A strategic plan for startup and stakeholder engagement

Report for the Somerville, MA Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development:
Carlene Campbell, Director of Community Relations
Maria Ortiz Perez, Business Development Specialist

By Brenna Gibson, Heather Gill, Lauren Haring, Constanza Ulriksen

Tufts University, Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning
Field Projects Spring 2006
Faculty Supervisor: Molly Mead
Teaching Assistant: Audra Vernon
The purpose of this report was to produce a strategic plan for the Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (SPCD) to establish an East Broadway Main Street program in Somerville, Massachusetts that has diverse community participation and broad stakeholder support. Research included published sources, unpublished written material provided by SPCD, and interviews with scholars, community organizers, non-profit managers, and Main Street specialists. Findings included critical issues affecting the implementation of EBMS. These issues concern non-profit startup processes, stakeholders’ feelings of mistrust toward City Hall, and challenges to organizing business owners and residents. Corresponding strategies and tactics to address these issues are recommended based on theories of community engagement and non-profit management. Potential tools and events for encouraging ongoing community engagement and participation in EBMS once the organization is established include: a website, an art walk, and a vendor fair.
# Table Of Contents

Executive Summary 7

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction 9
  The National Main Street Model 10
  Somerville’s Historic Significance 11
  Why Main Street in East Broadway 12
  Status of East Braodway Main Street 12

CHAPTER TWO
Critical Issues and Strategies 13
  Non-profit Startup Issues 14
  Community Engagement Issues 16
  Stakeholder Issues 20

CHAPTER THREE
Future Community Relations Tactics 23

APPENDIX
Appendix 1: Methodology i
Appendix 2: The National Main Street Model iv
Appendix 3: Website Example vi
Appendix 4: Memorandum of Understanding vii
Appendix 5: Internal Review Board Approval x
Appendix 6: Sources xi
In 1970, the National Trust for Historic Preservation developed a methodology for revitalizing traditional business districts while preserving distinctive neighborhood characteristics, known as the Main Street approach. The City of Somerville Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (SPCD) is in the process of establishing a Main Street program in the East Broadway area of Somerville. Main Street programs are community run non-profit organizations that develop revitalization strategies along the areas of: Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructure.

Currently, the businesses in this district are thriving, but they mainly serve only the residents of East Broadway, and many business owners are unhappy with the current state of the streets. The major highways bordering the area limit pedestrian traffic in the commercial district, and there are signs of excessive trash, deteriorating storefronts, and other physical issues. The Main Street organizations’ strategies will address these issues and benefit local businesses.

The purpose of this report was to produce a strategic plan for SPCD to establish an East Broadway Main Street (EBMS) program in Somerville that has diverse community participation and broad stakeholder support. The plan is informed by published sources, unpublished written material provided by SPCD, and interviews with scholars, community organizers, non-profit managers, and Main Street specialists. This research produced the following recommendations and findings:

- Non-profit startups need focused leadership from the beginning, which can be accomplished by immediately finding a full-time project initiator.
- A working group comprised of key community leaders can be used to launch the Main Street in East Broadway. The working group will be well-suited to initiating a Main Street because they can utilize their status in the community to organize others. The working group and other interested community members should be the chief promoters of Main Street information into the neighborhood.
- Being a government entity limits the degree to which City Hall can engage this community. Rebuilding trust in the community and forming a distinct identity for EBMS will address this issue.
- To secure participation of working group members, the project initiator should make contact strategically and assign specific tasks to each member according to a master schedule.
• The initiator should guide the working group to generate support for and participation in EBMS by contacting fellow community members and publicizing their involvement with the organization.

• Communicate the purpose of EBMS to the non-profit community and invite them to attend informational meetings. Partner with existing organizations and create participatory roles for them according to their areas of expertise.

• To organize the business community, provide business improvement tips, facilitate training for business owners, and hold special functions exclusively for the business community. The goal of these steps is to engage business owners in EBMS and emphasize the benefits economic development can bring to their businesses.

• When engaging residents, focus initial organizing efforts on groups that are interested in EBMS and available to assist with promotion. Provide opportunities for youth involvement in the Main Street process as a means of reaching adult populations and training future community leaders.

To maintain stakeholder support and involvement in EBMS after the organization is established, transparency and communication are essential. Regular community events can keep the public informed about the progress of EBMS and generate enthusiasm for the organization’s mission. Potential tools and activities for community relations include: a website, an art walk, and a vendor fair.
In 1970, the National Trust for Historic Preservation developed a methodology for revitalizing traditional business districts, known as the Main Street approach. The Mayor of Somerville, Joseph Curatone, has decided to apply this model to neighborhoods around the city as a means of promoting local economic development. A Main Street program was successfully launched in Somerville’s Union Square in 2004 and efforts are currently underway by the Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (SPCD) to initiate one in the East Broadway area. The aim of this report is to provide relevant background information and a strategic plan to help further the implementation of an East Broadway Main Street (EBMS) program.  

Appendix 1 outlines the data collection methods and strategic planning model used, as well as the areas of expertise of each interview subject.
Introduction

The National Main Street model

In many cities and towns across the United States, there are communities experiencing economic disinvestment. The National Main Street model seeks to address this disinvestment through community-driven economic revitalization in the context of historic preservation. To do this, it applies a comprehensive Four-Point approach which requires four key development areas: Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructure. Over 1,200 Main Streets across the United States use this model to revitalize commercial districts.

A Main Street is an independent non-profit organization, which is run by a governing board. Board members include business owners, residents, city officials, and staff members from local non-profits. This group hires an executive director, and together they guide the overall vision and direction for the Main Street. Sub-committees of the board are formed for each of the Four-Point areas and are responsible for carrying out tasks that further the overarching goals and strategies of the organization. Main Street development occurs over a 15 year period, in which particular phases require different courses of action.¹

¹ See Appendix 2 for a more detailed description of the Four-Point Approach, responsibilities of Main Street boards, and program phases of growth.

