# AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS DISTRICT RESTORATION IN SMALL TOWNS

45

1226-5600

by

Charles Thomas Badrick

B.S., Kansas State University, 1967

---

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree

MASTERS OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Department of Regional and Community Planning

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas
1973

Approved by:

Major Professor

LD
2668
R4
1973
B3
c.2
Doc.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS


| Chapter | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| | Preface and Acknowledgments | ii |
| 1. | Introduction | 1 |
| 2. | Five Case Studies | 8 |
| 3. | Analysis of Findings | 56 |
| 4. | A Model Plan of Action | 86 |
| 5. | Suggested Areas for Further Research | 92 |
| | Conclusion | 98 |
| | Appendix | 100 |
| | Footnotes | 105 |


## TABLE OF TABLES AND PLATES


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Table 1. | Table of Significant Comparisons of Five Subject Towns in Study | 76 |
| Plate I. | Step by Step Procedure for CBD Restoration | 91 |

# PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For several years the Department of Regional and Community Planning at Kansas State University has had a vital interest in small town development. More recently the department has conducted a special small town redevelopment project with the help of federal funding under Title I of the Secondary and Higher Education Act of 1966. Several faculty and graduate students in the department have been involved in this project since its inception. It was the good fortune of the author of this document to be involved in the project during the 1971-72 academic year. And it was in relation to this project that the subject of this paper was conceived. While working with leaders in several small towns in Kansas many questions came up regarding the process of small town redevelopment that were unanswered, because little research has been done in the area. One of the questions has to do with how small communities can most effectively organize to implement redevelopment. And this is the subject of this report.

The intent of the study is to shed more light on the organization techniques and problems of small town redevelopment. In addition, the study is intended to provide more guidelines for professional planners and designers working in the field to help them avoid some of the pitfalls of offering the wrong design to the wrong community.

While this study hints at some answers to questions of small town redevelopment it is not intended as an addition to

the science of rural sociology. Its intent is purely practical and immediate.

There were several people who gave valuable assistance to the author without whose help this study would have been most difficult, if possible at all. Particular thanks must go to Professor Vernon Deines who gave invaluable advice and help in determining the focus and scope of the study. With him, Assistant Professor Ray Weisenburger gave help and guidance throughout the 1971-72 academic year in broadening this writer's knowledge and appreciation of how restoration work can be effective in small towns. Also, thanks go to Associate Professor Joseph Barton-Dobenin of the College of Commerce at Kansas State University, and to Associate Professor Leland Edmonds of the Department of Regional and Community Planning for their advice and help in formulating the topic of study. In addition, they were helpful in directing this writer to valuable sources of information.

Throughout the period when interviews were conducted in the communities surveyed, this writer had the rare opportunity of meeting many community leaders who displayed a remarkable ability to get things done and a deep commitment to the progress of their communities. They included most particularly, Howard Kessinger, editor of the Oberlin Herold, Oberlin, Kansas; Stan Morgan, County Attorney for Decatur County (Oberlin), Kansas; Kenneth Rydquist, businessman and president of the Decatur County Chamber of Commerce; Robert Larson, editor of the Albia,

Iowa Newspapers; Robert Bates, interior decorator in Albia and a prime inspiration in the idea for a new look for Albia; Robert Kaldenberg, an Albia, Iowa banker; Everett McCracken, former mayor of David City, Nebraska and a prime influence in the David City restoration; Donald Gollnast, senior vice president and director of the Citizen's State Bank of New Ulm, Minnesota; Pat Patterson, retail businessman in New Ulm; Gene Larson, banker and community leader in Linsberg, Kansas; and Alan Nelson, Illustrator and design specialist from Red Oak, Iowa who has probably completed more small town store front designs than anyone else in the midwest.

Every one of these people were outstanding in their skill and devotion to improving their community. In all cases they gave this writer a great deal of their valuable time so that this study would be possible. Without their help, this study could not have been started. All of the ideas expressed in this report on developing better ways of implementing downtown restoration came directly or indirectly from these people. However, only this writer could be held responsible for any mistakes or misquotes that may appear in this report. It is to these community leaders that this study is dedicated, with the hope that the ground that has been broken in these communities may make it possible for thousands of other communities to do the same thing in the future.

Charles Badrick

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on smaller communities in the midwest. Small communities today are going through a dramatic transition in their function and identity that began more than a hundred years ago when the great industrial era of this nation began. Martindale and Hanson writing in Small Town and the Nation trace this historical trend from just after the Civil War:

> The rise of mass industry accelerated after the Civil War. The forms of mass transportation were destroying the sheer physical isolation of local life while men by the millions were beginning to buy and sell in continent-wide markets. The effective points of gravity were relocating in emerging mass industries, in the great metropolitan centers, in the state and federal rather than in local political institutions. Hence, slowly at first but accelerating in time, small towns and cities began to lose ground and in many hundreds of cases to vanish altogether.
>
> In the twentieth-century world the Jeffersonian ideal of autonomous small towns has become anachronistic. Power is shifting from the locality to the great centers of government, industry and finance. If the small town survives at all it is not as an autonomous center of local life, but as a semidependent agency of distant power centers.[1]

But while this has been happening there has recently been a corresponding concern for the preservation of small communities, and this concern has engendered a response broadly termed small town development, or sometimes called community development.

Community development is the broadest of the two terms and as defined by Charles Abrams means this:

> A term embracing all those activities and programs designed to strengthen the physical, social, and economic conditions of an area with a view toward making it a more healthful, prosperous, and gratifying place to live, and in the process to develop the community's capacity to help itself. The term was once mostly applied to work in developing countries, especially to efforts relying on local planning and self-help. It is now also used to refer to work in urban ghettos and poor rural communities in the United States and has come to describe that larger enterprise in which urban planners, public health experts, social workers, economic planners, community organizers, and the like find themselves engaged when they look beyond the traditional bounds of their own disciplines.[2]

While community development is an important issue for the survival of small towns it is important also to large urban areas. Successful small town development could lead to reduced out-migrations towards large urban centers that now have more population than they can adequately handle. This possibility gives small town development more than just small town importance. It is an issue of national magnitude.

## Visual Impact

While it may not be the most urgent issue in community development theory, the visual impact of a town is important to both local residents and others considering moving into small towns. The problem today is that many small towns in the midwest are now more than one hundred years old, and in urgent need of restoration. Hundreds of these communities, now over one hundred years old, were constructed during the same era. They were built in the same architectural period, grew together to maturity, and now commonly suffer the same problems of age and transition. The urgent need for rehabilitation in small towns

is widespread throughout the midwest, but little has been done in the past by these communities or by others, such as state and federal government, to assist in their physical restoration. More recently though, a few select communities have made some remarkable efforts at renewing themselves.

This renewal has taken many forms, but one of the most refreshing and dramatic is the physical restoration of all buildings in the central business district. The important word here is restoration. This means the preservation of original architecture and an overall emphasis on making what is already in the CBD look as good as possible. While malls, special lighting, and other types of decoration can be added, they are not the core elements in downtown restoration. Restoration retains the best elements of past and present architecture, while adding historical pride to the ownership of buildings. Restoration of downtown buildings must carefully avoid the use of supposed modernizing techniques such as the use of aluminum store front facades that hit the eye with a multitude of contrasting colors. Restoration is instead the application of good design principles to the rehabilitation of present structures so that they look good both individually and together.

While restoration of the central business district is only one element in the arena of rural and community development programs, it is an important element, and one element where the results can be dramatically seen. In this era of mass media and image making where some believe "what is good is what looks good" the physical rehabilitation of small communities may prove in

the future to be more important than it is recognized to be today.

## Focus of the Study

The communities that today are actively investing their human and financial resources into revitalization of their central business districts are the subject of this study. And the methods they are using are the specific concern of this study.

## Community Development Corporation

One of the most important tools for the implementation of business district restoration is the community development corporation, sometimes called a community improvement corporation, or business district redevelopment corporation. For purposes of consistency in this report, it will, most of the time be referred to as a community development corporation.

Community development corporations are citizen supported corporations chartered for the purpose of doing some kind of community betterment work. They are almost always non-profit in nature, yet enjoy the same rights as a for-profit corporation.

The community development corporation is an institutional device around which people can organize for a continuous long term community effort. In addition, the community development corporation has certain built-in advantages when raising money. As a long term financial tool a community corporation has power to negotiate contracts, to sue or be sued, to purchase goods and services, to incur debt, and perform other functions consistent with the intentions of its charter. It does this with the im-

portant financial protection that a corporation affords its stockholders: limited liability. Depending upon state tax law, a community development corporation may be able to secure special tax advantages for donors and stockholders. It may also be eligible for special loans that would not be available to a non-incorporated organization.

A good share of the study will concentrate on how the community development corporation fits into the overall community development effort. The principle question to be addressed is this: how well does the community development corporation work as a tool help in the implementation of downtown restoration? In addition, a broad look is taken at how communities go about restoring their central business districts, what problems they encounter, and how they overcome them.

Method

Interviews were conducted on an informal basis with community leaders who were directly involved in the restoration in their community in each of the subject towns. Often, these people would turn out to be either bankers, or newspaper editors, but now always. The towns in which interviews were held were Albia, Iowa; David City, Nebraska; Linsberg, Kansas; New Ulm, Minnesota; and Oberlin, Kansas. In all, approximately twelve people were interviewed for about a total of twenty hours of interview time. Primarily, the interviews concentrated on the downtown restoration, but in Oberlin, Kansas, special note was taken of the outcome of economic development efforts there, because of its close relationship to overall small town develop-

ment.

The interviews were very informal. The interviewer asked a series of questions that were similar from community to community, but mainly for the purpose of covering the whole restoration process in each community rather than specifically comparing responses of each person interviewed. The objective in each interview was to get as much useful information as possible. All of the persons interviewed were encouraged to elaborate fully on each detail in an effort to get perspective and insight as opposed to comparative information. In a study as exploratory as this was, it was felt that the objective should be to come away from each interview with an understanding of how each person interviewed saw the restoration project in his town, and how he participated in it. No attempt was made to compare the effectiveness of one person, or one group of people against another group in another town. This was not the intention of the study.

All of the communities in the survey, except for New Ulm, Minnesota, would be classed as small towns. They ranged in population from about twenty-five hundred to sixty-five hundred and in most cases were county seat communities. New Ulm, at about fourteen thousand people might also be called a small town, but it was the observation of the interviewers that New Ulm has a much larger core of community leadership than the smaller towns, plus a different set of problems in organizing its restoration. The New Ulm experience with CBD restoration was unique among all of the communities in the survey, while the economic situa-

tion of the community was also unique. This will become evident further into the paper.

With such a limited amount of interviewing in so many communities, it was impossible to come to a precise account of the series of events in each community. The best that could be taken from this series of interviews was an overall impression of events, problems, and solutions in an attempt to find out what "appears" to work, and what "appears" not to work. The study then, is exploratory in nature and while it hints at answers and solutions, the research methodology was far too broad in scope for the conclusions to be considered final. Many of the conclusions in fact might be the subject of further and more precise research.

Presentation

The bulk of the presentation in this paper is in the form of five case narratives. This is the most natural form considering the method of research, because each case is unique in its setting. The final portion of the report is primarily devoted to an analysis of the research findings, a suggested list of further research needs, and a model action plan for central business district (CBD) restoration.

# CHAPTER 2

## FIVE CASE STUDIES

### Albia, Iowa

Albia is a county seat town in south central Iowa near what was once a strip coal mining area. The coal is mostly gone now, and so have a lot of the people. The farming is not bad in Southern Iowa, but it's not great either. For several years the area that surrounds Albia has been losing population and the effect has been a generally depressed economy.

In response to this, for several years the Iowa Development Commission, the Iowa utility companies, and the leadership of several southern Iowa communities have engaged in long term planning and development in continual attempts to lure new industry to this part of the state. Long before the community leaders in Albia were involved in the renovation of the downtown area, they were concerned and involved in the effort to bring in new industry. Their efforts must have been well spent, because they were successful in bringing in three factories.

Consequently, when the early inspirations for downtown restoration came to Albia, the people there looked on it with a positive attitude, perhaps not knowing for sure whether they could carry it off, but knowing that they could give it a good try. While the writer has no specific evidence to support this reasoning, it is believed that because this community had been forced in the past to cope with the problems of industrial development work, its leaders had become accustomed to thinking in

terms of community improvement. Development planning and development schemes came natural to them. This would be unlike the situation in a completely stable agricultural town where the community leadership is not forced into the realization that it must either develop and bring in new industry, or die.

How it Began

A long time before Albia business leaders ever decided to go ahead with a complete downtown restoration, a local interior decorator named Robert Bates had often considered the possibilities of improving the looks of his town that sat surrounding a town square with the county courthouse in the middle. So when the right opportunity came along he grabbed it. The first step came when Mr. Bates and a few others obtained two films from the Northern Natural Gas Company, one on renovation in Norwich, England, and the other on David City, Nebraska. They held a meeting with a small number of community leaders who saw the films and who became excited at the prospect of Albia looking as good as the two towns in the movies.

To give the idea a wider hearing, another meeting was planned in which about fifty people attended. At this meeting many people became convinced that Albia should consider doing a major CBD restoration.

Six months later another meeting was held. This time a smaller group was present along with representatives from the Northern Natural Gas Company and Iowa Southern Utilities Company. The films were shown again, then the meeting got into

more detail on how the project could be successfully implemented. It was here that a definite decision was made to go ahead with the restoration project.

During this period of promotion and "talking up" the project, the leaders obtained definite commitments to participate from seventy-five to one hundred people who represented about one-half of the businessmen on the town square.

