

COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION SPECIALIST

- HISTORIC DOWNTOWNS
- NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICTS

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Main Street® Specialist Report Borough of Lehighton Organizational Development Visit May 29-30, 2019

Section I

Visit Purposes

The Organizational Development services provided to Lehighton Borough staff and Lehighton 'Main Street' Steering Committee members during an on-site visit on May 29-30 were a follow-up to a Main Street® technical assistance and training visit that occurred October 22-25, 2018. That earlier visit concentrated on the setup of the Main Street® Steering Committee and the development of subcommittees that followed the Main Street Four Point Approach to downtown revitalization.

On this visit, the Main Street® Specialist delivered services that were designed to guide the process for moving Steering Committee members to a higher level of proficiency in Main Street® methodology and to prepare those members for undertaking tasks leading to establishment of a fully-operational downtown revitalization organization. The training provided instruction on the:

- Formation of a Board of Directors and selection of Board Officers
- Establishment of Four-Point Main Street® standing committees
- Development of an organizational one-year comprehensive work plan
- Application process for IRS 501 (c)(3) non-profit organizational tax status
- Filing of state incorporation papers
- Adoption of organizational by-laws
- Creation of a public relations campaign to gain volunteers and financial supporters
- Guidance on the development of a fundraising plan for program support and hiring staff

Visit Components

Teresa Lynch, a Main Street® Specialist, provided all services for this Organizational Development Visit. *(Teresa was part of a two-person Main Street® team that conducted a Community Assessment Visit to Lehighton in October, 2013, and authored the follow-up Visit Report. Teresa also delivered initial Main Street® organizational development services to the Borough during the October 22-25, 2018 Downtown Revitalization Visit.)*

The following outlines the components of the May 29-30, 2019 visit:

The first day of the visit was comprised of:

- Meetings with Borough Manager, the GLVR Government Affairs Director, and several Steering Committee members to:
 - Review with the four Subcommittee Chairs the projects already underway; discuss how subcommittees were performing; and initiate ideas for new projects that might be undertaken
 - Discuss the process for creating a board of directors for a new 'Main Street' organization
 - Provide guidance on setting up the structure for a non-profit organization
- A meeting with four LDI Officers to discuss LDI's continuing role as an independent organization and LDI's future role/relationship to a new 'Main Street' organization (if that is what evolves)
- A Main Street® Board Orientation presentation for all Steering Committee members -- held at the Lehigh Outdoor Center

The second day of the visit was comprised of:

- A meeting with Attorney Nanovic to discuss legalities and issues relative to forming a new stand-alone 'Main Street' organization and to examine the potential for combining LDI with a 'Main Street' organization.
- Meetings with Borough Manager and Steering Committee members to:
 - Review mission, purposes, policies and practices for a 'Main Street' organization as outlined in draft bylaws.
 - Discuss the benefits that could accrue to the Borough by making application to the Pennsylvania Downtown Center for designation as a Keystone-Main Street Program.
- Individual meetings with Chairs and members of the Economic Vitality, Promotion, and Design Subcommittees to discuss the projects members of each subcommittee are working on and to outline ways in which new activities can be integrated into the coming year's work plan.
- Training and Power Point presentations in Main Street® Public Relations and Fundraising practices for the Organization Committee and all other Steering Committee members able to attend – held at the Lehigh Outdoor Center

Section II

Establishing an Organizational Structure

TO ALL STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS –

During my visit to Lehighton I presented a huge amount of information and Main Street® organizational training to Steering Committee members and LDI officers on the process for establishing a free-standing non-profit ‘Main Street’ organization. I know that all of that information coming at you in the short time that I was on site must have seemed a bit overwhelming.

I was not able to be available after our final meeting to respond to the many questions you had with regard to putting this new-found knowledge into practice, particularly given the limited number of volunteers you now have in place. I also realize that I left Steering Committee members with a large ‘to do’ list on ways to utilize Main Street® methodology without fully explaining the steps for gaining the people and financial resources you will need to bring a new organization into being.

