

# Joint Steering Committee Meeting #2

Hanover Borough-Penn Township Joint Comprehensive Plan

## Summary

Monday, April 29, 2013

6:30pm at Hanover Borough Municipal Building

## Attendees

Committee Member		Committee Member	
✓ John Gerken	Borough Council President	✓ Joe Klunk	Board of Commissioners
✓ Gerry Funke	Borough Council, Council Planning Committee	Ray Van de Castle	Township Planning Commission
✓ Barb Krebs	Borough Manager	✓ Jeff Garvick	Township Manager
✓ Cindy Wyatt	Borough Treasurer	✓ Eric Bortner, P.E.	Township Engineer/Public Works Director
✓ Zachary Steckler	Borough Engineering office	✓ Kristina Rodgers	Township Admin Assistant, PC Secretary
✓ Katie Caples	York County Economic Alliance/Hanover Main Street Manager	✓ Roy Livergood, Jr.	York County Planning Commission
Michelle Brummer, AICP	Gannett Fleming	✓ Chris Lankenau	Urban Partners
✓ Jonathan Heilman, AICP	Gannett Fleming		

## Discussion

### 1. Welcome

- <http://hanoverpennplan.com> is live; Meeting #1 summary is posted.

Chris Lankenau was the presenter on the meeting's topics. The presentation slides are included and the committee's comments have been added.

### 2. Presentation and Discussion of Issue #1 – Downtown Vitality

### 3. Presentation and Discussion of Issue #2 – Regional Economic Development

### 4. Next Steps

- Develop Chapters for Issues 1 – Downtown Vitality and 2 – Regional Economic Development
- Continue interviews for the issues and opportunities, focusing next on
  - Circulation and Parking
  - Growth Management (Land Use, Housing, and Zoning)
- Next meeting: May 29, 2013 at 6:30pm at Hanover

# Hanover Borough-Penn Township Joint Comprehensive Plan

Joint Steering Committee – Meeting 2  
April 29, 2013

Chris Lankenau, Urban Partners  
Jonathan Heilman, Gannett Fleming

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[hanoverpennplan.com](http://hanoverpennplan.com) is live!



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## Tonight's Discussion Topics

**Issue #1 Downtown Vitality**

**Issue #2 Regional Economic Development**

Issue #3 Circulation and Parking

Issue #4 Growth Management and Housing

Issue #5 Parks and Recreation

Issue #6 Character and Identity

Issue #7 Utilities (Water, Sewer, Stormwater Capacity)

Issue #8 Community Service Demands

Partners in Community and Economic Development

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## Interview Status

- Gary Laird
- Scott Roland
- Oliver Hoar, V-P of RH Sheppard  
(2012, additional contact is pending)
- Jim Wissler, CEO of Hanover Hospital
  
- Todd Kennedy, McLarin
- Allen Beily, McLarin/Sheppard,
- TBD - Conewago Enterprises;
- Dr. Barbara Rupp, Southwestern School District
- Joe/Ben Myers, residential developers
- Jim Baumgardner, architect
- Michael Rice, Utz
- Eric Menzer, York Revolution/CODO

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## Downtown Vitality

### Subtopics and Data Sources

- Land Use and Economics
- Architectural Character
- Streetscape
- Welcome and Wayfinding
- Adopted Vision Statement for Downtown Hanover
- 4/8/2013 COSTARS report provided by York County Economic Alliance
- 4/9 and 4/12 field walk of downtown for land use, occupancy, façade, streetscape, bicycle-pedestrian and signage data collection and observations
- Retail market analysis from the Heritage Conference Center (2012)
- National Register Records for historic downtown



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## Downtown Vitality

### Downtown is

the General Business district per the Borough  
~ 40 blocks

roughly 3 blocks from Center Square per Main Street

~ 250 parcels

~ 225 buildings

~ 25 lots used for parking



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## Downtown Vitality

### Opinion Says

- Commercial vacancy rates are high
- People are really taking charge of downtown improvement; lots of groups interested in revitalization but they are fractured; the effort needs to galvanize
- Downtown needs to be more of a destination; some area people don't know where downtown Hanover is
- Downtown could use thematic signage
- Customers don't feel comfortable downtown; some merchants don't feel safe to be open in the evening
- Downtown is not clean
- Borough should "package" properties for redevelopment