Albia Area Improvement Association

It was felt that a new organization was needed in order to handle the administrative and financial work that would be required in order to implement the project. In response, the Albia Area Improvement Association was created as a non-profit corporation with membership open to anyone interested in the project. Of course, all businessmen were urged to join. The organization did not sell stock, because under Iowa law, a "corporation" for non-profit purposes allows that membership dues are tax deductable. In order to raise more money than a single membership from each participant would raise, many people were encouraged to purchase more than one membership, even though extra memberships are not tax deductable.

As a point of interest, the charter of the corporation did not limit the activities of the organization only to those of the downtown redevelopment project. The purposes as stated in Article IV are quite broad and do not directly refer to the downtown renovation. They simply state that their purposes are:

> a. To provide the means for obtaining benefits available under the various federal and state programs for citizens residing in the Albia, Monroe County, Iowa, area.
>
> b. To undertake any other programs and activities which would improve economic and social conditions, and educational opportunities for citizens residing in said area.[3]

What role the Albia Area Improvement Association had in the implementation of the project will become evident as the discussion proceeds.

The Project Gets Underway

Soon after the association had been formed the Iowa Southern Utilities Company decided to get involved, and in doing so gave the Albia Area Improvement Association a one thousand dollar planning grant for initial planning activity.

The next step was to invite several architectural firms to submit sketches and proposals for the central business district. Several firms responded with varying schemes for the town. Some approached the problem as a series of individual buildings, each building a separate entity. Others used a more integrated approach seeing the need for a blending of colors and treatments. The integrated treatment was finally chosen by the town and an architect was contracted to do basic sketch work. However, at this point, the talents of Robert Bates began to be used almost daily. His importance in guiding much of the actual work itself cannot be overlooked. For instance:

> Staphen M. Stoltz, a partner in the firm of Steffen-Stoltz Architects of nearby Ottumwa, following closely Mr. Bates' specifications for color selections for paints and stains, made sketches of the

> buildings as they would appear after restoration. The two men determined where shutters and awnings would be appropriate, where ornamental iron work should be placed. Colors were coordinated.[4]

Mr. Bates is an example of that unusual person who was able to lend the expertise needed by a small town like Albia to do something for which there are very few guidelines. Had Robert Bates not been on the scene, it is questionable as to whether Albia would have been able to do either a fully integrated treatment or a fully completed restoration as it has in fact done.

## The Contractor

The Albia Area Improvement Association immediately began looking for a contractor. With some outside help, they found and hired the J & R Building Restoration Co. of Des Moines, a contractor that specializes in restoration work. It was agreed that J & R would do all of the restoration work in Albia and each building owner would directly contract with J & R. However, this is where the Albia Area Improvement Association performed a special task that may have helped push the project along to completion.

Once the sketches were completed, and once the owner had agreed to negotiate a price with the contractor, the contract was prepared by the Association and taken to the store owner. If the owner felt the price was right, he could sign it on the spot. If the price, or something else was not as he liked, negotiations were held between the store owner, the Association and the contractor. The Association's participation in the contract negotiations had some distinct advantages. On one hand,

it allowed a third party to oversee the proceedings, thus protecting the store owner from unfair or discriminatory prices. Second, and most important, it gave to the Association another method of discretely pressuring reluctant businessmen into having their building fronts restored. Since the Association prepared the contract and took it to the businessman, he was under immediate pressure from an organization that represented a majority of the businesses in the downtown area. Finally, by handling the contract making, the Association was in a position to insure that good scheduling on the work was attained.

## Forces that Moved the Project

Albia was fortunate in having an ideal combination of community leadership and design skill in the community. This made it possible for the project to move steadily towards completion. These forces must have been strong in Albia, because the restoration is today remarkably complete. Almost every building in the downtown area has been worked on and restored. There is considerable consistency in the use of signs even though there is no sign ordinance. In addition, the community was able to get the cooperation of the County Government and the County population outside of Albia to pass on a bond issue to finance the cost of sandblasting the County Courthouse, which sets in the center of the square. While an epidemic of dutch elm disease hit the trees in the town square leaving it bare, plans have been made to replant the square and provide a pleasant park atmosphere.

Accomplishing changes this extensive requires a strong community spirit that sees the progress of the community as first priority. This spirit became evident once the work had begun on one of the blocks. Once business people began seeing the dramatic results that were beginning to emerge with just the completion of a few buildings, they began signing contracts in large numbers, hoping to beat the rush.

During this process, two important groups emerged, as they have in virtually all of the other survey communities to give forceful leadership to the project. They were the local newspapers and the banks. In most cases, there is one principle newspaper in a town the size of Albia. Albia is no exception. Robert Larson, editor and owner of the Albia NEWSpapers was instrumental, all along, in giving feature and editorial support to the project. His local coverage of the progress of the project helped develop a positive public attitude towards the project's importance. In addition, Mr. Larson was able to secure both newspaper and television coverage throughout central and southern Iowa. On one occasion, the Albia story got coverage in both the Sunday Kansas City Times and the Sunday New York Times. This outside newspaper coverage not only spread the work to other communities around the country; it also brought in people from several small towns in the midwest to see what had been done in Albia. This outside interest was good for the town. It gave the residents of Albia reason to feel pride in what they were doing and pride in their community. It helped insure that this project was worth it, and would not stay undone for long.

## The Banks

The banks of Albia were behind the restoration project all the way. They were particularly instrumental in two ways to see that the project was completed. First, they were able to offer low interest loans to businesses that needed them for contractor costs. Second, they were able to use these low interest loans as a way of gently prodding reluctant businessmen into going with the program. Their role was substantial.

## Customers

The impact of customer pressure on a merchant to fix up has not been measured. However, there is reason to believe that in Albia, as well as in other communities that have implemented renovation, customers had a subtle but effective way of suggesting that the store owner should do something about his store. Simply commenting to the store owner about how nice a job was done on that building across the street, or how nice the community is going to look once all of the buildings are completed, was all that was needed. Without knowing that the store owner had not yet signed his contract, the customer could assume that the store would be done, and could comment accordingly on how nice the store would look when restored.

## The County Courthouse

The work done on the county courthouse deserves some special comment. As the town took on a new glow from the bright new fronts being applied all around the square, the courthouse in the middle of the square stood in marked contrast with its

tarnished, drab, uncleaned stone. The Improvement Association was hoping that the county commissioners would take note of it and fix the building. But that didn't happen, and it took a visit of local businessmen to the county commissioners to convey the importance of a better looking county courthouse. The commissioners, while not against the idea, were not too enthused about it. There was no money in the county budget for as extensive a restoration as the courthouse would need. However, the county commission was willing to submit a proposal to the voters in the county for a bond issue of approximately $22,000 to pay the cost of the work on the courthouse. Apparently, the residents in the county saw the whole renovation project as something good and worth their support. There is often a split or rivalry between the county seat town and the outlying areas. It was not so in this case. The voters in a general election approved the bond issue by a margin of more than seventy percent. This was done without overt campaigning. The only campaign support the bond issue had was editorial support by Robert Larson in the Albia NEWSpapers.

Problem of Increased Property Valuation

Something that many businessmen are legitimately concerned about if they decide to restore the front of their stores are increased property taxes resulting from an increased valuation of their property. Robert Larson of the Albia NEWSpapers said that in Albia some of the valuations had gone up, particularly where the work had been extensive. By extensive this means that

structural changes had been made to the front of a building such as new larger windows and doors, the addition of rod iron, etc. However, he said, most of the work was considered strictly maintenance in character, and by itself should not have increased the valuations on the buildings. Mr. Larson felt an increase in valuation would probably come as readily from a natural increase in market value for any building, resulting from increased business in the town in general. The important point is that increased valuations do not come automatically with restoration. Because most of this work essentially brings a building back to good structural condition, cleans it and then adds a paint job, restoration should not be thought of as a complete remodeling of the structure. Consequently, there should be no altering of the property valuations.

Impact of the Project

At the beginning of the project, many businessmen were not certain that it could be carried out successfully. There were just too many pitfalls. Its success depended upon the cooperation and investment of so many people. So when the renovation was completed successfully, it was a matter of great self-satisfaction and self-confidence to know that they were capable of accomplishing that required such extensive cooperation. Consequently, since the project began, other things have happened that have improved the community. First, there has been a greater consciousness and interest in the appearance of the neighborhoods. People have begun to notice their neighborhoods

more, and have been thinking more about how to make them look better. The City of Albia initiated a fifty block paving program in order to improve the quality and appearance of roads. Third, there have been projects to plant new trees in the town where needed. Fourth, the industrial development program already going strong before the renovation has succeeded in bringing in even more employment opportunities to the community since the renovation began in 1967. A plastics factory that had already located in Albia before 1967, decided to carry out a major enlargement of facilities. Thirty-six thousand square feet of new floor space was added to the present structure already there. In addition another new factory came into Albia in 1971. When asked what impact the downtown renovation had on the decision of industrial firms to locate in Albia, some business leaders replied that it wasn't an overwhelming factor, but that it had helped to influence the decision to move to Albia.

*DAVID CITY, NEBRASKA*

David City, a county seat of about twenty-four hundred people in central eastern Nebraska, began its downtown restoration more than seven years ago. But it really started before then. For several years before the city decided to organize, Everett McCracken, a community leader and then mayor of David City, and a fellow downtown businessman talked often of the need for renovating the downtown. The downtown area didn't look that bad. The buildings, by and large, were in good shape, and the central business district was attractively built around a central square on which sat an elderly courthouse. But the surrounding county was losing population while no industry had come into David City to provide jobs for the young people who were finding that agriculture was demanding less labor. Like other communities of its size, David City was fighting to keep its vitality.

Consequently, the people were ready to do something in April, 1965, when representatives of Northern Natural Gas Company visited the town and gave an audio-visual presentation of downtown renovation. David City was the second town Northern Natural Gas had tried to interest in downtown restoration, a project which was to involve a considerable effort on the part of the community with generous technical assistance from Northern Natural Gas. The first town had not found the idea interesting enough to take the utility company's offer. But when the offer of technical assistance came to David City the local business leaders readily accepted the challenge. Within a short time, the David City Development Corporation was formed and put

under the supervision of the local Chamber of Commerce.

After discussing among themselves and with the representatives of Northern Natural Gas, what should be done about getting good design advice, they decided to consult with an architectural firm. The firm, Consultants in Real Estate of Omaha, offered to do the basic design work for $7.50 per front foot giving an average cost of $187.50 for a building with a twenty-five foot front. The firm was hired and did the basic design work. Care was taken to develop a standard color code for the whole downtown area so that as the work progressed over several years, the color schemes would blend well together.

In order to finance the cost of architectural services, each businessman was assessed an amount equal to $7.50 per front foot of his store.

In the course of discussions, it was decided that a whole block should be completed as a single segment to gauge the visual effect of the completed work. The north side of the square was chosen, assessments were made, and the architects drew up the sketches.

The work was offered to local contractors, but they lacked the right type of equipment. So, an out of town contractor was hired. The contractor, Vans Waterproofing Co., Inc., of Beatrice, Nebraska, was a firm that specialized in maintenance work. The firm was consequently capable of doing this kind of work.

During this period, there was some natural concern expressed from some of the businessmen on whether this big effort was

going to be worth it. Businessmen in small towns are always very cost conscious particularly when it comes to overhead costs. However, as the project began to get underway opinion changed. This has been important in almost all small town efforts. Ample editorial support by the local newspaper helped to bring public opinion around to full support of the project.

In the David City project, Northern Natural Gas turned out to be extremely important in both promoting the project and in giving technical assistance on several occasions when it was needed. Once the northside block was completed and the results of renovation were apparent, Northern Natural Gas produced a color brochure on David City for broad distribution. In addition, they produced a short color film intended for community leaders elsewhere on how it was done in David City.

It was the last part of 1965 when the first block was nearly finished. Then the problems began. Late one night in January 1966, the weather sub-zero, an explosion occurred in one of the stores that had been recently restored. Ten minutes later the largest and most devastating fire in David City's history was raging out of control and threatening to destroy the whole block that had just been restored. Fire fighting equipment from more than ten surrounding communities was brought in, but it was the next morning after almost half the block was destroyed that the fire was finally brought under control. The fire was a blow to the people who had spent so much time and energy renovating their buildings. It was a blow to the downtown in general. But all of the building owners who lost their building in the fire

decided to rebuild.

The next phase of the project was the east side of the square. It should have been simple to get the east side merchants and store owners to go ahead with the renovation, but it wasn't. The completion and impressiveness of the north side had not sufficiently moved the east side group to action. They were concerned that the cost was greater than it should be, while some did not think the effort was worth it. Others felt that the architectural fees were too high. Some, perhaps, worried that for some unknown reason fate had it in for them, and that if the renovations were completed they might be subjected to another disaster similar to the one that had hit the just completed north block of buildings. Consequently, the work on the east side went slower, and took a couple of years to complete. But with determination and urging from community leaders, the store fronts were completed.

And they were completed at an amazingly low cost. Van's Waterproofing Co., Inc., was able to do most of the buildings for an average cost of only about $500 per building in 1968. In addition, the local people were very well satisfied with the quality of Van's work.

Major Problems

Every town that sets out to implement a project is bound to encounter a series of serious problems that will have to be overcome in one way or another if the project is to be a success. David City was no exception. It appears that David City had at

least three major problems that could have slowed down and diluted the value of the overall renovation. They were: (1) disinterest of absentee landlords who owned a number of buildings in the downtown area; (2) the fact that the busy architectural firm they had hired could not always give them the kind of "on the spot" assistance they needed; and (3) that in the beginning, some of the businessmen were not convinced of the necessity and value of the project.