I am hoping that the ‘Next Steps’ recommendations below will ease the minds of Steering Committee members, respond to some of their lingering questions, and give everyone more time to catch their breath and not feel so stressed about the tasks that lay ahead.

However, before I get to the ‘Next Steps,’ I do want to address a few of the concerns/ideas that came out of the Steering Committee’s June 11, 2019 meeting in which committee members engaged in a discussion about their ‘takeaways’ from my visit, meetings, and training sessions:

- **Small town – limited volunteer capacity.** *This is certainly a logical concern that a couple of members voiced. I guess the best way to address it is to say that I have seen the Main Street® approach work in communities with populations as small as 1,200. Included below are references to some designated Main Street® programs with populations around the 5,000 mark. Several of those on the list are ‘small towns’ I have personally worked with in the past in Virginia, Arkansas and Maine; and the three others are Pennsylvania Downtown Center-designated Keystone-Main Street programs with populations under 5,000. Some of these ‘small town’ programs have been in existence for more than 20 year. Since it is always good to ‘compare apples to apples,’ you might want to go onto their websites to see how well these programs are working with limited volunteer and financial resources:*
 - *Historic Downtown Bedford (PA)*
2,800 Population
<http://www.downtownbedford.com/index.html>
 - *Explore Sewickley (PA)*
3,800 Population
<https://www.exploresewickley.com/>

- *Danville Business Alliance (PA)*
4,600 Population
<http://visitdanvillepa.org/about/danville-business-alliance/>
 - *Orange Downtown Alliance (VA)*
4,700 Population
<https://www.theoda.org/>
 - *Berryville Main Street (VA)*
4,185 Population
<https://berryvillemainstreet.org/>
 - *Gardiner Main Street (ME)*
5,600 Population
<https://www.gardinermainstreet.org/>
 - *Main Street Helena (AR)*
6,300 Population
<http://www.mainstreethelena.org/programs>
- ***Creation of a downtown Visitors Center.*** *This is an excellent idea which came out of your June 11 meeting discussion. I think it could work very harmoniously with a ‘Main Street’ program – possibly using the same facilities/downtown location for both. In many small communities the Main Street® program handles promotion of all visitor attractions. Those functions could certainly be combined.*
 - ***Inviting Emmaus Main Street program to a Chamber seminar.*** *I definitely think it is worthwhile to: find out how Emmaus has structured its ‘Main Street’ program; understand the relationship between the Emmaus program and the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (if any); learn the ways in which it connects with Pennsylvania’s designated Keystone-Main Street organizations; and find out how the program interacts with the many Pennsylvania downtown revitalization programs that are using parts or all of the Main Street® approach but have no connection to the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. Just a small caution as you explore the construct of the Emmaus program – If Lehighton decides to pursue Keystone-Main Street designation, the structure of the Emmaus program may not be the model to follow. But you will be able to figure that out when you decide to actually apply for designation.*

Next Steps Recommendations for Main Street Steering Committee:

NOTE: The ‘Next Steps’ Recommendations outlined below for establishing a stand-alone Lehighton ‘Main Street’ organization are reliant on discussions with Atty. Nanovic which suggested that LDI retain its status as a separate non-profit organization and on my 35 years of experience working on organizational development issues with Main Street® communities across the country.

As often quoted, "Rome wasn't built in a day." It could easily take a year and a half for the Steering Committee to get to the point where its downtown revitalization effort has developed the volunteer capacity and the financial resources to move forward with the process for getting a fully-operational organization off the ground and is ready to hire staff.

You will note that there are no timeframes for accomplishing each of these steps. The timeframe will be dependent on how quickly the Lehighon Main Street Steering Committee moves through the process. Some of these steps might be working concurrently and some of these recommendations might move in order of tackling. You will make those decisions.

