



Owosso Main Street/DDA

Board Retreat/Strategic Planning Report

Thursday January 8, 2015, 5:00 p.m.

The Gould House,

100 W. Oliver St.

Owosso, MI 48867

BACKGROUND

In January 2015 the Owosso Main Street/DDA (OMS) board held a strategic planning/priority setting in preparation for the 2015/16 programming year. The strategic planning process was hoped to assist with budget prioritization and further focus the direction of the OMS Program.

On January 8th, the Board of Directors gathered together to discuss the future direction of the program and to set priorities for the four committees. Under the Main Street model, communities take a four-point approach to tackle downtown revitalization in a comprehensive way. The four points (each with its own standing committee) are Organization, Design, Economic Restructuring and Promotions. The four points are meant to work together to create a healthy and attractive historic downtown with an engaged population being served by a number of diverse businesses.

STRUCTURE

Main Street is a volunteer-driven organization. While there is a paid employee in the form of a Main Street Manager, this employee is there to help guide the efforts of the board and program volunteers.

To give the committees direction, the MS Board of directors sets objectives and priorities allowing each committee to work towards those goals through the lens of their committees skill set. Under these objectives, the committees create specific projects to help achieve the objectives. These projects should have specific tasks, goals and means to measure success.

Once projects are determined by committee members under board objectives and priorities, it is up to the committees to create a work plan for each project. The work plans should include all steps necessary to complete the plan, including a start and finish time for each task, as well as a budget and the person assigned to complete the task. One person should act as the chair for each project, taking the lead to make sure that the work plan is completed. Individual volunteers should be assigned to complete the individual tasks. The Main Street Manager's name should rarely be assigned to tasks and never as the chair of a project.

Once a work plan is completed, it is compiled with the other proposed project work plans to help determine an overall program budget. It is up to the board to either approve or deny a project and work plan, based on how the proposed project is slated to meet the board's objectives and how the work plan is laid out. Once a project is approved, the committee has the authority to carry out the tasks and complete the project without board interference.

MISSION STATEMENT

The board reviewed the mission statement developed prior for Owosso Main Street:

"The mission of Owosso Main Street is to actively revitalize the Downtown Owosso District. Owosso Main Street will promote an atmosphere of cooperation throughout the community, with downtown acting as a gathering place and focal point for community engagement through volunteerism. Our organization will work to promote economic development by attracting new businesses, shoppers and residents to the district and act as a resource for downtown merchants."

Throughout the last year, OMS has formed a sub-committee to develop a new mission statement for the organization. Using last year's strategic planning notes along with additional board comments a list of suggested statements were provided during this year's meeting for board review. As a result, the following mission statement was chosen:

“Owosso Main Street's mission is to foster an active and thriving downtown that is the heart of our community, promoting historic preservation, and drawing both local residents and visitors to our community.”

Through board discussion, it was agreed that this final mission statement will be formally approved during February's regular board meeting.

YEAR END ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the Year-End Assessment is to determine the progress the local Main Street program is making in the fulfillment of its vision, mission and work plan and identify areas and ways that MMS can continue to support the community in its community development efforts. The Assessment Team will use three primary tools to measure progress - the local programs' self-evaluation, the annual report and interviews with the board, committees and municipality.

Main Street communities are reviewed using the National Main Street Center's 10 Standards of Performance. Fulfillment of each of these 10 criteria leads a community to be a Nationally Accredited Main Street Community and continue its partnership with the Michigan Main Street Center.

10 Standards of Performance:

1. Broad-based Community Support
2. Vision & Mission Statements
3. Comprehensive Work Plan
4. Historic Preservation Ethic
5. Active Board and Committees
6. Adequate Operating Budget
7. Professional Management and Development
8. Program of Ongoing Training
9. Reporting of Key Statistics
10. National Main Street Network Membership

The 2014 Year End Assessment concluded that while OMS has accomplished measurable achievements within the downtown district, the OMS program is currently not meeting the minimum expectations set forth for accreditation by the National Main Street Center (NMSC).

The deficient areas highlight by Michigan Main Street Center (MMSC) and NMSC are as follows:

1. Achievement of #3 [“Has a comprehensive Main Street work plan with measurable objectives”].
2. Achievement of #5 [“Active board and committees”].

It is the intent of MMSC to utilize the six month postponement as a remediation period, in which both MMSC and Owosso Main Street will agree upon an aggressive Remediation Plan. At the time of this report, the terms of the proposed Remediation Plan were still being worked out by the MMSC and OMS.

2013 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

During the 2014 Strategic Planning, the Board of Directors identified four areas of focus for the upcoming year. Some of these goals required multiple layers of objectives to achieve them and likely would translate into several years of programming to support that goal. Before moving toward a new set of goals for the year, it was important to evaluate our performance against the goals outlined in 2014 and decide what areas if any, are necessary to continue focus on.

The four goals included;

- Armory Building as an income generating property, destination for the region and entry way from downtown to the river.
- Increase volunteer participation through comprehensive volunteer management strategies.
- Strong business base in downtown Owosso.
- Broad range of community is aware and in support of Main Street principles and activities.

COMMITTEE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Owosso Main Street Board determined the following committee goals. Committee members will determine projects to help achieve the goals. These projects will be work planned by committee members. The only project that will be presented to the board are those that have a project chair and a completed work plan. These work plans will be presented to the board for approval. The board has the option to approve, decline or ask for changes to the plan. Final work plans will dictate the budget, which will be presented to city council for final approval. Once approved, committees will follow the work plan, setting monthly meeting agendas by the work plans, as well as dictating the board, monthly agenda.

