

July 6, 2005

Honorable Members of City Council:

In August, 2004, Mayor Sparachane called upon a number of individuals with interest in Downtown Wheeling to work as a group to formulate a plan for its future. Over the past year, this group has worked to present you with the enclosed report. We ask that you consider these recommendations with an open mind and a “thinking outside of the box” approach to revitalizing Downtown Wheeling.

Downtowns across the country have faced adversity over the past fifty years, and Downtown Wheeling is no exception. Downtown Wheeling continues to evolve to find its niche. Many entrepreneurs have come and gone, but the ones who have stayed are assets to the downtown. The question remains, how do we make Downtown Wheeling a better place to work, shop, live, and visit?

Mayor Sparachane’s mission for the Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board was to “study and evaluate the downtown area in an effort to formulate a plan for the future development and marketing of the downtown business district.” Study and evaluate we have done. We began with involvement from business and property owners in the downtown. Our sector meetings brought about a number of common issues, from which we formed individual task forces. These task forces studied the issues in depth. Some of the task forces brought about recommendations for city leaders, others simply brought about information.

The open public forum was the cornerstone for our study. Ideas and concerns from the downtown business community helped us to focus on defining a niche for Downtown Wheeling. Some individuals, participating for the first time, provided their visions for Wheeling. Others were skeptical. Together everyone appreciated the opportunity to provide valuable information to our group.

Throughout our meetings, entertainment became a recurring discussion. The Capitol Music Hall is one of greatest assets of our downtown. The Heritage Port is becoming Wheeling’s place for outdoor entertainment, as well as a center for recreating the feeling of being a part of a community. WesBanco Arena continues to serve the residents with quality events year round. Entertainment as well as Tourism should be a very important part of Downtown Wheeling’s revitalization.

As Chairpersons of the Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board, we would like to thank Mayor Sparachane for entrusting us with such a mission. We would also like to thank each member of the advisory board for their many hours of hard work and dedication.

It has been a challenging year for this advisory board. It is not a simple solution, nor one initiative that will lead to a vibrant downtown. It is our belief that a combination of actions and focus that will lead us to an exciting future for Downtown Wheeling. It is our hope that Wheeling become a place where more people live, work, play, and raise families, and that our report begin the catalyst for change.

Sincerely,

Joe Santinoceto  
Chairman

Kris Molnar  
Co-Chairperson

## **A Brief History of Downtown Wheeling**

Downtown Wheeling has evolved greatly since the days of the Industrial Revolution. Industry ruled in the early days, providing an economy that supported one of the nation's first waterworks and early use of telephones. Wheeling became the fourth city in the country to have electric lights, and the third city to electrify its streetcars. It had its own stock exchange and was the center of government as the site of the state's capitol. By the middle of the century, downtown Wheeling was a bustling hub of activity, with stores of every shape and size, theatres, restaurants, and hotels.

Over time, the business climate in the downtown has had its ups and downs. In the 1970s, downtown Wheeling had an opportunity to build a Downtown Shopping Mall. The shopping mall concept was new at the time, and it was decided that downtown Wheeling was not the right place for one to be.

As the needs and wants of the average shopper changed to big box retailers and shopping malls, downtown Wheeling began to decline. Stores such as Goods, Horne's, GC Murphy, and Stone & Thomas started to feel the effects of a large shopping mall just across the state line. Shoppers wanted to park right in front of the store they were going to and spend the day window shopping indoors instead of up and down Main and Market Streets.

Today, Downtown Wheeling includes many offices and banks with a workforce estimated at 5,000 people. Today there are no major department stores in Downtown Wheeling. Only a few small shopping opportunities remain, along with a small number of restaurants, mostly catering to the nine-to-five crowd. Entertainment remains, with venues such as the Capitol Music Hall, WesBanco Arena, the Victoria Theater, and the increasingly popular waterfront events.

In the early 2000s, there was hope for downtown Wheeling in the development of an outlet mall. This project, had it been funded, would have transformed the downtown into a shopping destination, meeting the needs of local residents as well as tourists. Unfortunately, funding for the project did not materialize, and despite the valiant effort of many, the project failed to come to fruition.