1. Main Street Steering Committee should meet with LDI Board Officers to define:

- a.** Differing missions of LDI and a new 'Main Street' organization. Spell out responsibilities of each organization -- e.g.
 - LDI has responsibility for planning/managing all downtown special events. Gets involved in beautification efforts – particularly with regard to the Col. Jacob Weiss Park.
 - New 'Main Street' organization would handle: downtown business and property development (including market analysis, creation of incentives, property/business inventory, and business owner survey); design assistance for encouraging building façade improvements, all urban design enhancements within the public spaces (including signage), and all other design aspects affecting downtown's visual appearance; retail promotions and marketing/image development projects for the downtown business district.
- b.** How each organization can benefit from two organizations partnering on downtown revitalization projects – e.g.
 - Individuals involved with LDI, including its officers, can serve in whatever capacity they would like with the 'Main Street' program; and vice versa for those members of the Main Street organization who want to participate on whatever level with LDI's activities.
 - Each organization helps the other by expanding volunteer capacity in the broader Lehighon community. The 'Main Street' organization can help LDI by giving it access to all of the new volunteers the Main Street program can bring in (because of its comprehensive approach). These volunteers can be harnessed to assist LDI in facilitating/implementing its special events/park beautification projects.
 - The new 'Main Street' organization benefits because: LDI takes the responsibilities of planning and managing special events off the 'Main Street' program's shoulders as well as continuing its work with the Borough's Parks & Recreation Dept. on maintenance/improvements to the Col. Weiss Park area.

- Both organizations create partnership opportunities with each other on new projects that come down the pike which are essential to supporting downtown revitalization mission.

At this joint meeting with LDI the Steering Committee should also discuss the many ways in which the Borough could benefit from the establishment of a stand-alone 'Main Street' organization –

- Community volunteer capacity will be expanded and burdens on government will be reduced through public improvement activities undertaken by the organization.
- The organization will combat community deterioration by preserving and enhancing the historic character of the downtown business district.
- A major role for the organization will be the creation of a positive image for downtown as it promotes the downtown business district as an exciting place to live, shop and invest.
- The organization would alleviate pressures on Borough staff and Borough Council to manage everything related to downtown revitalization activities.
- A Main Street organization will serve as a conduit and a liaison for resolving problems and confronting issues that downtown business owners and residents believe are affecting the economic and social vitality of the downtown district.

2. Those members of Steering Committee who have the time to devote should:

Conduct reconnaissance visits to two or three designated Pennsylvania Keystone-Main Street programs in the near vicinity to learn how those organizations are applying the Main Street Four Point Approach® in their communities.

The visits will help the Steering Committee better understand the relationship and benefits that come from being part of a Pennsylvania Keystone-Main Street Program.

The visits will also provide an opportunity to meet with Main Street® staff and board members in those communities and to create a relationship with those individuals. Main Street® organizations are always willing to lend a hand to novice programs. They have been through the process and can offer excellent advice.

3. The Steering Committee should sponsor a Public Forum that will:

- a. Educate the community on the Steering Committee's mission, its goals for establishing a Main Street® program, the accomplishments it has already made, the services the organization intends to offer, and the benefits the community could derive from becoming a designated Pennsylvania Main Street® program.
- b. Invite key contacts from the Pennsylvania Keystone-Main Street communities that were visited by the Steering Committee to present their downtown successes to the Lehighton community – thus creating more momentum for moving Lehighton's revitalization efforts forward.

- c. Generate enthusiasm in the community and create an environment for additional volunteer participation (and possible financial support).

4. The Steering Committee should call a meeting a few weeks after the Public Forum to:

- Review outcomes and feedback from the Public Forum
- Make a decision on whether to move forward with steps for forming a new 'Main Street' organization. If the decision is positive, begin working through the steps for getting a new organization in place, as follow:
 - Start discussions on naming the new organization. Here are just a few ideas. You will certainly come up with others:
 - Lehighton Main Street Partners
 - Heart of Lehighton
 - Downtown Lehighton Partnership(or)Alliance
 - Downtown Lehighton Renaissance Program
 - Review Sample By-laws (*the document is included as a separate attachment*) and agree on any changes to be made.

