

## THE MAIN STREET APPROACH TO DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF THE FOUR-POINT PROGRAM

*Kent A. Robertson*

---

*Despite its widespread use as a downtown development strategy, little research has been conducted on the Main Street Approach established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Through the use of a national survey of Main Street programs and site visits to four downtowns (Tupelo, Mississippi; Danville, Kentucky; Cushing, Oklahoma; and St. Charles, Illinois), this article reports on how communities actually apply the elements of the four-point Main Street Approach — organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring — and discusses factors contributing to their usage and effectiveness. The article concludes with a discussion of the relevance of the Main Street Approach to members of the planning and design professions.*

---

## INTRODUCTION

The Main Street Approach is arguably the most widely used and heralded method of downtown revitalization — especially for smaller cities — in the United States. Established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and operated by the National Main Street Center (NMSC), this approach is grounded in a balanced four-point program that includes organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. Currently, there are over 1,000 Main Street communities and 43 state Main Street programs in the United States. Countless other communities not officially affiliated with NMSC have adopted this approach as well. Accolades for the NMSC and the Main Street Approach include: “It has proved to the nation that historic preservation is an effective revitalization tool for small cities” (Skelcher, 1992:19) and “The [NMSC] Center is the nation’s leader in the resurgence of small-city downtowns” (Keister, 1990). Based on a national survey of 57 small cities, Robertson (1999a) found the Main Street Approach to be the most successful of 16 downtown development strategies evaluated. Downtown consultant Hillary Greenberg went so far as to say that this approach “is almost a religion for some of these towns” (in Ehrenhalt, 1996:26).

Given its widespread use and many platitudes, the literature devoted to the Main Street Approach has been surprisingly thin. Moreover, most of the literature is descriptive, not based on independent empirical research, and not focused on analyzing the actual use of the Main Street Approach. A series of short magazine articles appeared in the early 1990s that presented the evolution and key features of the Main Street Approach (Keister, 1990; Skelcher, 1992; Shepard, 1992). Along these same lines, a number of accounts have been published that provide overviews of state Main Street programs and select communities in Mississippi (Kelly, 1996), Oklahoma (Ehrenhalt, 1996), Indiana (Kronemyer, 1997), Kentucky (Walfoort, 2000), and Iowa (Guzman and Buehler, 2000). Walzer and Kline (2001) present short, descriptive profiles of three Main Street communities as part of their larger work on downtown economic development. None of these articles, however, are based on empirical research and analysis. Geographer Thomas Paradis has conducted thorough research on individual Main Street programs in Roswell, New Mexico (2002), and Madison, Indiana (2001); the focus of his case studies, however, was not on the utilization of the four-point approach.

The NMSC has published several books and reports, including a guide to using the four-point program (Smith, 1991) and a volume containing four-page profiles of 44 successful Main Street communities (Dane, 1997) that includes six survey cities from this study (Burlington and Corning, Iowa; Danville, Kentucky; and Chippewa Falls, Rice Lake, and Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin). NMSC’s Amanda West (1998) prepared a book that contained short profiles on Main Street events and festivals nationwide. The NMSC’s (1988) empirical study was based on a national survey and 16 case studies of downtown revitalization programs, half of which used the Main Street Approach; their focus was on downtown development in general, however, not the four-point program specifically. NMSC also continuously gathers data from their member communities through surveys, such as a recent census they published (NMSC, 2000). These in-house data-gathering projects, while providing useful information, do not constitute independent and objective research.

This article, therefore, is intended to help fill this large void in the literature. Its purpose is to examine the way in which communities actually implement the four-point approach. The article focuses on the following research questions:

- Do communities use the four elements of the Main Street Approach equally, or are certain elements emphasized more?
- What factors contribute to one element being used more than another?
- Do size of city, distance from larger city, or length of time in program impact how the four-point program is used?

- Under each element, what strategies have proven to be the most successful? What factors help to explain the relative success of these strategies?

## **THE MAIN STREET APPROACH: BACKGROUND**

The genesis for the Main Street Approach occurred in 1977 when the National Trust for Historic Preservation launched a three-year demonstration project. Its aim was to help save many threatened older commercial buildings located in small Midwestern downtowns. Three cities were selected for this pilot project: Galesburg, Illinois; Hot Springs, South Dakota; and Madison, Indiana. The Trust hired a full-time Main Street Manager for each city. Out of this pilot project emerged several key components of the Main Street Approach that are still fundamental today: the necessity of a full-time manager and a strong private-public partnership, as well as the realization that a strong organization, effective promotions, a commitment to quality design, and economic diversification needed to accompany historic preservation. The demonstration project was so successful that the Carter administration embraced it as a model for economic development (Keister, 1990), and it attracted funding from numerous federal agencies, including HUD, Department of Commerce, Small Business Administration, Farmers Home Administration, and the National Endowment for the Arts (Skelcher, 1992).

This success led to the creation of the National Main Street Center (NMSC) in 1980. A second demonstration was initiated that included 30 cities located in six states (Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas). This launched the emergence of state Main Street programs, which today play a critical hands-on intermediary role — such as selecting communities and providing training and technical assistance — in the workings of the Main Street Approach. State coordinators were hired in each state, but each community was now responsible for hiring its own manager. By 1985, nine more state programs were established, and, by the end of the decade, 600 communities in 31 state programs were affiliated with NMSC (Smith, 1991). Originally designed for communities with populations of 5,000-50,000, the approach expanded to include cities with larger and smaller populations during the late 1980s. In the mid-1990s, the program was expanded to include neighborhood commercial districts in larger cities (i.e., Baltimore, Boston, San Antonio, San Diego). Today, 43 states host Main Street programs. The states without a statewide program are Alaska, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, and South Dakota; with the notable exception of Minnesota, these are all predominantly rural states with generally sparse populations.

The formal development of the Main Street four-point program went hand-in-hand with the creation of the NMSC. The four points include:

- Organization: fundraising; committee structure; membership recruitment; and consensus building and cooperation amongst the many businesses, individuals, institutions, and government offices with a stake in downtown;
- Design: enhancement of downtown's physical assets and visual qualities (i.e., buildings, streetscapes, open spaces, waterfronts);
- Promotion: marketing the downtown to the public, working to enhance its image, and hosting events and activities to bring people downtown;
- Economic Restructuring: strengthening and diversifying the downtown's economic base.

