CREATING RESILIENT SMALL CITY DOWNTOWNS

NCRCRD projects to inventory, share and apply Extension programs and resources nationwide

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Merging of Two Grants

1. Inventory of Downtown Development Programs and Resources
   A website created to connect Extension educators with colleagues in other states doing downtown development work.

2. Case Studies of Resilient Downtowns
   Designed to highlight best practices regarding small-city downtowns.

Team Members from Two Grants

1. Inventory of Downtown Development Programs and Resources
   Wisconsin:
   - Jessica Beckendorf
   - Todd Johnson
   - Chuck Law
   - Bill Ryan
   - Chris Clark
   - Emily Lutz - project assistant
   - Chrissy Dillhunt - web design
   Minnesota:
   - Bruce Schwartau
   - Ryan Pesch
   Iowa:
   - Lisa Bates
   - Susan Erickson
   - Jon Wolseth
   - Emily Lutz - project assistant
   - Chrissy Dillhunt - web design

2. Case Studies of Resilient Downtowns
   Wisconsin:
   - Anna Haines
   - Todd Johnson
   - Bill Ryan
   - Chris Clark
   - Emily Lutz - project assistant
   - Chrissy Dillhunt - web design
   Minnesota:
   - Ryan Pesch
   - Bruce Schwartau
   Illinois:
   - Raha Behnam
   - Kathie Brown
   - Russell Medley
   - Zach Kennedy
Definitions

Vibrant
full of energy and enthusiasm.
"a vibrant cosmopolitan city"
synonyms: spirited, lively, full of life, energetic, vigorous,…

Resilient
Tending to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change
"the local economy is remarkably resilient"
synonyms: bouncy, flexible, elastic, rubberlike, springy, stretch, stretchable, stretchy, supple,…

Poll Question
Have you ever or do you expect to work on a project related to downtown revitalization?
- Yes
- No

Why Downtowns are Important
1. Central place in the community
2. Sense of place with its character, history, and uniqueness
3. Describes the overall health of the community and its economic development potential
Some of the Issues Facing Downtowns

1. Changing uses for downtown buildings
2. Deliberate consumers expecting price, quality, and value
3. Changing retail landscape from big box stores to gray boxes
4. Most downtowns are overlooked by chains
5. Increasing competition from Amazon and e-commerce

Examples of Downtown Responses

1. Change uses of buildings to include more housing and restaurants
2. Be aware of cautious consumer decision-making
3. Coexist with big-box stores by developing your own niche
4. Embrace homegrown businesses through incubators, pop-up shops, buy local efforts,…Chains have their own problems
5. Develop an Internet or mobile presence
6. Think beyond business – downtown’s role as a central social district.

Big and Small Cities are Different

- Larger cities often have in-house economic development planners or can afford consultants
- Smaller cities and villages often lack resources to help their downtown
Who Provides Services to Downtowns?

Grant 1: A Web-Based Inventory of Extension Programs and Resources

1. Posting programs and resources to learn what others are doing (scholarship).
2. Encourage cross-state programming.
3. Help us define our roles vis-a-vis Main Street, consultants, and other organizations.

Website Homepage

https://fyi.uwex.edu/resilientdowntowns
Website Directs You to the Source

Open up another browser and go to Website
https://fyi.uwex.edu/resilientdowntowns/

Answer in Chat Box

From your quick look at the website, name one downtown related program in the US that you find interesting.
Next Steps

1. Continue adding to the inventory
2. Add additional case studies
3. Promote site to potential users
   - Community development colleagues nationwide
   - Main Street programs nationwide

Submit Your Scholarship

Click the “submit” button to upload a link to your work.

Grant 2: Case Studies of Resilient Downtowns

Purpose:

1. To understand and document small communities with successful downtowns.
2. Identify best practices for local governance and downtown development.
Communities

- Illinois:
  - Canton
  - Farmington
  - Silvis
  - Galva

- Minnesota:
  - Alexandria
  - Lindstrom

Wisconsin:
- Mineral Point
- Viroqua

Community Selection

Convenience Sampling & Research Team Familiarity

- Does the downtown area have a high building occupancy rate?
- Does the downtown area capture dollars from tourists and neighboring communities?
- Does the downtown area look nice aesthetically?

Findings

Lessons from Farmington
1. Private investments and public improvements
2. Historic Capital
3. Marketing and Communication
4. Small Business and Main Street Retail
5. Public Events and Programs
Thank you!
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