Note: I have reduced the number of Board members recommended in the sample bylaws to read 7 – 11 members rather than what was originally suggested because I understand your limitations on finding enough volunteers to serve as board members in these early stages.
 - Poll Steering Committee members as to individuals who are willing to serve on the board and reaffirm those who will be serving as committee chairs. (While the end goal is to get 9 members from the Steering Committee to serve on the Board, it might be possible at this point to work with just 7 members (4 chairs, 3 officers) composing the new board – with the balance of Steering Committee members working on committees). Put together the names of 7 Steering Committee members willing to serve on board.
 - Find professional legal/CPA assistance for getting state incorporation papers together as well as IRS 501 c3 nonprofit application completed. Figure out what the budget for that might be.
 - Develop timeframe/work plan for getting the new organization in place.
- Determine whether the new Lehighton 'Main Street' organization should eventually seek Pennsylvania Keystone-Main Street designation
- Decide what needs to be accomplished/put in place before application can be made to the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. Study carefully the benefits that would accrue to Lehighton by gaining official designation. Those benefits could add a major dimension to getting public and private financial support for the organization.

- Reach agreement on whether to apply to Keystone-Main Street designation and set a timeframe for when the 'Main Street' organization will be ready to apply.

5. The Steering Committee should hold first Main Street® organizational meeting with 7 board members and cover as much as possible of the following agenda:

(Note: All Steering Committee members could be invited to this meeting, but it will be the first time that the board members would be exercising their decision-making authority.)

- Review board member roles and responsibilities
- Make decisions on public relations materials that need to be created (based on Organization Committee's recommendations) in order to gain community support for the new organization
- Put together a work plan for outreach activities that can educate the community on the mission/goals of the new organization so that there is a clear understanding of the benefits to the community and the Borough in establishing the organization. (The Organization Committee should have already come up with a plan that defines the ways in which outreach activities can be formed and launched.)
- Take the lead on getting state incorporation papers approved and moving the IRS 501 (c)(3) application forward
- Determine a budget for program operations that covers hiring staff and develop a plan for seeking program funding based on public/private contributions, a membership campaign, in-kind assistance, and other fundraising activities.
- Outline a timeframe for launching a membership drive and approaching Borough Council for funding.

Section III

Recommendations for Four Point Committee Work Plans

Over the past five months, each of the Steering Committee's four subcommittees have been working on projects within their individual work areas. Some of the activities that were undertaken followed recommendations made in the Main Street® Specialist's Report on the October 22-25, 2018 Visit. Other projects initiated by the subcommittees were responsive to opportunities that arose during the last several months. The following sections describe each subcommittee's workplan for projects either recently completed or in progress. Those descriptions are followed by recommendations for new activities that might be tackled in the coming year.

DESIGN COMMITTEE WORKPLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1. *LDI had taken the lead on establishing Leighton as a D&L Trail Town. LDI then received a grant from the Trail Towns' program for funding three D&L Trail Town welcome signs to be located at gateways to the downtown district. One of those signs has already been placed on the Route 209 triangular entrance onto 1st Street. As part of its work in beautifying the downtown business district, LDI also purchased half-barrel decorative planters which have been placed in locations on 1st Street as well as in the Park in order to present a more welcoming appearance in the district.*

D&L Welcome Signs. While LDI took primary responsibility for facilitating Trail Town designation and finding the funding for the D&L Welcome Sign project --

It is recommended that 'Main Street' Design Subcommittee members join with LDI in facilitating the installation of the remaining two D&L welcome signs.