The National Trust Main Street Center’s mission is to empower people, organizations, and communities to achieve ongoing downtown and neighborhood district revitalization based upon the principles of self-determination, resource conservation, and incremental transformation represented through the comprehensive Main Street Four-Point Approach™ (www.mainstreet.org).
Somerville's Historic Significance

The National Main Street model seeks to revitalize traditional business districts without compromising their historic significance. Somerville has a rich cultural heritage dating back to 1628, and each of its neighborhoods have distinctive characteristics that can be assets in downtown revitalization and should be preserved.

Brief History of Somerville's Physical Development

- During the 1700s the majority of manufacturing plants were located in the lowlands near the Mystic River, while residential development was kept to the slopes of the hills.
- In the 1800s, Washington Street - between the Charlestown line and Union Square - made up the majority of the City's industrial base. To meet housing demands of the workers, a concentration of two family homes were built.
- Most residential development occurred between 1875 and 1925. During this time, Somerville became the densest city in the country. This building stock comprises the majority of housing units today.
- In the early 1900s, Broadway began to develop as a commercial center as stores and residential developments replaced farmhouses and land.
- Today, many of Somerville’s original structures remain. These buildings are over 100 years old and have many architecturally and historically distinctive features.
- Many of the City’s historic housing and buildings are located in the East Broadway area. In fact one of the largest Local Historic Districts is on Mount Vernon Street near Sullivan Square.
Introduction

Why Main Street in East Broadway?

East Somerville was designated as a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2004 and subsequently received funding to promote economic development in the area. Through the use of the comprehensive Four-Point approach, the Main Street program will expand economic opportunities for East Somerville residents, while preserving the unique historic characteristics of the neighborhood.

Currently, the businesses in this district are thriving, but they mainly serve only the residents of East Broadway, and many business owners are unhappy with the current state of the streets. The major highways bordering the area limit pedestrian traffic in the commercial district, and there are signs of excessive trash, deteriorating storefronts, and other physical issues. The four committees of the Main Street will develop strategies for Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructure to address these issues and benefit local businesses. Increased sales revenues will help these establishments afford future rent increases and will potentially allow them to expand and hire more people who live in the area. Over time, these improvements will lead to a safer and more attractive neighborhood.

Status of East Broadway Main Street

For the past year, SPCD has been working to organize the East Broadway community to implement a Main Street program there. Staff members have formed relationships with business owners, residents, and local organizations by talking with them about their businesses, community issues, and the concept of a Main Street initiative. One community meeting was also held to elicit participation in the program.

One issue that has been driving SPCD’s efforts is the need to have a board that is representative of the ethnically diverse East Broadway community, so that all interests of the community will be heard. At this point, a few stakeholders have expressed interest in the initiative, and the City is continuing efforts to secure their support and involvement. To raise awareness of EBMS, SPCD has: distributed fliers, interviewed community leaders, and hired a bilingual staff member in early 2006.

The next step in forming an East Broadway Main Street is to engage interested parties and identify a few key leaders who will commit to leading the program. Once the organization is established, the board must continue to engage the community so that the program can grow and change after the City has scaled back its involvement. It is the goal of this report is to outline strategies for developing a Main Street program and suggest activities the future board can use for continuing community engagement as the organization grows.
SPCD seeks to establish a Main Street program in the East Broadway area of Somerville that has diverse community participation and broad stakeholder support. The success of this initiative is contingent upon the characteristics of the neighborhood and effective non-profit management. The following eight issues will affect this process. Corresponding strategies and tactics to address these issues have been recommended based on theories of community engagement and nonprofit management, and are designed to be adapted to the specific needs and resources of SPCD.

---

2 This strategic plan incorporates theoretical perspectives and informed suggestions offered by scholars, community organizers, nonprofit managers, and Main Street professionals during personal interviews. Direct quotes or personal opinions appear where noted. See Appendix 1 for a complete list of interviews.
Issue #1: Non-profit startups need focused, consistent leadership from beginning to end.

Leaders are responsible for inspiring others, setting the path, and bringing people along toward a shared vision. Non-profit startups require this kind of driving force to initiate and promote organizational development and new Main Street programs are no exception. Founding board members of Union Square Main Streets recently commented that they had been somewhat unfocused during their organization’s startup phase and would have benefited from the guidance of a strong leader who had structured their work processes and reminded them of the “big picture”.

When consulted about starting an East Broadway Main Street program, Tufts Professor and non-profit expert John Hammock, advised, “You need one champion of the cause to drive this.” He suggested hiring the executive director up front to fill this role if funds are available, or finding a business leader in the community or a bilingual staff person who is passionate about the cause, dedicated to the project, and can focus solely on this position during the startup years. He said that this executive director, or whoever acts as the project initiator, should get a core group of community members together to talk about the issues and draft the startup materials. The initiator must stay involved with and support this group every step of the way in order to maintain continuity and drive their progress.

Strategy: Use existing block grants to hire a dedicated EBMS “initiator” immediately.

Tactics

• Prepare bank accounts, payroll, workspace, and a preliminary job description for an EBMS initiator to ensure a seamless transition for the new hire.
• Search for bilingual candidates with non-profit startup and leadership experience, preferably who are also familiar with the East Broadway community and existing Somerville organizations. The ideal candidate will be willing to commit to a minimum of 1-2 years, or until all EBMS paperwork is complete and the board has hired an executive director to replace him/her.
Issue #2: Organizations are best launched by a small group of interested people.

