

Mantua Revitalization and Economic Development Project Steering Committee Meeting 10/12/06

Participants:

John Grossman, E.G.&G.
Matt Benner, Ellie Stamm, Hal Stamm, Edie Benner, Eric Hummel, Becky Newell,
Michelle Stuck, Ben Prescott, Claude Hopkins, Betsy Woolf, Michelle Barnauskas,
Jim Rogers, Helen Hazlett, Joan Sweet, Wes Hawkins, Jim Mocny

Summary of Efforts to Date

Jim Rogers summarized events that led to the 10/12 meeting, including the 9/20 chamber of commerce meeting at which John Grossman spoke to community members about his firm's services. As a follow-up to that meeting, several people particularly passionate about revitalizing the area were invited to hear more about the process – and become a steering committee. Jim stressed that E.G.&G. is just one resource available to help guide revitalization efforts.

John Grossman explained that he was brought in by Bob Harris from Portage County Regional Planning as part of the Mantua Village Comprehensive Plan. He encouraged the steering committee, or “exploratory” committee, to research options, keeping his firm's fee structure confidential.

E.G.&G., Inc. Examples

Mr. Grossman showed before and after photos of several projects and recapped the firm's history. In 25 years of business, they have completed 60 projects and currently employ a staff of 20, including urban planners, landscape architects, engineers, and financial planners. They completed Chagrin Falls last year, are currently working on a plan for Aurora, and are close to completion in Sugar Creek.

One example – Slippery Rock, PA – included several unique elements:

- huge rock sculptures, designed and donated by a local artist
- easements to carry “the look” onto private property adjoining public spaces (chain link fence and steep slope replaced by rock retaining walls, steps, sidewalk)
- cooperation agreement with local bank to redesign private parking lot and walkway (from back of buildings to main street), providing additional public parking and attractive public spaces

E.G.&G.'s goal in community revitalization is to *Recreate Prime Real Estate Value* in a worn out area. Enhancing the appearance of public areas (streets, sidewalks, parks, empty lots, alleys) renews interest and generally causes private owners to improve their properties. E. G. & G. provides suggestions for key properties and individuals may request assistance from the firm.

Mr. Grossman emphasizes that the most important elements in any revitalization or economic development effort is leadership and cooperation. He advised the steering/exploratory committee to be a guiding force, interacting with Village Council, the Chamber, local businesses, and residents to gain consensus and keep the project moving.

Design/Development Plan

- A. First, determine area of focus with a primary project area that must facilitate pedestrian and vehicular traffic and an extended area with mostly vehicular traffic, which acts as a gateway.

The group proposed a primary area including:

- Main Street from Mill Street to Walnut Street
- High Street from Maple to Buchert Park
- Prospect from Maple to High
- Franklin from Maple to First
- First Street

The extended area of Main Street within the Village, north and south of the primary area, must draw people into the downtown area. Connectivity with the park and bike & hike trailheads is also crucial.

Opportunities exist for Mantua Township and Shalersville Township to tie-into the overall “theme” of the area as well as partnering with Hiram and Hiram College on efforts to revive the community.

- B. Next, analyze problems and identify assets, concentrating on physical appearance.

Residents’ and business/property owners’ shared opinions on surveys and during the “critical issues/assets” exercise during the 3/15 community meeting. Comments were compiled and published at Chamber and Village Planning Commission meetings as well as in the Chamber newsletter. More feedback and ideas must be collected during public brainstorming meetings.

- C. Then illustrate possible solutions (concepts).

Community feedback should be discussed by steering committee and design firm to develop two-three concepts, which can be illustrated and shared with the public to confirm that the feedback was understood and incorporated into the plan.

- D. Include improvements to infrastructure.

Repairing or upgrading water, sewer, electric lines and capacity will ensure that new customers can be serviced and that the “new look” won’t be destroyed (changes will not need to be torn up for future upgrades/repairs).