Barrel Planters. Since the planter project is going to be one that continues on from year to year— **It is recommended** that the Design Subcommittee now assume primary responsibility for that project. There are definitely maintenance issues that must be tended to with regard to these planters; and a clear policy/plan should be drawn that:

- Outlines the responsibilities of the business owners who have planters in front of their shops;
- Defines the care and maintenance of barrels within the Col. Weiss park area; and
- Addresses the costs for filling the planters with plants and other materials during each season

It is further recommended that the Design Subcommittee should assume responsibilities for any future landscape design issues related to the urban spaces within the downtown district and on entrances into the downtown district.

Recommendation #2. *Members of the Design Subcommittee have been meeting with business and property owners on 1st Street to encourage them to improve the facades of their buildings. An attempt was made to offer incentives to encourage the building owner of a large, visible building on 1st Street to make improvements. Design Subcommittee members did all of the leg work for establishing a façade improvement plan that would be minimal in cost for the property owner, and yet, make a major improvement to the building. They provided design assistance and found a contractor to cost out the project. But, in the end, it was a 'no go' for the property owner. While the Design Subcommittee struck out on this particular project, the approach used to encourage rehab was a good one.*

It is recommended that Subcommittee members begin the process for identifying another large, visible building on 1st Street and offer similar assistance to an existing receptive property owner or to a potential investor who is willing to do a major rehab on a building that he or she might purchase.

Recommendation #3. *There has been some movement on the part of a couple of Design Subcommittee members to establish a building/business inventory of the downtown business district – but the information-gathering has mostly been restricted to certain targeted vacant buildings.*

It is recommended that the Design Subcommittee work with the Economic Vitality Subcommittee to assemble a Building and Business inventory of all commercial buildings in the downtown district. (A Building/Business Inventory template form has been previously distributed to the Subcommittee.) Collecting the information needed for the Building/Business Inventory might require the Design and Economic Vitality Subcommittees to look to other volunteer resources within the community as this is a project that will require a dedicated team to properly complete.

Recommendation #4. *On all three of my visits to Lehighton, I've addressed the need for a focused effort to begin the process for putting a comprehensive urban design plan for the downtown business district in place. The plan would address all of the public design issues currently detracting from the physical appearance of downtown. Through LDI's efforts on getting Trail Towns Welcome Signs located at the gateways to the district, one aspect for improving entranceways to downtown has been addressed. However, several challenges to the urban landscape remain. These relate to: visual pollution along the byway, unattractive entranceways leading to the downtown district, limited linkages for moving pedestrians and vehicles easily into the business district, lack of wayfinding signs throughout, and needed enhancements to the public spaces along 1st Street.*

It is recommended that the Borough begin the steps to find funding sources that could underwrite a Master Urban Design Plan for improvements to public areas leading to, and within, the downtown district. If such potential funding source is found, it is the Design Subcommittee that will play a primary role in assisting and supporting the Borough in its efforts to get such a plan in place.

Recommendation #5. *At the Design Subcommittee meeting and at the Organization Subcommittee presentation, there was some discussion about the benefits of getting a National Register Historic District designation for the downtown business district. Apart from the attraction that a downtown historic district presents to heritage and cultural visitors to the area, the economic incentive of historic tax credits afforded to property owners making major rehabs is significant.*

It is once again recommended that the Design Subcommittee begin an information-gathering process to understand the steps for nominating all, or part of, the downtown business district as a National Register Historic District. This will necessitate contacting the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office to ascertain whether such a district could be established for downtown Lehighton and to define exactly the process for getting to that designation. Establishment of a National Register Historic District could take a couple of years. But the economic benefits of such a District are immense for the redevelopment and reuse of large historic commercial buildings that are now vacant or underutilized. The investment of property owners who undertake significant rehabs of contributing historic buildings in the district would be eligible for the tax credits.