While diversity is important in every organization, to start a non-profit you only need a few dedicated people to be involved at the beginning rather than the whole public because too many people can make the process contentious. The key to getting a non-profit off the ground is to find a core group of 2-4 leaders who are willing to work hard to get it formulated. Together, these community members should identify and articulate the vision, mission, values, and goals of EBMS that will drive the organization and be communicated to the public. With support and guidance from the initiator, this working group should also draft long-range strategic and fundraising plans, as well as a community-relations strategy.

East Somerville is the most diverse area of the City with 34 percent of residents identified as non-white. Spanish, Portuguese, and Creole are commonly spoken in the area in addition to English. The EBMS initiator should look for active residents and business owners with varied skills and backgrounds to form a working group that is culturally reflective of the community. Bilingual participants who can communicate with a large portion of the community would facilitate the group’s work. Given the financial, legal, and marketing tasks involved in starting a Main Street organization, it would also be particularly helpful to involve those with knowledge or training in these areas.

**Strategy:** Identify a small, diverse group of dedicated leaders in the community to become the “working group” for EBMS and formulate the non-profit.

**Tactics**
- To reach working group candidates with specific skills or qualities, look for ways in which they might already be organized. The Somerville Rotary Club, for example, is a network of business and professional leaders with an interest in community service.³
- Target owners of Lopesa Services, Peru Travel, and Milagro’s Boutique as potential working group members⁴ and convince them of the benefits EBMS would bring to their businesses. They are excellent candidates because their businesses are well established, they have technical skills, and all speak at least two languages (Chasan & Pistrang 2003). Their participation may help bridge linguistic and cultural gaps between EBMS and the community.

---

³ The Somerville Rotary Club meets every Tuesday, from 12:15-1:30 pm, at the Mt. Vernon Restaurant, which is located at 14 Broadway in Somerville. Non-members are welcome to attend. For more information, see: www.somervillerotary.org.

⁴ SPCD’s record of meetings as of August 25, 2005 indicates that information about EBMS has been left at Lopesa Services and Milagro’s Boutique, but that no meetings have taken place.
Issue #3: Being a government entity limits the degree to which City Hall can engage this community.

According to Maria Ortiz Perez’s research as a Rappaport Public Policy Fellow, a series of events over many years has led the East Broadway community to mistrust City Hall. In particular, the lack of involvement by previous administrations and the failure of projects such as the Streetscape Improvement initiative to materialize has disappointed and disillusioned stakeholders such that they are unlikely to believe any new promises of change coming from City Hall. Further, initiating a community development program by a government entity can be counter-productive because crucial constituencies can reflexively oppose or be suspicious of policies they feel are being imposed on them, which can lead to more distrust.

A government entity can also be intimidating to some residents. Somerville has always been a “gateway city,” and during the 1970s Somerville’s immigration pattern changed quite rapidly. Portuguese-speaking Cape Verdeans began arriving, and in the following decades, immigrants from El Salvador, Brazil, Haiti, and other Latin American countries began to move to the area. Undocumented immigrants especially, fear the consequences of having any contact with City Hall and will avoid their meetings and surveys as a result. These negative feelings toward authority may be exacerbated by the Somerville gang ordinance, which prohibits loitering in public spaces. Sylvia Saavedra, Executive Director of Concilio Hispano, believes that the intentions of this law and of community organizing are mutually exclusive, which may cause City Hall to appear inconsistent to residents.

Given the feelings of mistrust and disillusionment toward City Hall that exist in the community, promotion of an East Broadway Main Street program may be more successful if it comes from and alternative source. Realistically, City Hall will always be closely connected to EBMS, but ideally, it will ultimately assume an ancillary role as just one of multiple funders. Hiring a program initiator to take over the organizing process will help change the voice that carries the message of EBMS, and City Hall should continue to support this person from behind the scenes during the startup phase. However, to increase the potential for participation, EBMS also needs to be clearly presented to the community as an organization that is separate from local government.

---

5 As reported in a memo regarding East Broadway Main Street, from Maria Ortiz Perez to members of the City of Somerville Planning Department on August 29, 2005.


Gibson, Gill, Haring, Ulriksen
Strategy: Create an identity for an East Broadway Main Street organization that is distinct and independent from City Hall.

Tactics
• Since publicity and community engagement are interconnected – the former often resulting in the latter - brand a name and logo for East Broadway Main Street as soon as possible, to be used in all communications and publicity regarding the organization.
• Register the domain name for website and e-mail account use by the initiator and working group, and print business cards and letter head to build recognition of this new entity and avoid reflexive resistance to a government initiative.

Strategy: Begin to rebuild trust in the community by taking steps to address issues of concern to residents.

Tactics
• Allay stakeholders’ fears of false promises from the City by showing complete clarity about the commitment of the Mayor to this project and how much funding is available.
• Take steps to show visible progress toward addressing residents’ concerns as a means of demonstrating the responsiveness of City Hall. For clues as to what issues are currently of concern to residents, consult the Somerville Community Corporation’s Mapping Project, which is based on the results of a survey issued to residents of East Somerville.

The Interstate 93 overpass is the eastern boundary of Somerville before reaching Sullivan Square and Charlestown.
Issue # 4: Building relationships in the community has generated interest but no action yet.

In an initial client interview about the status of implementing a Main Street program in the East Broadway neighborhood, Carlene Campbell, Community Relations Manager for SPCD, stated that she and her staff had visited the community frequently during the summer of 2005 and had built relationships with some stakeholders over time. She said that they had even found some people who expressed interest in the program, but still needed to produce action – such as gaining their commitment to a board.

Many sources agree that media-based outreach is flat and that successful community engagement is founded on exactly this type of sustained personal contact. However, Kennedy Smith, former director of the National Main Street Center, stresses that people who show interest in a Main Street program must be brought together early on to form a coalition in order to give the initiative enough momentum to overcome the reservations of other groups. Therefore, attempts to promote a Main Street program in East Broadway must go beyond building relationships in the community and be followed by the assembly of interested parties.