Over the years, the NMSC has developed several key principles that underscore the successful implementation of this four-point program. First, the Main Street Approach is comprehensive and must integrate all four of the above elements. According to Kennedy Smith, Executive Director of the NMSC:

TABLE 1. Survey main street programs.

| City                   | 1999<br>Population | Program's<br>First Year | Distance From<br>75,000 City |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Anniston, AL           | 25,622             | 1993                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Florence, AL           | 39,028             | 1992                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Selma, AL              | 21,774             | 1984                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Camden, AR             | 13,115             | 1988                    | 91+ miles                    |
| Benicia, CA            | 27,236             | 1987                    | 0-30 miles                   |
| Hollister, CA          | 31,374             | 1987                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Lakeport, CA           | 4,899              | 1995                    | 91+ miles                    |
| Lindsay, CA            | 8,832              | 1988                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Dover, DE              | 32,099             | 1993                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Rehoboth Beach, DE     | 1,469              | 1996                    | 91+ miles                    |
| Seaford, DE            | 6,724              | 1995                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| <b>St. Charles, IL</b> | 27,957             | 1995                    | 0-30 miles                   |
| Bedford, IN            | 14,982             | 1986                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| Greencastle, IN        | 9,913              | 1983                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| New Albany, IN         | 40,273             | 1991                    | 0-30 miles                   |
| Burlington, IA         | 26,585             | 1986                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| Corning, IA            | 1,703              | 1990                    | 91+ miles                    |
| <b>Danville, KY</b>    | 16,767             | 1986                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Murray, KY             | 16,238             | 1998                    | 91+ miles                    |
| Somerseset, KY         | 13,203             | 1982                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| Covington, LA          | 9,197              | 1987                    | 0-30 miles                   |
| Winnsboro, LA          | 5,571              | NR                      | 31-60 miles                  |
| Corinth, MS            | 13,868             | 1991                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| Hattiesburg, MS        | 49,233             | 2000                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| <b>Tupelo, MS</b>      | 36,817             | 1991                    | 91+ miles                    |
| Alliance, NE           | 9,555              | 1994                    | 91+ miles                    |
| Central City, NE       | 2,901              | 1998                    | 91+ miles                    |
| Fremont, NE            | 24,541             | 1995                    | 0-30 miles                   |
| McCook, NE             | 7,769              | NR                      | 91+ miles                    |
| Bridgeton, NJ          | 18,358             | 1991                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Hammonton, NJ          | 12,791             | NR                      | 0-30 miles                   |
| Westfield, NJ          | 29,265             | NR                      | 0-30 miles                   |
| Roswell, NM            | 47,644             | 1987                    | 91+ miles                    |
| Silver City, NM        | 12,288             | 1986                    | 91+ miles                    |
| <b>Cushing, OK</b>     | 7,933              | 1998                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| Chippewa Falls, WI     | 13,136             | 1989                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| DePere, WI             | 19,978             | 1990                    | 0-30 miles                   |
| Rice Lake, WI          | 8,696              | 1992                    | 61-90 miles                  |
| Sheboygan Falls, WI    | 6,596              | 1987                    | 31-60 miles                  |
| Waupaca, WI            | 5,958              | 1996                    | 31-60 miles                  |

- Notes:
1. Population Source: United States Bureau of Census (2000), 1999 estimates.
  2. Program's First Year and Distance from Nearest City of 75,000 population taken directly from surveys.
  3. Case studies indicated in boldface type.
  4. NR = not reported on survey.

*... the four points of the Main Street Approach ... are an integrated, Zen-like package, not four separate categories into which activities are arbitrarily assigned. The overarching strategies the revitalization program adopts must cut across all four areas. This gives the program balance and ensures that activities in each part of the organization are tightly integrated with the other parts.*  
 (Smith 1999:2)

Second, a strong working coalition between the private and public sectors must prevail for successful downtown revitalization to occur. Third, a full-time Main Street Manager is essential to oversee the effective use of this approach. Finally, each community must recognize and take advantage of its own assets; thus, the four-point program should be applied differently in different communities (Smith, 1991).

## METHODOLOGY AND CASE STUDIES

The research for this study was conducted in two phases. First, a national survey was designed and implemented to determine the specific ways that communities utilize the Main Street Approach. In January 2001, surveys were sent to Main Street Managers in 100 communities located in 15 states. Addresses were obtained primarily through the NMSC website ([www.mainst.org](http://www.mainst.org)) where many state programs had their own websites that included information on member communities. Communities were selected to insure a balanced representation of population sizes; for each of the 15 states, surveys were sent to six to eight cities. The 40 Main Street communities that completed the surveys are presented in Table 1.

Once the surveys were returned, tabulated, and analyzed, site visits were arranged to four of these communities during 2001 and 2002. The purpose of these research visits was to see and hear firsthand how the Main Street Approach was working. Key informant interviews with the Main Street Manager, heads of active Main Street committees, board members, city officials, and the local press constituted the primary research activity. The four programs selected were the Downtown Tupelo (Mississippi) Main Street Association, Downtown Cushing (Oklahoma) America, Heart of Danville (Kentucky), and Downtown St. Charles (Illinois) Partnership. These communities were chosen for three reasons. First, based on their surveys, they were representative of many of the programs in the sample in terms of the distribution of their use of the four-point approach; none of the selected programs deviated substantially from the national findings. Second, the four programs represent 11 of the 12 categories — all but the under 7,500 population category — used in the subsequent section (see Tables 2, 3, and 4) based on population size, age of program, and distance from large city. And finally, their Main Street organizations were very willing to participate in this research project. Below is a brief overview of these four case studies.

Tupelo (pop. 36,817) is the regional hub of northeastern Mississippi. It is located approximately 100 miles from Memphis, Tennessee. The city has a diversified economy, although it is probably best known for upholstered furniture. The Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association was established in 1991. It has had one Main Street Manager — Debbie Brangenberg — since its inception, a most unusual occurrence. Tupelo is best known as the birthplace of Elvis Presley, a feature that attracts many tourists. The downtown contains a long-standing family-owned department store, a traditional hardware store where Elvis obtained his first guitar, City Hall, the county courthouse, numerous churches, a convention/events center, and a nicely landscaped streetscape. Currently, downtown Tupelo has a unique opportunity. A 30-acre parcel of land adjacent to downtown that was formerly used as the county fairgrounds has been obtained by the city. The Fairgrounds Project will include a new city hall, housing, a public square, and retail/office space.