It is also recommended that the Design Subcommittee research whether property owners in the downtown historic districts of Bethlehem and Allentown have undertaken major rehab projects that utilized historic tax credits to help underwrite the costs of redevelopment. If such property owners/developers are identified, it is suggested that the Subcommittee make contact with one or two of these property owners and ask them if they would be willing to visit Lehigh to talk with the Design and Economic Vitality Subcommittees about how those projects were accomplished. Having investors describe their redevelopment experience utilizing Historic Investment Tax Credits would provide a very good education for Subcommittee members.

PROMOTION COMMITTEE WORKPLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Promotion Subcommittee is doing an excellent job on tackling two work areas of Promotion that are essential to expanding business vitality in the downtown district. The Subcommittee created two projects -- one in the field of 'Retail Promotions' and the other an activity in the subcommittee's work area of 'Image Development.' Both of these projects were well underway when I came for my visit, so I have no recommendations for improvements – only a suggestion that after the projects have been completed the Subcommittee carefully evaluate what went right and what went wrong and discuss how each can be improved if a decision is made to continue with both projects in the future.

Below are my notes describing the information I gathered on the two projects while I was on site:

- **'Sidewalk Sale' Retail Promotion:** The 'Sidewalk Sale' is the first retail promotion project undertaken by the Subcommittee. It ties-in with the existing LDI Farmers Market which runs 9-11 on Saturdays. The desire is to include as many downtown businesses as possible and to utilize the sidewalk areas on those blocks of 1st Street that are immediately adjacent to either side of the Park. Those businesses that not located in the vicinity of the sidewalk sale area would be invited to put their table/goods in front of a business that is not participating in the sale or in front of vacant storefronts. The thought is that there could be 10 – 20 businesses participating in the Sidewalk Sale.
- **'Business Directory' Image Development:** The co-chairs of the Promotion Subcommittee have been working on an image development project that is geared to promoting the array of businesses that are part of the downtown Lehigh community. They are creating a format for a binder that would include individualized flyers containing promotional information on participating businesses. Each flyer would be inserted into separate plastic sleeves in the binder. The flyers would have a map of the area on the reverse side to help shoppers locate participating businesses. Once the contents of the binder have been finalized, individual binders would be strategically placed in destination locations (such as area motels) and in all of the businesses participating in the business directory promotion. There is a thought that some sort of promotional card that would lend itself to one business recommending customers to another business could be included. It is felt that 20 – 40 businesses would participate in this business directory project.

I have nothing but praise and good wishes for successful outcomes for the Sidewalk Sale and Business Directory projects described above. But, not wanting you to rest on your laurels, I would like to add to

the Promotion Subcommittee's work plan for the coming year recommends a couple of projects that could jointly promote downtown businesses while enhancing downtown's 'family-oriented' image:

Recommendation #1. *I'm not sure how many Easter activities are already scheduled in the Borough on an annual basis that appeal to families with young children. But it is certainly worth looking into getting a downtown Lehighon Easter Celebration into the mix. Families with young children represent a demographic group that you want to encourage to come into downtown Lehighon and Eastertime presents an opportunity for the downtown businesses community to show how it feels about those young families.*

Of course most Easter celebrations include the usual fare – the Easter Bunny, photos, an egg hunt in the park, and other activities that are appealing to young children. But, if the Subcommittee gives it some imaginative thought, it could come up with a more unique activity to add to the mix. Here is a recommendation for an additional activity that directly involves downtown businesses owners in the Easter family festivities:

It is recommended that the Promotion Subcommittee create a 'raffle' for a giant **Easter Basket** which contains products, wares, and coupons from participating downtown businesses. The gift items in the Basket would be geared to adults and, particularly, those who are the parents of young children. In order to 'sign up' for the raffle, customers will need to visit participating businesses during the three weeks prior to the downtown Easter Celebration. The giant Easter Basket would be displayed in a prominent storefront window location on 1st Street during those three weeks. And the drawing for the raffle would occur on the day of the Easter Celebration, with much pomp and circumstance (perhaps a local radio station broadcasting from the site).

