. In addition to a **growing restaurant scene**, Downtown

Manchester hosts a variety of **events** and **activities**, making it a **vibrant gathering place** and **community hub**. Downtown Manchester is a short walk to incredible **recreational assets** including Center Springs Park, Charter Oak Park and the East Coast Greenway, and is **well-connected** to other exciting districts where **business**, **health and wellness**, **culture** and **the arts** thrive.



Activity #5 - Strategies & Tactics

Goal

The goal of this activity was to first provide examples of relevant urban activation strategies and tactics being implemented in towns and cities across North America, in order to inform and inspire participants to then begin identifying and prioritizing initiatives to employ in Manchester.

Activity Description

During this activity, LWLP presented a selection of precedents from cities and towns across North America, illustrating a number of strategies and tactics that could be implemented to assist in achieving the following desired outcomes:

Desired Outcome #1: Implement and Further a Vision for Downtown Manchester

Tactic #1: Define a comprehensive vision for downtown

Collaboratively articulating a cohesive vision for Downtown Manchester is an essential step in gaining consensus and providing guidance on preserving and reinforcing Downtown Manchester's unique attributes, while also identifying opportunities to transform the downtown into a more vibrant and regional destination. In a vision statement, it is important to highlight the town's key features and differentiators, and to incorporate key local historical and cultural strengths.

Example: Main Street Vision - Tecumseh, ON, Canada

5.1 THE VISION STATEMENT

Tecumseh's Main Street is a community place for commerce and gathering. Designed for walking and anchored by its historic buildings, the street is both a place to live and a regional destination. As the heart of the Tecumseh community, it is a gathering place with unique amenities and supported by great festivals and events.

Desired Outcome #2: Promote Downtown Manchester and Attract New Businesses

Tactic #1: Create a marketing and business attraction strategy

In order to promote and attract new businesses that will be catalytic in transforming Downtown Manchester into a destination, it will be important to create a unique and compelling marketing and business attraction strategy. This strategy should include a compelling business rationale for investing in Manchester, the tools needed to tell Manchester's story and methods that will allow the best businesses and tenants can be attracted.



Tactic #2: Allow pop-ups in vacant storefronts

Allowing small business owners and entrepreneurs to open pop-ups and temporarily occupy empty retail spaces is one way to promote and attract new businesses to Downtown Manchester. Bringing new businesses into the downtown, even if only for temporary purposes, presents a wide range of benefits, including adding new interest and activity to the downtown, encouraging new visitation, increasing foot traffic to neighboring businesses, and occupying otherwise vacant storefronts. If businesses do well, some may even become permanent tenants.

Example: Project Storefronts - New Haven, CT

Increase foot traffic **Promote underutilized spaces** **Enliven neighborhoods**

Program that encourages artists & "creative entrepreneurs" to test the viability of new creative and arts-related retail and other businesses by providing free or subsidized access to empty retail spaces.

Desired Outcome #3: Build Community/Support Existing Businesses

Tactic #1: Activate downtown

Activating Downtown Manchester with a series of daily, weekly, monthly and annual events, festivities and rituals will help to build community and support existing businesses, while additionally:

1. Increasing activity & traffic
2. Creating buzz
3. Creating more things to do
4. Attracting visitors
5. Generating revenue
6. Fostering healthy habits
7. Increasing sense of place
8. Enhancing quality of life

Part of activating the downtown is also maintaining and enhancing “anchor” uses that attract a critical mass of visitors. The Mary Cheney Library currently plays such a role. One or more additional anchor uses would be beneficial in increasing foot traffic and vibrancy in the district.

Example: Activation - Columbus, GA



Outcomes after 6 years (in conjunction with additional investment):

- **42** businesses (net gain)
- **400** new jobs
- **30%** increase in gross receipts
- **550,000** visitors to events over a 2-year period (2014/15)

Tactic #2: Support market rate residential development in the downtown

At present, Downtown Manchester has approximately 200 residential units on Main Street, all of which are rental units. Many of the upper levels of Main Street buildings, however, are underutilized and might have the potential to be converted into housing. Focusing growth in, and bringing more housing to the downtown by redeveloping underutilized buildings can satisfy the growing demand for living close to jobs, services and entertainment, promote mixed-use development, provide property owners with additional income and support existing businesses and services.

