



Navigator

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONNECTICUT

MAIN STREET CENTER
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Main Street is SMART Growth *A Letter from the Executive Director*

I have always felt that the principles of smart growth were good, solid common sense. However, the term “smart growth” can be a buzzword that inflames emotions in various camps. In the past I have been somewhat apologetic about using the term for lack of a better choice of words. Then I discovered a publication on the US Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) website called “Getting to Smart Growth II.” This publication asserts that “smart” is actually an acronym and is not meant as a not-so-subtle slap in the face to advocates of “dumb” growth (or sprawl). SMART stands for: **Safe, Mixed income, Accessible, Reasonably priced and Transit-oriented.** In other words, **smart growth is about building communities where all generations can afford to live and be able to walk to school, work and shops.**

Here in Connecticut we are trending in the opposite direction of smart growth. The lack of affordable housing choices pushes us to live farther and farther away from our work. According to the U.S. Census, by 2000 Connecticut’s workers’ median commutes were 24 minutes, up 16% from 1990 – a faster increase than in the U.S. as a whole. Fully 80% of Connecticut’s 1.6 million workers drove to work alone in 2000, up nearly 3% from the previous decade. When communities do build multi-unit housing (which is not often enough) it is built in isolated parts of town ensuring that one has to get in the car to do anything. At the same time **Connecticut, the third smallest state in the country in terms of land size, has the third highest number of buildings listed on a state historic register with 53,000 buildings.** And while I have not

conducted a formal survey, I have to believe that a vast number of these buildings are in our town centers and commercial districts because that is how this state was first developed.

The point is, despite the sprawling trends listed above, we still have incredible wealth of historical and cultural assets intact. We need to identify and/or develop every tool imaginable to implement a comprehensive smart growth strategy. It will take the partnership and cooperation of not only elected officials and key state agencies (Departments of Transportation, Economic & Community Development, Environmental Protection, Culture & Tourism and the Office of Policy & Management) but also of our regional planning agencies, local municipalities, non-profit organizations, businesses, and local residents.

The Main Street Four Point Approach™ to downtown revitalization, which we embrace at the Connecticut Main Street Center, is clearly an agent for smart growth. Main Street is about building a community-driven, ongoing and comprehensive downtown revitalization program. We operate with the principles of using historic and natural assets as the basis for economic and community development. Developing the right mix of uses in downtown is a key part of the strategy. **What better place than downtown to develop residential spaces where one can walk from home to satisfy most of one’s needs?**

Downtowns are often mistakenly overlooked as engines for economic development. Downtowns are like living organisms – they need all their parts (appropriate mix of uses, physical design,

ongoing management & promotional/branding strategies) to be healthy and work in harmony with each other. When you look at a downtown collectively, it is often one of the community’s largest employers and tax payers. The infrastructure is already in place and most often there are multiple transportation options, including walking (what a concept!).



Bank Street, Downtown Waterbury.

Main Street is not the only organization whose work contributes to the quality of life and economic well-being of this state. But I also know there are not enough of us, not enough tools in place, and there is no current mechanism in place to foster strategic partnerships around smart growth, either within state agencies or between the public and private sectors.

It doesn’t take a lot of “Google-ing” to find a vast amount of resources and some excellent smart growth models. It is time for us to develop and commit to a vision for Connecticut’s future, and that will mean a major attitude change in this land of steady habits and 169 fiefdoms. What’s the first step? Embrace both the term itself and the principles of SMART growth.

John Simone
Executive Director



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Welcome to the New EDs on the Block!

Barbara Richardson Crouch comes to **Niantic Main Street** from Moscow, Idaho where she was the Executive Director of the Latah Economic Development Council. Barbara previously held Community Development management positions in Rockford, IL and Bixoli, MS.

Randy Anagnostis assumed the ED position with the **Rockville Downtown Association** following 20 years as a marketing and public relations specialist. He has extensive experience as Past President and Past Director of

Chambers of Commerce in Rhode Island and Connecticut.

Debra Parnon was appointed by **Darien Revitalization Inc.**, the newest Connecticut Main Street program, and brings extensive volunteer management experience to her organization. A graduate of Dartmouth College, Debbie has experience in public relations, event planning and coordination, and volunteer leadership development.

Connecticut Main Street Center welcomes these newest downtown professionals to our network.