Recommendation #2. *The Christmas Holiday Season presents a major opportunity for Lehighon downtown businesses to express their interest in, and appreciation for, families who live -- not only in the Borough -- but throughout Carbon County. Again, I'm not sure how many activities go on in Lehighon during the Christmas season – there may be many. But it is extremely important for downtown businesses to stake their claim on a particular activity that will augment and enhance the season's celebrations.*

It is recommended that the Promotion Subcommittee begin making plans for integrating a business promotion/image development project for the coming **Christmas Holiday Season**.

Recommendation #3. Business Owner Survey. I am repeating a 'Long Term' recommendation that I first made in my October, 2018 report. I initially put the responsibility for facilitating the Business Owner Survey on the shoulders of the Promotion Subcommittee. But on this return visit, I understand that the Economic Vitality Committee has taken primary responsibility for getting this Survey completed. If it better fits with the Economic Vitality Subcommittee, that is fine – but it is important for Promotion Subcommittee members to help in whatever way possible to get the work done.

One side benefit that can come out of the Business Owner Survey is that it offers an introduction of the 'Main Street' downtown revitalization concept to business owners and gives your Promotion Subcommittee members an opportunity to tell the business owners they encounter about your planned promotional activities. It also provides a chance to garner more volunteers. The information gathered through the survey will help Subcommittee members gain a better understanding of what business owners think of the downtown district, what it is like for them to conduct business in the downtown, and what constitutes their unmet needs and concerns. The responses to questions on the survey will lead to increasing awareness of business owners' needs and provide insight on how to structure future business marketing/promotional campaigns. The Promotion Subcommittee members who are working on the Business Owner Survey project should not just drop the survey off at a business and expect a completed survey to be returned; but should confer with, and help, the business owner complete the survey.

ECONOMIC VITALITY COMMITTEE WORKPLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

I learned on my visit that members of the Economic Vitality Subcommittee had been actively engaged in assisting Kathy Henderson, CCEDC Director of Economic Development, put into place a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) Program for the Borough. LERTA is a tax incentive program for property owners to renovate or update a building to encourage businesses to locate and grow in an area. Improvements eligible for the LERTA program include repairs, construction, improvements to alleviate health concerns, economic use and to comply with ordinances or regulations. The area that has been targeted for the LERTA program is a little larger than downtown Lehighton. It is hoped that if the LERTA designation is approved, it will serve as a major incentive for property improvements in the downtown district.

There are three areas of work in which it is recommended that the Economic Vitality Subcommittee be engaged over the coming year. Here are recommendations relative to each of those work areas:

Recommendation #1. Business Owner Survey. The Economic Vitality Subcommittee will be taking the lead on the Business Owner Survey project so it will be this Subcommittee that will make decisions on the timeframe for conducting the business owner visits, who it is that is going to assume responsibility for each task, and if there is a budget involved in getting this project accomplished. Promotion Subcommittee members will assist the Economic Vitality Subcommittee in the survey work as much as they are able. It is estimated that about 40 businesses will be surveyed.

The visitations to downtown business owners will help the Subcommittee gain a better understanding of what business owners think of the downtown district, what it is like for them to conduct business in the downtown, and what constitutes their unmet needs and concerns. Small groups of two or three members of the Subcommittee (or individuals on the subcommittee) can utilize the Business Owner Survey as a means of getting out into the business community.

The responses to questions on the survey will lead to increasing awareness of business owners' needs and provide insight on how to structure future business incentive programs. The Economic Vitality Subcommittee members who are working on the Business Owner Survey project should not just drop

the survey off at a business and expect a completed survey to be returned; but should confer with, and help, the business owner complete the survey.

Recommendation #2. Encouraging Property Redevelopment. Working with the Design Subcommittee, investigate the potential for a major property development project that is in a visible 1st Street location for the rehab and reuse of the property to be developed as a small inn or B&B. There are potential investors in the downtown district who could use help in finding the right building and with defining its use and its design.

