



PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Shelley DeHart, AICP
Planning Director
CC: Joe Fivas, Town Manager
Date: April 8, 2010
Re: Main Street Solution Fund Grant

The State of North Carolina has established a new program known as the Main Street Solution Fund. The purpose of the Main Street Solutions Fund program is to provide maximum support to small businesses located within designated downtown areas. The program is intended to strengthen the economy of the municipality by leveraging the state's resources for small business development, spurring private investment and by providing economic development planning assistance. Staff was directed by Council to pursue this grant opportunity.

The goals of the grant program are:

- To provide directed financial benefits to small businesses
- To retain and create jobs in association with small businesses
- To spur private investment in association with small businesses

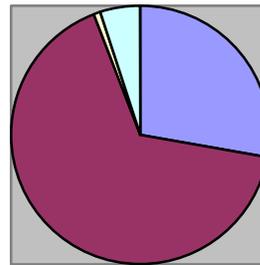
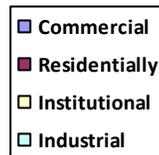
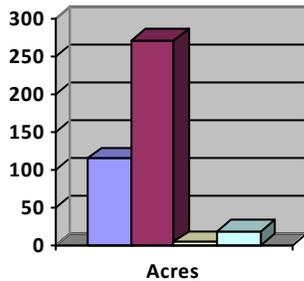
The application submittal date was originally scheduled for mid-March however was extended until April 15. Based on staff's analysis, we were unable to identify an eligible project within the time allotted. However, staff recommends Council consider developing other program options to assist the small business owners in the downtown area over the coming year.

Analysis

Staff followed the recommend procedures in evaluating eligible projects. The first step was to assess the downtown area and survey the business and property owners.

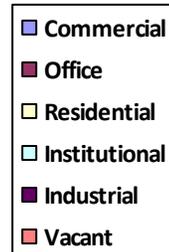
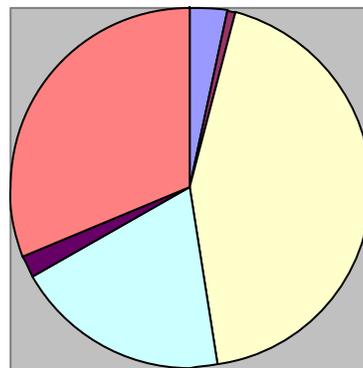
The Downtown Master Plan area consists of 248 parcels totaling approximately 406 acres.

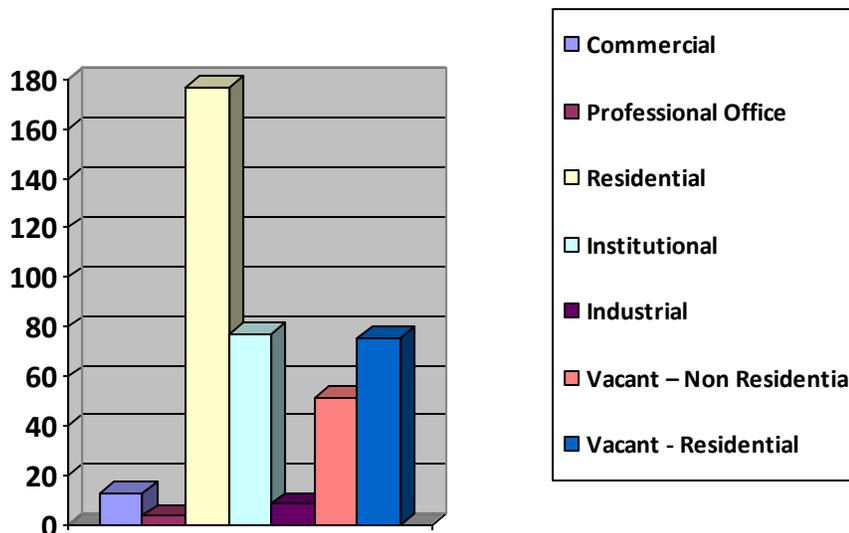
Zoning	Acres	%
Commercial	113	28%
Residentially	270.13	66.5%
Institutional	4.33	1%
Industrial	18.54	4.5%



CURRENT LAND USE

Land Use	Acres	%
Commercial	13.04	3%
Professional Office	3.74	.04%
Residential	176.57	43.5%
Institutional	77.15	19%
Industrial	8.38	2%
Vacant - Non Residential	51.6	13%
Vacant - Residential	75.52	19%





The data reveals a discrepancy between zoning designations and actual land use in the categories of residential, commercial and institutional uses. The institutional land uses currently in the downtown are primarily zoned residential. Only approximately 11 percent of the commercially zoned property is actually being used for commercial purposes. The remaining balance of commercial zoned property is being used as residential, institutional, or vacant.

Business Owner Survey

The majority of the business and property owners were phone or field surveyed. Their concerns fell into the following categories in this order:

- Traffic Congestion
- Beautification Enhancements
- Streetscape Infrastructure
- Building Improvements

Traffic: Business and property owners identified traffic issues as the top priority.

- Amount of Traffic – many of the business owners stated they believe local residents do not come to the downtown area due to the traffic congestion.
- Intersection improvements: two intersections were repeatedly mentioned as to needing improvements:
 - Unionville-Indian Trail Road and Indian Trail Road – request for right turn/left turn lanes and signal synchronization.
 - South Fork and Indian Trail Road – request for signal to manage traffic. Reports of high accident rates at that intersection.

Beautification Improvements

1. Street Banners and Decorations - many business owners suggested more holiday decorations similar to the City of Monroe such a Christmas Wreaths and banners identifying Downtown Indian Trail.

2. Maintenance – there were requests to require property owners to better maintain their property especially where commercial was located adjacent to rental properties. Request to better maintain landscaping adjacent to sidewalks, check for street light outages, and Town maintain their existing street pole banners and equipment.
3. Debris Clean-up-many business owners requested street cleaning and debris pick-up adjacent to the right-of-way. Walking within the Downtown area is not an enjoyable experience due to trash and unmaintained grass and shrubs within the R-O-W ditches and adjacent to sidewalk areas.

Streetscape Infrastructure

Business owners suggested more streetscape infrastructure in the form of:

- Sidewalks on both sides on Indian Trail Road;
- Streetlights
- Street Trees and other landscaping

Building Improvements

Many of our small business owners that lease space complained of poor maintenance of commercial structures. When building owners were contacted regarding maintenance many indicated they had no improvement plans at this time. Other property owners that were also the business owners indicated they were aware of needed improvements however economic times suspended immediate plans for improvements. None of the business owners surveyed indicated they had any immediate plans to vacate the downtown area or expand their business at their currently location.

Project Eligibility

The program is primarily targeting jurisdictions that already have established downtown rehabilitation programs. Staff was unable to identify eligible projects for this grant cycle within the time allotted. However, this project has identified some property owners and business owners that would take advantage of a Downtown Beautification Grant program committing matching dollars to improve their building façade, converting an existing residential dwelling into a commercial site, remove and improve signage, repair and enhance parking lots and roofs, and other general maintenance projects at their site.

Staff recommends the Council consider program development for the Downtown Area. These programs can range from a façade or site enhancement grant to a small business loan for qualifying downtown business owners. Programs identified in other North Carolina jurisdictions are:

- Façade Grant Programs
- Revolving or Special Loan Funds
- Retail or Business Assistance Program
- Signage Grants
- Interior Rehabilitation Grants
- Landscaping Grant