To convert stakeholder interest into action requires making contact strategically. The initiator should identify the stakeholders from whom s/he would like a commitment, and then lay out a strategic schedule of meetings with each one. S/he should also have a clear purpose and plan for every one-on-one meeting, no matter how informal, and specific goals in mind for each conversation, quickly bringing key leaders together to discuss Main Street issues with each other. Then, with instruction and support, this group can begin to put their ideas on paper in the form of a vision, mission, and values of EBMS.

Strategy: Secure participation of working group members.

Tactics

- Develop a schedule of desired conversations with key constituents and systematically record the objectives and results of each meeting. Include as an objective of individual meetings, to get each person's commitment to attend a working group meeting and discuss EBMS.
- Assign specific roles and tasks to each member of this new working group to keep him/her actively involved. Create a master schedule of the entire startup phase to keep the group, as a whole, focused and motivated, actively working toward a series of deadlines for each step.
Issue #5: Community engagement happens in stages.

According to nationally recognized urban and community planner, Peter Dreier (1996), the essential factor in determining whether or not a community will join together and mobilize around a certain issue is the organizers and leaders involved. People are naturally more likely to be influenced by those they recognize and legitimize, such as their fellow community members, than by outsiders. Community engagement, therefore, starts by getting a few interested constituents involved in the cause and then guiding them through the process of engaging others in their community. People may be more likely to participate in the initiative if they see that their fellow community members are involved.

In the case of EBMS, this process can be realized through the outreach efforts of the working group, which should be driven by the initiator. Meredith Levy, Director of Community Organizing for the Somerville Community Corporation (SCC), has found it effective to assign specific organizing tasks to people, such as to distribute invitations for an event within their networks, and then follow up with them after a short time.

Strategy: Via the initiator, guide the working group to generate support for and participation in EBMS by fellow community members.

Tactics
- Ask working group members to generate lists of their contacts in the community and to distribute invitations to informational meetings or promotional events in person, in order to publicize their involvement with the organization. Follow up with them persistently.
- The working group should include stipulations for diversity in their bylaws regarding the future board of directors and actively recruit involvement from different groups.
Issue #6: Non-profit organizations in Somerville are valuable resources for engaging other stakeholders.

Non-profit organizations already working in East Somerville, especially those with organizing experience could be valuable assets in the implementation of a Main Street Program in the East Broadway neighborhood. Maria Ortiz Perez, Business Development Specialist, recognized this when she said, “non-profits need to become allies, not competitors [of City Hall].” However, some organizations are unclear about the purpose of EBMS and are concerned that it will compete or conflict with their own missions. Experts agree that a key to community engagement is to have one goal and be very clear about what it is, then communicate it well to others and ask them to take part.

A new organization should not be started in a place where it will be competing with what is already there. Initiators of EBMS must recognize the work of existing organizations in East Somerville and determine how its own mission is different and beneficial to the area. It is also important to identify the strengths of key stakeholders and think about how each can be used as a resource instead of posing a threat. Every non-profit in Somerville already occupies a niche in the community and attracts particular groups of residents with the services it provides. Each might be able to further the progress of EBMS in certain areas where City Hall is limited by being a government entity.

Strategy: Make Somerville non-profit organizations allies of City Hall and EBMS by clearly communicating the purpose, addressing potential concerns upfront, and showing complete transparency at every stage.

Tactics
- Convene a meeting of local non-profit leaders to communicate the mission and engagement strategies of EBMS, get to know these stakeholders and the work they perform, and acknowledge their expertise by asking for advice on how to reach certain resident populations.
- Identify the niche of each organization and create unique roles for them accordingly, that will utilize their strengths.

7 As reported in a memo regarding East Broadway Main Street, from Maria Ortiz Perez to members of the City of Somerville Planning Department on August 29, 2005.
Issue #7: Business owners are key constituents of Main Street programs but are difficult to organize.

Many business owners are too busy to attend community meetings. Entrepreneurs operating new businesses in particular, often work twelve or more hours per day while trying to stabilize their ventures. Sylvia Saavedra reports that some business owners in the East Broadway area also have limited business skills and means with which to work. They are unaware of community-wide economic development issues and too preoccupied by the basics of running a business to work with EBMS on achieving broader goals for downtown revitalization. The former Executive Director of ACCION International recommended using its services in microfinance and business development as a means of addressing these concerns.

Another subset of the business community comprises owners of long-standing businesses, for whom the objectives of a Main Street program hold more immediate relevance. This group can also be hard to organize because they tend to be independent and professionally focused, and not necessarily interested in attending informal community meetings.

However, some sources suggest that they like to feel important and will respond well to special functions and professional recognition. This presents an opportunity for City Hall because it has the ability to provide these resources.

Strategy: Engage preoccupied business owners by providing business improvement tips under the EBMS name so that they will associate the growth and improvement of their businesses with the organization.

Tactics
• Distribute fliers to local businesses with easily implemented ideas for enhanced window displays or promotional activities.

Strategy: Facilitate training and support for owners of less developed businesses so that they can take advantage of and participate more fully in EBMS initiatives.

Tactics
• Contact Boston-based organizations such as ACCION USA and the Center for Women & Enterprise about the possibilities of assisting East Broadway business owners who cannot access traditional sources of credit or business development services.

• Collaborate with local non-profits such as Concilio Hispano, to provide free language courses to business owners who are interested in building their capacity to communicate with diverse populations and expanding their client base.

Strategy: Inform and engage established business owners at special functions held to acknowledge the business community.

