

APPENDIX D: PUBLIC OUTREACH RESULTS

D.1 2014 Downtown Business Survey

In coordination with this master planning process, SOM conducted a survey of downtown businesses in order to get input on local revitalization efforts. The following is a summary of key findings as they relate to this document.

Survey respondents generally felt positively about Downtown Springfield with respect to the following factors:

- 1) Businesses seek ways to cooperate with other local businesses;
- 2) Respondents are overwhelmingly satisfied with their building location;
- 3) Vast majority of downtown businesses have been here for over 20 years;
- 4) Events are helpful for business (e.g. Holiday Open House, Alumni Weekend, Stellefane, Farmer's Market, Great Hall Events, Market Madness, etc.);
- 5) Feel safe during the day.

Survey results indicate that the Downtown would benefit from addressing the following common complaints:

- 1) Concerns expressed about loitering, safety (evening/night), insufficient parking;
- 2) Look and feel of downtown does not help business;
- 3) Lack of a positive image;
- 4) Many business owners are apathetic about technical or financial assistance programs.

To help in SOM's downtown revitalization efforts, this survey also identified the following priorities or desired future conditions:

- 1) Top four things that attract people to downtown:
 - a. Dining
 - b. Movies
 - c. Library
 - d. Banking
- 2) Other desirable future events (e.g. Sat. evening street fair, professional conferences, alumni weekend dance)
- 3) For housing, respondents want to see condo units or loft/studio spaces
- 4) Top four businesses that respondents want to see in downtown:
 - a. Bakery
 - b. General merchandise
 - c. Brew pub
 - d. Coffee shop
- 5) Priorities to improve the economic condition of downtown:
 - a. Woolson Block
 - b. Odd Fellows
 - c. Mason Bldg.
 - d. Handly Bldg.
 - e. SEVCA
 - f. Parks
 - g. Empty store fronts

D.2 SOM Website Survey

Springfield on the Move collected responses from an ongoing website survey conducted between 2011 through 2013. The following is a summary of the results of that website survey. There were 19 respondents during this period. Responses are listed in a generalized order of frequency, with the most common responses listed at the top of the list.

Why do you come to Downtown Springfield?

- Post Office
- Bank
- Library
- Restaurant
- Town Hall
- Services
- Commute through Downtown
- Shopping
- Vault/museum
- Farmer's Market
- Church
- Comtu Falls

Issues / Problems in Downtown:

- Run-down buildings / need for façade improvements
- Empty storefronts
- Lack of shopping, shopping variety or weekend shopping
- Crime / smoking / loitering
- Poor infrastructure conditions (e.g. rough roads, sidewalk cracks/weeds, poor lighting)
- Lack of parking
- Poor signage
- "Slumlords"
- Traffic congestion

Desired Use for Downtown:

- Sidewalk cafes / vendors
- Events / festivals (e.g. music, multicultural or family-friendly events)
- More shopping opportunities (e.g. clothing, mercantile, grocery, wine, shoes, music store, artisan/craft shops)
- More restaurants / cafes (e.g. bakery, coffeehouse)
- Things to do (for teens)
- More businesses
- More parking / parking garage

D.3 Survey of Key Stakeholders

A survey was created via Survey Monkey as part of this effort. Key business people, property owners, and economic development, real estate or similar professionals were asked to complete the survey. Of the total respondents of the survey, 66% were business and/or property owners, 22% were economic development/similar professionals, and 11% were town officials. Below is a summary of key findings:

- Efforts to improve Springfield’s image as well as enhance the look and feel of the Downtown are desired.
- The local assets and existing conditions that are most helpful in their support for downtown revitalization include internet speed, quality of life in Springfield, local infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks, street lighting, etc.), quality local work force, and property values/rent. The Town Revolving Loan Fund program and Regional Brownfield Program were also identified as important, but to a lesser degree.
- When asked what the major issues are that limit economic development, the respondents identified the following as the key issues: certain building owners, crime or perceived safety concerns, out-of-town competition, and buildings that do not meet state building code. Lack of grants/financing to renovate buildings and a lack of parking/convenient parking were also identified as limitations.
- The survey asked respondents to rate the potential viability of the desired new downtown businesses that were originally identified in the 2014 SOM survey. Based on survey responses, the more viable new business types for Downtown Springfield revolve around food and entertainment: brew pub, coffee shop, bar and grill, bakery and restaurant.
- Respondents identified the following additional new desirable business types for downtown: trade school, specialty retail (e.g. books, gifts, art, jewelry, kitchen supplies, fabric/yarn, craft store), personal service (e.g. barber, cobbler, tailor), and a market/coop.
- Respondents indicated that uses best suited to the second and third floors of Main Street buildings include: professional offices, residences, studio, co-working space and business incubator.
- The survey asked: What type of commercial uses are appropriate for the plaza and along Clinton Street, River Street or Chester Road that will not compete or otherwise hurt Downtown revitalization efforts? Responses varied, but key themes include automotive businesses (e.g. mechanic, gas stations, car dealerships), large industrial uses, hardware/farm supply store and grocery store.
- When asked what types of additional residential units are needed in downtown, respondents showed a clear priority on focusing efforts to improve the conditions of existing units first. They also showed strong support for apartments for moderate income households (about \$42,500/year) and market rate apartments.
- Survey responses showed support for a long list of revitalization initiatives, but the following efforts rose to the top as areas to focus on to incentivize downtown revitalization:
 - Expedited local permit review for priority land use types;
 - Provide clear signage (e.g. to parking, business district);
 - Additional sidewalk/crosswalk improvements;
 - Beautification efforts (i.e. planter boxes, flowers, banners);
 - Parking deck on factory street; and,
 - Street trees along Main Street.