Supporting residential development in the downtown can range from providing technical assistance and guidance to property owners, identifying potential developers, and offering loans to applicable properties.

Example: UpstairsDowntown - Illinois



Award-winning initiative created to help owners reclaim and reuse vacant upper floors in older downtown areas, and turn them into income-producing properties.

Case study: Rock Island, IL:

- Upper Story Housing Loan Program - Tax Increment Financing
- Creation of over 150 downtown housing units, in a city of under 40,000 people
- Financing of \$20,000 for newly created units or \$10,000 per residential unit occupied within the last 5 years

Activity #5 - Strategies & Tactics (ctd.)

Desired Outcome #4: Improve Connection Between Downtown & Other Districts

Tactic #1: Strengthen district identities

By encouraging connected, complementary neighborhoods and districts, Manchester can more easily move forward with cohesive placemaking and catalyze future development or redevelopment opportunities not only in downtown, but throughout Manchester. Signage in downtown and other districts should reflect the town's aspirations and vision.

Wayfinding, Branding & Improving Physical Connections



Desired Outcome #5: Improve Downtown Manchester's Physicality

Certain physical enhancements can help foster a unique and authentic experience in Downtown Manchester, and support Main Street as the central spine and natural gathering place for residents, employees and visitors.

Tactic #1: Encourage more flexible patio spaces and outdoor dining

Renting out on-street parking spaces to local restaurants allows for larger patio spaces and encourages more street-level activity. This tactic allows restaurant operators to increase their selling space and potential revenues, as well as contributing to a more inviting and lively Main Street.

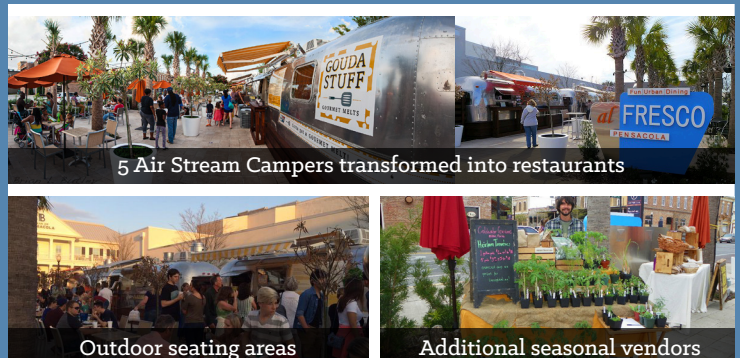
Example: Montreal, QC, Canada



Tactic #2: Activate underutilized land

Activating underutilized land with frequent events, festivities and rituals, including pop-up restaurants and other semi-permanent concepts can have a significant and positive impact on the downtown by creating a new and unique gathering place, and contributing to a sense of community and vibrancy in the downtown. This type of initiative can also drive traffic and visitation, while generating cash flow.

Example: al Fresco - Pensacola, FL



5 Air Stream Campers transformed into restaurants

Outdoor seating areas

Additional seasonal vendors

Located on a previously vacant lot, and now the most popular lunch spot in Pensacola

Desired Outcome #5: Improve Downtown Manchester's Physicality (ctd.)

Tactic #3: Improve accessibility

Fixing and getting rid of barriers in the built environment is essential to ensuring that the downtown and surrounding area is accessible to, and can be enjoyed by, all individuals, be it parents pushing strollers, couriers using dollies to handle heavy packages, or people using mobility aids.

Example: Stop Gap Foundation



The Ramp Project has been successful at highlighting how a simple, low-cost ramp can make life easier for everyone. The project has also proved to business owners that they are able to increase their customer base by providing a storefront that everyone can enter and exit.

Tactic #4: Support building improvements

Offering incentives for façade improvements and building rehabilitation to building owners and landlords can support improvements to buildings and to the overall look, feel and perception of downtown.

Providing code compliance and/or energy efficiency grants or loans is one way in which financing gaps can be addressed. Tax increment financing (TIF) or other financial incentives could help attract outside investment in the downtown and surrounding core area, revitalizing building stock while promoting economic development simultaneously.

