

Reconnaissance Visit Memo

Boyne City, Michigan

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Main Street Reconnaissance Visit Memorandum

Observations

The observations presented in this report are those of the reconnaissance team alone; they provide a snapshot of conditions that existed at the time of the on-site visit. The observations are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all organizational and revitalization issues that may currently be present in downtown Boyne City.

- The core downtown commercial area is a clearly defined, contiguous grouping of historic commercial properties. In other words, the historic and infill buildings create a fairly continuous streetwall that defines the space of downtown Boyne City. From the photographs that were included in the Main Street Michigan application and the community presentation, members of the Michigan Main Street reconnaissance team were not expecting this to be the case.
- Obviously, the natural features are a wonderful asset to the community and the downtown. It is quite clear that when one travels to and through the downtown that the waterfront is the focal point of the natural features. The surrounding hills also provide a fantastic backdrop to downtown Boyne City's built fabric.
- Two other important assets to Boyne City's downtown development district are the city's waterfront park and the adjacent gazebo park. Both facilities appear to serve multiple purposes for the community. The waterfront park provides immediate public access to the water and may be used more heavily for first time visitors or tourists. The gazebo park appears to function more as a "town square" type public space for community functions and celebrations and is easily visible and accessible from the downtown commercial district.
- There are no visual clues or entryways to tell a motorist or visitor that one is entering downtown Boyne City. It is not until that last bend in the road at the Wolverine Dilworth Inn that downtown Boyne City was immediately visible and in front of the visitor. There is no defined arrival sequence until one enters the center of downtown. The arrival experience may be more defined from the east and west entries into the downtown district.



Downtown Boyne City's well-maintained historic buildings contribute a well-defined sense of space and place (above and below).



- As for the building stock in downtown Boyne City, there is a visual disparity between the older, historic building facades and the newer, remodeled properties. Many of the newer renovated facades do not appear to have been completed to conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. There is almost an artificial appearance to some of the more recent projects. In other words, Boyne City has a combination of older facades along with newer ones that seem out of place and inappropriate for a historic commercial area.
- One clear observation, and one that was consistently mentioned as an issue by interviewees and confirmed through the SWOT analysis (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis, see page 9*), is that community stakeholders have no clear consensus and direction for downtown's future. Perhaps this lack of consensus relates to the community's much larger issues with how to manage growth and whether or not the waterfront should be developed. There are definite pro-development and anti-development factions within the community.
- At the time of the reconnaissance visit, a non-profit board of directors was in the process of being established to manage the program but none of the four Main Street committees have been formed.
- Fundraising has been taking place to hire a part-time Main Street manager and donated office has been found in a downtown location to house staff and program operations.
- It appears upon observation that Boyne City's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has had a low profile in community and has not been staffed since its establishment. It also appears that in past years the DDA has only focused on public improvements and not on any of the other aspects of downtown revitalization. Though this focus of operation is common across many DDA's in Michigan, Boyne City's DDA has not realized its full potential to carry out a comprehensive program for revitalizing the downtown as enabled by the state DDA law. Last, it is unclear as to whether or not the DDA itself or the DDA tax increment financing mechanism will expire in four years time.
- Though it is still early in the Main Street program's entry to Boyne City, the community still is not quite knowledgeable about the Main Street program and what the significant benefits will be to the community. Once the manager is hired and the board fully functional, a good amount of time should be spent early on in the Main Street program educating the community at large.
- The Boyne City Chamber of Commerce is well-established and will be a powerful partner to the Main Street program's efforts.
- Currently, there is an informal architectural review committee that is part of the Downtown Development Authority. This committee has been responsible for design review and providing advice and financial assistance, through a façade improvement program, for owners of downtown commercial buildings.

- Parking, or the lack of the parking, was consistently mentioned as an issue in interview sessions with representatives from the community. It is clear, however, that parking management strategies had not been investigated as the best approach to long term planning for downtown parking.
- There appeared to be a lack of communication or miscommunication between some parties including property and business owners and residents in regard to historic preservation and design issues.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided as a guide to help the Boyne City Main Street leadership implement specific action steps to fully establish its new Main Street program. It is critically important that many of these six-month, first-year recommendations be achieved so that an effective Main Street program can be established and experience early success.

