

ADOPTED

by the Lawrenceville Main Street Board of Directors

July 7, 2015

Strategic Plan  
For the  
**Lawrenceville Main Street**

2015-2020



Heritage  
Consulting Inc.

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## *Introduction*

For the last twenty years the Lawrenceville Main Street Board, volunteers and staff have been working hard to enhance the Main Street area by promoting high quality special events; beautifying Main Street; helping existing business to expand while recruiting new ones; and marketing and communicating about the Main Street area and the organization's work.

The Main Street area is the historic heart of Lawrenceville and the northern part of Lawrence Township. As a National Register Historic District, The Village defines the local identity and reflects the community's history and 'sense of place.' The Main Street Four Point Approach™ stresses historic preservation as the underlying design principle for revitalization efforts. Main Street works nationwide to maximize the economic potential of each historic commercial district while preserving its authentic and historic character.

For Lawrenceville Main Street, the Board and volunteer-led teams and task forces are critical to the success of the program. The teams utilize volunteers—residents, business owners, and property owners—to implement projects, while the Board makes decisions about the future direction of the organization. Many stakeholders participated in all facets of the research leading up to the creation of this new Strategic Plan which represents the next phase in Lawrenceville Main Street's organizational development.

### *Consulting Services from Main Street New Jersey*

The state coordinating program provided staff assistance and consulting services to Lawrenceville Main Street (LMS) as part of the State's effort to enhance the growth, effectiveness, and sustainability of participating Main Street New Jersey organizations.

Heritage Consulting Inc. is a Philadelphia-based consulting firm contracted by Main Street New Jersey to provide technical assistance to LMS for this three-phase Strategic Planning effort. Donna Ann Harris of Heritage Consulting Inc. worked collaboratively with Vincent Scozzari, Board President, and Lindsey Bohra, the Lawrenceville Main Street Executive Director, to develop this Strategic Plan. There was active participation by Lawrenceville Main Street Board members, business owners, merchants, and members of the greater Lawrence Township community. The research was conducted over nine months and included three distinct activities, which are outlined below.

- 1) A SWOT Analysis was held on September 16, 2014. This three-hour evening meeting resulted in input from 43 participants, including Lawrenceville Main Street Board members, downtown merchants, property owners, Planning Board members, Chamber of Commerce Members, and members of the greater Lawrence Township community. During the meeting, we discussed the current conditions of both the Main Street area, which is the downtown shopping district, and the Lawrenceville Main Street organization. A summary

memo was prepared that offered observations and recommendations for solving several specific problems in the short- and medium-term.

- 2) An Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey was conducted for three weeks from October 20, 2014 to November 10, 2014. There were 224 responses. While this is considered a good response, this survey cannot be considered a “statistically representative sample.” We would have needed 379 responses to give us 95% confidence that the opinions expressed in the survey are the same as the 29,000 people who live in Lawrence Township, according to the 2010 US Census. Therefore, the survey results are only accurate for the group that took the survey, and we cannot generalize for the whole of Lawrence Township. The findings are an important but not a wholly reliable assessment of the views of all the shoppers in the Main Street area. Despite the small survey response, the survey provided critical demographic and market data about current downtown district shoppers. A 125-page report prepared by Donna Ann Harris was circulated to the Lawrenceville Main Street Board on December 3, 2014 and Ms. Harris visited with the Board to discuss the document on January 14, 2015.
- 3) A Visioning and Goal Setting Workshop was held on Thursday evening, May 28, 2015. This session was two and a half hours long and included sixteen Lawrenceville Main Street Board members, business owners, key volunteers, the Mayor, and members of the greater Lawrence Township community. Prior to the workshop, all participants received copies of the SWOT analysis, the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey Report and an executive summary. This workshop began with a brief summary of the results of the Online Survey. During the workshop, all participated in a visioning exercise to help the assembled group visualize the future of the Main Street area five years from now. Finally, we used the visioning exercise to identify specific strategies to implement projects toward the realization of this long-term vision of downtown.

*What is a Strategic Plan?*

**Board Source**<sup>™</sup>, a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance the public good by building exceptional nonprofit Boards and inspiring Board service, defines a strategic plan as a written document that defines an organization’s over-arching strategies and major areas of work for the next five years to achieve the organization’s mission.

Strategic plans for nonprofit organizations are created through a process that builds on research to accumulate wisdom about the organization, its environment, and economic potential. This process involves stakeholders to ensure that the resulting strategic plan contains a comprehensive understanding of the organization’s preferred future.

## *New Mission and Vision Statements*

As part of the May 28, 2015 Visioning and Goal Setting workshop, we asked participants to review the existing mission statement of the organization to determine if it was still valid, and to note if any changes were necessary. There were many comments made about the mission statement, so we developed a new one to compliment the overall new direction of the organization as discussed during the workshop. We also created a vision statement for the organization.