Example: Main Street Arkansas - Arkansas



FAÇADE RENOVATION & NEW CONSTRUCTION	
2013	\$5,502,407 INVESTED
2014	\$4,421,137 INVESTED

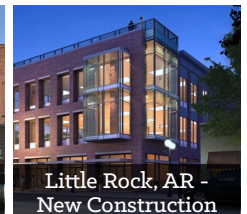
The Main Street Arkansas organization has provided resources, educational and professional assistance to Main Streets across the state, including grants for a number of façade improvement, building rehabilitation and new construction.



Carleton Place, AR -
Façade Improvement



Little Rock, AR -
Building Rehab.



Little Rock, AR -
New Construction

Desired Outcome #6: Improve communication within the Manchester community and with other communities

A strong communications strategy can help keep local residents informed about redevelopment efforts, events, and activities occurring in Downtown Manchester, as well as encourage people from neighboring towns and communities to visit and spend time and money in Downtown Manchester.

Tactics include:



Coordinated Marketing Strategy



Community Outreach

Activity #5 - Strategies & Tactics (ctd.)

Activity Description (ctd.)

Using the discussed tactics as inspiration, participants then discussed the following questions in small groups, before sharing concise answers with the larger group:

1. What are two concrete things that you would like to see happen in Downtown Manchester within the next year?
2. What strategies and tactics do you see being most successful in Downtown Manchester?

Summary of Responses

Responses from this activity are summarized below:

Questions	Responses
1) What are two concrete things that you would like to see happen/ accomplished in Downtown Manchester within the next year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide more support to existing and future businesses (promote available space, encourage pop-up retail, help with financing in building upgrades and rectify code issues)• Encourage businesses to get involved with the Downtown SSD• Create on-street patios and outdoor dining opportunities• Encourage redevelopment of vacant and underutilized buildings• Develop a unified marketing, branding and communications strategy, including a wayfinding and signage strategy• Promote and organize frequent and regular free events and activities• Reinvision Main Street street design (conduct a traffic calming study, enhance downtown safety, develop bike infrastructure - bike lanes and racks)• Expand the Forest Street parking lot farmers' market• Enhance the use of the back of Main Street buildings (beautification (art, landscaping, lighting) and improved accessibility)
2) What strategies and tactics do you see being most successful in Downtown Manchester?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-brand and market the downtown (develop a downtown smartphone application with centralized information, develop a wayfinding strategy)• Improve downtown connections to adjacent districts (create traffic loop to expand the downtown, connect downtown to the East Coast Greenway bike trails)• Make Main Street more walkable and safe for all users• Increase patio space and promote more outdoor uses• Promote health-focused events and initiatives downtown• Provide financial incentives for reinvestment in older buildings

Workshop Follow-Up

Following the workshop, Tom Tomko of Tomko Enterprises submitted a memorandum detailing his suggestions regarding strategies to catalyze economic growth in Downtown Manchester.

Mr. Tomko's ideas included developing a specific marketing and branding strategy and attracting a hotel, conference and banquet facility.

The memorandum is provided in **Appendix B: Memo - Strategies for Downtown Manchester**.

Activity #6 - Resourcing

Goal

The goal of this activity was to get participants to consider how to begin immediately implementing ideas and effecting change through their individual or collective efforts.

Activity Description

In order to achieve the aforementioned desired outcomes and to support Downtown Manchester's revitalization, this last activity focused on discussing approaches to resourcing. More precisely, resourcing involves what is currently being done and how individuals and groups can better work together to achieve shared goals for a more vibrant Downtown Manchester and community core.

To this end, participants were encouraged to discuss the following questions in small groups, before sharing concise versions of their answers with the larger group:

1. What are you already doing in Downtown Manchester?
2. What can you do more of?
3. How can you work together (partnerships and collaboration)?