The historic city of Danville (pop. 16,767), in central Kentucky, is located approximately 35 miles south of Lexington. One of the state's oldest cities, Danville was the site of the signing of Kentucky's first constitution in 1792 at what is now Constitution Square State Park in downtown. The Heart of Danville was established as the city's Main Street organization in 1986, making it the oldest of the four programs and one of the oldest in the survey. Julie Wagner, the latest in a series of Main Street Managers, took her position in 1998. The downtown is home to Centre College (founded in 1809), the Kentucky School for the Deaf (the oldest state-operated deaf school in the nation), a large regional hospital, and is the county seat for Boyle County. Danville, with its many handsomely preserved buildings (see Figure 1), was honored as a Great American Main Street by the NMSC in 2001, the first program in Kentucky so honored.

Cushing (pop. 7,933) is situated in north-central Oklahoma, approximately 65 miles west of Tulsa and 30 miles east of Stillwater. The city is known as the "Pipeline Capital of the World." Once a prominent oil production area, today there are nine major oil companies operating 23 pipeline systems near Cushing that have the capacity to store 30 million barrels of oil (Cushing Chamber of Commerce, 1999). Downtown Cushing America was created in 1998 as Cushing's Main Street organization. It has had several managers during its brief existence, the most recent being Beverly Abell.

Within the downtown can be found a movie theatre, a recently-opened community theatre, City Hall, a former hotel converted into a senior housing facility, and an old railroad depot currently being renovated. Broadway is the downtown's principal street.

St. Charles, Illinois (pop. 27,957), founded in 1834, is located in the fast-growing western suburbs of Chicago and is surrounded by much larger suburban cities, such as Elgin, Aurora, and Naperville. The downtown is situated on the Fox River (see Figure 2) and is directly at the crossroads of three busy state highways, including Main Street itself, also known as Illinois Highway 64. The St. Charles Downtown Partnership became a Main Street organization in 1995, and Neal Smith was named its newest manager in 2001. The downtown is becoming known for its many antique dealers/shops, its growing number of fine restaurants, and the historic Hotel Baker. Like Danville, in 2000 St. Charles was also honored as a Great American Main Street (two of only 40 programs nationwide to receive this competitive award).

#### **USE OF THE FOUR-POINT APPROACH**

A key survey question asked Main

Street managers to estimate the percentage of their organization's time and effort devoted to each of the components of the four-point approach. Although each component is very important, it was anticipated that there would be considerable variation in how this approach was implemented by communities. Tupelo's Jim High, based on his two years as President of the Mississippi Main Street Program, stated that "no community works the four-point approach the same way; each molds it to fit their own unique situation" (High, 2001). The NMSC strongly emphasizes that communities should apply the four-point approach to fit their local needs and assets (Smith, 1991). Moreover, anything approaching a truly balanced use of the four components (25% each) was deemed unlikely. In fact, only one of the forty survey cities — Hattiesburg, Mississippi — indicated that each component represented 25% of its efforts.

Given this, the final results were still somewhat surprising. Promotion was consistently the most heavily-utilized component, averaging 36.71% of the efforts being expended by the sample programs. The other three components were all clustered around twenty percent: design (22.09%), organization

FIGURE 1. Core block of historic buildings in downtown Danville. The two buildings in the center were recent recipients of façade improvement grants.

FIGURE 2. The recently redesigned Main Street Bridge over the Fox River in downtown St. Charles. The historic Hotel Baker is in the background.

TABLE 2. Use of the four-point approach: City population size.

| City Population     | Organization | Promotion | Design | Economic Restructuring |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------|--------|------------------------|
| Less than 7,500 (8) | 26.87%       | 31.87%    | 23.12% | 18.12%                 |
| 7,500-14,999 (13)   | 18.88%       | 41.92%    | 22.27% | 16.92%                 |
| 15,000-29,999 (10)  | 19.00%       | 37.50%    | 21.00% | 22.50%                 |
| 30,000-50,000 (7)   | 22.14%       | 32.14%    | 22.14% | 23.57%                 |
| <b>Total Sample</b> | 21.20%       | 36.71%    | 22.09% | 19.87%                 |

Notes: 1. Population Source: United States Bureau of Census (2000), 1999 Estimates.  
2. Number of sample cities in each category indicated in parentheses.  
3. Two sample cities did not report percentages.

TABLE 3. Use of four-point approach: Age of Main Street program.

| First Year in Program | Organization | Promotion | Design | Economic Restructuring |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------|--------|------------------------|
| 1983-1989 (15)        | 18.03%       | 42.67%    | 21.96% | 17.33%                 |
| 1990-1993 (9)         | 21.67%       | 33.33%    | 20.00% | 25.00%                 |
| 1994-1997 (7)         | 22.86%       | 33.57%    | 24.29% | 19.29%                 |
| 1998-2000 (4)         | 28.75%       | 26.25%    | 26.75% | 18.75%                 |
| <b>Total Sample</b>   | 21.20%       | 36.71%    | 22.09% | 19.87%                 |

Notes: 1. Five communities did not report the year that their Main Street program began and/or did not report percentages.  
2. Number of sample cities in each category indicated in parentheses.

(21.20%), and economic restructuring (19.87%). Furthermore, 28 of the 40 programs (70%) affirmed that promotion was either the most frequently used component or was tied for that position; by contrast, the next highest component — design — was most frequently used in only eight programs. Even when programs were broken down by city population size, age of program, and distance from nearest city with a population of 75,000+ (see Tables 2, 3, and 4), promotion was the most heavily-utilized component in every category except one. Let us examine these categories in greater detail.

The forty programs were first classified based on their city population size. The results can be observed in Table 2. While promotion was used most heavily in cities of all sizes, including 41.92% in cities with population between 7,500-14,999, there was no apparent correlation between size of city and emphasis on promotion. Organization was used most often in cities of less than 7,500 people (26.87%). Due to fewer financial and human resources, Main Street programs in smaller communities may find it even more essential to organize and efficiently utilize the resources they possess than programs in larger communities. The percentage of time devoted to design was remarkably consistent throughout the four population classifications, ranging only from 21.0-23.12%. Economic restructuring was employed a little more in the two largest population categories. Economic restructuring often requires more professional expertise and financial resources than the other components, and these are usually more available in larger cities.