### *What is a mission statement?*

A mission statement articulates where the organization is now, not at some desired point in the future. An ideal mission statement identifies why the organization exists, who benefits, what the organization does and, finally, how it does what it does. A good mission statement conveys how the organization relates to its public and communities; why and how it enhances the well-being of others and improves quality of life; and, finally, what service it provides. A mission statement should be easily memorized, as it becomes a part of the “elevator speech” about the organization.

### *Current Lawrenceville Main Street Mission Statement*

Lawrenceville Main Street is a volunteer-led organization dedicated to fostering a sense of community and continuing the revitalization of our historic downtown area by organizing events, building partnerships, cultivating the business environment, and enhancing the physical setting of the Main Street area of Lawrenceville.

### *New Mission Statement*

Lawrenceville Main Street is a volunteer-led nonprofit organization that promotes revitalization and improvements to The Village, the National Register Historic District. We accomplish this work by implementing exciting events, recruiting new shops, building meaningful partnerships, and marketing and beautifying the charming historic shopping district for Lawrence Township residents.

### *What is a vision statement?*

A vision statement describes the preferred future of both the organization and downtown after five years of hard work towards fulfilling the dreams of stakeholders. The vision statement should focus on community impact and the power of the organization to transform downtown. A good vision statement is ambitious enough to force people out of comfortable routines, is conceptual but practical, and takes advantage of fundamental trends from consumer research. A vision statement should be clear enough to articulate the visual changes in downtown.

## *Our Vision for the Village of Lawrenceville in 2020*

By 2020 the Main Street area will be recognized as a thriving shopping district where Lawrence Township and Mercer County residents and visitors find exciting shops and restaurants.

Our Main Street district is supported by Lawrenceville Main Street, which is committed to all aspects of the customer experience. This includes event planning, beautification projects, and its traditional role in assuring that the Main Street area is clean and inviting.

Shoppers and visitors use Main Street and the surrounding area during the week as they run errands, shop, or stop for a quick lunch. On weekends, our Main Street area is crowded with families from the area. They enjoy our fine complement of shops and restaurants. Both Friday and Saturday nights are hopping in the district's many restaurants. We have become a well-known restaurant destination with both fine and casual dining options housed in our historic buildings. The sidewalk cafes and monthly events organized by LMS and other organizations in town keep the sidewalks and parking lots full virtually year-round. A new brew pub opened on Main Street, after several years of working closely with the Township, which has created a lively local place for entertainment and socializing.

The Master Plan revisions for the Main Street area were completed in 2015 to help us to improve the downtown district. As a result, several award-winning and high quality infill buildings have been completed. These mixed use buildings fit the scale and character of our National Register Historic District. Our historic downtown buildings are well maintained and celebrated because we encourage property owners to continue to reinvest in them to retain the district's small town charm.

When a rare storefront vacancy occurs, we are able to help identify new and appropriate uses as we maintain a list of interested high quality local and regional retailers waiting for a space to open up in the Main Street district. Lawrenceville Main Street continues to be the "go to" place for those who wish to locate or expand in our downtown.

In the past five years, we have worked closely with downtown property owners to bring more than a dozen new or expanded businesses into the heart of our community. We were able to do so because we worked hard to relocate some existing businesses into newly rehabilitated upper story locations, or into our infill buildings. These new businesses have significantly increased the Township's tax base, created new jobs, and generated a positive buzz about the Main Street area and our future.

Our Main Street area continues to be well known for our colorful hanging baskets that are planted seasonally, and for the annual holiday decorations we install. Since 2015, we have made major investments to beautify our rear parking lots, including the installation of new landscaping, dumpster enclosures, and café-style seating or benches in select locations. We have also encouraged building owners to upgrade their rear entrances from the parking lots. We

installed a series of artist designed bike racks in the district to support users of the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail that passes through downtown to shop and stay longer.

Lawrenceville Main Street works closely with business owners to promote a handful of creative retail events each year that appeal to the variety of market niches in the downtown. LMS collaborates with many other organizations that host regular special events throughout the year. Traditional and new media communication campaigns regularly market the Main Street district to more than 2500 Township and area residents and explains about all the exciting events, shops, and activities happening in downtown.

By 2020 the Lawrenceville Main Street budget is over \$125,000, including \$40,000 of in-kind services donated yearly. Our entire budget is raised from a highly diverse number of revenue sources. Our residential membership program, where we raise almost \$40,000 yearly, is the centerpiece of our fundraising efforts. There is superb Board and staff leadership. More than 80 volunteers on the roster provide leadership for, and mount, award-winning special events and retail events. Over 2,500 volunteer hours were expended in 2020 and partnerships have been expanded with existing civic and religious organizations in Lawrence Township.

