

Recap & Resources

The following articles & links provide additional information on key themes presented by our speakers.

THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

One theme our speakers emphasized almost universally is that bricks & mortar shops often can't compete with the ease of online shopping - and they shouldn't necessarily try to. Instead, they should focus on **creating a better retail experience**.

Whether this meant externally - in terms of placemaking and the amenities around the shops (e.g. walkable, connected streets, signage, facades, streetscapes, etc.), or internally - by providing a storefront & retail space that is clean, attractive, engaging & fun - **what is paramount is creating an experience that is pleasurable, convenient & memorable for the consumer**.

Here are some helpful articles that talk more about creating a great customer experience:

- **8 Types of Retail Experiences that Keep Customers Coming Back** - From a treasure-hunt like feel to infusing entertainment into the customer experience, there are many ways to create a memorable shopping experience.
- **Pop-Up Stores and the Experiential Retail Economy** - How embracing the experience economy can create a connection between customers & your brand, generate excitement & drive sales.



Robert Gibbs, Gibbs Planning Group: *Shapeshifting Retail - Facts, Fiction & Fun*



Key Themes

- Give your downtown the "X factor" through things like engaging artists to create unique storefronts, walkability & having good signage with a listing of businesses. All of these components are key to successful downtown retail.
- Having a good internal store flow, strategic merchandise displays, and staying open on weekends (especially past 5:30 pm on Sundays) can all provide a major boost to sales & revenue.
- Towns & cities everywhere should join a Main Street network. Their guidance & education offer an excellent return to communities. **Join the CMSC network today! Call us at 860.280.2337 or email us at info@mainstreet.org.**

Additional Resources

- **What Main Street Can Learn from the Mall** - By viewing streets as part of the commercial experience, towns & cities can encourage additional interest in an area's retail establishments.
- **Is online shopping killing Main Street? These 3 facts prove brick-and-mortar retail isn't going anywhere** - This article talks about why the death of retail is exaggerated and the truth behind just how much people enjoy shopping in stores.
- **Vacant Storefronts Find New Life as Space for Recitals, Banquets and Pet Parties** - Explore how being innovative with vacant storefronts can create a sense of excitement and luxury for downtowns.

Missed our event? Watch it now on CT-Network: <http://www.ctn.state.ct.us/ctnplayer.asp?odID=16755>

Questions? Let's talk! Call us at 860.280.2337 or email us at info@mainstreet.org



Key Themes

- Parking is an important issue for retail, but it's not one of volume. There's generally enough parking but it needs to be convenient & accessible. Other aspects like shared parking (i.e. metered spaces) which encourage turnover (more customers) is more important than more spaces.
- Good signage is critical for a healthy downtown.
- Creating micro climates that allow people to walk & bike, that create interesting streetscapes without gaps, all help encourage thriving businesses.

Additional Resources

Preparing Main Street for the So-Called 'Retail Apocalypse' – Cities can help encourage brick & mortar retail through the regulatory environment and downtown fundamentals like accessibility, walkability & symbiotic business locations.

The Future of Retail – When people want to have a meaningful shopping experience – supporting an artisan, knowing how a product was made & where, buying local – they are more likely to go to a brick & mortar store. Here's how communities, Main Street leaders and retailers can help them.

Panel Discussion: Addressing Retail & Commercial Vacancies – Moderator, Mike Goman, Goman + York | John Pollard, Real Estate Advisors, Ltd. | Lisa Drazen, 74 Union Place Realty LLC | Erik Ben-Kiki, EBK Gallery-Inside Out Project | Barbara Karsky, BK& CO, West Hartford | Gary Anderson, Dir. Planning & Econ. Development, Manchester

KEY THEMES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Retail Businesses & Storefronts

- Add personal touches to differentiate your business & to make people feel good & feel connected.
- Business associations are great for sharing best practices & working together.
- Work with other business owners to keep people in your downtown, not just in your store.
- Street level art is part of a larger picture in downtown, which is often an arts & culture hub. Art enlivens a place, making it feel more welcoming & vibrant.
- Vacant retail space can be used to showcase art, then amplified via a website to reach a wider audience & highlight artists.

Real Estate & Property Management

- Make your space attractive. Even simple things like fresh paint will help bring in merchants.
- Know the market & what's the right use for the space. It's a hard process, but doing it well avoids a turnstile of businesses that open then close.
- Review market viability & consider shorter-term leases (i.e. 5 years in a tenuous market)
- Consider pop-up or temporary tenants to fulfill minimum tenancy clauses & sample options
- Offer graduated rent to allow startups & new business ideas to grow
- Divide unmarketable large retail spaces & diversify the retail experience (e.g. putting a cafe in a bookstore)
- Landlords make an investment in their properties & they look to the town/city to be good partners in helping with their streetfront (things like trimming dead trees).



Municipal Zoning & Policies

- Towns can play an active role in driving traffic to their downtown areas using a variety of incentives like facade and rehab grants, placemaking, etc.
- Review zoning to allow for mixed-use or flexible uses
- Review parking requirements to make business growth easy
- Control significant (visible & sizeable) properties to facilitate reuse
- *Downtown 2020 Initiative, Manchester, CT*: Downtown 2020 is a 2-year initiative aimed at increasing vibrancy & economic opportunity Downtown through incentivizing transformational private development, lowering special district taxes, and achieving key public improvements.

Articles of Interest

- *Ten Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail*
- *The Case of Disappearing Main Street Retail*
- *How to Monetize Your Empty Retail Space*

Did you miss us on *Where We Live* talking about the State of Main Street Retail? Listen now at:
<https://www.wnpr.org/post/state-main-street-retail>