

Create a Sense of Place that's Real!

Public perception is the quiet component that can add value to or hinder the image of your downtown or neighborhood commercial district. While community organizations and municipalities work to create more economic opportunities, redevelop existing structures, redevelop street-front buildings and build places where people want to shop and visit, an effective communications strategy is crucial to capturing the public's recognition that downtown is the "place to be."

In order to manage the expectations of the customer's experience downtown, it is important that authentic selling points are identified and that they are grounded in reality.

Ted M. Levine, founder of Development Counselors International in New York City, states that when marketing and promotional campaigns are intended to attract new business to an area, you don't play with the truth. "Image and reality have to be the same or there's a tremendous possibility for backfire." Other marketing professionals recommend that



Diverse participation among relevant stakeholders within the district is a priority for an effective communication strategy.

focus be leveled on the very things that make a downtown distinctive, even if it's nothing more than an unusual history or unique location. But this requires a process and a plan to deliver the right product: the "brand" for your downtown.

A brand is the sum total of everything the customer or visitor thinks and feels and how he or she interacts with the brand. It is important to note that a brand is not just a logo or tagline. A brand is how the

customer reacts when they see the logo or tagline and, if it is held in high esteem, contributes to gaining a greater share of the customer's time and expenditures.

In order to develop a brand for marketing your downtown, fundamental steps include:

1. **Develop the team** – who is responsible for developing the brand, for keeping its use consistent in both application and with the overall marketing strategy.
2. **Assess the current situation** – do research, gather information and determine what your downtown is and what it is not.
3. **Develop the promise** – what will your brand stand for and what does it offer your customers?
4. **Create a communications plan** – determine how the customers and your community will view your brand (logo, tagline, advertising, banners, collateral materials, signage, etc.)
5. **Build the brand** – be certain to include the image and message in all communications and apply it to materials, equipment and online resources, and adopt the brand throughout your organization and community.

If time and thought are both allocated to this process, your downtown will become a genuine place that is well worth the visit.



"Simply put, a brand is a promise. By identifying and authenticating a product or service, it delivers a pledge of satisfaction and quality."

**Walter Landor,
Landor Associates**



Mission

Connecticut Main Street Center provides training and advocacy to its network of public and private partners statewide in order to build economically vibrant traditional main streets as the foundation for growing healthy communities.

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DRI Building Community Consensus

DEBBIE PARNON
Executive Director,
Darien Revitalization Initiative

Downtown Darien was long overdue for a face lift. What had often been referred to as “quaint and charming”, in reality was a downtown so familiar to its residents that it was easy to overlook the signs of slow deterioration. But downtown’s time has come! The district is looking different and people are seeing distinct signs of activity. There is a now a ground swell of interest and support among residents to enhance the walkability of the central business district and the community has become more vocal about its desire to shop and dine in its own town.

The time was also right for an organization to step in and guide inevitable changes that will ultimately bring Darien into the 21st century — Darien Revitalization, Initiative (DRI).

Partnering built early success

DRI happened to be the right organization at the right time. Upon its creation, DRI received publicity through news media coverage that catapulted the organization into the limelight. The Planning and Zoning Commission, which drew DRI into their decision-making process in a collaborative and information-sharing way, contributed to its credibility.

Large scale projects were already in the works. However, the organization was able to influence some decisions regarding these new buildings utilizing the principles of the “Main Street Approach”. Collaborating with the DOT on maintenance issues along the Post Road (Darien’s Main Street) made an immediate and visual difference in the streetscape. DRI participated in the selection of uniform lighting fixtures which will be installed in downtown parking lots. DRI also contributed to the development of a new ordinance which will guide the dimension and placement of newsracks in downtown. Subsequently, DRI was asked to participate in panel discussions about the future of downtown Darien and many other local organizations invited DRI into discussions with their members. These appearances further served to allay the fears some expressed about too much change coming too quickly.

Promotion to diverse Audiences

Events attract people downtown, but the need to secure promotion across all age and community groups forced DRI to use creative

Darien Revitalization Initiative unveils its new logo.