Financial Plan

After a design plan is selected, E.G.&G. determines the cost of implementing the changes. Sugar Creek's plan encompasses two distinct areas: the gateway (underground lines, street & sidewalk resurfacing, directional signage, etc.) at \$1.5 million and the downtown at \$2 million. Mantua Village has the benefit of one, contiguous area of focus.

Implementation (i.e., What are the sources of funds?)

- A. The community must show some investment before seeking outside help.
 - 1. Sell "memorial" street light fixtures and furnishings to individuals and businesses. Typical cost is about \$1200 each. Fundraising should generate \$150,000.
 - 2. Allocate part of Village budget. A tax increase is strongly discouraged. Common thinking is that a community should be making these improvements anyway. Local officials must figure out how to spread the existing budget to begin the project and provide *visible* examples that tax dollars are being used wisely.

- B. Much of the funding often comes from grants. E.G.&G. handles grant writing.

Construction

E.G.&G. provides construction documents, solicits public bids, and monitors construction to ensure quality. Construction takes about one year. It is controlled and slow so as not to disable downtown.

Getting Started

Approximately \$70,000 is needed to complete reach the construction phase. If the E.G.&G. is selected to guide revitalization/economic development efforts, a campaign to raise seed money must take place. Three sources are:

- 1. Local Government
- 2. Community Groups (Chamber, Rotary, Lions, etc.)
- 3. Fund Drive

Soliciting monetary gifts from businesses, residents, and alumni (those who moved, but still call Mantua home) is often successful. Mr. Grossman cautions against canvassing the world; his advice is to identify the supportive people and get the money (or pledges) fast. A fund drive should last four to six weeks.

Individuals prefer tax-deductible donations to non-profit organizations (ex. Chamber). A development corporation may be formed to administer activities.

**MINUTES OF THE DOWNTOWN MANTUA REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE MANTUA-SHALERSVILLE FIRE STATION
March 20, 2007**

In Attendance:

Michelle Barnauskas
Edie Benner
Jim Rogers
Ellie Stamm
Hal Stamm
Dean Stebbins
Joan Sweet
Joann Vance

Presenters for CT Consultants:

Rich Iafelice, Vice President/Secretary
Joyce Bond, Landscape Architect
Chris LeGros, Planning/Funding

In an effort to explore several options regarding the consultant we select to help with revitalization, we met with three members of the staff of CT Consultants.

Rich Iafelice introduced himself and explained that he has been serving as Village engineer for 20 years – CT was hired by the Village of Mantua in 1987 – and therefore has a good relationship with the community and a solid understanding of our needs. They know our roads, utilities, and drainage through other projects they've completed for the Village.

Rich spoke of specific projects his company has been involved with including the widening of St. Rt. 44 at McDonald's and Crestwood High School to incorporate turn lanes, the work on the intersection of Main Street at High Street, and the installation of the pedestrian bridge as part of the hike & bike trail. Brian Rogers of CT designed the trail bridge and Bob (who formerly worked for EG&G, Inc.) was project engineer on many of the communities we visited, according to Rich.

The company specializes in community engineering and has staff focused on specific areas such as project management, civil engineering, landscape architecture, and grant-writing.

Examples of streetscapes in which CT was involved include Willoughby and Fairport (Harbor) High Street, which each have buildings close to street with little space for sidewalks and curbing, like Mantua; Canton, where they found places for vegetation amidst concrete and asphalt; and Campaign Alley in Chagrin Falls, where they used stonework in a pocket park prior to Chagrin Falls' full streetscape.

CT's presentation featured four elements of a project:

1. Concept Development
2. Project Goals
3. Design Issues
4. Funding Sources

Concept Development

- ✓ Photo manipulation is used to show what could be; notes are added to the photos to identify what stays and what is new (ex: Broadview Heights).
- ✓ Photos and plans combine to depict possibilities (ex: Route 306 Streetscape, Kirtland).
- ✓ Photos, plans, and drawings allow for more detail (ex: City of Elyria, State Route 57 trees).
- ✓ Detailed drawings are used to identify future problems (ex: trees and overhead lines) and determine how people might use different elements (ex: trees and flagpoles).
- ✓ Handouts are used to engage the community (ex: Lakeshore Blvd. & Vine Street intersection).