Programs were also analyzed based on their age (Table 3). Of the 35 programs that answered this question on the survey, 24 (69%) were formed between 1983-1993, and thus are well established. The newest programs, created since 1998, unfortunately comprised a very small sample of only four programs (Central City, Nebraska; Cushing, Oklahoma; Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Murray, Kentucky); perhaps newer programs felt less qualified to respond authoritatively to the survey. A clear pattern emerged wherein organization was emphasized more in newer programs. This makes sense because a great amount of time and energy is devoted to getting everything, such as committees, volunteers,

TABLE 4. Use of the four-point approach: Distance from city with a population of 75,000+.

| Distance               | Organization | Promotion | Design | Economic Restructuring |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------|------------------------|
| Less than 30 miles (8) | 17.81%       | 45.00%    | 16.56% | 20.63%                 |
| 31-60 miles (11)       | 21.18%       | 35.00%    | 21.09% | 22.73%                 |
| 61-90 miles (9)        | 25.00%       | 34.44%    | 23.89% | 16.67%                 |
| 91+ miles (10)         | 20.50%       | 34.50%    | 26.00% | 19.00%                 |
| <b>Total Sample</b>    | 21.20%       | 36.71%    | 22.09% | 19.87%                 |

Notes: 1. Two sample cities did not report percentages.  
 2. Number of sample cities in each category indicated in parentheses.

work plans, and funding, in place during the initial years of a program. Once established, these areas often require less attention than before. Design was also utilized more often in newer programs. Two factors help to explain this. First, it is important to a fledgling Main Street program to have public recognition of its early successful efforts, and design tends to be the most visible manifestation of the four-point approach. Second, in the beginning, a great deal of time is required to persuade people of the importance of design. Over time, with proven successes, people can see the results for themselves. Promotion, conversely, was applied more frequently in the more mature programs, while no correlation was observed between economic restructuring and age of programs.

Finally, the programs were divided based on their distance from the nearest large city with a population of 75,000+ to see if the nearby presence of a larger market area would influence the use of the four-point approach. As can be seen in Table 4, promotion was employed most frequently in the programs closest to a large city (45%). Promotion, obviously important to downtowns in any location, is especially critical in places with close-by competition for retailing, services, and entertainment. On the other hand, design became more important to programs as their distance increased from a large city. In some instances, this is because these cities have been able to retain more of their older building stock due to the lack of intense development pressure — resulting in the demolition of buildings — often found closer to larger metropolitan areas. No clear patterns emerged with either organization or economic restructuring.

In the following four sections, each of the components of the four-point Main Street Approach will be examined.

## ORGANIZATION

A strong organization is the foundation upon which downtown design, promotion, and economic restructuring is built. Organization includes numerous fundamental activities, such as committee structure, funding, membership, and working relationships with local government and other organizations. Important to all Main Street programs, this element is especially critical to newer programs. In Cushing, where the Main Street organization was established in 1998, organization accounted for 40% of the program's time, nearly double the survey average of 21.2%. Newly-hired manager Beverly Abell, who had worked with several other Main Street communities prior to coming to Cushing, quickly determined that the program urgently needed stronger organization. To help provide structure to the many good people, projects, and ideas within the program, a work plan was completed during her first year (Downtown Cushing America, 2001).

The establishment of standing committees serves to organize, define, divide, and distribute the workload. Not surprisingly, the survey of 40 communities revealed that the most commonly used standing committees directly corresponded with the elements of the four-point approach: promotion (31 programs), design/preservation (31), economic restructuring (28), and organization (16). While

committees devoted to organization constitute the smallest number, it should be noted that committees for membership and fundraising, two important subsets of organization, each accounted for five standing committees in the survey. The fact that only five programs had a membership committee is somewhat surprising given that recruiting new members is a constant challenge for many programs, including Tupelo and Cushing. Six programs possess a standing committee specifically for a special event; Tupelo had two such committees, one for their Elvis Presley festival and another for their Christmas events.

The survey asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of their standing committees. On a 5-point scale with 5 being the highest rating, promotion (3.97) was rated as the most effective, followed by design/preservation (3.74), organization (3.44), and economic restructuring (3.08). Effectiveness correlates exactly with the use of each of the four Main Street elements (see Table 2). Promotion may be rated the most effective because it is often the easiest to recruit volunteers to. The Tupelo Main Street Manager explained that “more people understand and can relate to promotion than to the more technical areas of design and economic restructuring” (Brangenberg, 2001), while their Board President described promotion as the “have fun committee on which you can see results quickly” (Parnell, 2001). The bottom line, according to the St. Charles Main Street Manager, is that “promotion is the easiest of the four points to do” (Smith, 2002).

Having reliable sources of funding is essential for the survival of any nonprofit organization. Of the 39 surveys that reported funding sources, 33 received funding from city government accounting for an average of 33.15% of their total funding. Other leading sources include membership dues (24 communities; 29.04% of funding), private donations (22; 24.05%), grants (15; 22.47%), and fundraising events (29; 21.31%). While only nine programs benefitted from being part of a Business Improvement District (BID), the BID provided an average of 47.89% of their funding base. In BID communities, therefore, the revenue stream is more predictable and the pressure to generate additional revenues is reduced considerably. The St. Charles Downtown Partnership, for example, receives 75% of its total funding from a special services area that the city established to directly benefit the downtown.

The fact that a high majority of programs derive funds from their city government is evidence of the prevalence of a strong private/public partnership in Main Street communities. For instance, 28 of the 40 programs have a city representative serve on the Main Street Board of Directors. The cities of Danville (\$35,000) and Cushing (\$20,000) provide annual funding to their Main Street programs. Cushing City Manager Robert Collins declared, “In most small cities, if a city is unwilling to fund their Main Street program it is doomed to failure” (Collins, 2001). The city connection is even more pronounced in Tupelo, where the city pays the salary and benefits for the Main Street Manager, contributes \$20,000/year for operations, provides in-kind funding and, until recently, housed the program offices in City Hall.

Sustaining strong partnerships has been a key foundation in both St. Charles and Danville (Robertson, 2002). To ensure continuous linkages, the bylaws for the St. Charles Downtown Partnership (SCDP) require that the heads of the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and park district, among other organizations, as well as the City Administrator and two aldermen from the City Council, sit on its board of directors. Kaye Siblik (2002), SCDP President, believes this is the key to her organization’s success; it is the one piece of advice she always gives to any new Main Street program. Strong communication is maintained and nurtured, according to Siblik, because “key people are already at the table talking together.” SCDP also benefits from a healthy working relationship with City Hall. One important manifestation of this relationship was the completion of a jointly prepared downtown strategy plan (City of St. Charles, 2000) that Community Development Director Robert Hupp (2002) says, “clearly articulates goals for downtown agreed upon by both the city and SCDP that the community can easily understand and relate to.” While the Heart of Danville’s working relationship with City Hall is not as entrenched as in St. Charles, it maintains potent linkages and steady communication with the Boyle County Community Development Council, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Conventions and Visitors Bureau — all of which share a restored house with the

TABLE 5. Promotion strategies.

| Strategy                            | Sample Cities<br>Using (N = 40) | Effectiveness |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Special Events/Festivals            | 40                              | 4.28          |
| Newsletter                          | 34                              | 3.82          |
| Downtown Brochure                   | 29                              | 3.59          |
| Downtown Concerts                   | 23                              | 3.57          |
| Cooperative Advertising             | 31                              | 3.48          |
| Program Website                     | 20                              | 3.40          |
| Downtown Products (i.e., mugs)      | 25                              | 2.80          |
| Historic Walking Tour               | 29                              | 2.76          |
| <b>Overall Promotion Strategies</b> |                                 | <b>3.52</b>   |

Note: Survey respondents rated strategy effectiveness on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the most effective.

