

Mainstreets and Town center Associations in in Australia and New Zealand

New Zealand

- Background
- The emergence of Main streets Associations and Town center Associations
- Institutional Actors
- Case Example : Tapakuna Beach
- Role of local governments
- Future Trends

New Zealand

Background

- Proliferation of suburban malls from the 1960's to 1980's hollowed out the traditional town centers
- The response of traditional town centers was the importation of the "Mainstreet" model for town center revitalization
- The Mainstreet Program in New Zealand was promoted primarily by city center business, council planners, urban designers and heritage preservationists.
- Improvements in the built environment as well as promotional events and branding were the main focus.
- Currently, there are about 150 Mainstreets and Town center Organizations in New Zealand

The Mainstreets Five Point Plan

- Built Environment/ Landscape and Design
- Heritage and Environment
- Business Improvement
- Marketing
- Promotions

Problems:

- Operations and financial sustainability were neglected
- Urban design and improvements in the built environment were emphasized over local community development

Financing Town and City Centers

Initially, most Councils granted sums of \$10,000-\$30,000 to their town center Business Associations, to assist them to function.

Current thinking is that Town Centers can achieve financial sustainability through the self-funding mechanism of Separate Rating (SR). Separate Rating is acknowledged by virtually all town center organizations as the only means possible for them to become competitive with the encroachment and proliferation of mall development in New Zealand.

Currently in New Zealand there are approximately forty to fifty town centers which have self-funding Town Centers.

What does Separate Rating imply?

- Separate rating policy is implemented to enable the local commercial center to implement business improvement and marketing initiatives for the town center as well as undertake strategic issues.
- A separate rate is a levy, or rate is imposed on a defined commercial sector of a town or city. The rate often based on a percentage of land value and must meet the pre-determined policy or policies of the local Council to be implemented.
- For a separate rate to be struck on a commercial sector, the Local Council legally must have a policy in place to determine the framework within which the rate can be struck.
- The Town Centre Development Group is the principle advocacy group that lobbies local governments to put in place Separate Rating policies

Case Example: Takapuna Business Development Concept

The Takapuna Business Development concept was developed by the Town Centre Development Group , an association of professionals who work together in separate but related disciplines in the development of town and city centers and community organizations.

Takapuna Business Development Concept

- In 1999 a foot traffic count taken in Takapuna found that of 13 areas in Takapuna CBD area, all were in decline with 12 empty shops in Hurstmere Road, which once was considered the prime shopping centre of North Shore City.
- The Takapuna Business Association had been concerned about the decline for many years and had over a 5 year period had attempted to raise interest and give profile to separate rating (SR). In 2000 the Takapuna Business Association gained funding from North Shore City Council, contracted Town Centre Development Group (TCDG) to undertake the SR process which was successful. The rate was implemented in July 2001.

Takapuna Business Development Concept

- The main focuses of the Development concept were architecture and physical environment, 'branding', and creating a sense of place.
- One of problems identified was that the beach frontage was cut off from the CBD area with all commercial buildings backing onto the beach. The plan saw the need to create physical links between the Takapuna CBD area and the beach.
- To begin the process of creating a sense of place and developing Takapuna as a destination, it was decided to undertake a branding exercise. Though they decided to preserve enclaves of interest such as— arts/theatre precinct; financial/professional precinct; shopping precinct; Takapuna required unifying or branding to bring it together as an overarching 'whole'.
- Branding workshops were undertaken with members of the local community, Takapuna Business Association and members of the local Council. The branding workshops identified Takapuna's personality as conservative, individual and described as 'a comfy old slipper'.

Takapuna Business Development Concept

- The vision for the new Takapuna was a dynamic, vibrant place to 'live well, play well and work well' – values which encompassed the community and business sectors alike
- Taking the long white sand beach alongside the CBD area as the key icon, the first step was a name change for Takapuna to Takapuna Beach.
- The Takapuna Beach Business Association's (TBBA) early task was to create ambience in the CBD area –through street performance, colorful flags and banners in a marine theme.
- In the first year of operation , \$60,000 was spent town centre development. The first year of operations also featured street performance and music on the streets, which began to create a sense of interest. Commercial vacancies had been reduced from 12 to 2.

