



A program of the MAINE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

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## Summary Report from the Start Up Team Visit to Presque Isle

October 2009

Presented to the Presque Isle Downtown Revitalization Committee  
Cathy Beaulieu, Chair

and to the  
City of Presque Isle's Planning and Development Department  
Ken Arndt, Director

*Maine Downtown Center team members:*

Roxanne Eflin, MDC Program Manager  
Terry Ann Stevens, Co-Chair, Maine Downtown Center –  
Maine Department of Economic and Community Development  
Abbe Levin, member, MDC Advisory Council - Maine Office of Tourism  
Greg Paxton, member, MDC Advisory Council - Executive Director, Maine Preservation  
Bill King, MDC Senior Advisor  
Jayne Palmer, MDC Senior Advisor  
Rochelle Bohm, Maine Preservation Field Representative  
Denis Lachman, Architect/Consultant

**Healthy, thriving downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts are  
assets to communities endeavoring to sustain or grow their local  
economy and create or retain jobs.**

## INTRODUCTION

The Maine Downtown Center (MDC) is a program of the Maine Development Foundation (MDF). MDF believes that vibrant downtowns can be an economic engine of growth; can serve as an attractant to young people, creative economic ventures, retirees and diverse populations; and can mitigate costly sprawling land use development patterns. The MDC helps communities throughout the state revitalize their downtown economy, preserve and enhance appearance, and boost the image of their traditional business districts using a range of services and assistance.

We utilize the successful **Main Street Four-Point Approach**® developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center as its foundation for assistance. This approach emphasizes economic development within the context of historic preservation and is based on principles of self-determination and direct community participation. The Main Street Approach focuses on four key areas of revitalization which are worked simultaneously:

- **Organization.** Involving all constituencies having an interest in downtown revitalization and management of both human and financial resources. Organization helps everyone work towards the same goals and maximizes involvement of public and private leaders within the community;
- **Design.** Implementing projects that improve the appearance and functionality of downtown buildings and physical environment. Design enhances a district's appearance and pedestrian amenities while preserving its historic features;
- **Promotion.** Creating programs that market your downtown to potential and existing customers, producing special events and festivals, and promulgating a positive image of downtown. Promotion brings people back downtown by helping to attract visitors, shoppers, and investors; and
- **Economic Restructuring.** Studying your community's economy and market opportunities and using the information to develop programs that strengthen and expand existing businesses and aid in recruiting new businesses to downtown. Economic restructuring stimulates business development and helps strengthen the district's economic base.

The comprehensive approach has long been proven an effective methodology for revitalizing traditional, pedestrian-oriented commercial districts in your downtown. In essence, the Main Street Four-Point Approach® stresses grassroots involvement in the revitalization process where the community works beyond just the downtown stakeholders, to develop a compelling vision for your downtown.

Each Main Street program is locally driven, responds to locally identified priorities, and is locally funded. The Maine Downtown Center is committed to be a partner in this essential revitalization process for the long term.

## OVERVIEW OF THE MAINE DOWNTOWN NETWORK

As part of a three-tier approach to downtown revitalization in Maine, the MDC has launched the **Maine Downtown Network**, an affiliate to our successful Main Street Maine program and Downtown Institute. The Maine Downtown Network (MDN) program provides a range of services and assistance to meet a variety of community commitment and readiness levels with technical support through its staff and other experienced consultants.

The MDN is for communities just starting a downtown revitalization effort and/or for those hoping to achieve Main Street Maine status. MDN services help communities build an appropriate organizational and funding base for a comprehensive downtown or neighborhood commercial district revitalization program. Participation as a MDN community does not guarantee selection as a future designated Main Street Maine community, although it will help communities strengthen their revitalization efforts.