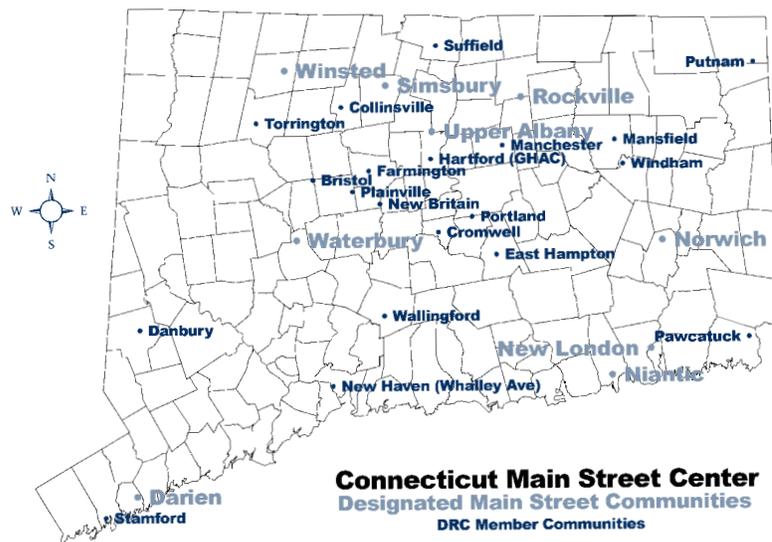
Join the Downtown Resource Center

CMSC developed the Downtown Resource Center in order to make commercial district revitalization resources and tools more widely available. Any municipality, non-profit, consultant or individual citizen can become a member of the DRC. As a DRC member, you get access to the latest information, trends and tools relating to commercial center revitalization, a members-only list serve, newsletters, and on-site consulting.

You interact with practitioners statewide, sharing ideas issues, questions, solutions, and success stories. You help shape Connecticut's public policy, by participating in advocacy efforts for legislation that supports downtowns.

For more information about the Downtown Resource Center or the Downtown Revitalization Institute, please go to our website: www.ctmainstreet.org

In the past year Connecticut Main Street Center has welcomed 20 new members into our program.



Welcome New Downtown Resource Center Members!

*Bristol Development
Authority*

*Pawcatuck
Neighborhood Center*

*Stamford
Partnership*

A Day of Fun and Learning at the Downtown Revitalization Institute

Connecticut Main Street Center's 2005 Downtown Revitalization Institute concluded with the most energetic and well-attended workshop yet, "Promotional Strategies for Your Commercial District", presented by Jane Jenkins. Workshop content focused on *Developing an Image, a Brand and a Position, Analyzing your Target Markets, How to Market and Promote Downtown, Creating an Event Matrix and a Marketing Plan, and a Discussion of Downtown Customer Service as a Marketing Strategy.*

Over 40 attendees enjoyed this interactive workshop, sharing both challenges and successes in their own downtowns. The speaker kept everyone engaged by striking a balance of presentation, group discussion and breakout exercises throughout the day. "I learned new ideas for advertising and what not to focus my energies on - Jane was great!" and "Exceeded [my] expectations +100%. The speaker's experiences throughout her career gave us vision to reach our town's potential next level," were just two comments shared following the workshop.

Jane Jenkins is the Executive Director of the Downtown Boulder (Colorado) Business Improvement District. Under Jane's direction, downtown Boulder has developed and created a brand identity and successfully maintained a 97% retail occupancy rate in the face of a declining economy and the competition of a new regional center only a few miles from downtown. Prior to her position in Boulder, Jane was the Director of the Southwest Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. During her three year tenure at the Trust, Jane

A Brand is a PROMISE - branding is a chain that begins with the promise you make to customers and ends with what you do to fulfill it.



Jane Jenkins leads a group discussion on Downtown Customer Service as a Marketing Strategy.

developed a marketing plan that increased National Trust visibility in the region and successfully advocated for retaining preservation enhancements as part of the federal Transportation Equity Act.

2005 Downtown Revitalization Institute Certificates of Completion were presented to Carmen Domonkos, Program Manager of the Stamford Partnership, and Sheila Hummel of the State Department of Economic & Community Development. The 2006 DRI kicks off with the January 27th

workshop, "Building Your Capacity to Revitalize Downtown" with Kent J. Burnes of Burnes Consulting. Visit www.ctmainstreet.org to register.

The 2005 Downtown Revitalization Institute was made possible by Bank of America, in collaboration with the Office of the State Treasurer.

Downtown Revitalization Institute 2006

JANUARY 27TH – *Building Your Capacity to Revitalize Downtown*

APRIL 28TH – *Using Design as a Tool for Downtown Revitalization*

JULY 28TH – *Economic Realities of Downtown Revitalization*

OCTOBER 27TH – *Promotional Strategies for Your Commercial District*

Each workshop is scheduled from 8:30am – 4:00pm at Northeast Utilities Headquarters in Berlin.

To register, visit our website at www.ctmainstreet.org



Bronze statue of young Eugene O'Neill at New London Waterfront Park.

Mark Your Calendar!

*Connecticut Main Street Center
2006 Annual Meeting
and Awards Presentation*

Monday, June 19th at 5:30 pm

*The Crocker House Ballroom
in Downtown New London*

Connecticut Main Street Center is funded by the *State of Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development* and *The Connecticut Light and Power Company/Yankee Gas* and is committed to bringing Connecticut's commercial districts back to life socially and economically.



CHARTING YOUR COURSE TO A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

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