Where does that leave Downtown Wheeling today? In 2003, Wheeling Mayor Nick Sparachane appointed the Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board to study the downtown and devise a plan to improve it. The following document will detail the work done in the past year by the Advisory Board with recommendations on how to make downtown Wheeling a better place to work, shop, visit, and live.

## **Executive Summary**

Wheeling Mayor Nick Sparachane appointed the Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board in 2004. The board was charged with the study and evaluation of the downtown area in an effort to formulate a plan for the future development and marketing of the downtown business district.

The board met regularly among themselves, and also incorporated the input of the general public through sector meetings and task force meetings. The following report details the process and the outcome of the work of the advisory board over the past year.

Several recommendations have come about as a result of the study and evaluation of the advisory board. They are summarized in the “Calls for Action” section of this report.

**Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board  
Task Force Report Form**

Task Force Name:	Business & Occupation Tax
Members:	Larry Bandi, Chairman, Robert Herron, Mike Klug, Craig O’Leary, Bryan Fato, Jimmy Swann, Bob Robinson, Jack Felton

*Goals of Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board:*

1. *Education and engagement of a broader base of Wheeling residents*
2. *Job Creation – retain and bring back our young people with quality jobs*
3. *Mixed use of properties including downtown living*
4. *Increase foot traffic in downtown*

**Task Force Objective:** (Please refer to one or more of the original goals of the Advisory Board)

The goal of the task force was to come up with a way of addressing B&O Taxes, perceived to be a deterrent to doing business in the city, which would directly benefit economic development in the downtown district while keeping in mind the four main goals (above). An additional objective was to retain the businesses that currently exist in the downtown.

**Task Force Procedure:** The task force met extensively to study the current City of Wheeling B&O Tax and ways that it could be altered to be **revenue neutral** to the City’s budget. Studies were also done to compare the City of Wheeling’s B&O Tax Rates versus the B&O Tax Rates of other cities of similar size in the state. In depth analysis was conducted from information received from the City’s Finance Department to determine the course of action to be taken and the impact of the recommendations. After a preliminary recommendation was determined, the task force met with the Development Committee of City Council to see if the preliminary recommendations met with their approval. Following that meeting, further outreach into the community occurred by task force members to educate the public on the proposal and it’s intended impact as well as to receive feedback.

**Recommendation:**

The task force recommends the creation of a “Downtown Revitalization District” (boundaries for the district being I-70 to the north, Wheeling Creek to the south and east, and the Ohio River to the west) in which the following would apply:

1. A 50% reduction of B&O Tax in the categories of Retail, Service, Amusements, and Rents.
2. New business in the Downtown Revitalization District would pay zero B&O for the first three years of operation.

The task force also recommends an increase in the City of Wheeling B&O Rates in the categories of Contracting and Utilities, bringing them in line with other cities of similar size in the state.

1. Contracting would go from \$1.56 to \$2.00 per \$100.
2. Electric Utility would go from \$3.00 to \$4.00 per \$100.

City-wide, the task force recommends that the Manufacturing Category also be included in the three year B&O Tax abatement for new manufacturing businesses.

After a five year period, the task force recommends that the Finance Department conduct a review of the program and present it to City Council. At that time, City Council can determine the future of the program.

Requirements for Implementation: City Council would have to adopt an ordinance to make these changes to the City Code. (See attached draft)

Procedural / Software Changes: Businesses in the district that qualify would have to complete an application form through the City's Finance Department to be eligible for both the three year tax abatement and the 50% reduction in B&O Taxes. Changes to the existing B & O Tax form would need to be made to print a line for the credit for the eligible companies. Software changes may have to be made in the Finance Department for easy reporting on the impact of this program in the targeted district.

Risk Analysis: (Legal, Reputation, Environmental, Compliance, Financial, etc.)

Reputation – There has been some discussion from Business Organizations outside the proposed Downtown Revitalization District regarding the possibility that businesses may move away from the outskirts to downtown to receive this incentive. The task force reviewed these risks and believes that the total savings to a business would not be large enough in and of itself to cause a business to relocate within the City limits. Financial – Even though detailed analysis was done based on records provided by the City Finance Department, there could be a small amount of financial risk associated with the amount of credit generated in the downtown revitalization district as a result of the proposed change. The financial risk is potentially eliminated with the projected increase in B & O revenues which should generate a \$125,000 cushion.