### Vision Says

Downtown Hanover is

- An inviting, friendly home
- An economic and industrial hub for local artisans, innovators, start-up businesses, and multi-generational businesses
- A rich, historic epicenter of national history, architecture, transportation and travel
- A food lover's paradise from the market to snack kings to outdoor cafés, neighborhood pubs, and local bistros

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## Downtown Vitality

### Land Use and Availability

#### Buildings for Sale

37 buildings – 16% for sale - on 4/8/2013 :

16 General Retail

6 Class B Office

9 Class C Office

4 Industrial

88% occupied, 12% vacant

#### Building Occupancy

Figures still under review

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## Downtown Vitality

### Land Use and Availability

#### FIELD VIEW OF CENTER SQUARE AND THE 000 BLOCKS

- High commercial vacancies; also notable recent relocation of businesses
- Upper floors were observed as predominately occupied; most appeared to be used as apartments; the quality/condition of apartments was not observed

#### Anchor Buildings (by building type and location)

- Center Square: Gitt Building, Clarks Bostonian, Square Commercial Center (underutilized)
- Carlisle St: PNC Bank (occupied), HCC building (under redevelopment)
- Broadway: Moose Building (purchased in 2012)
- York: McAllister Hotel (underutilized, mixed non-profit/residential occupancy)
- Baltimore: M&T Bank (occupied, not in character)
- Frederick: Former Montgomery Ward (vacant/at risk), Hanover Theatre (vacant/at risk)



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## Downtown Vitality

### Land Use and Availability

#### FIELD VIEW OF CENTER SQUARE AND THE 000 BLOCKS

#### Other Underutilized Properties

- Non-profit agencies
- Automotive repair (at W Walnut)
- Gas station (Royal Farms)
- Residential uses on first floor of Center Square
- Excessive private commercial parking (Rite-Aid)



Comment: The Rite-Aid parking may be more than is needed, but it has been informally shared with adjacent uses.

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## Downtown Vitality

### Land Use and Availability

#### FIELD VIEW OF THE 100 BLOCKS (AND THE EDGE)

- Mixed use buildings
- Separate commercial and residential buildings, including single family homes/neighborhoods
- Churches
- More parking lots

#### Secondary Anchors (by building type and location)

Walter Stone Furniture (Railroad and Chestnut)(vacant)

Markethouse (just outside the 100 block, in the General Business district)

Prof Office building (Broadway and Locust)

Hanover Evening Sun (for sale)

Former School (W Walnut and Centennial) – current use?



Comment: Furniture Store was originally a car dealership.

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## Downtown Vitality

### Land Use and Availability

#### FIELD VIEW OF THE 100 BLOCKS (AND THE EDGE)

#### Other Underutilized Properties

Old firehouse (?)(E Chestnut)

Automotive repair (1 at Franklin and Gail)

Low rate housing between S Railroad and Eagle Streets

Uses with extensive outdoor storage (within blocks from railroad)

Unstructured space (W Walnut and Centennial) – some used for church parking



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## Downtown Vitality

### Retail Market Opportunities

*Based on market analysis for HCC study*

- Retail trade area encompasses Hanover and Penn
- Total retail sales in trade area: \$900 million
- Total retail demand in trade area: \$662 million
- For several retail categories, customers are coming from outside: **department stores, home centers, sporting goods**
- There is \$42 million in *unmet* demand in other categories – customers are leaving the trade area because they don't exist here
- Most are small, niche-type retailers appropriate for a downtown
- These are key retail opportunities for downtown Hanover

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## Downtown Vitality

### Retail Market Opportunities

**Total: 138,700 SF of store space**

**Community-Serving Goods and Services: 54,000 SF**

- Specialty Foods: 4,000 SF
- Drug Stores/Pharmacies: 14,000 SF
- Bars and Lounges: 8,000 SF
- Laundries and Dry Cleaners: 28,000 SF

**Apparel: 900 SF**

- Men's Clothing: 900 SF

**Home Furnishings and Improvement: 47,300 SF**

- Window Treatment Store: 1,000 SF
- Radio/TV/Electronic Stores: 10,000 SF
- Paint/Wallpaper Stores: 3,300 SF
- Retail Lumber Yard: 33,000 SF



**Comment:** There were 3 drug stores in downtown in the past. As a result of the Baker's closing, women's clothing may also be market opportunity. Schmuck's Lumber, a home improvements and furnishings store, is on the edge of town.