Project Goals

- ✓ Develop a Unified Character and IDENTITY
- ✓ Create and AESTHETIC Appeal for Both Auto and Pedestrian Traffic
- ✓ Promote a SAFE and Accessible Environment

Photos can be used to identify unsuitable elements currently in place (clutter, unsafe). Draw more appropriate layout. A streetscape encompasses four zones:

1. Vehicle Zone (size varies) – curb extensions often used to calm traffic and provide pedestrian area
2. Curb Zone (4' minimum) – a transition area, often missing, need to sneak into design, may be landscaped, may be incorporated into vehicle zone with materials in parking spaces (brick pavers)
3. Pedestrian Zone (5' minimum)
4. Business Zone (size varies)

Design Issues

- ✓ ADA/Access
- ✓ Drainage
- ✓ Vaults (holes in sidewalks)
- ✓ Old Utilities (ex. gas, service connections)
- ✓ Overhead Lines
- ✓ Signalized Pedestrian Crossing (possibly at Prospect Street?)

CT Thoughts:

- Mantua needs many treatments due to variations in buildings and uses.
- Water lines are a main concern.
- Need to take advantage of trail; get those people to move through town (“cannot ignore economic component...it doesn't matter how pretty it is if we don't draw people in”). CT will help with façade development to create sense of unity (ex. awnings, signage).
- Topography can be a challenge, particularly with steps and hills (Prospect and Main), in ADA compliance.
- Entryways should be enhanced (Chase). Need to get businesses to buy-in.
- Borrow space from Haylett's (grassy knoll between store and bank) for a stone wall and sitting area?

- Improve drainage for better accessibility – curb ramp near RK/Italiano’s collects water and debris from street; snow melt in front of Mantua Professional Building and Sontag’s lot settles on sidewalk.
- Improve appearance of visible areas – blank wall facing post office (side of Mantua Professional).
- Create sense of place near monumental buildings like Village Hall – provide more parking, stone wall, seating by cutting into hill.
- Burying utility lines is extremely expensive: estimate one-million dollars per mile to bury electric, plus vault access can be \$25,000 each, plus access for cable and phone. High Street has a main trunk line, which will be even more costly to deal with. Consider raising lines so their out of sight-line or placing them behind buildings (which will require new service connections) and burying just the lines that cross the street.

Funding Sources

- ✓ Ohio Department of Transportation (bike & pedestrian; aesthetics; highway)
- ✓ Ohio Public Works Commission (infrastructure)
- ✓ Ohio Department of Development (community development, gap financing for businesses, downtown revitalization tier 1/planning and tier 2/construction, 412 account/infrastructure, 629 account/roadwork, 166 direct loan/property acquisition)
- ✓ Ohio Department of Natural Resources (trails)
- ✓ Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (504 loan program/property acquisition by business)

CT Recommendations:

- Leverage support from one grant to the next.
- Grant-making agencies want to see, hear, feel the energy, diversity; know that many viewpoints are represented, that there is a long-term vision.
- Regular dialog with agencies (and elected state and federal officials) is key so they are familiar with our vision and needs. CT has staff familiar with funding to open doors for us. They have good relationship with new governor, our house rep and congressman and dedicated government relations people on retainer. All Mantua projects they’ve completed have been funded through grants.

Recommended Next Steps:

- Identify current public parking spaces (ex. W. Prospect by pocket park) and how to improve them. Village can influence private property owners with CRA and other tax incentives (and can benefit from tax incremental financing) to encourage improvements.
- Work on wish list...look into ODOD Downtown Revitalization Tier I funds for full-scale planning/visioning...estimate costs and determine funding sources...prioritize and be willing to strike unaffordable elements.
- Remember to incorporate economic development. It is not enough to mke things “look pretty” without attracting more people to town.