Tactics
• Host periodic luncheons that acknowledge the work of the business community and discuss local economic development issues. Invite the Mayor to attend as a guest to show his support for EBMS.
• Take appropriate action in the interim to address issues raised at the meetings, in order to build trust with these stakeholders and demonstrate the City’s commitment to working with them.
• Convene informational meetings and community events at local businesses whenever possible to encourage the involvement of owners and provide them with free publicity and increased patronage.

8 | ACCION USA provides loans and other services to help self-employed individuals grow their businesses; The Center for Women & Enterprise empowers women to become economically self-sufficient and prosperous through entrepreneurship. For more information see: www.accionusa.org and www.cwefonline.org.
Issue #8: Downtown revitalization is not a priority for many residents.

In such an ethnically and economically diverse community, some residents have concerns that take precedence for them over the objectives of a Main Street program, or even preclude them from participating at all. For example, some parents must devote all of their resources to providing income, shelter, and food for their families and are unconcerned by issues of downtown revitalization. Other community members, especially recent immigrants, do not speak or understand English—if, in itself, can be a barrier to engagement—and are focused on acquiring language skills and adjusting to their new neighborhood rather than improving the commercial district.

Community engagement experts widely insist that organizing depends on constituents’ level of interest in the issues at hand. While the work of a Main Street organization may benefit these East Broadway residents eventually, it is difficult to demonstrate how it will affect their daily lives now. Given the challenges and stages of gaining community involvement in new programs, EBMS initiators should target their energy on community leaders and interested residents during the startup phase.

In the future, the community’s youth should be involved in EBMS programs and events wherever possible because they can serve as a bridge to adult populations that are harder to reach. In fact, Tufts Professor James Jennings, who has researched and written extensively on topics of urban and neighborhood politics, social welfare, and community development, suggests that providing training and resources for young people is one of the best ways to sustain community engagement over a long period of time. Involving youth in the organization and giving them participatory roles at meetings and events builds connections to their parents in the short-run and effectively trains the next generation of East Broadway’s community leaders in the long-run.

Strategy: Focus initial engagement efforts on groups who are already interested and available.

Tactics
- Enlist the support of residents who have already shown their interest in a Main Street program and attended past informational meetings. They can be asked to organize their neighbors and initiate conversations about EBMS within their networks, and gather community perspectives on issues to inform the working group.

Strategy: Engage youth to raise awareness of EBMS in the community.

Tactics
- Involve youth in EBMS community events. Collaborate with Somerville High School to provide student volunteer opportunities that would complement its business education curriculum, student internship program, or the community service component of its mission.

Storefronts that could benefit from future improvements by EBMS
The success of a planning initiative depends as much on the community as it does on its directors. Community engagement and participation must be fostered at every opportunity and require long-range strategic planning. Joan Hummel (1996), author of *Starting and Running a Non-profit Organization*, warns, “Unless you develop community relations according to a well-thought-out plan, your efforts in this area will have limited, transitory, and perhaps harmful effects.”

In the case of an East Broadway Main Streets program, transparency and communication will be essential throughout the life of the organization to maintain stakeholder support and involvement. Regular community events can help keep the public informed about the progress of EBMS and generate enthusiasm for the organization’s mission. Potential tools and events for encouraging ongoing community engagement and participation in EBMS once the organization is established include:
East Broadway Main Street Website

A website should be started as quickly as possible to help brand the East Broadway Main Street name and publicize the program within the community. The initial site should be very basic so as not exclude any segments of the population.

Steps to implement:
- See Appendix 3 for sample pages
- Look to other Main Street websites for ideas about the types of information to include. One good example is the North Park Main Street website at: http://www.northparkmainstreet.com.

In the long-run, this website can:
- Provide information to the general public about EBMS
- Offer anticipated before and after images of East Broadway to communicate the future goals of the program
- Provide information to residents and outside consumers about activities and programs going on in the area
- Promote transparency of the Main Street Board by reporting on meetings and proposed actions
- Provide a community discussion board and forum to encourage community involvement
- Grow in the future and truly reflect the different segments of the East Broadway community

Art Displays

EBMS should build on existing relationships that SPCD has formed with the artist community. To do this, the board could commission artists from the Somerville Arts Council to create public art in the East Broadway area. With special grant funding, the board could pay artists to paint local utility boxes or host other displays of their artwork around the neighborhood.

Restaurant owners should be encouraged to allow artists to display original work in their establishments. As an incentive, EBMS could sponsor periodic “Art Walks” to attract patrons. Maps highlighting each business hosting artwork could guide visitors as they walk through the neighborhood and stop at various establishments. Similar Art Walks sponsored by the North Park Main Street in San Diego each draw around 2,000-3,000 people to the community to view art.

Steps to implement:
- Continue collaboration with the Somerville Arts Council and initiate a relationship with Somerville Open Studios
- Inform them about the goals of EBMS and the potential mutual benefits for the community and the artists of this collaboration
- Work with the artists to design projects that are appropriate to the character of the community
- Advertise the Art Walks through the networks of artists and businesses involved

In the long run Art Walks can:
- Bring recognition to local artists
- Make art more readily accessible to residents
- Visually enhance the neighborhood
- Increase foot traffic in the commercial district and draw potential patrons into restaurants
- Bring publicity to the EBMS
**Vendor Fair**

One way to introduce outside consumers to the businesses within the community is to hold a vendor fair in Foss Park. Restaurants from the East Broadway area could each have a booth where they sell food, and merchants could sell their specialty goods. In addition, artists in the community could display or sell their work in the park, and neighborhood youth or performing arts groups could perform. One variation of this concept could be an international festival to celebrate cultural diversity in the area.