The Role of Local Government

- To provide mechanisms by which Town and City center Organizations can achieve Separate Rating
- To assist selected town and Local Authorities to undertake much-needed capital works programmes which will (1) underpin local identity/brand and (2) create local benefits socially, environmentally and economically.
- The self-funding mechanism of SR should be matched dollar to dollar by local government, because the resultant *community and public benefits*.
- At present, there is an overlapping of functions between local government and Town Centre organizations, with local governments involved in brand building and tourism promotion as well.

Future Trends?

- The Town center Development Group wrote a discussion policy paper for the New Zealand Labour Party. The paper discusses the potential of New Zealand traditional town centers economically, socially and environmentally, which they believe are not yet being realized. The paper was approved and adopted by the NZLP prior to the last election and is currently being developed as policy.
- Some of the key points from the Town Centre Development Groups vision statement follow

Opportunities for Town and City Centers in New Zealand

- Town and City Centers (TCC) can function as tourism destinations in their own right.
- TCCs can be peripheral economies, complementary to existing tourism attractions
- Economic generators – TCCs Organizations can facilitate true private/public sector partnerships and relationships. TCCs that have a professional organizational structure and sustainable finance can attract significant support from the private sector

Opportunities for Town and City Centers in New Zealand

- Community and civic functions – town centers provide significant resources to community groups, local schools, and local artists on a weekly basis
- TCC Orgs can provide employment opportunities (retail is one of the largest employers including providing entrée to employment for low skilled people
- Minor crime problems such as graffiti ,underage prostitution, glue sniffing, homeless and marginalized people, are few of the possible areas of involvement.

Opportunities for Town and City Centers in New Zealand

- Develop relationships with Iwi and in some instances, work with Iwi on economic and social programmes and projects such as tourism and employment.
- Some Town Centers have taken a responsible and pro-active approach on environmental concerns.

Main Streets and Town Centers in Australia

- Background
- New South Wales Main Streets Programs
- Case Example
- Future trends

New South Wales Mainstreets Program



Currently 130 towns and small cities all over New South Wales are participating in the Mainstreets Program

New South Wales Mainstreets Program

- In New South Wales , the Mains Streets Revitalization drive is a state government initiative
- The New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development began the Main Streets/ Small Towns Program to revitalize town centers in 1994.
- To be eligible for community planning and/or project implementation assistance a local program should generally have a population over 1,500
- Currently, 130 town metropolitan and regional communities are participating in the program
- The programs offer a community planning process which aims to bring together local government , business and community representatives to develop a strategic plan.

Objectives of the Program

This program is a self-help program. DSRD assistance is only designed to “kick-start” local programs. From the early stages serious consideration is given to how the local program can become self-sustaining through sponsorship, special rates levied by local council, membership fees and consolidation of the operations of organisations involved in economic development/promotional activities.

In considering applications, DSRD takes into account :

- likely outcomes such as employment, local partnerships
- The level of local support/involvement/commitment (local council, business and the community)
- Geographic coverage of the local program
- Specific hardships or difficulties being faced by the local community
- The level of previous DSRD funds provided in the area and surrounds

The Process

- The sponsoring organisation can be a local Council, Chamber of Commerce or an incorporated community/business association, which applies for funding to the Mainstreets Program
- The Mainstreets program begins with a survey of the local economy
- The Business Retention and Expansion Survey collects information on the make-up of the local economy and the needs and plans of local businesses
- Projects are identified and implemented in the community strategic plan.
- Once the plan is completed, funding is available under the Main Streets Small Towns Program on a matching cash-basis to employ a co-ordinator to implement the plan.