Recommendation #3. Building/Business Inventory. Again, working with the Design Subcommittee, assemble a Building and Business Inventory of all commercial buildings in the downtown district. Collecting all of the information needed for the Inventory might require the Design and Economic Vitality Subcommittees to look to other volunteer resources within the community as this is a project that will require a dedicated team to properly complete and it will take some time to get it accomplished.

ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE WORKPLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the main purposes of my May visit was to provide training to the Organization Subcommittee in its Public Relations work area. It will be the responsibility of Lehighon's future 'Main Street' Organization Committee to act as the resource and support for the Board in all outreach activities the organization undertakes. I believe that the information provided in that Public Relations training presentation will serve as a continuing guide for outreach projects that can be undertaken by the Main Street Organization Committee in the future.

However, the Public Relations training was never meant to be a 'to do' list for immediate action by the present Organization Subcommittee. I very much understand the limitations during this early stage – volunteer-wise and moneywise – for developing public relations materials and putting educational forums in place. So the key will be for the Organization Subcommittee to take the information that was presented in the Public Relations training and to winnow it down to the potential community outreach activities suggested in the presentation that are essential at this particular time, always keeping the projects as simple as possible and within the Subcommittee's present capacity to perform. As the Subcommittee moves along and increases volunteer capacity, you will be able to undertake more difficult and challenging projects.

Recommendation #1. The Organization Subcommittee members should review the PDF of the Public Relations training presentation to identify just what outreach activities suggested in that presentation are applicable to present circumstances.

Some of the Public Relations activities described in the training presentation were included in recommendations I made to the Organization Committee in my October, 2018 Visit Report and would seem to be still valid and do-able at this point of organizational development. Here are the outreach actions identified in that report that should be considered by the Organization Subcommittee:

- Utilize the information contained in the document entitled, "Benefits of a Main Street Program" to identify the groups/individuals in the Lehighton community which the Subcommittee wants to attract as supporters/volunteers/financial donors to the downtown revitalization program. The document outlines all of the reasons why these groups/individuals would want to participate.
- Encourage Chairs of the Steering Committee and the four Subcommittees to begin speaking about Lehighton's Main Street® downtown revitalization movement at group meetings held by other community organizations. (*The Organization Subcommittee would provide whatever support materials/information those speakers will need.*)
- Create printed materials, such as:
 - A 'Fact Sheet' that describes what the Lehighton Main Street® movement is about
 - Articles/features on downtown revitalization activities contributed to the Borough's quarterly newsletter
 - Inserts placed in Utility bills and Shopping bags
 - Regular press releases provided to media
- Get publicity for the Lehighton Main Street® movement through existing on-line platforms, such as:
 - The Borough's website; LDI's Facebook Page; other Lehighton community organizations' websites/Facebook pages.

And through new online entries, such as:

- Eblasts sent to known supporters of Lehighton's Main Street® downtown revitalization efforts
- Other social media platforms that can get to the various audiences identified as important to the downtown revitalization movement
- Encourage Chairs of the Steering Committee and the four Subcommittees to take advantage of all other P.R. opportunities, such as:
 - Appearances on TV/Radio to spread the word
- Be sure that the Lehighton Main Street® movement has a presence at all special events held in the downtown district

Recommendation #2. Expand the member composition of the Organization Subcommittee so that there are individuals on the Subcommittee who can be helpful in getting a comprehensive community outreach effort off the ground. The Subcommittee will need more members than are currently involved in order to tackle and manage the Public Relations activities suggested above. While all of the 'Main Street' Subcommittees could use additional volunteers, it is going to be the Organization Subcommittee leading the charge for generating support for the downtown revitalization effort throughout the broad Lehighton community. So it is essential that the Organization Subcommittee find volunteers that have the skills and talents to assume these tasks.