REPORT
of the
FRENCHTOWN DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION & PLANNING
COMMITTEE

PROCESS AND REPORT
The report describes the planning process, findings, and recommendations of the 2012 Frenchtown Downtown Revitalization & Planning Committee
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PURPOSE AND TASKS

This is the report of the 2012 Frenchtown Downtown Revitalization and Planning Committee (Committee). The Committee was established by municipal resolution on February 15, 2012, began meeting on April 10, 2012, and concluded its planning on September 27, 2012. During the process committee members were instrumental in: moving the River Mills Project forward—a key redevelopment project in the downtown area; the Borough won a prestigious award from the American Planners Association as one of New Jersey’s "Great Towns"; the Frenchtown Business & Professional Association applied for a $25,000 NJ Tourism grant, Bridge St. and S. Harrison St were repaved and drainage reconstructed; the new sewer plant reconstruction project began, the sewer rate review committee completed its task, revision of alcohol sales ordinance, and the Nishisakawick Creek restoration project was funded by the state. Each project has significant impact on the downtown as a whole and on commercial properties specifically. The Committee was broad based consisting of business and property owners, residents, developers, professionals, a planning board representative, and elected officials including Seth A. Grossman an international expert on downtown revitalization. The Committee began by exploring the assets of Frenchtown and utilizing a strategic planning approach, and addressed supportive actions and the management opportunities to sustain these actions.

The Committee’s report is advisory and the recommendations are based on investigation, planning and discussion. However, the Committee is not assigned to implement the recommendations. As per its task, the Committee has made a recommendation on how to manage implementation as well. This is why the Economic Development Commission is the key recommendation as it will allow for further research and implementation. Each recommendation requires quite a bit of work to determine if and when its is feasible, let alone implementable. Since the Committee was essentially assigned to investigate what to revitalize and improve, almost all the recommendations speak to changes and investments, and are future-oriented. Unlike the other tasks, there is an array of issues that effect downtown and community development. The Committee dealt with these tasks. The work was comprehensive and limited only when it obtained a level of competency reflecting a complete and implementable revitalization capability. The recommendations reflect that and will require a serious commitment to determine the correct implementation.

After a lengthy, and award winning, community planning process managed by the Planning Board, on December 24, 2004 a Frenchtown Village Center Plan prepared by Schoor DePalma, Inc. (a professional planning consultancy) was submitted and accepted by Borough Council and later revised in June, 2006, and the last revision was on September 6, 2006. Based on this plan, in December 1, 2004, the Borough approved the business district as an area in need of Rehabilitation (Resolution #2004-70), which permitted redevelopment to occur in partnership with the Borough in block group 1, census tract 115) in an area that we call River Mills. The report was specifically designed to determine a need to designate the business district as in need of rehabilitation, to provide guidance on building and signage design, and allow for redevelopment agreements, and to address the River Mills site. As stated on pg. 1 of
the plan, "This Rehabilitation Plan is based on the designation of Frenchtown Borough's historic Central Business District and a portion of its Transitional; Business District as an "Area in need of Rehabilitation." The areas identified were chiefly the River Mills area and the Lott and Front Street warehouse area. This report also identifies those areas as primary redevelopment locations. The process did not follow a citizen-planning process similar to this Committee, and instead was a professional planning study on the specific subject of business district redevelopment, and not revitalization, business development, and ongoing investment and management. Although not an official amendment to the plan, this report adopts and extends the 2006 Village Plan to include business development and management needs of the Borough.

The Committee was charged with considering the following concerns: the economic vitality of the Borough, a strategic business development plan, cooperative business practices and customer service, streetscape improvements, parking, building and sign design, lighting, signage, marketing, advertising and promotions, downtown management, and use of the N J Special Improvement District statutes and any other related matters. The Committee studied and evaluated the applicability of downtown revitalization, redevelopment, and management, and sought agreements on how these items could be accomplished. The Committee met bi-weekly on Thursdays at 3:30PM@ Borough Hall.

Resolution #2012-38
Resolution creating an ad hoc Downtown Revitalization and Planning Committee in the Borough of Frenchtown

Whereas the downtown business district is comprised of Race St., Bridge St. Trenton Avenue, Harrison St., S. Harrison St., Front St., Lott St., Second St., and Kingwood Avenue in the borough and is a key responsibility of municipal government.

Whereas the Council of the Borough of Frenchtown believes it is in the best interest of the municipality to have its citizens and businesses participate in determining how best to plan and revitalize the borough and the business district.

Whereas the Council believes that the best mechanism for receiving input from those citizens is to have their direct involvement in developing policy and plans regarding such matters.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Borough Council of Frenchtown create an ad hoc Downtown Revitalization and Planning Committee to consider such issues and concerns as may affect the improvement, growth, development, and economic success of the borough and its residents, businesses and visitors and make recommendations to the Council as regards strategies to achieve the goal
of downtown revitalization in the borough, and to seek grants to obtain professional services to achieve this endeavor as needed and determined.

Be it further resolved that the committee be comprised of ten members, including the Chairman or his/her designee and members of the Economic Development and Strategic Planning Committee, the Streets and Roads Commissioner or his/her designee, the Planning Board Chairman, at least two borough residents, two members of the Frenchtown Business & Professional Association, one business person at large appointed by the Mayor with advice and consent of Council.

Be it further resolved that the committee be charged with considering the following concerns: the economic vitality of the borough, a strategic business development plan, cooperative business practices and customer service, streetscape improvements, parking, building and sign design, lighting, signage, marketing, advertising and promotions, downtown management, and use of the N J Special Improvement District statutes and any other related matters.

Be it further resolved that the committee shall bring to Council, no later than Dec. 1, submit a report and recommendations for achieving the goal of revitalizing and improving the success of the borough's business district and the community as a whole.

The Committee focused on six (6) aspects of downtown revitalization and economic development in Frenchtown.

1) **Utilize prevailing technologies of downtown-town center-revitalization**: Cooperative retail commercial management, enhanced customer service approaches to business development, pedestrian orientation, destination management, and asset based planning and management.

2) **Conduct strategic planning methods**- using teamwork, visioning, and SWOT analysis.

3) **Review market and business trends** impacting Frenchtown and who this impacts Frenchtown as a whole.

4) **Address streetscape, infrastructure, and redevelopment improvements**.

5) **Examine the parameters of a establishing a Business Improvement District** to sustain cooperation and needed services.

6) **Examine the establishment of an Economic Development Commission** to sustain the work of the Committee and prepare for future outcomes.

This Committee had the responsibility of envisioning a successful future for Frenchtown's downtown and identifying various methods and projects to get there.
The Committee led a community-based planning process necessary to determine what is applicable, and if so how it will be organized and what it will do to enhance business. The planning process consists of three essential stages:

1) **Getting Started** – which consists of getting organized and understanding what downtown revitalization is and how business district planning works;

2) **Analysis, Planning & Product** – which consists of research, discussion, and determining agreements;

3) **Presentation to Governing Body** – which consists of the necessary public hearings and reports to the community, municipal Mayor, and Borough Council.

**MAP OF DOWNTOWN FRENCHTOWN, NJ**
The red areas indicate the "downtown" business district.
REPORT OF THE 2012 DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION & PLANNING COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Seth A. Grossman, Chairman, Councilman
Michelle Arlotta, Photography, Businessperson At Large
Randi Eckel, Planning Board President, Resident, Horticulturalist
John Hindman, FB&PA, Thistle
Cathryn Leach, Councilwoman
Dimity Levitsky, Resident & Landscape Architect
Jim McCormick, River Blue
David Miller, Prior Resident/ Observer
Michael Padovan, Jersey Arts Studios and Commercial Property Owner
Dominikjia Prostak, Resident and Consultant
Dorsey Reading, Commercial Property Owner, Developer, and Minettes
Special thanks to Marie D’Costa, The National Hotel

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a summary of the key recommendations of the Committee:

1. **Establish an Economic Development Commission** - Implement Committee Recommendations - Think ahead.
2. **Create a Business Improvement District** - Manage the Business District.
3. **Improve streetscape and signage** - Manage assets.
   - Street Lighting - to define business district and tie together Race St., Kingwood Ave, Harrison St., Trenton Ave., and Front St.
   - Benches - Sidewalk furniture upgrade
   - Trash receptacles upgrade.
   - Bury overhead electrical wires along Race St. & Bridget St.
   - Trees and other plantings upgrades to include properly designed tree pits.
   - Street banners
   - Welcome signage upgraded at each gateway to town
   - Wayfinding system: directional signage
   - Traffic signage maintenance and design upgrades
   - Frenchtown directional road signs - on I-78, 519 & 513.
4. **Develop and expand connecting trail system** around Frenchtown.
5. **Build a coherent branding and advertising program** that communicates Frenchtown's assets.
6. **Redevelop Kerr's Hatchery/ Warehouse site** as #1 redevelopment concern..
7. **Establish an Arts & Community Center** - possibly at Hatchery site similar to Doylestown County Theater, but with more performing arts capability.
8. **Encourage and strengthen building upkeep in the downtown.**
9. **Improve parking** - ex. across from Post Office, and on Front St.
10. **Build the new Riverbank Park** as a Frenchtown celebratory park.
11. **Encourage Shale Cliff development** and Trenton Ave. reconstruction.
12. **Establish a Visitors Center** - for information and customer services.
13. **Areas in need of Redevelopment:**

   a) River Mills project.
   b) An Arts/Cultural Center possibly on Front Street at the old egg Hatchery site/warehouse was agreed as the Number 1 Redevelopment area in town.
   c) The new riverbank park along the river behind the guard house off Bridge St. donated to the Borough.
   d) The Shale Cliff project.
   e) The motorcycle parking spot on Race St.
   f) The public parking spot across from the post office on Trenton Ave.
   g) Greenway trail connector around Frenchtown.
   h) Tying in the Harrison St. shops to the downtown.
   i) A wayfinding signage system.

**BASIS FOR ACTION**

**WHY IS FRENCHTOWN A "GREAT PLACE"?**

"Frenchtown, like most Delaware River towns, is centuries old", wrote Ellen Fletcher in her book, "Sketches of a River Town: History of Frenchtown, NJ" (1997). The beginning of Frenchtown was around 1785 when Thomas Lowrey built a saw and grist mill near the river; several residences and businesses sprung up around the mill. In 1794 Paul Henri Mallet-Prevost, a French speaking Swiss, purchased a large tract of land which he called Alexandria. The locals believing him to be French started referring to the area as Frenchtown in the early 1800’s. This was also the site of a ferry crossing on the Delaware until a bridge was completed in 1844.
The success of the Erie Canal, which connected Lake Erie and the Hudson River in 1825, allowed for goods to be transported more efficiently. This was a time when roads were of poor quality, and most goods were transported by horse-drawn wagons or by boat. There were no cars, and trains were just coming into the horizon. The Delaware Canal affords many Frenchtown and area residents numerous reasons to enjoy the outdoors. Tourists came from far-away places for pleasure boating and recreational activities, making it a vital part of the community, but did you know that it was also an important supply route during the Civil War and the industrial boom of the 1870s. George Washington’s army are reported to have utilized this supply route during the American Revolution. With the busy trade and transport of freight across the Delaware Canal, completed in 1834, Frenchtown became a busy little town that was an integral part of the growth and development of the area.

