



HAMILTON MAIN STREET BUSINESS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN HAMILTON, OH



Prepared for:
The City of Hamilton
Rediscover Hamilton
Main Street Area Association

December 2007

Prepared by:
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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HAMILTON, OH

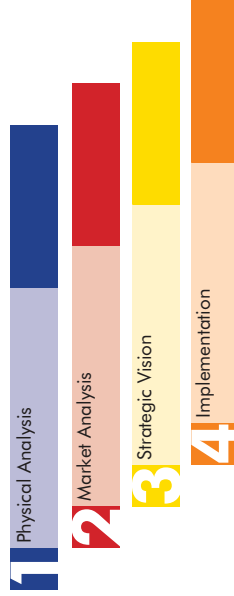
EXECUTIVE Summary

THE MAIN STREET BUSINESS DISTRICT IS LOCATED ADJACENT TO THE GREAT MIAMI RIVER TO THE WEST OF DOWNTOWN HAMILTON, OHIO.

It is primarily comprised of a mix of uses including retail and/or office space on the street level and residences above shop space in a traditional historic setting. Historically the corridor has served as the primary commercial district to the surrounding neighborhoods. As newer commercial corridors have developed, mainly to the west and the recent development of Bridgewater Falls, a slow but deliberate shift in where people shop has occurred causing the Main Street District to deteriorate. However, through a public-private partnership and a Main Street Business District Master Plan, the City of Hamilton, Main Street Area Association and ReDiscover Hamilton can determine what should be the acceptable community development standards and repositioning strategies for the Main Street Business District.

In December of 2006, City of Hamilton, in conjunction with the Main Street Area Association and ReDiscover Hamilton, retained the consulting firm of Kinzelman, Kline, Gossman (KKG) to prepare a Business District Strategic Master Plan for the Main Street area. KKG assembled a team of experts including Brownstone Design, Link and Oldham Consulting to address the future challenges facing the Main Street area.

The important components of the master planning framework are the following:



This document is a reflection of the community vision. The consultants have taken the ideas generated at the town meeting, conveyed during focus group interviews and charrette, or expressed by the Advisory Committee members and integrated them into an urban redevelopment action plan for the Main Street Business District.

A coordinated public-private strategic vision for Main Street will give all those involved in the development of the area a road map to guide their efforts and to ascertain the real estate development projects, marketing activities, street & sidewalk enhancement efforts, infrastructure improvements, and community wide development opportunities.

The document has been formatted in a publicly accessible manner to allow the Main Street Master Plan Implementation Committee and Main Street Manager to use it as a business plan. It is recommended that the Implementation Committee revisit the plan often and adjust the course of action as market conditions and opportunities dictate.

PHYSICAL ANALYSIS

The consultant team met with the Main Street Advisory Committee on March 1, 2007 to kick-off the Master Plan development process and to discuss the committee's goals and objectives. Committee members raised issues they felt were critical to address in the planning process.



- ...and it became quite clear that the overwhelming issue regarding Main Street was the lack of a "sense of place"; an authentic identity that clearly distinguished Main Street as a unique business/retail/entertainment district of Hamilton. To create its own niche within the community and the region, the Main Street area has been envisioned as the following:
- + A place where shopping, entertainment, housing, and work environments are organized around well designed public streets, sidewalks, alleyways and green connectivity.

- + Streets, traditionally engineered to promote hasty through access, are designed instead for a pedestrian oriented environment.
- + Property owners who in the past would allow their historic buildings and in particular the upper stories to fall into disrepair and vacancy, reinvest into their properties because of the increased confidence they have in the Main Street area as a secure real estate investment.
- + A place where retailers flourish and offer a product of higher value or quality to their customers.

- + A place where the visitor and the resident feel comfortable and secure walking throughout the Main Street and adjacent neighborhoods in a pedestrian focused and friendly environment.
- + A desirable place to live as well as work. Conversion of upper story into loft apartments or new infill neighborhood housing will provide residents easy walking distance to their place of employment or to everyday needs and services.
- + The Main Street area is in a stage where the revitalization efforts should start in earnest where Main Street Area Association, the City and other interested stakeholders should work together in reversing the trend of deterioration. An urgent "call to action" is needed highlighting the immediate responsibilities for revitalization.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The study area has been analyzed in its regional context to determine the market driven opportunities and various uses the area might support. This analysis has been focused on strategies relevant to the market-centric project feasibility and economic success.