Steps to implement:

- Hold the vendor fair on a Saturday during spring or summer when people are likely to attend
- Publicize the event extensively until it develops a reputation with residents and surrounding communities
- Encourage artists and business owners to discuss it with their customers and hand out promotional material with purchases
- Target advertising in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic, such as college campuses and Davis Square
- Sponsor an international parade for children and families to celebrate their cultural heritage

- Invite international musicians who represent the various cultures of the East Broadway community to perform in Foss Park

In the long run this vendor fair can:

- Get members of the East Broadway community to socialize with each other in a positive environment
- Introduce residents to businesses they may not have visited before
- Begin improving the image of Foss Park and strengthening the identity of East Broadway
- Provide opportunities for fundraising (raffle tickets, for example)
APPENDIX 1 - Methodology

Strategic Planning Process
Strategic planning is a management tool used to set goals, and develop approaches to achieving them, which are responsive to an organization’s environment and resources. Upon review of a range of management and planning literature, we adapted an approach to strategic planning that is specific to this project and our client’s needs, integrating portions of multiple models and tools. To arrive at our strategic plan, we used the following process:
1. Identify the purpose
2. Develop a database of quality information
3. Assess the situation
4. Identify and prioritize critical issues
5. Develop strategies to address critical issues
6. Propose actions to carry out strategies

To gather the information necessary for a situational assessment, we conducted interviews with a variety of experts and consulted published sources as well as unpublished written material provided by the City of Somerville Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development. This data included demographic information, prior interviews with community members, and other surveys that have been conducted by members of the department.

Primary Interviews
We contacted several key informants, with varying areas of expertise, for personal interviews. Academic experts interviewed include professors from Tufts University, who specialize in community development and research, as well as non-profit startup and management. They provided an academic basis for the study and essential theoretical perspectives on the engagement of diverse communities. Community engagement experts interviewed include professionals with experience organizing Somerville residents and Main Street programs. They provided insight into eliciting diverse community participation, allowing the team to build upon the successes and shortcomings of past efforts when tailoring strategies to the unique characteristics of the East Broadway area of Somerville. East Somerville organizers provided important details about the makeup of the local community. These experts included some local non-profit managers, who also happen to be stakeholders in EBMS.

Professor James Jennings
James Jennings is a professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University. His research covers urban and neighborhood politics, social welfare, and community development. Professor Jennings has prior experience working on The Demonstration Disposition Program in Boston, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, and various other projects, mostly dealing with low-income neighborhoods in the Boston area.

Gibson, Gill, Haring, Ulriksen
Professor John Hammock
John Hammock is a professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. His professional activities include positions as the founder and former Executive Director of the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University, the former Executive Director of Oxfam America (1984-1995), the former executive director of ACCION International (1973-1980), and as a Consultant for Women's World Banking and USAID.

Kennedy Smith
Kennedy Smith directed the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s National Main Street Center for 13 years and is considered one of the world's leading experts on downtowns, downtown economics, independent business development, and the economic impact of sprawl.

Jay Turner
Jay Turner was recommended by Kennedy Smith as an expert in managing Main Street programs in diverse communities. He worked with Main Street organizations in three California towns over twenty years: North Park in San Diego, Mendocino County, and Humboldt County.

Lisa Brukilacchio
Lisa Brukilacchio is the Community Engagement Specialist at Lincoln Filene Center for Community Partnerships at the University College of Citizenship and Public Service. She has experience working with various communities in Somerville.

Carlene Campbell
Carlene Campbell is the Community Relations Manager for the Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development in Somerville, MA. She has been part of the Main Street initiative in East Broadway since its inception in 2005 and continues to play an integral role in its development.

Sebastian Chaskel
Sebastian Chaskel is a Tufts University student from the University College of Citizenship and Public Service. He has worked with SCC on community organizing initiatives and been involved with the East Somerville Neighbors for Change organization. Mr. Chaskel has also established informal contacts with religious organizations in the area.

Daisy Gomez
Daisy Gomez works at Saint Benedict's Church in Somerville and is an informal community organizer. Her work at the church mainly consists of leading religion classes with El Salvadorans and other Central and South American church members. Ms. Gomez works directly with about 400 children, youth, and adults, and has regular contact with the broader church community of 800 to 1,000 residents.

Meredith Levy
Appendix

Meredith Levy is the director of community organizing for the Somerville Community Corporation (SCC), a non-profit organization that works with the East Broadway community. SCC develops and manages affordable housing, provides supportive services, organizes low-income Somerville communities around affordable housing issues, and also works on neighborhood organizing. East Somerville has been a target of SCC since 2003.

Maria Ortiz Perez
Maria Ortiz Perez is a Business Development Specialist for the Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development in Somerville, MA. She began work on the Main Street initiative in 2005 as a Rappaport Fellow at Harvard University, and was recently hired by SPCD in early 2006 to continue working on the Main Street initiative.

Sylvia Saavedra
Sylvia Saavedra has been the Executive Director of Concilio Hispano for more than ten years. Concilio Hispano, Inc. is a non-profit human service organization that was founded in 1969 by Latinos who wanted to improve conditions in their community. The programs that they offer focus on education, information & referrals, interpreting and translation, health, family, and youth.
APPENDIX 2 – The National Main Street Model

The Four-Point Approach
The Main Street Four-Point approach was developed by the Center in 1970 and has been implemented in over 1,200 Main Streets across the United States. It requires that each main street focus on four key development areas. These are:

- **Design** - enhancing the physical appearance of the district through streetscape and storefront improvements, building rehabilitation, and design management systems.
- **Organization** - building coalitions among private and public interests and individuals, and finding funding for the revitalization activities.
- **Promotion** - marketing the events in the commercial district to attract outside consumers, visitors, potential investors and new businesses.
- **Economic Restructuring** - strengthening the districts economic base and creating new opportunities through careful analysis and appropriate market based strategies (National Main Street Center, www.nationaltrust.org/main_street).