Several people who were former residents of David City or who had never lived there but had inherited property in the city owned buildings on the main street. Because they did not have to look at the buildings every day and accept David City as their home, these absentee owners took no pride in the community. For them, there would be no payoff for investing in a restoration of their store front. In addition, they might be forced to raise the rent on the store just to overcome the costs of restoration. Added to that was the possibility that their property taxes would go up. If these buildings were to be restored, something had to be done to either get the store owners to invest in their buildings, or find someone else to pay the cost of the restorations. Neither option was resorted to in David City. A number of local people, instead, simply bought out the absentee store owners, then proceeded to go ahead with the restorations. In one case, however, an absentee store owner who wanted to sell his store was persuaded to restore it on the chance that it would become more attractive to a prospective buyer. The store was sold within four months after it was reno-

vated. Some communities have a problem with stores that are owned by large chain operations. Chains are not always a problem, but they can be. Each one will usually have a unique store front design that is identified with that chain, or at least a street sign that is standard for the chain. For David City, however, this was not a problem, because there are no large chain stores.

Architectural Firm

The people of David City were well satisfied with the quality of work done by the architectural firm from Omaha. However, there were apparently a few complaints that the costs were too high. The cost per block averaged about $2250.00. Another problem they often encountered had to do with "on the spot" needed assistance which the architectural firm was often unable to give. This kind of problem can easily occur when some step in the process of restoring a building is not clear, or when an owner has an idea for renovation for which he would like some qualified advice. By and large, though, the work of the architectural firm was of high quality and well received by the community.

Winning Over the Reluctant Ones

Winning over reluctant store owners was a special problem in David City. Unlike some other small towns where store owners almost raced to see who could finish his store first, many people in David City had to be carefully convinced of the value of the project. As is normal for a small town, this was done pri-

marily by a few people on a personal basis with the store owners. In addition, the newspaper gave editorial support to the project and the banks offered special low interest loans to businesses that decided to renovate. In the end, the whole east block was completed.

## Impact of Renovation on Retail Business

Out of the survey of six towns, David City is the only one in which before and after studies were made of the effects on retail business. The studies were conducted by the Bureau of Business Research, University of Nebraska, and the Economic Research department of Northern Natural Gas Company of Omaha. Some of the results of these studies follow:

> A survey and economic analysis of business in David City was done in 1965, before the renovation began, and again in 1967 after the project was completed. A comparison of these two periods shows a strong upsurge of business between the two periods. In 1965, David City businesses had just over $15.7 million in sales. By 1967, one year after completion of the restoration project, sales increased to well over $22 million. Overall, the increase amounted to 42.3 percent upsurge between the two years. Some of this increase undoubtedly was the result of an extremely good crop year in 1966. However, substantial gains in food, agricultural trade and public services point up the aggressiveness of merchants in David City. Even the 2.1 percent growth in consumer trade and services represents a substantial gain, since in many rural communities this category is declining.[5]

Estimated Total Sales
David City, Nebraska
(Thousands of Dollars)

| | 1965[a] | 1967[b] | % Increase* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agricultural Trade & Services | $7,777 | $12,334 | 48.3 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Consumer Trade & Services | 2,787 | 3,046 | 2.1 |
| Personal & Professional Services | 537 | 621 | 9.6 |
| Food and Food Services | 4,214 | 5,810 | 24.3 |
| Public Services | 417 | 777 | 74.3 |
| Bank Deposits | 8,601 | 10,790 | 17.7 |

[a]Prior to the David City Project
[b]After the David City Project
*Adjusted for decreased purchasing power of the dollar (6.5%) between the two periods.[6]

## Impact on Industrial Development

Like the other small towns in the survey, David City has had some valuable industrial development. Like the other towns, the restoration of the central business district while not being perhaps decisive in the decision of the respective industries to locate there was still of major importance. On the other hand, there is some evidence to suggest that towns that have organized to do restoration work have also organized to do other things including industrial development. This appears to be the case for David City as well as for other communities in the survey. The common trend is not that restoration of the central business district brings in new industry, rather a town that organizes to do a complete restoration will often have the ability to organize a strong industrial development program.

## Other Effects of Renovation

Along with the impact of the Nebraska Community Improvement Program, the downtown restoration work has helped David City come to a heightened perception of the overall visual impact of

the community. There has been a lively interest in the rehabilitation of local churches and schools, and even private homes. During an organized spring clean-up, the local paint stores reported selling over eighteen hundred gallons of house paint. The overall appearance of the community is evidence of this kind of concern.

NEW ULM, MINNESOTA

New Ulm, at 14,000 people, is the largest town in the survey, which makes New Ulm unique among the towns in the survey both in its problems and in how the residents of the community went about a solution to the problem. Unlike most of the other communities, New Ulm a few years ago was not losing population. The town was enjoying a successful industrial expansion. What the town was not realizing was a simultaneous increase in retail business. In a study done in 1968, a resident of New Ulm, Herb Schaper, who headed a study group on business trends in New Ulm reported:

> In 1958 New Ulm had 15 1/2 percent of the business in a five-county area. In 1964 it dropped to 14.3 percent. The total growth of business in a five-county area was 21 percent from 1958 to 1963 while New Ulm grew on 11 percent.[7]

The surrounding towns of Mankato, Hutchinson, and Redwood Falls had picked up business while New Ulm has lost ground. With this happening, New Ulm downtown businessmen were concerned that new competition would come into the community and construct shopping centers on the edge of the city. They feared that the city as a whole might pick up new business, but at the sacrifice of the central business district. There was a real concern that if a shopping center did come into the community the downtown would become almost completely abandoned. With these concerns in mind, the business people of New Ulm set out to do something about it.

A group of businessmen in 1966 began meeting once a week early in the morning with the intention of coming to grips with

New Ulm's problems. Their chairman and the president of the local Chamber of Commerce lead them through several publications produced by the National Chamber of Commerce on community development. It was at these meetings that this core of people began to come to grips with and articulate what New Ulm needed. In a move to educate more people and get broader participation in a community improvement program, the group organized a large dinner meeting for February, 1966. The more than two hundred people who attended the meeting heard prepared reports on parking needs, traffic and pedestrian problems, beautification possibilities, etc. A film was shown on the City of Grand Junction, Colorado, explaining what had been done there. Because of the community's long and close ties to its German traditions, there were suggestions that a German atmosphere be maintained throughout the community improvement phase of the program. Also at the meeting, the community's banks committed themselves to supporting a program by offering improvement loans to the extent they were capable. The February meeting must have been a success, because soon afterward a group was formed to work on developing a community improvement program. It was called "Ach Ya!" short for "Activating Community Horizons". Ach Ya operated over a period of eighteen months and involved no less than three hundred people in the formulation of programs and priorities.

The work of Ach Ya could be divided into three time sequences. First, committees met, discussed, and worked on seventy-one different problems areas. The committees then wrote up results. The next phase started when people at Dr. Martin

Luther College in New Ulm volunteered to take the reports and edit them into consolidated reports. The third phase was begun when the edited reports were turned over to a committee for the determination of community priorities.

In September 1967, a larger committee meeting of Ach Ya was held in which the priorities were established and listed. They are as follows:

No. 1 To improve the utility and attractiveness of the central business district so as to substantially increase New Ulm's share of trade from the surrounding area.

No. 2 To achieve a better community through planned re-development of deteriorating areas by means of a partnership amongst local government.

No. 3 To conserve and protect land areas within the city so as to obtain the maximum economic use and value and to enhance the beauty of our community.

No. 4 To provide a library sufficient in size and adequate in quality to serve the needs of our city.

No. 5 To provide adequate facilities for the efficient operation of our city government.

No. 6 To provide adequate facilities for recreational swimming and water safety instruction.

No. 7 To improve the means of travel by motor vehicle to, from and within the city.

No. 8 To provide adequate drainage and sewage disposal facilities and to prevent the pollution of public waters.

No. 9 To provide higher educational opportunities in this community.

No. 10 To make assessment practices stable and equitable, to review charges for municipal services, and to maintain municipal revenue from tax and sources at a level consistent with essential needs.

No. 11 To maintain a vigilant and active interest in the progress of our farm neighbors as the prosperity of agriculture in this area is vitally important to New Ulm; we are interdependent on each other.

No. 12 To improve existing airport facilities to accommodate newer and larger aircraft.

No. 13 To improve New Ulm's attractiveness to visitors.[8]

The first priority of the committee was the redevelopment of the central business district. The urgency of this first priority was evident in the statement of the priorities committee when it said:

> A special program of improvement is imperative to maintaining New Ulm as a leader among communities of the state. Revitalization of the business district is important not only to businessmen but to every citizen for the maintenance of property values and consequent tax revenues, along with keeping up the employment level among other reasons.[9]

Soon after the thirteen priorities were established, the Chamber of Commerce formed a business district committee. This committee was responsible for giving the program continuity, and for the planning and scheduling of a large general meeting that took place in March, 1968.

The March meeting, which more than two hundred attended, hosted speaker Lockwood Martling, an architect with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Chicago Regional Office. He spoke and showed slides on "before and after" treatments of buildings using restoration techniques. During the meeting, Mr. Martling gave concrete advice on the importance of retaining the present architecture and avoiding modern fads such as glass bricks, garish looking signs, and metal facades for store

fronts. He further advised that the city should adopt a sign ordinance to get rid of the clutter of conflicting signs competing with one another. Finally, he invited the city government to get involved by establishing a grace period after each renovatio in which there would be no increase in property taxes.

That summer, the community geared up for action when the Business District Committee of the Chamber of Commerce was converted into a non-profit corporation for the purposes of including broad membership and conducting financial transactions. New Ulm Business Districts, Inc., or NUBD, was the new name for a non-profit corporation that had full power to participate in financial transactions. During the fall, NUBD contacted an architectural firm in Minneapolis, Inter Design, Inc., to do a preliminary study of New Ulm. This would give the members of NUBD an idea of the design scheme that Inter Design would implement if the community were to hire the firm to do the complete plan.

In January, 1969, Inter Design made its proposal to NUBD at a meeting in New Ulm and projected that the total architectural fees over a period of two years would come to approximately $6,000. NUBD liked the Inter Design plan and decided to try to raise the money to get started.

In order to get a plan that would be comprehensive and inclusive of the whole downtown area, NUBD decided that if the money could be raised, the architectural firm should be hired by NUBD to do a complete plan rather than having each business separately hire the firm. In so doing, NUBD not only assumed the

job of being a fund raiser, but also effectively became a vehicle for giving the project unity and continuity. It became the task of the active members of NUBD to convince other business people that the project was worthwhile and essential.

To apportion the cost fairly among the downtown businesses, a formula was arrived at that assessed each store either a flat fee of thirty-five dollars or at a rate of three cents per square foot of floor space, whichever was more. The first year's cost was going to be three thousand dollars, and the members of NUBD felt that at least half of that should be raised before actually hiring the firm.

While it would not be easy for them to raise fifteen hundred dollars in a short time they were surprised to find that several people who had no property in the downtown contributed to the initial fifteen hundred. The response to the assessment was good enough to raise the balance of the fifteen hundred dollars.

So in February, 1969, Inter Design was hired to draw up the first actual plans for the downtown renovation. While Inter Design worked on the plan, about a year went by before a contractor was hired.

Then in 1970, several members of NUBD made a trip to Albia, Iowa to inspect the almost completed restoration there. They were impressed not only by the striking appearance of the town, but also by the quality of the restoration work. They talked with the contractor, and soon afterwards the J & R Building Restoration Company of Des Moines was starting on its second

major restoration job: New Ulm, Minnesota.

By 1972 New Ulm had a large portion of the buildings already completed, while other projects like a planned historic trail running through the downtown were in the early stages of being implemented.

Chain Stores

For three years community leaders in New Ulm worked to first articulate their problems and needs and then develop detailed and concrete solutions. Throughout the three years the development of the program took on a remarkable form. As a community they began by defining their problems and needs. By stages, then, they continually developed approaches to solving problems. All along the way care was taken to include as many people as possible in the planning and development of the program. In 1970, when they were ready to begin the actual restoration they had already defined what kind of restoration they wanted, and how it should fit into the overall design for the community. They had hired a fine architectural firm that was capable of putting the community's ideas into the right visual form. Finally, they had succeeded in hiring a restoration contractor that had a reputation for high quality work. They had even succeeded in getting a sign ordinance passed that would require a certain degree of sign uniformity. For those businessmen who had recently hung expensive overhanging signs, the city commission included in the ordinance a provision for amortizing the signs over a period of three years. This meant that

the store owner did not have to pull his sign down immediately. He could keep it up over a period of time that would be considered reasonable for the value of the sign to be depreciated.

But with all of these accomplishments NUBD has had considerable difficulty in getting chain stores to participate in the project. This would not be so serious, except that New Ulm has a number of chain stores. The question regarding the cooperation of chain stores had been asked in all of the communities visited, but only in New Ulm, the largest community in the survey, were chains a real problem. This is apparently for two reasons. One, only New Ulm out of all of the towns in the survey has a considerable number of national chains. Second, apparently only in smaller communities can local public opinion about a retailer can be so pervasive as to seriously effect the store's business. But in a larger community the existence of a unified public opinion is much less pervasive. New Ulm has had some success in getting chain stores to spend money to fix up, but this far they have a long way to go.

