

## Executive Summary

Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc. (PDG), working with the Danter Company, Ms. Linda Fitzgerald of LSR Consultants, and the Downtown Mason Revitalization Committee (DMRC) completed this *Downtown Mason Revitalization Plan* for the City of Mason after twelve months of research, brainstorming, public input, and coordination with other related projects. Numerous opportunities were provided for public input and review, including public sessions with DMRC and displays at the DMRC booth at the Heritage Festivals in both 2001 and 2002.

It was very evident during the past year, that most of the residents of the City of Mason view Downtown Mason as the heart of the community, and want it to be preserved. Downtown Mason represents the Mason of the past, before all the new housing developments, shopping centers, industrial and commerce parks, and the community campus were constructed. Downtown Mason evokes fond memories of life in a small town; memories of a shopping area where people knew everyone, felt safe and comfortable with their children, could purchase the basic necessities, and get a bite to eat. This is the nostalgic feeling that they want preserved and enhanced in Downtown Mason.

The *Downtown Mason Revitalization Plan* contains 50 pages of recommendations to improve the current situation in Downtown Mason. Key areas that are addressed include: traffic, image and theme, streetscaping, focal points, gateways, signage, parking, street treatment, land uses, buildings and historic resources, management and organization, marketing and promotion, and technical and financial assistance. Each of these elements is important to the overall revitalization effort.

If the City of Mason and the Downtown Mason Revitalization Committee (DMRC) are to be successful with this downtown revitalization effort, ***a strong partnership between the two is imperative***. Neither group alone can successfully undertake a project of this magnitude. Better communication between the City, DMRC, business and property owners, and other interest groups is extremely important. A joint subcommittee of city and DMRC representatives should be created to facilitate coordination and communication.

The ***City of Mason and DMRC must adopt the basic concepts of this Plan*** wholeheartedly in order to begin implementation. The key to the success of this Plan is that the City and the County, with input from the DMRC and businesses in the downtown, ***must agree to a viable solution to route non-local traffic and truck traffic around the downtown***, so that the principles of New Urbanism, and especially the concept of a pedestrian-friendly environment, can be initiated. This is critical to almost all design elements recommended in the Plan: reinstating on-street parking, maintaining two-way traffic, pedestrian oriented streetscaping, pocket parks, focal points, reduction of the required right-of-way width, alternative street treatments, pedestrian crosswalks, business recruitment, etc.

The ***City of Mason and DMRC should play a proactive role with Warren County in the Major Investment Study (MIS)*** soon to be undertaken to identify an east-west connector between I-75 and I-71. This project will impact the City of Mason and the downtown more than any other issue in the past decade. The City and DMRC should have a representative on the MIS Committee.

**Truck and non-essential traffic must be removed from Main Street**, and classification of Main Street must be reduced to a collector or less (in lieu of an arterial) so that two-way traffic and two lanes of parking in most areas can be provided without reducing sidewalk area. This is the major goal of the Downtown Plan; however, it will take the cooperation and coordination of many entities (including ODOT, Warren County, and neighboring communities and townships) to resolve this issue.

***A Downtown Manager must be hired*** to carry this Plan forward through implementation. Volunteer groups are just that – volunteers! They have businesses to run or jobs to do and can only dedicate so much time to the downtown planning effort. The Downtown Manager should be the person with the primary responsibility for coordinating all efforts on the implementation of this Plan and should act as the liaison between the City and DMRC.

***A theme, such as “Mason Village,” should be adopted*** and utilized extensively to create an identity for the downtown. A coordinated signage system, including building identifications and gateways, should be implemented, incorporating this theme or logo.

The City should hire a consultant to ***conduct a feasibility study of the buildings formerly occupied by the City Administration, Engineering and Building Departments, and Fire Department***, to determine the structural integrity of the buildings, as well as alternative uses and potential tenants for the facilities. The potential for adaptive re-use of these buildings is critical to maintaining a flow of pedestrian traffic in the downtown.

***A design firm should be retained to undertake detailed design*** on a streetscaping plan that would include placing all overhead wiring underground, decorative light fixtures matching those on Mason-Montgomery Road, street furniture, street trees, signage, and decorative pavers. ***The first phase of this design should include Main Street between Reading Road and Mason-Montgomery Road.*** Funding assistance should be sought for the first phase immediately after completion of preliminary design. The City should ***apply for a CDBG - Downtown Revitalization Tier 2 application*** in September of 2003.