Other:

Submitted by:

Date:	
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**Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board  
Task Force Report Form**

Task Force Name:	Back Office /Business Services
Members:	Red Marketing Committee, West Virginia Development Office, Ralph Baxter

*Goals of Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board:*

5. *Education and engagement of a broader base of Wheeling residents*
6. *Job Creation – retain and bring back our young people with quality jobs*
7. *Mixed use of properties including downtown living*
8. *Increase foot traffic in downtown*

Task Force Objective: The task force can meet two of the Advisory Board goals. 1.) To Produce quality jobs and 2.) Increase foot traffic in downtown.

Task Force Procedure: The task force believes that the City can build on and replicate the ORRICK success and draw high end business support jobs to Wheeling. The availability of high quality dependable workers and lower than average lease rates in the Wheeling area give us a unique advantage in the market. The task force efforts have been concentrated in two areas; Marketing and 2.) Applicable building identification and development.

**Marketing:** The RED staff has conducted substantial research into the Business Services/Outsourcing business sector. This is a rapidly growing employment market. Gartner Data (an industry leader) reports that “outsourcing has grown an average of 23 percent per year since 1999”. Outsourcing is an enormous sector, which is broken into specific business sectors such as: human resources, financial services, IT services, document outsourcing, and facilities management. The trend for outsourcing companies has been to shift operation centers overseas to lower cost areas such as India, but some companies have been encountering a few problems. These problems include: security concerns & lapses; cultural differences; less effective customer service; and some backlash from the American public and other American companies over exporting jobs to other countries. RED feels that our area can offer a low cost alternative to these companies.

RED and the West Virginia Development Office (WVDO) co-exhibited at the New York HR World Conference and Exposition this spring. Through the research they have done over the past year, they have developed a targeted list of the largest and most diverse shared services companies. When the information on this conference was available, RED determined that all the targeted list

companies were either sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, or a combination at this event. Prior to the conference RED enlisted the assistance of Governor Manchin; Ralph Baxter, CEO, Orrick; and Stan Cavendish, President, Verizon WV. Each of them wrote an introductory letter to the presidents (and in some cases the actual person who was determined to be at the event), of the targeted companies, introducing RED and the State of WV to them, and encouraging them to meet with representatives in New York. RED and the WVDO also developed new marketing materials geared towards the Business Services sector. Meetings with companies were arranged on-site of the conference, and all companies have received follow-up information. A booth for the 2006 conference has been reserved, additional research is being completed and the target list refined. Additional trade shows/conferences and marketing events are being considered for 2005-2006.

2. **Building Identification and Development:** In collaboration with RED Partnership, and the City of Wheeling, a project funded by the Wheeling National Heritage Area Corp. (WNHAC) has led to \$17.1 million economic development investment in the city's downtown revitalization effort.

After the success of locating Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe in the renovated Wheeling Stamping Building, representatives of the three organizations identified five more large abandoned buildings that could be adapted for either office or residential use. As a result, four of the five buildings now have new owners who, in total, have made an initial investment of \$17.1 million.

The studies resulted in:

- Stone & Thomas was purchased by the Regional Economic Development and is investing in its rehabilitation. Office space will be available to shared services companies
- Joseph Santioceto bought the Reichart's/Helig-Meyers structure for expansion of his medical management a billing services business, Santco, Inc. He renamed the building the Heritage Port Business Center and has made additional space available for businesses and offices.
- Wheeling Wholesale Grocery was acquired by West Virginia Northern Community College as part of its College Square project.
- Zarnit's was purchased by Mark Staley for Staley Communications Inc.'s new headquarters, retaining jobs in Wheeling

Building identification and development

Recommendation: The City, Ohio County and RED work together with existing property owners, to implement a comprehensive marketing strategy to attract companies and jobs into downtown.

