



CHAPTER 15: MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION

GOALS

As previously detailed in Chapter 2, Union Bridge has set forth the following goals:

- To improve the appearance of the downtown, Main Street businesses and residences
- To promote activities that strengthen the success rate of downtown businesses
- To provide amenities that are pedestrian and user-friendly and that promote community interaction

SUMMARY AND REFERENCE TO MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION ELEMENT

Commercial revitalization of cities and towns is changing the face of the Nation. From the Main Streets of small towns to the central business districts of large cities, communities are spending their money to reinvest in their buildings and to improve their public spaces. These improvements result in creating a more attractive environment, enhancing the function of the business district, and strengthening the economic climate.

In the fall of 1993, Mayor Perry Jones expressed his interest in taking some type of action toward improving the Main Street area. The commercial area of Main Street in the past had been a significant financial and social center; however, many businesses left the area, and a decline in the appearance of the area resulted. A plan was initiated to provide a basis on which to make decisions about revitalization activities and to encourage Town residents to become involved in the process. The Town of Union Bridge used components from two plans to revitalize its Main Street area. The 1995 *Union Bridge Main Street Revitalization Plan*, prepared by Carroll County's Department of Planning, and the 2000 *Union Bridge Main Street Plan*, prepared by Whitney, Bailey, Cox, and Magnani, provided a strategy to guide the physical appearance and functional use of the central business area of the Town. The area covered by these plans is shown on the map entitled, "Main Street Revitalization Area."

The plans to revitalize the Main Street of Union Bridge were a collaborative effort between the Union Bridge Main Street Revitalization Committee, the Mayor and Town Council, Town Planning Commission, local business owners, and local residents. These plans served as a guide for the physical and economic development of Main Street and were developed around the locality's vision for the future.

The Vision Statement for both plans, which was developed as part of the planning process, is as follows:

"The Main Street area of the town of Union Bridge will be the center of the community. The area will be safe and attractive with an emphasis on preservation of historic characteristics and values. Thriving businesses will provide a blend of goods and services to residents as well as visitors. A combination of convenient access and promotional activities will encourage continued patronage and stimulate future



planned economic development. A blend of desirable housing opportunities will be available. A more stable economy will result in a stronger tax base”.

With that vision statement in mind, the revitalization plans focused on land use, streetscape and design, utilities, traffic, and parking as they applied to the Town of Union Bridge. The elements of the plan included research and data collection, setting objectives, creating goals, identifying assets, liabilities, and opportunities, action strategies, and identifying key players, partners, and organizations. The plans presented a series of recommended actions in order to achieve the desired objectives and goals. Please refer to those plans for more detailed information and to view the specific recommendations.

The *Union Bridge Main Street Revitalization Plan* was adopted by the Mayor and Town Council in September 1995, and the *2000 Union Bridge Main Street Plan* was approved by the Mayor and Town Council in August 2000.

The Main Street Revitalization Committee (1998-2007) worked to accomplish the goals of the project. The Committee raised funds within the Town to hire Slater & Associates and applied for grant funds through the Town to hire Whitney, Bailey, Cox & Magnani to perform initial planning and engineering studies. Work on the project continued in subsequent years through the planning and public comment cycle prescribed by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). The SHA performed the streetscape project in 2004, which included replacing water lines, repaving Main Street, and installing patterned concrete sidewalks and historic reproduction lighting fixtures. Upon the completion of the streetscape work, the Main Street Revitalization Committee formed sub-committees that accomplished the following:

- 1) Recommended branding, signage and design guidelines in 2005 to the Mayor and Council to address landscape, minimum livability code, signs, facades, and building demolition or construction. New welcome signs to the Town of Union Bridge were designed using original art by Town resident and Poet Laureate Richard Eichman (1940-2001).
- 2) Promoted communications and tourism with the design and printing of the new Union Bridge Walking Tour Brochure that provides visitors with a self-guided tour to 41 historic sites within the corporate limits of Union Bridge and 4 additional sites on the outskirts of town. The guide contains vibrant histories of the individual sites, a map, and a glossary of architectural terms to enrich the experience for the visitor. The brochure was originally produced in fall 2006 and distributed by the County Tourism Office throughout the state via welcome centers and other outlets. The Union Bridge Area Heritage Committee sponsored the brochure. Local businesses and the Town of Union Bridge funded the design and first printing of the brochure and served as local distribution points. The guide has been successful in bringing visitors to the Town and is popular with area residents who also take the tour. The Town continues to receive requests for more copies and has applied for matching grant funding to replenish the diminishing supply.
- 3) Established the Union Bridge Business Association (UBBA) that was incorporated under the Community Foundation of Carroll County, Inc., established by-laws, and elected officers to begin serving terms of office in calendar year 2006. In the first year, 38 individual and business memberships paid annual dues of \$25; a regular meeting schedule continues to build relationships between these members and the larger community. UBBA organized an annual event, called Depot Day, to promote tourism and invigorate business in the Town of Union Bridge. The UBBA



Economic Development Committee contacted owners of targeted commercial buildings to establish a listing of properties available for sale or rent.

- 4) Installed a recast sculpture by William Henry Rinehart (1825-1874), who was born in Union Bridge and was considered one of the most gifted American sculptors of the nineteenth century. Rinehart's memorial to Mrs. William T. Walters, *Love Reconciled with Death*, located in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore, was selected by the Town of Union Bridge to be reproduced and installed at Main Street and Broadway in 2007 as a memorial to the sculptor, their native son.

In response to statements made during the SHA public comment phase and concerns raised by the business community for additional parking, the Mayor and Council applied for grant funding and purchased two properties at the intersection of Main Street and East Broadway in 2005 to establish the Rinehart municipal parking lot and a small park where the Rinehart statue was installed. The Mayor and Town Council celebrated the official conclusion of the Main Street Revitalization project and the dedication of the Rinehart statue on May 24, 2007.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Considering that the Main Street revitalization process spanned a 14 year period from 1993 to 2007, volunteers on the committee learned that a deliberate process of planning, funding, public comment, engineering and construction required both patience and perseverance. At the conclusion of the project, the hard work left a lasting legacy to the Town of Union Bridge through the streetscape project, design guidelines, the Union Bridge Business Association, the Union Bridge Walking Tour Brochure, and the William Henry Rinehart sculpture. Members of the Town Council and volunteers on the Main Street Revitalization Committee received advice and guidance from two consulting firms and the staff of the MD State Highway Administration.

Two reports, in particular, contained many of the recommendations achieved by the Main Street Revitalization Committee as well as many other recommendations developed by experts in the field that deserve review and reconsideration. For this reason, the Mayor and Council and selected individuals should conduct a careful review of both the Union Bridge Main Street Revitalization Plan (1995) and the 2000 Union Bridge Main Street Plan to identify those recommendations that merit further attention and implementation.