Recommendations #1: Establish Main Street program within the Boyne City Downtown Development Authority.

Across the country, almost all successful Main Street communities have only one organization that is responsible for carrying out a consistent and coherent downtown revitalization and management program. Though Boyne City leaders and stakeholders have initially organized the Main Street program as a separate non-profit from the DDA, it is not entirely clear how each agency would operate in a setting where both would have the clear right to implement a downtown revitalization agenda. From another perspective, there could be potential conflicts between the two boards when changes in leadership occur and new board members interpret their respective agency missions differently. Secondly, there are available resources from the DDA that can be utilized more effectively to staff a full-time Main Street program as well as implement more wide-ranging downtown revitalization activities. In essence, Boyne City should use its existing DDA to house and start-up the Main Street program and the DDA board should adopt the Main Street Four-Points as its operating methodology.

There are specific advantages to using a DDA-based Main Street operating model and they include the following:

- Provides for access to dedicated and more reliable financial resources to start implementing the Main Street program relatively more quickly than a non-profit operating model. For instance, more funds can be allocated to hire a full-time manager rather than part-time.
- A board of directors is already in place with operating by-laws though the board will have to transition to becoming a working board and the by-laws will have to be revised to accommodate the various operating components of a Main Street program.
- The community at large will be less confused who is undertaking the revitalization work with one organization in charge.

- Fundraising efforts can focus on committee projects rather than on overhead and personnel.
- The DDA's façade improvement program can readily come under the management of a volunteer design committee.

Recommendation #2: Expand DDA board membership and revise corporate by-laws to reflect its transition to a Main Street program.

The DDA board may want to consider expanding the membership of the board to include additional downtown or community stakeholders. Diversity in board membership can help bring together different segments of the community to work in one cohesive effort on behalf of the downtown. Secondly, the DDA will need to revise its corporate by-laws to include articles regarding the roles and responsibilities of DDA board members and officers; the program manager and the Main Street committees; budget and finances; conflict of interest circumstances; and membership and fundraising provisions. If necessary, request additional technical assistance from Michigan Main Street in the reconstitution of the DDA board and in the rewriting of the corporate by-laws.

Recommendation #3: Hire full-time staff.

Having full-staff from the start of the Main Street revitalization effort can help build a stronger program relatively sooner than with a part-time program manager. Though Boyne City is eligible to have a part-time manager under Michigan Main Street application requirements, the downtown has a comparatively large physical setting, with many historic buildings and businesses, and relatively complex planning and revitalization issues that will require more staff and Main Street committee time and resources to address. Secondly, extra funding could be sought from the DDA to augment the manager's salary to raise the position to full-time status.

Recommendation #4: Establish Main Street committee structure with committee chairs in place.

Going forward, the Main Street board will now need to take the next steps and establish the four volunteer committees, the most essential organization component of the Main Street program. It is recommended that the four committees be formed around the promotion, design, organization, and economic restructuring components of the Main Street Four-Point Approach. Committees will need to be staffed by a compliment of volunteers, meet once a month and adopt a yearly work plan of activities. Ultimately, functioning and well-managed committees will build the capacity and effectiveness of the program through volunteer and community involvement in the committees

In establishing the committees, the Boyne City DDA/Main Street board should start by recruiting enthusiastic and capable individuals who would be willing to serve as committee chairs. In fact it would ideal if the first committee chairs were members of the Boyne City DDA/Main Street board of directors so as to ensure a good communication link between the committees and the board. Committee chairs have the primary responsibilities of managing the committee budget, developing an annual plan of work, and delegating specific tasks assignments to volunteers. With the chairperson in place, the chair and Main Street board members can then start recruiting committee volunteers in the community at large who would commit to attend monthly meetings and take on the responsibility for completing specific projects and activities. In months

and years to come Boyne City DDA/Main Street should work actively to retain and recruit volunteers through several volunteer development activities so that volunteer participation in the committees is consistent.