The Four-Point Approach is guided by the philosophy that is outlined in the Eight Guiding Principles that the Center puts forth for each community that is undertaking a Main Street project. In order to increase the possibility of success, the Eight Guiding Principles call for each Main Street to be:

1. **Comprehensive** - There should be no single focus but instead there needs to be effort put into all areas of the Four-Point Approach. This is the only way that a Main Street will achieve long term, sustainable revitalization.
2. **Incremental change** - Each Main Street needs to begin with small basic steps to demonstrate to the community that something is happening. As understanding and trust in the program increases over time, then the Main Street can begin to tackle more complex problems.
3. **Self-help** - There needs to be the will and the buy-in by local leaders for a Main Street to be successful. There has to be the commitment on the part of several key individuals to mobilize resources and the community.
4. **Partnerships** – both public and private parties are going to have interests in the outcome of the Main Street, so both sectors must work together to understand each one’s strengths and limitations, in order create a more effective partnership.
5. **Identifying and capitalizing existing assets** – Each district is going to have characteristics that make it unique and speak to the history of that location. Those historic elements must be identified and can serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
6. **Quality** – An emphasis on quality is essential for every aspect of the revitalization process. There especially should be an emphasis on quality over quantity.
7. **Change** – This refers to a change that will come in attitudes and perceptions towards the Main Street and the change will be seen in business practices and the physical appearance of the district.
8. **Implementation** – Main Streets must show visible changes as way of reinforcing the idea that the program is working to improve the district. Constant revitalization effort will also help build confidence in the program over time (www.mainstreet.org).
Boards of Directors

Generally, the board will determine the problems that need to be addressed, and usually two very broad market based strategies to address them. It is then the job of each sub-committee to determine the specific tools and tasks that will be used to achieve the broader strategy (Kennedy Smith Interview). A visual representation of this process, with examples of the types of tasks that could be undertaken by each committee, which would be further broken down, is depicted in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Market-Based Strategy #1</th>
<th>Market-Based Strategy #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>• Storefront Improvements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>• Partner with local government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>• Advertising events in local newspaper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Restructuring</td>
<td>• Window displays</td>
<td>• Improved lighting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 (Kennedy Smith, personal interview, February 24, 2006)

Phases of Growth

The National Trust helps each Main Street map out its growth over a 15-year period (See figure 2). Programs are given the most help during the initial three to five year period, which is known as the catalyst period. In this time, there is very little revenue coming in and because of this, the available money should be put into activities that will increase sales revenues, rather than into physical improvements. Of the Main Streets that fail and dissolve, 95 percent fail at the five-year mark. Kennedy Smith, who directed the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center for 13 years, believes this failure occurs because it is human nature to want to start projects but not sustain them. During this period, it is essential to change the makeup of the organization to make sure that there are people who are committed to sustaining the project in the long term (Kennedy Smith Interview).

In the next phase, the growth phase, successful Main Streets have been able to increase sales revenues. There is also a focus on design management, determining the role of the district within the larger regional economy, becoming a credible organization, and a long-term focus (Kennedy Smith Interview). It is also necessary to put in place measures that will ensure that some of the sales revenue being generated gets put back into the Main Street, in order to allow the program to be self-sustaining in the future. The last stage of the program is known as management. In this time period, the Main Street has become established in the community and has experienced successes in rehabilitation and lowering the vacancy rate. The Main Street must then maintain its successes and continue to work to further the goals of the community.

Gibson, Gill, Haring, Ulriksen
APPENDIX 3 – Website example

East Broadway Main Street

Mission Statement

Description of the Main Street program in the East Broadway area. Could include pictures of the community, businesses, or photos from recent events.

News!!

•

•

•

•

Address,
Contact Information

Executive Director profile
Board Member Profile
Board Member Profile
Board Member Profile

Design
Organization
Promotion
Economic Restructuring

About Us

Description of the area, along with links to descriptions of the board members.

Agendas/Reports

Put summaries of meetings online, along with any annual reports.

Business Directory

List of all businesses that are paying dues and are part of the Main Street.
APPENDIX 4 - Memorandum of Understanding

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
TUFTS UNIVERSITY FIELD PROJECTS TEAM NO. 9
AND
THE CITY OF SOMERVILLE
MAYOR’S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I. Introduction
Project (i.e., team) number: 9
Project title: Main Streets Initiative – East Broadway and Magoun Square

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) summarizes the scope of work, work product(s) and deliverables, timeline, work processes and methods, and lines of authority, supervision and communication relating to the Field Project identified above (the “Project”), as agreed to between (i) the candidates for the Master of Arts degree enrolled during the spring 2006 semester in the Field Projects and Planning course (UEP-255) (the “Course”) offered by the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (UEP) who are identified in Paragraph II(1) below (the “Field Projects Team”); (ii) the City of Somerville, Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, further identified in Paragraph II(2) below (the “Client”); and (iii) a Tufts faculty member directly involved in teaching the Course during the spring 2006 semester.

II. Specific Provisions
(1) The Field Projects Team working on the Project consists of the following individuals:

1. Constanza Ulriksen  email: costanza.ulriksen@tufts.edu  phone:

(2) The Client’s contact information is as follows:

Key contact/supervisor: Carlene Campbell
Email address: FAX number:
The goal/goals of the Project is/are:
Research and recommend new strategies for attracting diverse community participation in the East Broadway Main Streets Initiative. Time permitting, assist client with implementation and evaluation of strategies.