The Community Planning Process: Activities Undertaken and Funding Structure

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| ■ Business Retention & Expansion Survey | | Grant of \$4,000 |
| ■ Economic Assessment | Grant of \$3,000 | |
| ■ Initial Community Workshop facilitation | | Facilitation Only* |
| ■ Initial Community Workshop | Grant of up to | \$3,000 |
| ■ Strategic Planning Workshop facilitation | | Facilitation Only* |
| ■ Strategic Planning Workshop | Grant of up to | \$3,000 |
| ■ Interim Planning Co-ordination | Grant of up to | \$6,000 |
| ■ Strategic Plan Review Workshop facilitation | | Facilitation Only* |
| ■ Strategic Plan Review Workshop | Grant of up to | \$3,000 |
| ■ Specialist Workshop eg. Organisation structure of up to \$3,000 | | Grant |
| ■ Organisation set-up costs eg. Incorporation costs of up to \$1,000 | | Grant |
| ■ Business Retention & Expansion Survey review of \$3,000 | | Grant |
| ■ Business Marketing Workshop for business owners of up to \$3,000 | | Grant |

Strategic Plan/Project Implementation

DSRD may match local cash contributions up to \$25,000 per project for project implementation.

Types of Projects

- the development of an investment prospectus
- training for local business operators;
- introduction of business awards
- establishing marketing cooperatives , events or projects
- Developing information technology and telecommunication capacity.

Publicity for the DSRD?

Prior approval must be sought from DSRD for the content of the first local press release announcing assistance. DSRD reserves the right to issue this press release.

DSRD must be acknowledged as a

- major sponsor and financial contributor to the event in all related publicity including the prominent display of the DSRD logo:
- On stage at all launches or events
- On all publicity and printed material
- On all reports produced in association with this project.

Case Example: Toronto Mainstreets Program

- The town of Toronto is located at Lake Macquarie in the Hunter Valley region. As well as having the largest population within the Hunter Valley, the City of Lake Macquarie is home to the largest saltwater lake in the southern hemisphere. Toronto itself has a population of about 30,000. The majority of its 714 businesses are small and locally owned.
- The Toronto Chamber of Commerce implemented the Main Street/Small Towns Program in 1993 after the town's chamber of commerce decided the town needed revitalization.
- The two chief concerns were city beautification, and local economic development

Toronto Main Streets Program

- **Beautification**

As a result of the original Main Street program strategy, Toronto underwent significant streetscape improvements, including landscaping and tree planting, which have changed the whole image of the town centre. Improvements have also been made to the landscaping of Regatta Park on the Lake Macquarie foreshore.

Thanks to the new town image, Toronto now enjoys a very high occupancy rate for commercial premises, including a 99% occupancy rate for the past four years.

During the past two years, approximately \$30 million worth of development in Toronto has produced a new courthouse, two new shopping centre, serviced apartments on the foreshore, a new fire station and numerous multi-dwelling residential developments.

Toronto Mains Streets Program

- **Event Planning and Economic development**

Major annual events held at Toronto each year include the Lake Macquarie Heritage Afloat Festival, the Toronto Village Fair, the Buy Local Campaign, the Business and Community Awards and Supercruise 2001.

A promotional brochure was developed to promote business/industry opportunities and events within Toronto.

The Toronto community also implemented the Business Retention and Expansion Program assist the business community to identify needs and gaps in the business mix.

Initiated a “Buy Local” Campaign. The Business community benefited from the inaugural campaign in 2000 with many businesses reporting an increase in customer flow and trade.

Toronto Mains Streets Program

■ Future Trends?

According to coordinator Jacinta Outlaw, Toronto is a good example of a community economic development program that has been showcased in various arenas. The annual review of the strategic plan allows Toronto to continually reflect on events and strategies that have community endorsement.

'Through the continued partnership of business, community and government departments, the Toronto Main Street program will continue to grow.'

'We are in a win win situation, everyone recognises our past successes and they are all looking forward to many more successes in the future.'

Future Programs?

The success of the Mainstreets Program has prompted the DSRD start funding programmes for smaller towns and villages. These will support community planning initiatives and partnerships between small businesses, local governments and community groups.

These includes the Town Life Development Programme, to foster economic growth and job creation in small regional communities and the “Sense of Place” Program, which is an extension of the Mainstreets Programs with the twin objectives of economic and community development