Recommendation #5: Adopt job descriptions or contracts for both board of directors and main street manager.

It was unclear at the time of the reconnaissance visit whether or not the program manager would have a formal job description in place. If not, the board, or the executive board of officers, should develop a description that would accurately reflect the appropriate duties of a program manager. The description would then be approved by the full board of directors. It would also be the option of the board to include the job description as part of a contract but this not a common practice in most Main Street programs around the country. In addition, in the coming year, the board of directors should explore the development of job descriptions for board members and officers. These descriptions would be much the same as the one for the program manager but they would define the particular responsibilities and expectations of board members including requirements for attendance at board meetings, committee membership, and involvement in fundraising activities. Such descriptions will help current and future board members better understand their roles and responsibilities within the organization.

Recommendation #6: Attend Michigan Main Street MS 101 training and work plan training in October 2003.

It is critical that as many Main Street Boyne City and other community leaders attend the Michigan Main Street 101 training scheduled in Lansing in late September and the work plan development sessions for mid October. Each of the workshops will provide the necessary training and information on how to properly establish the committee structure, what types of activities the committees will undertake in the first years of operation, how to institute a work planning process and develop an effective work plan for each of the Main Street committees. In the coming year, each Main Street Boyne City committee will be expected to complete work plans that outline in detail what projects they will take on in the coming year, how much each project will cost, which and how many volunteers will do them, and when the projects will start and be completed. Work planning will help organize and manage efficiently the new and growing number of projects and the volunteer and financial resources needed to support them. It will, as well, augment staff resources with volunteers to complete a variety of other activities that Main Street staff would not be able to do otherwise.

Ideally, Main Street Boyne City should prepare for the October work plan training sessions by identifying major downtown revitalization priorities and issues, by each of the Main Street Four Points, and possible activities that could be undertaken to address those issues. Last, the board of directors should strive to have all committees established each with a full compliment of volunteers in time for the sessions.

Recommendation #7: Transition the DDA's existing design review committee to become the Main Street design committee.

Since the Boyne City DDA already has a design review committee in place, it makes appropriate sense that it transition to become a Main Street design committee with broader roles and responsibilities. Such responsibilities will not only include reviewing applications for the façade

improvement program but also providing design assistance to downtown property owners and businesses, educating the public regarding good downtown design, planning for public improvements, and encouraging appropriate storefront merchandising. The committee should be expanded to include additional representation from the downtown business and property owners. It may also be advisable to include a member from the historic district commission and the overlap between the local Main Street program and the commission can help ensure good communication regarding downtown building improvements.

Recommendation #8: Adopt new design guidelines.

The Main Street Approach advocates that good downtown design should stress authenticity and integrity in the way historic commercial buildings are improved. Historic architecture should not only express individual authenticity and integrity but also collectively express a story about the history of the community. Theme approaches, or those that advocate inappropriate façade changes, are destructive to that individuality and history. Almost all Main Street programs use the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* as a guide to make appropriate decisions on how to properly rehabilitate historic commercial buildings. For that reason, it is recommended that all future reviews of building changes comply with the *Standards*. In complying with this recommendation, the design committee, historic district commission, and the Main Street program should discontinue using the existing *Guidelines for New & Renovated Commercial & Residential Structures in Boyne City*. Developing a new set of design guidelines may be one of the projects identified by the design committee for its work plan. New design guidelines should be developed in cooperation with the historic district commission and the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office.



Though improvements to this building do assist in promoting the business's image, they are not in keeping with proper historic preservation building rehabilitation standards and support a false architectural style in downtown Boyne City.

Year 2003 – 2004 Technical Service Schedule

- **Board and Volunteer Training and Orientation/Main Street 101; September 29 to October 1, 2003; Lansing.**
Board and volunteer orientation is a general training session in Main Street downtown management including extensive session in organization, design, promotions and economic restructuring.
- **Program Manager Orientation; October 2-3, 2003; Lansing.**
A two-day training session for Main Street managers on topics ranging from roles and responsibilities to working with a Main Street boards and committees.
- **Work Plan Development Sessions; October 16-17, 2003; on-site.**
This two-day on-site training workshop is geared toward developing committee work plan and crafting a downtown Boyne City vision statement.