***A series of focal points and pocket parks should be designed*** to incorporate various historic sites and buildings, green spaces, pedestrian walkways, Muddy Creek, the new community center, the proposed amphitheater and train depot, city parks, and other key points of interest in the downtown and surrounding community.

***Committees should be appointed and assigned to pursue specific elements of this plan***, such as the proposed amphitheater, the gateways, the proposed train depot, restoration of a theater/arts center in the Fifth Third Bank building, or new/improved parking areas. Whichever project is able to proceed the fastest, or is able to acquire financing, should receive the highest priority for implementation. The Downtown Manager should coordinate the activities of these committees.

Obviously 50 pages of recommendations can not be implemented immediately. The City and DMRC must take the Plan and implement one step at a time, albeit in a coordinated manner consistent with the goals of the Plan. The Downtown Manager's main goal should be to see that the Plan is implemented within the next five years.



This *Downtown Mason Revitalization Plan* is a ***conceptual plan***. As actual design plans are prepared and additional research undertaken to do so, changes to the Plan will be required and should be expected. The general principles and concepts of this Plan, however, are critical to its successful implementation.





Downtown Mason  
Revitalization Plan  
DMRC Council





Over Design Group



- Complex process requiring a comprehensive approach -- all 4 Main St. points
- Both public and private sectors -- an effective partnership must be forged
- \* Buy in and involvement from the City and downtown property owners/businesses
- "New Urbanism" design concepts
- Pedestrian traffic and activities
- Electric lines placed underground

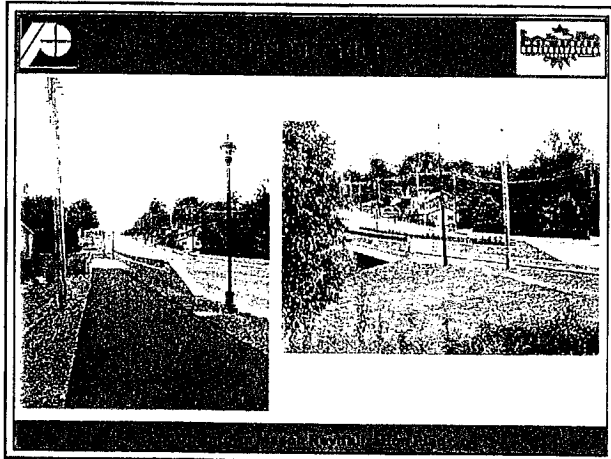
- Demolition of structures minimized
- Historic integrity and charm retained
- Downtown planning process -- continuous process
- A joint task force to plan and coordinate activities
- Substantial financial/human resources needed to implement
- A full-time downtown manager required

- Work with Warren County on MIS
  - Include TEC study
  - Study rerouting US 42 around DT
  - Study rerouting US 42 truck traffic around the downtown
  - Study a future bypass
  - Add proper signage
  - Prioritize and construct a full interchange at Western Row Rd. (Tylersville Rd.) and I-71
- Update the traffic counts if needed
- Construct the east leg of Church St.

- Maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment
- Design new bridge on US 42 to match the new bridge on M-M Rd.
- Reclassify Reading Rd. and Main St. from an "arterial" to a lower classification