D.4 Public Meetings

A public meeting was held in the Great Room at One Hundred River Street on April 23, 2015. There were approximately 70 people in attendance. A significant number of excellent comments were collected during the meeting and after the meeting, submitted by mostly by email or Facebook. A significant portion of those comments were regarding a desire for a more specific vision statement. The steering committee attempted to incorporate as many of those as possible into this document.

The following is a summary of key points/comments expressed at this event:

- BRAT is working with the Town and State to inventory street trees
- Consider a “river renaissance” (perhaps “Springfield – A River Runs Through it” or "Reinventing the Black River"):
 - invest in recreation infrastructure

- improve the ecological health of the river
- turning the community toward the river
- Transform the river into an asset/economic boon
- Consider removal of certain buildings in order to improve access to and visibility of the river
- Safety is of paramount concern:
 - Need a community safety program with a positive slant (which is what Project ACTION is)
 - Need better street/sidewalk lighting
 - More people walking = improved safety
- Need year round trash pick up
- Improve river access for recreation, picnics, etc.
- The arts need to be a strong component of our downtown strategies
- A successful downtown has lots to do – arts, music and food are a large component of that
- Concerns with developing a park behind Lovejoy with respect to flooding, regulatory restrictions, liability, etc.
- Grow businesses based on existing activities (e.g. an optics shop/Stellafane)
- What does it mean for buildings that are not “red” on the priority buildings map? Does that diminish the ability to sell those properties?
- Youth population is an asset:
 - Existing assets: Rec. center, library, Dance Factory
 - Need more youth opportunities
 - Need a teen center / a youth-run business in the teen center
- The plan needs concrete strategies, such as to relax/eliminate zoning parking standards for existing buildings in downtown
- Advertise our great high school
- Consider angle parking on Main Street
- Make the Miller Arts Center a priority building
- Clarify what it means to be a priority building
- Hydro power
- Year-round trash, recycling, composting bins per Act 148 (VT Recycling Law)
- Need recycling transport
- Plant ornamental trees for color
- More downtown events (e.g. motorcycle event, bluegrass festival)
- Paint/improve building facades
- Include a planned space for children. Right now the only public space in the entire downtown designed with children in mind is the children's room at the public library. Other towns have indoor playspaces (Chester, Brattleboro), museums (Rutland, Norwich) and even the occasional child-friendly restaurant. Any of these would be a welcome addition to the downtown.
- I sincerely believe Springfield is ready for action, therefore my first suggestion is that we need to continue to build on this momentum.
- The plan as presented, had the appearance of a wish list, and I think the town needs a vision, something with more coherence, something that shows continual progress, but also something big and beautiful.
- If we had an artist’s rendition of what some of the proposed infrastructures looked like, that would make it become more alive, and more inspiring.
- Visuals to make the changes seem real and attainable. Create the dream that people can see.

- A plan that ties everything in, but also shows what gets done first, second, etc. Prioritize and set goals. We know we will not be able to do everything at once, but have a phase in plan as opposed to something that is piecemeal and later shows no planning or forethought.
- Lack of money always becomes an obstacle, but so much so that it has paralyzed the town. If we create the will, and we are persistent and creative, we can achieve much of what we want. Tell it like it is: if we do not invest in our town, it will not thrive. Everyone talks about the tax base, but to attract people to town we need to demonstrate we have a strong school system, a good infrastructure, we have a positive attitude, and we have a coherent plan for improvement.
- Put pressure on the owner of the Hanley building to do something about it. Beyond doubt it is the ugliest and most visible building to visitors who come to Springfield via I 91.
- Public art work: it is beginning to look way too haphazard. The original stagecoach that was placed on the Hanley building seemed like a good idea, but when executed only amplified the ugliness of the building. Subsequent paintings are out of scale (the young girl in white who is reading a book), and again highlight everything that is wrong with the building. Although the scope of the downtown plan does not include artwork, the current stuff around town is a good example of what could happen to town if a coherent plan is not in place.
- Create the idea we need to actively pursue the goals. Connect money to the idea that taxes buy us goods and services. Put ongoing pressure on our local and state governance to become champions of change.

Numerous comments were also submitted regarding a draft vision statement. Section 4.1 was rewritten in order to address these comments.