

Highlands Economic Development: Where Do WE Go from Here?

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International Council of Shopping Centers

Our objectives tonight....

Explore ways to increase tourist traffic

Our objectives tonight...

Discuss if we can bring more local shoppers to town

Our objectives tonight...

After our question and answer period, let's take some of the best ideas (yours or mine) and start to put them to action

Tonight

Some of what I have to say you've heard before....but some of it is probably new, too

Tonight

Economic development is often the implementation of out-of-the-box thinking

Where We Are

We have a ton of research that I've pored through – it's all good but we seem to have fallen behind on the execution

From Here On In

We're going to need a united front and commitment to move forward

Tourism

What is the #3 tourist destination in New York State after New York City and Niagara Falls?

Tourism

Idea: a pedestrian mall

Tourism

Close North half of Main Street to traffic and put on special events every weekend possible:

- cultural activities
- fund raisers
- fairs
- craft shows
- art exhibits
- family entertainment

Tourism

The Farmer's Market is the one place you can buy local- buying local is a good thing- but it's awfully small in its present state and has little entertainment value, but if it could expand its wares....that could draw both tourists AND locals

Tourism

Eating itself is not considered "entertainment"

Where is the entertainment quotient?

Tourism

Hang big signs to welcome visitors!

Tourism

Theme our village venue

“Hometown U.S.A.”?

Tourism

Come up with a logo, a name and an eye-catching color design for the downtown business improvement program

Tourism

Is it better for the town to look more military or look more historical in concept?

- What we have is neither

Tourism

MAYBE...the answer lies in making the North End of Main Street the tourist-oriented half of the town, and the South End caters to the locals and we DON'T try to link the two

Tourism

If by making Main St. one-way, tourists in cars have to pass our way

- But we also have to give them a good reason to stop here

Tourism

Signage has to be more prominent around town so tourists get to know their way around and become aware of what's here

-like the eye-catching Farmer's Market signs on Routes 9W and 218

Tourism

Store names, construction styles and merchandise sold in the tourist types of stores, from this point on, should be more or less tied to our overall theme and look wherever possible

Tourism

Shopping has to be a fun activity for tourists, where's our fun, tourist magnet?

Tourism

Can we find or cultivate a tourist magnet?

Tourism

Even shuttered storefronts should be brightly decorated

Tourism

Everyone who owns a store must be challenged to improving their visual display

- Let's teach them if we have to...
- We only have one shot to capture a visitor!
- We can't expect repeat business and referrals if they're disappointed

Tourism

- No ugly windows
- No messy displays
- Curb appeal a must!
- Super clean
- Got to get some good sign-makers here
- Turn the lights on
- No empty shelves
- Redecorate frequently

Tourism

One goal should be to cultivate independently owned crafts stores, antique, nostalgia shops and unique gift shops to open here (think New Paltz and Woodstock)

Tourism

Target women shoppers MUCH MORE

Tourism

Consider creating opportunities for pop-up stores (temporary stores) and RMU's (retail merchandise units)

Tourism

Divert "Cold Spring-type" visitors to also visit here

Tourism

Let's go on a "best practices" road trip to find the answer!

Tourism

Does the town have reason to open up a temporary historical exhibit or permanent museum?

Tourism

Unfortunately....at present...the town lacks a "focal point" to build around – the best available land to do that is to take half of the center parking lot on Main St. and convert it to something that catches the eye of the visitor in a town square concept

Tourism

- The focal point could be a statue properly placed
- It could be the Military Walk of Fame
- It could be a fountain
- It could be a piece of sculpture

Tourism

Offer historical driving, bike and walking trails

- Connected to West Point/Walk of Fame
- Connected to Fort Montgomery
- Connected to Bear Mountain
- Connected to Cornwall, Garrison, Peekskill or other historical points of interest
- Come up with a great looking map
- Test guided tours

Tourism

Could we tie ourselves to a Duck Tour of the Hudson?

Tourism

U.S. Cultural and Heritage Marketing Council Tourism

What we have to do

- Check racks at all area venues and make sure we fill them with our materials
- See that we're properly advertised in tourist and business directories
- Create a great Calendar of Events; post it, hang it large, e-mail it; print it; mail it, even go door-to-door!
- Meet with state and county departments of tourism

Tourism

Consider naming a Tourism Director; advertise that this department exists; find a desk for it; make sure the phone takes messages

Economic Development

Promote a regional business expo (or an economic development day for just our town) and hold it here

- with speakers
- attractions
- one-on-one opportunities to meet politicians
- press coverage
- special deals for customers on this day
- invite all residents to join us
 - This is not to compete with what West Point does

Economic Development

- Lobby the public sector harder than ever for Tax Increment Funds and Business Improvement District money
- Float a bond issue?
- Find the real advocates in local, regional state and federal government and cultivate them
- Seek out what is possible in terms of grants, demonstration projects, stimulus funds, etc.