By 2020, The Village has become a true destination for all Lawrence Township residents who seek quality retail shops and excellent restaurants, housed in our charming, historic properties.

## ***Lawrenceville Main Street Six Strategic Goals***

The goal-setting portion of the May 28, 2015 workshop helped to take the long-term vision and create a specific future direction for the downtown. Task Force members formulated goals that fit neatly within the traditional purview of the Main Street Four Point Approach™. Board and Task Force members prepared a brief statement of their team's overall goals for the future. They were asked to be specific about the outcome of five years' work. The following are the future strategic goals for downtown Lawrenceville as prepared by each of the teams at the May 28, 2016 evening workshop.

### ***2015-2020 Lawrenceville Main Street Strategic Goals***

1. Expand the operating budget to \$125,000 by 2020 through a comprehensive private sector fundraising effort; continue to communicate regularly about the exciting activities in the Main Street area and involve hundreds of volunteers in this work.
2. Manage and expand the Main Street area's business mix by retaining existing retail, restaurant, and service businesses and help them expand and actively recruit new complimentary businesses. Expand local business involvement in LMS through the Business Membership program.
3. Work to expand the LMS goal for fundraising year after year.
4. Work with Lawrence Township to update the planning and zoning regulations for the Main Street district to foster high quality building restoration and rehabilitation; sensitive, new, mixed-use infill construction and other improvements.
5. Make the downtown business district thrive by offering year-round special events and retail activities that Lawrenceville shoppers want.
6. Continue to promote the community's built heritage and foster restoration, revitalization, beautification and celebration of the Main Street area's green spaces and historic buildings.

These six Strategic Goals serve as the bridge to the new vision for the future. All of the short and longer-term projects, individually and collectively, move the organization towards making this vision into a reality by allocating all of its financial and volunteer resources accordingly.

The activities and programs that Lawrenceville Main Street will implement in the future, through the combination of Board, staff, teams, partners, and individual Team volunteers, must be aligned to achieve at least one of the six above Strategic Goals. If a project does not *clearly* meet any of the Strategic Goals, the project should neither be staffed nor funded, as the organization has a finite number of volunteers and financial resources.

## *Return to the Committee System*

In the recent past, the Board has had only one working committee, the Landscaping Committee. Some of the seventeen Board members are taking on some individual work assignments, but the lack of a working committee system and part-time staff is limiting the number and type of projects that the organization is able to undertake.

To implement even a portion of the worthy projects enumerated in this Strategic Plan, Lawrenceville Main Street must return to the bedrock of the Main Street Four Point Approach™ and institute a working volunteer committee (or team) system. The Main Street committee system uses capable volunteers who are empowered to execute the projects enumerated in this Strategic Plan through the creation of work plans which are approved by the Board.

### *Role of Work Plans*

Project work plans provide detail on how to implement an effective project. Every work plan contains the following elements:

- Who (names of all volunteers including the project leadership)
- What tasks are needed to implement the project
- When the task(s) will take place
- How much each task will cost
- How much revenue the project will generate
- Number of volunteer hours needed to accomplish the project
- Number of staff hours needed to complete the project
- Outcome of the project
- Strategic Goal(s) met

Collectively, approved work plans become the substance of what is submitted to Main Street stakeholders to seek their support each year. The work plan can be used to sell sponsorships, as well as to assertively market the volunteer and collaborative opportunities therein to individuals and groups of current or potential stakeholders.

### *Staffing and volunteers*

This Strategic Plan sets out a very ambitious improvement agenda for Lawrenceville Main Street over the next five years. All of these activities are important and worthy, but the Lawrenceville Main Street Board must reach agreement about how it will identify volunteers to complete all of these important projects. Creation of short volunteer job descriptions will help to recruit quality volunteers to help.

While there are already some volunteers involved with the organization, there are not enough to implement even a small portion of these worthwhile projects. The current part-time paid staff cannot take on any more duties, as they are already significantly overstretched.

If the Lawrenceville Main Street Board, along with teams of new volunteers, is to be responsible for implementing these tasks, then the Board must continue to invest substantially in volunteer infrastructure. Leadership for any new volunteer effort must come from the Board itself, primarily in the form of promoting volunteer recruitment throughout the teams and organization as a whole.

### *Conclusion*

This 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for the Main Street district in Lawrence Township is a review of the past performance of the organization and a representation of its bright future. This Strategic Plan contains new mission and vision statements. The six Strategic Goals mentioned above organize the rest of the document and should be used to guide all of the organization's work in the next five years, which is the useful life of this planning document.

## *Organization Team*

### **Strategic Goals:**

1. Expand the operating budget to \$125,000 through a comprehensive private sector fundraising effort; continue to communicate regularly about the exciting activities in the Main Street area and involve hundreds of volunteers in the work.
2. Work to expand the LMS goal for fundraising year after year.