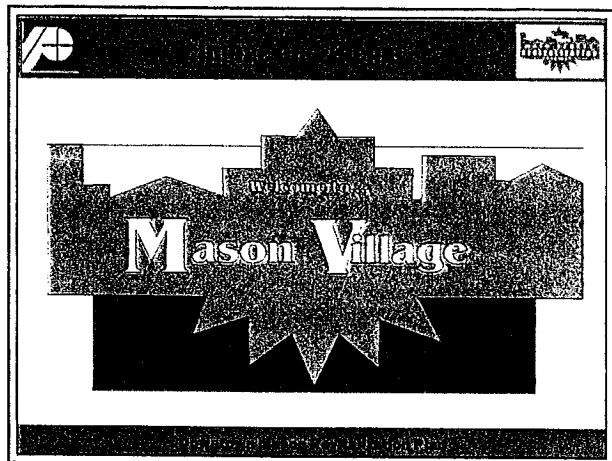


• Utilize traffic calming techniques

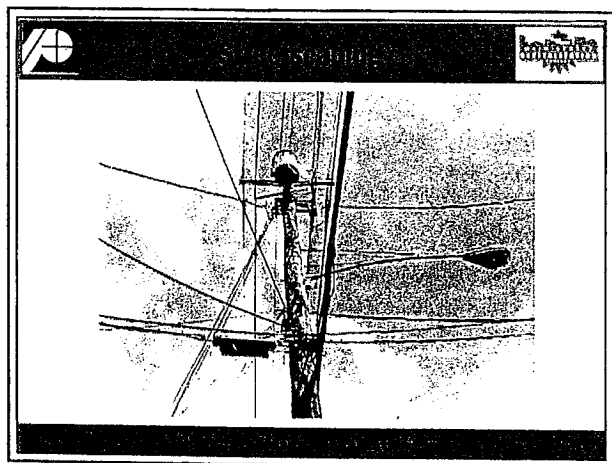
- Reading Rd. and Main St. should be restricted to two lanes
- Connect the new community campus to the downtown
- Link the bikeway system
- Consider feasibility of reactivating the Turtle Creek Excursion Train

Only the downtown area contains the history of the City of Mason

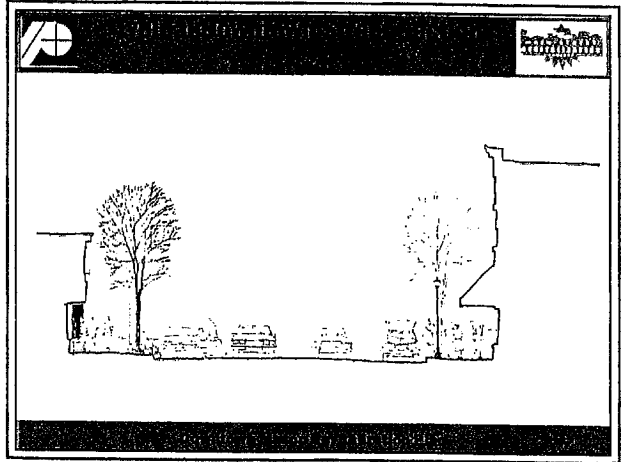
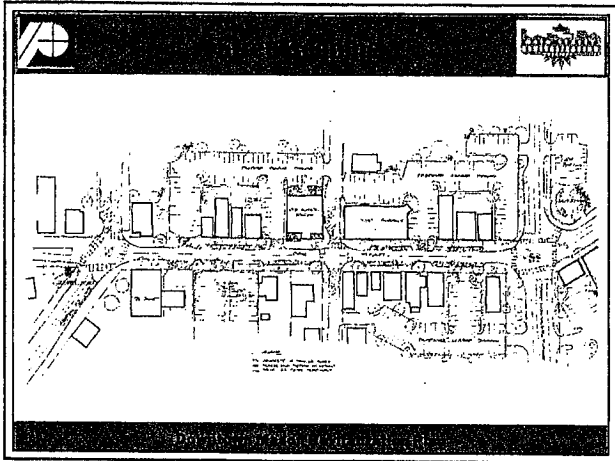
- Clean-up and renovate
- Preserve historically-significant buildings
- Create gateways
- Create small green spaces
- Maintain pedestrian-level decorative lighting
- Provide benches and other street furniture
- Utilize the Mason Village logo

A black and white photograph of a street scene. In the foreground, a wide sidewalk runs alongside a road. A streetlight is visible on the right side of the road. The background shows trees and a building.

- Existing underground infrastructure evaluated and replaced
- Electric lines placed underground
- Street lighting same as those used on M-M Rd., but reduced scale
- Sidewalks at least eight feet wide and meet ADA requirements

A black and white photograph of a street scene. In the foreground, a utility pole with several cross-arms and wires is visible. The background shows a street with a building and trees.

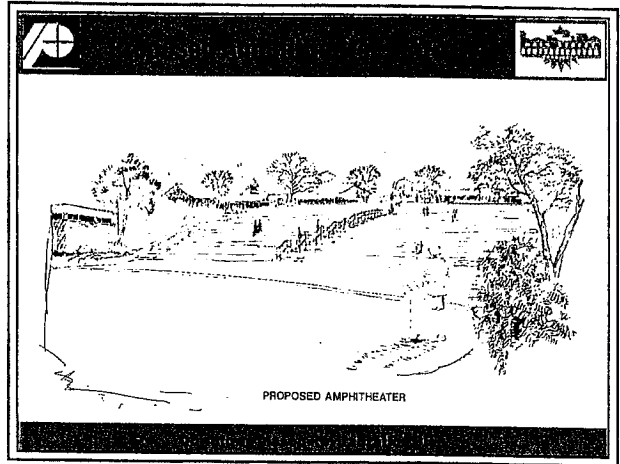
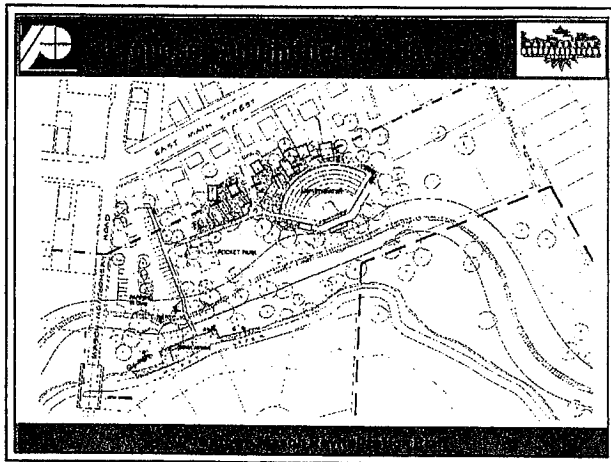
- Street trees should be carefully selected
- Existing trees should be preserved (pleaching)
- Awnings should be encouraged
- Pedestrian walkways
- First phase = Main St. between M-M Rd. and Reading Rd.