Economic Development

Name an Economic Development Director?

- The person could even be a business owner
- The position can be part-time

Economic Development

Pass the 3% local hotel tax!

Economic Development

Make sure store employees don't use prime parking spots

Economic Development

Is our Zoning Board and our Planning Board working in our favor?

Economic Development

Update the Master Plan

- Concentrate on what can be done, given limited resources
- Anything new or different in a town can get some of the residents upset in the short-run

Economic Development

Determine if West Point is our full partner or we have to go at it alone

Economic Development

Determine the level of risk we need to take

Economic Development

- Two really good things to shoot for?:
 - Help the present land owner to build a shopping center by the Holiday Inn on 9W
 - Get an investor/builder to buy a few stores that are attached to one another in downtown Highland Falls and convert the space

Economic Development

Insist on more uniform store closing times

Economic Development

Come up with an “open on Sunday” strategy

Economic Development

Bring back the nights too by coming up with clever promotions for families, for young people, for adults looking to enjoy free time

Economic Development

We need an anchor and Rite Aid is not that....

Economic Development

The right kind of food store to replace Key Food could attract both visitors and residents and that could be a big winner

Economic Development

Even if you have a strong food store operating, there would still be no retail anchor here

Economic Development

When you make Main Street one-way:

- Then we can widen the pavement to allow more benches and cafe tables

This can be done without touching the federally-owned service road off of Main St.

Economic Development

Store owners must “pass muster”

- Sorry, no more laundromats and pizza parlors
- Adhere to uniform store design standards and styles
- There must be standards of performance, especially to offer exceptional customer service

Economic Development

A fast-growing segment in this country are retail franchises. Do we love them in

The Highlands?

Economic Development

Bring in stores that offer a higher level of unique and quality merchandise

- What categories of stores do you want???

- Is there a chain we should concentrate on?
- What incentives can we give them to open up here?
- What fact sheets/material can we supply brokers and landlords to help sell the space?

Chamber Involvement

- Post visible chamber signs
- Chamber calling cards
- Have a working phone number
- Banner/visibility at community events

Chamber Involvement

Take Sandy's DVD/streaming video and circulate it frequently

Chamber Involvement

Operate a Welcome Wagon

Chamber Involvement

Reach out to our temporary residents in a more serious way

Chamber Involvement

Bring guests to chamber meetings

- We need lawyers, West Point decision-makers, moms, architects, sign-makers, printers, budding entrepreneurs, students, ordinary citizens who are passionate and more – and join committees!

Chamber Involvement

Create a newsletter?

- Should we concentrate more of our editorial, time and money on cultivating tourists – or – on local area residents?

- Targeting tourists can be vast opportunities, with several counties within driving distance
 - Plus, we have thousands of visitors to West Point

Chamber Involvement

- Stress member benefits and increase member benefits
- A “signature pick” should be on the bottom of everyone’s e-mail saying they’re a member of the chamber and direct readers to a web address
- Look to a creating a joint, self-funded merchant marketing fund

Young People

- Consider building a children’s play area or having a Gymboree here
- Get kids to work with the Garden Club to plant flowers and trees and let’s hang up their art work!
- Let’s make economic development and marketing the town a student project @ O’Neill High
- Let’s have the young people create interesting promotions using social and mobile media

Publicity

- Publicity “takes a village”
- We need sponsors/backers – like a Home Depot, Habitat for Humanity, American Express, Sears, etc. – this is do-able
- Much more needs to be written and talked about this town – can we write buzz-worthy columns and advertorials?
- There’s an array of free media out there
 - But it takes time and effort

Publicity

Get public opinion on our side by stressing economic development is to improve the residents' quality of life

Planning

Let's write ourselves a business plan

- It includes a situation analysis, a marketing plan, a research plan, a publicity plan, a mission statement and a vision statement
- Let's partner with West Point and the public sector to get this done
- Let's write measurable and achievable goals, objectives, strategies and tactics
- Let's put due dates and make people responsible for completing action items

Thank you!