### *Expand team membership*

- Establish and expand team membership. Work with the team chair to identify skills needed for the team and create job descriptions for specific volunteer jobs. Recruit, train, and orient new volunteers to their team assignments as described in the work plans.

### *Create work plans for all team projects*

- Create work plans for all team projects so that the Board can track all projects on a monthly basis. All teams and task forces should review the profit/loss for their event/activity as soon as it is complete, and adjust the work plan for the event next year.

### *Budget and fundraising*

- By 2020, the annual operating budget of Lawrenceville Main Street will be \$125,000 which includes \$40,000 worth of in-kind services. To meet this ambitious budget target, we need to raise over \$85,000 each year from individual donations, the residential membership program, sponsorship, net proceeds from special events, advertising, vendor fees, fundraising events, and other donations. We receive no financial support from Lawrence Township or Mercer County to accomplish this work.
- To meet LMS budget target by 2020, we will need to grow the organization's capacity to raise funds from the private sector. In 2015 we raised \$70,000. We will need to identify another \$40,000 in new revenue over the next five years. To grow that capacity, we will participate in fundraising trainings of various kinds to expand the skills of both Board and staff, so we can confidently raise more money each year and meet this ambitious \$85,000 goal in five years.
- Identify and recruit one or more volunteers who will help us identify and write successful grant applications from area foundations, government agencies, and corporations for useful projects for the Main Street area.

- Institute a Board giving program and expect 100% participation. In 2015 aim for \$2,500 total Board contributions, and grow this sum to \$5,000 over five years. Create a line item in the budget for Board contributions to track these throughout the year.
- Review all sponsorship levels and vendor fees yearly and increase a select number each year.
- Continue the successful LMS annual appeal to residents, and increase this net revenue source to \$40,000 by 2020.
- Expand the Business Membership Program so that it supplies regular and predictable income each year.

#### *Fundraising events*

- Continue to host Night in the Village, the annual fundraiser and grow net proceeds from \$17,000 in 2015 to \$25,000 in 2020. Work with team members to continually update this event.
- The net income from the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Jubilee was almost \$15,000 in 2015. Grow the net income from this event to \$25,000 by 2020.
- Consider new types of fundraising activities, including crowdfunding for specific projects such as flower baskets. Identify a volunteer who would lead any crowdfunding efforts.

#### *Planned giving and endowment*

- As a twenty year old organization, Lawrenceville Main Street should consider starting a planned giving program to encourage founding members of the organization and others with long-term associations, to name Lawrenceville Main Street in their estate plans. Identify a local attorney or financial professional to help craft the appropriate language needed to solicit these gifts, and begin to approach those who have a longstanding interest in Lawrenceville Main Street about this opportunity to create an endowment for the organization.

#### *Volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition*

- Expand the volunteer pool to help implement activities through aggressive recruitment at LMS-sponsored events, and by regularly publishing volunteer job descriptions prepared by volunteers on Facebook, the LMS website, and in the e-Press newsletter.

- Continue to add to the current volunteer database. Add anyone who has expressed interest in volunteering on any project. Use this list to solicit for volunteers for any project across teams/task forces. Add to this list as new volunteers come forward.
- Team members should create short volunteer job descriptions for specific projects where expertise is needed.
- Support the most interested volunteers to take on increasing leadership roles by chairing events, becoming team leaders, or serving on the LMS Board. Offer to send these star volunteers to trainings as available.
- Continue to host the annual volunteer appreciation event. By 2020, the volunteer appreciation event will be considered an important date on the local social calendar.

### *Communications*

- Continue promotion of the Main Street shopping district. Continue the weekly e-Press; regularly update the website; and continue social media efforts (Facebook), other advertising, and PR efforts.
- Continue to invest in social media. Maintain an active presence on Facebook. Consider adding other social media platforms as they become available.
- Regularly evaluate marketing efforts by conducting surveys at events, online, and through broad outreach to downtown customers.
- Update the LMS website as needed.
- Continue the aggressive effort to collect email addresses and add these names to LMS' e-blast list so that it continues to grow beyond the 830 current names.
- Review and revise the advertising and marketing efforts for all events and activities as needed.
- Grow the media list and update as needed. Regularly send press releases about Main Street happenings to local, regional, and national media outlets, and pitch stories about local trends and impact of national events on the Main Street area businesses.
- Use social media outlets to drive traffic to the web site where additional event information and maps will be available about all LMS sponsored events and activities.

### *Board leadership*

- Create a Nominating Task Force to identify possible candidates for Board membership throughout the year, and provide thorough vetting and orientation for each candidate so they can be productive board members upon election.
- Work with Main Street New Jersey to provide mandatory board training at least every other year to ensure that each Board member understands their roles and responsibilities as a Lawrenceville Main Street Board member.
- Support any Board member or volunteer to take advantage of any training opportunity, especially those provided by Main Street New Jersey or other economic development organization.