Tilley Park, in the heart of Darien, was the venue for the 2nd Annual Father’s Day Downtown Car show. Vintage, exotic and nostalgic cars were artfully parked throughout the park and enjoyed by admirers and spectators.

ways to communicate. As families with school-age children comprise 43% of Darien’s population and each school sends its own newsletter electronically to students’ families, DRI worked diligently to have information included in these broadcast emails. Darien also has a very high rate of volunteerism in town. DRI identified that it was important distribute information to other nonprofit organizations, their boards and members, which account for a large sector of Darien residents, through emails to all executive directors. These actions have broadened DRI’s reach to a variety of generational and interest groups, including town commissions, committees and departments.

Darien also has its own government access television channel where important government meetings are recorded live and then regularly broadcasted. DRI attends Board of Selectmen meetings and presents information which reaches the homes of many Darien residents.

Working to orchestrate public dialogue and involve downtown merchants, DRI has organized several seminars on pertinent downtown issues. Additionally, DRI has planned and executed events that will bring people downtown – the Father’s Day Car Show, Darien’s Holiday Stroll and Summer Jazz concerts in Tilley Park. These various activities yielded yet more opportunities to increase the visibility and value of DRI.

Whether through partnering or promotion, Darien Revitalization, Inc. is working to positively impact the future and showcase downtown Darien as the community’s perfect place to visit, shop, dine or relax.

Downtown Business is Booming!

DON COURTEMANCHE
Executive Director
New Britain Downtown District

Downtown New Britain is well underway for a complete economic revitalization - historic buildings are being restored, apartments are coming on line and new businesses are in the process of or have recently opened, and the arts community is flourishing!

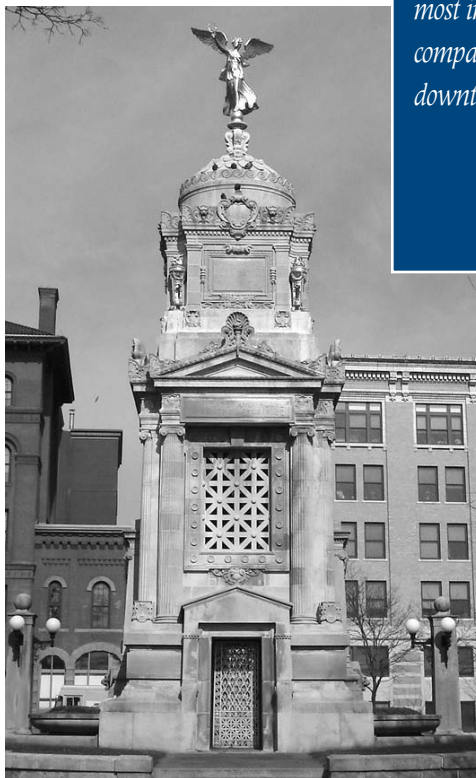
All-in-all, it has been a very busy summer in the New Britain Downtown District, Connecticut's oldest business improvement district. Comprised of 84 for-profit property owners who voluntarily levy an additional annual property tax on themselves, the District has efficiently utilized those revenues on projects such as the opening of New Britain's first Visitors' Center, architectural tours, business recruitment campaigns and promotional events, as well as on-going beautification projects and maintenance.

The Downtown Visitors' Center, which welcomed its 6,000th visitor since opening two years ago, is a great example of the activity taking place downtown. Elsewhere the long vacant historic Hicks Building is about to debut as an artists' cooperative, complete with ground-floor gallery, where artists will be able to live and work. A previously abandoned building on Main Street, which many considered to be downtown's most prominent eyesore, is now catching attention for its restored beauty as it is transformed into luxury apartments, office and restaurant space.

New businesses that have recently opened downtown include the La Quinta Inn & Suites, Famous Dave's Barbeque, Acapulco Mexican restaurant, Hardware City Antiques, Rosa's Furniture, a yoga studio in the Andrews Building; and the new Green Table Tavern will open later this year. Additionally, a

Downtown Revitalization Study, led by Mayor Timothy Stewart's office, is nearly complete and will provide an economic development plan for the downtown area, components of which include new housing, retail space, mass transit, a new public safety complex, and educational opportunities.