### **MDN communities are required to:**

1. Understand, commit to and follow the Main Street Four-Point Approach® to downtown revitalization (Organization, Design, Promotion and Economic Restructuring) established by the National Trust Main Street Center and promoted by the Maine Downtown Center.
2. Maintain and report on quantitative measures of success, specifically volunteer hours and re-investment statistics and share these with the MDC Program Manager at least twice annually or as requested.
3. Develop and/or maintain a volunteer board, including representatives of downtown business entities, the greater community and local government, to oversee the continuing development of the local downtown revitalization program for the terms of this agreement.
4. Engage staff, committee and/or board members and volunteers in ongoing training offered by the Maine Downtown Center. Travel expenses for such training shall be paid by the Local Program, unless otherwise provided by the MDC. Discounted registration will be made available to MDN Local Program participants to attend Downtown Institute sessions and the annual Maine Downtown Conference.
5. Share lessons learned from their experience as a MDN Local Program and share documents and products with the MDC and other communities in instances where sharing will not compromise the work of the Local Program.
6. The Local Program will illustrate the acknowledgement of the receipt of the MDC's services by crediting its participation, and as a beneficiary of, the MDN program through the appropriate methods (i.e., website, printed acknowledgement in public notices, press releases, project signs, publications, verbal recognition at public meeting, etc.)
7. Pay an annual participation fee based on population.

**The MDC will provide these additional services to MDN communities:**

1. Designate a MDC Program Manager to act as liaison with the MDN Local Program and to facilitate communications between the Local Program, the Maine Downtown Center, other Maine communities and the National Trust Main Street Center where appropriate.
2. Organize and conduct an initial Start-Up Visit whereby the MDC Program Manager and members of the MDC Advisory Board, Senior Advisors and selected consultants will visit the MDN Local Program to conduct an informal needs assessment and offer initial observations to help organize the Downtown program.
3. Organize and conduct a Year One Organizational Visit to assist the MDN Local Program in developing a start-up checklist, work plan creation and fund raising strategies.
4. Organize and conduct a Year Two Organizational Visit identifying progress and provide suggestions for moving forward.
5. Conduct training for board members and/or committee members, MDN Local Program Managers (where appropriate), and community volunteers, providing intensive and comprehensive training on the content and methodology of the Main Street Program at the local level.
6. Provide resource and consultant information to the MDN Local Program in topic areas specifically related to organization, design, promotion and economic restructuring.
7. Assist in the selection of a Downtown Manager, if appropriate, and provide orientation and training at the MDC office.
8. Provide for the MDN Local Program's membership in the National Trust Main Street Center for two years during the term of the agreement.
9. In general, facilitate learning among Maine Downtown Network and Maine Street Maine communities and the general public.
10. Post success stories and testimonials from the MDN Local Program on the MDC website and share links to the National Trust Main Street Center and other state coordinating programs.

In summary, the Maine Downtown Network is what you make of it. Tap into the energy! Consider yourself part of a growing family of historically rich, civic minded, volunteer-driven cities and towns in Maine – with passionate people committed to protecting and enhancing their special sense of place and courageous enough to invest the energy necessary to convert their vision of a vibrant downtown to reality. Now let's get to work!

## THE START UP VISIT

In July 2009, a group of enthusiastic downtown supporters representing both the public and private sectors met with the Maine Downtown Center's team. Our discussion focused on past efforts, current activities and future visions. The walking tour took the group into key businesses and buildings on Main Street, including the Wintergreen Arts Center which was undergoing rehabilitation. We returned for dinner, and later for a post-dinner reception, to share immediate observations and discuss next steps as a Maine Downtown Network community. This report captures comments, ideas and suggestions from the team for consideration as you begin to work toward the Main Street model for downtown revitalization, incorporating the four points discussed previously.



*Report photos by Roxanne Eflin, Program Manager, Maine Downtown Center*

## ORGANIZATION OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESQUE ISLE

Effective downtown revitalization efforts require the energy, leadership, vision and passion of an organized, engaged and diverse group of downtown supporters. Presque Isle is fortunate to have such a group downtown, led by the Presque Isle Downtown Revitalization Committee (PIDRC), which started meeting as an ad hoc committee in the winter of 2005-06. In April 2008, the PIDRC became a publicly charged board with funding provided and members appointed to regular terms by the Presque Isle City Council. They have organized themselves into the Main Street Four Point committee model and are enthusiastically and competently staffed by Jamie Francomano with the City of Presque Isle's Planning and Development Department.



*PIDRC is easy to locate on the City of Presque Isle's home page*

PIDRC has solid footing toward the next step of becoming a separate 501(c)3 nonprofit organization in the future. They have posted their vision and mission statements to their website, currently hosted within the City's website, and have a clear understanding of the Main Street Four Point Approach®. They have also developed a downtown branding logo around their nickname, The Star City. "Downtown Presque Isle. Shine On. Good Times" which was adopted in 2009.