Requirements for Implementation: Additional (continued) funding: Marketing \$40,000 Building Identification/Development \$15,000
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Procedural / Software Changes: N/A
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Risk Analysis: None
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Other:
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Submitted by:	Don Rigby
Date: July 5, 2005	

**Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board  
Task Force Report Form**

Task Force Name:	<b>City Development Assistance</b>
Members:	Cliff Sligar, Terry Sterling, and Kris Molnar with excellent assistance from Susie Nelson

***Goals of Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board:***

- 9. Education and engagement of a broader base of Wheeling residents*
- 10. Job Creation – retain and bring back our young people with quality jobs*
- 11. Mixed use of properties including downtown living*
- 12. Increase foot traffic in downtown*

**Task Force Objective:**

- Job Creation and Mixed use for properties within sectors identified

**Task Force Procedure:**

- Improve visibility of loans and grants through City of Wheeling website and marketing initiatives
- Local financial institutions provide for new loan programs focused on building renovations

**Recommendation:**

- A list of all loan and grant programs should be listed on the City of Wheeling website with program details and application information
- Resources available for assistance should be included on website i.e. SCORE, SBA's Small Business Development Center and RED
- Links to other websites for additional loan and grant information should be included i.e. WVEDA, WV Department of Development, RED, SBDC, USDA, etc
- Loan programs available through local financial institutions that can leverage other loan and grant program funds i.e. Leverage CDBG fund availability with Façade Renovation or other renovation loan programs.

### **Requirements for Implementation:**

- Final review of grant and loan programs available
- Authorization from RED, SBDC, etc to provide website links, if needed
- City approval of requested \$150,000 CDBG funds designation for façade renovation program
- City approve the Downtown Building Renovation Program or other loan programs needed

### **Procedural / Software Changes:**

- Website development with links to outside resources
- Dedicate human resources to website development, support, and maintenance
- Marketing material development to support website and advise public
- Need for City Development Director to work as conduit with business owners, financial institutions and public lending/funding sources to facilitate economic activities. Development Office could publish a service provider list as a resource for new businesses
- City Council consider the establishment of a Business Improvement District

### **Risk Analysis:**

- **Legal** Assurance that terms and conditions of grant and loan programs defined correctly. **Mitigated** by having City Solicitor review website and marketing materials prior to implementation
- **Reputational** Lack of programs and program information available may limit business development opportunities. Can be **mitigated** by website and marketing materials development. Further **mitigation** can be gained by City development officials working with local financial institutions and development agencies to create loan programs that will leverage City and other public funds.
- **Financial** Without public funds availability to leverage private funds, economic development may not occur, resulting in decreased tax dollars to support other City initiatives. Website and marketing initiatives can help **mitigate** by providing information to a broader potential base. This can result in future economic development.

Other:

Submitted by:	
Date:	

## Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board Task Force Report Form

Task Force Name:	<b>City Development Assistance</b>
Members:	Cliff Sligar, Terry Sterling, Kris Molnar with excellent assistance of Susie Nelson

*Goals of Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board:*

- 13. Education and engagement of a broader base of Wheeling residents*
- 14. Job Creation – retain and bring back our young people with quality jobs*
- 15. Mixed use of properties including downtown living*
- 16. Increase foot traffic in downtown*

**Task Force Objective:** (Please refer to one or more of the original goals of the Advisory Board)

- Job creation and mixed use for properties within the sectors identified

**Task Force Procedure:**

- Aggressively recruit downtown businesses that are specific to the need of those living and working in the central business district

**Recommendation:**

- As tax abatement and loan programs are being developed, City officials need to consider those businesses that will support the future business and housing growth needs of the business sectors identified
- Evaluate businesses i.e. food stores, general store type retail, etc that are needed to support growth

**Requirements for Implementation:**

- City Development Department determine needs to support growth

**Procedural / Software Changes:**

- Department of Development needs to develop a program to attract services identified

**Risk Analysis:** (Legal, Reputation, Environmental, Compliance, Financial, etc.)

- Reputational: Lack of ancillary services to support retail and housing growth within sectors identified mitigated by providing special tax abatement, loan and grant programs to attract businesses needed to

support growth
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Other:
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Submitted by:	
Date:	

**Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board  
Task Force Report Form**

Task Force Name:	<b>City Development Assistance</b>
Members:	Cliff Sligar, Terry Sterling, Kris Molnar with the excellent assistance of Susie Nelson