1. Revitalization and preservation of downtown properties, especially those which are vacant.
 - a. Objective #1: Work to get the Façade Grant up and running again – Due to new census numbers, Owosso no longer qualifies for the state façade grants. As a result, the City of Owosso will be conducting a survey of local incomes to indicate that our downtown is still within the appropriate criteria to qualify for the grant funding. OMS can help with the communication and implementation of this survey in the hope that façade grants will be reinstated.
 - b. Objective #2: Education – Use the organizations large social media presence to inform and educate our local stakeholders and the public on the importance of our historic downtown buildings, as well as the financial importance of a fully-occupied downtown.
 - c. Objective #3: Business recruitment and promotion –The Main Street program can play matchmaker for new opportunities. Using the market study for data, start to educate, incentivize, and recruit the businesses to make downtown properties successful.
2. Monthly communication and engagement with downtown stakeholders.
 - a. Objective #1: Communication – In order to be of assistance to the existing business community, you must first be seen as an ally. Continuation of the successful communication efforts will foster these relationships.
 - b. Objective #2: Strategic Partnerships – This effort can be tackled as a team by eliciting the help of volunteers, or other professionals that may interface with business owners on a regular basis. Arm them with information and create a network of ambassadors for downtown Owosso. This will aid in the communication of upcoming services and events.
 - c. Objective #3: Needs Assessment – The best way to engage downtown stakeholders is to simply offer assistance. Local stakeholders need to know that OMS is here to help them. Getting an assessment of their needs is a great catalyst for engagement.

3. Increase volunteer participation and engagement.
 - a. Objective #1: Volunteer Recruitment – Though this is often the most requested aspect of volunteer management, it is often the one least necessary for the successful volunteer program. Strategies used in the past include volunteer raffles, social media, hot jobs, and partnerships.
 - b. Objective #2: Strategic volunteer partnerships – In rural communities, it is more important than ever to share organizational goals with an array of organizations. This will not only move the community faster to a shared goal, but will lessen the burden of volunteers in the community.
 - c. Objective #3: Volunteer communication – With all the pieces in place, communication between volunteers and to volunteers will be the gas that makes the volunteer engine run. This can be through Hot Jobs, Owosso newsletter, local media, or bulletin boards. Any communication tool is a good communication tool to continue participation with the program.
4. Comprehensive fund generation.
 - a. Objective #1: Awaken the Organization Committee – It is important that in the next year OMS finds the right volunteers to take part in this committee. Fund generation at the organizational level will be dictated by the strength of the Org Committee.
 - b. Objective #2: Change the organization's perception of fund generation – OMS is a vital player within the community. OMS events and programs attract thousands of people to the community each year. It is time that promotion and sponsorship outreach starts to reflect that. Instead of simply asking for donations, the development of a strategic sponsorship plan should take place – one that will show potential sponsors their return-on-investment and communicate the value of giving to the organization.
 - c. Objective #3: Create a central fund generation process – Fund generation currently happens at the committee level with each work plan responsible for its own funding. As the Org Committee grows and starts implementing its own programs it will be important to centralize all fund generation, having the Org Committee keeping track of fund development.

VISION STATEMENT

The board reviewed the vision statement developed prior for Owosso Main Street. Throughout the last year, OMS has formed a sub-committee to develop a new vision statement for the organization. Using last year's strategic planning notes along with additional board comments a list of suggested statements were provided during this year's meeting for board review. As a result, the following vision statement was chosen:

"Our downtown, bright with promise and potential, captures the spirit of community. It is a gathering place to work, eat, play, and stay. Downtown Owosso is rich with opportunities in art, entertainment, business, and learning. Owosso Main Street unites individuals, businesses, and local government to revitalize our historic downtown. It is a comprehensive approach that focuses on community assets and partnerships to preserve and promote historic Owosso."

Through board discussion, it was agreed that this final vision statement will be formally approved during February's regular board meeting.

FUTURE ACTIONS

1. Edit organizational vision and mission statements – get final approvals of the mission and vision statements listed above.
2. Finalize the upcoming Remediation Plan with the MMSC and start immediate implementation - a Remediation Plan has to be in place with the MMSC by no later than Friday, January 30, 2015. The Remediation Plan will include the following:
 - a. Participate in work planning process facilitated by MMS.
 - b. Prepare detailed work plans for all four committees, finalized and approved by Board. Each Work Plan needs to be detailed and understandable.
 - c. Once work plans are completed and approved by the board; submit copies of all work plans to MMSC no later than April 1, 2015.
 - d. Have regularly-scheduled meetings of all four committees, at which, agendas are set by the approved work plans.
 - e. Participate in Board Training offered by MMS.
 - f. Following the Board Training, the following documents should be submitted to MMSC:
 - Board Position Description
 - Officer Position Description
 - Committee Chair Position Description
 - Committee Member Position Description
 - Main Street Manager Annual Expectations
 - Volunteer recruitment strategy
 - g. Participate in Committee Chair Orientation facilitated by MMS with the help of Owosso Main Street. Document steps and prepare local orientation for new committee members and committee chairs.
 - h. Hold regularly-scheduled monthly meetings with all committees
3. Give goals and objectives to committees to work from for 2015 work planning – each committee will brainstorm projects that would support the identified goals and objectives and each committee member can choose one or two (depending on their level of availability to the program) projects from the list of existing and brainstormed projects to work plan for the next meeting.
4. Board approval of work plans - the board is to review all work plans to assess the level of detail, ability to meet goals and objectives, budget and volunteer support. These work plans should be used by the board or executive committee in creating the upcoming year's budget to be submitted to city council. Once the board approves the work plans for the year the committee has the ability to execute the work plan without interference from the board. The board will receive regular updates and provide support as necessary. Any new projects that are initiated throughout the year due to opportunities or partnerships, should first be work planned and approved by the board.