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## Downtown Vitality

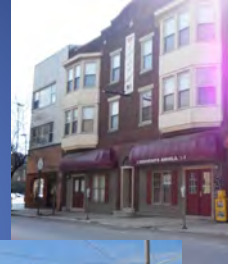
### Retail Market Opportunities

#### Other Specialty Goods: 15,500 SF

- Luggage/Leatherwork Store: 600 SF
- Computer & Software Store: 900 SF
- Camera/Photo Supply Store: 1,000 SF
- Specialty Sporting Goods Store: 1,000 SF
- Book Stores: 10,000 SF
- Collectors' Items & Supplies Store: 2,000 SF

#### Other Retail Stores: 21,000 SF

- Auto Parts & Accessories Stores: 17,000 SF
- Other Health & Personal Care Stores: 4,000 SF



Comments: All of these types of stores existed in town in the 50s and 60s – some into the 90s. Reader's Café is a downtown bookstore. Norfolk Virginia has experimented with allowing pop-up retailers into vacant storefronts to allow people to imagine what the area could be like after revitalization. (See 2 news stories at end of meeting summary file)

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## Downtown Vitality

### Potential

### Residential Redevelopment Opportunities

- McAllister Hotel (mixed non-profit/residential occupancy; opportunity for reuse as retail/service and market rate apartments/condos)
- Former Montgomery Ward (vacant/at risk)
- Hanover Theatre (vacant/at risk)
- Former School at W Walnut and Centennial – already used as residential
- Old firehouse (E Chestnut) – already used as residential
- Low rate housing between S Railroad and Eagle Streets

Potential for Rehabilitation/Modernization of Existing Residential Space

- Interest by CODO and other developers - TBD



Comment: Is CODO's development model (modern architecture) applicable to Hanover? Perhaps appropriate on the edge of downtown, not in the historic core.

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## Downtown Vitality

### Objectives

- Rescue anchor buildings from blight
  - find realistic market opportunities
  - facilitate re-use/redevelopment
- Increase first floor commercial occupancy (from % to %)
  - Review/revise zoning to focus retail market opps and their needs
- Increase second floor office uses
  - As start-up space
  - More appropriate for non-profits
- Diversify business types in line with vision
  - review/revise zoning for restaurants, including sidewalk café's, esp. on Center Square

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## Downtown Vitality

### Questions on Land Use/Economics

- Should there be other objectives?
- Interior conditions were not assessed. Is there need for periodic inspection (e.g. as tenants change) to keep business and apartment units up to code?
- What other opportunities do you foresee?
  - Other sites/buildings?
  - Other uses?

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## Downtown Vitality

### Architectural Character

- Originated from historic civic investment by business barons and philanthropists
- Maintained with integrity (without major modification) by a generally affluent community
- Significant for the number and concentration of buildings, distinctive architectural styles, original ownership, representation of regional commerce, transportation and housing
- Threatened by
  - Neglect and potentially, demolition
  - Inconsistent architectural modification
  - Inconsistent new construction
- **Philosophical Options:**
  - Preserve (keep) and sustain (add more of same) architectural character through guidelines, not regulations, and examples of desired outcomes; too many requirements might scare investors away
  - Allow new (high quality) architectural styles to mix with historic ones



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## Downtown Vitality

### Architectural Character

#### Range of Recommendations:

1. Establish/Lead an Anchor Building Restoration Program
2. Set a civic design standard with new public buildings and renovations
3. Require any demolition permit by borough to allow an opportunity for documentation by historical society or similar entity
4. Allow additional uses on historic properties not permitted under the base zoning
5. Give "free" density where historical buildings are rehabilitated or adaptively reused
6. Adopt a design review ordinance.
7. Require the submission of a historic resources impact statement
8. Adopt Historic Preservation Regulations
9. Prepare and publish historic review and design guidelines
10. Encourage façade preservation by easements through a conservancy; encourage local contributions/sponsorships of façade preservation
11. Support collective purchasing of building maintenance/restoration services

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## Downtown Vitality

### Questions on Character

- Which of the options is more appealing?
- The list of recommendations is a range of options. Are any of the recommendations too much? How so?