**MINUTES OF THE DOWNTOWN MANTUA REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE MANTUA-SHALERSVILLE FIRE STATION
March 27, 2007**

In Attendance:

Michelle Barnauskas
Edie Benner
Sandy Engelhart
Bob Maclearie
Melanie Miraclefox
Jim Rogers
Ellie Stamm
Hal Stamm
Candy Young

Presenter for Poggemeyer Design Group:

Charlene Kerr Piper, AICP, Principal Owner

Sandra Hull of Main Street Wooster recommended Poggemeyer Design Group as a well-rounded consulting firm for our revitalization efforts. The Committee heard from Poggemeyer as the third in a series of presentations by consultants being considered to help revitalize downtown Mantua.

Edie Benner opened the meeting by explaining steps the Downtown Revitalization Committee had taken prior to the day's presentation by Poggemeyer; then she introduced Charlene Piper.

According to Charlene, Poggemeyer has been in business since 1968. The company, headquartered in Bowling Green, has 250 staff-members throughout the country with offices in Strongsville, Lexington/Mansfield, Westerville/Columbus, Toledo, Defiance, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Reno, San Diego, Seattle, and in Monroe, MI and North East, PA. They began as an engineering and surveying firm and developed into a full-service planning and landscape architectural company with \$30 million in business per year. The company prides itself on securing grants and getting funding, services they began providing when their planners needed money to complete projects.

The firm's planning department of 20 includes those with American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) credentials and one planner with a law degree. Other staff-member specialties include economic development, financing, historic preservation, and zoning. They have a certified Main Street Manager on-staff, as well as certified city managers, electrical engineers, environmental engineers (for water/sewer lines; storm drainage), transportation engineers (pre-qualified to work with ODOT), and a graphic artist (for visuals of what could be).

Poggemeyer will help with design review guidelines, signage/way-finding projects, market studies (CDBG requirements and/or partnering with research firms for more detail), listing properties on historic register, and more.

In the past 5-10 years, they have worked on over 50 downtown plans including some that have been updated several times. Some examples:

- ♦ Layout of amphitheater (suggested near a river/lake, in a park, on a hill to create a traffic generator in otherwise open space)
- ♦ Photoshop work on pictures of behind downtown buildings to show painted window frames and doors, window boxes, sheds removed, gravel lot replaced by paved parking and greenspaces.
- ♦ Sketch of fence designed to look like train for a community needing to protect pedestrian area from railroad tracks.

Charlene's presentation included some **recurring themes and recommendations**:

- ♦ Downtown did not get to its current state overnight, just as it cannot be "fixed" overnight. Revitalization is an ongoing process.
- ♦ Parking areas must be safe, well-lit, attractive, and clearly designated with directional signage.
- ♦ A Special Improvement District (SID) may be formed in a designated area to institute a property tax that pays for certain things such as marketing and maintenance; however, forming a SID is NOT recommended until business is improved throughout the district and property/business owners are in a better position to self-fund these projects. Grants should be used to get projects started. A SID may be considered for sustainability.
- ♦ New electrical lines and upgrades could be funded through grants but are very expensive projects. Moving lines behind buildings and focusing on specific areas are ideas to maintain costs.

New information shared by Charlene or details she clarified include:

- ♦ Block-by-Block is a national program which hires local people, outfits, trains, and pays them to keep an area well-maintained, greet people, offer directions and assistance.
- ♦ Portage County gets CDBG funds for which Mantua can compete.
- ♦ CDBG also has Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP)
- ♦ If a county has a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) balance, they must tap into that before CDBG funds are available because HUD will cut state funding for grants based on RLF balances.
- ♦ CDBG Tier I grants can be applied for at any time; however, funds are often depleted early in the year. A community may request up to \$15,000 toward planning (design standards, market study), but must provide 50% in matching funds. Communities compete statewide against other non-entitlement communities (smaller, not cities). Poggemeyer has received 11 Tier 1 grants.