New Community Campus represents the  
**“Mason of the future”**


Downtown Mason represents the  
**“Mason of the past”**

- An amphitheater
- Passive recreational activities around amphitheater
- A linear walkway along Muddy Creek



**• Pocket parks**

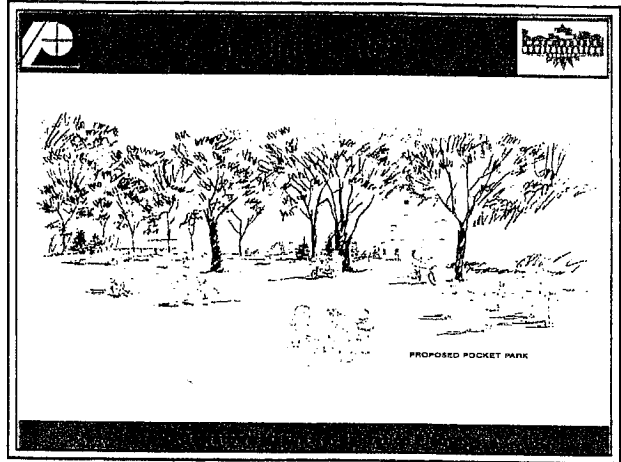
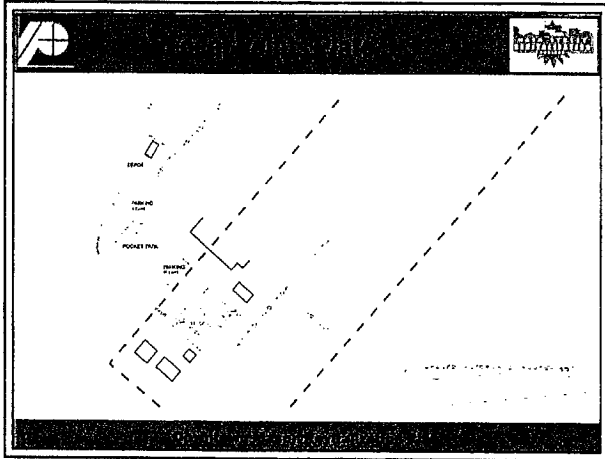
- Behind building #23
- Behind building #24
- Former Reber building lot
- Lower area behind the Fifth Third Bank parking lot
- Area between Angelo's Pizza and Bauer Insurance
- Lot between Heritage Awards and Nationwide Insurance (Ownership must be addressed!)



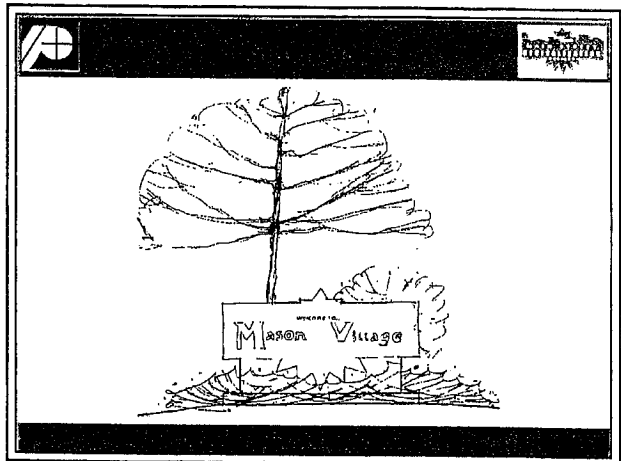
**• Pocket parks**

- Grassy area west of Fifth Third Bank
- Lawn at the Library
- Floodplain of Muddy Creek
- Front of the shopping center at 115-117 Reading Rd.
- Current Busken Bakery lot
- Corner lot on the south side of Main St., west of M-M Rd.
- Corner of the Marathon lot
- Corner of the Speedway lot






- Reading Rd. at the bridge
- East Main St. at Kings Mill Rd.
- West Main St. at Mason Rd.
- New bridge on M-M Rd.



