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## Purpose and Making of a Downtown Plan

**The purpose** of most downtown plans is something like:

To increase commerce,  
increase cultural and recreational activity,  
increase residential density,  
and make more beautiful  
a downtown or village center.

**Input** should be proactively gathered from:

Previous studies and existing plans

- Comprehensive plans
- Other

Town Government

- Council / Selectmen
- Manager and departments

Nonprofits

- Main Street Group
- Chamber of Commerce
- Merchants Association
- Historical society

Downtown businesses

The Public

**Plan development** should lead by a multi-stakeholder committee, staffed by an objective expert.

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## Major Elements of a Downtown Plan

### Background and Goals

- Why are you doing this planning exercise?
- What do you hope to achieve?

### Inventory and Analysis

#### Design Inventories

- Existing studies and plans
- Land use and zoning
- Historic buildings
- Traffic and parking
- Pedestrian circulation
- Lights, signs, and street trees
- Civic and green space

#### Economic Inventories (market analysis)

- Space utilization
- Intercept survey
- Merchant survey
- Retail trends
- Trade market analysis

#### Analysis

- Design Opportunities and Constraints
- Economic Opportunities and Constraints

### Recommendations

- Economic goals and strategies
- Marketing goals and strategies
- Design goals and strategies
- Organizational goals and strategies

### Resources

- Financial
- Technical

← Committee Buy In

← Large Public Meeting

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## What Makes a Good Downtown Plan

from Brian Kent

- Good communication throughout the process
  - Good representation from stakeholders
    - Beginning
    - Middle
    - End
  - Frequent e-mail communication with the committee
- Good visioning and clearly-defined goals
  - These need to be prioritized
- Good research
  - Problem definition
  - Market analysis
  - Understanding relevant programs and grants
- Creative design thinking
  - Focuses on opportunities for economic development
    - Supporting existing buildings
    - Attracting new business
- Presentation of viable options
  - Design options in plan and sketch
  - Marketing options
  - Charette: the public considers and prioritizes alternative designs
- Early draft report
  - Time to take input and adjust
  - Time to develop buy in
- Public presentation

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## Some Definitions from the Tax Increment Financing Manual

as of October 1, 2003

**Downtown tax increment financing district:** "Downtown tax increment financing district" means a tax increment financing district described in a downtown redevelopment plan that is consistent with the downtown criteria established pursuant to rules of the department.

**Downtown Redevelopment Plan:** "Downtown redevelopment plan" means a document adopted by a municipal legislative body that describes the municipality's comprehensive plan for the physical and economic redevelopment of its downtown.

**Downtown:** "Downtown" means the traditional central business district of a community that has served as the center of socioeconomic interaction in the community, characterized by a cohesive core of commercial and mixed-use buildings, often interspersed with civic, religious and residential buildings and public spaces, that are typically arranged along a main street and intersecting side streets and served by public infrastructure.