Heart of Danville on the edge of downtown — as well as with two other vital downtown destinations: Constitution Square State Park (their director is the Heart of Danville Promotions Chair) and Centre College (faculty serve on committees).

## PROMOTION

The oft-quoted line from the movie *Field of Dreams* — “Build it and they will come” — usually constitutes poor advice in downtown revitalization. Main Street organizations quickly learn that downtown economic and design improvements must be actively promoted to ensure success, as evidenced by promotion being the most frequently used of the four Main Street elements (see Table 2). The goals of downtown promotion are threefold. The first goal is to communicate with the public at large, as well as with select audiences, the activities, attractions, and improvements in the downtown. Strategies include publishing a newsletter (used in 34 of the 40 survey programs) or a brochure (29) and establishing a website (20). A second goal is to attract more people downtown through special events and festivals (all 40 programs) and walking tours (29). A final goal seeks to assist downtown retail and restaurant establishments by using techniques, such as cooperative advertising (31). Clearly, these goals are not mutually exclusive.

Not only were special events and festivals the most commonly utilized promotional strategy, it was also rated the most effective (see Table 5). There are numerous explanations for this. An event is a one-time occurrence that requires considerable effort over a short period of time, not a long-term, ongoing effort; so, volunteers are easier to recruit, burnout is less frequent, and results can be seen far more readily. The Tupelo Main Street Association, for example, has hosted a 3-day Elvis Presley festival since 1997. All but one of the activities takes place downtown. In 2001 more than 100 volunteers contributed to the festival that attracted an estimated 13,000-14,000 visitors (High, 2001).

Events do not have to be large or expensive. A brainstorm of the Cushing Promotions Committee was an innovative Block of Ice event (Lehr, 2001). On a very hot summer day, a \$100 bill was placed inside a block of ice. People were invited to submit their guesses as to what time the ice would melt, with the closest time winning the money. More than 300 participants submitted their guesses at downtown participating businesses. A sidewalk sale was held at the same time. For the record, it took 5 hours for the ice to melt. While an event clearly supports the goal of attracting people downtown, it should also provide a boost to businesses by increasing the pedestrian volume and the overall exposure of stores, services, and restaurants. Even if event-goers do not buy anything from an establishment at the time, they may decide to come back at a future date. Of course, it is up to individual establishments to take advantage of this by offering event-related products, sales, coupons, etc., and presenting an attractive and enticing exterior and interior to the visitor.

TABLE 6. Downtown design challenges.

| Design Challenge                         | Severity of Challenge |
|--|-----------------------|
| Uncooperative Property Owners            | 3.68                  |
| Uncooperative Business Owners            | 3.28                  |
| Out-of-Town Owners of Downtown Property  | 3.23                  |
| Vacant Buildings                         | 2.70                  |
| Slipcovered Building Façades             | 2.68                  |
| Upkeep of Landscaping                    | 2.58                  |
| Quality of Building Stock                | 2.53                  |
| Funding Assistance from Local Banks      | 2.13                  |
| Providing Professional Design Assistance | 2.03                  |

Note: Survey respondents rated design challenges on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being a very significant challenge.

Cooperative advertising can be an effective and economically prudent way to assist downtown businesses. The cost of sharing a newspaper advertisement, for instance, is much less costly than taking an individual ad. Moreover, having many downtown businesses advertising in one place gives people a better sense of the range of opportunities available at one location. This approach has worked well in Cushing, especially during the Christmas holidays. It has been far less successful, however, in Tupelo. One reason is that there are only a few small retail establishments in downtown Tupelo. There is a large department store, but they can easily afford their own advertising. Furthermore, some owners of small businesses are skeptical towards cooperative advertising and other promotional efforts because “an independent businessperson wants to think of their own ideas” (High, 2001).

In recent years, an increasing number of Main Street programs have created web pages to assist in their promotional efforts. It is generally less costly than comparable print communication techniques, such as newsletters, brochures, and advertisements; plus, it can be updated on a regular basis and has the potential to reach more people. Websites have proven to be particularly effective where tourism is an integral part of the downtown economy (Andrus, 2000). Although only one-half of the survey programs currently have their own website, six other surveys stated that one was in the works. Not only can a good website help to expose people to downtown attractions and provide basic information (i.e., maps, parking, calendars), but it usually includes links to individual downtown businesses to help them reach more potential customers. Of the four case studies, only St. Charles ([www.dtown.org](http://www.dtown.org)) had a website at the time of this research, although it was rated as only moderately successful on their survey.

## DESIGN

When one thinks of a healthy Main Street, the physical appearance of the buildings, sidewalks, and public spaces often comes to mind. This is where the element of design comes into play. Design plays a critical role in determining the strength of a downtown’s sense of place. For a downtown to claim a strong sense of place, it should be distinctive from other commercial settings, represent the unique heritage of the community, be pedestrian-friendly, and encourage people to linger (Robertson, 1999b). Good design practices, according to the Main Street philosophy, can help to facilitate these qualities.

The survey reveals, however, that there are many design challenges faced by Main Street communities (see Table 6). Most problematic are owners of downtown property and businesses that are resistant to making design improvements for their buildings. The three greatest challenges by far are uncooperative property owners, uncooperative building owners, and out-of-town owners. Absentee building owners were a concern in both Tupelo and Cushing. Since they do not live in the community and do not see their properties very often, they may have little incentive to improve the look of their

TABLE 7. Design strategies.

| Strategy                                    | Sample Cities Using (N = 40) | Effectiveness |
|---|------------------------------|---------------|
| Façade Improvement Loans/Grants             | 32                           | 4.16          |
| Landscaping (trees, planters, flowers)      | 36                           | 4.03          |
| Enhanced Infrastructure (lights, sidewalks) | 29                           | 3.79          |
| Providing Design Assistance                 | 38                           | 3.68          |
| Street Banners                              | 28                           | 3.68          |
| Benches and Other Added Seating             | 29                           | 3.41          |
| Use of Downtown Waterfront                  | 17                           | 3.18          |
| <b>Overall Design Strategies</b>            |                              | <b>3.75</b>   |

Note: Survey respondents rated strategy effectiveness on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the most effective.

buildings. Sometimes property owners are unwilling to sell their vacant buildings at a reasonable price, which is always damaging to downtown development efforts. Part of the explanation for this behavior may lie in foolish pride, wherein the owner refuses to accept the true value of his or her building and will let it sit empty rather than sell at that price (Abell, 2001). Other challenges relate directly to the buildings themselves, such as vacant buildings, slipcovered building façades, and quality of building stock. In Tupelo, for example, many of its oldest structures — including several historic hotels — were razed years ago to make room for new office buildings, thus limiting the preservation opportunities today (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. In Tupelo, an entire block of older commercial buildings, including the historic Hotel Tupelo, was razed so that the headquarters for BancorpSouth (pictured) could be erected.

