

Guide to Establishing and Achieving
Measureable Revitalization Goals

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Introduction

There are probably thousands of cities and towns throughout the United States attempting to achieve revitalization. Many are failing or are having limited success. There are a number of reasons for the lack of success, but a common feature is the lack of measureable strategic goals and a clear set of actions to reach them.

This report provides a practical guide to establishing and achieving measureable strategic goals. These techniques apply to communities which experienced or are experiencing decline in population and wealth.

Strategic Goals

Towns attempting revitalizations programs are typically trying to restore the community or town center to a remembered past prosperity. At some period in the past the town had sufficient population, jobs and income to support a thriving town center with retail, eating and drinking, amusement and other establishments. This period of economic stability is usually the result of a long period of growth.

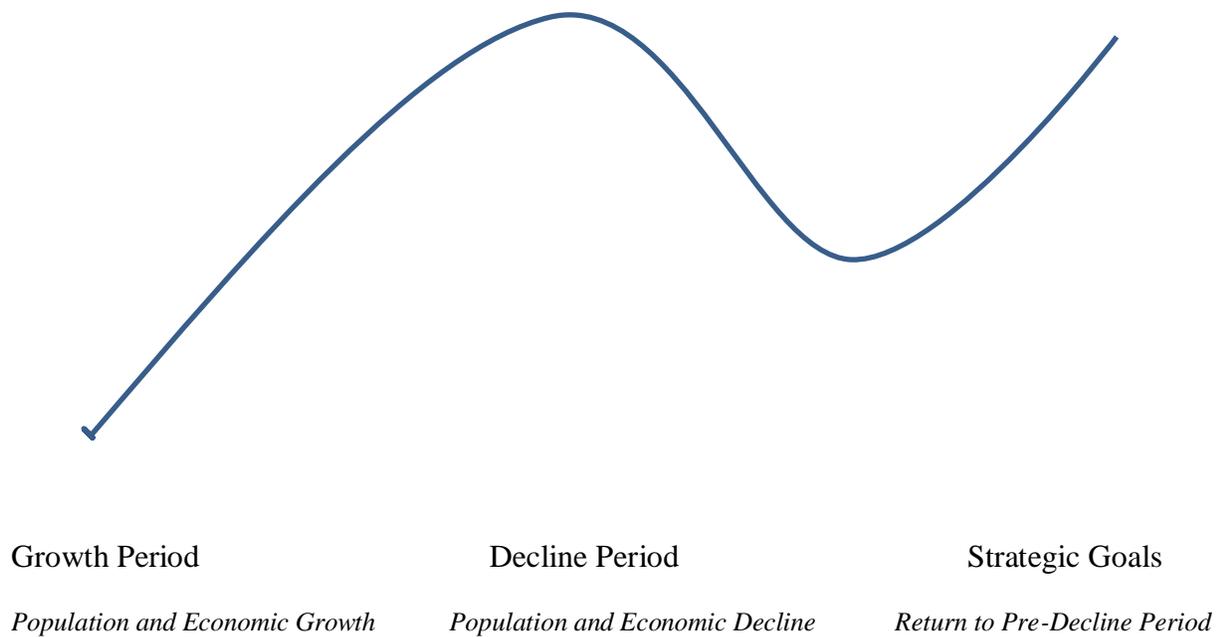
At some point in time a causal event or events occurred, such as a closing of a major employer facility, leading to a period of population and employment decline. During the period of decline middle and upper income families relocate out of the community to seek employment. Without the required population and consumer spending levels businesses in the town center close. Store fronts become empty. Buildings destroyed by fire or other catastrophe are not rebuilt, leaving vacant lots. Declining rental incomes impact abilities to maintain or renovate buildings.

The following graph illustrates a typical population and economic profile of a town with a past period of growth followed by decline.

The graph also reveals the necessary strategic plan for revitalization: return to the pre-decline period population and economy.

Revitalization Strategy Goals

Return to Pre-Decline Period Population and Economy



To achieve revitalization a community's strategic plan should be to restore population and economy to the pre-decline period. Only then will there be sufficient consumer spending available to sustain town center business activity.