The work processes and methods by which the Field Projects Team intends to achieve this goal/these goals is/are:
- Review existing data on the East Broadway Main Streets Initiative; visit community with client to familiarize ourselves with the area; and summarize neighborhood characteristics, challenges to community engagement, and strategies that have already been tried and the corresponding results they produced.
- Research the topics of community engagement and how to recruit an effective nonprofit startup board; research/examine existing successful organizations that are based on diverse public participation.
- Interview community engagement specialists and other professionals with experience successfully launching participatory initiatives or recruiting startup nonprofit board members.
- Synthesize above findings and develop and recommend new community engagement strategies for furthering the Main Streets initiative in the East Broadway area of Somerville.
- Assist client with the implementation of 1 or more new strategies and document results.

The Project work products and deliverables are:
- Overview/summary report of: basic information about the Main Streets program and its potential for East Broadway, demographics & characteristics of the East Broadway neighborhood, methods/strategies for increasing public participation that have already been tried by the client and the results they produced
- Summary of research & interviews on community engagement and nonprofit board recruitment
- Strategic plan for increasing community engagement in the East Broadway Main Streets initiative and attracting a diverse board (including goals, challenges, and corresponding strategies)
- If Applicable: a progress-report on the status of implementation of new strategies and their level of success

The anticipated Project timeline is:
- Feb. 6-27 (3 weeks): Collect background information, conduct research & interviews, and outline report (outline due Feb. 27)
- Feb. 27-March 6 (1 week): Continue to conduct interviews/follow-up questioning and research if necessary; Develop strategy recommendations and prepare oral presentation (presentation due March 6)
- March 6-April 3 (3 weeks + 1 week spring break): Finalize strategy recommendations, draft report and assist client in strategy implementation (draft of report due April 3)
Appendix

April 3-24 (3 weeks): Finalize report, continue to work with client on strategy implementation, write up evaluation of strategies in progress, and prepare final class presentation (final presentation due April 24)

April 24-May 3 (10 days): Last revisions, edits, and printing of report (finished report due May 3)

(7) The lines of authority, supervision and communication between the Client and the Field Project Team are:

- Heather is primary client contact for correspondence and scheduling.
- Students’ project-related decisions are made as a team with guidance from course professors as necessary.
- Carlene Campbell, SPCD Community Relations Manager will be the primary person who will be working with and assisting the Field Team in accomplishing the MOU. Ms. Campbell will be able to assign additional staff to work with students in the future.

(8) The understanding with regard to payment/reimbursement by the client to the Field Projects Team of any Project-related expenses is:

- Due to the fact that the City of Somerville has many resources available the Field Team to use it is normally not the practice of City to reimburse students. However, the City would consider reimbursement of items as long as the Field Team has had them pre-authorized by the supervising staff.

III. Additional Representations and Understandings

A. The Field Projects Team is undertaking the Course and the Project for academic credit and therefore compensation (other than reimbursement of Project-related expenses) may not be provided to team members.

B. Because the Course and the Project itself are part of a larger academic context, it is understood that the final work product and deliverables of the Project (the “Work Product”) – either in whole or in part – may and most likely will be shared with others inside and beyond the Tufts community. This may include, without limitation, the distribution of the Work Product to other students, faculty and staff, release to community groups or public agencies, general publication, and posting on the Web. Tufts University and the Field Project Team may seek and secure grant funds or similar payment to defray the cost of any such distribution or publication. It is expected that any issues involving Client confidentiality or proprietary information that arise in connection with a Project will be narrow ones that can be resolved by discussion among the Client, the Field Projects Team and a Tufts instructor directly responsible for the Course (or his or her designee).

C. It is understood that this Project may require the approval (either through full review or by exemption) of the Tufts University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process is not expected to interfere with timely completion of the project.
TO: Lauren Haring, Heather Gill, Brenna Gibson, Constanza Utiriksen

This letter is your official notification that your research project

*Main Street Initiative – East Broadway and Magoun Square*

*(Protocol # 0601012)*

is exempt from further IRB review for the following reason:

2. Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior UNLESS the information is recorded in a manner in which the subject can be identified AND disclosure would place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to financial standing, employability, or reputation. This does not apply where the subjects are children except where it involves passive observation of public behavior.

No written consent documentation is required.

Please be sure to print a copy of this notification for your files.

Helen A. Page
IRB Administrator
February 28, 2006

Helen A. Page, Ed.D.
Associate Director of Research Administration
Office of the Vice Provost
20 Professors Row
Tufts University
Medford, MA 02155
Phone: 617-627-5187
FAX 617-627-3673
Email: helen.page@tufts.edu
URL: http://tufts.edu/central/research
APPENDIX 6 - Sources

References


East Somerville Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area. (????). Conducted by the City of Somerville Office of Housing and Community Development.

Bibliography


Appendix


Interviews


Gibson, B. & Haring, L. February 17, 2006. Interview with Lisa Brukilacchio.

Gibson, B., Gill, H., Haring, L. & Ulriksen
Gibson, B. & Haring L. February 24, 2006. Interview with Kennedy Smith.


Gill, H. March 23, 2006. Attendance at Union Square Main Streets Board meeting.

Gill, H. & Haring, L. February 17, 2006. Interview with Meredith Levy.


Haring, L. March 7, 2006. Phone Interview with Jay Turner.

Ulriksen, C. February 16, 2006. Interview with James Jennings.

Ulriksen, C. February 24, 2006. Phone interview with Sebasant Chaskel.

Ulriksen, C. February 27, 2006. Phone interview with Daisy Gomez.

Ulrisken, C. March 8, 2006. Interview with Sylvia Saavedra.

Websites

http://www.health.state.mn.us/communityeng/disparities/strategies.html
http://www.cdc.gov/phppo/pec/index.htm
http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g1s2.html
http://www.globalfuture.com/planning.htm
http://www.allianceonline.org/
http://managementhelp.org/
http://dmoz.org/Business/Management/Strategic_Planning/
http://www.northparkmainstreet.com