General community attitudes towards the importance and value of design are an underlying challenge confronting many downtowns. A challenge to Main Street Programs is that many people — including some business owners — do not understand how inviting streetscapes and attractive building façades can enhance the desirability of downtown to many people, including potential customers. The Main Street Managers in Tupelo and Cushing both made reference to this challenge with statements like “the lack of a strong design ethic” (Abell, 2001) and “the constant struggles with the leisure suit mentality towards design,” where following fads leads to damaging results (Brangenberg, 2001). Both managers agreed that continuing efforts in educating the community of the value of good design is an important component of a successful Main Street program. In contrast, Danville possesses “a strong commitment to preservation within the community” (Wagner, 2002) and, therefore, does not face this challenge to the extent of Tupelo and Cushing.

Of the seven widely used design strategies listed in Table 7, all except one have been implemented in at least 28 (70%) of the 40 survey cities; the lone exception — use of downtown waterfront (43%) — is easily explained by the simple fact that many downtowns are not located on a body of water. St. Charles, the only case study with a downtown waterfront, is embarking on a long-range plan to

TABLE 8. Economic restructuring strategies.

| Strategy   | Sample Cities<br>Using (N = 39) | Effectiveness |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Building/Space Inventory                           | 34                              | 3.65          |
| Private/Public Partnerships                        | 33                              | 3.54          |
| Market Analysis                                    | 32                              | 3.41          |
| Business Visitations to Assist Existing Businesses | 32                              | 3.41          |
| Marketing/Recruitment Kit                          | 21                              | 2.90          |
| Seminars/Workshops for Business Owners             | 34                              | 2.68          |
| Targeted Business Recruitment                      | 30                              | 2.67          |
| <b>Overall Economic Restructuring Strategies</b>   |                                 | <b>3.20</b>   |

Note: Survey respondents rated strategy effectiveness on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the most effective.

improve “continuity of access along the Fox River” (Hupp, 2002) and “connectivity between the river and downtown buildings” (Armstrong, 2002). Currently, the dominant land use along the Fox River is parking. Survey respondents rated the overall effectiveness of design strategies as higher than strategies for promotion and economic restructuring (refer to Tables 5 and 8), thereby supporting the contention that good design is critical for a successful Main Street.

The three most effective design strategies observed in Table 7 all relate clearly to the downtown’s visual appeal and its sense of place. Providing façade improvement grants and loans is essential for assisting building/business

FIGURE 4. Continuous heavy traffic on Main Street (Illinois Highway 64) acts as a major impediment to pedestrian movement in downtown St. Charles.

owners in improving the appearance of their buildings by providing necessary repairs and maintenance; removing unsightly slipcovers; and improving signage, entrances, windows, and awnings. In Cushing a number of businesses have taken advantage of a matching grant program for awnings; moreover, the State Architect from the Oklahoma Main Street Program provides façade renderings. The Main Street Program’s Architectural Review Board administers Danville’s widely used façade grant program; Paula Barry (2002), Planning Director, declared, “It has generated a tremendous visual impact on our downtown.” In St. Charles, the grant program is funded by the city and its Mayor proudly boasts, “Our façade program (\$150,000 in 2001) is probably the most generous in Illinois” (Klinkhamer, 2002). Landscaping (i.e., street trees, planters, flowers) and enhanced infrastructure (i.e., sidewalks, street lights) not only improve the aesthetics of downtown, but they also make it much more desirable for a person to spend more time walking downtown, a key to a strong sense of place.

The importance of having a pedestrian-friendly downtown — maintaining high densities, supplying walk-by traffic for businesses, making downtown look lively and interesting — has been well covered in the literature (i.e., Crankshaw, 1998; Robertson, 2001; Campoli, *et al.*, 2001). This poses a special challenge in St. Charles, where Illinois Highway 64 (Main Street), serving more than 40,000 vehicles/day, and the Fox River act as formidable barriers in downtown that impede pedestrian move-

ment and divide the downtown into separate quadrants (see Figure 4). In the survey city of Florence, Alabama, an innovative improvement was observed that combines enhanced infrastructure and added benches/seating strategies for the purpose of improving the pedestrian environment. Several attractive pedestrian shelters with benches inside were situated at the terminus of major crosswalks. These add to the aesthetics of the streetscape and provide shade and resting places for pedestrians, thereby encouraging them to prolong their stay (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5. One of several attractive pedestrian shelters in downtown Florence, Alabama.

Cushing is in the process of implementing several design-related strategies worth noting. Their design committee is organizing a Façade Squad to work on façade improvements. A group of volunteers, which will include retired builders and carpenters along with anyone who can use a paintbrush, will provide labor on selected buildings where the owner agrees to pay for materials (Duff, 2001). They also recognize the lack of downtown open space for people to gather and linger and are working to create pocket parks on two parcels cleared of buildings. Acquiring funding for these parks was a major priority at the time of the site visit. Finally, a 6,000 sq. ft. historic railroad depot located on Broadway several blocks from the

FIGURE 6. A railroad depot in downtown Cushing currently undergoing adaptive reuse.

core of downtown is being restored and will include a railroad museum and retail/office space (see Figure 6). The Main Street organization is providing most of the background services, while much of the funding is coming from a private individual in the community who is a railroad buff.

Most of the design work in Tupelo is currently focused on the Fairgrounds Project mentioned earlier. A series of design charettes have been conducted to assist the design committee in making recommendations for the planning of buildings, open spaces, and streets that will be included in this expansion of downtown. In Danville, being a long-standing, older program where “the downtown is fortunate to have most of its historical environment intact” (Berkshire, 2002), most of the design challenges have already been addressed successfully (i.e., most façades have been improved). One recent noteworthy accomplishment was working with the Postal Service not only to keep the Post Office downtown but also to design a new structure (opened in 2001) that integrated with other buildings and was set close to the sidewalk.

## ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Unless the fundamental economics of a downtown keep pace with the changing times, all the creative promotions and attractive design in the world will not be sustainable. Thus, the fourth element of the four-point approach — economic restructuring — is necessary to help strengthen existing businesses, recruit new businesses to downtown, and, when appropriate, alter the retail and service mix. An example of the latter is found in Cushing where a vacant hotel on East Broadway was converted to a much-needed senior housing facility. These residents provide nearby customers for select downtown businesses.

However, the survey results reveal that economic restructuring (ER) is not only the least used of the four elements (see Table 2) but also that ER strategies have been far less effective than have design and promotion strategies. As seen in Table 8, the overall effectiveness of ER strategies was only 3.20 (5 = most effective), compared to 3.75 for design (Table 7) and 3.52 for promotion (Table 5). Five of the seven design strategies listed in Table 7 scored higher than the highest ER strategy (building/space inventory — 3.65) and the two least effective strategies in the entire survey were part of ER: seminars/workshops for business owners (2.68) and targeted business recruitment (2.67). The explanation for these findings lies in the fact that ER strategies tend to be more complex, require more sophisticated outside expertise, and involve more external forces outside of the community that are beyond the control of the Main Street organization (i.e., state, national, and global economic trends). Another factor may be the focus that emanates down from the state Main Street program. This was the case in Tupelo, for example, where it was suggested that the Mississippi Program places heavier emphasis on design and promotion in their training and technical assistance (Agnew, 2001).

All but one of the strategies listed in Table 8 (marketing/recruitment kit) have been utilized in at least 75% of the sample cities in the survey, thereby indicating that these are among the most popular downtown ER strategies. There was a notable gulf, however, between those strategies deemed effective (3.41-3.65) and ineffective (2.67-2.90). Tupelo made effective use of a market analysis done several years ago to help determine how the new Fairgrounds Project area will be developed, while Cushing is in the process of conducting a thorough market analysis — with the assistance of nearby Oklahoma State University — that includes business surveys, zip code analysis, focus groups, and customer intercepts (Abell, 2001). Danville was in the process of hiring a consultant in 2002 to conduct its market study (Wagner, 2002). None of the four programs have had much success with targeted business recruitment, in part because of the time, information, and salesmanship required to execute this strategy. Furthermore, “not having control of the buildings where vacancies exist makes recruitment very difficult” (Smith, 2002). Once their market analysis is complete, however, the Cushing ER committee plans to prepare a much-needed business recruitment package; St. Charles is already gearing up for recruiting retailers to its First Street Corridor project that is still in its planning stage.

Two ongoing ER issues/projects deserve special mention. The historic Hotel Baker (see Figure 2), a catalyst for downtown development in St. Charles when it reopened in 1997, has been closed since January of 2002. Although the overall impact on downtown has been minimal thus far, the city and the SCDP are very concerned about its long-term impact and are, thus, working hard to find a new owner, preferably to continue operating it as a hotel. The greatest challenge may be in Danville, where the 79,000 sq. ft. Hub Building, which once housed a department store, hotel, and theater, has been vacant since 1995. To fill this strategically located structure at downtown’s traditional peak land value intersection, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Development Corporation was formed and is jointly administered by the Heart of Danville and the Boyle County Community Development Council. They have successfully purchased the building and are working with Eastern Kentucky University and other prospective tenants to occupy it in the near future. This project has dominated the Heart of Danville’s agenda for some time now.

TABLE 9. Downtown changes in past 3 years.

| Downtown Feature                        | Level of Improvement/Decline |
|---|------------------------------|
| Visual Appeal of Downtown               | 4.10                         |
| Image of Downtown Within Region         | 4.08                         |
| Overall Health of Downtown              | 3.85                         |
| Economic Prosperity of Services/Offices | 3.65                         |
| Pedestrian Volume on Sidewalks          | 3.58                         |
| Number of Street-Level Vacancies        | 3.58                         |
| Economic Prosperity of Retailers        | 3.55                         |
| Availability of Downtown Parking        | 3.28                         |

Note: Survey respondents rated the downtown compared to 3 years ago on a 1-5 scale (5 = much improved, 3 = about the same, 1 = much worse).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNERS AND DESIGNERS

Why should the planning and design professions take note of and better understand the workings of the Main Street Approach? One answer is quite basic. The vast majority of planners and designers work in or for communities that possess a downtown, the health of which is considered to be a vital cog in the long-term sustainability of the overall community. Recognizing this importance, some suburban communities that have never possessed a traditional downtown are attempting to create town centers that borrow many characteristics from conventional downtowns (Lockwood, 1997, 1998). Also, the Main Street Approach is the most recognized method for revitalizing downtown districts in the United States. Over 1,000 cities are currently part of the National Main Street Center (NMSC), attesting to its popularity. Moreover, a greater number of cities use elements of the four-point approach even though they are not officially affiliated with the NMSC. Evidence of this was observed in a previous study conducted by this author where less than one-fourth of the 44 cities that said they used the Main Street Approach were NMSC members (Robertson, 1999a). Not only is this a widely used approach, it has also proven to be very effective based on the current survey of Main Street communities. In Table 9, one can observe the marked improvement in most key downtown features (i.e., visual appeal, image, economic prosperity of services and retailing, pedestrian volume) and in the overall health of the survey downtowns over the past three years. The survey clearly demonstrates that these communities have faith and confidence in the Main Street Approach as a downtown development philosophy.

City planners and the governments they are employed by constitute an important part of Main Street's success. The key role of private/public partnerships was clearly evident in this study in terms of funding, clear communication and representation, loan and grant programs, project coordination, streetscape and infrastructure, and economic development efforts. Supporting this importance was Tupelo's Mayor Larry Otis (2001), who declared, "City cooperation and investment in Main Street makes common sense because if you don't have a strong central business district, the rest of the city goes to pot." While elected officials, the city administrator, and the city engineer, among others, all play key roles, the city planner may be in a position to most closely work hand-in-hand with the Main Street organization because of shared interests related to downtown land use, design and preservation, transportation (including pedestrians), open spaces, and economic development. Given the survey results considering the use and effectiveness of economic restructuring, planners well-versed in economic development techniques should be able to provide valuable assistance to Main Street communities.