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## Downtown Vitality

### Streetscape

#### Sidewalks

- present along both sides of all streets and along one side of alleys in the 000 block
- surfaces are in fair to good condition; cracks and uneven surfaces were present in many of the older sidewalks (>5 years old) but only in small sections, not any entire block
- generally passable but in many locations only passable by a single person; stoops, poles, sign posts, and vegetation impeded the usable width of the sidewalk



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## Downtown Vitality

### Streetscape

#### Crosswalks

- provided at major intersections; not provided to cross alleys along major streets
- consistently faded
- many have curb ramps; only those at major intersections have detectable warning surfaces, likely installed within 5 years



Comment: Crosswalks are scheduled for annual painting in summer.

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## Downtown Vitality

### Streetscape

#### Bikeracks

- 1 on Center Square

#### Benches and Seating

- clustered on Center Square
- 1 on York
- 1 on Carlisle

#### Trash and Recycling Receptacles

- Trash receptacles were few
- units are utilitarian in design and mobile, lacking a visual commitment to cleanliness and character
- There were no recycling receptacles



Comment: Bike rack is never used; bikes are not seen locked to posts, etc.

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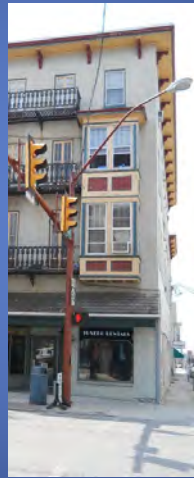


## Downtown Vitality

### Streetscape

#### Streetlamps

- located at corners and mid-blocks; one side of street only and focused on the street
- highway-style lamps mounted <20 feet above the ground surface; not conducive for pedestrians
  - lighting for pedestrians should be lower, more frequent, and focused on the sidewalk
- ornamental lamps are located in some parking areas: municipal lot #1 and Wellspan lot; these were also few and far-spaced



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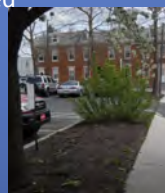
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## Downtown Vitality

### Streetscape

#### Street Trees and Other Greens

- Several approaches to downtown have mature trees; arrival into downtown is apparent by lack of large trees
- Some poor street tree choices; need better species list
- Landscape trees are not maintained (replaced); leads to an unkempt image
- General lack of ground- and eye-level greenery



Comment: Replacement trees are a recommended species. Planters will be brought out in early June.

## Downtown Vitality

### Objectives

- Improve passable width of sidewalks
  - Look at standards for sidewalk width and potential obstructions
- Improve crosswalk maintenance
  - Add crosswalks at alleys
  - ? Install decorative/thematic crosswalks at major crossings
- Improve bench placement
  - Re-space benches on Center Square periodically
  - Add/redistribute benches in first block adjacent to square
- Show commitment to cleanliness
  - Install trash and recycling receptacles
- Improve lighting for pedestrians
  - Install replacement/supplemental streetlamps
- Increase greenery – street trees, planters, gardens

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## Downtown Vitality

### Questions for Discussion

- Streetscape improvements should begin with an overall design.
- Main Street envisions block by block phasing.
- After Center Square, where should improvements begin?
- Is business signage part of character?



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## Downtown Vitality

### Welcome and Wayfinding

#### Banners

- None in downtown
- Event banners hang across major streets just outside downtown

#### Signage

- A lot of transportation signage - route and street signs, speed limit signs, parking signs
- Varied business signage – façade- mounted signs and shingles, in-window signs, and sandwich boards
- Landmark signage – pedestals and plaques



Comment: Banners for the square and 1<sup>st</sup> block have just been funded.

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## Downtown Vitality

### Objectives

- Improve identification of downtown
  - Install (seasonal) banners on downtown lampposts
  - Install decorative crosswalks at major intersections
- Improve wayfinding
  - Provide signage to public parking
  - Provide signage to anchor buildings/businesses and landmarks – think of the “you are here” maps

#### Comments:

- The signage on Carlisle Street seems to differ based on whether the property is in the borough or the township. Is this due to differences in ordinance, or just differing history of the properties?
- The township would like to update its sign ordinance. The borough is not happy with its ordinance. This presents an opportunity to update each ordinance in a coordinated fashion. The planning team should identify a few successful sign ordinances in similar size communities.
- It would be difficult to follow one of the state routes through downtown using only the signs. PennDOT should do a sign inventory and ensure that signs are well-placed.