Summary of Responses

Responses from this activity are summarized below:

Questions	Responses
1) What are you already doing in Downtown Manchester?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fostering a strong sense of community (individuals invested in and already using Downtown Manchester)• Leading existing organizations/entities (Downtown SSD and Chamber of Commerce)• Utilizing existing communication channels ("Manchester Matters" newsletter, Manchester Public School application)• Promoting existing resources for businesses (business networking opportunities and matchmaking events, technical and business assistance)• Hosting existing special events and initiatives (Road Race, Cruisin' on Main, Taste of Manchester, Pride in Manchester, summer concerts, etc.)
2) What can you do more of?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue fostering community (be more inclusive, create more of a downtown "family", connect different organizations and entities, encourage partnerships, introduce new people to Manchester, advocate for Manchester elsewhere)• Develop a cohesive marketing strategy• Start or expand informal meet-ups/events• Promote downtown to friends and neighbors• Make an effort to intentionally shop and visit downtown• Promote business development (attract more businesses, mentor entrepreneurs to contribute to downtown growth)• Take action and move to the implementation stage
3) How can you work together (partnerships & collaboration)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop partnerships between different businesses to organize events, such as live music in the park during outdoor yoga classes (individual businesses, Downtown SSD & Chamber of Commerce)• Develop collaborations between the town and engaged organizations (Downtown SSD & MCC)• Develop a better database of information on building stock and state of buildings and make building owners aware of grants, costs, etc. (Downtown SSD & Town of Manchester)• Work together to develop a unified marketing strategy (Economic Development Commission, Downtown SSD & Town of Manchester)• Reach out to and welcome new business owners to Manchester (Town of Manchester, Chamber of Commerce & Downtown SSD)• Stay positive and foster social interaction (Everyone!)• Coordinate Road Race preparations and event with local businesses (Road Race Committee, Individual Businesses & Downtown SSD)





Welcome
to
Downtown

DIANE M. SAUER
REAL ESTATE BROKER

PRMI
873

MANCHESTER

LANDMARK

867

2
PARKING
7 AM
TO 5 PM

30
MIN
PARKING
8 AM
TO 6 PM

OPEN SUNDAYS 9:30-2:30

Extra Parking
& Entrance
in Rear

MANCHESTER
Carpeting
• GLASS
• SHEDS
• ROOFS
• CARPETS
• DRAPES
• LAMINATE

Appendices



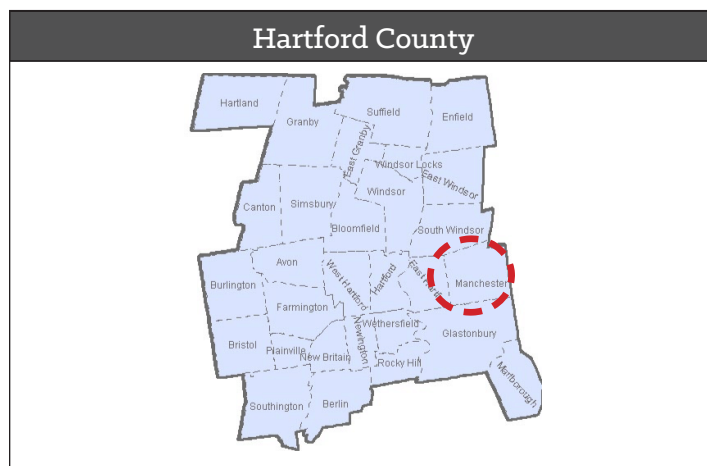
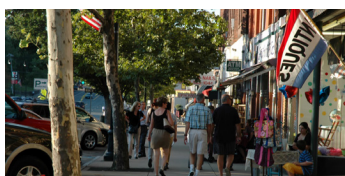
Appendix A: Macro Overview of Manchester

Town of Manchester Overview

The Town of Manchester is located less than 10 miles east of the City of Hartford. With a 2016 population of over 59,000, the town is the second largest suburb in Hartford County. Manchester is projected to overtake West Hartford as the region's largest suburb by 2020 (*Connecticut State Data Center, 2012*). Key local anchors include Manchester Community College, Manchester Memorial Hospital (part of the Eastern Connecticut Health Network), and the town's historic Main Street.

Manchester - Demographics (2016)	
Population (2016)	59,186
Population Growth (2011 - 2016)	1.3%
Median Age	38.2
Median Household Income	\$65,517
Average Household Size	2.3

Source: Nielsen, 2017



Downtown Manchester Overview

Downtown Manchester's Main Street features a number of beautiful historic buildings and over 200 local shops and services. Main Street is programmed with popular special events and activities, such as the annual Cruisin' on Main and the Manchester Road Race. The Mary Cheney Library and Center Memorial Park, a 7.6-acre park that hosts craft fairs, outdoor concerts and sporting events, are also located downtown.

