

Torrington Development Corporation Accomplishments

DRAFT 3/1/11

2007:

Milone & MacBroom, Inc. Selected as MDP Consultant (March 6, 2007)

Board Names MDP Project Committee (April 3, 2007)

CT Main Street Center to Visit and Assess Downtown Torrington (July 17, 2007)

New Office Location (August 14, 2007)

TDC Opens Project to Multiple Developers (September 11, 2007)

New Office Open (September 13, 2007)

Open House on Oct 23rd (October 9, 2007)

City Accepting Facade Improvement Grant Applications (October 18, 2007)

TDC Unanimously Endorses Plan to Renovate City Hall (December 4, 2007)

TDC Receives \$50,000 to Begin Preparation of Municipal Development Plan (December 18, 2007)

2008:

TDC to Receive \$504,000 in State Funding (March 20, 2008)

June 2008 Newsletter: Great Things are Happening Downtown (June 5, 2008)

Downtown Torrington Participates in CT Open House Day (June 6, 2008)

TDC Approves MDP Contract with Milone & MacBroom (August 7, 2008)

Bill Baxter Selected as New Interim Executive Director (September 17, 2008)

TDC Board to Review Preliminary Downtown Conceptual Plans (October 9, 2008)

2009

Public Informational Presentation held on 1/6/09 at the Nancy Marine Studio Theatre (68 Main Street)

MDP approved by the TDC board (July 8, 2009)

MDP approved by Torrington City Council (July 20, 2009)

Letter of Agreement, Phase 1 (August 18, 2009)

Torrington Municipal Development Plan Formally Approved by State (September 16, 2009)

Parking Committee charged with Vickie Patrick as chairperson (November 17, 2009)

2010

Agreement on Warner on preliminary design. Warner BOD officially accepts design. (2/24/10)

Preliminary Design, Phase 1 complete 4/16/10

Public Information Meeting 6/16/10

TDC participates in Main ST Marketplace 7/6/10

Stakeholder releases obtained for City Hall Avenue Extension. 9/14/10

Collaborative agreement developed with Downtown Torrington Partners LLC [DTPLLC], a private investor group to incorporate their objectives into 'plan'.

DC Board accepts Phase 1 Design [12/7/2010]

2011

Supplemental River/parking lot conceptual study initiated at request of DTPLLC 1/11

Planning & Zoning Commission approved of proposal to improve city-owned parking lot on south side of City Hall Avenue and including extension of City Hall Ave and reconfiguration of parking area behind properties on Main Street (Torrington Downtown Improvements - Phase I). (February 9, 2011)

Conceptual plan for Bridge/Parking Lot project approved by Project Committee of TDC, and agreed to by DTPLLC [2/11]

Website upgrade – (March 15, 2011)

SOME RESULTS OF THE TDC'S AND THE CITY'S EFFORTS

We often hear that all we are doing is wasting a lot of money and that our goal of revitalizing our downtown will never be achieved despite the actions and approvals mentioned above; that our efforts and expenditures have produced no visible results. This view is mostly supported by pointing to a short term timeframe in which there may not have been much activity or progress. One problem with that approach is that it fails to see growth or activity over a reasonable period of time; or that it fails to connect a particular activity with what has gone on before. What was accomplished a year ago may be forgotten, or the connection between some accomplishment and the downtown efforts may not be understood. In other words we sometimes miss the forest for the trees.

Also some consider a particular new activity as an isolated event rather than in the context of an overall plan or as a result of momentum helped along by such planning efforts. A new business may open and no thought is given to the underlying reason for the decision to open at this place and time. Was that opening encouraged by the opening of another business, because the streetscape has improved, or is it because of the TDC planning efforts; or is it the City's demonstrated commitment to encouraging a vibrant downtown through its support of the Main Street Market Place, the cooperation with Uconn to display Uconn banners, etc. etc. Downtown activity and progress is very often encouraged by a number of factors with one building on another – in a word “momentum”. That momentum is happening now. We are already successful. That infrastructure we have “shovel ready” is not built yet but the excitement and ever widening support of the concepts it contains are truly beginning to show.

With that said consider a partial list, at best, of what has been happening downtown in no particular order:

- Private developers, Torrington Downtown Partners, LLC, have made a significant investment in or city. The Partnership has established a ground floor leasing office at 53 Main Street.
- The Downtown Partners have developed a crowd sourced method of obtaining input from the community by offering investment opportunities in its business model resulting in more than 100 additional partners excited about the downtown's future.
- Studio 69, a business connected to the flourishing arts and cultural community downtown, is moving to a larger space and will open a gift and coffee shop.

- Other businesses are thriving: Brazen Betties, Remember When, Nirvana. Toy Jam, Michael's, Libby's, the Bridal Shop to name a few.
- Formerly empty store fronts have been offered by the Torrington Partners to non profit groups while without paying tenants giving a sense of goings-on. Colorful awnings will soon be installed on its Water Street buildings.
- Apartments on the upper floors of Water Street buildings are in the process of being renovated by the TDP LLC
- Torrington has been chosen to host the Connecticut Main Street Awards Program, a statewide event usually held in larger cities.
- A new restaurant, Backstage Live! has almost immediately replaced the old Brew Pub with the new owners bringing in additional concerts for the Warner stages.
- Other restaurants such as the Venetian and Bogies continue to be reservation only businesses most of the time.
- The City has changed its zoning regulations to be consistent with a more people friendly downtown.
- The Warner, Nutmeg Conservatory and Artwell continue to flourish and to bring thousands of people downtown.
- The TDC plan has been incorporated into the City Comprehensive Plan of Development.
- The Allen building has been almost completely rented and joins the "educational" atmosphere of our downtown with Brio Academy.
- Uconn/Husky banners fly from downtown light poles along with summer time flowers donated by the Mayor.
- The City, the TDC, and the University of Connecticut are examining the potential of an arts, culture and college collaboration as a part of our downtown synergy.
- The Connecticut Association for the Arts, CAFTA, has started a gallery and school across the street from the Nutmeg and the Warner.
- The Torrington Titans baseball team has recently been purchased and will continue to provide college baseball during the summer.
- Main Street Market Place has and will again host thousands of visitors during nine Thursday evenings during the summer. All this in addition to car shows, Christmas events, etc.

These are but some of the measures that are both examples of the "momentum" we have going and which in turn creates the additional drive we need to put "feet on the street"; to generate the sense of accomplishment that leads to other activities and encourages more and more people to believe in the ultimate goal of a vibrant, safe, and profitable downtown.