The State of New Jersey also gave another company permission to build the Camden and Amboy railroad in the same area. The Delaware Canal and the Delaware & Raritan D&R Canal was a technologically advanced canal at the time it was completed and became an important part of the intercoastal waterway that stretched along the East coast. The D&R Canal Company joined together with the Camden and Amboy railroad company, becoming the “Joint Companies” a partnership that lasted and allowed for the canal and the railroad to successfully compete with each other, bringing goods, services and people, to our little corner of the world. Among the people who came to Frenchtown, were business people, entertainers, and workers. Thanks to these workers, manufacturers received raw materials, such as coal, from Pennsylvania, and farmers sent their produce to new markets that had previously been out of reach. Much of this went through Frenchtown, and on many levels, it contributed to the growth of New York City in the 1800s. Sundays were special during these times. The canal was closed and boats would tie up. The boatmen and their families would come into Frenchtown to attend church, and often join in festivities such as concerts or picnics.

Addressing Frenchtown's role as a business center Ellen Fletcher states that, “In Frenchtown's commercial district, along Bridge and Race streets in the 1920s and 1930s, a richly diverse array of stores offered nearly everything the people of town and country could need or want.” She adds, "while the town once attracted farmers from the agricultural region around it; today it attracts and serves people who live on land once farmed, and visitors who see in Frenchtown an illusion of an earlier, less complicated way of life...Today's Frenchtown charms the eye with its riverside setting, its tree shaded streets of 19th century houses, its array of specialty shops and restaurants...Because of its beautiful riverside location, its appealing small-town ambience, and the picturesque qualities of its downtown commercial district, Frenchtown attracts visitors from nearby townships, major cities, and all points between."
Today Frenchtown is a wonderfully gentle village on the Delaware River, and a growing destination to western New Jersey and Bucks County, becoming a key New Jersey tourist destination.

Frenchtown Borough is a small manageable community located along the banks of the Delaware River on the Hunterdon Plateau. The Borough consists of 1.2 square miles and was formed by an Act of the New Jersey Legislature on April 4, 1867, from portions of Alexandria Township. Additional territory was gained from Kingwood Township in 1865. As of the U.S. 2010 Census, the Borough population was 1,373.

The Borough has an eclectic array of architectural styles that make the Borough visually interesting. These styles include Federal, Italianate, Victorian, Colonial Revival, Gothic and Greek revival, as well as Bungalow-craftsman. Frenchtown Borough is located along the banks of the Delaware River on the Hunterdon Plateau, west of Flemington, NJ, and east of Doylestown, PA. Various names have been applied to this settlement, after the many ferry operators residing on both sides of the river. Alexandria Ville, Sunbeam, and Frenchtown were the official names by which this community was known over the years.

Frenchtown is strategically located as five significant roads terminate in Frenchtown: Rt. 29, Rt. 513, Rt 12, Rt 619, and the Frenchtown-Uhlerstown Bridge. Frenchtown is the transportation junction for the area.

The town boast great dining opportunities, terrific B and B's, and an amazing assortment of art galleries and quality shops featuring upscale gifts, casual and dressy attire, home décor with everything from antiques to contemporary.
What's more, Frenchtown is a charming and scenic place to visit, walk or bike our abandoned railroad paths - now a state park, spend a day in one of our spas, and perhaps catch a play with our River Union Stage.

Commercial, residential, apartment complexes and mixed use buildings all serve the community by encouraging a mix of income levels and lifestyles living and contributing within the community. Old meeting halls have been transformed into 2-story lofts and zoning allows multi-family dwellings within designated districts.

Although Frenchtown is surrounded by a rural setting, and most people drive cars, buses travel daily to and from NYC. Bicyclists also visit in large numbers with the rail trail being one of the ways to arrive from other river towns. The rail-trail, paralleling the river, is always filled with families strolling, runners, bikers, and visitors enjoying the length of the Borough and beyond. A County supported “Link” bus travels through Frenchtown during the week for those who need local transportation for work, food shopping and doctor appointments.
Through the 1960’s to mid-80 the town was rarely visited. In 1987 a grant was awarded to transform the downtown with new sidewalks, street paving and a small grant program to improve mix-use properties and commercial buildings. This encouraged owners of properties in other parts of the Borough to start removing old asbestos shingles, aluminum and brick-cote siding and reveal their hidden treasures. In the early 1990’s Frenchtown was nominated and accepted to the National Register of Historic Places.

Although Frenchtown is small in size and population it has its own elementary school which students enjoy walking to. The school, with a Parent Teacher Organization, contributes to the socialization and bonding of residents. In addition the Borough boasts several other organizations. They include the Senior Citizen’s Club, Lions Club International, Friends of the Frenchtown Fire Department, Frenchtown River Dogs, The River Rats Motorcycle Club, Darcy Lodge (a Masonic organization), Frenchtown American Legion, and Frenchtown Business & Professional Association. There are three churches each also offers support to those seeking AA meetings with one church serving as a food pantry for residents in need. A small public library is housed at the basement level of Borough Hall and supplemented by the County Library. In addition Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops are attended through surrounding communities.

The Frenchtown Police work with residents to keep our community a place where residents and visitors alike feel safe. Police can be seen patrolling the streets and taking a moment to chat with residents or visitors asking for direction. The police support and encourage residents to become involved in National Night Out each year, held in August.
In the early 1990’s the Borough developed its own recycling center. Over time it has evolved to commingled curbside recycling. The center is now used for yard debris, oil and metal recycling and residents can pick up wood chips and mulch. In the past two years a Green Team was formed to further the efforts of sustainability in Frenchtown. Today there is talk to increase recycling pick-up from bi-weekly to weekly and trash pick-up to bi-weekly.

There are five parks; the rail trail and adjoining river edge property on the western fringe which comprises about 30 acres; Frenchtown Borough Park, close to the downtown, comprises about 16 acres; 12 acres northeast part of the Borough, Old Frenchtown Field is almost 9 acres across from and used by the school; a recent purchase by the State of NJ DEP of 150 acres on the south-east corner of the borough and the most recent park was donated by a developer and comprises almost 1 acre on Bridge St. next to the River.
We boast great dining opportunities and two operating 19th century stage coach inns (The Frenchtown Inn and The National Hotel), terrific bed and breakfasts', and an amazing assortment of art galleries and quality shops featuring upscale gifts, casual and dressy attire, home décor with everything from antiques to contemporary.

Major festivals include: Destination Frenchtown (May), Bastille Weekend (July) and RiverFest (September) with dog shows, pet photos and more. Smaller events like “Second Saturdays”, and the "Green Fair" and “October in Frenchtown” add to the variety and spice that attract over 30,000 visitors per year. Eclectic shop and boutique owners find Frenchtown a terrific place to open their business or professional space. Some new development projects are making Frenchtown an even more exciting place to be. "River Mills", an approved mix-use project by George Michael, will feature important new condominiums and store fronts near the river and bridge; a new river-side park is in the planning stages, and a Victorian styled mixed-use building site, "Shale Cliffs", is approved for the eastern edge of the downtown on Rt. 12.

Frenchtown is the kind of place people go looking for when they take to the byways and the “scenic routes” dotted in green on the highway maps. It comes as a surprise and delight to those who find it by chance. Located in the middle of a turn of the century inn culture, wineries,
walks along the Delaware-Raritan Canal system and adjacent to Bucks County, PA, this is a town to be enjoyed at length, a bicyclist and kayaking destination, and a place where curiosity is rewarded by an array of things to see and do.

Frenchtown is dedicated to the economic, aesthetic, and cultural growth of the Borough and its surrounding area. Important Frenchtown websites include: frechtownnj.org, frechtownboro.com, frechtown.com/fbpa and frenchowner.com.

PLANNING INPUTS

Competition and impacts from regional discounters, highway retailers, and the suburbanization of Raritan Township were not well understood. Like many New Jersey towns, Frenchtown is proud of its heritage, architecture, neighborliness, small town feel, and rural nature, but did not manage these aspects as if they were marketable assets, or as if they had competition. It was assumed that Frenchtown would retain its traditional prominence as a regional business destination in the region with little attention to competition and marketing. For instance, historic preservation, which should be and is understood in Frenchtown, was not fully developed as a marketing asset, but chiefly as a quality of life issue that was in many ways a "Frenchtown secret". Preservation is understandable and needed, but it must define identity and destination advantages if it to support economic progress.

Frenchtown is not alone in this behavior. Many towns in Hunterdon County using the understandable premise of heritage preservation also exhibit exclusionary and insular economic development tactics with the idea that new people and customers are a hindrance rather than an opportunity. Consequently, Frenchtown does very little to combat a change in the market and has had trouble grasping its gateway status to mid-western New Jersey's Delaware River Valley, and NE Bucks County.

Frenchtown apparently concluded that its destination status was declining and, as a result did very little until the late 1980's. This inaction, leading to the demise of key historic
buildings in the middle of downtown. One that later was developed as a bank, and the other which sat vacant and barren until 2012. Frenchtown survived despite its failure to recognize that its historic assets are the key to its revitalization. Consequently, by the 1970’s Frenchtown began to see its downtown erode. The Committee noted that revitalization will require a united community, a partnership between the business community and the municipal government, and a strong market approach to business development.

The Committee recognized that it is necessary to develop strategies to encourage community and economic development within the Borough, integrate the residential and commercial segments of Frenchtown to benefit the entire community, and, strengthen and enhance the commercial sector of the Borough, with an emphasis on attracting specialty retail and restaurants, and encouraging the redevelopment of underutilized properties particularly those within the Downtown Business District. It was recognized that progress is deeply hampered if local government and business could not come together in a viable partnership. The success of the Borough’s businesses is threatened by a change in market conditions and unplanned development, the current recession, lack of coordinated management, and poor signage and communications which tend to isolate rather than connect the Borough to the region. It also divided the Borough business community between the traditional downtown, and residential neighborhoods. Frenchtown needs a new model that would include Frenchtown as a cultural, dining, niche retail, and "visitors" destination. But, this moniker-"visitor destination"-sounds too much like Jersey shore or Disney Land tourism unless Frenchtown is placed in a regional context and tourism is considered as including historic inn culture, recreation, artisan, architectural, village, or rural tourism. Then Frenchtown is a gateway to an exciting historic, dining, and rural village adventure with great shopping and services. This can accomplished by a synergistic strategy that unites all businesses in a destination marketing model that manages the community's assets as value-added services and experiences to customers, and builds on excellent customer service capability.

The Committee reviewed the existing zoned business and commercial districts and current mix of commercial, retail and residential in the downtown area to determine the
usefulness and appropriateness of improving the business district to strengthen and expand business opportunity and improve the economic health and prosperity of the Borough, as follows:

- **Overview of Revitalization Planning: Strategic & Asset based Planning**

- **Consensus Process.** Organizing, planning, defining and implementing a downtown revitalization strategy.
  - identify how best to maximize downtown revitalization technologies to meet the challenges that confront the district.

- **Identify Revitalization Objectives.** Examine streetscaping, walkability, management, redevelopment, communications, planning, and signage. Develop recommendations.
  - strengthen a partnership with the Business Community and the Borough of Frenchtown.
  - identify consensus-supported objectives.
  - agreed upon list of objectives, priorities and strategies that will be incorporated into an overall revitalization effort.
  - identify management strategies and mechanism to operate Business Improvement District.

- **Consensus Building.**
  - hold community meetings of business operators, residents, elected officials, and commercial property owners.
  - work with existing leadership and staff.
  - identify those members of the community whose direct interest may not be specifically in one of the zoned business and commercial districts but in the overall economic vitality of the community at large and who have resources to support the Committee efforts.
  - agreed upon list of objectives, priorities and strategies that will be incorporated into an overall work program

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

The Committee's planning process began on April 10, 2012 and concluded on September 27, 2012. Each regular meeting of the Committee was open to anyone who was interested and a cross section of the community is represented on the Committee. Key to the Committee planning process was the agreement to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible. As the process concluded, the Steering Committee agreed to hold a Community Meeting at Borough Hall to receive input on the draft report prior to submitting the report to Mayor and Borough Council. The Committee will send out flyers and emails to all downtown stakeholders, posted announcements on the Borough website with a copy of the draft report,
Report of the 2012 Downtown Revitalization & Planning Committee

and make an announcement on Facebook http://www.facebook.com/groups/75881088146/?ref=ts&fref=ts). After this meeting community input will be reviewed and incorporated into the final report, which will be presented to mayor and Council.

The Committee met once a week on Thursday afternoon at 3:30pm at Borough hall and went through a process of learning about downtown revitalization, examining the state of the downtown district and economic impactors, the NJ-BID statute, the technologies that are used to manage downtowns, and the strategies necessary to create and sustain an effective business and economic development improvement effort. Upon the submission of this report the Committee has fulfilled all its tasks and will be dissolved.

Committee members were active in discussing with government officials, property owners, business owners, and residents alike about what business district improvement would mean to the community. They addressed the need to coordinate with the Borough’s redevelopment efforts, the business community, and work with the Borough's elected officials, planning board, and administration.

TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Frenchtown's emergence as a quality tourist destination is an important challenge. The key aspect of this challenge is that it is not solely a Borough problem, but a regional issue. Frenchtown had been left out of the tourist conversation until recently as Hunterdon County became fashionable and more affluent. Though it was evident in the 1980’s that the Borough was undergoing a transformation from a neglected and somewhat forgotten community, it now is one of the most sought after destinations in the tri-state area. Nonetheless, this was not apparent as early as the 1980's. As Ellen Fletcher put it, "Frenchtown's transformation from agricultural town to appealing river town was neither smooth nor certain. ... Bridge St. was a virtual revolving door as new stores opened, failed and closed in rapid succession... Frenchtown had been classified by the state as a "depressed area."

The Frenchtown area because of its western location was out of the mainstream immigration routes until approximately the 1990's. the area has been a retreat for NYC arts and stage people for almost 100 years, but Frenchtown was too far west and off the beaten path. That's what preserved it, but also let it rundown an underutilized. Flemington's ups and downs didn't especially help Frenchtown. Raritan Township eventually buried Flemington and they relied too heavily on a one-trick pony- the outlet mall for survival. When that became competitive, Flemington did nothing to fight back, or adapt until, 2011 when they established a municipality-wide business improvement district. Additionally, Raritan Township, which surrounds Flemington, went on a building spree from 1990-to 2009. This dictated that Rt. 31/202 would be developed along big-box and mall-type retail. This successfully buried this traditional and historic Borough in retail causing a steady disintegration of Main Street Flemington, and it began to lack market relevance. Flemington's quaintness became just old fashioned, its charm an inconvenience, its unique shopping just ordinary. Efforts were
attempted to address this, but never went beyond a localized approach. Feeling threatened it withdrew from rather than embracing its place as the center of a new regional market.

The strength of Frenchtown, both residually and commercially, is as an intimate, vibrant, and diverse market, a quaint river town, and a gateway to one of the region's great value destinations - western New Jersey and Bucks County, PA. It previously did not act this way, or managed this key asset well, but in the past 15 years it has, or the market has, worked to maximize this competitive advantage. The Borough is challenged to recognize itself as the center of a new regional "tourist" market and in this way to professionally manage business development along partnering opportunities.

Tourism is a two-sided coin. Tourism creates identity and destination ability. It brings in money directly to town and supports a wider range of services and goods than would otherwise be available for the town. Indirectly, tourism supports other people when shop owners in turn employ people and buy goods and services in the area, a phenomenon called an "economic multiplier effect". Tourism supports property values by creating a ready market for stores and homes for the people that own and work in them. Tourism is also behind many efforts to preserve the historic nature of an area.

On the other hand, tourism brings traffic congestion and crowds. The crush traffic and people may seriously affect the quality of life for the residents. Tourism often adversely affects the ability to provide municipal services like police protection. The structure of taxation in the state does not easily provide a method for capturing a portion of the money spent by tourists to use in providing services necessitated by their presence.
There are mutual interests between business and residents’ interests in preserving the Frenchtown’s quality of life. A town’s culture, values, and history are foundations of the area as a destination. In this way, business owners also have a strong interest in controlling the impacts that come from tourism. If visiting Frenchtown becomes no longer enjoyable, tourists and residents will go elsewhere. Suitable limits must be established that reflect town values. The management of tourism to sustain these values is essential to the quality of life in the area.

The effects of tourism are not confined to the limits of the Frenchtown area. Other Hunterdon/Delaware & Raritan River communities such as Lambertville, Stockton, Flemington and Clinton as well as Bucks County, PA are linked together as a rural & village tourist destination exemplified by a unique and strong Inn system and 19th and 20th century historic industry and artisanship.

These towns also struggle with many of the same tourism issues as Frenchtown such as; marketing, circulation, quality of life, and the correct mix of shops in the Central Business District. This argues for these communities to work together to define their niches concentrating on enhanced values, quality, and specialty products instead of insular and chaotic marketing behavior.
STRATEGIC PLANNING - AN ASSET BASED APPROACH

At the heart of these plans is a rediscovery of the significant values of the community developed through its history and interpersonal relationships. It is these values that downtown revitalization and planning intends to build on and manage.

The Committee discussed asset based planning by reviewing the research assignment of asking people, "What do you love about Frenchtown". Asset-based development, rather than needs assessment, has become a new paradigm in the community development field. Managed Business Districts use an asset-based rather than needs-based approach to determining the direction, network, and services it will provide to develop the community.

Quality of life is a result of services managed to enhance community assets. These assets must be identified first & agreed upon, developed, and then managed with commitment over time. The Model that determines this is:
Agreements - Management - Commitment. Asset-based approaches do not fix the past, but consciously plan for and create the future. An asset-based approach must be managed by community-based organizations. Asset-based development emphasizes common interests and values ..., and attend to functional change in a community. Asset-based development is contextual assessing assets as parts of conversations that link the understanding and perception of the asset at each level. Therefore, it is a highly inclusive, participatory, and linked approach. "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts" is an explored and practiced axiom. It is comprehensive because it is contextual and each project or service fulfills an agreement to improve a quality of life as a service advantage and a larger vision/ promise. Unlike needs that are often very subjective and personal, assets are most effective as shared, linked and networked community phenomena and wither when isolated or restrained.

Agreements are not only the identified assets, but the vision of what the community will be, based on these assets. It sets a direction and is non-political. This is not a fix-it, or problem solving, approach to community development. It is about moving forward and harness all the community's assets and potential in order to do so.

Management is the key to success. No business, organization, institution, or individual succeeds without management. The quality of management is the key indicator of success. Successful managed business districts manage Agreements not Disagreements. They may disagree but they do not compromise on the community vision because this vision is a promise for a powerful and fulfilled future. Asset management also is about identifying the potential and "promise" of various assets vital to being authentic and fulfilled. Managing agreements is a collaborative effort because the agreement is a form of consensus not persuasion. Without management nothing actually can happen.

Commitment is equal to resource and service management and in our culture synonymous with "money". Commitment allows our agreements to be managed and not disappear even if people change or circumstances fluxuate. Our commitment to something indicates where our resources will go. Commitment is not less than 100%; it does not require knowledge; and, it is always social. It is a dialogue of the value of known and shared assets.

A simple and common way of determining community assets, especially hidden assets, is to ask the question of citizens, elected officials, community planners, and planning bodies, "What do you love about the town?" This question is not a needs question, but an immediate assessment of what matters, what is valuable, and what defines quality. The answers are always transferable and quickly have great currency building ownership and capital in and with others. Asset building questions are not typical. Problem solving-oriented questions are typical. Communities are not built on problems, but on the perception of potential and real assets. Development is the management of all these assets in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
ASSETS OF FRENCHTOWN

1. River
2. History
3. Small town feel - love having neighbors - the perfect small country town.
4. Eclectic nature of the residents - a little quirkiness.
5. Old Victorian homes - feeling of being back in time.
6. The ease of living - everything I need is right here.
7. A safe place-Frenchtown feels like home, a definite charm.
8. It’s all about the feet. You can walk everywhere - stroll through town.
9. The quality of light along the river.
10. Accessibility of hiking/biking/canoeing/kayaking right from town.
11. Adorable, charming, architecture, colorful paint, cheerful, sense of history, preserved sense of past.
12. Location between the two great metropolitan centers of New York and Philadelphia.
13. Genuineness
14. Two 19th century Inns
15. Alfresco dining
16. Artisans and crafts
17. Safe and clean
18. Economic potential
19. Variety of quality owner-operated destination stores

COMMUNITY VALUES

- be honorable  honor your word
- communicate effectively
- be committed to success
- truthful
- accountable
- informative
- have a good relationship to the facts
- if you don't know, don't make it up, and if you do make it up, clean it up.
- fun is important
- be pragmatic and results oriented
- be creative
- do our best
- be fair and equitable
- be in action

Summed up, these attributes speak to a great sense of “small town” life. In Frenchtown. This is present in the nature and structure of the town, and fully recognized as a valuable asset.
Frenchtown is “Main Street America”. Little wonder that an eroding of these values, real or perceived, cause anxiety in a traditional town. The challenge of the Borough, and consequently the proposed improvement of the Downtown, is to revitalize and build on its environmental, locational, social, cultural, historic, architectural, and business assets (including the surrounding communities), and expand and maintain the community’s identity and essential value. As proven in other developing areas, much of the current anxiety of the community will prove unnecessary as intrinsic value is seen to be enhanced rather than eroded by the challenges of well-planned future growth. Factually, people coming new to the area are attracted for exactly the value that exists and often become staunch supporters of community-based planning. They seek walkable public/community places that build a sense of community and meet real social and economic needs.

Frenchtown is one of the important gateways to a unique region encompassing two states in a portion of the Delaware River valley. Its small town assets can project a vibrant, well-maintained, upscale, safe, clean and attractive downtown and adjacent business corridors. Revitalization should be pedestrian friendly and provide facilities to accommodate vehicles and bicycles ... a vibrant business environment with mercantile and service type businesses...(the community)...would provide shopping, dining, socializing, entertainment and commercial activities for daytime and evening hours. The Committee recognizes that to maximize its potential a capable community partnership must be present. One that brings together free enterprise participants, government and the community. Perhaps one of the most important findings of the Committee was the lack of a comprehensive management capability actively managing the assets and customers needs of the downtown business district. Fundamental to the success of the Borough is its ability to bring the community together as “one community”, and elevate the management of services that significantly enhance community assets—particularly the assets of the downtown. Revitalization plans are “daunting” if left to one aspect of the community such as local government. Its success relies on an integrated community approach and the sustainability of community partnerships that merge public and private interests.

Asset building and development act as a "community option" that promotes decentralization, comprehensive community development, and long term strategies for development.

**SWOT ANALYSIS - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats**

The **overarching agenda** of the Committee is to identify what is valuable about Frenchtown and to find agreement in this Committee in such way as to communication to the community a plan for revitalization. Having done that, we can then look at revitalization in a business and, to some extent, community development manner. Then we can attempt to make recommendations on maximizing ideas, management, projects and procedures that align with the development plans.
**SWOT analysis** (alternately SWOT Matrix) is a strategic planning method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses/Limitations, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project or in a business venture. The aim of any SWOT analysis is to identify the key internal and external factors that are important to achieving objectives.

The Committee conducted a SWOT Analysis as follows:

The result of the analysis is a matrix of positive and negative factors to address:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal factors</th>
<th>Positive factors</th>
<th>Negative factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
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<td>Weaknesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
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<td>Threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>External factors</td>
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The key point to remember about SWOT is that:

**Strengths and weaknesses**
- Are internal to the community.
- Relate to the present situation.

**Opportunities and threats**
- Are external to the community.
- Relate to changes in the environment which will impact the community.

**Strengths:**
- What advantages does our community have?
- What do we do better than anyone else?
- What unique or lowest-cost resources can we draw upon that others can't?
- What do people in our market see as our strengths?
- What are our community assets?

Consider our community-strengths from both an internal perspective, and from the point of view of our customers and people in our market. When looking at strengths, think about them in relation to competitors.

**Weaknesses:**
- What could we improve?
- What should we avoid?
- What are people in our market likely to see as weaknesses?
- What factors turn customers away?
Again, consider this from an internal and external basis: Do other people seem to perceive weaknesses that we don't see? Are our competitors doing any better than we?

**Opportunities:**

- What good opportunities can we spot?
- What interesting trends are we aware of?

Useful opportunities can come from such things as:

- Changes in technology and markets on both a broad and narrow scale.
- Changes in government policy related to our field.
- Changes in management.
- Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, and so on.
- Local events.

A useful approach when looking at opportunities is to look at our community strengths and ask ourselves whether these open up any opportunities. Alternatively, look at our community weaknesses and ask ourselves whether we could open up opportunities by eliminating them.

**Threats**

- What obstacles do we face?
- Are demographics and markets changing?
- What are our competitors doing?
- Are quality standards, assets, or services changing?
- Is changing technology threatening our position?
- Do we have financial problems?
- Could any of our weaknesses seriously threaten the community?

When looking at opportunities and threats don't overlook external factors, such as new government regulations, demographic shifts, or technological changes in the industry.

**Committee SWOT Analysis Results:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>River</td>
<td>Compromised Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/Village Community</td>
<td>Poor/Weak Asset Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkability</td>
<td>Lack of Professional Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultured Community</td>
<td>Lack of Enforced Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail-Trail</td>
<td>Poor Access to the River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transportation</td>
<td>Lack of Rail Connections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Manageable Size
Historic Architecture
Strong Sense of Community
Celebrity Draw
Affable, Friendly, Romantic
Tourist Destination (ecological, historical, archeological)
Eco-Recreational
Owner-Operator Niche Retail
Functional Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay-cations</td>
<td>Border Overdevelopment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics (More affluence/Growth)</td>
<td>Gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redevelopment Capacity</td>
<td>River Flooding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Tourism Alliances</td>
<td>The Great Recession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space Preservation</td>
<td>Illegal Drug Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better Communications/Technology</td>
<td>Lack of Regional Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dining Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Sourcing Movement (Food, Economy)</td>
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**STRATEGIC VISION**

**STRATEGIC PLANNING** builds upon a vision and develops an implementation strategy to work towards fulfilling on that vision. Strategic Planning builds from the bottom, or community, upwards and the community builds a consensus for a common vision. Strategic Planning works towards cooperation, coordination, and collaboration across the board to create sustainable communities. This process demands that each individual think and act more as a “community”, and outside of the ordinary limits of what is possible and known. With community development, the “vision” is about creating “Places of Confidence and Inclusion”. A Vision Statement is best understood as a promise to the community - a community promise, because it states clearly what is expected by an organization that will manage the expectations. There are two essential stages to Strategic Planning: A) Vision; and, B) Implementation

**Strategy.** Fundamentally, all planning has three elements or steps illustrated by these three questions: 1) Where are we now? 2) Where are we going? 3) How will we get there? Strategic planning adds an initial extra step: **Visioning**: Designing a vision of a possible future from a future standpoint not from a standpoint of “fixing” the past. Planning can be defined as, “an anticipated set of actions designed to achieve a desired set of objectives”. Therefore, a strategic place will have a **Vision Statement** which states who you say you are if you were already there.
VISION OF THE FUTURE: When we design a vision/promise of something. We boldly declare who and what we are and what we want to be known for and how we want to live. A vision/promise is a bold statement of what is possible and a declaration of ownership of our future. Without vision/promise we react to a past vision, which we do not own. And, often because we have no “ownership” we are not committed to it and the vision/promise is compartmentalized, fragmented, and not whole. Without a vision/promise, without ownership, when issues or needs arise we react in order to survive the deterioration of our environment and community. A vision/promise allows us to pause and then respond to issues and needs and concerns from a place of ownership, responsibility and commitment.

Vision/Promise Statement: The vision/promise is not fluff. It is a bold statement, a community promise of what the district is and will be and most importantly what it is accountable for and committed to. It is what every plan and action of the Downtown Revitalization is measured against.

Accountability: What the district is “accountable” for, in terms of the vision statement, is not the work it is responsible to do, but what it is authentically. We are accountable for who and what we say we are, which the vision statement will boldly state. This requires being honest and creative. What we “love” about our town is what it authentically is. That is what we are accountable for.

Commitment: What the district is committed to is a future - a positive, effective, and excellent future. It is something bigger than any one person and literally a way of being, behaving and communicating. It is what we say is possible. Vision Statements declare what the future is for a community. Any vision whether it is personal or communal is not about any one individual. It is that which can be counted on to occur over time. This vision statement declares our future clearly, boldly and openly. Consequently, our plans and projects are designed to fulfill upon that vision.

VISION STATEMENT

The Frenchtown Downtown Business District is dedicated to serving our community and creating memorable and rewarding experiences. It is the entrance to a romantic, eclectic, and a historic small town; a gateway to a uniquely intimate and beautiful area. We are committed to preserving a safe, family-oriented, creative, fun and sustainable downtown as a destination for adventure, shopping, dining, arts and entertainment - quaint, walkable, and a traditional vibrant river town.

MANAGEMENT Vs No-MANAGEMENT

Successful business districts/ downtowns identify common areas of interest, usage, and the challenges required to maintain a competitive, successful and effective environment, and
manage it. The degree of success of a town, and the lack of success, are directly attributed to the extent of conscious management. Contrary to our personal sensibilities, complaining is not management in the sense the Committee came to address it, or better said, complaining is the management of disagreements. Letting the wind manage things is also not management. Yes sometimes the wind blows nicely, but often it does not. This is happenstance not management all to often how downtowns are managed- by no-management. Powerful and effective management is the management of agreements, often hard won. Towns that address professional management in this way are more successful in every way. Management may cost an additional fee above regular rent or taxes because in itself management is a special or enhanced service. The paramount common interest of business districts/downtowns is the visitors/customers that the business district attracts, and management takes a good look at their customer’s perception of their downtown. In a comprehensive manner, the organized business district works to manage the customer’s perception and experience of their district so that the customer feels comfortable and enthusiastic about spending their time and money there.

The goal of this technology is named, “Managing The Conversation”, (this conversation is the internal experiences/ perceptions of the customer(s)). The conversation we are managing is the conversations our customers have about our community. They may not say it out loud, but they are talking to themselves. His internal conversation is completely impacted by the way a district manages itself and how it communicates its sense of value- its values. ‘Managing the conversation’ is an analogy described by Seth Grossman to describe superior place management, particularly in retail environments (Grossman 2006). Grossman writes that people always have an internal dialogue (the ‘conversation’) which is, in effect, sensory feedback from the environment around them. An example of a ‘conversation’ is: A person visits a place and feels uncomfortable due to the behavior of some people nearby, such as swearing, spitting or littering. To ‘manage the conversation’ is to note the person’s response and then act upon it. In this case, it could include better supervision of public spaces. The result is the conversation the person has with themselves as they use the space is more ‘I like this place!’ and less, ‘Let’s get out of here and don’t come back!’.

There are seven (7) key objectives of this technology that develop a community conversation. The Committee looked at the district from a physical, communicative, built and environmental from these objectives. The objectives, when deliberately managed, are the building blocks of the community when it is aware of itself as a community, and able to act on its own revitalization. These seven objectives are:

2. Inter-dependence rather than independence.
5. Professional rather than amateur.
6. Focus on the customer rather than oneself.
7. **Integrity** – being our vision and values as a commitment, a promise to our visitors & customers, rather than a complaint.

Managed areas tend to express a commitment to quality and value. Non-managed areas express complaints over quality and value.

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**BUSINESS DISTRICT MANAGEMENT**

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that a Business Improvement District be considered for Frenchtown to include all commercial properties with the possible exception of the old ceramics industrial properties across from the Frenchtown School. We will ask the Clerk to provide property data on these properties. It is understood that a separate planning process must occur to establish a BID even though much of the foundation work has been addressed in this Committee. Boundaries, services, budgets, and management remain to be determined.

There are two (2) types of management that Business Improvement Districts may consider. Both reflect the form of public-private partnership the Business Improvement District represents. {NOTE: The chief role of the Business Improvement District management is to manage the public-private partnership.} This partnership sets a new tone for government and business relations in the municipality, and leverages the assets and capabilities of each sector to provide services, improvements, and ongoing management. Some Business Improvement Districts are more public than private, some more private than public.

**The first type** of management, and the preferred type in New Jersey (over 90%), is the:

**B.1) private non-profit corporation.** It establishes a more private form of public-private partnership. The non-profit Corporation manages the Business Improvement District and although a separate and distinct corporation under NJ Law, it is designated in the enabling Business Improvement District ordinance to manage the Business Improvement District and is
subject to all the requirements of the ordinance. Although an agent of the municipal government, it is not a government office and operates as a private non-profit corporation. The non-profit has a Board of Directors representing the stakeholder groups affected by the BID. The non-profit elects its members, although the first Board of Directors is appointed by the Trustees of the Corporation according to its bylaws. All Business Improvement Districts have a few selected positions such as one elected official from the municipality and other important institutions. The Corporation may hire a professional manager and the municipal government has oversight, but less direct influence. The non-profit corporation would be the Frenchtown Business Improvement District Management Corporation (Business Improvement District).

B.2) Economic & Community Development Commission (ECDC)

The ECDC generally has oversight over all economic development activity in the municipality and is an ongoing planning and advisory body for the municipality. Commissions can manage the BIDs.

The second type of management, of which approximately 10% of New Jersey Business Improvement Districts utilize, is a Municipal Commission. This type of management establishes a more public form of public-private partnership. A Commission is also designated in the enabling ordinance to manage the Business Improvement District as an office of the municipal government. It also may hire a dedicated professional manager, but it may also purchase the services of the municipality by utilizing and subsidizing a designated staff member and then it may be subject to public regulations, or it may hire someone outside of government not unlike the non-profit corporation. The Commission is appointed by the Mayor & Municipal Council, but would also have bylaws articulating how it is organized, its purpose, and functions. In the case of the Commission, the local government has oversight and more direct influence.

For Frenchtown the "downtown area is obvious, but there is the extension down Trenton Avenue to Two Buttons, and the fact that the Harrison Street commercial areas are directly tied to the downtown, and both could arguably be in the BID. The potential budget can begin using NJ's industry average of 7% of total property taxes, but it does not have to be that amount. An analysis of tax data would provide potential budget totals.

SPECIAL (BUSINESS) IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

A Special or Business Improvement District (SID/BID) is a legal self-governing body that provides services to a specific district of properties through a self-imposed public assessment. In most states, Special Improvement Districts (SIDs), also known more popularly as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), are public-private partnerships. State laws governing business (special) improvement districts provide statutory authority for municipalities to create publicly financed business improvement districts in partnership with their municipality and to designate business-led non-profit corporations to manage them. The statues recognize that business viability is related to the proper identification and management of services to encourage and support retail/commercial economic activity and development.
The BID works with the Borough to improve existing services to the district and provide additional enhancements and focus. Funding is created through an annual assessment on property in the district, collected by the Borough, but transferred and controlled by the BID. The BID management team (The Board of Directors and the professional manager) implement a strategic and operating plan, and establish the annual budget. There are over 85 BIDs in New Jersey providing comprehensive services that result in increased sales, property values and community pride.

BIDs are not government programs, but a partnership of business, government and the community. BIDs are created at the local municipal level and do not require state approval. The primary purposes of a BID are to:

- Manage business development professionally
- Increase customers and sales
- Expand business opportunities
- Keep the customers coming
- Work as an organized and professional team
- Be a good and reliable partner to government, financial institutions, and the community.
- Define a future vision (see vision statement)
- Be competitive, safe, clean and fun.

The questions a BID asks are: How well are we serving our customers? Are these services well planned and managed professionally?

BIDs also: A) provide services that consider the customer's needs; B) provide a comprehensive array of services at the same time such as: promotions, security, cleanliness, design and development, business recruitment, business support, transportation, and financial resources; C) provide services that are common to all businesses in the district; and, D) provide management. BIDs work on the principles that management is the key to success, and that service is the competitive edge in business.

TRADITIONAL BID SERVICES

A) Commercial Marketing and Communications Programs:
- Development and implementation of a destination marketing strategy and image building theme- advertisement.
- Development of a "shop locally" campaign as a means of offsetting existing retail sales leakage.
- Development of an annual program of special events and activities.

B) Civic Beautification, Safety and Design Programs And Projects:
(Physical image-building)
Develop improved clean landscaped, and safety programs.
Streetscape improvement projects such as street furniture and street trees, tree grates.
Development of a program of visual amenities such as signage, flags, banners, seasonal decorations, etc.

C) Commercial Recruitment and Retention Programs:
• Assist in filling commercial vacancies with the most desirable new businesses.
• Understanding the assets and value of the district as a marketing plan.

D) BID Programs Administration:
• Dedicated management. If applicable, hire professional BID management.
• Set up an organizational office.

BELOW, ARE ANSWERS TO TYPICAL QUESTIONS REGARDING BIDS/SIDS

1. **HOW IS THE BID CREATED?** The BID, itself, is created by local ordinance supported by a community planning process, and does not require approval by the state or county. A community-based planning process establishes the extent, purpose, mission, and budget of the BID.

2. **HOW IS A BID TERMINATED?** The municipal government can rescind the BID ordinance in the same manner that it was created.

3. **WHO GOVERNS THE BID?** The BID is governed by a non-profit management corporation designated in the enabling ordinance. It is required that the BID have at least one local elected official on this board as a voting member, and that the board be comprised of a majority of business and property owners of the BID. All members of the BID are usually members of the non-profit corporation.

4. **WHO DETERMINES THE BID BUDGET?** The BID and its Board of Directors determine the budget of the BID not the local government, although the municipal council must approve it annually by resolution.

5. **WHAT SPECIFIC BENEFITS WILL I GET FROM A BID?** The services and benefits of a BID are summarized in the budget. Also, the BID will produce an annual report summarizing its services and accomplishments. The chief benefit a BID provides is a voice for the business community and the ability to professionally manage advocacy and services to improve business capability for the district as a whole.

6. **WHO COLLECTS THE BID ASSESSMENT?** - One of the chief partnerships of a BID is with the local government, which acts as collector of the BIDs funds. It is their responsibility to bill and collect the funds as a special assessment and insure that 100% of the funds are given to the BID.
7. **WHO PAYS THE BID ASSESSMENT?** NJ Law requires that the property owner pay the BID assessment.

8. **CAN THE BID ASSESSMENT BE PASSED THROUGH TO A TENANT?** YES, NJ law allows a landlord to pass along public assessments like property taxes and special assessments to tenants unless otherwise specifically stipulated in the lease agreement.

9. **CAN THE BID HAVE FUNDRAISERS?** YES, the non-profit management Corporation of the BID can raise additional funds.

10. **DOES THE BID REPLACE ANY MUNICIPAL SERVICES?** No, by state statute a BID can only “enhance” not replace municipal services.

11. **DOES THE BID REPLACE UEZ PROGRAMS OR REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES?** No, UEZ programs. Redevelopment Authorities, and BIDs are designed to complement each other with the BID acting as a business constituency focused on improvements and customer satisfaction, and the UEZ on business recruitment and job creation. Both are intended to revitalize activity business in commercial, retail and industrial areas.

12. **IS THERE MUNICIPAL OVERSIGHT OF THE BID?** - YES. There are four primary oversight: 1) ordinance oversight by the Municipal Council; 2) the BID statute requires at least one elected person to be a voting member of the BID Board of Directors; 3) the municipal council must approve the annual BID budget and be presented with an annual report; and, 4) the BID must conduct an annual certified audit which must be submitted to the municipal government.

13. **Examples of success in BIDs:**

   It is reported that BIDs leverage up to 3 times their BID assessment budget, which brings the total amount of funds for the 85 BIDs in New Jersey to approx. $52,500,000 per year.

   To track successes some BIDs have tracked vacancy rates, amount of private investment, rent values, and customer volume. **Union Township BID** claims a 5% or less vacancy rate compared to 30% pre-BID. **Collingswood** claimed a 30% - 40% pre-BID vacancy rate and a year later 0%. **The Times Square BID** did a survey in 1996: 86% said they saw overall improvement, 86% said it was cleaner, and 80% said it was safer and there has been an influx of new businesses and renovation. **Red Bank** saw its ratable base grow from $84.3 million in the 1990’s to $121 million in 2000; retail rents were $9-$12 in 1994 and $20-$25 in 2003; 35% vacancy rate in 1990’s to a 98% occupancy rate in 2003; and, has attracted better stores going from being known as “dead bank” in 1990 to “the hippest town in New Jersey” in 1995.
Towns that have BIDs are also surveying as showing a greater sense of town pride, cooperation between business and government, and cooperative development processes. **Newark’s Ironbound BID** states that it has leveraged twice its budget for clean-up efforts, façade improvements, and has enhanced its designation as a tourist destination, built a partnership with local government, and sustained a less than 5% vacancy rate in 2009 with over $10,000,000 in commercial investments.

**THE BID STRATEGY - Retail/Commercial Cooperative Management**

Much of the challenge about BIDs is that they are an amalgamation of a number of legal, organizing and management capabilities. In almost every analysis of a BID, it has normative public and private functions. For instance, the BID public-private partnerships can be interpreted both as a public or private contract, or in organization terms. All of these interpretations are valid. In this study, BID’s are referred to regarding their legal interpretation. BIDs tell us that public-private partnerships can be government entities where that partnership is described in the enabling legislation by requiring public and private actors to participate in an advisory capacity and the management of the BID.

BIDs provide a local subgovernmental mechanism for managing business and community revitalization and development efforts by establishing a governing and special assessment district. This mechanism operates as a public-private partnership both contractually and politically. The BID’s partnership stems not only from the combination of public and private property brought together to form the district, but from the requirement to have representatives of such properties manage and contribute to the financial stability of the district. Also, although BIDs are generally identified in the enabling ordinances by the lot and blocks of each property contributing financially to the BID, all BIDs have an area-wide designation laid over these properties, public property, and public right of ways thereby identifying the jurisdiction of the district, which supersedes the individual listed properties. This may seem obvious, but again it points to the combined public-private partnership intention of the BID. BIDs are not set up to operate individual businesses or properties (even though in many states they may own and operate property). They are set up to manage the designated business community as a whole. "Public-private partnership" (PPP) describes the functional community-nature of BIDs. It further infers that BIDs function directly within larger real communities, and are not separate from their host community. This function is a function of government even as the techniques of business development are utilized. The partnership is managed by an organization--either a private non-profit corporation or a Committee--thereby establishing the BID management as in, but not of, government often referred to as quasi-governmental.

There are two aspects to a BID. First, the Business Improvement District, itself, is a part of the local government and is a public entity governed by the enabling ordinance and legislation. Second, the management entity is a separate concern. In the enabling ordinance, the management entity is specifically identified and can be altered at any time by the municipal legislature. It is common, but also confusing when the management entity and the BID are
unknowingly collapsed into one object. This tends to skew a true assessment of what the BID is and how it functions.

The premise for a BID tends to be based on the observation that community revitalization without reliable resources and strong administrative support is limited and often ineffective. Having a non-profit community organization, or a non-governmental organization, is not enough to sustain long term revitalization, which requires legal structures and committed ongoing funds to sustain hard earned plans. Government programs also have their limits, and are held responsible for economic trends they cannot control, services that are not in line with immediate business needs, and service delivery systems that do not meet the day to day requirements of dynamic and changing business environments. Special (Business) Improvement Districts (SIDs/BIDs) are designed to remedy this problem, particularly in traditional downtown business areas (although the model has been extended to industrial, multi-use, and residential area) by transferring both the legitimacy of government and the resources of the private sector to a new entity—the BID.

Special (Business) Improvement Districts (SIDs/BIDs) define not only the specific business district (commercial, industrial or mixed use), but also the municipality as a whole. The saying, "as the downtown goes, so goes the town" is true. In a BID planning process the most challenging and rewarding discussions are discovering a new concept of the business community and as a community what it is committed to and can be counted on for. This type of strategic, future-oriented, planning is at the core of BID success.

In the USA, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NIDs), and Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) are similar terms. In Canada BIDs are called Business Improvement Areas. BIDs are a type of governmental authority allowable in 49 (excluding New Mexico) by state statute that give authority to municipalities to create special districts to improve business and community development in local communities. States provide statutory authority for municipalities to create mandatorily financed business improvement districts (BIDs) that enhance local management capacity for local business and community developments and improvements so they can compete more effectively. “The general aim of BIDs is to put public places within cities on the same footing as the private places outside them—shopping centers and strip malls” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 6). In order to do this, public and private actors must be brought together in a professionally managed and committed partnership. The districts provide supplemental services to encourage and support a cooperative form of retail/commercial economic activity and provide a competitive edge. Similar to shopping centers, the BID provides services common to all businesses in the district such as: street and sidewalk cleaning, customer service, identify and manage community assets, and use destination marketing practices. Business Improvement District legislation is designed to provide municipalities with the ability to partner, focus, increase and manage services specifically designed to enhance the economic viability of business areas and downtown business centers. The services that are provided by a Business Improvement District are specific and unique to that business district.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Committee unanimously voted in favor of supporting an Economic Development Commission to oversee the economic interests of Frenchtown, implement the Committee's report and other studies, and manage downtown revitalization.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION - PROPOSED ORDINANCE

Whereas economic development, revitalizing and improving the success of the borough's business districts and the community as a whole, and the downtown business district, which is comprised of Race St., Bridge St. Trenton Avenue, Harrison St., S. Harrison St., Front St., Lott St., Second St., and Kingwood Avenue in the borough, are key responsibilities of municipal government and promotes the general welfare of the entire community.

Whereas the Council of the Borough of Frenchtown believes it is in the best interest of the municipality to have its citizens and businesses participate in determining how best to plan and revitalize the Borough and the business districts.

Whereas the Council believes that the best mechanism for receiving input from those citizens is to have their direct involvement in developing policy and plans regarding such matters.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Borough Council of Frenchtown create an Economic Development Commission to consider such issues and concerns as may affect the improvement, growth, development, and economic success of the borough and its residents, businesses and visitors and make recommendations to the Council as regards strategies to achieve the goal of downtown revitalization in the borough, and to seek grants to obtain professional services to achieve this endeavor as needed and determined.

Be it further resolved that the Commission will be establish as follows:

1. Purpose and Name.
2. Duties and Responsibilities.
3. Membership and Terms.
5. Termination of Membership.
6. Meetings of members
7. Financial disclosure
8. Appointment of officers
9. Duties of officers
10. Ad-hoc Committees
11. Compensation
1. Purpose and Name.
A. It is in the best interest of the municipality to have its citizens and businesses participate in determining how best to plan economic development and improve the Borough and the business districts, and that the best mechanism for receiving input from those citizens is to have their direct involvement in developing policy and plans regarding such matters.
B. A Commission is hereby established as the Economic Development Commission to advise the Borough Council on the economic, business, and commercial needs of the Borough of Frenchtown.
C. Its nine appointed and selected members represent the entire Borough, and have special interests and awareness in economic development and downtown management, business, industry, commerce, merchant goods and sales.

2. Duties and Responsibilities.
A. It shall be the duty of this Commission to make continuous study and survey of the economic, business, downtown development and management opportunities of the Borough of Frenchtown, and work to implement the recommendations of the 2012 Downtown Revitalization Committee, and other such Borough planning efforts that examine economic and business development in the Borough of Frenchtown.
B. Analyze business, industry and trade with a view to ascertain the type of commerce best suited to the economic, cultural, and social improvement of the Borough.
C. Consider such issues and concerns as may affect the improvement, growth, development of businesses, arts and culture, and economic success of the Borough and its residents, businesses and visitors and make recommendations to the Council as regards strategies to achieve the goal of economic development and downtown improvement in the Borough, and to seek grants to implement projects and goals, and obtain professional services to achieve this endeavor as needed and determined
D. Prepare an annual report to the Mayor and Council as to the processes of the Commission and development of the commercial and merchant districts, including but not limited to business needs, environmental improvements and maintenance, design elements, signage, improvements to Borough infrastructure and streetscapes, holiday lights and other promotions, downtown management and technology, construction capacity, redevelopment, labor, taxes and property assessment and improvements for business recruitment and retention.
E. Recommend to the Mayor and Council and Planning Board reasonable and desirable restrictions and improvements concerning commercial areas.
F. Recommend to Mayor, Council, and Planning Board changes to zoning establishing a desirable commercial ratable base for an area for business and trade.
G. Prepare and sponsor events to improve merchant trade and commerce in business areas. Sponsor educational symposiums to improve business development knowledge.
H. The Commission may prepare, distribute, and support the purchase of material and data advertising the advantages of the Borough for the purpose of attracting business and improving Frenchtown as an attraction and destination for visitors and travelers.
I. The Commission shall receive from all officials and all authorized boards, departments and offices of the Borough such assistance as may be required by the Commission in performing its
duties, and the Commission shall also be given access to all municipal reports and information which may assist the Commission in the performance of its duties.

J. The Commission may act as planner and management, or approve such contracts to assign such and administer the processes necessary, for a Business or Special Improvement District (BID/SID) per NJ. Statute 40:56, et seq., and the Chairman of the Commission shall be a selected voting member of the management organization of a BID/SID or any other form of agency to manage the BID/SID such as a non-profit corporation or Commission.

3. Membership and Terms.
A. The Economic Development Commission shall consist of nine members appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Borough Council. Other than elected officials, members will be business owner/operators and owner/landlords of commercial property, and at least one resident of the Borough of Frenchtown. It is strongly recommended, in order to represent stakeholders effectively, that members of the Commission will include a mix of business owners and commercial properties owners from various locations (Bridge St./Race St. Rt. 12, Rt. 29, Harrison St., Front St., etc.), professions, and types of business in the Borough. B. Commission members shall be residents of the Borough, or rent or own a business or commercial property in the Borough of Frenchtown. And, recognizing that Frenchtown's business area and influence extends outside of the Borough limits, one (1) business member may be a member of the Commission who owns and/or operates a business within 5 miles of the Borough's municipal borders and be a voting member and shall be known as the At-Large member.
C. The term of membership shall be two (2) years.
D. A Borough councilperson shall act as Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, and shall be the Chairperson of the Commission as a voting member.
E. The Mayor of the Borough Council shall be an ex officio non-voting member of the Commission and shall serve for a term concurrent with their elected office.
F. One other Councilperson may be appointed as a voting member to the Commission.
H. The President of the Planning Board shall be a selected voting member of the Commission.
I. The President of the Frenchtown Business & Professional Association or his/her designee shall be a voting member of the Commission.
J. A resident homeowner, commercial property owner or business owner of the Borough of Frenchtown except the At-Large member, 18 years or older and having lived in Frenchtown for at least two consecutive years at the time of appointment to this Commission, shall be a member of the Commission.

Each Commission member shall be entitled to one vote. Approval of any matter requires an affirmative vote from the majority of the members present provided a quorum of four is present and voting.

5. Termination of Membership.
If any member misses more than three (3) consecutive meetings of the Commission, without prior authorization from the Chairperson, such members shall be considered to have resigned from the Commission. In addition, any member of the Commission may be removed at any time and without cause by a majority vote of the Borough Council.
6. Meetings of members
C. Regular meetings of the Commission shall be scheduled at least monthly, with the exception of August and December at a time and place acceptable to the Commission and convenient for the public in order to encourage community involvement.
D. Special meetings may be called at any time by the Commissioner or four or more members, provided however that notification to the public and press is made in accordance with applicable State laws.

7. Financial disclosure
In accordance with the State of New Jersey Governmental Code, the Economic Development Commission members shall be required to file disclosure statements as required by the Local Government Ethics Law.

8. Appointment of officers
A. The officers of the Commission shall be Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Other officers may be appointed as necessary to carry out the work of the Commission.
B. The Chairperson will be the Commissioner of Economic & Community Development. All other officers shall be nominated and elected annually by the Commission. The term for officers shall be one year and any officer may be re-elected to succeed him/herself for one additional term only.
C. The term of office shall run from January 1st and expire December 31st of each year.

9. Duties of officers
A. Duties of the Chairperson. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Commission and provide instructions to all ad hoc Commission chairpersons, and shall keep or cause to keep a book of minutes of all meetings of the Committee. The Chairperson shall give notice of regular and special meetings of the Committee. The Chairperson shall forward meeting minutes to the Borough Clerk monthly. The Chairperson will attend meetings of the Borough Council. In his/her absence the Vice-Chairperson or his/her designee will attend and make appropriate reports to the Borough Council at their regular meetings.
B. Duties of the Vice Chairperson. In the absence or disqualification of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall assume all the duties and responsibilities of the Chairperson.

10. Ad-hoc committees
The Committee may create such ad hoc Committees as the business of the Commission may require, each of which shall exist for such period of time and perform such duties as the Commission may determine.

11. Compensation
A. Members of the Frenchtown Economic Development Commission shall serve without compensation. However, members shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred in carrying out the duties of the Commission as approved by the Borough Council.
B. Appropriation. There shall be appropriated in each annual budget of the Borough such amount as, in the opinion of the Mayor and Council, may be necessary or available for the purpose of advertising the advantages of the Borough or to support the efforts and cooperation of the individuals or organizations encouraging economic development.
STREETSCAPE ANALYSIS

STREETSCAPE DESIGN ELEMENTS - Streetscape features, such as street lights, trees and landscaping, and street furniture can contribute to the unique character of a block or entire neighborhood. There are two components: Context & Plan.

A. CONTEXT
The context information should include the following:

- **Vision statement**: one or two paragraphs that describe the vision the proponent is trying to achieve through the Concept Plan. This should be supplemented with photos of existing conditions and illustrative sketches of the proposal.
- **Site map**: the purpose of this map is to locate the project and define its geographic scope.
- **Existing street section**: develop a scaled (1 inch=20 feet) is suggested, dimensioned street section that defines the existing street (e.g., number, width and typical purpose of travel lanes, location and width of sidewalks and planting strips).

B. PLAN - Elements

Roadway
- Curbline (including curb bulbs if proposed) or roadway edge;
- Special curb space zones (e.g., loading zones, bus layover zones);
- Parking, on-street location and configuration;
- Traffic operations (as defined above);
- Transit routes (bus, light rail or streetcar);
- Service access and delivery needs; and
- Street classifications within a quarter mile of the proposed site.

Streetscape
- Sidewalks, walkways or other pedestrian space (location and dimensions); such as the sidewalk on Trenton Ave. from Bridge St. to Two Buttons.
- Bicycle parking;
- Paving material design;
- Trees and landscaping design, location and specimen type;
- Street furniture (e.g., benches, planters, waste receptacles), description and location;
- Weather protection (e.g., awnings);
- Signage, especially any non-standard or special signs;
- Public art or other unique features; and
- Transit stops or stations.

Utilities
- Lighting (roadway, pedestrian scaled or other);
- Utilities, type and location of water, power and drainage both above and below grade;
• Natural drainage proposals; to determine if the location of your project is within a creek basin) and,
• Private utility locations.

Include a description of streetscape features that are considered unique (e.g., special paving treatments or landscaping, special street and/or pedestrian lighting, standard and non-standard stormwater or natural drainage treatments).

Great streetscapes, in great downtowns, are the center of public life. They brand a community, giving it a cultural identity and guiding the perceptions of the downtown. They speak of the history of the city and convey the aspirations of what’s to come. When done right, with reasons to linger and places to gather, a streetscape sets the stage for the community; the elements of the streetscape can create a place of vitality and activity or can discourage interaction. When the streetscape is right, it provides the community with the location to live its best life.

Good streetscape design happens when there is a design framework that responds sensitively to the context of the surrounding natural and built environment of the city. The beauty of the river and the near downtown neighborhoods, the existing buildings, and the many uses of the downtown are integral to the development of the streetscape framework. When all are taken into consideration, the result is a downtown that is attractive, desirable, and memorable. Together they create the downtown environment. While all have a profound effect on the district, the ability of the streetscape to help or hinder the functionality of the downtown should not be underestimated. Good design of the streetscape is critical to the success of the downtown.

A number of downtown principles were identified in the development of this report. Their presence is found in these guidelines, and they can be used to answer questions beyond the scope of this report. We believe that a successful downtown Frenchtown will be:

1. **A Pedestrian Friendly Environment** - The design of the streetscape will reflect this priority with an attention to scale, beauty, and function that work for and celebrate people rather than cars. The pedestrian will feel connected, inspired, comfortable and safe.
2. **Landscaping that is, attractive and dramatic** - We know that greening enhances the downtown aesthetically, but it will also promote economic development, improve the public’s perception, reduce crime, slow traffic, improve the quality of the environment, encourage tourism, and create a sense of community pride.
3. **A Beautiful Downtown** - Aesthetics are an integral part of good design. Focusing on the decorative elements will enhance the character of the downtown and define the distinction of urban from suburban.
4. **The Heart of the Community** - The downtown’s highest use is as the center of the Frenchtown region: west Hunterdon County and east Bucks County, from its role as a
public gathering spot to the center of culture and commerce. The downtown streetscape should be the best that Frenchtown has to offer.

5. **A Place of Diversity** - A successful downtown will be welcoming to a diverse group of users. It will create an environment that is specifically designed to appeal to the full range of the Frenchtown community, young and old, singles and families, and all ethnic groups. This will make the downtown stronger and more relevant, as it welcomes a variety of people and provides a diversity of experiences.

6. **A Unified Sense of Place** - While the downtown has separate areas, guidelines will create a “signature downtown streetscape” and common framework that ensures there is a “downtown” identity throughout the area. The theme of continuity will create a visual identity for the downtown.

7. **A Connective Downtown** - The guidelines will encourage the development of a network of pedestrian connections between districts, parks, and attractions through the placement of new paths, art, and greening. In a highly interconnected downtown, pedestrians have the opportunity for formal and informal interaction, and businesses and attractions are easily accessible.

8. **Authentic** - Downtown Frenchtown has its own unique collection and combination of historic and new buildings, streets, public spaces and parks that create a distinct river town environment. In addition, most of the businesses located in the downtown are locally owned and operated. Between the built environment, the businesses and the uses of the downtown, the visitor should have an experience that is real and is only found in downtown Frenchtown.

9. **A Diversity of Uses and a Balance of Activities** - The downtown streetscape will support a wide variety of uses - office, retail and entertainment – and activities - day and night – with an appropriate balance to ensure a vibrant district. This will attract both people and business to the downtown, making the sidewalks feel populated at a variety of times.

10. **A Showcase for Public Art** - Downtown should be a location of visual wonder that speaks to the spirit as well as the eye. Public art enriches the streetscape, adding interest and supporting the downtown’s function as the cultural center of the region.

11. **Encourage Both Private and Public Efforts** - The only way to have a dramatic impact on the streetscape is through both private and public efforts.

12. **Build on Existing Assets** - New design will build on the good design elements that are already in place, rather than call for a new design that would be slow to happen.

**OUTLINE OF STREETSCAPE GUIDELINES:**

**Street Lighting:** Down lighting; warm, tunnel effect; like Park & Ride, but scaled for communication and decoration; pedestrian oriented; not gas lights; efficient.

**Benches:** Eclectic, not the same but only a few designs; comfortable; arching back design; set for observation and talking.
Trash cans: Round; Include recycling cans; possibly multi-sided.

Kiosk: No multisided kiosks. Consider bulletin boards.
Clocks:

Utility Lines: Buried from Race St. to Bridge on Bridge Street.

Planters:

Park by the River: Possible Name- Riverbank Park, Sunbeam Park; a celebratory park, not a playground. Parking should be very limited.
Signage, Banners & Wayfinding: The goal of the wayfinding effort is to make it easy for visitors and residents to navigate around Frenchtown, as well as, highlighting its attractions and offerings in an appealing and informative manner. The decision points visitors will face in their experience of Frenchtown should be supported by wayfinding elements that lead them seamlessly to their intended destinations. Further, The wayfinding system can create synergies for residents and visitors who may have been unaware of the location (or even the existence) of that next adventure; it can open doors to entirely new discoveries.

Signage: Welcome visitors, uniform and maintained traffic signs, coordinated wayfinding system.

- **Wayfinding**: Wayfinding refers to a person becoming oriented and choosing a path. Must function well and intuitive for first time visitors.

1. Directional/destination signs for business community.
2. Gateway entrances at city limits.
3. Design elements that help orientation.
   - A uniform, readily identifiable set of features
   - A common set of colors, graphics, forms, logos, motifs
   - A range of scales and features
   - Variations specific to the identified facility
4. Sign Destinations
   - **Civic facilities**: Borough Hall, Library, Parks, Arts Center, etc.
   - **Public parking lots**
   - **Business areas**: may include references to “shops” or “restaurants,” and individual businesses
   - **Other major destinations**: Bus station, Parks, hospital, historic sites, tourist information centers, etc.

Examples only (not agreed upon designs)
Banners: Example only (not agreed upon design)

ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER

The Committee agreed that the number 1 redevelopment site(s) in Frenchtown are the warehouse and abandoned restaurant at Front Street and Lott Street, the former location of Kerr’s Chicken Hatchery. It acts as a blight on the town and an economic disincentive. The warehouse and restaurant have both been underutilized since the 2006 flood. The Committee looking at the success of Doylestown's County Theater, the array of performing and visual arts in the region as well as a repertory theater group, concluded that an Arts & Cultural Center would enhance the town, support existing restaurants and retail, and encourage economic development. The Committee unanimously voted in favor of supporting the idea of a Arts/ Cultural Center in Frenchtown, and recommends that a Task Force be instituted to study the feasibility of this venture.

Traditional business districts have always been more than a place to do business. They are community gathering places, centers of education and entertainment, and ground zero for the shifts in the artistic and cultural activities that define a community. Reminiscences of their past heydays typically focus on sidewalks crowded with Saturday night movie goers more than they do the purchase of basic goods.
It’s only natural then that a revitalization program would include significant investment in attracting consumers of entertainment, artistic, and cultural amenities. But there may be some misunderstanding about how to best go about it. Incorporating an arts and culture component in downtown revitalization requires a unique strategy for your one-of-a-kind community. Yet, while the point of this is to use your own assets to make community successful, there are some general best practices to consider.

The arts including performance, visual, film, etc., are emerging as a potent force in the economic life of cities and rural areas nationwide and assuming an important role as a direct and indirect contributor to state economies. Thriving cultural life generates income, jobs, and tax revenue, and it also creates visibility for a state. The arts and cultural life of a region are also principal determinants of quality of life. The arts combine with more traditional quality-of-life factors including safe neighborhoods, good schools, strong infrastructure, and accessible recreational and outdoor “natural” attractions, to create more viable, desirable and livable communities.

Art and culture have long been associated with the development of America’s towns and cities and the rich diversity and evolution of neighborhoods and communities. Art and culture are, in fact, often used to help revitalize and improve the economies of inner cities, suburbs, and rural areas. The arts help develop self-esteem in youth and improve test scores; they have been shown to lower crime rates; they create jobs and attract businesses; and they define communities and attract cultural tourists.

Many rural communities have struggled to survive and define themselves in the wake of the economic and agricultural downfall of the 1980s. The arts (e.g., community and professional theatre, art museums and galleries, art fairs, music concerts and performances), combined with other economic engines, can provide a vehicle to create incremental changes that help communities define their own distinctive arts identity and utilize their existing resources to improve their economic situation. Managed by a nonprofit comprising local residents, government officials, and a consortium of Broadway professionals the historic Bucks County Playhouse illustrates well the importance of arts and culture to a community. The Bucks County Playhouse (http://www.bcptheater.org/) is a public/private partnership, raised sufficient funds to regain the property following a 2010 foreclosure. Following an extensive renovation, the theater reopened on July 2, 2012.

When used in conjunction with other economic development engines, the arts can greatly contribute to the revitalization and economic development of downtown areas. In its most current economic impact study, Americans for the Arts (2002) reveals that America’s nonprofit arts generate $134 billion in total economic activity annually, including $24.4 billion in local and state tax revenues. This spending—$53.2 billion by nonprofit arts organizations and an additional $80.8 billion in event-related spending by their audiences—supports 4.9 million jobs. These figures provide strong evidence that the nonprofit arts are a significant industry in the United States, putting to rest the common misconception that communities that support the arts do so at the expense of economic development.
Unlike most industries, the arts produce significant amounts of event-related spending above event admission by their audiences. Nationally, an average of $21.75 for local audiences and $38.05 for nonlocal audiences was spent on lodging, meals, retail, and transportation costs while attending art events. The data clearly supports community investment in the arts as a significant catalyst for economic development and urban renewal (Americans for the Arts 2002).

Thriving tourism and cultural destinations are growing out of once-latent artistic and cultural resources and contributing to economic sustainability in rural communities and regions. Cultural activities attract tourists and spur the creation of ancillary facilities such as restaurants, hotels, and the services needed to support them. Cultural facilities and events enhance property values, tax resources and overall profitability for communities. In doing so, the arts become a direct contributor to urban and rural revitalization. By partnering with the cultural sector, state, county and municipal governments are melding business incentives and the arts to revitalize downtown areas. Renovations combining art and function also stimulate economic development. Even in the most successful communities, civic leaders are beginning to take stock of artistic and cultural assets, recognizing that they are essential to quality of life, which is, in turn, necessary for sustained growth.

Municipalities have several motives to promote the arts as a critical component in an overall economic development strategy. These range from community renewal and revitalization to contributing to an innovative business climate. Arts and cultural districts may thrive without the explicit support of government. However, the effective synthesis of strategies related to the arts and cultural industries into a broader economic development plan can provide communities with tools and solutions for areas in which more traditional policy instruments have returned unsatisfactory results. Though arts based strategies will not be the primary economic development drivers for most communities, they may provide the “missing link”: where traditional approaches have not been effective on their own, they may, coupled with the arts, become powerful tools for change. One of the most appealing aspects of an arts-based economic development strategy is the degree of strategic flexibility it can afford local government and local leadership. To advance the integration of the arts in economic development, there are several strategies communities can pursue.

- **Encourage collaboration** among the business community, state arts agencies, economic development, tourism and education departments to create a more integrated approach to public investments.
- **Revitalize under utilized redevelopment sites** such as old movie theaters, warehouses as arts and cultural centers merging performance art, theater, film, visual arts and education.
- **Evaluate and nurture culturally based industries** indigenous to the state, especially areas or regions that have difficulty sustaining “imported” businesses due to lack of infrastructure or other factors.
• **Focus on changing regional and community images** by capitalizing on the design of more people-friendly sites that encourage foot traffic and increased retail and commercial ventures.

• **Where vibrant high-technology economies exist, use the arts to continually improve quality of life** and the creativity of the business environment—recognizing the needs of the present workforce as well as helping to attract new knowledge workers.

• **Work to eliminate stereotypical views of the arts** and introduce them as a tool for a municipality's economic development plans by highlighting their contributions to the local and regional economies.

• **Stay informed of innovation concerning the arts** on the local level. Future policy initiatives can be consistent with what is already occurring in communities—strengthening current initiatives while building on them—thereby creating a win-win situation for the state and its constituency.

Active cultural participation can build strong communities. Strengthening cultural communities, in turn, creates economic assets. And these economic assets can be harnessed for regional growth. Together with other components of the regional economy—scenic resources, the hospitality industry, and others—traditional arts production forms an economic sector that has major room for growth given the rapidly increasing resources Americans are devoting to leisure time opportunities. Because traditional arts are grounded in the cultural traditions of particular communities, the artists and arts organizations involved in producing traditional arts have great economic value that can be harnessed to increase regional economic growth. The problem is that the traditional arts sector is not currently well connected to the commercial marketplace, which inhibits its ability to grow.

Many high-profile downtown cultural investments follow the model of the architecturally significant performance space or museum that serves as a regional asset and tourism destination. But that’s just one approach, and few communities currently have the resources to successfully pull it off. Another strategy coordinates smaller, strategic investments in existing assets. These might include a rethinking of under-programmed venues already in place and a strengthening of the social network of arts and cultural organizations already at work in a community.

Arts projects with the best chances for success in revitalizing underutilized downtowns are the ones that target the local community as well as visitors. Projects that only target the needs of tourists or suburbanites will find it difficult to spread their impact to the local economy or even to businesses down the block or around the corner.” “Arts projects with the best chances for success in revitalizing underutilized downtowns are the ones that target the local community as well as visitors. Projects that only target the needs of tourists or suburbanites will find it difficult to spread their impact to the local economy or even to businesses down the block or around the corner.”
Arts projects with the best chances for success in revitalizing underutilized downtown areas are the ones that target the local community as well as visitors. Projects that only target the needs of visitors will find it difficult to spread their impact to the local economy or even to businesses down the block or around the corner. A well planned arts center will provide a powerful vehicle through which to implement positive, incremental change and economic growth in the revitalization of communities.

VISITORS INFORMATION CENTER

A Visitors Information Center is a Hospitality Center for visitors and customers of Frenchtown. Hospitality is the relationship between guest and host, or the act or practice of being hospitable. Specifically, this includes the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, attractions, special events, and other services for travelers and tourists. A visitor information center provides information, hospitality, and promotes a town, region, or country in order to increase the number of visitors. It promotes the development and marketing of a destination, focusing on accommodations, dining, entertainment, tourism marketing, and services.

A visitor center, visitor information center, is a physical location that provides information to the visitors who tour the place or area locally. It may be:

- A visitor center at a specific attraction or place of interest, such as a downtown location, landmark, national park, national forest, or state park, providing information (such as shops, restaurants, government, emergency services, trail maps, and about camp sites, staff contact, restrooms, etc.) and in-depth educational exhibits and artifact displays (for example, about natural or cultural history). Often a film or other media display is used. If the site has permit requirements or guided tours, the visitor center is often the place where these are coordinated.

- A visitors information center, providing visitors to a location with information on the area's attractions, lodgings, maps, and other items relevant to tourism. Often, these centers are operated at the airport or other port of entry, by the local government or chamber of commerce. Often a visitor center is called simply an information center.

FRENCHTOWN GREENBELT

Creating a Frenchtown Greenbelt to develop and expand the trail system within and around Frenchtown would have several benefits for the borough. A loop trail system that encircled Frenchtown would 1) increase the destination value of Frenchtown for birders, mountain bikers, hikers, runners, horseback riders, naturalists and other active persons, and 2) provide a pedestrian way for Frenchtown residents who live ‘beyond the sidewalks’ to access downtown.
Frenchtown already attracts a great number of active people who take advantage of the path along the river and the river itself for exercise and recreation. By creating a trail system both around and through Frenchtown, the opportunities for this sort of tourism would increase. Additionally, many residents in Frenchtown who live outside of the downtown and numbered street region do not have sidewalks available to walk safely into town. By creating a trail system that connected the more distant sections of the town to the pedestrian friendly ‘sidewalked’ sections of the town, it would allow residents to easily access the many amenities of their borough via walking or bicycling.

Frenchtown Open Space Map
Some large stretches of property surrounding Frenchtown, notably the 150 acre Frenchtown Preserve (which abuts the 300 acre Horseshoe Bend Preserve in Kingwood township), the parkland along Creek Road, and the Bingeman property (12 acres that connects Creek Road and Route 513 at the edge of the borough) are already preserved and could easily be used for such a trail system that would be linked to the river trail. A trail system that connects all of Frenchtown would likely need to traverse a combination of state, local and private land. Such a system would be a huge benefit to all of Frenchtown, not the least of which being the downtown business community who would not only enjoy a greater tourist trade, but also more business from residents.

CONCLUSION

The volunteer members of the Committee attended over 12 meetings over a period of six months, were trained on planning technology, discussed Frenchtown’s future, downtown improvements and management, researched data on topics of discussion, and submitted this report. The recommendations in the report are the result of their work, and support what is best about Frenchtown. Downtown Revitalization requires planning, organization, management and resources, and the time, talent and treasure of people like the members of this Committee. The attachments examine issues, management and the planning of a Business Improvement District, which support the public - private partnerships necessary to succeed.

As has been widely documented, America’s urban and downtown areas began a long period of decline in the fifties and sixties. The popularity of the automobile changed individual and commercial behavior, and the focus of commercial activity shifted from the cities to the suburbs. During the late sixties and seventies, cities declined further as white flight to the suburbs accelerated. The result was a vicious cycle in which downtown businesses closed because of population declines, which increased the rate at which residents and visitors left downtown areas (Robertson 1999).

Why is Downtown Revitalization Needed?

In spite of these trends, research shows that a healthy and vibrant downtown boosts the economic health and quality of life in a community. Specifically, it creates jobs, incubates small businesses, reduces sprawl, protects property values, and increases the community’s options for goods and services. A healthy downtown is a symbol of community pride and history. It is demonstrated that the economic and social sustainability of towns all over the country is dependent on the ‘health’ of independent, ‘small’ shops (small to medium enterprises) in town centers.
Downtown Revitalization Program Strategies

**Aim for a multi-functional downtown.** Successful downtowns attract a wide range of individuals by affecting housing, work, shopping, culture, entertainment, government, and tourist attractions (Robertson 1995*).

**Develop a broad strategy for revitalizing downtown areas.** Blueprints for improving downtown areas must address several areas at once. A 1999 census of programs by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, which has partially funded community development programs for twenty-one years, finds that “supporting community development in the next ten years needs to mean supporting the whole community development agenda—the human, social, and economic dimensions as well as the physical” (LISC, 3*). Downtown revitalization should include not only new housing and commercial businesses, but also after-school programs, anti-crime initiatives, youth development and employment services, arts, recreational opportunities, and public transit.

**Create partnerships.** Downtown revitalization encompasses a wide range of activities. Therefore, it requires the cooperation of local government, chambers of commerce, the private sectors, civic organizations, and other key institutions. Public-private partnerships are necessary and work. (Grossman, 2012)

**Pay particular attention to attracting commercial business.** Downtown organizations, when possible, should provide guidance with financing, parking areas, zoning, and building design (Robertson 1999*).

**Focus on developing the unique qualities of downtowns.** Downtowns have an advantage over suburban developments in terms of their historical value and compact, walking-friendly size. Development should focus on these strengths by identifying and managing their assets. Downtowns should also improve pedestrian walkways through installation of attractive lights, benches, and flowers in order to draw shoppers and other traffic. Cities with waterfronts have found that developing these sites for tourists and residents is particularly successful (Robertson 1999*).

**Maintain and develop genuine public spaces.** The legacies of urban renewal programs are downtowns with fewer sidewalks, more car traffic, and more “dead spaces” such as parking lots, highway ramps, and vacant buildings. As a result, pedestrian activity and public gathering in many cities is discouraged. Careful planning through widening sidewalks, encouraging mass transit, and landscaping can encourage “on-street” activities such as commerce and dining and widen the public sphere, promoting community (Robertson 1995*).

**Make strategies locally based and flexible.** Downtown revitalization programs must be flexible not only in terms of goals, but must also adapt their strategies to local needs. Market research aids in helping communities determine which projects match local demand. It is also crucial to take advantage of the particular skills of residents and local
program coordinators (LISC).

Secure multiple sources of funding. Although it is important to secure funding from a variety of sources, assistance from local governments is particularly important for long-term project sustainability (The Urban Institute).

Get local governments involved in several areas. In 2000, four of the five factors most helpful to development cited in the survey-securing favorable zoning codes, retaining government offices, increasing housing stock, and approving historic preservation codes-all require local government involvement. Governments can use their regulatory powers to make it easier for a wide variety of small businesses to locate downtown, as well as help preserve existing housing and promote new, affordable housing.

Why is Downtown Important?

In a vibrant-downtown-big or small, the independent retailer provides jobs; provides security; provides personal services outside their primary function; provides light, sound, smells or other sensory activity; provides complimentary services to other retailers in the area to create a sense of completed-ness; provides social opportunities; provides public street maintenance; attracts other investment to the area; is a backdrop to the lives of growing children; and maintains personal relationships to contribute to the social and cultural sustainability of the area (Association of Town Centre Management 2011).

1. Your central business district is a prominent employment center. Even the smallest downtown employs hundreds of people. Downtown is often the largest employer in a community.
2. As a business center, your downtown plays a major role. It may even represent the largest concentration of businesses in your community. It also serves as an incubator for new businesses—the successes of tomorrow.
3. Most of the businesses in your downtown are independently owned. They support a local family who supports the local schools, etc. Independent businesses keep profits in town.
4. Downtown is a reflection of how your community sees itself—a critical factor in business retention and recruitment efforts. When industry and potential homeowners begin looking at your community as a possible location, they examine many aspects including the quality of life. Included in quality of life is interest in downtown — is it alive and viable, or does it represent local disinterest and failure?
5. Your downtown represents a significant portion of the community’s tax base. If this district declines, property will decrease in value and subsequently increases the tax burden on other parts of your community.
6. The central business district is an indispensable shopping and service center. Though it may no longer hold the place as your community’s most dominant shopping center, it still includes unique shopping and service opportunities. Attorneys, physicians, accountants, and insurance offices, as well as financial institutions, are often located downtown.
7. Your downtown is the historic core of your community. Many of the buildings are historically significant and help highlight your community’s history.

8. Downtown represents a vast amount of public and private investment. Imagine the costs to recreate all the public infrastructure and buildings already existing in your central business district. Think of the waste of past dollars spent if downtown is neglected.

9. A central business district is often a major tourist draw. When people travel, they want to see unique places. There isn’t a downtown like yours in the world!

10. Downtown is usually a government center. Most likely it is where your town hall and post office are located. This “one stop” shopping for government services is a notable feature of downtowns across the country.

11. And, perhaps, most important, your downtown provides a sense of community and place. (Edited from an article by Alicia Goehring, Wisconsin Main Street Program, Wisconsin Department of Development)
Report of the 2012 Downtown Revitalization & Planning Committee

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