- ♦ CDBG Threshold submittal in May allows grant-seekers to show their qualifications and find-out their chances of receiving funds before going through the full-Tier II application process. Thresholds that must be met are:
 1. an active downtown management association for at least two years (Mantua can use Chamber tenure by showing Committee's relationship to Chamber)
 2. a thorough downtown market analysis including a consumer survey and a merchant survey, both completed within the previous 5 years and used to formulate the downtown plan
 3. the downtown plan itself
 4. downtown design standards (which must incorporate and reference the Secretary of the Department of the Interior standards as a minimum) and explanation of how they will be administered and enforced
 5. marketing and promotional plan for downtown (example: a community calendar of all area organizations' events; piggyback on neighboring community events)
- ♦ CDBG Tier II grant applications are due every September for approximately six awards of up to \$400,000 to complete the downtown plan. The community must match grant funding dollar-for-dollar. Poggemeyer was one of the first to receive funding (for Galion) and came up with forms and guidelines now referenced by others; although the application and administration process is still difficult. They received funding for 36 projects and sit on the state's Downtown Advisory Committee to help refine the process of selecting communities and managing projects (but have no input into awards).
 - To qualify for Tier II funds, a minimum of 20% of property owners must agree to complete façade improvements or correct code violations; although only 20% is not competitive enough to be awarded funding. These private investments are counted toward the matching requirement for Tier II grants.
 - The community must collectively spend what the plan calls for in matching funds (ex. if businesses move out of district or fire levy doesn't pass; those funds must be made up elsewhere).
 - The community must have a designated person in charge of administering Tier II projects. Up to 20% or \$60,000 of grant may be used for a two year position.
 - Grant money is often split between public and private projects. Ex. \$170,000 toward streetscape, \$170,000 for private projects, and \$60,000 for administration.
 - Other communities have set up programs to award grants of up to \$10,000 or 50% of project costs to private owners. The downtown manager walks private property owners through the process of applying for funds.
 - Local banks may set up a Lender Commitment Program where they extend low interest loans to property owners following guidelines.
 - Part of administrative budget (\$5,000-\$7,000) may be used to pay for an architect to interview property owners then make suggestions for façade improvements and mock-up the new look.

- ♦ CDBG Tier III grant applications are accepted throughout the year for “white elephant” building projects, with an estimated \$100,000 per year available. Poggemeyer received three awards. One was used for senior housing in Galion (along with the city’s RLF, historic preservation tax credits, and other monies)
- ♦ ODOT’s Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) has been used toward CDBG match.
- ♦ There are little pots of money for historic grants and designation as a historic district protects buildings (ex. ODOT cannot widen road and encroach on historic buildings). However, historic designation requires owners to follow the National Trust’s prescription for façades (ex. they discourage replacing windows in favor of repairing original windows unless owner can prove that repairs are cost prohibitive).

Specific suggestions for Mantua:

- ♦ Follow Main Street approach with subcommittees to focus on organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring to ensure CDBG requirements in each area are met.
- ♦ Review Village’s Comprehensive Plan to identify unmet CDBG requirements.
- ♦ Invite consultant to submit scope of work based on tasks needed to be done for grant applications.
- ♦ Decide on tasks community can complete and projects consultant must manage, to maintain affordability.
- ♦ Begin planning process with \$30,000 and/or apply for Tier I grant for planning that cannot be completed with available funds. (Activities defined in Tier I application cannot be started until funding is awarded.)
- ♦ Allow 9-12 months to complete planning process.
 - Plan for whole Village or large area, but cut back to a target area based on which private owners will participate. All buildings within the target area must be counted to calculate the percent of participation. If a block of owners do not buy-in, it is better to exclude that block from the project than risk losing grant application’s competitiveness.
- ♦ Submit Tier II Threshold application in May of 2008 (response within two months).
- ♦ Keep working on full Tier II application to meet deadline of September 2008.
- ♦ Plan Tier II projects over two year period.
 - If Village plans any capital improvements, schedule them during Tier II activities to take advantage of capital improvement costs as Tier II matching funds.
 - Use past dollars spent (bike trail, water plant, private improvements) to show that community can get things done and continues to work on projects rather than waiting for grants. Completed projects cannot be used as leverage/matching funds.