

Revitalization creates jobs

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On May 23, a Steinwehr Avenue ribbon cutting ceremony will thank and recognize more than 100 people for their support and hard work in the \$8 million revitalization of the Steinwehr District over the past 5 years. Through private business investments, federal, state and local grants, this attractive business friendly district will showcase not only the streetscape improvements but the private business improvements spurred by the revitalization improvements. Businesses such as the newly remodeled Heritage Center, McDonald's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken, as well as, new businesses such as the Appalachian Brewery and the future upgrade to the America's Best Value Inn seek to increase business and jobs.

When talking about "economic development" people often refer to and measure it through "the empty store fronts," but rarely talk about what is necessary to be a successful business, improve the economy and create jobs. Steinwehrs' results provide an example that shows the complexity, the resources required and the importance of the town working together to achieve this goal.

In February, Main Street Gettysburg (MSG) presented to the borough council some enlightening information about industry-wide norms for empty storefronts and how they relate to Gettysburg's statistics. Despite some perceptions in town, we discovered Gettysburg fairs excellently when looking at its empty storefronts statistics compared to others both nationally and statewide. As of Feb. 16, (typically the highest number of open storefronts due to the off-season for tourism) there were nine vacant businesses out of 227 businesses in the Gettysburg historic downtown. This 3.96 percent open storefront rate is half of the 10 percent average rate used by national and state experts such as Donovan Rypkema, principal of Pace Economics, Washington D.C., the Pa. Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and Pennsylvania's Downtown Center (PDC). In addition, peer towns in the state open storefront rates are in the 10-15 percent range with half the business inventory.

We have learned through the Steinwehr Avenue Revitalization project that creating an attractive business friendly environment through streetscapes, upgraded technology and safe infrastructure, adding amenities such as pedestrian and bike trails, lighting and parking are all important to both existing and potential businesses. As outlined in the Gettysburg Ten-year Economic Strategy, the Baltimore Street Corridor will be next to revitalize with similar upgrades as Steinwehr. Chambersburg and York streets are working on their own upgrades as well.

In addition to revitalization, MSG works daily with the downtown businesses to address their needs. MSG is also the point of contact for anyone interested in moving a business to Gettysburg. A Business Welcome Guide is available both online and paper. In 2015, MSG hosted a Realtor's Luncheon to initiate better communications, created a business focused e-blast system called Main

Street Minutes and now maintains a "For Sale and Lease" listing on the MSG website for anyone who wants to know about open commercial locations. In the future, MSG will work with new businesses and the Borough to uncover ways to streamline the process for opening a new business and minimize costs.

For more information about empty store fronts and what new businesses are coming soon, check our Main Street Minutes and website mainstreetgettysburg.org. If you know of any business transitions underway, please contact us at info@mainstreetgettysburg.org.

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