If New Ulm at fourteen thousand people is encountering difficulty in getting chain stores to work with the community, there is reason to believe that communities larger than New Ulm would experience even more serious problems. For instance in a city of fifty thousand people most new chain stores will want to locate in a shopping center on the edge of a city, primarily because of the availability of land. With the growing dominance of "discount center" or warehouse type of stores such as K-Mart, Woolco, and Arlans, the space required for this marketing strat-

egy would be extremely difficult to obtain in the central business district. The land costs would be completely out of reach. Since many of the traditional chains that occupy building space in the old central business districts have themselves been going into this newer form of marketing they are probably going to be very reluctant to spend money on a store that they feel is already inefficient and outdated. Developing strategies that allow the central business district to cope with this phenomenon are beyond the scope of this report, but the problem deserves further research. If larger cities are to successfully renovate the central business districts, they will have to somehow come to grips with the realities of modern marketing technology that most traditional central business districts do not recognize.

Impact of Renovation on the City

It is extremely difficult to gauge the impact of the downtown restoration on the city. It is difficult for many reasons, among them because the renovation is not complete yet, nor are many of the other plans such as the Historic Trail completed. In addition, no impact market studies have been carried on. Some of the businessmen commented that they have seen an increase in retail business, but not enough of these comments were collected to insure that this trend would hold up. However, there is reason to suspect that the restorations which are already complete are having a positive impact on the business of the downtown area. The visual impact of the area is considerably better than it was before the renovations began.

Another difficulty in gauging the impact of the renovation has to do with community organization. Usually community leaders respond to the question about impact in a way that points up how the renovation has sparked new interest in the overall beautification of the community. The renovation in New Ulm may have also done this. More likely, though, in New Ulm the renovation has more accurately 'enhanced' the interest in community beautification. Even before the renovation was underway New Ulm had a very active community. This activity was of course demonstrated in the way the community was able to methodically organize a full community improvement program of which the downtown renovation was a first priority.

The whole program in New Ulm has been carried on for the last several years with almost textbook methodology attesting to the strong and articulate leadership of New Ulm. Obviously, New Ulm has benefited from the renovation in many ways. But it's simply more difficult in a town of this size with its history of considerable community activity to gauge the effects at least so far.

## Community Leaders

There appears to have been broadly based community leadership in New Ulm. The number of committees that actually produced results in 1967 was considerable. The core of twenty people who met early in the morning once a week in 1967 indicates the leadership core was fairly large. The over two hundred turnouts at general meetings held between 1967 and 1970 indicate a large

number of people who had more than passing interest in the project.

Like the other communities in the survey, the local banks and newspaper gave strong support to the project from its inception. Donald Gollnast, senior vice president of the Citizen's State Bank, has been one of the principle leaders from the very beginning of the project. In 1967, when the twenty people began meeting in the mornings Mr. Gollnast was the president of the Chamber of Commerce and chairman of that group. When the Business District Committee was formed under the Chamber, Mr. Gollnast was chairman of that group. When NUBD was established, Mr. Gollnast was its first president. Throughout the period of this project he and other bankers in New Ulm have accepted continual responsibility for keeping the continuity and momentum of the project going.

The newspaper, the New Ulm Daily Journal, has given the renovation project continual feature and editorial support. Again, as in the other communities, the newspaper was very important in helping to bring about public support for the project.

OBERLIN, KANSAS

Oberlin, Kansas is a town of about twenty-five hundred that serves as the county seat for Decatur County in northwest Kansas. It is in an area that has been experiencing an out-migration of people since the turn of the century and continues in that trend today. That is except Oberlin. Oberlin, with its wide streets and functional one story buildings looks more prosperous today than at any time in the past. For being a community in the center of a county that has a population of less than six thousand people Oberlin has done well for itself. It shares a television station with McCook, Nebraska, the nearest community larger than Oberlin. It has a local industry that manufactures mobile homes. It has a superior school system and a business district that has undergone an interesting renovation. In addition, today Oberlin has just built, through the investment of towns people and farmers living in the surrounding county, an enormous feed lot capable of handling more than forty thousand head of cattle per year.

Oberlin is a contradiction to the image of the small town in an area losing population. Not only has Oberlin maintained itself, but it has become strong again both as a trade and an industrial center.

The main concern in this report though is the series of events that led up to the completion of the downtown renovation. In many ways the renovation is not yet complete. What has been done is something that is appropriate for a town in western Kansas, but unneeded in a community such as Albia, Iowa. That's

the construction of a continuous canopy for the full length of the main street on both sides covering the whole sidewalk. Ball shaped street lights are mounted on the canopy rather close together for the full length of the street. The effect of these lights that are mounted fairly close to the ground is pleasing during the daytime and truly brilliant at night.

The use of a continuous canopy covering the sidewalks is appropriate for a western Kansas town for at least two reasons. One, the architecture of buildings in most western Kansas towns is not distinctive. Unlike small towns in eastern Kansas, which have many two story brick structures with interesting cornice work and sometimes elaborate detail, buildings in western Kansas tend to be of one story, rectangular in shape, and usually without any detail built into the front facade. Simply preserving and highlighting the facade is not always enough. Something is needed to tie the downtown area together to make it more interesting. The other reason is that Kansas tends to be very hot in the summer. The intensity of the sun alone is much greater than it is just one hundred miles north. The canopy serves to protect the shopper from the heat of the sun and the glare of what would be a very bright sidewalk. But it wasn't for these reasons alone, that the canopy was constructed.

## Inspiration

Several years ago, a now deceased newspaper publisher from Oberlin named Ernest Woodward went to a professional meeting in St. Thomas, Ontario, where he saw a town that had been complete-

ly restored by cleaning and highlighting of the existing architecture. He was so impressed with the town that he wrote an editorial on it when he returned to Oberlin and talked it up with the business people in town. He must have stirred some interest, because not long afterwards the Chamber of Commerce hired an architect to do some drawings and sketch work of the downtown area. For some reason, the people were not too happy with the architect's ideas and the plan he proposed was never implemented. Sometime during this period the newspaper in Oberlin was taken over by Howard Kessinger, a young graduate of Kansas State University, who took up where Ernest Woodward left off in promoting a revitalization of the downtown area.

In another attempt to explore downtown development strategies, the Chamber contacted the Kansas Agricultural Extension service for assistance. The extension people responded by visiting Oberlin and reviewing with them the elements of a community improvement program. They also suggested that the business people in Oberlin contact the Department of Regional and Community Planning at Kansas State University for architectural assistance.

The people in the planning department at Kansas State were interested and were able to arrange for an urban design class under Professor Gene McGraw to do some design work for the city. While this exercise was useful and provided some insight into what might be done in Oberlin, the faculty felt that a more detailed and in-depth project was needed. Professor Vernon Deines, head of the department, was able to obtain a small

amount of money allowing a group of graduate students in planning to take the project on with an objective of completing a detailed and integrated design for Oberlin. Professor Ray Weisenburger was named project coordinator, and in 1967 the group went to work.

For Oberlin and for the team from Kansas State University this was a new and different kind of project. There were few guidelines to go by, so a great deal of consultation between the team and the business people of Oberlin was required. Finally the concepts were agreed upon, and the planners went to work on the design of a completely new environment for the central business district. It was to consist of a complete three dimensional mall on the main street and was to encompass various artifacts, trees, areas to sit, and a small amphitheater for performing events. The sidewalks were to be covered by a continuous wooden canopy designed in western style and lighted with ball shaped lights. The stores were to have complete face-lifting treatments that would give the stores architectural distinctiveness, and yet retain a consistency that would exhibit a western flavor. As it turned out the ideas were good, the designs of a high quality, but the projected price would have been much too high. The community hesitated.

Despite the high price, there was still a desire to make changes in the downtown area and many people began to look forward to fixing up their storefronts. That's when the next big problem emerged.

## The Contractor

The Chamber of Commerce in its discussions of the project came to the conclusion that it would be best to have all work done by local contractors. This seemed like a reasonable policy at the time. After all, Oberlin did have skilled contractors who were fully capable of doing the work. When contacted about the possibility of doing the work, however, it turned out that the local contractors were mainly involved in building housing and other forms of new construction. They were, by and large, not interested in doing restoration work.

When finally one of the contractors did decide to do some restoration work, it was hard to get the firm at any specified time except when there were no houses to build. When the contractor did finally do some restoration work, it was not considered by some to be "up to par". After a couple of stores had been worked on, the project temporarily came to a halt.

## The Canopy

With all of the problems the Oberlin business people had had so far with designs and contractors, they wanted to go ahead with some of the overall restoration work. They decided in local meetings of the Chamber of Commerce to begin work as soon as possible on the canopy. Doing this would require some kind of shared means of financing. Because the canopy would be built on public property, they went to the city council for help. The council responded by passing a bond issue to finance the cost of the canopy. The method of raising the needed rene-

nue was to be a frontage assessment of the property owners on Main Street. The total cost as contracted out was forty-seven thousand dollars.

The only design difference between the canopy contracted for and the one proposed by the KSU planning team was the material to be used. The KSU planning team had suggested the use of wood in order to save money and give an authentic western look to the structure. However, it turned out that a materials supplier was able to give a lower bid for the use of steel. Consequently, steel was chosen as the primary construction material.

So Oberlin got its canopy and new lighting to go with it.

This is mostly what has been done to the main street of Oberlin. The town has a new look even though most of the buildings themselves have not been fixed up yet, nor has a mall been constructed. What has happened though is that today there is a new pride in Oberlin. This pride is evidenced by a great deal of inside remodeling of stores. In addition, store owners and downtown merchants are still very interested in completing the job. They have expressed an interest in further design assistance, and have expressed a willingness, in many cases, to hire contractors who can and will do the work even if this means hiring out of town.

## Countywide Chamber of Commerce

The renovation work that has taken place in Oberlin has to a considerable extent been implemented through the local Chamber

of Commerce. Many of the meetings that took place regarding renovation were Chamber meetings, and many of the ideas for doing things came directly out of this civic organization. To broaden the base of the organization and make it more effective as an areawide group, instead of simply a group representing the business people of Oberlin, the local Chamber has renamed itself and has rewritten its charter to become an organization that represents the whole county. It is now called the Decatur County Chamber of Commerce and includes a great deal of representation from farmers in the area. In many ways, this is natural and healthy. Oberlin and its surrounding area are mutually dependent on the agricultural economic base that provides the major share of the income to the area. Consequently, the concerns of the townspeople are the same concerns of the farmers in the area. How to maintain and increase the value of the agricultural base in the area.

The impact of the countywide Chamber has been nothing short of dramatic. Last year a few people in Oberlin visited a thriving town in Texas called Hereford. Not surprisingly, the town is heavily involved in the work of producing cattle. In particular, Hereford, Texas is in the business of feed lot cattle production, and has profited handsomely from it. The group from Oberlin came back so impressed that they organized a whole bus load of people to go to Hereford and witness what they had seen. This group, partially organized through the Decatur County Chamber of Commerce, included both townspeople and farmers from the surrounding county. The group came back from Hereford as im-

pressed and enthusiastic as the first group.

It was then when things really began to happen. Because the Chamber was fully representative of people throughout the county, the discussion of how Oberlin and the surrounding area might duplicate what has taken place in Hereford did not scare the farmers. While these farmers had been in Hereford, they had had the opportunity to talk with other farmers from the Hereford area, and they found out that these farmers had profited enormously from feed lots there. When discussions seriously began on the possibility of constructing a large feed lot in Oberlin, there was a broad agreement among both townspeople and farmers that it was a good idea.

Soon there was general agreement that a feed lot should be built. A new corporation was formed and stock was sold to raise the needed capital. Once stock sales had begun it took about two weeks to raise the necessary two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The stock was purchased by people from all over the county. The feed lot truly took on the character of being an areawide project. Within six months, the feed lot was constructed and the first small calves were on their way to becoming the first cattle through a production operation that would be handling more than forty thousand head of cattle per year.

## Impact of Downtown Renovation and Feed Lot

Both the extensive work done in the central business district of Oberlin and the construction of the new feed lot were accomplished by effective leadership in the community, operating

through the Chamber of Commerce with persistent support in feature stories and editorials by the newspaper editor, Howard Kessinger. The atmosphere for action in Oberlin is positive. People there now know that progress is possible.

A few years ago a study was made of the economic structure of Oberlin and Decatur County to determine what would happen there in the future if nothing were done to change things. The conclusion was, that unless the area found ways of diversifying its economy, particularly in the area of agra-business, it would continue to suffer a countywide decline in population. Something was done, and now Oberlin is a small boom town enjoying a new prosperity and a new future potential.

LINDSBORG, KANSAS

Up to 1965, Lindsborg, Kansas was a prosperous community in central Kansas that depended primarily upon local agriculture for support. In addition to agriculture, Lindsborg was located along a major highway going north and south between Salina and Wichita. Trade in the form of gasoline sales, restaurant, and motel trade added to the community's income. A small college provided both a youth element in the community plus income from both faculty and students on the campus. Finally, Lindsborg received considerable economic benefit from the presence of Schilling Air Force Base about fifteen miles away in Salina. Some of the military people stationed at Schilling chose to commute to work every day from their homes in Lindsborg. More importantly, several long time Lindsborg residents were civilian Department of Air Force employees who had been commuting for years to the large Air Force Base in Salina, but preferring to live in Lindsborg.

Then in 1965, this town of Scandinavian ancestry suffered a heavy blow to its economy and its people when, in an economy move, Schilling Air Force Base was completely closed down. Immediately, those people who were employed by the Department of the Air Force who wanted to keep their jobs had to move to wherever the Air Force could use them. The town lost population, it lost retail sales, housing construction dropped off, and the town went into temporary economic decline.