### *Vision statement:*

The Downtown Revitalization Committee is a community-based organization that works to preserve and advance Presque Isle's historical heritage by emphasizing economic vitality of the downtown district, keeping the downtown and surrounding area economically viable and attractive, and maintaining the wonderful quality of life that exists.

### *Mission statement:*

It is our mission to encourage our community to preserve and reinvest in the economic, aesthetic, and cultural future of Presque Isle by promoting viability and vitality of the downtown.

We are impressed with the caliber of volunteers and the depth of civic leadership, which we encourage the PIDRC to continue engaging to help spread the work and bring in more partners. Engage everyone! Downtown is the heart of your community, and it is essential to have broad based support.



*Lara Cannon, Executive Director, Wintergreen Art Center (left) and Cathy Beaulieu, PIDRC Chair join City Planner Jamie Francomano (far right) on the Downtown Team's walking tour.*

PIDRC's Chair Cathy Beaulieu is a strong, impassioned leader and a successful local businesswoman. We encourage her to delegate and develop highly-functioning committees in order to keep the movement pulsing forward and prevent burn-out. As with many of our participating communities, often the Chair or Board President does much of the heavy lifting – primarily because (as with Cathy) they do it so well! We encourage balance within the leadership to spread the enthusiasm and groom others to pick up the pace when, and if, she ever wishes to step back from the role as Chair and lead spokesperson.

The City's contribution of both human and financial resources to PIDRC's effort is important and much appreciated. City Planner Jamie Francomano has been assigned to spend "a quarter of his time" staffing the PIDRC Board of Directors and its four committees. Other staff members in the Planning and Development Department also provide support to downtown projects on occasion. Presque Isle City Council currently provides funding to the PIDRC Board of Directors in the amount of \$13,000 to \$14,500 annually. Jamie is a true advocate for the program – living and working downtown. His understanding of city planning and downtown revitalization is impressive. We strongly encourage Jamie, PIDRC members and other City staff members to receive training in historic preservation in order to fully understand the *essential role* that historic preservation, and the accompanying incentives, plays in economic development.

The City's commitment is clear. It is important for other civic leaders who do not yet have a stake in downtown to be persuaded by influential leaders to get involved to help lead the effort. As the PIDRC continues to gain momentum, and potentially establishes itself as a separate nonprofit organization, City government should position itself as partners, facilitators and implementers, encouraging the leadership roles to be served by the private sector. Our experience shows us that when local government provides all the answers, few others are motivated to get involved. As Senior Advisor Bill King says

“you do have a great sense of pride among the business owners and a 'can do' attitude." You need to spread that around - inspire others to be positive, including your City leaders who need to believe in what you all can do together. They must want their downtown businesses to survive and prosper. It's all together for success!"

We have been provided with a copy of the May 2008 Downtown Master Plan commissioned by City Council from J.W. Sewall Engineering. This plan, to be effective, should be kept fresh and impart an enthusiastic vision, clarify priorities, set deadlines and assign responsibilities. As you have effectively demonstrated, organizing your efforts and your master plan into the Four Points is recommended. Determining the boundary of your downtown program area will help focus your efforts. If you have not done so already, we encourage you to compress the geography to your downtown core.

A few other Organization observations and suggestions:

- Web presence is crucial, as you know and have demonstrated very well – good job! The PIDRC's home page within the City's website is easy to find and simple to navigate. Please link the MDC's website to yours and include the fact that you are an official Maine Downtown Network community!
- Fundraising is an ongoing challenge and opportunity. We encourage you to “think in threes” for income sources: 1/3 from the City, 1/3 from downtown businesses and 1/3 from the residents and special events. A balanced fundraising plan is important to help spread the ownership and prevent a setback should any one source be cut or curtailed. You should work in tandem from bottom to top/top to bottom - establish your budget and a funding pyramid. If you have not yet done so, this is the time to inventory your assets and promote these as a selling tool. This is also the time to ask each of your downtown stakeholders to sign on with a gift then secure one or more lead gifts while you are obtaining grassroots support from every resident and business. A number of small gifts are as important as your top gifts when building your base of support. And remember to thank every donor in writing within 48 hours after their gift is received. You may need to partner with a 501(c)3 nonprofit as your charitable fiscal agent.
- Public relations about your revitalization efforts should be constant – in the press, on public access television and in educational presentations by your members. Develop a PowerPoint presentation and take your message into the schools to educate and inspire teachers and students (K-12) and subsequently, their entire families.
- We urge the PIDRC to maintain a continued positive presence at City Council meetings and invite one of them to serve on your board, if they do not already. It is useful to rotate the spokesperson role at Council meetings, which are televised, in order to show the many faces of downtown and develop speaker leadership.
- Have some fun times together, preferably after hours, at several different businesses. The Bath Business Barometer is an excellent model, resulting in team building.