## *Business Development Team*

**Strategic Goal:** Manage and expand the Main Street area's business mix by retaining existing retail, restaurant, and service businesses and help them expand and actively recruit complimentary new businesses. Expand local business involvement in LMS through the Business Membership program.

### *Expand team membership*

- Establish and expand team membership. Work with the team chair to identify skills needed for the team and create job descriptions for specific volunteer jobs. Recruit, train, and orient new volunteers to their team assignments as described in the work plans.

### *Create work plans for all team projects*

- Create work plans for all team projects so that the Board can track all projects on a monthly basis. All teams and task forces should review the profit/loss for their event/activity as soon as it is complete, and adjust the work plan for the event next year.

### *Understand the current market downtown*

- Update the existing business inventory including first and second floor businesses in the district at least yearly. Maintain this data on the business directory portion of the Lawrenceville Main Street web site.
- Utilize the Main Street New Jersey-provided market information each year to offer new, high quality information on the demographics and market potential for the district. Use the market information in conjunction with the Online Consumer and Stakeholder survey information as the basis for any business recruitment materials.

### *Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey*

- Post the recently completed Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey on the LMS website.
- Widely disseminate the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey report to existing merchants and work with them to alter their product mix to appeal to the current downtown shoppers as described in this report.
- The Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey noted that the vast majority (85%) of current shoppers live in Lawrence Township. Use this information to refine any advertising buys by LMS. Make existing merchants aware of this information so they can adjust their media buys accordingly.

- Create brief profiles about the survey results for retailers and restaurants so they can utilize the market information to make improvements to their businesses.

#### *Educate existing businesses*

- The Business Development Team members should continue to regularly visit every business to keep up to date with their concerns, hear about any possible business expansion plans, and to alert them to any Lawrenceville Main Street created business promotions and events.
- Continue to provide valuable training and networking opportunities for all Main Street businesses
- Work with existing restaurants to determine if they are willing to upgrade the exterior appearance of their properties and their food/beverage options to meet the needs of the current shoppers as expressed in this survey. Share the Online Survey results and any comments about individual businesses. Support these business owners to seek out the local Small Business Development Center staff to help those who wish to make upgrades.
- Expand local business involvement in LMS through the Business Membership program.

#### *Liquor license for the Main Street area*

- Support the efforts of the Mayor and Lawrence Township to bring more liquor licenses to the Township. A liquor license is needed in the Main Street area for a bar/pub/tavern or brewpub, which was the most requested type of new businesses named in the 2014 online survey results.

#### *Recruit new complimentary businesses*

- Strengthen relationships with property owners, and area commercial real estate brokers that represent commercial properties in the Main Street area.
- Work with receptive building owners and tenants to move professional services located on Main Street (Route 206) to upstairs and side street locations whenever possible.
- Create a new simple sell sheet for the district using research from the most recent Market Analysis provided by Main Street New Jersey and the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey for specific underutilized commercial properties. Make these sell sheets available as PDF documents on the website and distribute to commercial real estate brokers and others as needed.

- Continue to host welcome ceremonies and ribbon cuttings when new businesses open in the Main Street district.
- Continue to feature individual businesses on the LMS Facebook page, website, and in the e-Press newsletter.
- Target specific business types for recruitment from the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey completed in 2014 once a vacancy is identified.
- Continue to identify high quality tenants who want to establish their business in the district and steer them to receptive property owners. Maintain a list of business owners who are seeking a Main Street location.

*Monitor the district*

- Continue to supply Main Street New Jersey with the district's Reinvestment Statistics as required and widely promote any successes in attracting new business, new investment, and new jobs in the downtown district. Consider issuing an Annual Report and make these statistics widely available.

*Coordinate with other LMS Teams*

- Work with the Design and Landscaping Team to provide quality architectural advice to property owners with underutilized spaces to help them solve problems so that more productive uses can be placed in these historic downtown properties.

*Promote positive change in the Main Street area*

- Promote any successes in attracting new business, new investment, and new jobs in the district by publishing stories in the e-Press, LMS website, and other social media platforms. If appropriate, pitch these stories to local and regional news sources.
- Use the weekly e-Press to disseminate information about any planning or zoning changes and other real estate news. Update this information at least monthly.

Regularly update the "Space Available" information on the LMS web site and in the e-Press newsletter.

- Review existing marketing materials for business recruitment and retention purposes in the downtown and create new materials as needed using data from the 2014 online survey.

## *Marketing and Promotion Team*

**Strategic Goal:** Make the downtown business district thrive by offering year-round special events and retail activities that Lawrenceville shoppers want.