*Goals of Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board:*

- 17. Education and engagement of a broader base of Wheeling residents*
- 18. Job Creation – retain and bring back our young people with quality jobs*
- 19. Mixed use of properties including downtown living*
- 20. Increase foot traffic in downtown*

**Task Force Objective:** (Please refer to one or more of the original goals of the Advisory Board)

- Job creation and mixed use for properties within the sectors identified

**Task Force Procedure:**

- Improve Market Street Plaza. This is one of the only few downtown park areas and surrounds areas that are in the process of being renovated. More people will be living and working around the Plaza area. Improvement of this area will help confirm the City of Wheeling's economic development emphasis.

**Recommendation:**

- Determine specific improvements that are needed in the Plaza
- Working with the Department of Development and the City's Marketing Director, evaluate and apply for grant funds to fund the improvement project
- Evaluate the funds needed for Plaza's annual upkeep and allocate funds for this in the City's annual budget.

**Requirements for Implementation:**

- Confirm the agreement with the Wheeling Park Commission regarding Plaza upkeep
- Establish an agreed upon process for Plaza upkeep
- Evaluate and prepare marketing material to highlight the available uses for the Plaza i.e. School musical groups, farmers markets, art shows, etc.

**Procedural / Software Changes:**

Risk Analysis: (Legal, Reputation, Environmental, Compliance, Financial, etc.)

- Reputational: Recent investments in the Stone's building will bring significant numbers of people to Market Plaza as business owners come to evaluate the building's prospects and as people ultimately come to work and live in Sector One. Without some improvement to the Plaza, the City limits the opportunity to attract new businesses to the Plaza area. This can be mitigated by a well-planned improvement project funded by grants and City funds.

Other:

Submitted by:

Date:

**Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board  
Task Force Report Form**

Task Force Name:	Downtown Living
Members:	

*Goals of Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board:*

- 21. Education and engagement of a broader base of Wheeling residents*
- 22. Job Creation – retain and bring back our young people with quality jobs*
- 23. Mixed use of properties including downtown living*
- 24. Increase foot traffic in downtown*

**Task Force Objective:** (Please refer to one or more of the original goals of the Advisory Board)

The City of Wheeling has tried for many years to entice small businesses into the downtown area; those efforts have not been as successful as anticipated. Discussions and public meetings reveal that owners of businesses feel at risk in an area that lacks daily foot traffic. The consensus is that desirable living space in the immediate area would help create a customer base and urban vitality supportive of small enterprises: shops, restaurants, services, and entertainment venues.

The project will meet two of the stated objectives; 3 and 4.

**Requirements for Implementation:**

A team of experts will investigate existing buildings in downtown Wheeling to determine whether they can be renovated into revenue-generating apartments. The Task Force has identified and verified the services of a local firm that will analyze each building in terms of structural integrity, architectural appeal, neighborhood amenities, environmental considerations, and owner cooperation. The end result will be a portfolio of 8 to 12 potential properties that can be acquired, remodeled, and rented at a level adequate to maintain the property and service the debt. The survey could be completed by October 2005.

The cost for this property survey will be \$50,000.

**Procedural / Software Changes:**

The City Web page should be updated to include reference to this project and promotion to investors and possible tenants

**Risk Analysis:** (Legal, Reputation, Environmental, Compliance, Financial, etc.)

It is possible that after the expenditure of \$50,000, no buildings will be found that meet the criteria set by this task force. In addition, it is possible that once this program is offered to private investors that there will be no interest.

Investors will bear the risk of promotion, management, maintenance and mortgage payment obligations. Funds expended by or through the City (tax abatements, financial aid programs and grants) will also be at risk on a "per building" basis if a building would come to being in default of their obligations.