The arts community, long regarded as a pillar of downtown revitalization, continues to be one of New Britain's top performers. Hole in the Wall Theater, CONCO-RA, Trinity-On-Main, the Music Series at South Church, and the Art in the Heart of the City gallery, regularly draw hundreds of arts patrons to the downtown streets.



You'll also want to follow the progress of the restoration of the tower of Trinity-On-Main at 69 Main Street, which has recently been named to the National Register of Historic Places.

The New Britain Downtown District, a member of Connecticut Main Street Center, utilizes the National Trust Main Street Center Four Point Approach™ to revitalization in all areas of its activity. Working with the District on a daily basis and in all areas of economic restructuring and downtown improvements

"Downtown New Britain is rapidly becoming a center of culture, entertainment, and commerce for the greater New Britain area. People once again believe in downtown, are supporting our efforts to improve it, and perhaps most importantly, are supporting the companies and agencies that call downtown New Britain home."

Gary Friedle,
New Britain Downtown
District Chairman

are the New Britain Chamber of Commerce, Greater New Britain Arts Alliance, and the City of New Britain, key contributors to the successful partnership that is forging New Britain's downtown revitalization.

The New Britain Downtown District welcomes you to its historic and new downtown. We look forward to seeing you!

The "Soldiers and Sailors Monument", restored in 2000, is located in Central Park and featured on the New Britain Architectural Walking Tour.



The heart of New Britain is its volunteers who contribute countless hours supporting events and activities.

WELCOME *New Connecticut
Main Street Member!*
Town of Haddam

Manchester's Vintage Vehicles Go the Mile!

TANA PARSELETI

Downtown Manager

Downtown Manchester Special Services District

"Cruisin' on Main Street," a one-day cruise and show for antique and classic cars, trucks, sports cars and street rods twenty-five or more years old, has translated a warmly-held community tradition into an enormously successful special event. Produced by the Downtown Manchester Special Services District (DMSSD), "Cruisin' on Main Street" has grown into one of the largest cruises and exhibitions of its kind in the Northeast.

The first "Cruisin'" was held in August 2001 when organizers had a modest goal – attracting 200 show cars and several hundred spectators. Since then "Cruisin'" has grown exponentially each year. In 2007, "Cruisin'," held on a one-mile stretch of Main Street (closed to traffic for the day), drew close to 1,500 vintage vehicles and 30,000 spectators!

Looking closely, the growth of "Cruisin'" can be attributed to several factors:

- **"Cruisin'" is an intrinsic event.** It draws on a community tradition of cruising Main Street on a Thursday night. In years past, roundabouts at the top and bottom of the street made it possible for Manchester youth to see and be seen in their "cherry" vehicles as they wove a continuous loop up and down Main Street.

- **"Cruisin'" appeals to all generations, sexes and ethnicities.** It allows people to connect to fond memories embodied in the show cars and share those memories with friends and family members.

- **Downtown's Main Street is a ideal venue for "Cruisin'."** The historic architecture, old-time ambiance and proximity of antique stores, small shops and independent restaurants are a perfect stage to exhibit vehicles representing 100+ years of automotive history. Restaurant owners report that "Cruisin'" is their busiest day of the year and retail shops report a steady stream of customers that generate both day-of and bounce-back sales.

"Cruisin's" accomplishments demonstrate how the right event can be an effective component of a downtown revitalization program.

- **"Cruisin'" reinforces a positive image of downtown as an attractive, safe and fun place** that reaches beyond event attendees.



Cruisin 2007 - Looking in
photo: Tana Parselti

Extensive pre- and post-event print, radio, cable and broadcast media coverage focused attention on the event, downtown improvements and businesses.

- **"Cruisin'" increases exposure to downtown and its businesses.** It reinforces the connection with existing customers and introduces new customers and prospective investors to the downtown.

- **"Cruisin'" builds pride in downtown and a shared sense of purpose** by bringing town staff, the business community, churches, nonprofit institutions, civic, and service groups together to work on the event. The volunteer roster has grown each year and numbered nearly 200 in 2007.