- **Volunteer Development Workshop; January, 2003; on-site.**
A one-day training workshop on developing and maintaining an effective volunteer development program.

- **Resource Team March/April 2004**
This resource team is the most important technical service to be offered to the Boyne City Main Street in its first year. A team of four to five downtown revitalization professionals will be assembled to assist Main Street leaders and community stakeholders devise strategies to implement its future work plan and to make best use of the Boyne City's financial and human resources for revitalizing the downtown area. Over the course of three days, the team will examine information about the community and downtown, study plans, meet and interview key members of the community, discuss ideas, and finally, suggest a set of strategies for local action.

- **Market Analysis Training; Lansing.**
A two-day training session on the components and process for conducting a retail market analysis. This workshop is required for all economic restructuring committee members.

- **Annual Program Evaluation; June/July 2004**
A two-day service designed to evaluate the progress of Boyne City in implementing in its Main Street program.

Ongoing Services (to be delivered primarily by Michigan Main Street)

- **Architectural and Design Assistance; November 10-11, 2003**
This workshop is required training for all design committee members.

Results of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

<u><i>Strengths</i></u>	<u><i>Points</i></u>	<u><i>Weaknesses</i></u>	<u><i>Points</i></u>
Water	84	Lack of Consensus/Focus	42
Historic Buildings	43	Lack of Marina Space	41
River	23	Not Bicycle Friendly	19
Festivals	15	Seasonality	19
Parks	15	Dealing w/ Change	18
Volunteers	13	Poor Variety	16
Quality of Schools	12	Inappropriate Business Mix	16
Good Restaurants	11	Lack of Coordination of Services	11
Recreation Opportunities	9	No Technology Resources	9
Farmer's Market	8	Unattractive Entrances to Downtown	9
Library	8	Lack of Communication	9
Marina	7	Poor Business Hours	8
Good Business Mix	6	Parking	6
Pedestrians	5	Wasted Architecture	5
Good City Staff	5	Vacancy	5
Free Parking	4	Some Deteriorating Historic Structures	3
Garden Club	3	"Off the beaten path"	3
Climate	3	Inappropriate Business Location	2
"Off the beaten path"	3	No Regional Cooperation	0
Views	2	Big Box/Urban Sprawl	0
Trees in the downtown	1	No Anchor Stores	0
Work Ethic	0		
Community Organizations	0		
Gazebo	0		
People	0		
Focused Commercial Area	0		
Non-polluting Industries	0		
<u><i>Opportunities</i></u>		<u><i>Threats</i></u>	
Vision for the Future	53	Apathy	31
Waterfront Uses	48	Lag in Technology	21
Targeting Appropriate Retail	28	No Activities for Youth	21
Maintain Natural Resources	20	Volunteer Burnout	19
Redevelop Empty Space	16	Floating Temporary Docks	18
Housing	10	Too Many Condos	17
Create Pier	9	Lack of Affordable Housing	16
Architecture Design Standards	9	Negative Attitudes	15
Riverwalk	8	Environmental Contamination	13
Rails to Trails	8	Have vs. Have-nots	11
Mentor Programming for Retail	6	Big Box	11
Boyne Mountain	5	No Diversity	8
Rehab Historic Buildings	4	Year Round Residents Leaving	7

Preserve History	3	Expensive Office Space	7
Public Transportation	2	Economy	6
Involving Youth	2	Lack of Cultural Opportunities	5
Expansion of Marina	2	Other Regional Retail Destinations	5
Expansion of Commercial	1	Zoning	4
Coordination of Activities	1	Revenue Sharing	3
Update Infrastructure	0	Weather	1
Partnerships	0	Climate Change	0
Maintain Commitment Level	0	Disrupted Energy Supply	0
Big Box	0		