### *Expand team membership*

- Establish and expand team membership. Work with the team chair to identify skills needed and create job descriptions for specific volunteer jobs. Recruit, train, and orient new volunteers to their team assignments as described in the work plans.

### *Create work plans for all team projects*

- Create work plans for all team projects so that the Board can track all projects on a monthly basis. All teams and task forces should review the profit/loss for their event/activity as soon as it is complete, and adjust the work plan for the event next year.

### *Monitor existing special events*

- Eliminate or substantially change any Lawrenceville Main Street-sponsored special event that does not reinforce the demographic profile of the current downtown customers.
- Conduct simple evaluations of each Main Street-sponsored special event to determine volunteer, merchant, and attendee satisfaction.
- Coordinate with other downtown event sponsors to help them understand who shops on Main Street now and assist them to make changes to their events to better target primary customer demographics.
- Work with merchants to help them draw new customers into their stores from the hundreds of people who attend downtown special events organized by LMS and other groups.
- Work with retailers and restaurants to offer discounts or other incentives for event attendees to urge them to shop in the Main Street area before/after each event.

### *Review existing LMS events*

- The Online Survey listed the most outstanding events happening in the Main Street area. Consider expanding these events while keeping in mind the current customer groups in town. The top events were:

- Lawrenceville Main Street Music in the Park Summer Concert Series (60% Great Success)
- Lawrenceville Main Street Jubilee (53% Great Success)
- Lawrenceville Main Street Night in the Village Restaurant Walking Tour Event (almost 50% Great Success)
- Review the following LMS sponsored events that did not rate highly. The LMS Board may want to rethink/eliminate/find new homes for some of the lower rated events, to permit staff to focus more on business recruitment and retention efforts.
  - Lawrenceville Scarecrows in the Village (31% Great Success, 21% No opinion)
  - Lawrenceville Main Street Holidays in the Village (28% Great Success, 29% No opinion)
  - Lawrenceville Main Street Fall cleanup (21% Great Success, 33% No opinion)
  - Lawrenceville Main Street Spring Clean Up (19% Great Success, 33% No opinion)
  - Lawrenceville Main Street Kids in the Park (16% Great Success, 54% No opinion)

*Add new special events*

- Create new special events based on volunteer interests.
- Any new special event should cater to existing customers shopping on Main Street. Consider adding the following new special events:
  - Fun and Fit in the Park. It is a children-based event with a pediatrician joining an art studio, yoga studio, etc.
  - Village Picnic, a family-centered event.
  - Talent night as an open mic in the park.

*Annual event calendar*

- After a thorough review of LMS-crafted events, create an annual calendar of special events and retail events, both LMS and non LMS events, and promote these opportunities widely on the LMS website and through traditional and social media outlets.

*Involve more volunteers in events*

- Build a larger event volunteer database by creating short job descriptions. Post these on the organization's website, promote in the e-Press newsletter, on Facebook, and at a volunteer booth at each downtown event staffed by another volunteer. Follow up with any potential volunteer within 48 hours, and refer the potential volunteer to a team chairperson or event chair within a week.

*Create retail events*

- Over the next five years, fill out the calendar of Main Street events to bring shoppers to the district by creating new retail events designed to ring cash registers at downtown business throughout the year. Work with area merchants to identify retail events that would most benefit them and enlist them in planning and implementing these events.

## *Planning and Zoning Task Force*

**Strategic Goal:** Work with Lawrence Township to update the planning and zoning regulations for the Main Street district to foster high quality building restoration and rehabilitation as well as sensitive new mixed-use infill construction and other improvements.

### *Master Plan updates needed for the Main Street district*

- The Master Plan for Lawrence Township is up for review in 2015 and this is the right moment to bring concerns about planning and zoning in the Main Street district to the attention of Township Officials.

### *Create a task force*

- Identify members for this Task Force, establish its agenda and engage volunteers in this committee.
- Planning and Zoning Task Force members should identify the key planning and zoning needs before meeting with Township officials.
- SWOT participants, survey respondents, and goal setting participants noted the following planning and zoning concerns for the Main Street area:
  - Expand the commercial footprint of the Main Street area to permit more retail and restaurant uses. Survey respondents identified this as one the four top critical issues that LMS must address.
  - Work with the Township to establish a local historic preservation ordinance to prevent demolition downtown. Close to 30% of survey respondents felt this was a critical need.
  - Convert some of the office uses to retail or restaurant locations in the district and move non-retail uses to side streets and upper stories. A quarter of survey respondents felt this was a critical issue.
  - Given that The Village is also a National Register Historic District, any increased density would have to be very carefully inserted into the existing historic fabric. Balance the scale and historic character of the Main Street area with any new infill construction permitted by ordinance.
  - Consider adding additional landscaping, urge better dumpster enclosures, and identify locations for seating in the rear parking lot area.
  - Foster better quality signage on individual properties in the district.
  - Involve local residents, merchants, and all property owners in any kind of decision making for any changes in land use in the Main Street area.