We encourage the Downtown Committee to take advantage of the training and network opportunities made available by the Maine Downtown Center, including the Downtown Institute – six sessions held throughout the year in Augusta on a variety of topics specific to the Main Street Four Point Approach®. We strongly believe that an informed and well organized group, comprised of downtown retailers and business owners, local residents, nonprofit organizations and municipal government, has the singular ability to elevate downtown Presque Isle to the prominence it rightly deserves.

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## DESIGN OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESQUE ISLE



The overarching slogan for the Main Street program is “economic development within the context of historic preservation.” Historic buildings provide the distinctive setting for downtown revitalization and, when combined with a beautiful natural setting, are a community’s greatest development assets. Presque Isle is fortunate to have a number of architecturally and historically significant buildings which help define your character. Your good historic building stock is relatively intact and there are signs that building owners are ready to progress to stage two with rehabilitation. The entire community, led by PIDRC in concert with the City’s Planning Department and Jamie, need to recognize the quality of their buildings and use the benefits of the historic tax credits to propel them to the next level. As we continue to state: historic preservation is a proven economic development tool and will significantly raise the level of revitalization here to the “star” status it deserves.

As Aroostook County’s Star City and leader, Presque Isle’s success with the preservation methodology could positively influence other communities in the county, struggling with similar issues in their commercial cores. “Just demolish the eye sores” is not well considered and will result in gutting the heart of your community of its heritage and distinct character and thus jeopardizing your strong position in the regional marketplace as a community with heart and heritage. These buildings may merely need proper rehabilitation guidance to correct deferred maintenance and/or unsympathetic changes that have occurred over time.

Embrace those historic buildings! Conduct a historic survey of every building within the downtown district using forms provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. Christi Mitchell (287-2132) will provide guidance or provide you contact information of professional preservation consultants who can assist you through this process. Trained

volunteers often conduct reconnaissance level surveys of historic areas, beginning by gathering all the historic photos possible which has the extra bonus of assisting property owners, your Design committee and the City in making key façade design decisions. This survey information is the important first step in determining whether Presque Isle's downtown is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places – or whether only specific individual buildings are eligible. Either way, National Register status is vitally important for a number of reasons, including economic incentives for preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, or redevelopment – and it comes with no local restrictions.



*Preservation opportunities abound! This new home for Wintergreen Art Center at 149 State Street is the corner gateway building to downtown as accessed via the airport and the west via Routes 227 and 163. The interior of the upper floor ballroom was a happy surprise!*

We encourage you to investigate some form of local preservation legislation to help protect your historic built environment – your key downtown asset – and to incentivize private investment downtown. Thousands of towns and cities nationwide have adopted historic preservation ordinances, including many in Maine. Some of these ordinances are more advisory in nature, which Presque Isle may wish to consider at this stage. To learn more, contact either/or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (287-2132), Maine Preservation (775-3652) or the Maine Downtown Center (622-6345.)

We also encourage you to develop simple design guidelines for downtown buildings. Check out Gardiner Main Street's efforts here – their publication is posted to their website. These will serve to inform, educate and encourage good stewardship practices and incorporate savvy energy efficiency methods while retaining historic building fabric. We noticed a number of buildings that needed a fresh coat of paint and some simple maintenance. These are easy opportunities for volunteers to pitch in to make an immediate difference.

Most often, changes over time detract from the original design integrity – we see many examples of this erosion in downtowns across Maine, including Presque Isle. All is not lost! Small changes can make a significant difference and will begin to build energy and similar interest by building owners up and down the street. *The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the*

*Treatment of Historic Buildings* offers practical, common sense advice to building owners and contractors. Base your design decisions upon those historic photos you gathered or find clues in the building. You will begin to accomplish two things: 1) restore the authentic appearance of these character-defining buildings and/or 2) rehabilitate buildings with design sensitivity to original design principles and the neighboring context. Nationally, appreciation and interest is growing for 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture and Presque Isle has the “bone structure” and architectural character worth preserving.