That's when the community became aware that they would have to do something about saving their community from further

decline. This would not be easy because new shopping centers had been built in Salina which drew heavily on local retail sales. The task of revitalizing the community to make it competitive with the larger trade centers was a matter of considerable concern to the merchants of Lindsborg.

Almost by chance, a resident of the community named Anton Pearson, who was a man of Swedish descent and a woodcarver, got together with some other people and decided to add some small trees to the central business district. They built large plant boxes, all of the same design, and put small carefully trimmed evergreen trees in them. They were placed every thirty feet along the sidewalks in the downtown area. This little project aroused the interest of many people, and they began to talk of what might be done on a larger scale to fix up the downtown.

Pearson again came up with some original inspiration suggesting that some modifications with a Swedish flavor, be added to the downtown store fronts. It caught on. Several people hired Pearson to design and construct some new facades that would enhance the looks of their stores.

During this period, people in Lindsborg wanted to also grapple with the broader problems of economic development. Two dinner meetings were sponsored and held by the banks in the community in an effort to bring out new ideas and develop more commitment from local people for economic development. To show that they cared, both banks offered loans to store owners for restoration at reduced rates. Most store owners did not need the loans, but a few actually did take up the offer.

During this period, the community did not form any new organizations or corporations to work specifically on downtown renovation and economic development. Community activity thus far had been carried on by interested individuals, the Chamber of Commerce, and a group called the Community Coordinating Council. This group was a central organization of all local organizations in the community, and its principle responsibility was the planning and coordinating of "Svensk Hillingsfest," a festival held every two years to pay tribute to the Swedish ancestry of the community.

## Technical Assistance

Many people felt the community could use technical help in more effectively dealing with their economic and community problems. As a consequence, the Extension Service at Kansas State University was contacted. The Extension people responded and came to Lindsborg where several meetings were held in which the potentials for agra-business, education, tourism and other things were discussed. The Extension people provided some valuable help but also may have contributed to some difficulties for the town.

## Children's Clothing Store

The Extension Service advised the Lindsborg people that they should do some market research in their community to find out what was needed in order to make the central business district more attractive and useful to consumers. To conduct this research, Extension advised that a questionnaire be constructed and sent to a sample of local townspeople and rural people in

the Lindsborg area. The people in Lindsborg thought this to be a good idea, and requested assistance from the Extension Service on putting it together. Extension was reluctant to do so, however, and advised that the questionnaire should be done by local people.

After some amount of difficulty, the questionnaire was completed and sent out. The rate of return was good and should have represented a good and reliable sample of opinion. But interestingly, one item that stood out as a retail deficiency of the town had to do with the need for a children's retail clothing store. Under the item on the questionnaire that asked, "what kind of stores does this community need most right now?", the response that marked "children's clothing store" was overwhelming. Seeing the results of this, a clothing store owner in the town decided to open another store across the street that would specialize in children's clothing. The owner did open the store. It stayed open for a year and a half, then closed for lack of business. The store, under competent management, had almost no business. While this local store when it was open, was not able to carry the variety of merchandise that some large department stores could in Salina, it should still have been a success. Virtually all of the stores in Lindsborg could not afford to carry an inventory as large as a comparable store in a larger community, yet they have survived and made money. What had gone wrong?

Looking back on the episode Gene Larson, a banker and community leader in Lindsborg who had participated in the effort

around the market survey, felt that because they had made some mistakes in administering the survey it was probable that several people knew the contents of it before it was ever sent out. Consequently, one or two people who may have had a lot of neighbors, or perhaps been members of some womens' groups could have urged several women to mention the need for a children's clothing store when they received their questionnaire in the mail. Apparently, this is exactly what happened. Had the responses been strictly individual and impulsive as they should have been on this kind of questionnaire they may have reflected an accurate attitude towards the children's clothing stores. But even a small suggestion from a few people that such a store was needed may have been enough to get many women to mention the item while they themselves were not all that interested in the idea.

This event points to the need for careful assistance to communities when undertaking something with as many potential pitfalls as an attitudinal survey.

## Design Assistance From Students

More recently, contact was made with the Department of Regional and Community Planning at Kansas State University. Professor Ray Weisenburger later went to Lindsborg to talk with the community leaders and present a slide show on some of the treatments that have been successful in other communities in the midwest. In addition, Professor Weisenburger was able to arrange some design assistance for the community by having an urban design class at the university use Lindsborg as their

class design problem.

The next semester the instructor and students made several visits to Lindsborg to talk to local residents, take hundreds of slides, and generally get an overall impression of the flavor of the community. They went back to the University and began to work out a large variety of design alternatives. The designs were completed and a meeting with business people in Lindsborg was arranged for the purpose of presenting the completed designs. The meeting was held, and many interesting designs were presented, but the Lindsborg residents came away from the meeting still without a concrete resolve on what they wanted. One alternative that they did not want, because of its possible costs, was a mall. This proposal cooled a few people to the whole program and scared them into concern that the city was going to get itself into deep debt if it were to spend as much money as would be needed for the construction of a mall.

Even though the students had spent a great deal of time producing the various designs the overall effect was one of confusion and frustration. The merchants did not know what to do, and unfortunately, were probably suspect of the student designs. It appears that the businessmen saw the designs as interesting, but unreliable, because they were done by students, and because some of the design alternatives were just too far out for the community.

## Preservation of the Swedish Culture

Something that was mentioned as important during the inter-

view in Lindsborg was the need to maintain "authentic Swedish tradition" in the community. This is particularly important when it comes to the implementation of an urban design for the central business district. The people of Lindsborg want it to reflect a cultural tradition, and not be simply a fix-up job. To do it right then, it would be necessary for the architect doing the basic sketch work to thoroughly research both the new and the old architecture from this tradition, then set out to offer designs that are authentic representation of the tradition.

Lindsborg Today

Lindsborg has made considerable progress in fixing up its downtown area. But even as its community leaders would be ready to admit, the town is still incomplete. There are things that still need to be done. The awareness of this is stronger now than at any time in the past. Not too long ago with the completion of Interestate 35 between Salina and Wichita, Lindsborg, which is a couple miles off the Interstate, lost a great deal of business that once came to it from the traffic that used to travel Kansas Highway 81, then the main route between Salina and Wichita. Today, the business people in Lindsborg know more than ever before that they must find ways of maintaining a stable economic base for the town, and they must find a way to at least compete with the larger cities for a stable share of the retail purchases in the Lindsborg area.

Lindsborg today appears closer than ever before to knowing

what it wants to do. What it appears to need at present is specific assistance on developing a downtown plan of restoration that would be within a Swedish architectural tradition, yet not overly expensive. At that point the community may well be able to move forward and begin to regain its economic security.

# CHAPTER 3

## ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This chapter is essentially a categorical analysis of the findings reported in the last chapter. This analysis represents both the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods employed. As will be evident, the analysis will make many tentative judgements about many elements of CBD restoration. This is the essential strength of case analysis. It provides the means of looking at a situation with a broad focus. In this situation the many factors that can effect the outcome of a project are synthesized into a broad integral analysis.

On the other hand, case method research does not provide as well for careful, in-depth, inductive findings. This means that one or some of the judgements made in this chapter could be incorrect. In this study it is possible that the wrong questions were asked, and the wrong conclusions sought after. It is difficult to avoid the possibility of error without sacrificing the essential value of the findings. Consequently, the reader should know that while chance for error in judgements in the chapter are real, it was necessary to take this chance in order to obtain a broader understanding of CBD restoration.

Included at the end of this chapter is a table of significant comparisons between the communities in the study. The more important comparisons and the ones for which the most information was available are also covered in the text of this chapter.

While the results stated in this chapter might provide some

ideas for the researcher, this analysis is primarily directed towards the community development practitioner. It is hoped that he will find useful and practical ideas in this chapter that will, in a small way, help make it possible for more communities to successfully complete CBD restorations in the future.

Community Concern Before Restoration

In all of the communities surveyed the people interviewed shared a long term concern for the future of their communities. In all of the communities except New Ulm, the concern centered on the adverse effects of a declining county population surrounding each town. The community leaders spoke of the effects in terms of lost retail business, a lack of jobs for young people and general deterioration of the communities as a whole. These observations were consistently found in all four of the smaller communities in the study. Community leaders even expressed concern for the very survival of their communities in the face of a declining economic base and competition from larger and stronger communities.

In New Ulm, the problems were defined differently. New Ulm has been growing, but its central business district was not. Consequently, business people were concerned about the possible ill effects of a declining business district within a growing town. At the same time other people within the community were concerned about saving the gentle beauty of this community so rich in its historical position. Growth on the edges of the

community if not properly controlled threatened to blight several neighborhoods of the community.

In all of the communities there had not only been a recognition of problems but also organized efforts to cope with them. These efforts resulted in such things as historical preservation programs, industrial development programs, community improvement programs and long-term educational programs on community development. It appears that in each of these communities the stage had been set for central business district restoration. When the idea for it was presented to community leaders in these towns, the reaction was positive enough to allow them to move ahead with it. (See Table One, No. 10.)

## Organization, Leadership, and Professional Assistance

### Local Organizing Skill

It is not clear what relationship exists between the ability of local leaders to organize and their ability to complete a downtown restoration. While there were obvious organizing skills required to implement the restorations in the five towns surveyed, it is not known whether such skills had to be above what is ordinarily found in similar size communities. Assessment of the relative quality of leadership required to carry out downtown restoration was completely beyond the scope of this study. It would, however, be valuable to do research to determine exactly what qualities are needed for effective local organizing. Such information could be used for designing improved training workshops for small town leaders.

It is also not clear whether the experience of implementing a downtown restoration improves the organizing abilities of local leaders. Some of the comments made by local leaders interviewed tended to indicate that it does. Certainly it increases the self confidence of community leaders. Having accomplished a major project in the downtown restoration, most of the community leaders interviewed were already involved in other activities directed towards community improvement.

Broad Community Participation

In general, broad community participation had a positive impact on the progress of the projects in the survey. Where there was broad community participation there was usually interest in doing a variety of other things to improve the community. People almost always were willing to pass bond assessments for such things as improved streets, new street lighting and street plantings.

The subject of community participation appears to be very important in determining the ability of a community to carry out a major project. While it was beyond the scope of this study to dig very deep into breath of participation in the communities surveyed, the community leaders interviewed left the impression that it contributed greatly to the successes in their respective communities. In the instances in which difficulty was experienced in completing the downtown restoration, the lack of total community unity appeared to figure into the problems.

This area deserves considerable research.

Bankers and Newspaper Editors

As a group, bank owners or employees, and newspaper editors were very involved in downtown restoration. In all of the communities involved, bankers and newspaper editors were strong supporters of downtown restoration. Naturally, the health of a bank is tied to the health of the community as a whole, and in all cases in the survey, where bankers were interviewed, bankers were deeply involved in the affairs of their communities. They apparently saw banking as a central function in the community and completely dependent on the future of the community. They always made restoration loans available to other business people who needed them, and they made them at very low interest rates. In addition, they were among the first to fix up their own buildings.

The newspaper editor was often the person who kept the issue alive and growing at every opportunity. In most of the communities in the survey, feature and editorial support was extensive. Because newspaper circulation often went well out into the area surrounding the community, the newspaper helped to spur further interest from people in other towns. (See Table One, No. 13 and 14.)

Special Individuals

In all of the communities surveyed there was a core of community leaders who were strongly committed to completing the downtown restorations. While they had little past guidance to work from, they nevertheless pushed their communities to do

something new. It is not certain whether leadership of the quality found in the communities surveyed will be required in the future when the methods and techniques of downtown restoration become better understood.

Utility Companies

In all of the surveyed communities, utility companies were involved, or at least interested in downtown restorations. In a couple of the communities, the utility companies serving the towns gave grants to help in the initial planning. They also provided technical assistance on several occasions. Northern Natural Gas Company has produced films on small town restoration which have been distributed for showing in literally hundreds of communities. (See Table One, No. 12.)

University Involvement

University extension services, planning departments, and business administration departments have in several instances been involved in small town development for several years. In three of the towns surveyed there was college or university involvement somewhere along the way.

In New Ulm the involvement came in the goal formulation stage when faculty from St. Olafs College, which is located in New Ulm, assisted community leaders in editing the various goal statements that had been produced.

In Oberlin, there was considerable involvement in the design phase by the Planning Department of Kansas State University. A group of faculty and students worked for about two

years completing designs for the restoration of Oberlin's central business district. At the time the design work began in 1967 the student designers took a fairly free hand in developing extensive restoration plans for the downtown. Many of these plans were well adapted for small town use. They concentrated upon restoration of the building fronts while adding new street lighting, plus a single long canopy over the sidewalks. In addition, they designed and proposed the construction of a downtown mall. This is where the design work became financially uneconomical. The cost of constructing the kind of mall that was proposed would have been so high as to be impossible.

In Lindsborg the involvement of the KSU Cooperative Extension Service has already been discussed in the section on Lindsborg. However, it is worth repeating the observation that a university will often go into a project such as this without a clearly defined understanding of how to assist a community. The involvement of both the Extension Service and the College of Architecture serve to emphasize this point.

However, a good example of assistance to small towns from the university is the Small Town Redevelopment Project administered by the Department of Regional and Community Planning at Kansas State University. The team working on the project is presently engaged in assistance to five communities in Kansas with particular emphasis on providing sketch and design work for the restoration of the central business districts of these towns. The emphasis in the design work is on providing designs that are comprehensive, yet practical and inexpensive to carry

out. The local community relates well to this approach as opposed to the more reserved attitude other communities have taken towards the work of urban design classes. (See Table One, No. 15.)