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## Downtown Vitality

### Other Discussion on Downtown?

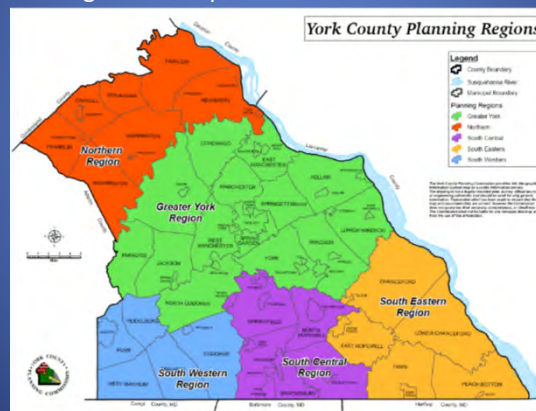
#### Comments:

- We need reduce traffic through Center Square.
  - *Circulation and Parking are one of the next topics*
- We should start with a small focus area to revitalize and try to use success there to build momentum.
- Hanover Hardware could be converted to shops that enter from the parking lot. The conference center is considering a similar idea at their location.
- York is doing an art installation initiative where sculptures are integrated with trash cans, benches and similar items. Hanover could partner with an arts group on a downtown public arts initiative.

## Regional Economic Development

### York County as a Partner

- 2009 York County Economic Development Plan major resource
- South Western Region encompasses Hanover and Penn



## Regional Economic Development

### Economic Development Vision

- Managed growth and development
- Conservation of rural and scenic areas
- Revitalization and infill in boroughs: small-scale retail and office
- Limited retail expansion in townships that serve residents
- Diversification of manufacturing and industrial-based development
- Agricultural protection
- Agritourism: bed and breakfasts, wineries, farms
- Agriculture to meet residents' needs
- Agriculturally-related support businesses

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## Regional Economic Development

### Key Economic Sectors (highest employment and/or # of businesses)

1. Manufacturing ▼
2. Accommodation and food services ▲
3. Other services ▲
4. Retail trade ▼
5. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting ▼
6. Health care and social assistance ▲
7. Administrative and support, and waste management ▲

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## Regional Economic Development

### Target Industry Categories

**Current industry strengths:** strong national performers with current local specialization

- Hanover/Penn: Diversified manufacturing – Metals/Metal Fabrication
  - R.H. Sheppard
  - New York Wire

**High-priority retention targets:** lagging national performers with current local specialization

- Hanover/Penn: Agriculture and food production
  - Utz
  - Snyder's (Snyder's-Lance)
  - Hanover Foods

**Emerging strengths:** strong national performers but not a current local specialization

- Hanover/Penn: Health care
  - Hanover Hospital/Medical Group

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## Regional Economic Development

### Workforce Needs

- Metal Manufacturing
  - Engineers
  - Some advanced degrees
  - More technical skills among production workers
  - On-the-job training
  - Aging workforce that will need replacing
- Food Production
  - Engineering and science backgrounds
  - Workforce flexibility/cross training
  - On-the-job training
  - Aging workforce that will need replacing
- Health Care
  - At least two-year degrees in medical fields
  - Advanced degrees for physicians
  - Registered nurses
  - Less demand for office and administrative support as medical technology advances

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## Regional Economic Development

### Site Needs

- Metal Manufacturing
  - Access to multiple modes of transportation
  - Close proximity to end-users
  - Industrial parks (room to expand, buffers from other uses)
  - Reasonable utilities
- Food Production
  - Access to suppliers and distribution networks
  - Close proximity to workforce
  - Industrial parks (room to expand, buffers from other uses)
  - Proximity to sufficient water sources
  - Reasonable utilities
- Health Care
  - Access to qualified regional labor force
  - Ability to attract and retain workers
  - Proximity to population, particularly seniors
  - Proximity to educational resources (colleges)
  - Room to expand

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## Regional Economic Development

### Business Retention and Recruitment

- Outreach efforts
  - York County Economic Alliance
- Marketing efforts
  - Hanover Area Chamber of Commerce
  - York County Economic Alliance
  - (future) Main Street Hanover

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## Regional Economic Development

