

Peer-to Peer – The Town of Ware

June 30, 2014

History:

The Ware Business and Civic Association (WBCA) was formed in 2011 with the purpose to transform Ware into a destination point for visitors and a resource to the residents.

They offer free seminars to help businesses grow and “Meet and Greet” which offers networking opportunity for local businesses.

They meet on the third Wednesday of each month-the location circulates among the various members.

At the beginning of this project the WBCA had 30 members.

Visit www.wbca.org

Situation:

The Town of Ware and the WBCA wanted to learn about how other communities organized their downtown stakeholders to more effectively enhance revitalization efforts. After some initial research, they identified three models: the Main Street Program, Business Improvement Districts (BID), and independent non-profit organizations. They wanted to gather additional information about each of these models to understand how they are managed and financed, as well as the successes and challenges each has experienced in the particular communities studied. The Town received a Peer-to-Peer grant from MA DHCD for this project, and hired consultant Mary Vilbon to lead it. Mary chose three communities with similar demographics to Ware to represent the three models: Beverly (Main Street), Westfield (BID), and the Shelburne Falls Area Partnership (independent non-profit). The WBCA agreed to organize, publicize, and facilitate each of the presentations.

Peer-to-Peer Project:

Feb 12, 2014: A preliminary meeting was held in the Town of Ware with the Town Planner, the Peer Representative, and a representative from the WBCA. It was decided that 5 public meetings would be organized over the next several months by the Peer; A presentation of the overall project, the three individual revitalization models; the Main Street Program, Business Improvement District (BID), and Public/Private Partnership, along with and a “wrap up” public forum. The following meetings were held:

February 27, 2014 - Emmy Hahn, Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Program Coordinator at the MA Department of Housing & Community Development, presented an overview of the

popularity (number of times mentioned, which indicates a degree of priority to the community), as well as ease of implementation (things that are relatively inexpensive and easy to accomplish, to show progress to the greater community). This will be done by the WBCA Steering Committee.

2. Review and discuss the three models presented, compare to the current organization of the WBCA, and determine if any modification is needed or desired at this time. This is the responsibility of the WBCA, with guidance by the WBCA Board. This could be anything from “no change needed” to “work toward establishment of a BID” including simply adopting some of the ideas that were heard from any of the three models presented.
3. Maintain the public/private partnership with the Town officials working with the WBCA to effectuate change. This includes discussions and ideas about regulatory issues such as use and density, parking, signage (both for businesses and for general directional signage), and code compliance, as well as discussions about the physical environment such as streetscape improvements and “curbing your dog” enforcement.

The Town of Ware has been working on other projects which will be of direct or indirect benefit to the downtown business district, including a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project to install new traffic lights at three intersections on Main Street which will greatly improve control of traffic flow through the core downtown, and construction of the long dormant rail trail which lies on abandoned rail beds north and south of downtown and which will follow sidewalks right through downtown. In addition, the Town is in the midst of a new master plan, and will soon be hiring a consultant to assist with visioning and ascertaining a community identity in preparation for designing a wayfinding system.

Taken together, these various efforts will position the community to make significant strides forward. The things the participants at the meetings for this project learned have already started to make a positive difference in town. The WBCA and all businesses now have an opportunity to take what they’ve learned and put it to use to improve their community.

Ware Business & Civic Association

Business District Revitalization Initiative

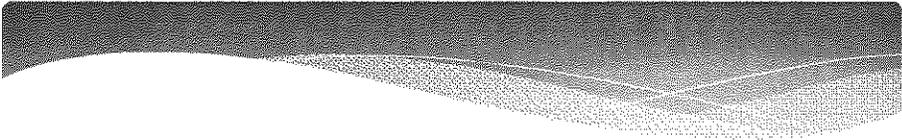


Business District Revitalization Models

Shelburne Falls Area
Partnership

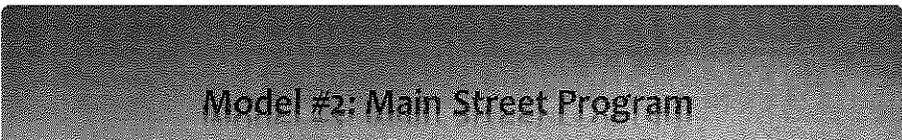
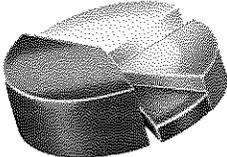
Main Street Program

Business Improvement
District (BID)



Unique Aspects:

- Memorandum of Agreement between the GSFABA and the Towns of Buckland and Shelburne with an Annual Review
- Last existing Partnership from the original 1995 DHCD grant program to promote public/private partnerships.
- Focus of Economic Development Chapter of Joint Master Plan.



Model #2: Main Street Program



Beverly Main Streets

- 501 (c) 3 Non-Profit subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Focused on Downtown Preservation and Revitalization
- 10 years in Existence
- Population 40,000 (2 streets)
- Annual Budget \$225 K
- 2 FT staff

Model #3: Business Improvement District (BID)



The District Westfield
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

- 501 (c) 6 Status – Not-for-Profit
- 7 Years in Existence
- Population 40,000 (2 / 3 streets)
- Annual Budget \$265 K
- 1 FT Staff
- 1 PT Staff

Facts:

- BID based on assessment / renewal
- Provides Business Development
- Beautification and Maintenance Programs
- Infrastructure Projects
- Public Safety Programs