Main Street experiences a lot of truck traffic and acts as a main connector between Hamilton and Greater Cincinnati to Oxford, Ohio. It is also well traveled due to the City of Hamilton being the County seat for Butler County and providing for approximately 15 million square feet of office space in and around the central business district.

The market has been analyzed with a drive-time study of 5, 10 and 15 minutes.

| | 5-MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 10-MINUTE DRIVE TIME |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 2006 POPULATION ESTIMATE | 50,616 | 111,415 |
| MEDIAN AGE | 35.1 | 36.3 |
| FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS | 65.6% | 71% |
| MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME | \$41,682 | \$50,968 |
| 2011 POPULATION PROJECTION | 53,028 | 117,796 |

The retail supply and demand analysis indicates there is a shortage and demand for some retail categories such as furniture, home furnishings, food service, books & music, specialty retail, jewelry and luggage.

EXECUTIVE *Summary*

STRATEGIC VISION

1. REPOSITION MAIN STREET AS THE ENTERTAINMENT/CULTURAL CENTER OF THE REGION

Main Street and B Street within the study area have the prime location near the riverfront, the historic Rossville District and residential neighborhoods in and around the area. While downtown Hamilton can flourish as the regional business center, the Main Street Area has great prospects for repositioning itself with specialty and neighborhood oriented retail, professional office spaces and restaurants. These uses are recommended to be in a cluster to create a synergy of activities and encourage public involvement through a green connectivity network (green cross streets) in a pedestrian friendly environment.



Although the character of retail is different from burgeoning shopping centers around the area, the "entertainment" concept with entertainment such as neighborhood music/movie theater coupled with restaurants, ice-cream and coffee shops, and unique one-of-a-kind stores and services would help to establish a niche in the community. The opening of the new "Riverbank Café" provides a specific example of successful tenancing strategies that should happen in the Main Street area. Cultural activity centers such as the Senior Citizens Center and Hamilton Music Theater continue to be the preferred sites for significant cultural events. There are additional renovation opportunities such as the church on B Street and Park Avenue that can be creatively re-used as supporting cultural activity centers.

The Main Street area is also distinguished by its ability to offer better sites for outside open air venues with neighborhood and pocket parks such as Sutherland and Armstead Park and opportunity to integrate riverfront activity areas as well.

Long term benefits will include a more stable night time user rate, more entertainment options conveniently located to each other, restaurants & shops, and a unique identity for the entire Main Street area.

PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- + Riverfront gateway and relocation of Clark's Sporting Goods store; possibly replaced with neighborhood café/restaurant/ neighborhood-oriented retail/ specialty retail.



- + Appropriate infill and façade improvements.
- + Intersection improvements (stamped concrete crosswalk and mast arm traffic signals).
- + Pedestrian oriented green cross streets to connect neighborhoods.

- + Improvement of alleyways to provide for consolidated parking at the rear of the Main Street buildings and enhanced pedestrian access corridors.



- + Development of a new state-of-the-art multiplex cinema near riverfront on north side of Park Avenue.
- + Development of a Farmer's Market.
- + Public art and streetscape amenities celebrating the City of Sculpture.



- + Promotion of the Music Theater as a live music venue.
- + Targeted tenancing.

2. CREATE THREE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS OF THE MAIN STREET DISTRICT

The idea surrounding the three district concept is to develop distinctive personalities and characteristics for each of the districts, which will cater to appropriate retail / entertainment / neighborhood services specific in each district yet creating the niche for the entire business district as a whole. Each district would have a unique personality created by carefully crafted design guidelines for storefronts, facades, lighting, and signage. Streetscape improvements would be designed to reinforce the district identity while acting as a common thread woven through all three districts.

Anything anywhere is not going to work from a retail tenancing perspective within the Main Street Business District.



- 1. Riverfront District
- 2. Park District
- 3. West Gateway District

A strategic leasing initiative spearheaded by ReDiscover Hamilton/Main Street Area Association and Main Street Manager would focus on assisting landlords/property owners to secure those tenants appropriate to each district identity while promoting complementary retail clustering opportunities.
A well designed marketing and PR campaign should focus on a regional advertising approach.

EXECUTIVE Summary

Uses common to all three districts would be eating and drinking establishments, and upper story housing or office development. Also the idea of green connections should be implemented to physically connect the adjacent neighborhoods with the Main Street area. These connections can be in the form of tree plantings on cross streets such as B to F Streets and container planting, hanging flower pots on Main Street light poles.