*Two very different storefront treatments - the one on the right retains its historic integrity.*



*These two storefronts, seen in context*



*The Downtown Team experienced Main Street traffic volume and noise up close and personal on our walking tour. To paraphrase one of our Downtown Team members: “Bypass, bypas, bypas!”*

Building density is a good thing in downtowns. Connected facades invite pedestrian traffic and helps create a symbiotic energy that is distinctive from the detached commercial

buildings that generally flank downtown or appear randomly at the gateways. That said, the “super blocks” made pedestrian crossing challenging, even dangerous, though we were impressed with the effectiveness of the pedestrian cross light in front of the Northeastland Hotel. We imagine the City has studied traffic calming alternatives – keep at it! Your community leaders must summon the courage to question design guidelines for major roadways when the roadway in question is your one and only “Main Street.”

Denis Lachman, Lachman Architects and Planners, who served as design consultant on our Downtown Team, shares the following:

- Super Blocks – These extra long blocks discourage people from walking and put extra unnecessary pressure on curbside parking. Use the interior of the super block for parking so the precious perimeter street frontage is reserved for shops and people. Find and create opportunities to penetrate the super block with walkways, so pedestrians can access Main Street with a few steps from interior parking rather than hiking the perimeter. There is obviously much quality fabric to work with, as well as major challenges from super blocks and Route 1 traffic – and plenty of it!



*Local discussion about the future of the building (2<sup>nd</sup> to left) includes its rehabilitation to serve as a pass-through to parking areas in the rear. The façade, though suffering from deferred maintenance, has great architectural interest. The strong unbroken façade rhythm of this block is significant character defining feature of the street and possible future National Register district.*

- Vacant Storefronts – Vacant storefronts make downtowns feel “hollow” and unappealing. Start an “adopt a storefront” program where teams of Design committee members can work together to enliven vacant storefronts.
  - ✓ Reducing dark cavernous voids by installing a temporary wall or curtains a few feet behind the storefront and provide lighting (on a timer). Next, introduce rotating displays which could be historic photos of the building and/or community, work by local artists and/or youth, local business display ads, your library or a “what is happening on Main Street” display etc....

- ✓ Divide wide and deep storefronts into small “incubator” spaces that are cheaper and easier to lease for “start up”.
- People Matter - Downtown Revitalization is about designing Main Street to better accommodate people, not snow plows. Stick to improvements that emphasize people, even if it does not make trucks happy. Drivers have accommodated streets for people all around the globe.
- Riverfront District - Presque Isle is unusually fortunate. Few cities have such an opportunity to create a new riverfront commercial district within steps of an existing well developed Main Street. Think long term about this once-in-a-century opportunity. Incorporate an overall street grid pattern as a continuation of downtown to organize buildings and parking, rather than creating streets and buildings around parking lots. Because Main Street has so much traffic, this new district with a well designed street grid could become an adjunct pedestrian oriented secondary “main street”. Make sure the new district is compact and high value to compliment Main Street, rather than diffuse, cheap and draining from Main Street. As planned, seek opportunities for pedestrian connections to the new neighborhood from Main Street.



*The City is working on a pedestrian/multi-use plan with design improvements for the area behind Main Street and linking to Bicentennial Park near Presque Isle Stream and Riverside Drive.*

We recognize and are excited by your efforts to “green up” the large expanse of connected parking lots and impervious surface behind (west of) Main Street leading to the river and park area. As we have seen with a number of other Maine downtowns, these parallel trail/park/river connection efforts are superb for collaborating with a variety of new users to downtown. The challenges for PIDRC are many; two of which we mention here: 1) remaining focused on Main Street activities while thinking and acting broader, and 2) way-finding signage and actual *links* to Main Street is essential so the trail is experienced as a downtown amenity and part of a comprehensive “healthy downtown” approach to alternate access points to the downtown commercial core. News about our Green Downtowns program will be made available soon.



*Invest in the “backs” of buildings so they become more functional and attractive.*



*We noticed a number of buildings needed a fresh coat of paint and some maintenance – an easy opportunity for volunteers to pitch in to make an immediate difference. This red glass tile is an example of early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century building materials that are relatively rare in Maine’s historic commercial districts.*

### Streetscape and other Design Aspects

PIDRC has a good feel for the value of incremental steps that are easily attainable and result in noticeable improvements. Benches, flowers buckets, window displays, attractive and effective signs, color and street trees all enhance the downtown experience. You are fortunate to have a very walkable, pedestrian friendly downtown. To encourage more of this, a complete streetscape rendering is suggested in order for building owners, merchants, residents and – importantly – your elected officials – to visualize the possibilities.