### Land Available for Economic Development

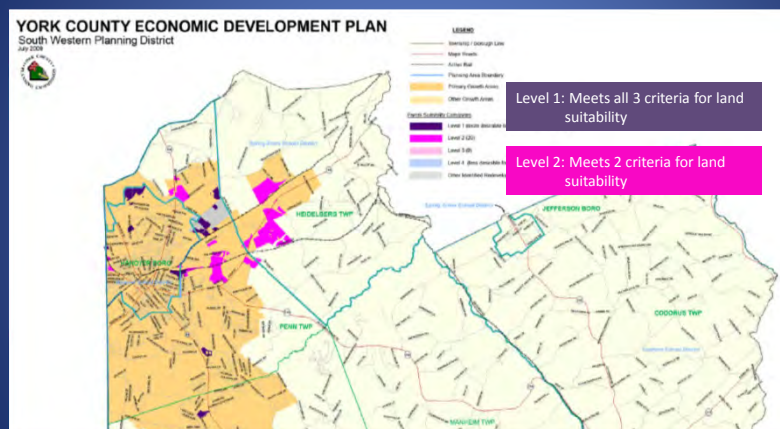
#### Criteria for identifying best locations for continued development:

- Land availability
  1. Property within growth area (County Growth Management Plan)
  2. Appropriate zoning (industrial, commercial)
  3. 3 buildable acres or larger
  4. Property is vacant or underutilized
- Land suitability
  1. Property has good access to transportation (road and rail)
  2. Property within growth area
  3. Water and sewer are available

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## Regional Economic Development

### Land Available for Economic Development



Comment: Some lands held by the Snyder/Hanover Foods companies may not actually be available. The tend to hold onto their land and not sell.

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## Regional Economic Development

### Financial Assistance

- York County Economic Alliance a key funding resource/partner
- Categories of funding available:
  - Real estate
  - Working capital
  - Job creation tax credit
  - Training
  - Machinery and equipment
  - Energy-related improvements

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## Regional Economic Development

### Questions for Discussion

- 2 sites identified by York County have already been developed. Are the remaining sites still open/available?
- Should the comp plan have a similar map to ID sites?
  - Should there be any different criteria?

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## Next Steps

- Develop Chapters for Downtown Vitality and Regional Economic Development
- Continue interviews, focusing on
  - Circulation and Parking
  - Growth Management (Land Use, Housing, and Zoning)
- Next meeting: May 29, 2013 at 6:30pm at Hanover

Mark it on your committee notebook cover, too.





Published on HamptonRoads.com | PilotOnline.com (<http://hamptonroads.com>)

## Norfolk leaders want more festivals on Granby Street

### NORFOLK

Granby Street could host as many as four street fairs this year if city leaders are successful in finding partners to help pay for the downtown extravaganzas.

More than 7,000 people gathered on Granby in September for the first Meet, Greet & Imagine event, a massive block party meant to bring people downtown and highlight businesses.

The event was such a success that officials are working on bringing more to Granby this year, each with a different theme.

The fairs are still in the planning stages, but city spokeswoman Lori Crouch said there are three basic concepts: an arts festival in April, a health festival in June and another Meet, Greet & Imagine in September. A fourth fair is possible, though no time or theme has been decided.

"We got a lot of positive feedback from businesses and residents," Crouch said. "There is just something cool about these. They're fun."

Though spearheaded by the city, more than 50 public and private groups played a role in September's MG&I event. Officials blocked off the street and built five stages for musical acts.

Mary Miller, president of the Downtown Norfolk Council, said she is intrigued by the idea. "They give people another reason to come downtown," she said. "The hope is, once here, they will find reasons to come back."

Sture Sigfred Jr., owner of five restaurants downtown, including 219 Bistro and 456 Fish, said he would love to see more block parties.

"I remember watching crowds of people pouring off of the light-rail platform and heading downtown for Meet, Greet & Imagine," he said. "They were carrying shopping bags and darting in and out of stores. There was a level of excitement downtown."

Crouch is meeting with downtown civic and business leaders to find partners for the events. MG&I cost the city \$10,787. Crouch said the goal is to have other groups pay for future street fairs.

"We can't do this without help," she said. "We think the first one showed how good this can be for everyone."

*Clay Barbour, 757-446-2379, [clay.barbour@pilotonline.com](mailto:clay.barbour@pilotonline.com)*



Published on HamptonRoads.com | PilotOnline.com (<http://hamptonroads.com>)

## Norfolk puts focus on Granby St. north of Brambleton

### NORFOLK

When Kline Chevrolet Sales Corp. set up shop in 1926, it ensconced itself among the many independent, domestic dealerships that lined Granby Street just north of Brambleton Avenue.