**Way-finding signage system for the entire City**

**A downtown signage system**


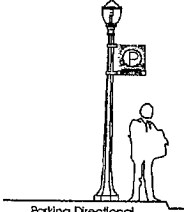
- Business identification
- Building identification
- Historic building markers
- Gateways
- Historical markers
- Directional signage
- Signage identifying parking
- Key points of interest




A large, stylized sign for Mason Village. It features a silhouette of a city skyline with the words "Welcome to" above "Mason Village" in a large, bold, serif font. The sign is set against a dark background with a starburst pattern at the bottom.

**Pedestrian Identity and Directional**  
These signs are primarily located on historic and identify entry points, streets, or provide direction to destinations or information about signage.  
Signs may be mounted to street signs, tree trunks, poles, or mounted to buildings.

**Parking Directional**  
These signs inform signage structure or street signs. They direct vehicles to public parking areas.  
They are vertical or street signs and are located at key intersections - primarily Downtown.

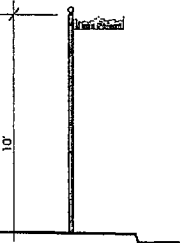
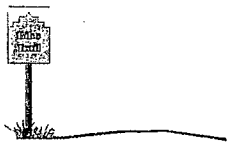
Pedestrian Directional

Parking Directional

Parking & Pedestrian Identity & Directional Signs

**Street Signs**  
These signs carry street names and numbers and should reinforce the district identity through the use of color and graphics. They are located at each street corner.

**Traffic Markers**  
These are vertical signs that mark and guide pedestrians along designated routes.  
Signs include names of trails and/or include the trail name and logo.