Riverfront District



Location / Characteristics:

- + B Street to D Street and B Street along the Great Miami River within study area.
- + Rich architectural detailing showcasing the wonderful collection of late 19th and early 20th century historic architecture. Includes part of Rossville Historic District.

- + A mixed use environment combining different types of retailing and eating & drinking establishments.
- + Salons.
- + Art & Music.
- + Music Equipment.
- + Eclectic Merchandise.
- + Sportswear.
- + Restaurants.
- + Used Books and Music.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE RIVERFRONT DISTRICT INCLUDE:

- + Multiplex cinema on north side of Park Avenue adjacent to B street
- + Comprehensive riverfront development for improved pedestrian access and synergy of mixed uses.
- + N B Street condominiums/town homes with structured parking.
- + New linear park stretching from riverfront and turning west under the railroad arches. This will help connect the riverfront with Rossville neighborhood and provide activity zones to revitalize the B Street environment.
- + Main Street Area Association/the City to partner with Clark's Sporting Goods store to provide for restaurant/café/neighborhood-oriented retail space at the southwest corner of Main Street and B Street and relocation of Clark's to a larger space on interior lots.
- + Farmer's market.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PARK DISTRICT INCLUDE:

- + Pedestrian design enhancements for Main Street.
- + Improved alleyways with access to consolidated parking.
- + Public gathering space at the intersection of Main Street and E Street both at the northeast and southeast corner. Work with Rizzi Body shop to create for park/public gathering space. The used furniture store at Main Street and E Street has the opportunity for new infill with corner restaurants and outside sitting areas.
- + Selective infill opportunities in other areas, specifically in front of S&S Carryout.
- + Opportunity for ice-cream shop, antiques, books and music.
- + Pedestrian oriented streetscape enhancements to link the district together and reinforce overall identity.
- + Wayfinding and signage to direct vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- + Green cross streets with pedestrian amenities.



- + Neighborhood theater/cinema.
- + Wayfinding and signage to direct automobile and pedestrian traffic and innovative storefront design to complement the character.
- + Gateway feature near riverfront to announce arrival to the Main Street area.
- + Alleyway enhancements for improved access to parking.
- + Pedestrian design enhancements for Main Street.
- + Increased curbside landscape density for softer visual character (all districts), planters, hanging flower pots on Main Street and urban-scale trees on cross streets.
- + Container planting program for storefronts, light standards and streetscape.
- + Curb extensions (bump-outs) for integration of pedestrian and automobile traffic and safer crosswalks.

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- + Container planting program for storefronts, light standards and streetscape.
- + Curb extensions (bump-outs) for integration of pedestrian and automobile traffic and safer crosswalks.



Location / Characteristics:

- + D Street to E Street.
- + Location of Sutherland and Armstead Park.
- + Residential character and professional offices spaces.
- + Other establishments.
- + Neighborhood convenience stores.
- + Automobile body shop.
- + Used furniture.



West Gateway District



Location / Characteristics:

- + E Street to Millville/Eaton Avenue.
- + Convenience retail such as Walgreens.
- + Rich architectural quality on south side of Main Street with mixed use environment consisting of a slew of different uses:
- + Professional office spaces.
- + Hobby and craft store.
- + Convenience goods.



- + Gift shops.
- + Printing services.
- + Rossville shopping center mainly consisting of professional office spaces, jewelry store, spa and salon.

EXECUTIVE *Summary*

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WEST GATEWAY DISTRICT INCLUDE:

- + Façade improvements and appropriate tenanting of Rossville Shopping Center.
- + Public gathering spaces at the intersection of Main Street and F Street with incorporation of restaurants and outdoor seating spaces, generous green space at the corners.
- + Façade improvement and building rehabilitation of Hamilton Music Center. Possible uses include a live music venue or cultural center with cluster of associated uses such as ice-cream/coffee shops, music store, café etc.
- + Wayfinding and signage program.
- + Gateway at the intersection of Main Street and Millville/Eaton Avenue to announce arrival to Main Street area.
- + Green cross streets with pedestrian amenities.

3.

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO LIVE IN THE MAIN STREET AREA

Although there is always a desire to bring new businesses into the core urban areas of our towns by those involved in the revitalization process, successful redevelopment of Main Street will not be fully realized until new market smart housing is made available. Quality housing in the area will allow more people to live on Main Street and thus increase the demand for higher quality retail and other services. Demographics for Hamilton indicate that young professionals and empty nesters are likely candidates for quality Main Street housing.