Manchester's Main Street, similar to other Main Streets across the nation, declined in importance with the construction of large-scale shopping centers and big-box developments located along the highway corridors and in neighboring communities, marking a shift in shopping behavior from smaller, locally-based retailers in the downtown core, to these larger centers. In Manchester, shopping centers that may have contributed to the decline of Main Street include the Middle Turnpike Shopping Center and the Broad Street Parkade that opened in 1950 and 1970 respectively, as well as the more recent opening of the Shoppes at Buckland Hills and Promenade Shops at Evergreen Walk in 1990 and 2004 respectively.

The advent of e-retail and online shopping has shifted shopping habits and further hampered traffic and spending in both Main Street environments and traditional retail centers across the United States. Online retail sales in the United States reached \$334 billion in 2015, accounting for approximately 10% of all sales in the Country. Online sales are expected to increase over the next few years and are projected to reach \$480 billion by 2019 (*Forrester Research, 2015*).



Recently, however, there has been a resurgence of Main Streets across the nation. Manchester has been no exception to this trend, visible through the growth of the town's restaurant cluster and popular events and activities drawing many visitors back to downtown. While downtown has always been the heart of Manchester, the growth and enhancement of the district has become a town priority in recent years.

Downtown SSD Study (2011)

In 2011, the Downtown SSD conducted a study focused on Downtown Manchester, including a telephone survey of 400 Manchester residents and residents of surrounding towns. Although the survey dates from 2011, it remains relevant and reflects likes and dislikes of the Downtown Manchester area, barriers to visiting downtown, and opportunities for improvement.

The survey revealed that many respondents had a favorable perception of Downtown Manchester and were loyal patrons of local businesses, especially restaurants. More than half of respondents also reported attending a special event, and would spend more time in downtown if more events were organized.

On the other hand, one quarter of respondents said there was “nothing there/needs more” in Downtown Manchester, and thus did not frequently shop there. Some respondents cited safety concerns in the downtown. The survey concluded with respondents’ desired experiences for the downtown, which included more retail shops, an improved diversity of bars and restaurants and more events. The majority of workshop participants agreed that there has been a significant improvement in the diversity of bars and restaurants located on Main Street, since 2011.

Downtown Manchester: Market Segment Overview

Retail

Despite currently being home to over 200 businesses, it is estimated that Manchester’s Main Street is experiencing significant retail leakage. More precisely, in 2011, retail leakage was estimated at \$1.3 million within a 1-mile trade area from downtown (AMS Consulting (2011) - *Market Study & Recommendations, Downtown Manchester*). Moreover, downtown lacks destination and anchor retail operators, and features many “business and personal services” that do not encourage repeat visitation.



Residential

Approximately 200 residential units are located along Main Street and 3,633 people live within a 0.5-mile radius of downtown. The Main Street housing stock is primarily characterized by rental housing with lower than average rents, no owner-occupied units on Main Street and only a handful on side streets. The buildings along Main Street have many issues pertaining to code compliance, and there is limited potential for new construction due to physical constraints. Developing market rate housing has been identified as a priority.

Office

There is a well-established and stable office market in and around Main Street, including a high concentration of medical uses. As of 2011, approximately 20% (180,000 SF) of Manchester’s office space inventory was located downtown (AMS Consulting, 2011). There is limited room for new office space due to physical limitations and market constraints, however, the possibility of refurbishing underutilized buildings remains, should there be more demand for office space in downtown.

Appendix B: Memo – Strategies for Downtown Manchester

This memorandum was submitted to LWLP as a follow-up to the workshop by Tom Tomko of Tomko Enterprises.

Memorandum

To: Richard Martz, LWLP

From: Tom Tomko, Tomko Enterprises

CC: Bob Schneider, RDA
Don Dubaldo, Chairman SSD
Gary Anderson, Planner, Town of Manchester
Jay Moran, Mayor, Town of Manchester
Carl Zinsser, Zinsser Real Estate Agency, Brokers & Consultants
Gary Sweet, RDA & Architect

RE: Economic Catalysts Strategies for Down Town Manchester

Date: February 27, 2017

Richard,

Nice meeting you and your staff. The following are two strategies and a comment on the SSD. I have been advocating these ideas for at least 15 years and they would provide as a Catalyst for economic stability and growth.