The measurable goals for such a strategy are to achieve:

1. Population growth to pre-decline number.
2. Jobs expansion to pre-decline total.
3. Incomes increased to pre-decline levels adjusted for inflation, measurable by per capita, household or family income.
4. Property values growth to pre-decline amounts adjusted for inflation, measurable by property tax revenue or valuations.

All revitalization related actions should be directed at accomplishing this set of goals. Any projects, programs, activities or events that are not focused on the strategic goals could be unproductive and not efficient use of limited resources.

Action

Organization. The first step in revitalization is to create an appropriate organization, if none exists, to develop and execute the strategic plan. In the United States the recommended form of organization is the non-profit, 501 [c][3], public-private corporation.

Many of these corporations have proven successful and have the advantages of non-taxable revenue, eligibility for government grants and loans, ability to solicit tax deductible donations and capable of a wide range of actions.

The articles of incorporation of the public-private partnership should expressly state a mission that includes economic development, residential development and community development as areas of responsibility and authorize the required actions to accomplish its mission.

The following flow chart illustrates the recommended coordinated actions for effective revitalization:

Revitalization Strategy Action and Goals



Manage, Support and Encourage



Economic Development Residential Development Community Development



By Managing or Facilitating

Real Estate Financing Advocacy Marketing Events



Through

Public-Private Partnership



To Restore Population, Jobs, Income and Real Estate Property Values

To

Pre-Decline Levels

Economic Development is the attraction, expansion or retention of business or other employers, usually for the purposes of creating jobs and tax revenue. It can be monitored by employment and employer data, local income tax revenue, industrial and commercial tax revenue and the number of building permits issued.

Residential Development is the expansion of the number of habitable housing units by construction, renovation or repurposing. Affordable housing projects are designed to meet the housing needs of low income households. Gentrification is the term often used to describe a program of increasing residential units for middle and upper income households. Success of residential development can be gauged by changes in average household incomes, residential property values, residential building permits issued or population.

Community Development is the development of community owned facilities for community uses, such as parks, playgrounds, pools, libraries or community centers. An effective program should benefit employers by making the community attractive for hiring and retaining employees, and benefit residential property owners by maintaining or increasing property values. Accordingly, employment numbers and residential property valuations are good performance measures for community development results.

Real Estate development is an essential component of a revitalization strategy. Without it there will be no revitalization. The public-private partnership should have the power to acquire, sell, lease, construct, renovate, repair, improve or demolish real property. It should also have the capability to assist private sector businesses, investors and developers in undertaking building projects. Building permits issued and property valuations are short term indicators of increases in real estate projects.

Finance provides the essential means to accomplish development and revitalization. The partnership should have the ability to receive grants, donations, contributions or loans from any source, and to make grants, loans or loan guarantees. The corporation must also be able to facilitate financing for businesses, investors and developers from private or government sources, including tax incentives.

Advocacy is the act of affecting government decision making, usually on regulatory issues, short of lobbying. Advocacy is commonly employed to seek changes in zoning or construction permitting ordinances to allow real estate projects to proceed. It may also be used as a means of recommending new government incentive programs.

Marketing is a form of communication directed at a target audience through advertising, public relations or other means. Its main purpose in revitalization efforts is to attract private investment and businesses, or in some cases, residents with intended income levels. An effective revitalization program requires the completion of an objective, data driven, market analysis before implementing a marketing campaign.

Events are usually managed to bring potential customers to town centers to generate retail and restaurant sales and as a means of supporting local business. Parades, fairs and festivals are examples of event

management projects. Events by themselves are not productive revitalization tools. They should only be a small part of a comprehensive and coordinated strategy with the above components.

Conclusion

Revitalization is attainable with an appropriate organizational structure whose purpose is to manage support and encourage coordinated economic development, residential development and community development by managing or facilitating real estate, financing, advocacy, marketing and event projects, with a clear measureable strategic goal of restoring the population, jobs, income and property values to their pre-decline levels.

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