Living on Main Street is an **ATTRACTIVE OPTION** to these population segments for several reasons:

- + **CONVENIENTLY LOCATED NEXT TO THEIR WORK IN DOWNTOWN HAMILTON AND MIAMI UNIVERSITY, RESTAURANTS AND SERVICES**
- + **ADJACENT TO CULTURAL ACTIVITY CENTERS**
- + **HIGH VALUE OF HOUSING PRODUCT FOR THE MONEY COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE MARKET**

Discussions with area developers suggest that the market may be more attractive for new town homes/condominiums along with historic property rehabilitation projects which are assisted by the federal and state historic tax credit programs. Multi-story older buildings tend to present the developer with ADA accessibility issues not normally encountered with single story construction. However, by taking advantage of the alternative building code specifically created for older property rehabilitation, elevators and other costly improvements can sometimes be avoided.



By introducing working families, young professionals and empty nesters to the advantages of living in a Main Street environment, a quiet reinvestment into properties and businesses will likely follow.

Development of town homes / condominiums near the riverfront would provide not only opportunities for additional Main Street housing but also act as sustenance of the Main Street “entertainment” / cultural and neighborhood oriented retail amenities. This will also serve as a catalytic development fostering other projects to be developed.

A Main Street and City supported riverfront renewal program is feasible through the cooperation of the numerous governing authorities involved in the ownership and/or management of the Great Miami River.

IMPLEMENTATION

The value of the master plan is in the implementation. In this case the Main Street Area Association in conjunction with the City of Hamilton is recommended to hire a Main Street Manager and create a funding program for the position. This position should be responsible for daily activities of the master plan implementation along with researching for additional funding opportunities to carry out public-private partnership projects. This position will also perform the duties of marketing the prospects of the Main Street area and taking part in educational outreach programs to bring in local/regional/national experts on various facets of Main Street revitalization and delivering the same to the property owners and tenants both existing and prospective.

In an effort to assist the Main Street Area Association/Main Street Manager to identify project opportunities and further exploration of critical future planning issues, the following action items are listed in three time frame categories:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| SHORT TERM GOALS | - LESS THAN 24 MONTHS |
| MEDIUM TERM GOALS | - 24 TO 60 MONTHS |
| LONG TERM GOALS | - MORE THAN 60 MONTHS |

In order for the current enthusiasm for the Master Plan to be maintained and converted to action, it is recommended to identify projects, which can be accomplished with relative ease to show the community things are happening. These opportunities have been identified as short-term projects and should be started immediately.

As these short-term projects are being discussed and implemented, medium and long-range projects and opportunities should be in the discussion stages and moved as quickly as possible into position for implementation.

SHORT TERM ACTION ITEMS → LESS THAN 24 MONTHS →

- + Form a Main Street Coalition Committee consisting of representatives from Advisory Committee, City and other stakeholder organizations. This Committee will be in the charge of assigning implementation tasks to appropriate agencies along with Main Street Area Association and Main Street Manager.
- + Get City of Hamilton Departments Involved
- + The City shall review and officially adopt the master plan and follow these action items on a timely basis.
- + The City shall modify the zoning ordinance based on the visions and the design principles of the three district concept. The revisions/zoning overlay should be discussed with Coalition Committee and MSAA and adopted for prompt compliance by property owners and developers.
- + Enforcement efforts to comply with applicable codes and regulations should be performed by the City officials in collaboration with the Main Street Coalition Committee that will systematically address each property within the Main Street area.

EXECUTIVE Summary

- + The City building and planning staff should familiarize with the Alternative Building Code and its effects on the Main Street buildings. The City shall assist permit seekers (investor) by touring the potential reconstruction site, reviewing draft plans prior to submittal to check compliance and completeness and provide the property owners/permit seekers with available options of redevelopment.
- + The City officials and staff should also assist developers/property owners with historic tax credit applications.
- + The City should also maintain and follow a Capital Improvements Plan for infrastructure improvements.
- + A commercial broker is recommended to be hired to represent the district and for initiating the marketing and recruitment of appropriate tenants.
- + Hire a Main Street Manager in coordination with the City of Hamilton, the Main Street Area Association, the Visioning Committee and ReDiscover Hamilton. Financing for this position should be fixed by the City for at least three years after which a Special Improvement District must be in place to sustain the improvements achieved.
- + Create an operating budget based on the identification of the expenses for the revitalization process.
- + With the initiation of the revitalization process it is recommended to identify criteria to quantify the condition of the Main Street area such as physical improvements to buildings, targeted tenancing etc. Keeping track of these improvements is important to sustain the revitalization process and further continue with the recommendations of this master plan.
- + Intersection improvements with “stamped concrete” for pedestrian crosswalks as planned by the City of Hamilton Public Works Department. Discuss with City of Hamilton, opportunities for traffic calming curb extensions and/or bump-outs and similar enhancements specifically on cross streets.
- + Organize public officials, representatives from the Main Street Area Association and Visioning Committee, property owners and merchants to consider a “Main Street Beautification” program. This program will involve tree plantings on cross streets and container planting landscape effort to help soften the harshness of the Main Street. Work with the city to consider providing new welded arms to light poles for hanging basket program. Other efforts should include a Main Street area street cleanup program specifically through the City Public Works Department.
- + Create new Main Street logo with graphic design consultant and coordinate with wayfinding.
- + Create “Public Awareness” campaign through a PR liaison including a regular newsletter.