While you are working these larger goals, there is much you can accomplish right now.

- Gateway design: A larger issue, and one that plagues many of Maine’s historic downtowns, is gateway design. We encourage you to continue working on a four-season solution that results in a “WOW!” moment when people finally arrive in downtown Presque Isle, through the surrounding fringe development.
- Window Displays: The Downtown Team noticed that many window displays need improvement and freshening. This is an opportunity to involve a variety of people from the community, particularly UMPI and NMCC students. What about a window display contest? Invite a display professional to give an evening workshop with hot tips on how to make storefront displays sing! Encourage members of the Design and Promotions committee to take pictures during their travels of any and all storefront window displays (and signs) that catch their eye and make them pause.

Those are the displays that work. Study the elements and help your downtown merchants improve their greeting-card-behind-glass. (Macy's window designers can't all be wrong!)

- Plantings: The streetscape plantings looked a bit sad when we were there. Correcting your street tree issues is a large but vitally important project we encourage you to continue through the Canopy project, or other means. Make sure your plantings are well maintained and replaced immediately when necessary.
- General tidiness: Walkways, doorways and windows all need cleaning - a great activity to engage your committees, volunteers, building owners and merchants.
- Signs: A big issue with big results. Historic New England communities are known nationally for their excellent signage – quality materials, nicely designed and scaled to the building. The Downtown Team could not determine if you have a sign ordinance in place, and if so, if it is enforced. There are a number of very good signs downtown as well as opportunities for improvement. Consider hosting a sign workshop and providing small matching “seed” grants to merchants who need to replace – or repair – their signs. The MDC can help you with sample ordinances or simple design criteria to encourage downtown merchants/owners to improve signs.



*These are a few examples of visible yet tastefully designed and appropriately scaled downtown signs....*



*...and a few others with opportunity for improvement.*

## Promotions Observations and Suggestions for Presque Isle

Congratulations on your new Star City downtown logo – the beginning of your branding campaign for downtown Presque Isle. Branding images are most effective when used widely – by merchants, partner organizations, the City, etc. Your new Star City logo brand should be used everywhere - on banners, shopping bags, marketing materials and public signs including way-finding, directional, entry gateways, facility identification and city entry monuments. These signs, combined with other design amenities, will help create an appealing environment for residents and visitors and need to be produced in sustainable materials for durability and easy maintenance. (For a PowerPoint on Promotions, Marketing and Branding, presented through the Downtown Institute, visit the MDC website at [mdf.org/SessionVResourceList.php](http://mdf.org/SessionVResourceList.php).)

The Crown of Maine Balloon Festival is a signature event, supplemented by your Main Street event focused on bringing people to downtown. We urge you to continue working with all your partners – Wintergreen Art Center, Presque Isle Historical Society and many others to bring people downtown in every season. Events are excellent opportunities to engage volunteers of all ages and interests in downtown, and help build the base of support Presque Isle needs to move forward in a Main Street model of downtown revitalization.

Sister Cities are another good way to connect merchants and residents to communities with some connection to Presque Isle (e.g., Bangor/St. John, NB.) You don't have to have just one. Not only does this encourage tourism and school connections, but it provides good publicity and good will between communities.

Remember, also, the importance of retail events which serve triple duty: 1) they bring shoppers to downtown, 2) they get shoppers inside stores spending money, and 3) they can galvanize merchants to your downtown mission, vision and efforts. Many of our participating Main Street Maine and Maine Downtown Network communities have created annual signature retail events that have become extremely successful. Cathy Beaulieu described an innovative February event involving, as our Downtown Team recalled, “a lot of chocolate!” You might try an “Early Bird” sale as a retail promotion for the first day of hunting season; details are available through the Maine Downtown Center. These events are easy, fun and are great media photo opportunities! And please share your success stories with the MDC for posting on our website.