At the time, Granby was part of a bustling commercial mecca known as "auto row," according to Bill Inge, building historian for the Norfolk Public Library's Sargeant Memorial Collection. The vehicles of the day - Franklins, Nashes and even Oldsmobiles - were prominently displayed inside many buildings, and, according to Inge, the market was hot.

The dealerships eventually left for bigger spaces away from downtown.

Now, half a century later, there's a movement afoot to revive some of those battered Granby Street blocks. That effort is starting with a quest to give Granby Street, between Addison Street and Olney Road, a new identity as an arts district. And at City Hall, it has already picked up a new nickname: The NoB (North of Brambleton).

Starting next month, the city will begin work on a master plan for the area, and then in April, two blocks of Granby, portions of the 700 and 800 blocks, will be the focus of an intense revitalization project.

Norfolk will pay Dallas-based Team Better Block \$33,000, plus \$10,000 for travel and accommodation, to oversee the project, according to the city's contract with the firm. The work will take place on April 12 and 13, when the company will lead a "rapid revitalization" project that will feature pop-up shops, such as a temporary coffee shop inside vacant buildings, and other short-lived changes.

"It's more about imagining what the area could be like," Assistant City Manager Anne Odell said as she stood in front of a vacant storefront on Granby Street that could be used as a temporary store in April.

But renewal doesn't have to mean erasing the strip's past, say advocates of the arts district. Already, the area is home to the Chrysler Museum, the Harrison Opera House, an interior decorating business, a photography studio and a beauty shop.

Hannah Serrano, who is championing the arts district along with Jesse Scaccia, said incorporating the area's history will make it feel like a legitimate arts community. In Serrano's mind, that gritty past and the presence of existing businesses like Fuzion Ink and Bob's Gun Shop are the perfect complement to a fine arts museum and an opera house. It gives the district balance, she said.

Serrano and Scaccia, respectively the publisher and editor of news site AltDaily, have filed paperwork to create a nonprofit called the Norfolk Arts District that could then apply for grants and play "matchmaker" between property owners and potential tenants, Scaccia said.

Scaccia, who also serves on the Norfolk Public Arts Commission, has also been talking to nearby property owners about possible art projects, such as murals.

"Why have a blank wall when you can have something inspiring," Scaccia said, pointing to a white wall of a building on the 700 block of Granby St.

The Better Block project is also spurring a broader conversation about what an arts district should be and what would it need to entice young entrepreneurs and members of the "creative class" to live and work there. That would likely mean offering businesses incentives and tossing out overly restrictive zoning regulations. Today, the zoning there prohibits artist studios and live-work spaces, Odell said.

A proposal for the arts district could be presented to the City Council as early as this spring, Assistant City Manager Ron Williams said.

Better Block selected Granby Street from Addison Street to Olney Road out of three other areas in the city. Its preliminary report recommends that the city "activate storefronts with at least four pop-up shops, such as a gallery, coffee shop, gift store and artist collective." It also recommends that the city "remove bars and make storefronts permeable," and that it "blend public and private space with cafes and a beer garden," according to the report.

It also suggests toying with parking and bicycle lanes, expanding sidewalks temporarily and enhancing crosswalks with patterns and colors.

"Something needs to be done in this area," said Michael Phelps, who owns Norfolk Printing Co. on the 800 block. "There's a good core of business here, but I would like to see it a little more vibrant and active."

Phelps said he doesn't see how the arts district can help his business economically, but he recognizes the potential to improve the quality of life for his employees. Who wouldn't want a nearby restaurant or park to visit during lunch break? he asked.

Mike Day, the owner of Exotic Home on the 800 block, said the concept of an arts district is appealing, as long as everything is classy. Day can see a potential benefit of an arts district: His business depends on foot traffic, he said. He also would like the city to loosen the parking regulations and address problems with vagrants, and he wants standards in place for the kind of art allowed.

"There needs to be a certain level of sophistication in the art that's presented there," he said. "I don't want elementary school artwork spray-painted on the roads."

Any public art would likely be selected through a committee process, so the property owners would have a say, Scaccia said. But Scaccia and Serrano also hope the new district will move people to create art naturally. Envision the possibilities, they said. They could take the form of an oil painting, a song, a tattoo or a parking meter covered in yarn.

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