- + Secure future special event commitments for Main Street and use as opportunities to communicate the Main Street accomplishments.
- + Develop positive partnership with local newspaper for regular Main Street activity updates.
- + Commence the Façade Improvement Program through educational campaign and participation.
- + Commence a retail retention and recruitment strategy.
- + Create a thorough up-to-date survey of historic properties along with mapping the address list.
- + Expand the historic district list under the National Register of Historic Places for easier redevelopment process.
- + Work collaboratively with the private sector and public organizations to create a pro-development framework.
- + Explore possibilities of the City of Hamilton to participate in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION ITEMS 24 TO 60 MONTHS

- + Develop design & development criteria/standards for each district.
- + Make available to the development interests of the City of Hamilton and specifically Main Street.
- + Begin the exploration into a wayfinding system for the Main Street area with a graphic design consultant (coordinate with City of Sculpture efforts).
- + Identify liaison for public art campaign (coordinate with City of Sculpture efforts).
- + Light pole banner project identifying newly created districts through district logo icons.
- + Identify sources for local and/or regional alternative transportation system such as bus transit, trolley etc. (cost estimates, routing, corporate interest, public funding potential, etc.)
- + Real estate acquisitions liaison to identify land purchases/options for future development opportunities.
- + Protect the historic properties/resources through zoning ordinance or historic preservation legislation.
- + Create a for-profit Limited Liability Company (LLC) who will be responsible for acquiring funding for the real estate transfer of unmaintained properties and buildings



- + The Coalition Committee/MSAA/Main Street Manager shall work with businesses and property owners to identify opportunities for improvement to their properties. Also, conduct direct contact with business recruitment with regional businesses to inquire about expanding into the Main Street Business District.
- + Work towards creating a Special Improvement District within three years of adoption of the plan.

LONG TERM ACTION ITEMS MORE THAN 60 MONTHS

- + Develop long range vision for riverfront development and creation of public open spaces/parks.
- + Identify opportunities to champion Main Street and riverfront housing opportunities. Work with neighborhoods, developers, and building owners to create a higher quality housing product for the area.
- + Continue working on the “Main Street Beautification” program including tree plantings, public art/sculpture, cleanup program, providing pedestrian amenities and streetscape features such as benches, trashcans, bike racks etc. This should also include reviewing opportunities for public funding for curb extensions/bump-outs.
- + Assign liaison to promote and enforce the “Main Street area as the Entertainment/Cultural Center of the Region” campaign. Coordinate with Greater Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, City of Sculpture, Visioning Committee, Senior Citizens Inc. and regional cultural attractions to broaden awareness and appeal of Main Street area’s entertainment, food and cultural offerings.



As the committee begins to work together on the implementation strategy and has met with key individuals or organizations intended to champion the cause on various projects, the list of action items suggested above may be broadened or diminished depending upon the wishes of the project needs by the Main Street Area Association/Main Street Manager. The priorities might also shift because certain situations may present themselves suggesting a project might take more or less time to implement.

EXECUTIVE *Summary*

In the end, regular meetings of the Main Street Area Association will ensure communication linkages between the committee members, project liaisons, and the Main Street Manager will remain strong and focused towards implementation strategies.



REGULAR COORDINATION WITH THE MAIN STREET AREA ASSOCIATION, CITY OF HAMILTON, VISIONING COMMITTEE, REDISCOVER HAMILTON AND GREATER HAMILTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WILL ASSIST IN INFORMATION AND EXPERTISE EXCHANGE FOR HOLISTIC REDEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIN STREET AREA.