*Start a conversation with Township officials*

- After gathering a small Task Force of interested Board members, make an appointment to discuss district needs with the Township Manager and Mayor.

*Create additional work plans*

- Based on the results of a meeting with Township officials, create work plans for further actions by this Task Force. Submit these work plans to the Board for approval and gather additional volunteers and funds to help with project implementation as needed.

## *Design and Landscaping Team*

**Strategic Goal:** Continue to promote the community's built heritage and foster restoration, revitalization, beautification, and celebration of Main Street's green spaces and historic buildings.

### *Expand Team membership*

- Expand the existing Landscape Committee membership. Work with the team chair to identify skills needed for the team and create job descriptions for specific volunteer jobs. Recruit, train, and orient new volunteers to their team assignments as described in the work plans.

### *Create work plans for all team projects*

- Create work plans for all team projects so that the Board can track all projects on a monthly basis. All teams and task forces should review the profit/loss for their event/activity as soon as it is complete, and adjust the work plan for the event next year.

### *Landscape Master Plan needed*

- Consider contacting faculty at the Rutgers University Bloustein School to identify how to involve a graduate school planning or landscape architecture class or student thesis project to create a master landscape plan for the rear parking lots. Consider a small honorarium to attract the right class/student to provide a quality project working closely with the Design and Landscape Team of LMS.

### *Maintenance of streetscape and green spaces*

- Continue to maintain and beautify the Main Street district through hanging baskets and planters. Increase the number of hanging baskets from 12 to 20 by 2020.

### *Work with individual property owners*

- Assist local property owners to replace tired signs, awnings, plantings, umbrellas, and seating and make upgrades as appropriate.

### *Place more street furniture*

- Add some bike racks, perhaps artist-designed, to leverage Main Street as being located on the Lawrence-Hopewell trail and aid riders to shop and dine downtown.

*A local preservation ordinance*

- The Village is currently listed as a National Register Historic District which does not afford any protection of historic buildings, prevent demolition, or insensitive alterations. Determine if there is an interest in establishing a local historic preservation ordinance for The Village. If so, create a task force to identify needs and create work plans to address this matter. Work closely with Planning and Zoning Task Force on this issue.

*Foster better maintenance of historic properties.*

- The Design and Landscape Team should actively work with property owners to persuade them to better maintain their properties, storefronts, and rear facades in cooperation with the Township code enforcement officer.

*Create a small grant program to foster quality improvements*

- Currently, there are no matching grants available to urge quality restoration or rehabilitation in the Main Street district. Consider creating a small pool of funds around \$3,000 to provide six \$500 matching grants to property owners who wish to make improvements to storefronts, signs, awnings, or street furniture.
- The Design and Landscaping team should use existing design guidelines and applications for matching grants if funds are raised for this incentive program. Actively market the matching grant program to all business and property owners in Main Street and support applications for support. Award grants, monitor progress, celebrate and promote quality rehabilitation and restoration work on historic buildings.

*Provide good design advice*

- Continue to provide good advice to any Main Street property owner or business owner by becoming the “go-to” office for assistance with signage, façade, or exterior improvements by maintaining abundant resource material including examples and vendors.

## ***Short, Medium, and Long Term Goals, 2015-2020***

### ***Organization Team***

#### **Within one year**

- Expand team membership
- Create work plans for all team projects
- Participate in fundraising training for both Board and staff
- Identify and recruit one or more volunteers to write successful grant applications
- Institute a Board giving program
- Review all sponsorship levels and vendor fees yearly
- Expand the Business Membership Program
- Expand the volunteer pool
- Add to the current volunteer database
- Team members should create short volunteer job descriptions for specific projects
- Continue to host the annual volunteer appreciation event
- Continue the weekly e-Press; regularly update the website; and continue social media efforts (Facebook), other advertising, and PR efforts
- Continue to aggressively collect email addresses
- Create a Nominating Task Force
- Support any Board member or volunteer to take advantage of any training opportunity

#### **Within two to three years**

- Consider new types of fundraising activities such as crowdfunding
- Start a planned giving program
- Gradually increase sponsorship and vendor fees
- Support the most interested volunteers to take on increasing leadership roles
- Evaluate LMS marketing efforts by conducting surveys
- Update the LMS website as needed
- Review and revise the advertising and marketing efforts
- Grow the media list and update as needed
- Provide mandatory board training at least every other year