- **"Cruisin'" is an effective fundraising event.** Serving as food vendors and performing other essential operational tasks, nonprofit, civic and service groups raised thousands of dollars for their particular causes. The "Cruisin'" Committee itself was able to donate \$5,700 to local charities.



Cruisin Street
Crowds
photo: Tana Parselti



Those were the days! photo: Tana Parselti

Those who work in the arena of downtown revitalization know that one event does not revive a downtown. But a strategically selected special event can strengthen downtown's image and marketability, support revitalization efforts and deliver measureable results. "Cruisin' has turned Manchester's Main Street into a "magnificent mile!"

Growing Brighter Year by Year



New London Main Street launched its *Celebration of Lights and Song by the Sea* ten years ago as an event to re-focus public interest on downtown New London. Initiated as a simple community carol sing and Christmas tree lighting ceremony, and refined each year, it has grown into an integrated community event which draws young and old from far and wide. "...Each year it gets better and better," said Donna Bailey of New London. "It's nice to see New London like this." *

Initially, hesitant shop keepers and restaurant owners needed encouragement to participate; now extended store hours, special holiday menus and the need for reservations are the norm. Elementary school choruses, recruited to perform, met with such success that youth choirs currently request to participate months in advance. Regardless of the means of transport – fire truck, antique pick-up, rowboat, tug or Amtrak train – all unique to New London, Santa has never missed being the host of the *Celebration of Lights and Song by the Sea*.

The inclusion of local artists and gallery owners who opened their spaces for public viewings resulted in a flood of request from other artists interested in participating. And the list goes on...a living history play was so successful it was offered for six days! Union Train Station was converted into "gingerbread station" and offered model train exhibits and gingerbread cookie decorating for children, while the New London Senior Center baked and constructed a giant gingerbread village, and the Superintendent of Schools read



The Gingerbread Man and performed a song he composed. Another annual tradition found its niche.

Year by year, the *Celebration of Lights and Song by the Sea* has grown from a daytime festival into an all-day-to-after-dark holiday gala. The event, run by volunteers, now includes the participation of individuals, students and schools, artists, dozens of merchants, all 32 downtown restaurants, members of the US Coast Guard Academy, and representatives from local and regional companies

More importantly, the *Celebration of Lights and Song by the Sea* has appealed to and encouraged financial sponsorships from community businesses who believe it's important to support local efforts to promote downtown and provide fine family entertainment. The event has more than succeeded in showcasing downtown and has contributed greatly to New London's image as a family-friendly, safe and clean district, and a place to gather, dine, shop and have fun – all year 'round.

*Quote Source: *The Day*, 12/3/03

John Simoni,
President and CEO
Connecticut Light & Power

"Together, CL&P and the Connecticut Main Street Center are putting Main Streets back in business."

"Since 1995, the Connecticut Main Street Center has helped communities generate more than \$487 million in public and private investment in their downtowns, resulting in new business, new jobs, and a new life for many commercial districts. And Connecticut Light & Power has played a leadership role from the beginning, contributing millions of dollars and countless hours to promote the Main Street Center program.

It's just one of many programs supported by CL&P in an effort to help Connecticut, as well as to be the lead for businesses and residents that call our state home. Together, we're breathing new life into Main Street, both socially and economically, because healthy and vibrant downtowns are good for business – and great for Connecticut."

Learn more about CL&P's commitment to the community through its leadership in organizations like the Main Street Center at www.clpenergyinfo.com.

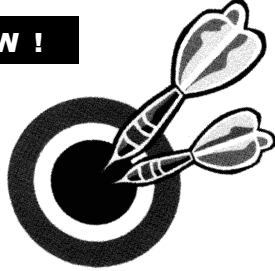


CL&P is proud to support Connecticut Main Street Center and is serious about its role as a corporate citizen, community stakeholder, environmental leader and steward.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: www.ctmainstreet.org or call: 860-280-2337

“ If you are trying to develop a neighborhood and fill buildings with new businesses, people need to know what it is becoming.”

Kyle Vixie, Downtown Seattle Association

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