Branding Down Town Manchester

Brand the area of the Down Town as “*Silk City Village*”. This is only a natural progression as Manchester was known as the Silk Capital of the world back in the 1920’. For lack of a water front, lake, college campus or destination attraction, we have to give the area an identity to separate it from other downtowns or main streets. This is the strategy used by all major retail centers, resorts, planned communities etc.

25 years ago I rebranded a Neighborhood Shopping Center in the northeast corner of Manchester to the “Blue Duck Plaza” and today, people give directions not by using street names but by first identifying if they know where the Blue Duck is.

The strategy to Brand is very inexpensive and can be accomplished over time by leadership and the willingness to change and make new history. Back when I was on the board of the SSD I reached out to the School of Business professor to make this a project for them however I could not open a communication with them. Perhaps, Manchester Community College would like to take this on as a project with their business program. Think of the Public Relations that would come from them taking on this Branding Project.

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The Branding would be well received as evidenced by Silk City Coffee jumping on that brand for the new coffee shop that is turning into a destination location. Once they layer in music/entertainment it will take them to the next level.

The branding strategy will bring together History, Identity, Image and a sense of place to the area can incorporate some of the following:

1. New signage at the Southern Gateway entrance of Main Street. Perhaps CVS along with their new development would contribute to the project. I propose an Artistic Arch (lighted) over main street as follows:

Silk City Village

Downtown Manchester

2. The Mayor can perform a Public Proclamation and this can be tied to TV and Print media.
3. The banner program can be revised to incorporate Silk City Village.
4. Business can incorporate Silk City Village into their advertising.
5. Town web site can be revised with Silk City Village.
6. With this type of branding, perhaps entertainment venues in existing restaurants expand.
7. Signage on the highways could be added.
8. State tourism media can be updated.
9. Street signs could be revised and Silk City Village could be incorporated.

The opportunities to market the brand are endless and with no doubt, result as an economic catalyst as indicated.

Appendix B: Strategies for Downtown Manchester (ctd.)

Hotel Conference & Banquet Facility

I proposed this many years ago and could not get any traction to move this forward. Manchester is the largest population base east of the Connecticut River. There are only two venues in town for a banquet, Manchester Country club and Adams Mill Restaurant. Each venue is limited to about 125 people comfortably and offer no lodging.

The proposed location would be the Forest Street Parking lot which is owned by the Town. The site can be developed with replacing all parking underground and incorporate above ground parking levels as well. The deal structure could be as follows: Ground lease land for 99 years for \$1.00/year. Provide tax incremental financing over 10 years to assist development. No cost to town, just a forward progression to tax payments and economic growth to the *Silk City Village* area. This concept has been well received by the local business I have spoken to over the years.

Location is ideal as the site is 18 minutes from the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs. There is no lodging in Storrs and we are in the direct highway corridor to get to the campus. In addition, we are 20 minutes from Bradley Airport. Ideal location for parent visits, visiting sports teams and just a Village atmosphere for anyone looking to stay, hold a conference or have a wedding reception.

With that said;

A discussion should take place about these strategies and I suggest these time frames as a CALL TO ACTION:

1. Combined meeting with Town Staff, RDA and SSD on or before May 1, 2017
2. Upon acceptance of moving forward
 - a. Move to branding and have archway in place by August 2017
 - b. Initiate an RFP to Hotel Developers on or before June 1, 2017
 - i. See what the Market brings or has to offer
 - ii. Let the private sector tell us if it is feasible

Feel free to communicate with me, as you are aware, I am not an advocate of more studies or planning. Let's move the process along. In real estate development, it takes Courage, Capital and Credit. We have these within the Main Street Area as it is generally successful and needs to advance to the next level.

Leadership by the planning bodies that have been in place for some time need to act, think big, think outside the box and move forward. In general – No risk, no reward and what do we have to lose?

My motto has always been – “Every Day is New Adventure”

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Downtown Manchester Strategic Planning Workshop

March 2017