#### **Within four or five years**

- By 2020, the annual operating budget of the Lawrenceville Main Street will be \$125,000 which includes \$40,000 worth of in-kind services
- Grow the net revenue for the annual appeal to \$40,000 by 2020
- Grow the Jubilee net income from this event to \$25,000 by 2020
- Grow the net income from Night in the Village to \$25,000 in 2020

### ***Business Development Team***

#### **Within one year**

- Expand team membership
- Create work plans for all team projects
- Update the existing business inventory
- Post the Online Survey on the LMS website
- Widely disseminate the Survey report
- Refine any advertising buys by the LMS based on survey results
- Create brief profiles about the survey results for business owners
- Regularly visit every business to keep up to date with their concerns
- Continue to host welcome ceremonies
- Support the Mayor and Township to bring more liquor licenses to the Main Street area
- Continue to feature individual businesses on social media outlets
- Continue to supply Reinvestment Statistics to MSNJ as required
- Promote any successes in attracting new business, new investment, and new jobs
- Use the e-Press newsletter to disseminate information about any planning/zoning news
- Regularly update the “Space Available” information

#### **Within two to three years**

- Use Main Street New Jersey-provided market information as the basis for any business recruitment materials
- Continue to provide valuable training and networking opportunities
- Work with any existing restaurants about upgrades based on survey results
- Strengthen relationships with property owners and brokers
- Work with receptive building owners to move professional services to other locations
- Create a new simple sell sheet for the Main Street area, and make it available online
- Target specific business types for recruitment
- Identify high quality tenants who want to establish their business in the Main Street area
- Consider issuing an Annual Report and make these statistics widely available
- Work with other teams to provide good design and business advice
- Review existing marketing materials for business recruitment and retention purposes

#### ***Marketing and Promotion Team***

##### **Within one year**

- Expand team membership
- Create work plans for all team projects
- Eliminate or substantially change any LMS event that does not reinforce the current shopper demographic profile
- Work with merchants to help them draw new customers into their stores
- Work with retailers and restaurants to offer discounts or other incentives for event attendees
- Expand these events: Music in the Park Summer Concert Series, Jubilee, and Night in the Village while keeping in mind the current customer groups in town

- Rethink/eliminate/find new homes for: Scarecrows in the Village, Holidays in the Village, Fall cleanup, Spring Clean Up, and Kids in the Park
- Create an annual calendar of special events and retail events
- Build a larger event volunteer database
- Make sure the LMS volunteer appreciation event is the highlight of the season

**Within two to three years**

- Conduct simple evaluations of each Main Street event
- Help other event sponsors understand local shoppers and change their events to meet their needs
- Create new special events based on volunteer interests
- Create new retail events that merchants will implement

*Planning and Zoning Task Force*

**Within one year**

- Bring LMS concerns about The Master Plan for Lawrence Township to the attention of the Township
- Create a Planning and Zoning Task Force
- Verify key planning/zoning needs in The Village
- Make an appointment to discuss Main Street needs with the Township Manager and Mayor
- Create work plans for further actions by this Task Force.

*Design and Landscaping Team*

**Within one year**

- Expand team membership
- Create work plans for all team projects
- Contact Rutgers University Bloustein School to get graduate students to create a master landscape plan for the rear parking lot
- Continue to maintain and beautify the Main Street area
- Support local property owners to replace/upgrade tired signs, awnings, plantings, umbrellas, and seating
- Work with property owners to foster better maintenance
- Continue to provide good advice

**Within two to three years**

- Place bike racks along the Trail in downtown
- Determine if there is an interest in establishing a local historic preservation ordinance
- Create a small grant program to assist owners with quality improvements
- Use existing design guidelines and applications for matching grants

## *Credits*

Donna Ann Harris wrote this 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for Lawrenceville Main Street

**Donna Ann Harris** is the principal of Heritage Consulting Inc. a Philadelphia-based Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) boutique consulting firm that provides assistance to non-profit organizations and government agencies nationwide in the following practice areas: downtown And commercial district revitalization, historic preservation, tourism product development, and non-profit organizational development.

Prior to starting her firm eleven years ago, Ms. Harris was State Coordinator for the Illinois Main Street program for two years and the Manager of the Illinois suburban Main Street program for four years. During her tenure as State Coordinator, Ms. Harris served 56 Illinois Main Street Communities, led a staff of 12, and managed a budget of over a million dollars.

Since 2004, Ms. Harris has worked with state, countywide and local Main Street programs in 23 States. She has spoken for the last eleven years at the National Main Street Center annual conference, and at the International Downtown Association annual meetings in 2013, 2008 and 2009. Ms. Harris has published six feature articles in the National Main Street Center's quarterly journal *Main Street News* on fundraising, business improvement districts and advocacy. She also writes regularly for The Main Street Story of the Week for the National Main Street Center.

AltaMira Press published her book *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* in 2007. Ms. Harris is a certified Main Street manager.

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