The Main Street element that planners and designers can make the strongest contribution to is design. These professionals possess the necessary training, skills, and expertise to help Main Street programs achieve goals related to historic preservation, open space acquisition and design, establishment of design ordinances, waterfront development, provision of adequate parking, creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment, and adaptive reuse. Furthermore, their intimate knowledge of rel-

evant city codes and zoning ordinances can help to expedite downtown projects. In some communities, planners have been instrumental in fashioning creative zoning ordinances that help to limit chain store development and encourage more local independent retailing and services through limitations on square footage, requiring community impact assessments, and business diversity requirements (Mitchell, 2000). State planners in Maryland have helped to encourage rehabilitation of downtown buildings by streamlining and simplifying their state building codes to reflect differences in the size of a project and between rehabilitation and new construction (Hopkins, 2000).

In conclusion, given its popularity and effectiveness, it is likely that many public and private planners/designers are already involved with a Main Street community, one that borrows many of its principal philosophies, or one that will soon house a Main Street program. Therefore, it is important for these professionals to clearly comprehend the workings of the four-point approach so that they can be in a strong position to work with and advise Main Street and other downtown development organizations.

## REFERENCES

- Abell B, Executive Director of Downtown Cushing America (2001) Interview. 22-23 August.
- Agnew S, Treasurer for Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association and Economic Development Specialist with Mississippi Development Authority (2001) Interview. 2 August.
- Andrus P (2000) Using the internet to promote heritage tourism. *Main Street News* October:1-4, 6-7.
- Armstrong M, Chairman of St. Charles Plan Commission (2002) Interview. 29 May.
- Barry P, Danville Planning Director (2002) Interview. 17 May.
- Berkshire KJ, Executive Director of Boyle County Community Development Council (2002) Interview. 16 May.
- Brangenberg D, Director of Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association (2001) Interview. 2 August.
- Campoli J, Humstone E, MacLean A (2001) Above and beyond. *Planning* 67(10):4-9.
- City of St. Charles (2000) *Downtown St. Charles Strategy Plan 2000*. St. Charles, IL: City of St. Charles.
- Collins R, Cushing City Manager (2001) Interview. 24 August.
- Crankshaw N (1998) To be somewhere: Taking stock of walking places in a small downtown in Winchester, Kentucky. *Small Town* 29(4):14-19.
- Cushing Chamber of Commerce (1999) *Cushing Oklahoma: Pipeline crossroads of the world*. Cushing, OK: Cushing Chamber of Commerce.
- Dane S (1997) *Main Street success stories*. Washington, D.C.: National Main Street Center.
- Downtown Cushing America (2001) *2001 Workplan*. Cushing, OK: Downtown Cushing America.
- Duff M, President of Downtown Cushing America and Chair of Design Committee (2001) Interview. 23 August.

- Ehrenhalt A (1996) Return to Main Street. *Governing* May:18-27.
- Guzman T, Buehler B (2000) Main Street at work in small towns: Iowa success stories. *Main Street News* September:1-10.
- High J, Assistant Director of Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association and Past President of Mississippi Main Street Association (2001) Interview. 1-2 August.
- Hopkins J (2000) Smart codes: How to make building codes and zoning work for smart growth. *Main Street News* November:1-3, 6-7.
- Hupp R, St. Charles Director of Community Development (2002) Interview. 29 May.
- Keister K (1990) Main Street makes good. *Historic Preservation* 41(5):38-45.
- Kelly S (1996) The Main Street program in Mississippi. *Economic Development Review* 14(2):56-59.
- Klinkhamer S, Mayor of St. Charles (2002) Interview. 31 May.
- Kronemyer B (1997) Indiana Main Streets: Tips for successful downtown revitalization. *Indiana Business Magazine* 41(6):17-24.
- Lehr B, Chair of Downtown Cushing America Promotion Committee (2001) Interview. 24 August.
- Lockwood C (1997) Putting the urb back in the suburbs. *Planning* 63(6):18-21.
- Lockwood C (1998) Retrofitting suburbia. *Urban Land* 56(7):50-55.
- Mitchell S (2000) *Home town advantage*. Minneapolis, MN: Institute for Local Self-Reliance.
- National Main Street Center (1988) *Revitalizing downtown 1976-1986*. Washington, D.C.: National Main Street Center.
- National Main Street Center (2000) *Report of 1999 Main Street Census of Commercial District Revitalization Programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Main Street Center.
- Otis L, Mayor of Tupelo (2001) Interview. 3 August.
- Paradis T (2002) The political economy of theme development in small urban places: The case of Roswell, New Mexico. *Tourism Geographies* 4(1):22-43.
- Paradis T (2001) Updating the "Small town in Pennsylvania:" Discourse materialized on main street, Madison, Indiana. *North American Geographer* 3(2).
- Parnell J, President of Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association (2001) Interview. 2 August.
- Robertson K (1999a) Can small-city downtowns remain viable?: A national study of development issues and strategies. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65(3):270-283.
- Robertson K (1999b) Enhancing downtown's sense of place. *Main Street News* September:1-4, 12-13.
- Robertson K (2001) Parking and pedestrians: Balancing two key elements in downtown development. *Transportation Quarterly* 55(2):29-42.

- Robertson K (2002) Main Street partnering: A key to successful downtown revitalization. *IEDC Economic Development Journal* 1(4):53-59.
- Shepard J (1992) Leadership through partnerships: The national trust's Main Street program as a community economic development tool. *Urban Design and Preservation Quarterly* 15(1):20-27.
- Siblik K, President of St. Charles Downtown Partnership (2002) Interview. 31 May.
- Skelcher B (1992) What are the lessons learned from the Main Street pilot project, 1977-1980? *Small Town* 23(4):15-19.
- Smith K (1991) *Revitalizing downtown*. Washington, D.C.: National Main Street Center.
- Smith K (1999) Ultimate work planning: The high performance organizational tool for the next decade. *Main Street News* December:1-5.
- Smith N, Executive Director of St. Charles Downtown Partnership (2002) Interview. 29 May.
- Wagner J, Heart of Danville Executive Director (2002) Interview. 16 May.
- Walfoort N (2000) Downtown Kentucky Makes a Comeback. *City* (Kentucky League of Cities) 2(Fall): 7-13.
- Walzer N, Kline S (2001) An evaluation of approaches to downtown economic revitalization. In M Burayidi (Ed.), *Downtown: Revitalizing the centers of small urban communities*. New York: Routledge, pp. 249-274.
- West A (1998) *Main Street festivals*. New York: John Wiley.

Additional information may be obtained by writing directly to the author at Community Development Program, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498, USA; email: kent@stcloudstate.edu.

#### AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kent Robertson is Professor and Director of Community Development at St. Cloud State University (Minnesota). He has published over twenty-five articles on downtown development and has been invited to communities and conferences throughout the United States to conduct downtown development workshops.

Manuscript revisions completed 5 March 2003.