Submitted by: Dick Mansuetto	
Date: May 1, 2005 First Draft	

Other:

Background: The Task Force made an inventory of the assets of downtown Wheeling which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Adjacency to the Ohio River: *natural beauty, the historic Suspension Bridge*
- 2) Architectural resources: *e.g. historic homes, apartment buildings, office buildings, and warehouses with historic merit worthy of preservation*
- 3) Recreational opportunities: *the marina, the biking/hiking trail, indoor gyms, the civic center ice hockey rink*
- 4) Cultural facilities: *e.g. Capitol Theatre, Independence Hall, Towngate*
- 5) Educational facilities: *The Ohio County Public Library, WV Northern Community College*
- 6) Restaurants, clubs, and bars: *e.g. River City, Uncle Pete's, Endsley's*
- 7) Sports venues: *e.g. Wesbanco Arena*
- 8) Special events: *e.g. summer festivals at the Heritage Port, house tours in historic districts*
- 9) Churches, private clubs, and social clubs: *e.g. Fort Henry Club, the Masonic Temple, St. Matthews Episcopal Church, St. Joseph's Cathedral*
- 10) Services: *e.g. banks, dry cleaners, post offices, professional offices, medical facilities, food markets*
- 11) Walkability: *safe, clean pedestrian walkways connecting all resources*

Mapped out in the downtown area, it becomes clear that the above facilities are numerous and well-distributed throughout the downtown area, spreading from 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 16<sup>th</sup> Street running north to south, and east to west from Eoff Street to the Ohio River. The amenities are loosely clustered in three areas:

- (1) North Wheeling, near the marina and the historic homes
- (2) Heritage Port, along the river between 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets
- (3) East Wheeling, a Victorian neighborhood around 15<sup>th</sup> Street

Two adjacent areas need mentioning as they heavily affect the livability and enjoyment of the target area;

- (1) Wheeling Creek, a formerly industrial area on the banks of the tributary
- (2) Centre Market, from about 20<sup>th</sup> Street to 24<sup>th</sup> Street

Project Financing: The Task Force believes that affinity groups within our community can be encouraged to participate in the financing of one or more projects per group. The groups include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ohio County Medical Society
- Ohio County Bar Association
- Wheeling area banks and financial institutions
- Consortium of major industry professionals
- Consortium of business leaders
- Insurance industry
- Real estate industry
- Construction industry
- Organized labor

Affinity groups will participate as a group in the financing of a particular building and will receive priority in renting the apartments to members of their group. Participants will be asked to commit their credit worthiness towards the backing of the development money necessary to acquire, renovate, and promote a building. When the terms of the mortgage are met, the participants will be joint owners in the properties. In addition, historic tax credits and other investment incentives will be evaluated for each property.

Rental Market: In discussion with real estate representatives and apartment owners, the Task Force has come to the conclusion that there are far more potential renters than there are desirable apartments. At present a few are locating in rehabilitated Victorian homes in the three historic districts, but many are settling in St. Clairsville and other outlying towns and commuting to Wheeling for lack of agreeable residences in the city. Some are forced to buy homes outright, and some move to Pittsburgh suburbs where they feel more confident of the short-term resale market.

The Task Force feels that there is market potential for upscale apartments with the following characteristics: two or three bedrooms with 1 ½ baths, modern kitchen, living room/dining room, outdoor living space – porch or terrace – with a river or urban view, convenient parking, and laundry facilities. The facilities must be attractive, well maintained, and safe.

Submitted by: Dick Mansuetto	
Date: May 1, 2005	

**Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board  
Task Force Report Form**

Task Force Name:	<b>Building Inspection/Code Enforcement Task Force</b>
Members:	Dennis Madama, AIA, John Clark, Larry Dorsch, Hydrie Friend

*Goals of Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board:*

1. *Education and engagement of a broader base of Wheeling residents*
2. *Job Creation – retain and bring back our young people with quality jobs*
3. *Mixed use of properties including downtown living*
4. *Increase foot traffic in downtown*

**Task Force Objective:** (Please refer to one or more of the original goals of the Advisory Board)

Examine how the building inspection process impacts improvements and maintenance of Downtown properties as well as new construction.

- a. Adaptive reuse and mixed use of vacant properties.
- b. Reuse of vacant properties stimulates and creates jobs.

**Task Force Procedure:**

A. Informative meetings with local Building Inspectors and Fire Prevention

Bureau.

B. Exploratory meetings with City Solicitor.

C. Attended WV Building Code Conference.

D. Solicited Questionnaire Survey to Building Owners, Architects, Engineers,

Contractors and Realtors.

E. