

TENTATIVE AGENDA



BOARD MEETING

October 3, 2013 - 8:30 A.M. Commission Chambers - City Hall

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL
2. READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES - September 5, 2013 regular meeting
3. HEARING CITIZENS PRESENT (ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS)
4. CORRESPONDENCE
5. MAIN STREET COMMITTEE REPORTS
6. MAIN STREET MANAGER'S REPORT
7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS
 - a. Art-bike racks
 - b. Food Truck - Discussion
 - c. Veterans Park Pavilion - Update
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Trail Town Designation Discussion
 - b. Main Street Board annual planning/goal setting special meeting
 - c. Appoint Main Street Board Representative to Farmers Market Committee
9. GOOD OF THE ORDER
10. ANNOUNCEMENTS
 - Harvest Festival, Saturday, Oct. 5, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. downtown Boyne City
 - Candidates Forum, Oct. 14, 7 p.m. Boyne District Library Community Room
 - City Election, Tuesday, November 5.
 - Next Main Street board meeting, Thursday, November 7, 8:30 a.m. City Hall
11. ADJOURNMENT

Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services in order to participate in municipal meetings may contact Boyne City Hall for assistance: Cindy Grice, Clerk/Treasurer, 319 North Lake St., Boyne City, MI 49712; 231-582-0334

Approved: _____

**Meeting of
 SEPTEMBER 5,
 2013**

MINUTES OF THE BOYNE CITY MAIN STREET BOARD REGULAR MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2013 AT 8:30 A.M. IN THE COMMISSION CHAMBERS AT CITY HALL, 319 NORTH LAKE STREET

Call to Order

Chair Swartz called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Roll Call

Present: Jodie Adams , Michael Cain ,Bob Carlile, Jim Jensen
 Larry Lenhart, Pat O'Brien, and Rob Swartz

**Meeting
 Attendance**

Absent: Robin Berry Williams (arrived at 8:40 am) and Michelle Cortright
 City Staff: Main Street Manager Hugh Conklin, Assistant Planning, Zoning
 Administrator Annie Doyle and Recording Secretary Karen Seeley

Excused Absence

Public: There was one person in attendance

**Approval of Minutes
 MOTION**

Adams moved, Cain second **PASSED UNANIMOUSLY** to excuse the absence of Michelle Cortright

Citizens Comments

Adams moved O'Brien second **PASSED UNANIMOUSLY** to approve the August 1, 2013 meeting minutes

Correspondence

None

**Main Street Committee
 Reports**

None

In addition to the committee reports included in the agenda packet Main Street Manager Conklin reported on a few items:

Manager's Report

- Stroll the Streets wrapped up its 10th season on Friday, August 30th. Overall it was another great summer. The Chamber and Main Street managers have done a general survey to the downtown merchants about the summer season. Most reported business had improved from the previous year. Discussion on the horse-carriage ride. Conklin felt the Chamber location was a better site. He felt this year was a learning experience for them.
 - The Farmers Market hosted its second annual Friends Farm Meal and it was another successful event. Money raised from the evening will help pay for improvements to the winter market and to support other market initiatives. Their outdoor season continues through October and then will move indoors to the red building next to the library.
 - Just a few details remain before we have the final numbers for the 2013 Boyne Thunder event.
 - Four bids were received for the Art bike racks. The design committee should have a recommendation for the board at the October meeting
-
- Main Street Manager Conklin reported on: The firm that got the bid for the Boardwalk project will begin next week.

MOTION

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

“Pure Boyne” Marketing Campaign: Report from Advisory Committee

NEW BUSINESS

Charlevoix County Community Foundation Veterans Park Pavilion Grant

- He attended a DDA meeting in St Ignace along with Assistant Planner Annie Doyle to discuss the Main Street program.
- Last October an application was submitted for a retail merchandising consultant to work with local businesses through Michigan Main Street. This will be a one-day presentation to the DDA retailers. We are trying to get a price to add one more day. Board suggestion to record the community presentation.
- The State of the Community luncheon will be held September 12 at noon, Sommerset Pointe.
- The board received a copy of a request for a letter of support from WATCH, Inc. (Water and Air Team Charlevoix). This is a Bike Share Pilot Program for Boyne City, Charlevoix and East Jordan,. They are seeking funding from the local Community Foundation and private sources/donations to purchase at least 12 total bicycles, (4 to 5 bikes each community) helmets, locks and bike racks with brightly identifiable “Smart Commute” labels. This would be at no cost to the City; we would just provide the location and manpower. Board discussion regarding our liability? City Manager checking with our underwriters. **Cain moved O’Brien second PASSED UNANIMOUSLY** for Main Street Manager Conklin to prepare a letter of support for the Bike Share Program for Boyne City, Charlevoix and East Jordan.

The advisory committee met with Randy Calcaterra to discuss the questions/concerns expressed by the board about his marketing initiative. He is making a lot of progress with the infrastructure and has been out videoing events and collecting data. Question of the time frame for budget? He should be back with a request in the fall. His “Live Boyne” LLC has been applied for.

MOTION

Local Façade Grant Program

Michigan Economic Development Corporation has approved up to a \$12,500 grant to assist with the Veterans Park Pavilion project. The grant requires a dollar-for-dollar match. This project will develop architectural designs and cost estimates to expand and retrofit Boyne City’s Veterans Park pavilion into a multi-activity structure, including use as a permanent winter farmer’s market location. The farmer’s market committee under the leadership of Becky Harris has held fund raising events over the past two years and has accumulated funds to help with the match commitment. However, the market does not have the resources to fund the entire match and since the project involves far more than just the market’s use of the pavilion, responsibility for the match should be shared. One opportunity for additional funding is from the Charlevoix County Community Foundation. The project has been discussed with Maureen Radke of the CCF staff and she said the project fits the foundation’s criteria and it would be appropriate for Boyne City to submit a grant application requesting no more than \$5,000. The Foundation’s application deadline is October 1st. Board discussion that this is worth the time and effort to pursue. What a great opportunity to build on the farmers market and the community as a whole.

O’Brien moved Adams seconded PASSED UNANIMOUSLY that Main Street supports the grant application to the Charlevoix County Community Foundation requesting funds to support the Veterans Park Pavilion project.

Over the past few years Boyne City has been fortunate to take advantage of façade grants through the MEDC and MSHDA. Those grants are still available but they are more competitive and their criteria and priorities do not

always match ours. The emphasis of the state programs is on the core downtown area and their goal is to make a large impact on an area. We have seen the results of that with the work done that has been completed. Our Main Street / DDA district encompasses more than just the core downtown and we have identified areas on Boyne Avenue and North Lake Street as priorities. While it's possible, it is highly unlikely these areas would qualify for façade grants through the state. Developing a façade program is included in the DDA Development Plan approved in March 2010 and in recent years the Design committee has discussed creating a program to assist with local projects. The committee is now ready to recommend to the board the adoption of a local façade grant program. Its goal is to encourage private investment through the rehabilitation and improvement of facades within the Boyne City Main Street / DDA District, to encourage good design that will serve as quality examples, and to preserve the architectural character that is distinctive to Boyne City. By improving the appearance of the building facades, the program serves to improve the economic viability of the downtown.

MOTION

Dilworth Hotel Michigan
Economic Development
Corporation Grant
Application

This program, as proposed, provides a matching grant for facades within the Main Street / DDA District. For every dollar awarded the applicant must spend an equal amount. Individual grant amounts will be up to 50 percent of project cost. For the current year, \$10,000 is the amount recommended by the design committee to be allocated for the program. Recommendations for funding grant applications will be made by the Main Street Design Committee to the Main Street Board which will make all final grant-funding decisions. There is no set minimum or maximum number of projects per year. After review of the proposed grant program guidelines, board discussion on where the grant monies would come from. Boyne Thunder profits could be used. **Cain moved O'Brien seconded PASSED UNANIMOUSLY** that the Main Street Board approve the Boyne City Façade Grant policy as proposed and to set the allocation for the 2013-14 fiscal year at \$10,000. This could also be given in smaller amounts.

MOTION

Food Truck -Discussion

The State Historical Preservation Office and MEDC environmental review has been submitted, which would allow Mr. Grove to start incurring expenses. There is a grant opportunity through the MEDC "Unique Downtown Development Grant" with a job creation requirement. We should support to move forward with this grant. The building is all cleaned out. Mr. Grove is trying to make this building sustainable and viable for the long term. How would the funds be used? Renovation of the building. **Adams moved Lenhart seconded PASSED UNANIMOUSLY** a motion of support for the Dilworth Hotel Michigan Economic Development Corporation Grant "Unique Downtown Development Grant. Board discussion regarding conflict of interest if the Main Street Manager continues to be involved in this project. This is a good way to foster Economic Development and Historic preservation in the DDA. The board has no issues with this nor do they see it as a conflict.

**GOOD OF THE
ORDER**

(Carlile out at 9:28)

**ADJOURNMENT
MOTION**

Board discussion regarding be pro-active on this issue. Other communities allow food trucks and we should learn from them and have guidelines in place before we are approached with a request. It was suggested to have a small sub-committee to do the leg work and speak with other communities that have done this and come up with some guidelines. Main Street Manager Conklin

suggested Assistant Planner Annie Doyle be apart of this committee along with Michelle Cortright and Jim Bauman and they will invite whom they feel would be a good fit.

The first Triathlon was a great success with 191 people participating

It was a great Labor Day with major events all over town.

We continue to have ongoing communications with Devlon and they plan to bring something to the Planning Commission in the future.

The One Water Street project is moving forward

We didn't receive the Placemaking grant for Old City park.

Cain moved Adams seconded PASSED UNANIMOUSLY to adjourn the September 5, 2013 meeting of the Boyne City Main Street Board at 10:02 am.

Karen Seeley, Recording Secretary



Date: October 3, 2013

To: Main Street Board

From: Hugh Conklin, program manager

RE: Committee Reports

Promotions

- The Boyne City Harvest Festival is this Saturday, Oct. 5. The 100 and 200 blocks of Water Street and the 100 block of Lake Street will be closed. The farmers market will move downtown for the day and be joined by many other art and craft vendors. There will be music throughout the day, hay rides, and children's games and activities. The harvest festival is a joint effort between Main Street and the Boyne Area Chamber of Commerce. The Boyne District Library and its children librarian, Monica Kroondyk, have also been an important partner.
- The Farmers Market will move indoors starting the first Saturday in November. Again this year, the Boyne District Library is allowing the market to use its red building. Hours for the indoor market are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Plans are underway for two retail events in November. Earlier than the Bird is Saturday, Nov. 23, and the Holiday Open House and Christmas Parade is Friday evening, Nov. 29.

Design

- A summary of the committee's September meeting is included in your packet.
- A few weeks ago I sent out information about a Certified Local Government Grant available through the State Historic Preservation Office. I received some feedback from the board and other interested parties and I submitted a grant proposal for a downtown historic walking tour experience and signage for our new National Register Historic District. The proposal is due October 1 and once we receive comments back from SHPO we will complete a grant application which is due in early December.

Organization

- The board terms of Michelle Cortright and Bob Carlile are expiring. The deadline for candidates to submit an application is December 16.
- The committee discussed the annual planning session and appointed Lori Meeder and me to work out the details.
- In your meeting packet is a copy of the Boyne Thunder participant survey. The committee met Sept. 26 and will be starting to prepare for the 2014 event.

Team Boyne – Creating Entrepreneurial Communities (ER committee)

- Attending the most September meeting were:
 - Steve Bulmann of Bulmann Dock & Lift talked about his business and upcoming move to the former Great Lakes Motor Works building on M-75.

- Samantha Persons, manager of the new Parkside Grill and Treats, provided an update on the restaurant.
- Mike Sheean provided an update on local trails and the possibility of Boyne City becoming a Trail Town.
- Also attending was Jerome Fine, who owns an 11-acre parcel on M-75 across the street from Boyne City Lanes. He is interested in developing the property and was soliciting opinions from the group.



Design Committee

Meeting Minutes – September 16, 2013 - 4 p.m.

Library Conference Room

In Attendance: Hugh Conklin, Bruce Janssen, Mark Kowalske, Becky Harris, Martha Sulfridge, Mike Cain, Annie Doyle, Aaron Place

Unfinished Business:

1. Art - Bike Rack: Review Bids

- Bids were received on the four structures (Apple, Book Rack, Juggler and Fork) from CLB Associates (\$4580.00); Allied Mechanical Services, Inc. (\$8795.00); Walter Barkley (\$4380.00) and PIW Corp (\$4340.00-\$7485.00). The bids were compared and contrasted based on numerous variables, some being: price, proposed materials, pipe size, height of proposed structures, functionality, durability and aesthetic appearance. Dividing up the work between bidders was discussed, as was eliminating the Juggler and adding another structure in its place. Placement of the structures was discussed at the library, in front of the Thirsty Goat, at Veteran's Park and on Water Street.
- Mr. Conklin will talk to PIW to determine if it is possible to lower price of bid and still retain the design elements included in Option 4 for the Book Rack (\$2620.00). The committee also favored PIW's Option 1 for the Apple (\$985.00) and Option 3 for the Fork (\$1555.00). The total budget for the bike racks was cited as \$4,000.00.

2. Historic Mural project

- Local contractors have indicated they can put something up like what the committee wants. Mr. Conklin is trying to schedule a meeting with Steve Weber of Northwestern Bank to see if bank will sponsor the mural.

3. US-131 Billboard Design

- Mr. Conklin will take the two billboard designs the committee most liked back to Keisha for minor alternations to be included. The committee wanted the angled direction of the words; the ".com" added to the end of Boyne City and the phrase "where life meets lake" to be included in both of the designs

4. 2013 Holiday Decorations

- The Decorations committee met with the owner of Michigan Decorations. This year's decorations will look very similar to last years' except with a few minor adjustments. There will be more lights on trees and less on the light posts. The owner will try to come up to show some samples prior to installing in November. Mr. Conklin and Ms. Harris indicated the owner seemed like a good person to work with. This is the last year of a three year contract.

5. Veterans Park Pavilion

- A design grant was received. September 23, 2013 is the deadline for requests for qualifications. Mr. Conklin indicated the need for a committee that manages the architects and their designs.

He suggested the core committee consist of: Mike Cain, Becky Harris, Dean Soloman, Andy V. and another person from the Parks and Rec committee.

New Business:

1. Sunset Park Ice Park

- Mr. Conklin recommended the City does not install the ice rink this year. He will talk to Sante's to see if they have strong feelings about it not being put out this year, as they were a major fundraiser for it. Mr. Conklin also advised the rink needs to be cleaned.

2. Sunset Park Plan

- Possible individuals to hire for the creation of a site design were discussed. Mr. Janssen talked with John Borisch about who he hired for to create the design for the Walloon Lake Barrel Back park. Mr. Borisch advised that he had hired several designers, one being Chuck Robinson and then ultimately designed the park himself. Elements that he incorporated were a central point that is occupied in which everything else radiates out from; aerated benches; lighting; and a general layout that is open enough for events and vendors, etc.
- Mr. Conklin suggested casting out for proposals and allowing that to determine who the City would hire. He also mentioned needed to work with the Parks and Rec Committee and the need to create a request for qualifications. It was suggested that Mr. Boirsh might help in this process.
- The Boyne City Waterfront Master Plan was discussed and how it connects Sunset Park with the entire waterfront area.

Committee Member Assignments for Next Meeting:

- Mr. Conklin – Request for sponsorship from Northwestern Bank; obtain revised version of billboards from Kecia; talk with Sante's about ice rink; discover Charlevoix and Walloon lake park designers

Next committee meeting: October 14, 2013; 4 p.m. Boyne District Library



Date: September 5, 2013
To: Main Street Board
From: Hugh Conklin, program manager
RE: Unfinished business items

Art Bike Racks

Four bids were received and reviewed by the Design Committee at its September meeting. Due to the nature of the project, the bids received included a variety of options and range of prices. Considering all those factors, the low bid was received from PIW Corp., of Chicago and Gaylord. PIW's base bid was \$4,340. Members of the design committee met last Thursday with John Shepherd, vice president of the company, to review details of his proposal. Modifications were suggested although the cost is not expected to change.

The four bike rack designs are a fork, apple, row of books, and a juggler. After meeting with Mr. Shepherd the committee is recommending not using the juggler due to safety concerns. In its place the committee is considering a new design, and is leaning toward a music cleft. All those details should be worked out soon.

Main Street received a \$1,500 grant from the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments and has \$2,500 in the 2013-14 budget for the project.

Foods Trucks

At the September Main Street board meeting, a committee consisting of assistant city planner Annie Doyle, Jim Baumann, Becky Harris, Michelle Cortright and me was appointed to gather information and a possible strategy for dealing with Food Trucks. The committee met and discussed what strategies we can use to begin a community discussion on food trucks and how the city could possibly regulate them. Included in your packet is some information for you to review. More information will be presented at the board meeting.

Veterans Park Pavilion

Three proposals were received for the pavilion project and interviews are planned for next week. Serving on the pavilion project committee are Mike Cain, Dean Solomon, Becky Harris, Andy Kovalski, Jerry Swift, a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and me. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation has approved up to a \$12,500 grant to assist with the project. The grant requires a dollar-for-dollar match.

This project will develop architectural designs and cost estimates to expand and retrofit Boyne City's Veterans Park pavilion into a multi-activity structure, including use as a permanent winter farmer's market location. A key component of this process will be a multi-day community Charrette, which we hope to have completed before Thanksgiving.

| Bidder | Fork | Apple | Book | Unicycle | Total |
|-------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Walter Barkley | 1,350 | 950 | 1,580 | 0 | |
| CLB Associates | 1,095 | 1195 | 1295 | 995 | 4580 |
| Allied Mechanical | 960 | 1750 | 5125 | 960 | 8795 |
| PIW | 1,085 | 985 | 1185 | 1085 | 4340 |

ZONING PRACTICE

SEPTEMBER 2013



AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

⊕ ISSUE NUMBER 9

PRACTICE FOOD TRUCKS



Food Truck Feeding Frenzy: Making Sense of Mobile Food Vending

By Rodney Arroyo, AICP, and Jill Bahm, AICP

Recent economic and cultural trends show an explosion in the popularity of food trucks, or mobile vendors, over the past several years.



One of the hallmarks of the current food truck boom is an increased focus on "in-truck" preparation over preparation at a central commissary.

According to research done by Emergent for the National Restaurant Association, the growth of mobile food trucks will soar in the next five years, generating up to \$2.7 billion in revenue nationally by 2017—up from \$650 million in 2012 (Emergent Research 2012). All across the country, cities, small towns, and suburbs are seeing food trucks popping up, some in unexpected places like office and industrial parks, where zoning ordinances typically preclude res-

taurants. Amplifying the push for food trucks are the twin trends of "buying local" and "food as entertainment" that are enhanced by programs such as the *Great Food Truck Race* on the Food Network. While ice cream trucks and job-site lunch wagons haven't disappeared, they are increasingly being joined by gourmet trucks and trucks specializing in ethnic offerings.

All across the United States, people are exploring how mobile food vending might

make a difference in their lives and their communities. More resources are starting to become available for potential business owners. Networks for mobile food vendors are growing; the Southern California Mobile Food Vendors Association was formed in 2010 as one of the first associations dedicated to helping vendors break down barriers to business (www.socalmfva.com). And this fall, Roam—a first-ever industry conference for mobile food

ASK THE AUTHOR JOIN US ONLINE!

Go online during the month of September to participate in our "Ask the Author" forum, an interactive feature of Zoning Practice. Rodney Arroyo, AICP, and Jill Bahm, AICP, will be available to answer questions about this article.

Go to the APA website at www.planning.org and follow the links to the Ask the Author section. From there, just submit your questions about the article using the e-mail link. The authors will reply, and Zoning Practice will post the answers cumulatively on the website for the benefit of all subscribers. This feature will be available for selected issues of Zoning Practice at announced times. After each online discussion is closed, the answers will be saved in an online archive available through the APA Zoning Practice web pages.

About the Authors

Rodney Arroyo, AICP, is president of Clearzoning, Inc. He holds a Master of City Planning degree from Georgia Tech and has more than 30 years' expertise in planning and transportation. His experience includes master plans, zoning ordinances, form-based codes, corridor studies, and access management plans. Arroyo also serves as an expert witness in planning and zoning issues, is a national and state planning award winner, and serves as an adjunct professor for Wayne State University's graduate urban planning program.

Jill Bahm, AICP, is a principal planner with Clearzoning, Inc. She holds a Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree and has worked in both the public and private sectors as a downtown development authority director, city planner, and real estate marketing professional. Bahm's professional interests include economic development, recreation planning, historic preservation, community participation, and organizational development.

suppliers and owners—will take place in Portland, Oregon.

On the worldwide stage, the World Street Food Congress is the first of its kind to connect and open up fresh ideas and thought leadership in the massive and growing street-food culture and industry throughout the world. This 10-day street-food festival was hosted in Singapore in January 2013 and featured well-known leaders in the food industry (www.wsfcongress.com).

Faced with inquiries from food vendors, many communities turn to their zoning codes, only to discover that mobile food vending isn't really defined and may not be permitted in the way vendors might like. With the approach to regulating mobile vending varying widely in communities, it can be hard to know where to begin when considering if and how to accommodate food trucks.

WHAT IS MOBILE FOOD VENDING?

Regulatory codes for many communities recognize transient merchants—those goods and services provided by a traveling vendor. The typical ice cream truck would be a good example of a transient merchant who is mobile most of the time, stopping only when requested for a few short minutes. Many operators of today's food trucks or carts, however, are seeking more than a few minutes on the street, sidewalk, or parking lot, staying in place for a few hours to serve breakfast, lunch, or dinner. In fact, when they are located on private property, some food trucks may be in one location for days, weeks, or even months. It is important to make a dis-

inction between the food vendors that are more transient in nature, like an ice cream truck, and those that seek to move about less frequently. Both types of uses can offer benefits to the community, and they will each have different potential issues to regulate.

Many mobile food vendors utilize self-driven vehicles that permit easy relocation throughout the community. However, mobile food vending also includes trailers, food kiosks, and food carts. Food kiosks are temporary stands or booths that are typically intended to sell prepared foods, including ice cream, pretzels, and the like. Food kiosks may be found inside a large office building or shopping mall, but may also be secured for outside use. Some communities, like Maui County, Hawaii, allow a variety of products to be sold at a kiosk, provided certain standards are met (§30.08.030). While temporary in structure, food kiosks are often stationary with a defined location. Food carts allow the vendor to sell from outside the moveable unit and are often used to sell fresh fruits and vegetables. Typically, the food in kiosks and carts is prepared elsewhere and kept cold or hot in the unit. The city of New York encourages "green carts" that offer fresh produce in certain areas of the city and has special regulations for these uses (www.nyc.gov/greencarts).

In communities across the U.S., mobile food vendors are seeking permits to start these innovative businesses. They often run into roadblocks at city hall, because while many zoning ordinances include provisions for temporary

uses, most do not contain current definitions for mobile food vending nor do they include any standards that specifically relate to vending and the issues that may arise. The net result in many communities, intentional or unintentional, is a prohibition on mobile food vending.

THE PROS AND CONS OF MOBILE FOOD VENDING

Over the past few years, most of the economy has been struggling and the workforce has been challenged to adapt. With laid-off workers trying to reinvent themselves and new immigrants looking for opportunities, the number of people starting new businesses is rising. Mobile food vending seems, for some, like a low-cost way to wade into the pool of business ownership. There are a number of reasons why communities may elect to sanction mobile food vending:

- **It provides an opportunity to increase jobs and businesses.** The cost of starting a food truck business can start at \$25,000, where a traditional bricks-and-mortar establishment may start at \$300,000, according to the National Restaurant Association (Emergent Research 2012).
- **It offers opportunities to provide food choices where zoning precludes restaurants.** Traditional zoning codes tend to restrict the uses permitted in office and industrial districts, only allowing uses that narrowly meet the intent of those districts. Office and industrial parks, in particular, are often isolated from the rest of the community, requiring employees to drive to retail and restaurant areas. In addition, some communities may not have access to variety of

healthy, fresh foods, and therefore decide to encourage such food vendors in certain neighborhoods by relaxing requirements. New York's green carts initiative allows additional permits to be issued over the city's defined limit to mobile food vendors that offer fresh produce in underserved neighborhoods, and Kansas City, Missouri, offers reduced permit fees for mobile food vendors in city parks that meet certain nutritional standards (Parks and Recreation Vending Policy 4.7.08).

- *It can increase activity in struggling business districts* by creating a dynamic environment where people gather around the availability of new and fresh food. The economy has taken a toll on businesses over the past several years. Those that are hanging on in some areas find that their neighboring buildings or businesses are vacant. Food trucks can be a way to enliven an area, generating traffic for existing businesses and possibly spinning off new business activity. The restaurant industry is evolving to meet the demands of patrons who are looking for locally grown, sustainable, healthy, and fast options for dining. When food trucks use social media to communicate about their location schedules, it can build up a certain level of excitement and anticipation that can make a positive social impact. In addition, the rising trend of "cart pods" and "food truck rallies" brings multiple mobile food vendors to one location, creating a festive atmosphere in an area for a short time.

- *They signal to other potential businesses that the community is adapting to the evolving economy and supporting entrepreneurship.* Mobile food trucks are a new way of doing business; in these early years, communities that anticipate the demand from businesses and consumers may also find that this flexibility signals receptivity to new business models.

- *They are a way for restaurateurs to test the local market for future bricks-and-mortar facilities.* Mobile food trucks offer opportunities to interact with a potential market, to test recipes and pricing, and see if the restaurant fits with the community. All across the United States there are examples of food truck businesses evolving into permanent establishments, including El Camion ("the truck") in northwest Seattle that has recently opened a restaurant and bar in the Ballard neighborhood after several years of experience with its two mobile food units. Torchy's Tacos in Austin, Texas, started with a food truck and now has eight bricks-and-mortar restaurants in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Hous-

ton—and two more opening this year. The Lunch Room in Ann Arbor, Michigan, plans to open its bricks-and-mortar location soon, using social media to solicit fans of its existing "Mark's Carts" to become investors in the restaurant.

Along with these potential benefits can come community impacts and possible conflicts. Some of the challenges associated with

went through an extensive research and public input process, surveying their local chamber of commerce and meeting with prospective mobile food vendors, residents groups, and restaurant owners. Their resulting ordinance language responds to the needs and concerns of the community (Longmont 2011).

ADDRESSING AREAS OF CONCERN THROUGH ZONING

Many communities are updating their codes to accommodate or regulate mobile vending. In June 2012 Grand Rapids, Michigan, included the following statement of intent in a new set of mobile food vending provisions:

Employment and small business growth in the city can occur while providing a broad range of food choices to the public through careful allowances for temporary concession sales. The provisions of this section are intended to prevent predatory practices on bricks-and-mortar restaurants while allowing for new food vending opportunities that can add vitality to vacant parking lots and underutilized sites . . . (\$5.9.32.K).

Other cities, including Phoenix, Arizona (§624.D.87); Chapel Hill, North Carolina (§§10-66-74); and Fort Worth, Texas (§5.406)—just to name a few—adopted regulations in 2012 to allow mobile vending or food trucks. Chapel Hill's

provisions note that allowing food trucks will "promote diversification of the town's economy and employment opportunities and support the incubation and growth of entrepreneurial/start-up businesses" but also that food trucks pose "unique regulation challenges."

While specific approaches vary from place to place, communities interested in adding or updating regulations for mobile food vending should start by defining the uses and then consider each of the following questions:

- Where in the community should such uses be permitted?
- How long should a food truck be permitted to stay in one location?



Ritas Herscher

➔ Food truck gatherings are increasingly common in communities with extensive food truck offerings.

mobile food trucks might include problems with maintenance, trash, parking, noise, and vehicular and pedestrian circulation. In addition, some restaurateurs may be threatened by this new competition and try to prevent mobile food vending. Food trucks also have their own operational challenges, including dealing with unpredictable weather and maintaining an appropriate inventory despite limited storage.

The best way to understand and manage the pros and cons of food trucks in individual communities is to solicit public input and dialogue about the needs and wants of the community. For example, Longmont, Colorado,

- Are these mobile units just for food sales, or can other goods be sold as well?
- Does the community want to increase activity?
- How can the zoning ordinance address upkeep and maintenance?
- When can food trucks operate?
- How are visitor parking and circulation accommodated?
- How are these uses reviewed and permitted?
- What do vendors and their customers want or need?
- How is signage for the mobile unit regulated?
- How is the site lit to ensure safety?

Location

It is common to allow mobile food vending in commercial districts, but some communities add industrial districts or specify mixed use districts. Start with the community's comprehensive plan—is there a need or desire to increase activities in specific parts of the community? Are there concerns about the impact of single-purpose districts (especially office and industrial) on connectivity, traffic congestion, and business

In consideration for existing facilities, some communities decide that there should be a minimum distance between mobile units and bricks-and-mortar restaurants. Some communities try to limit the impact on adjacent residential uses through a distance requirement or by restrictions on hours of operation. Planners should test these locational restrictions to ensure that realistic business opportunities exist. El Paso, Texas, repealed its locational requirement of 1,000 feet from bricks-and-mortar establishments following a 2011 lawsuit to provide sufficient opportunities for mobile food vendors (Berk and Leib 2012). Attorneys Robert Frommer and Bert Gall argue that separation from other establishments is not necessary and that food truck regulations should be narrowly tailored to legitimate health, safety, and welfare concerns, not regulate competition (2012).

The American Heart Association has also looked at location issues related to mobile food vending. They report that several communities across the country prohibit mobile food vending within a certain distance of schools (or

nity and often is related to where mobile food vending is permitted. Some communities allow food trucks on public property but prohibit overnight parking. Where on-street parking is at a premium, communities may consider allowing food trucks to utilize public parking spaces for the same duration as other parked vehicles. Chicago requires food trucks to follow posted meter time restrictions, with no more than two hours in one location. In addition, the city also limits mobile food vending to two hours on private property (§4-8).

In contrast, some communities allow food trucks on private property for up to 30 days or more at one location. For example, Grand Rapids allows concession sales for up to 200 consecutive days over 12 calendar months (§5.9.32.K.6).

Regulations like this may impact vendors in terms of the types of food that can be sold and the manner in which they are prepared, especially when preparation is done on-site. Communities may wish to consider whether the allowed duration is reasonable for food vendors as well as adjacent property owners.



➡ This food truck rally in Royal Oak, Michigan, illustrates how a gathering of food trucks can activate an otherwise underutilized space.

retention and recruitment? Are there any areas in the community where the population is underserved by food choices? Planners can take these concerns to the community and invite residents and business owners to share their thoughts on where mobile food vending might be appropriate and desirable.

Some communities make a distinction between vending on public property, which often requires a license but is not regulated by zoning, and private property, which often requires a temporary use permit and is regulated by the zoning ordinance. When permitted on private property, zoning standards should require evidence of property owner approval.

at school release times) to limit the sometimes nutritionally challenged food choices available (2012). Woodland, California, prohibits mobile food vending within 300 feet of a public or private school, but will allow them on school property when approved by the school (§14-15). In a different twist, the Minneapolis Public School System introduced a food truck program this year to offer free nutritious meals to students during the summer months at four different sites in Minneapolis (Martinson 2013).

Duration

The length of time food trucks are permitted to stay in one place varies widely by commu-

Goods Available for Sale

Some communities, like College Station, Texas, are very specific that the goods sold from mobile vending to be food related (§4-20). This is often borne of a desire to start with mobile vending on a limited basis to gauge its impact. As mobile food trucks become more prevalent, surely people will explore the ideas of starting other types of businesses in this format. Communities may wish to consider the questions raised earlier about location and assess whether or not it makes sense to allow other goods in addition to food to be sold in designated areas. For example, Ferndale, Michigan, allows a variety of wares to be sold by a mobile

vendor, including apparel, jewelry, household goods, and furnishings (§§7-73–82). That might be just the place for book publisher Penguin Group (USA) to take its recently introduced first mobile bookstore, which aims to make books accessible where big box retailers aren't located (Edsall 2013).

Number of Units in One Location

Some communities that are getting on board with mobile food vending have started allowing them to congregate for certain events and activities. For example, Royal Oak, Michigan, started a food truck “rally” at their indoor farmers market during colder months. It is a good way to utilize the facility as well as provide entertaining food options for city residents. It has now become a great family event every month year-round, with musical entertainment, bouncy houses, and face painting. The city limits the rally to no more than 10 different trucks with a variety of cuisine for the whole family.

units to function on private property as a single business. To address potential negative impacts, each mobile food court must have its own on-site manager, who is responsible for the maintenance of the area (§5.406).

Trash

The type of standards for trash removal and upkeep will vary depending on the location and duration of the vending. Most communities require waste receptacles for every mobile food vending unit and some further require waste to be removed from a site daily. Keep in mind that where communities allow seating along with the mobile food unit, people will generate more trash on-site than in situations where there is no seating provided and people take their food (and trash) to go.

Hours of Operation

Some communities limit hours of operation to around lunchtime (e.g., 10:30 a.m. until 3:30

trucks on private property, communities typically require the vendor to ensure that there is sufficient parking available for its use and any other uses on the site, including the space taken up by the unit itself. Some cities allow public parking areas to be utilized for food trucks, and may even allow metered parking spaces to be used provided the related meter fees are paid. For example, Minneapolis allows a mobile vendor to park at no more than two metered spaces, as long as they are not short-term spaces and are not located within 100 feet of an existing restaurant or sidewalk cafe—unless the restaurant owner gives consent (§188.485.c.7).

Licenses and Permits

Most communities require permits or licenses regardless of whether the trucks operate on public or private property. It is also common for the community to reference compliance with other codes, particularly state or local health codes. These other codes can impact how trucks operate. For example, California's

Health and Safety Code requires trucks to have hand-washing stations if food is prepared in the truck, but does not require them on trucks selling only prepackaged foods like frozen desserts (§114311).

Some communities cap the number of licenses available for food trucks to limit their impact, but many others do not. Grand Rapids

requires a temporary use permit, subject to planning commission approval, and gives standards for consideration (§5.9.32.K.18), including an assessment asking “[w]ill the proposed stand, trailer, wagon or vehicle contribute to the general aesthetic of the business district and include high quality materials and finishes?”

Site Amenities

Some communities specify that no tables or chairs are permitted, or if they are, then sanitary facilities are also required. There may be flexibility in the permitted arrangements for such facilities (for example, having permission to use such facilities within a reasonable distance of the mobile unit). Frisco, Texas, prohibits connections to po-



According to Market Master Shelly Mazur, “It’s nice to be able to offer a family-friendly event in a climate-controlled building with renovated bathrooms and seating.”

On the other hand, in its 2010 ordinance, the city of Zillah, Washington, banned mobile food vending altogether, declaring it a “nuisance,” and finding that “when mobile vendors congregate in the same area, the heightened intensity of use negatively impacts the surrounding area, particularly by increased trash” (§8.32). Fort Worth tackled this issue head-on, defining a group of food trucks as a “mobile food court” when two or more mobile vending units congregate. They allow these

p.m.), and others allow sales from early in the morning to late in the evening (e.g., 7 a.m. until 10 p.m.). Some communities place no time limits on these operations in the zoning regulations. Again, consider where these units will be permitted and the potential conflicts with adjacent uses.

Parking and Circulation

Given the mobility of these vendors, they by necessity are typically located in parking areas. Whether in public spaces or a private parking lot, it is important to ensure sufficient parking for existing uses to prevent an undue burden on bricks-and-mortar establishments. For food

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table water, requiring mobile food vendors to store their water in an internal tank. The city also requires vendors to be located within 50 feet of an entrance of a primary building, and drive-through service is expressly prohibited (§3.02.01.A(20)). King County, Washington, requires that all mobile food vending in the county be located within 200 feet of a usable restroom (§5.34).

Signage

Some communities use their existing sign regulations, but others tailor standards for mobile units. In Michigan, both Grand Blanc Township (§7.4.9.F) and Kalamazoo (§§25-63-68) allow one sign on the mobile vending unit itself, but do not allow any other signage. This is fairly common. In many cases, the truck itself essentially functions as one big sign with colorful graphics. Additionally, many mobile food vendors now use social media to get out the word regarding the time and place they will set up shop, potentially reducing the need for additional signage beyond that on the unit itself.

Lighting

Lighting is not as commonly addressed as other issues, especially if a mobile food vending unit is located in an existing developed area, but it is likely presumed that other applicable lighting requirements appropriate to the location are to be followed. Consider adjacent uses and the impact of light trespass and glare. For example, Grand Blanc Township requires mobile food vending units to be lit with available site lighting. No additional exterior lighting is allowed unless permitted by the zoning board of appeals upon finding that proposed exterior lighting mounted to the mobile vending unit will not spill over on to adjacent residential uses as measured at the property line (§7.4.9.F.10).

TESTING, FOLLOW-UP, AND ENFORCEMENT

One of the nice things about mobile food vending is that it is really easy for a community to put a toe in the water and test the impact of regulations on mobile food vendors, other community businesses, and the public, and to adjust the regulations

as appropriate. The Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County, Tennessee, initiated a test phase beginning April 2012 that will provide evaluative data for a successful mobile food vendor program. The program will initially be operated under a temporary permit issued by the Metro Public Works Permit Office for two specified zones, the downtown core and outside of it. Oakland, California, has a pilot program for "Food Vending Group Sites," defined as "the stationary operation of three (3) or more 'mobile food vendors' clustered together on a single private property site, public property site, or within a specific section of public right-of-way" (§5.51).

Before embarking on extensive zoning rewrites, review the suggested considerations with the community to anticipate and plan for appropriate ways to incorporate this use in a reasonable way. Mobile food vending is on the rise all over the country, from urban sites to the suburbs. When regulated appropriately, mobile food vending can bring real benefits to a community, including jobs, new businesses, fresh food, and vitality.

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HOW DOES YOUR COMMUNITY
REGULATE FOOD TRUCKS AND
OTHER MOBILE VENDORS?

9



Date: September 5, 2013
To: Main Street Board
From: Hugh Conklin, program manager
RE: New business items

Trail Town

With the pending construction of the Boyne City-Charlevoix bicycle trail and the progress being made on non-motorized trail between Boyne City and Boyne Falls, there is much anticipation about Boyne City becoming a cycling destination. That was the purpose of a meeting held recently with LIAA (Innovative Ideas for Sustainable Communities) and a representative of the Northwest Michigan Trails Council. They wanted to share the concept of becoming a Trail Town and what positive impact it could have on Boyne City. It looks like a good fit for the community but at this point we are not asking for your support of Boyne City becoming a Trail Town. Rather, we want to know if there is enough interest on the Main Street board to learn more about the concept (which is also being presented to the Parks and Rec Commission). If there is, a joint meeting with the Parks and Rec Commission along with an invitation to all interested residents would be scheduled to hear a presentation by Harry Burkholder, a planner with LIAA about the Trail Town concept.

Information about the Trail Town concept is included in your packet.

Main Street Annual Planning Session

The Organization committee is working out details of the annual Main Street Planning Session. Two dates are preferred at this time: Nov. 11 or Nov. 13. Please check to see about your availability on those dates.

Farmers Market Committee

Main Street has two seats on the Farmers Market Committee and the term of Jodie Adams is expiring. Jodie has been a thoughtful and engaged member of the committee and hopefully she is willing to continue to serve for another three years. If not, the board will need to appoint another member of the board to serve.

Trail Towns

What is a Trail Town?

A *Trail Town* is a community in which local officials have used their trail system as the focal point of a tourism-centered strategy for economic development and local revitalization. The Trail Town concept was originally developed by the Allegheny Trail Alliance, a coalition of seven trail organizations along the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile multi-use trail running through Pennsylvania and Maryland. Many communities in Michigan are now working to develop their own local Trail Town Program. The basic Trail Town concept is simple: **ensure that communities along the trail are better able to maximize the economic potential of trail-based tourism.**



The local Trail Town effort can be centered around any type of trail (e.g., non-motorized, snow-mobile, equestrian and kayak). While the Trail Town concept is primarily geared toward cities and towns, the concept is very much applicable in rural areas that have at least one small center of commercial activity. Most Trail towns are not isolated communities - they are linked together by the trail, creating a regional destination for residents, trail users and tourists.

How Does a Community Establish a Trail Town?

While there are a number of different ways in which local communities can organize around an effort to create a Trail Town Program, the most common approach has been to use the "Four Point Approach" developed by the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

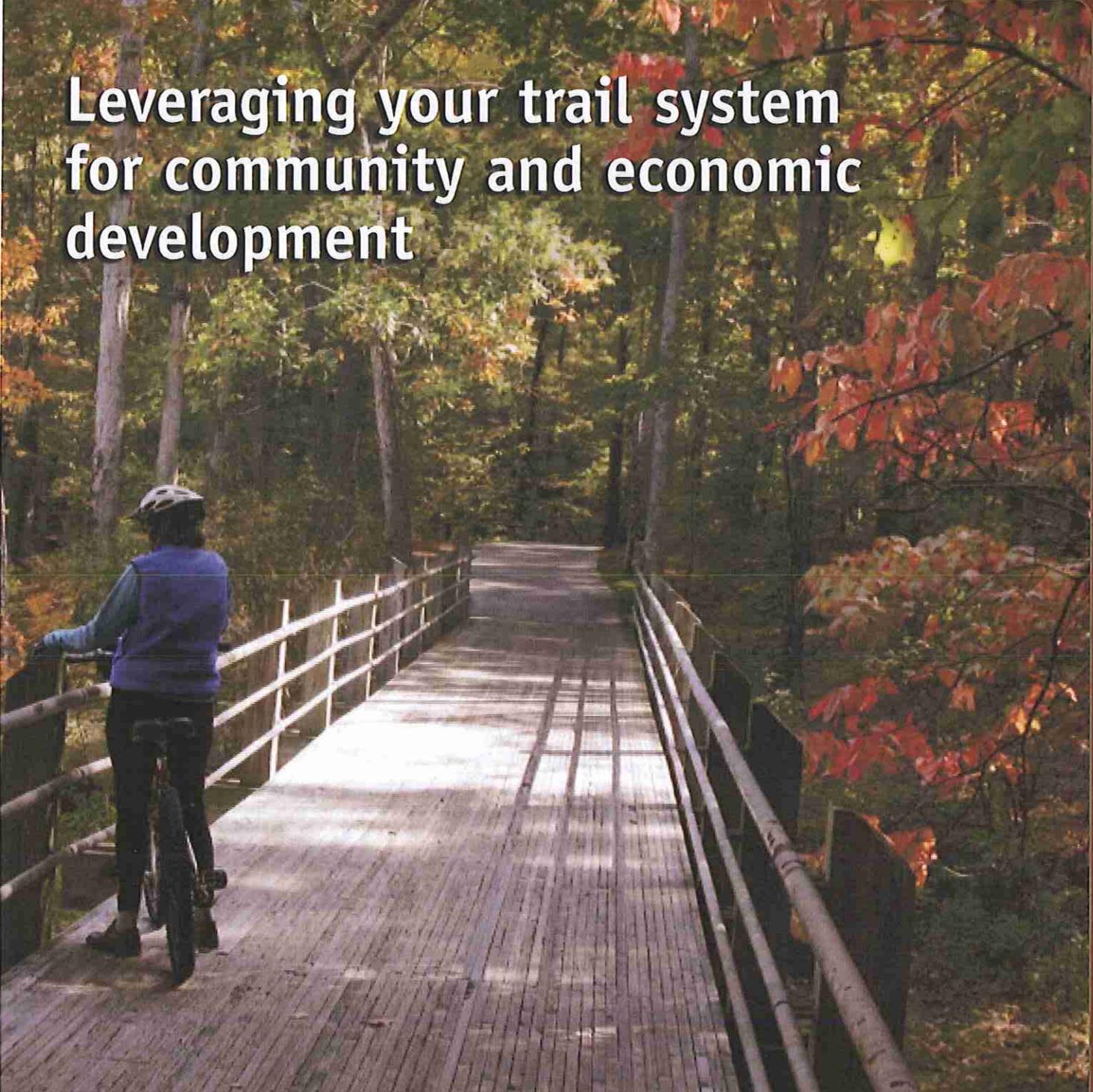
1. **Organization.** Establish consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among various groups that have a stake in the local trail system and the downtown.
2. **Promotion.** Sells the image and promise of a Trail Town to all prospects.
3. **Design.** Gets the Trail Town into top physical shape to create a safe and appealing environment.
4. **Economic Restructuring.** Helping existing businesses expand and recruit new businesses to respond to current trail activities and market forces.

What are the Benefits of Becoming a Trail Town?

Over the last several years, as the full economic potential of linking trails, recreation, tourism and business development has become better known, the Trail Town concept has caught on. According to an article from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, "communities around the country are increasingly utilizing the 'Trail town' model of economic revitalization that places trails as the centerpiece of a tourism-centered strategy for small town revitalization." In fact, studies from neighboring states like Wisconsin have shown that bicycle tourism supports more than \$900 million in tourism and residential spending each year.

For more information about the up-coming Trail Towns planning effort and how to participate, please contact:
Lori Eschenburg, Planner I.
St. Clair Metropolitan Planning Commission
(ph) 810-989-6950
(emai) LEschenburg@stclaircounty.org

michigan township news



Leveraging your trail system for community and economic development

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MTA
MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

September 2012

Cover Story



Trail Towns-hip:

Leveraging your existing trail system for community and economic development

Trails were once considered to be undesirable and unnecessary infrastructure in communities. People worried that trails would bring crime and unwanted people into their neighborhoods. Oh, how wrong we were! Trails have proven to be sought-after amenities for most communities. Trails not only increase nearby property values, they contribute to sense of place and offer new economic development potential. In addition, long, multi-jurisdictional trail systems can provide an unforeseen economic boost to an entire region.

'TRAIL TOWNS'

The "Trail Town" concept was developed by the Allegheny Trail Alliance, a coalition of seven trail organizations along the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile multi-use trail running through Pennsylvania and Maryland. The basic Trail Town concept is simple: ensure that communities along the trail are better able to maximize the economic potential of trail-based tourism.

While the Trail Town concept is primarily geared toward cities and large urban centers, we believe the concept is very much applicable in townships. Even if it's just a small handful of shops, restaurants and a gas station, many townships have at least one center of commercial activity. Furthermore, many of the over 2,000 miles of trails in Michigan travel directly through townships.

Over the last several years, as the full economic potential of linking trails, recreation, tourism and business development has become better known, the Trail Town concept has caught on. According to an article¹ from the Rails-to-Trail Conservancy, "Communities around the country are increasingly utilizing the 'Trail Town' model of economic revitalization that places trails as the centerpiece of a tourism-centered strategy for small town revitalization."

Trying to determine how trails affect the local economy is no easy task. A quick Internet search reveals a clearinghouse of national, regional and local economic impact studies related to trails. A recent statewide study² in Wisconsin found that bicycle recreation supports more than \$924 million in tourism and resident spending each year, of which nearly \$533 million

is direct impact occurring annually, such as travel, equipment sales and restaurant expenditures. Closer to home, a 2008 study³ by the Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University found that properties in Oakland County within a half-mile of bike paths have increased in value by as much as 6.3 percent.

There are a number of different ways in which local communities can organize around community efforts to establish a successful Trail Town program. For the last five years, the Allegheny Trail Alliance has applied the “Four Point” or “Main Street Approach” developed by the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Main Street Approach offers a complete outline for downtown revitalization and has been implemented in more than 1,200 communities across the United States.

THE FOUR-POINT APPROACH

Organization. Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in trails and the downtown or commercial district. By getting everyone working toward the same goal through volunteer recruitments, collaboration and an organizational structure consisting of a board and committees, your program can provide effective ongoing management and advocacy for your Trail Town program.

Promotion. Promotion sells the image and promise of a Trail Town to all prospects. Promotions communicate your community’s unique characteristics and trail resources to local customers, investors, entrepreneurs, property owners, residents and visitors.

Design. Design means getting a Trail Town into top physical shape, creating both a safe and appealing environment. Creating an inviting atmosphere through attractive window displays, professional signage, well-maintained sidewalks, accessible parking areas, appropriate street lights and inviting landscaping conveys a visual message about what a Trail Town is and what it has to offer.

Economic restructuring. Economic restructuring is carried out to strengthen your community’s existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. By helping existing businesses expand and by recruiting new businesses to respond to current market forces, a Trail Town program can help to convert unused space into productive property and increase the competitiveness of business enterprises.

GETTING STARTED

The first step in organizing such a Trail Town effort is to assess the economic development resources and organizational capacity of your community. Chances are, you have a handful of local or regional agencies and non-profit organizations—for example, a downtown development authority, chamber of commerce or business association—already implementing economic development programs throughout the community or area. The staff of these organizations can often provide technical expertise, resources and assistance in getting ►



Courtesy of Paul T. Olson

‘Helping to strengthen our sense of place’

In the Upper Peninsula’s Marquette County, the Iron Ore Heritage Trail (IOHT) forms a 48-mile, multi-use, year-round trail that connects communities and people to the region’s historic sites and human stories. Stretching from **Republic Township** to **Chocoday Charter Township**, this surfaced and signed transportation/recreational corridor provides access to a wide variety of recreational amenities.

Marquette Charter Township (Marquette Co.) was an initiating jurisdiction in the formation of the trail system, and hosts the formally designated Trailhead #9, which serves as an access point to adjacent commercial, residential and recreational areas. Other informal access points are served by additional trail networks. The township is also working to link its 2.7-mile portion of the IOHT to two other major trail networks in the area, the North Country Trail and Noquemanon Trail Network.

“Marquette Charter Township is widely recognized for the trail networks within our boundaries that help make our township such a great place to live, work, play and visit,” said township manager **Randy Girard**. “Our trails provide, arguably, the best and most challenging mountain biking in the U.S.”

The township’s efforts to promote these features of their community have paid off—literally. “Our focus on community amenities has been instrumental to our continued growth over the last 10 years, leading to 22 new major developments that Marquette Township staff has proudly added to our regional economy,” Girard said, noting that these developments have created 1,945 new jobs, and helped increase the township contribution to the total regional tax base by over \$123 million.

According to **Jason McCarthy**, township planner and zoning administrator, the IOHT has afforded local municipalities the opportunity to work together on a collaborative vision that has helped to strengthen their sense of place. “Walkers, runners, hikers, nature/wildlife observers, bicyclists, and skiers can enjoy this captured piece of history,” said McCarthy. “Classrooms can visit different areas to learn of the local industry while gaining an understanding of the natural and cultural history. Existing events and future activities will be hosted on the trail, providing regional tourism growth.

“These benefits combine for a win-win project that assists our area in the promotion of economic development, a healthy lifestyle, and a sense of pride and place.”



A trail portal—where the user exits the trail to visit a nearby central business district—should be a welcoming point, where landscaping and wayfinding clearly directs trail users into the district.

a local Trail Town initiative started. The local economic development organization may even be willing to direct all or a portion of the Trail Town initiative.

If your community does not already have a local economic development organization, you may have to rely more on individual community members and volunteers. In either instance, it can be helpful to identify a point person, or catalyst, to organize and lead the Trail Town initiative.

Once the community has indicated it is ready to move forward with a Trail Town initiative, it is important to organize and assemble a broad-based coalition of community stakeholders. The coalition will help organize and direct the Trail Town initiative, build partnerships and cultivate an active volunteer base. The coalition should include people from organizations with a direct stake in the viability and success of the downtown or commercial district. However, to establish a truly comprehensive initiative, it is important to involve a wide variety of community stakeholders, including local trail organizations, civic groups, church organizations, government officials, financial institutions, health providers, students, local foundations and local business owners.

One of the primary tasks of the Trail Town catalyst and coalition will be to find and secure the financial resources to implement the Trail Town initiative. Fortunately, community and economic development (including placemaking) are high priorities for state and federal governments. Therefore, public funding sources may be available to assist in the implementation of your Trail Town initiative. In addition, you may be able to secure grants through other regional, state and/or federal agencies that work on some of the ancillary aspects of the Trail Town initiative such as your county health department, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Additionally, members of your broad-based coalition may be able to help secure funding through corporate philanthropic programs and local service organizations to support specific aspects of your Trail Town initiative. For example, your local

hospital or health care providers may host and sponsor an annual “bike-to-work week.”

Once the Trail Town initiative is up and running, it is important to continually publicize your efforts and successes. It may be helpful to create a marketing committee that is responsible for getting the word out about the initiative. It is also important to develop relationships with the community and your local media—submit recurring articles to the local paper, and offer to speak to local service organizations and at school functions and large community events. Finally, it can also be helpful to create a catchy name for your organization, one that lets the community know what you do and is easily remembered.

DESIGN ISSUES

One of the first, and most important, tasks of any Trail Town effort is to assess the physical and administrative character of your local trail(s). In some communities, this effort may include an assessment of only one non-motorized trail looping through a small area. In other communities, this effort may include an assessment of an entire network of trails. The assessment will help the coalition better understand the trail and the challenges a visitor might encounter.

TRAIL TYPE AND ADMINISTRATION

Another step in the process involves characterizing the trails in your community and who oversees the development and maintenance of trails. For example, do you know what type of surface each trail has and how that surface changes under certain weather conditions? Do you know what types of activities take place on the trail? It is very likely that your trail accommodates different activities at different times throughout the year. Are there instances when these activities conflict? Do you know how long the trail is in your community—is it a short stand-alone trail or just one segment of a much larger multi-jurisdictional trail? If it's a multi-jurisdictional trail, how far is the next trailhead? Do you know who manages the trail and their contact information? If the trail is operated by the DNR or a regional trail advocacy group, there might be different rules about how the trail is used and how it is maintained.

TRAIL GEOGRAPHY AND CONNECTING ELEMENTS

Another important element to assess is the physical relationship between the trail and the downtown or central business district—the “trail-to-town” relationship. Distance, elevation change, physical obstacles and ease of movement contribute to the willingness of visitors to leave the trail and enter your commercial district. For trails that traverse right through the central business district, the trail-to-town relationship is fairly obvious. However, when the trail is located more than a mile or two from the commercial activity, it is important to provide for a town map at the trailhead and clear wayfinding signage along pathways. The following connecting elements provide a more detailed approach to the trail-to-town relationship.

Trailhead. The trailhead is the area where users can access the trail by road. Ideally, trailhead amenities should include

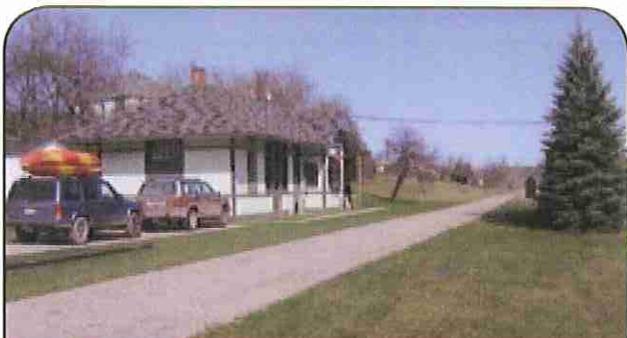
restrooms, water, shelter, bike racks, trash receptacles and picnic tables. The trailhead should also provide appropriately sized parking areas with shade and lighting for evening uses. For example, if your community is home to an equestrian trail, does the parking area accommodate large trailers?

In many instances, the trailhead is the point at which the trail user may first come in contact with the community and the point at which trail users will decide whether or not to enter into the community. Therefore, it is imperative to develop clear and appropriate information for visitors available at the trailhead. In addition, by providing such amenities as water and restroom facilities, the community welcomes visitors, showing hospitality and inviting them to visit the community.

Portal. The portal is the point at which the trail user exits the trailhead with the intent of visiting the nearby central business district. The portal should be a welcoming point, where landscaping and wayfinding signage clearly directs trail users into the central business district.

Pathway. The pathway is the corridor that trail users follow from the portal to the central business district. Depending on the location of the trail, the pathway could be just a few blocks or several miles. The pathway should be regularly assessed for cleanliness, safety, lighting, physical condition and interaction with traffic. In addition, it is important to consider the needs of local business owners along the pathway. For example, is there an opportunity to locate the pathway along retail establishments that provide services not available in the central commercial district?

Gateway. The gateway is the point at which the trail users enter the central business district of the community. The gateway should be located at the edge of the central business district that is closest to the trailhead along a well-developed pathway. The gateway area should welcome trail users and visitors into the central business district and be the starting point for directional signage to individual attractions and businesses within the district.



An important element to assess is the "trail-to-town" relationship between the trail and the downtown or central business district. Distance, elevation change, physical obstacles and ease of movement contribute to the willingness of visitors to leave the trail and enter your commercial district.

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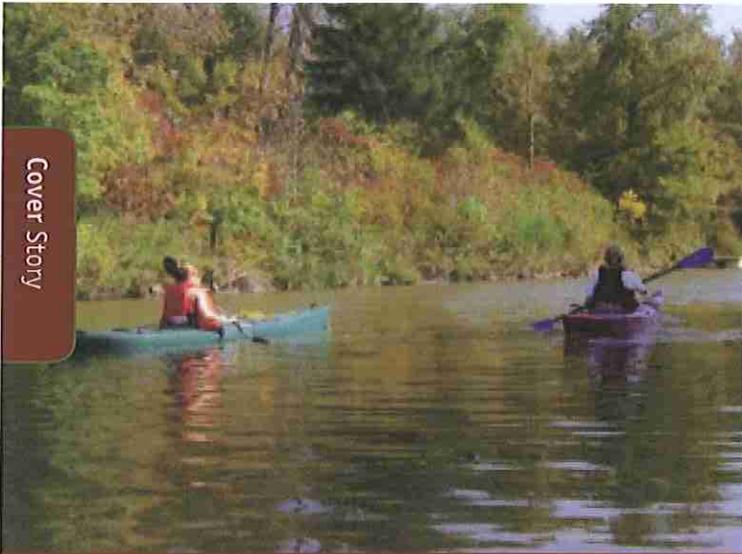
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'Benefits that any township can achieve'

Some 13 local governments in St. Clair County are working together to develop a 54-mile "Bridge to Bay" Trail, starting under the Blue Water Bridge in Port Huron and connecting community to community as it extends through the county, often near waterways and other times inland.

Four miles of paved "Bridge to Bay" paths wind through **China Charter Township**. The township's parks and recreation committee and parks commission work with the county and its neighboring communities to promote the pathway—along with the miles of unpaved, maintained hiking nature trails that are part of the township's 23-acre, wooded park and Belle River access site.

"Both entities work to develop, improve and maintain our facilities," explained Trustee **John Steffy**, who also sits on the park board. "We have worked with the adjoining communities on installing road signage, and with St. Clair County in promotion and marketing of both biking and hiking trails, as well as our canoe and kayak access and 'blueways'—i.e., water trails.

"All of [these efforts] contribute to a greater quality of life for our residents," he said. "There are also the obvious financial and economic benefits to the stores and vendors, along and near the trails. However, the greater benefits may include the fitness and health of our residents, guests and visitors. Those are among the benefits that any township can achieve by focusing resources to trails."

Steffy notes that trails can provide residents and visitors with a chance to disconnect from the bustle of everyday life and unwind—an opportunity he takes advantage of himself.

"Personally, I enjoy biking and hiking nature trails," he said. "It is a great way to reduce stress levels, and get away from the daily grind of life."

Center. The center is the central business district of the community. It may serve as the hub of goods and services for the trail user. The center should be regularly assessed for cleanliness, safety, lighting and physical condition. In addition, the center should be assessed on the availability of amenities that help the trail user enjoy their experience (e.g., bike racks, outdoor seating at restaurants, ATM machines, Internet access and public restrooms).

In completing this assessment, it can be helpful to identify all the "connecting elements" on a map or sketch of the community. Completing a thorough assessment of the physical relationship between the trail and central business district may reveal new opportunity for improvements. These improvements can then be clearly defined and integrated into action strategies for the community.

IMPLEMENTING THE FOUR-POINT APPROACH

As previously mentioned, economic restructuring may be needed to expand and retain existing businesses, and recruit new retail opportunities. Prior to moving forward with retention and expansion efforts, it is important to get a clear understanding of the socio-economic and lifestyle preferences of the people visiting your trails. For example, do you know where trail users like to eat and where they like to shop? Do you know how much money trail users spend on biking and traveling per year?

Several national trail organizations and bicycling affiliations have attempted to identify general lifestyle preferences and spending habits of trail users. However, it may be beneficial to administer your own survey to get a better understanding of the lifestyle preferences and spending habits of local trail users. Once you have a clear understanding of your local trail users, you can better assess what basic and long-term goods and services are needed in your community. You can also work with local businesses to expand their offerings and identify ways to benefit from trail users.

Great effort should be made to effectively market and promote your Trail Town and the image of a Trail Town. For example, it can be helpful to develop attractive marketing materials (e.g., website, brochures), a logo and local advertising. These materials work to convince local residents, the larger region and tourists that your community supports an attractive Trail Town environment.

In addition, it can be useful to hold Trail Town events and conduct Trail Town retail promotions throughout the year. It may be helpful to hold events in the business district or near the trail that celebrate the history and culture of the community. It can also be useful to incorporate presentations or workshops on bike safety or cross-country skiing near the beginning of different trail seasons or during trail-related events. These promotional activities may be especially effective if they coincide with multi-day trail-related events, such as a bike tour.

If your community hosts a community-wide event or festival, be sure to have a booth or table with information about the trail

readily available. You may also be able to work closely with your local merchants association to conduct sidewalk sales on or near the trail.

THE 'TRAIL TOWN' MASTER PLAN

Once the catalyst and larger coalition has conducted a complete evaluation of the physical character of the community and needs have been identified, the next step is to begin planning projects and/or programs. The direction of these efforts should be explicitly detailed in a Trail Town master plan. A Trail Town master plan provides the framework for future marketing efforts, capital improvements and community outreach, and helps to solidify support and leverage funding.

'TRAIL TOWN' EFFORTS IN MICHIGAN

Many communities across the state are working to leverage their existing trail resources for community and economic development. However, only a handful of communities are exploring the creation of a Trail Town program. A regional approach to the Trail Town concept might be especially impactful to the collection of communities that naturally line the state's many rail-trail corridors.

Two years ago, the Land Information Access Association (LIAA) worked to develop a regional Trail Town Manual for the seven communities the lie along the 62-mile North Central State Trail. These seven communities, along with a large consortium of local jurisdictions, regional planning agencies, economic development organizations and LIAA, are about to embark on an

effort to develop a regional Trail Town guidebook and program throughout a 22-county region in northern Michigan.

In St. Clair County, the Metropolitan Planning Commission is pursuing funding to develop and establish a formal Trail Town program for its extensive county-wide system of greenways and blueways.

These and other efforts seek to play to one of Michigan's greatest strengths: an abundance of excellent outdoor recreation opportunities. Trails can provide a framework for both enhancing these opportunities and maximizing their benefits to the community-at-large. The next time you're on a stroll or paddle in your community, take a look around—and take note of the possibilities. ■

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Footnotes

- ¹ *From Trail Towns to TrOD: Trails and Economic Development: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. 2007*
- ² *Kittner, Gena, Report shows \$1.5 billion annual impact of bicycling in Wisconsin. Wisconsin State Journal, February 1, 2010*
- ³ *The Economic Valuation of Natural Resource Amenities: A Hedonic Analysis of Hillsdale and Oakland County. Land Policy Institute, Michigan State University, Report #3. 2007*

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