

Vernonia Takes First Step In “Main Street Program”

The City of Vernonia will kick off its investigation into the Oregon Main Street Program on December 15, 2009, at 6:30 at City Hall. This “kick off” will be in conjunction with the regular community Economic Development Committee meeting. Bob Young, Vernonia City Administrator, and Bill Haack, Economic Recovery Manager for Columbia Pacific Economic Development District, will facilitate discussions among an ad hoc committee composed of members from the Vernonia Chamber of Commerce, the Vernonia Economic Development Committee, and Vernonia Pride.

Main Street programs are designed to improve all aspects of the downtown or central business district, producing both tangible and intangible benefits. Improving economic management, strengthening public participation, and making downtown a fun place to visit are as critical to Main Street’s future as recruiting new businesses, rehabilitating buildings, and expanding parking. Building on downtown’s inherent assets — rich architectural design, long standing businesses alongside new ventures and services, traditional values and, most of all, a sense of place — the Main Street approach has rekindled entrepreneurship, downtown cooperation and civic concern across the USA. It has earned national recognition as a practical strategy appropriately scaled to a community’s local resources and conditions. And because it is a locally-driven program, all initiative stems from local issues and concerns.

The Eight Principles

While the Main Street approach provides the format for successful revitalization, implementation of the four-point approach is based on eight prin-

ciples that pertain to all areas of the revitalization effort:

Comprehensive. Commercial district revitalization is a complex process and cannot be accomplished through a single project. For successful and lasting results, a comprehensive approach must be used. Simply stated, comprehensive means working on all four points simultaneously.

Incremental. Small projects and simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help develop skills so that more complex problems can be addressed and more ambitious projects undertaken. Starting with small projects creates progress and momentum at the same time.

Self-help. Local leaders must have the desire and the will to make the project successful. The NMSC provides direction, ideas and training; but continued and long-term success depends upon the involvement and commitment of the community.

Public/Private Partnerships. Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical stability of the district. Each sector has a role to play, and each must understand the other’s strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership can be forged.

Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets. Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them

unique. Every district has unique qualities — like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging or businesses that have become local institutions. Main Street cannot create new landmarks or institutions; existing local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.

Quality. Quality must be emphasized in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies equally to each element of the program, from storefront design to promotional campaigns to educational programs.

Change. Changes in attitude and practice are necessary to improve current economic conditions. Public support for change will build as the program grows.

Implementation-Oriented. Activity creates confidence in the program and greater levels of participation. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization process is underway. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger activities as the revitalization effort matures.

The Four Points

The four-point methodology works to create a total image for the community: Providing the retail/professional area with its necessary market niche, creating a cohesive visual identity unique to the community, and nurturing a cultural ambiance associated with the community’s location, appearance, and

way of life. The Main Street Approach gradually builds on existing resources and fosters improved community leadership and support on behalf of the Downtown Business District for the long term.

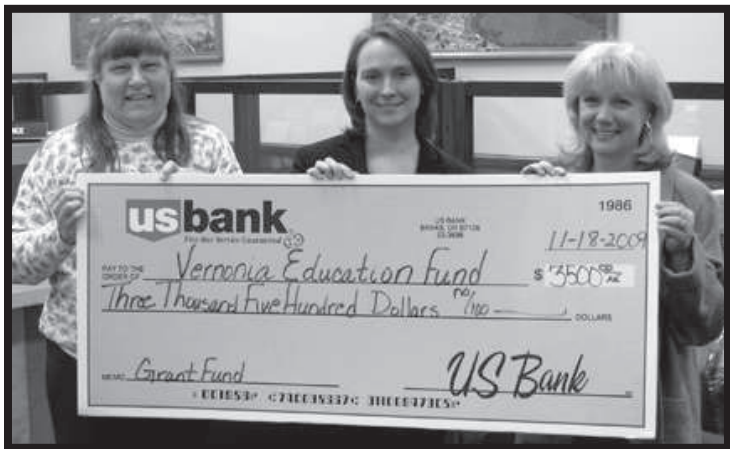
Organization is the building of consensus and cooperation between the groups that play a role in the downtown. Many individuals and organizations in the community have a stake in the economic viability of the downtown.

Design involves improving the downtown’s image by improving its physical appearance — not just the appearance of buildings, but also of street lights, window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, streetscapes, landscaping, promotional materials and all other elements that convey a visual message about what the downtown is and what it has to offer.

Promotion involves marketing the downtown’s unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, tourists, and others. Effective promotion creates a positive image of the downtown through retail promotional activity and special events utilizing the downtown as a stage area of community activities.

Economic Restructuring involves strengthening the existing economic base of the downtown while diversifying it. Economic Restructuring activities include helping existing downtown businesses expand, recruiting new businesses, providing a balanced mix, converting unused space into productive property, and sharpening the competitiveness of downtown merchants.

The City of Vernonia plans to provide updates monthly as they make progress to a renewed sense of purpose in the Downtown district.



US Bank made two grant awards to the Vernonia Community in November. (Above) Vicky Rice and Nicole Larke present Dawn Plewes from the Vernonia School District with a check for the Vernonia School Foundation for \$3500. (Below) George Gans from the Vernonia Senior Center received a check for \$1500 towards construction of their new facility. Pictured from left are US Bank personnel Julie Allen, Vicky Rice and Nicole Larke.



City Committee Members Needed

Volunteer Committee Members are needed for Vernonia City Committees. There are currently two vacant positions on both the Cemetery and Airport Committees. If you are interested in learning more about how you might serve your community on these vital citizen advisory committees, please contact Joanne Glass at City Hall at 502-429-5291.

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