Community Development Corporation

Three of the five communities formed and used community development corporations. In all three cases the Community Development Corporations were formed specifically for the purpose of implementing a downtown restoration. In the cases of Oberlin and Lindsborg other means of organizing were employed. In Oberlin the Chamber of Commerce was the organization primarily responsible for implementation of restoration. It conducted public meetings and provided financing to assist the KSU design team defray expenses. In Lindsborg the restoration work was primarily the result of the inspiration and work of a few people. The overall effort never really got organized, nor was any kind of comprehensive design plan or overall strategy developed.

Comparing the success of the three towns that did have community development corporations with the more relative success in Oberlin and Lindsborg, it appears that the presence of a special corporation to facilitate the process of downtown restoration was part of the reason for this success. While there were many forces that contributed to successful restoration in all of the towns surveyed, the community development corporation appeared to be instrumental in the three towns that used them.

After seeing how the community development corporations

worked in the towns surveyed, it appears that the CDC assists restoration in several ways:

First, it is a public symbol of single minded community effort. Local people have an organization to look to which they can hold responsible for the project. It is a way of recognizing that the community as a whole has committed itself to downtown renewal, rather than being seen as some project being done by a few businessmen. Second, it gives people a vehicle for consolidating and bringing together their commitments. This is to mean that a community project simply doesn't get done. There must be an organization in which people can meet and exchange ideas on what needs to be done. The community corporation is just such an organization. Third, it's an effective vehicle for putting pressure on reluctant businessmen to get involved. If the "slow ones" see that almost everyone else is involved and expecting one hundred percent participation, they will feel more welcome into the effort. At the same time, they will know that the other businessmen "expect" them to participate for the good of the community. Fourth, the community corporation is also a good vehicle for keeping the "eager" ones from going ahead with restoration work before a plan is completed. Fifth, it often serves as an administrative mechanism for taking care of project scheduling, keeping track of funds, preparing work contracts, etc. Sixth, it serves as a fund raising organization. This is one of the corporation's chief responsibilities. In the communities surveyed, several approaches were used in fairly assessing businesses for their share of the architectural design

costs. In one case, the corporation set up a membership fee which was tax deductable. This fee helped pay the design costs. In another community, each business member of the corporation was assessed a fee based on the number of square feet in the store. In both of these communities the architectural firm was hired and paid by the corporation. In another community, the corporation raised money by selling memberships. The funds were used for some overall design expenses, but in this case each merchant had to directly pay the architectural firm for design work on his building. By hiring the architectural firm, the community corporation can insure that every building in the central business district is sketched. This is important because it gives a forelook at how the community will look once completed, and is evidence of the importance of completing the whole central business district. Alan Nelson, an illustrator from Red Oak, Iowa, who does basic design and sketch work for the restoration of central business districts has said that some communities that do not have community corporations do not organize adequately to get a complete sketch plan for the whole downtown area. In such cases things tend not to get done, and the community ends up with only half a job.

Seventh, it helps to insure that each merchant will get a fair deal from the contractor. In one community, each contract was gone over by members of the corporation and the contractor before it was taken to the merchant. In so doing, the community corporation was able to insure that the merchant was getting a fair deal, and at the same time insure that those merchants who

were procrastinating in doing their fair share were "taken care of". Eighth, the community development corporation acts as a continuing forum for people to air their new ideas for community improvement. It's not unusual that once the process of actual restoration has begun in a community, and residents can see the effect in real life, they begin to get ideas on how other things in the community can be made to look better. The corporation provides an outlet for these ideas.

The conclusion of this study is that any community that plans a downtown restoration should form a community corporation, giving it broad responsibility to include the hiring and financing of all design work plus the job of finding and negotiating with a suitable contractor. (See Table One, No. 3.)

## Contracting and Design

### The Contractor

Three of the five communities hired contractors that specialize in restoration work. David City hired Van's Waterproofing of Beatrice, Nebraska, while both Albia and New Ulm hired J & R Building Restoration Company of Des Moines. Those three communities hired the contractors to do all of the work, while Lindsborg and Oberlin relied upon local contractors. Generally, the quality of work done by the specialized contractors was of a higher quality than that done by local contractors. The specialized contractors demonstrated an all around high level of competence in their work while the work done by local contractors varied.

Where work done by local contractors was of lower quality than it should have been, it was usually due to a lack of experience in the field of renovation work. In other towns, besides the towns in the survey, it is known that some renovation attempts have been carried out by local contractors and painters without taking care of proper maintenance requirements. Not surprisingly, it doesn't take a very critical eye to see the difference. Where the building hasn't been properly cleaned before being painted, or where repairs have not been made to cracks and tarnishes, the once-over with the paint brush is just not enough.

But in those cases where the local community corporation wants to save money and at the same time employ mostly local contractors, there may be a way this can be done while maintaining high quality workmanship. It would require good organization and administration on the part of the community corporation, but the results could well justify the additional effort. Normally, a merchant gives a sketch plan to the contractor and asks for an estimate for the cost of the work. The contractor will first do a careful building condition survey, then suggest needed repairs before doing anything else. This may include fixing a chimney, patching a cracked wall, replacing some bad brick, and it might also include a complete sandblasting and tuck-pointing job. The next step is the painting, if any, and finally the installation of any new items such as shutters, rough iron, signs, lettering, etc. In most restoration jobs there are at least four different stages: (1) cleaning, (2) re-

pair, (3) painting, and (4) installation of additional items.

If the community corporation could get strong cooperation from its members it could first of all determine from the analysis of the architectural firm what buildings need maintenance work and how much. In addition, it could determine how many of the buildings need sandblasting and tuckpointing. Then if cooperation could be gotten from all of the store owners involved, the community corporation could hire a local or near local sandblasting firm to do all of the designated buildings at one time.

The next step would be the purchase of paint and sealer. Through a local dealer, the corporation might be able to purchase a large lot of paint and sealer at wholesale prices thus saving money on the purchase price. Since the amount of paint alone for a town of five thousand people would probably exceed two thousand gallons, it would be possible to get low bulk prices.

The next step would be to hire local painters to apply the sealers and paints according to the sketch plans. For small one story buildings, the owner himself might be able to do the work. He might otherwise be able to hire some college or high school youth during summer vacation to do the work. The community corporation could have a file of local people who could be willing to do the work at reasonable prices.

The next step would be the purchase of materials such as shutters, rough iron and awnings. Again the community corporation could order this material wholesale and save money.

Finally, local carpenters could be hired to complete this final phase of adding the materials to the building.

This approach could have many pitfalls and the problems might seem never ending, but for the community that strongly feels that the work should be done by local people, this approach might work. Finally, if a community hopes to find a renovation contractor to do the work within a reasonable time, it may be very difficult. Many towns today have not been able to start the work, because of a shortage of renovation contractors. Certainly, there is a good chance that in the future there will be more such firms, but for the present there seems to be an acute shortage. (See Table One, No. 4.)

Design Costs

The design costs for basic sketch work and renderings of building fronts varied enormously from community to community. There was also no consistent pattern of services rendered from community to community. Where university teams prepared the sketch work the production varied from carefully worked out plans to design projects by architecture design classes in which a number of varied designs were completed. In the case of Albia, an architect was hired, but was assisted by Robert Bates, a local interior decorator. In David City, the cost for store front design ran a standard $2,250 per block, while in New Ulm, the cost of an initial two-year preliminary design study ran $6,000. In other communities, the store front designs have been completed for as little as $500 per block.

Financing of design costs was also undertaken in several different ways. In some cases a large portion of the design costs were borne by grants from large utility companies, such as Iowa Southern Utilities. In other cases the university design work was provided free of cost. In Oberlin, the design costs were paid for by the Chamber of Commerce. In one community funds were raised through the purchase of memberships in the development corporation. In another, assessments were levied against each store owner by the development corporation according to the number of front feet per store. In yet another, assessments were levied by the development corporation according to the number of square feet per store.

In most of the communities surveyed a combination of methods were used to raise the necessary funds to pay for the design work. Albia, for instance, raised the necessary money through both a grant from Iowa Southern Utilities and through the sale of memberships in the Albia Area Improvement Association.

Financing of design work does not appear to have been a serious problem for the communities surveyed. This does not mean that raising the necessary funds did not take a lot of work. In most cases it did. From the experience of the five communities in the survey it could be concluded though that any number of financing arrangements could be adopted with success by other communities. (See Table One, No. 7 and No. 8.)

## Impact on Communities

### Impact on Local Residents

In all of the communities visited, the efforts made towards restoration of the central business district had the effect of increasing local residents perception of how their community actually looks and how it should look. In addition, the efforts at restoration have helped to make people more aware of their own history and traditions and the importance of preserving them. In almost all of the communities surveyed, downtown restoration was only one of several projects that were underway to improve the quality of life in the community. Very often these programs were a part of state community involvement programs, such as the Kansas Pride Program.

### Impact on Retail Sales

There is reason to believe that downtown restoration does have a positive effect on retail sales. This was shown to be the case in David City, Nebraska, where before and after research was done. However, this kind of market research was not done in the other communities in the survey. When asked about the impact on sales, most of the respondents felt that there had been an increase, but no one had any precise figures.

Research on this is needed. If high quality and reliable research were conducted, the results might help encourage retail businessmen in small towns to participate in downtown restoration. If the results of such research were generally negative, small business owners could still benefit from more modest pro-

grams of downtown restoration which would be implemented primarily for the purpose of community betterment. (See Table One, No. 16.)

Impact on Prospective Industries

It is difficult to make any hard judgments about the impact of downtown restoration on the location decisions of prospective industries. Normally an industry will have many location considerations to take into account. Typically, these considerations are heavily economic in substance. Questions of essential regional location; availability of suitable industrial land and utilities; access to railroads; airports and superhighways; an adequate labor supply; access to markets and needed services, are the questions of first importance to industries looking for new communities in which to locate.

However, there was general agreement among those interviewed that industries had been favorably impressed with the results of the downtown restorations. One of the community leaders in New Ulm, in fact, said that prospective industries were particularly impressed for personnel reasons. Apparently certain industries based in the Minneapolis area that had moved some of their facilities to New Ulm found it easier to induce their more qualified employees to move to New Ulm because of the CBD restoration. It became easier to sell the qualities of New Ulm as a community of active people where "things are happening".

It is apparent that if a community wants to attract industry it must have a good industrial development program. A pros-

pective industry must have the proper industrial site available along with good roads and ample utilities. However, if a community has already implemented an industrial development program it is then in a good position to also benefit from a downtown restoration. A community will often have to compete with other communities in the region for industry. Having a restored central business district can only be a positive force for successfully competing with other communities.

This is another era, though, where further research is needed.

Property Valuations

The communities in the survey were able to handle the problems of a possible raise in property valuations perhaps, because they were so eager to get on with the projects that did not bother to worry about it. In Albia, the restoration from the point of view of tax assessors was considered an essential maintenance procedure rather than an attempt to increase the value of the property. Where extensive restorations were done, however, there was a change in tax valuation. Where a community is considering the possibility of doing a restoration, representatives of the community corporation should visit with the people who would have the authority to change the taxes in an effort to clarify the issue of what type of restoration activity would be considered strictly maintenance. At the same time, it might be possible to get the tax commissioners to allow a grace period before re-evaluating the property at a higher value.

## Other Considerations

### Importance of Complete Renovation

Heavy spending on renovation by using malls and that sort of treatment may be more self defeating than good. But on the other hand it appears that a great deal can be done if it's done right without having to spend incredible amounts of money. That's why the architectural design for the community should include more than just sketch work for the fronts of the buildings. In addition, it should include a sketch plan for trees and plantings. It should suggest specific kinds of street lighting, yet soften the presently harsh effects of mercury vapor street lights. In addition, lighting should be suggested that puts ample light onto the building fronts at night to bring out the new and brighter colors. The plan should include a specific suggested sign ordinance for all businesses in the downtown area. If by chance, the central business district is built on a square with a park in the middle, attention should be given to suggestions that would enhance the park. Finally, attention should be given to the provision for adequate parking space.

Anyone representing a firm dealing in downtown renovation should emphasize the importance of this to the local people. Most of the additional items would not cost so much as to be prohibitively expensive. The most extensive renovation a firm could come up with would probably not cost nearly as much as the construction of a mall without anything else.

Sign Control Laws

In the smaller communities, the community leaders were often successful in bringing about a reasonable conformity of signs without the need for a sign ordinance. A combination of organized pressure and good sign design was able to give the impression that the signs had been designed as part of the restoration. This wasn't the case for all of the small towns though, and definitely not the case for New Ulm which felt the need to pass a sign ordinance. It appears that even for most small towns an effort should be made to get a good sign ordinance passed. (See Table One, No. 6.)

Absentee Storeowners

In comparing the experience of New Ulm to the smaller communities in the survey, it appears that absentee ownership of downtown property, whether by chain stores or by inactive owners, became more of a problem as the communities got larger. In the small communities where only a few stores were owned by chains, local leaders were able to get cooperation from most absentee owners to fix up their stores. In New Ulm, where there were many chain stores, it was much more difficult to get their cooperation.