Street Sign

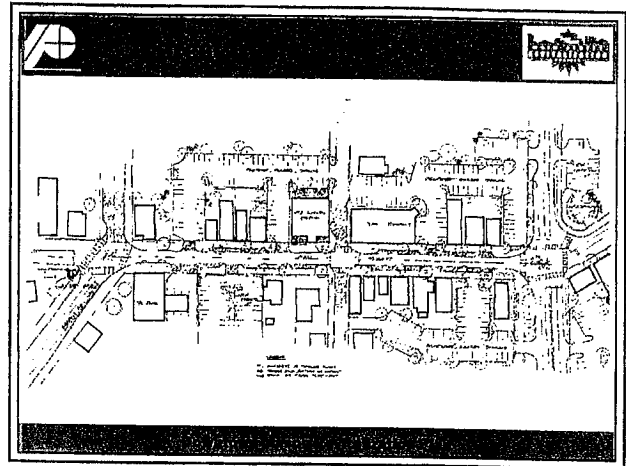


Traffic Marker

Streets & Trails Signs

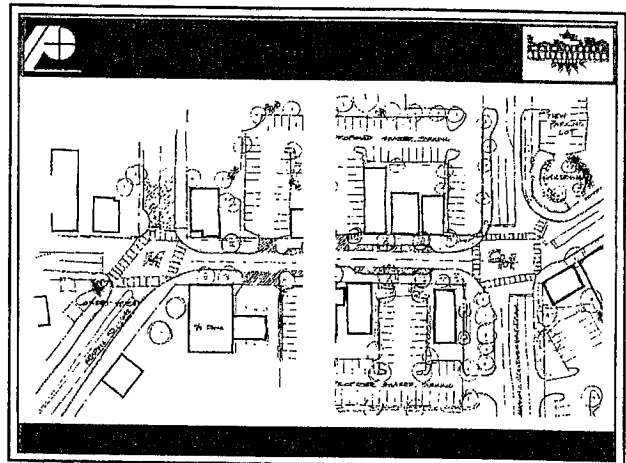


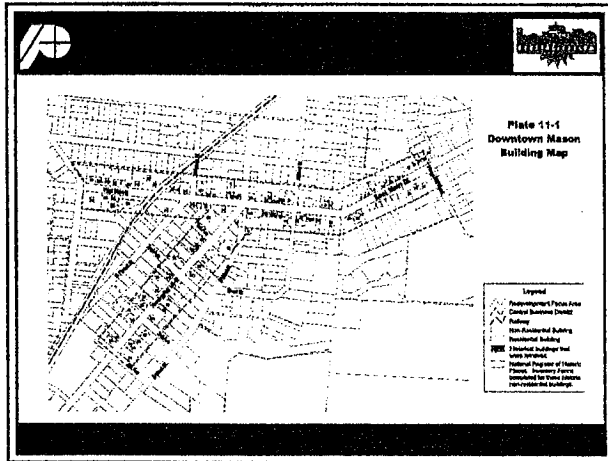
- Additional parking lots (ownership!)
  - Reber building lot
  - Lot between the Fifth Third Bank parking lot and DuPreist Antiques
  - South of building #23
  - Between buildings #80 and #81
  - South of building #24
- Return on-street parking
- Parking lots should be upgraded
- Parking lots should be properly signed
- Educational program

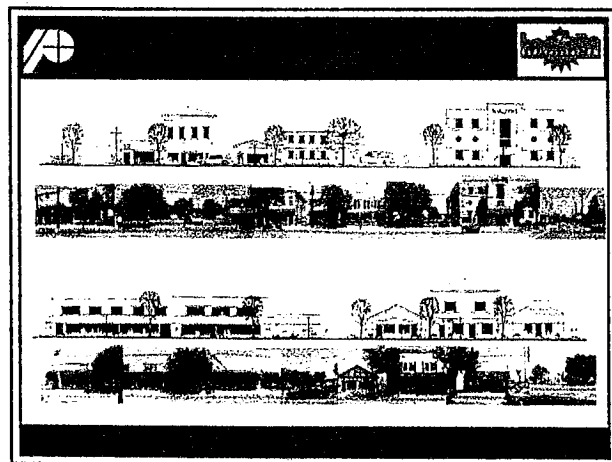
- Main intersections should be designed to include a variation in texture
- Centers of key intersections
- Pressed brick treatment on the asphalt on all side streets and parking areas on Main St. and Reading Rd.  
(Keep walking path smooth for maneuverability)








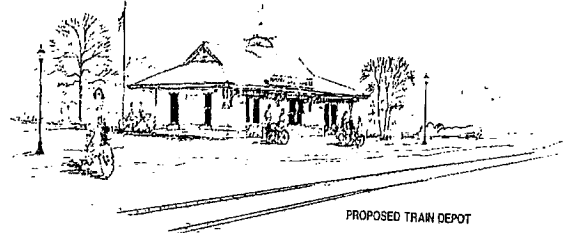
- Municipal building should be preserved and converted
- Feasibility study of all vacant buildings should be conducted
- Historic buildings should be preserved and restored
- Historic buildings should be inventoried and submitted for listing on NRHP



- Design standards should be adopted and enforced
  - Feasibility and cost of restoring the Opera House as theater/arts center
- 





- A train depot or railroad car should be acquired
- Seminars on the design of window treatments
- Windows in vacant upper floors should be properly treated
- Prepare and publish a Request for Proposals (RFP)





- Maintain membership in DOI
- Pursue Ohio Main Street status
- Hire a full-time Downtown Manager
- Continue to implement the four-point Main Street approach
- Establish a Merchants Association
- Expand membership in DMRC





- Coordinate with the City of Mason
- Establish a Design Review Board
- Establish a private for-profit investment group
- Establish a private, non-profit organization (501(c)3)
- Consider establishing a Community Development Corporation



- More festivals and social events
- More events for family, youth, and seniors
- More concerts in the park
- Murder Mystery Dinner Theater
- Joint promotions and cooperative advertising

- Pursue a CDBG-DT Grant "Tier 2"
- Consider submittal of a CDBG-DT "Tier 3" grant
- Establish a CRA
- Establish a Lender Commitment Program
- Pursue CDBG-ED for specific projects
- Establish a RLF for façade and building improvement projects
- Retain architects to assist building owners or merchants

- Sponsor design seminars regarding zoning, building codes, and architectural design standards
- Sponsor OHPO's Building Doctor Program
- Discuss the historic preservation tax credit program
- Continue to pursue fund-raising programs
- Establish a "historic overlay zone" in the downtown
- Consider the establishment of a SID  
*Street Improvement District*

- \* Adoption of Plan = Consensus
- Spirit of Cooperation
- Willingness to Proceed
- Acquire Financing for Phase I
- Negotiations with Property Owners
- Design Plans/Bidding for Phase I

**One step at a time!**