Take the lead to build pride in your built environment. Find opportunities to work with SAD1, UMPI, NMCC, your library and private teaching facilities (all ages) to create lesson plans centered around the history and architecture of Presque Isle. The Design and Promotions Committee could work together on projects such as:

- creating an architectural scavenger hunt downtown
- developing a monthly downtown building trivia contest
- printing a coloring book based on historic downtown and residential architecture



*Consider creating a pod cast walking tour utilizing your new interpretive signs.*

Through your association with the Maine Downtown Center, you have truly vast resources available to you through the National Main Street Center’s members-only section online. You will find a substantial amount of practical advice, innovative ideas and guidance to help you develop a solid promotion strategy for downtown Presque Isle. We encourage you to take advantage of our low-cost Downtown Institute sessions offered six times a year.

## ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESQUE ISLE



*This handsome storefront with recessed entry, mosaic tiles and transom signage caught our attention as a superb space for a quality, year round retail business. Focusing on ground floor retail with upper levels reserved for offices and residential uses will help insure a proper economic mix of retail/office and keep pedestrian traffic high. Some communities have institute vertical zoning to accomplish this multiple-use goal.*

Presque Isle’s downtown is loaded with amenities other communities *wish* they had! The Downtown Team was particularly impressed with the substantial number of upper floors that have either retained their original residential use or where new housing units have been created. Upper floor use is often a very difficult goal to achieve, though it appears that

much of downtown Presque Isle has figured out how to accomplish this. Establishing a diverse mix of residents – living right in downtown and within immediate proximity - is essential to keep downtowns thriving.



*Café Sorpreso is a new shining star on Main Street!*

Business retention and recruitment requires the work of downtown ambassadors. Package your amenities and assets and go after the businesses you lack to further strengthen downtown Presque Isle in the regional marketplace. Downtown Team member, Abbe Levin, from the Maine Office of Tourism states “you have an abundance of amenities, both natural and built, and unique features - all great assets.” She lists a few that stand out:

#### Main Street

- Congressman Mike Michaud’s District Office would be a good opportunity for a PIDRC window display
- A few great Main Street businesses (e.g. Café Sorpreso, Morningstar Art and Framing, Wilders Jewelry store and many more)

#### Amenities, local and regional

- UMPI
- NMCC
- Airport

#### Built and Natural Environment

- Train tracks may provide opportunity for trail development or actual rail use
- Access to outdoor recreation - Nordic Heritage Sports Club
- Presque Isle Stream river frontage and park
- Bike path which begins in Riverside Park

#### Local Cultural Attributes

- Turner Memorial Public Library
- Walking Tour/Interpretive Signs: PI Historical Society offers free guided tours
- Wintergreen Arts Center has the potential to have a significant impact on downtown growth and economic restructuring
- Future Downtown Farmers Market
- Summer Concert Series
- Braden Theater – terrific magnet for downtown users and opportunity to extend business hours during certain promoted days of the week

- Historic Fire Station owned by the Presque Isle Historical Society
- Native American community
- Franco-American community
- Potatoes, Potatoes!



*We loved this positive statement on your website!*

We noticed a few vacant storefronts on our tour. Since a primary objective with downtown revitalization is to fill storefronts, we see this as a great opportunity to study your market needs and invite the businesses you desire to locate downtown. Your recent market survey should have revealed a number of community services and consumer needs.

Marketing the historic tax credits is another strategy to stimulate downtown development - by contacting real estate-oriented new owners, encouraging residential development, getting a few smaller projects started at the same time and marketing downtown as a whole during the process. For more information on this, contact Mike Johnson at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (287-2132) or Greg Paxton at Maine Preservation (775-3652.)

Farmers Markets are wonderful additions to downtowns. You have the space and the potential to attract multitudes while promoting locally grown food and healthy living. This seasonal amenity should be widely promoted to residents and cross-marketed with downtown businesses. Waterville Main Street's new Barrels Community Market has been an instant success – serving a local need why creatively providing an income stream to the downtown program. Contact Shannon Haines, Executive Director, for details.

Expand free WiFi throughout downtown - include this on gateway signs and watch your pedestrian traffic grow! Lamp posts with power outlets near the base and an adjacent bench attract laptop users – who also drink coffee, need lunch and will shop downtown *first!*

Utilize your new connections to the Maine Downtown Center's resources (staff, Advisory Council, Senior Advisors, website, annual conference, Downtown Institute and the 16 other participating Main Street Maine and Maine Downtown Center communities.) Also, take advantage of your membership with the National Trust Main Street Center and tap into their vast online resources and listserv.

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**We applaud Presque Isle for becoming a Maine Downtown Network community and look forward to working with you in the future.**