TABLE 1

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Population (No. 1) | Ethnic Origins of Residents (No. 2) |
|---|---|---|
| Albia | 4200 | Not Known |
| David City | 2400 | Czechoslovakian |
| Lindsborg | 2764 | Heavily Swedish |
| New Ulm | Approx. 14,000 | Heavily German |
| Oberlin | 2291 | Not Known |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Community Development Corporation (No. 3) |
|---|---|
| Albia | The Albia Area Improvement Association was incorporated as a non-profit corporation according to the laws of Iowa. It had considerable responsibility for the planning and implementation of the project. |
| David City | The David City Development Corporation was created with the help of Northern Natural Gas Company as the organization primarily responsible for implementing the restoration. |
| Lindsborg | Did not have an organization in charge of downtown restoration. |
| New Ulm | The New Ulm Business Districts, Inc., was an outgrowth of a non-incorporated organization that had laid the groundwork for restoration activity. New Ulm Business Districts had considerable responsibility in implementing the restoration. |
| Oberlin | The organizing of the downtown restoration was primarily a project of the Oberlin Chamber of Commerce. |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Restoration Contractor (No. 4) | Percent of CBD Restored (No. 5) |
|---|---|---|
| Albia | J & R Building Restoration Co. of Des Moines<br><br>Specialize in restoration work. | Almost 100% |
| David City | Van's Waterproofing of Beatrice, Nebraska<br><br>Specialize in restoration work. | Approx. 75%<br><br>[Estimate] |
| Lindsborg | Work done by a single individual who had knowledge of Swedish architecture | Approx. 35%<br><br>[Estimate] |
| New Ulm | J & R Building Restoration Co. of Des Moines | Almost 100% |
| Oberlin | Work done by local contractors | Approx. 50%<br><br>[Estimate] |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Sign Control (No. 6) |
|---|---|
| Albia | No ordinance.<br>General improvement in signage is evident though. |
| David City | Not Known. |
| Lindsborg | No sign control. |
| New Ulm | Sign ordinance in effect.<br>A period of sign amortization is allowed for signs already hanging. |
| Oberlin | No ordinance. |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Design Costs (No. 7) | Methods of Raising Money to pay design costs (No. 8) |
|---|---|---|
| Albia | $1000, plus volunteer assistance from Robert Bates. | $1000 grant from Iowa Southern Utilities Company. Volunteer help from Robert Bates. Funds raised also by selling memberships in Albia Area Improvement Association. |
| David City | $7.50 per front foot which equaled $2250 per block | Each business paid $7.50 per front foot of its building. |
| Lindsborg | Designs were volunteered by individual who did restorations. | N.A. |
| New Ulm | $6000 | New Ulm Business Districts, Inc., levied a voluntary assessment against each business according to the amount of square feet per business. |
| Oberlin | Not Known. Paid expenses of K-State design team. | From Chamber of Commerce general fund. |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Comprehensive Design Plan (No. 9) |
|---|---|
| Albia | Complete store front design plan. |
| David City | Complete store front design plan, plus plan for street plantings. |
| Lindsborg | Actual restorations designed on an individual basis.<br><br>KSU Architecture class submitted several varied designs for the CBD. |
| New Ulm | Complete store front design plan, plus plan for historical trail in the CBD. |
| Oberlin | Complete store front design plan, a street lighting plan, street canopy plan, complete street mall design. |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Economic Conditions Before Restoration (No. 10) | Industrial Development Program Before Restoration (No. 11) |
|---|---|---|
| Albia | Economically depressed area. County had been losing population after depletion of coal fields in that section of Iowa. | Community had active programs prior to CBD restoration. |
| David City | Agriculturally strong area. County had been losing population. | Not known. |
| Lindsborg | Loss of Schilling Air Force Base in nearby Salina, plus the location of Interstate 35W one mile away from the town thus diverting through-traffic had a depressing effect on the community's economy. | Not Known. |
| New Ulm | Good agricultural area. Strong base. City was growing in population. Business district was not receiving a proportional share of the growth. | Community had active program prior to CBD |
| Oberlin | Strong agricultural area, but a lack of employment opportunities and a loss of county population. | Community has had active program for several years. |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Utility Company Involvement (No. 12) | Participation of Banks (No. 13) |
|---|---|---|
| Albia | Iowa Southern Utilities Company was involved from the beginning. Provided a $1000 planning grant to Albia.<br><br>Northern Natural Gas Company provided films for educational purposes. | Active Participation |
| David City | Northern Natural Gas was involved from the beginning. It suggested the project to the community, then provided assistance in several ways. | Active Participation |
| Lindsborg | Now Known | Active Participation |
| New Ulm | Not Known whether there was any involvement. If there was any involvement, it wasn't of the scale found in Albia and David City. | Active Participation |
| Oberlin | Not Known | Active Participation |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Newspaper Editorial Support (No. 14) | University Involvement (No. 15) |
|---|---|---|
| Albia | Heavy Coverage<br>Full Involvement | None |
| David City | Good Coverage | None |
| Lindsborg | Good Coverage | KSU Cooperative Extension Service.<br>KSU Planning Department<br>KSU Architecture Department |
| New Ulm | Heavy Coverage<br>Full Involvement | St. Olafs College of New Ulm |
| Oberlin | Heavy Coverage<br>Full Involvement | KSU Cooperative Extension Service<br>KSU Planning Department |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Table of Significant Comparisons
of Five Subject Towns in Study

| | Impact of Restoration on Retail Sales (No. 16) | Implementation Problems (No. 17) |
|---|---|---|
| Albia | No research done.<br><br>Business people believe there has been a moderate increase since restoration. | No major problems detected. |
| David City | Research indicated an increase in business. Research did not conclusively prove the reason for this increase. | A fire that destroyed several restored buildings.<br><br>Architectural firm did not give enough on-the-spot assistance. |
| Lindsborg | Not Known | Community did not have solid commitment.<br><br>University assistance was spotty, too varied, and ineffective. |
| New Ulm | No research done.<br><br>Business people believe there has been a moderate increase since restoration. | Problem with absentee business owners, and chain stores. |
| Oberlin | No research done.<br><br>Business people believe there has been a moderate increase since restoration. | Difficulty getting a qualified local contractor. |

# CHAPTER 4

## A MODEL PLAN OF ACTION

Based upon the findings in the case studies of the five communities, and upon comprehensive planning theory, the following process of central business district restoration is suggested.

1. Contact State Department of Development. This should be the first thing done if a community is thinking of doing restoration work. The State Department of Development can provide technical assistance and advice on many questions that community leaders would have regarding the restoration of their CBD.

2. Organize and Develop Community Improvement Program. Every community should have a community-wide organization dedicated to broad community improvement. This is not only important to bring about a general understanding of what the community needs to do, but also to enliven that spirit of community activity so essential if the community is to make progress. If a community does not already have such a program, its leaders should contact either a university extension service, a university department of planning, the state office of economic development, or the National Chamber of Commerce for assistance in getting such a program going.

3. Organize Central Business District Committee. The business leaders who are interested in CBD restoration should organize an informal committee to carry out the early phases of work leading up to a full scale restoration program. The purpose of the committee would be to get support for CBD restoration through special programs of education and personal contact.

4. Educational Program on Restoration. The CBD Committee should sponsor a special program on how restoration has been done elsewhere, and how it can be done in that community. Resource people are available from several places including universities, utility companies, and state offices of economic development. The program should be open to everyone in the community. In addition, the program could be set up to include more than just a session with speakers and slides. A field trip could be arranged for interested people to visit one or more towns that have already completed such a project. This is known to be a very effective way of enlivening interest in such a project.

5. Formation of Community Development Corporation. Once interest in downtown restoration has come to the point of commitment, a community development corporation should be formed. It need not have a complicated charter. Most are very simple. Once formed most of the activity would need to be carried out by such an organization.

6. Dialogue Between Community Development Corporation and Community Improvement Committee. These two new organizations should get together often to map out strategies which complement

one another. While each organization should have its own programs both should work in harmony with one another towards total community improvement.

7. Collect Funds and Hire Consultant Firm. The next step is for the corporation to interview various architects and designers to obtain good alternatives on design approaches for the central business district. Before hiring a firm, the community corporation should have already raised at least half of the first year's funds for design costs. This could be done by various means similar to those used in the communities in this study. Once sufficient funds are collected, a firm should be hired to do a complete sketch plan for all of the buildings in the central business district.

8. Discuss CBD Objectives with Firm. Once a firm has been hired to do the planning and design work, the members of the community development corporation and the staff of the firm should sit down together and discuss in detail what the CBD should become. Questions regarding the extent of the restoration, the type of restoration, the design approach, and the marketing strategy for the CBD should be thoroughly discussed. From this discussion the consulting firm should have enough initial guidance to begin its work.

9. Consulting Firm Does Basic Research. In order to more specifically determine what is possible and what kinds of problems will be encountered, the firm must do basic research related to such things as the condition of all buildings in the downtown; the historical background of the community; the pre-

sent marketing level and marketing potential of the town; the utilities infrastructure; and the traffic and parking situation. The firm should analyze the information collected and present an analysis in a brief, but carefully thought out document.

10. Discussion of Research Findings. The consulting firm should present the results of the research to the community development corporation. The results should be discussed with the objective of arriving at specific objectives for the CBD. At this point everyone involved should have a clear idea about the direction of the project.

11. Consulting Firm Produces Specific Plans and Designs. At this point the consulting firm should produce specific design plans that should include the following: (1) a land use plan for the CBD, (2) traffic and parking plan, (3) a store front design plan with renderings for all of the buildings in the CBD, (4) merchandise window display plans for all of the stores in the CBD, (5) a proposed standard signage design for all signs in the CBD, (6) an overall plan for street furniture, plantings and art objects, (7) a lighting plan for the street area, and a logo for the city if it wants one. These plans together should be put into a document.

12. Discussion of Specific Plans and Designs. The specific plans and designs should be thoroughly discussed by the community development corporation members and the staff of the consulting firm. If changes need to be made, the firm should set about to make them immediately.

13. Hire Contractor. This step is very important. If the

businessmen have decided to follow through with the project they should take great care to hire a competent restoration contractor. If they cannot find one, or if they feel the costs would be prohibitive, they will have to devise some other means to get the construction work completed. Whatever method the businessmen choose, great care should be taken to insure that proper methods are used in restoring the buildings.

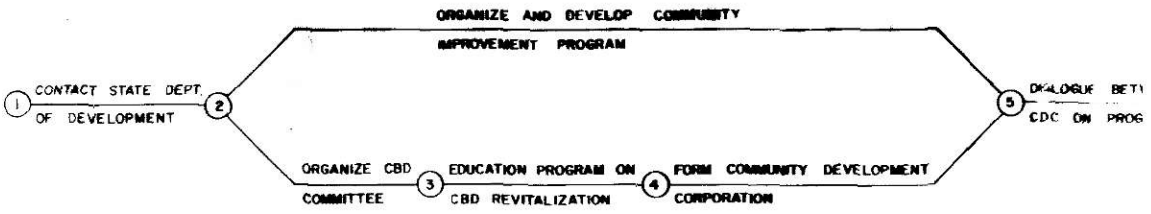
14. Schedule Work. Once a contractor has been hired, the community development corporation should take the responsibility of scheduling the work, preparing the contracts, and assisting in the negotiations between the businesses and the contractor. This should help to insure that the work progresses smoothly.

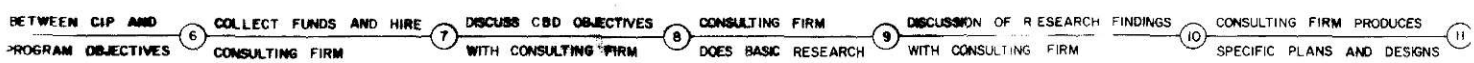
All of the above steps should be implemented with both care and vigor. Of particular importance, though, is vigor! The successful restoration of a central business district requires leadership of people who are willing to move the project from its beginning to its completion, which may be several years and several hurdles away. But it's encouraging to know that communities all over America today are doing just this.

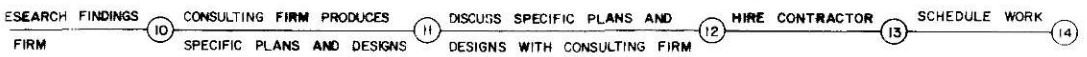
# THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT(S) IS OVERSIZED AND IS BEING FILMED IN SECTIONS TO INSURE COMPLETENESS AND CONTINUITY

PLATE I

STEP BY STEP PROCEDURE FOR
CBD RESTORATION




BETWEEN CIP AND PROGRAM OBJECTIVES
6
COLLECT FUNDS AND HIRE CONSULTING FIRM
7
DISCUSS CBD OBJECTIVES WITH CONSULTING FIRM
8
CONSULTING FIRM DOES BASIC RESEARCH
9
DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS WITH CONSULTING FIRM
10
CONSULTING FIRM PRODUCES SPECIFIC PLANS AND DESIGNS
11


ESEARCH FINDINGS
FIRM
10
CONSULTING FIRM PRODUCES
SPECIFIC PLANS AND DESIGNS
11
DISCUSS SPECIFIC PLANS AND
DESIGNS WITH CONSULTING FIRM
12
HIRE CONTRACTOR
13
SCHEDULE WORK
14

# END

# OF

# OVERSIZED

# DOCUMENT

# CHAPTER 5

## SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the course of work on this study new questions and new unanswered problems continued to surface. Unfortunately, the depth of research for this study was so shallow that it was impossible to reliably answer many of the new questions. Even so, this paper has discussed many of these new questions and has even hinted at some of the answers. But this is not enough. Speculation is not research, and speculative conclusions do not build a well based body of knowledge. For many of the questions touched upon in this paper, carefully planned, in-depth research is needed.

This section lists and briefly discusses several questions that the author believes should receive further research. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it covers many of the important questions that could not be reliably answered in this study. The list follows.

Industrial Development and CBD Restoration. There are at least three questions in this area that need careful study.

1. Does an active industrial development program have any impact upon the community's ability to organize a CBD restoration project? In other words, does the ability gained from operating an industrial development program pass on to the CBD restoration program?

2. Does CBD restoration have any influence upon the effectiveness of an ongoing industrial development program?

3. Will a completed CBD restoration project be a plus factor in attracting new industry into a community?

CBD Restoration and Retail Sales. In most of the communities surveyed the businessmen felt that there had been an increase in business since the CBD restoration had been completed. However, there was no concrete evidence to prove this hunch. Even in David City, Nebraska, where there was a study of retail business change after the restoration, the increase in retail business that the community had experienced could not be conclusively based upon the effects of the CBD restoration. During the same period of time the agricultural income for the surrounding area had increased significantly. Consequently, there is no conclusive evidence today to show that CBD restoration does in fact have a positive effect on retail business. This is an important question and it should be investigated further. It would require more than simply "before and after" measures of retail business. The research effort would have to deal with questions of why a change in retail business had taken place.

CBD Restoration and Negative Response. One of the variables that this study did not adequately deal with is the problem of negative response to restoration. Because the local people interviewed in this study were strictly community leaders who actively supported CBD restoration, it was impossible to get an objective profile of people who were against CBD

restoration. In addition, it was difficult to gain an understanding of how each community as a whole was responding to CBD restoration. In a couple of cases it was apparent that there were both serious community divisions and competing organizations, but it was impossible to find their total impact on the efforts at CBD restoration. Further research aimed at determining how these processes work would be valuable in helping communities in the future avoid the pitfalls of negative response and community division.

CBD Restoration and Sign Control. In all except one of the communities in the study there was no sign control as a part of CBD restoration. Even so there was success in some of the communities in bringing about a certain amount of guidance in the use of signs. A better understanding is needed regarding why communities do not have sign controls, and what can be done to encourage better use of signs.

Self Help and CBD Restoration. After the completion of the design work for the CBD, a new problem often emerges that prevents many communities from completing the restoration work. This is the difficulty of getting high quality contract work done at reasonable cost. In most instances a building will require a four phase restoration: cleaning, repair, painting and installation of additional items. If the building however is not structurally sound it will also need structural rehabilitation. All of this can add up to a considerable investment. When presented with a cost estimate from a restoration contrac-

tor, a businessman will often decide not to go through with it because he believes that he cannot afford the cost. On the other hand, there are many instances in which communities have tried to cut corners in restoring their buildings with noticably inferior results. By deciding not to properly clean the building, carry out the necessary repairs, or carefully follow the design instructions in the design plan, a building owner can save a lot of money. However, the inferior quality of work is immediately evident. After several months when the new paint starts to peel off of the uncleaned surfaces, the results are even more disappointingly evident. Finding a way of doing restoration work without encountering the substantial costs of hiring a restoration contractor, while avoiding the inferior quality associated with cutting corners is a problem that needs careful study. Chapter 3 of this paper, under the heading of "The Contractor" discusses one strategy for implementing high quality-low cost restoration. But it only touches on the subject. The strategy discussed has many possible pitfalls. Consequently, a separate comprehensive study is needed that would investigate all of the problems associated with a self help program. It could then set out in a detailed plan a step-by-step procedure for implementing self help restoration.

CBD Restoration and Peripheral Development. For the community that is growing, the competition from new retail business on the edge of the town can dilute the sales effectiveness of the central business district and fragment the power of the com-

munity as a retail trade center. On the other hand, consolidation of major retail businesses in a single central business district could work to emphasize the importance of that area as a shopping center. Within a consolidated shopping area each business could effectively benefit from the aggregate attraction of several businesses located near one another. This is particularly important with respect to shopping goods, such as apparel, furniture, appliances, shoes, jewelry, TV sets, etc. When buying such items shoppers have a strong tendency to compare prices, quality and features. Consequently they tend to buy these items where there is more than one store offering them. For a shopping area to have a strong magnetic pull on shoppers, it must incorporate a full line of competitive stores that provide shoppers with the benefits of comparison shopping. In the smaller community where the community leaders want the community to maintain its position as a regional trade center, a strategy for development of the central business district is essential. Such a strategy must contain several elements. Among them are: (1) an overall land use and design plan for the CBD to insure proper placement of new businesses, (2) a transportation plan for the maintenance of uncongested access to and from the CBD, (3) an implementation program for CBD development, and (4) a comprehensive plan for the community that takes into account the need for CBD development, yet protects the community as a whole from damaging development. Research is needed that would examine several different ways of properly planning for this kind of development. Such research should yield strategies that would

incorporate the use of effective marketing principles on one hand, and sound planning principles on the other.

# CONCLUSION

The future for community improvement programming in small towns looks bright. Not only is community improvement programming catching on in more places every year, it has now become an important and recognized tool for fostering the survival and growth of small towns in Mid America. Today, most midwestern states have state-wide community improvement programs run by state departments of development. These statewide programs emphasize a multitude of programs that include, but are not limited to: improved social services in the community, capital improvements, better schools, economic development, recreation facilities and programs, historical preservation, the improved physical appearance of the community as a whole, and central business district revitalization.

Central business district revitalization is one of the most important elements of community improvement programming, and perhaps the area in which the results can be most dramatically be seen. However, the development of a comprehensive CBD revitalization process is still in its early stages. There are many elements of CBD revitalization that need to be incorporated into future planning for small towns. This means that comprehensive planning for CBD revitalization must encompass much more than the restoration of buildings. It must integrate into an overall plan the elements of marketing strategy, urban design,

traffic and parking, essential public improvements, historical character, overall role of the CBD as it relates to the commerce of the community, and finally, the relationship of CBD revitalization to the total improvement of the community. While all of these elements have probably been included in several community plans this broad development approach has not yet been universally accepted.

As we learn more about community improvement programming and CBD revitalization, we should be able to look forward to revitalization programs that are far superior to even the best programs today. This will require continued technical advancement in community planning along with heightened public understanding of the importance of our communities. But by carefully building on the failures and successes of past and present programs we should be able to look forward to programs that will truly reflect a growing sensitivity to the quality of community life.

# APPENDIX

The appendix includes two items that should be instructive in understanding community development corporations. They are:

Reprint of Article on NUBD

Articles of Incorporation for
Albia Area Improvement Association

Reprint from article in New Ulm Daily Journal, August 7, 1968.

Title: Incorporation Plan Accepted by ACH Ya
Byline: Herb Shaper, General Manager

"Articles of Incorporation were adopted for the development of New Ulm business districts as part of the ACH Ya program for community improvement.

"Action was taken this morning by the committee established to concentrate on business activities under direction of ACH.

"A non-profit corporation is in the process of being formed. Articles of Incorporation adopted Wednesday list the purposes of the corporation to 'promote, encourage, and assist in community development and specifically the physical improvement of the business districts in the city of New Ulm'.

"Incorporators are expected to be the current members of the committee. Official name adopted for the group was 'New Ulm Business Districts, Inc.'

"Incorporating has been recommended as the first step to getting concrete action in several areas of business improvement. An official body is necessary in order to accomplish a number of goals.

"The corporation will not produce either individual liability or gains to its members.

-0-

"Other articles of the incorporation include:

"'To strengthen the general economy of the area and by improving community appearance to stimulate growth, employment opportunities and stability of industrial life in the community.

"'To participate in programs in furtherance of the foregoing purposes and for the correction or elimination of conditions detrimental to the above described purposes of the area.

"'To aid, assist, or implement programs of the area, its governmental units or agencies, the Government of the State of Minnesota, the Government of the United States, or other governmental units or agencies.

"'To purchase, take, receive, release, receive by gift, devise or bequest, or to otherwise acquire, own, hold, improve, use and otherwise deal in with real or personal property, or any interest therein, wherever situated.

"'To make contracts and incur liabilities, borrow money at such rates of interest as the corporation may determine, issue its notes, bonds and other obligations, and secure any of its obligations by mortgages or pledge of all or any of its property, franchises and income.'

"The committee also discussed design firms in attempting to develop a theme for business establishment appearance and calling of another community-wide meeting as more plans are formulated beyond the discussion stages."

# ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
# OF
# ALBIA AREA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

We, the undersigned, natural persons of the age of twenty-one years or more, at least two of whom are citizens of the State of Iowa, acting as incorporators of a corporation under the laws of the State of Iowa, as provided in Chapter 504A of the 1966 Code of Iowa and acts amendatory thereto, do hereby adopt the following Articles of Incorporation for such corporation.

## ARTICLE I.

The name of the corporation is Albia Area Improvement Association.

## ARTICLE II.

The corporation is a non-profit corporation and has no capital stock.

## ARTICLE III.

The corporation shall endure for a period of 50 years unless sooner dissolved as in these Articles provided or by operation of law. It may be dissolved by vote of two-thirds of its members.

## ARTICLE IV.

The purpose or purposes for which the corporation is organized are:

a. To provide the means for obtaining benefits available under the various federal and state programs for citizens residing in the Albia, Monroe County, Iowa, area.

b. To undertake any other programs and activities which would improve economic and social conditions, and educational opportunities for citizens residing in said area.

## ARTICLE V.

The street address of the initial registered office of the corporation is 115 South Main Street in Albia, Iowa, and the name of its initial registered agent at such address is O. J. Duea.

ARTICLE VI.

The number of directors of the corporation is ten (10) and the names and addresses of the persons who are to serve as the initial directors are:

## FOOTNOTES

1. Martindale, Don, and Hanson, R. Galen. Small Town and the Nation. Westport Connecticut. Greenwood Publishing Corporation. 1968. pp. xiii-xiv.

2. Abrams, Charles. The Language of Cities. New York. The Viking Press. 1971.

3. Articles of Incorporation, Albia Area Improvement Association. (See Appendix.)

4. American Paint Journal. Albia's Face Lifting Project Restores Splendor to Victorian Architecture. Schulenberg, Fred. St. Louis. American Paint Journal Company, 2911 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63103. Monday, Aug. 2, 1971. p. 18.

5. Northern Natural Gas Co., A Small Town Success Story. A brochure produced by Northern Natural Gas Company of Omaha.

6. Ibid.

7. New Ulm Daily Journal. New Ulm, Minnesota, Friday, March 29, 1968.

8. Non-published report of Ach Ya (Activating Community Horizons). The report goes into detail explaining each of the priorities.

9. Ibid.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Abrams, Charles. The Language of Cities. New York. The Viking Press. 1971.

2. Ach Ya (Activating Community Horizons). Non-published report produced in New Ulm by Ach Ya.

3. American Paint Journal. "Albia's Face Lifting Project Restores Splendor to Victorian Architecture." Schulenberg, Fred. St. Louis, American Paint Journal Company, 2911 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63103. Monday, August 2, 1971. p.18.

4. Martindale, Don, and Hanson, R. Galen. Small Town and the Nation. Westport Connecticut. Greenwood Publishing Corporation. 1968.

5. New Ulm Daily Journal. New Ulm, Minnesota.

6. Northern Natural Gas Co. A Small Town Success Story. A brochure produced by Northern Natural Gas Company of Omaha.

# AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS DISTRICT RESTORATION IN SMALL TOWNS

by

Charles Thomas Badrick

B.S. Kansas State University, 1967

---

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree

MASTERS OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Department of Regional and Community Planning

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas
1973

Small towns today are suffering from the impact of modern agricultural and transportation technologies as they effect the employment requirements in rural areas. Many small towns are situated in rural counties that are presently losing population. Small towns are often serving the needs of a decreasing population within an agricultural setting that is becoming increasingly inter-dependent between the farm and the large agricultural business complex. In light of this, small towns must devise new and innovative strategies for survival and growth.

One element of a larger economic development strategy for small towns is the restoration of the central business district to a new luster and attractiveness that would be even more striking today than when the town was new. Such a restoration designed to preserve the traditional architecture of the town can conceivably make the community more attractive to shoppers, prospective industries, and potentially new residents.

A relative few towns in the midwest have successfully completed restorations of their central business districts. These restorations were accomplished both because of circumstance and community leadership. How these communities went about implementing each restoration held some important lessons for how other communities might also organize to restore their business districts.

The study centered on the role and importance of the community development corporation, often called the community improvement corporation, in the successful implementation of business district restoration. Specifically, the question is

whether utilization of a community corporation would help or hinder the efforts at downtown restoration.

Five towns in the midwest were the subject of the study. They were: Albia, Iowa; David City, Nebraska; Lindsborg, Kansas; New Ulm, Minnesota; and Oberlin, Kansas. A case method study was conducted for each of the communities in order to take into account the unique setting and circumstances of each community. Community leaders in each town who were personally involved in downtown restoration were interviewed in an open format to find out how each community implemented its project. The number of interviews conducted was greatly limited by a lack of time and money. Consequently, the conclusions, while considered to have merit, were tentative. The study was exploratory in nature, and its findings in most cases were indicative of the need for more detailed and thorough research in the future.

The tentative conclusion regarding the value of the community development corporation was that it is valuable as a tool for downtown restoration. Essentially, the corporation: 1) is a public symbol of single-minded community effort. 2) it allows people a vehicle for consolidating their individual commitments into a larger commitment. 3) It is a vehicle for persuading reluctant store owners into an active role of participation. 4) It is an effective means of keeping nonconforming restoration from taking place before a physical plan is completed. 5) It often serves as a valuable administrative mechanism. 6) It serves as an effective organization for raising needed funds. 7) It helps insure that participating store owners will get a

fair deal from a contractor. And, 8) it acts as a continuing forum for new ideas for community improvement.

It was the finding of the study that while the community development corporation may not be the single most important element in business district restoration, it is an important and valuable tool. It should be utilized by other communities in restoring their central business districts.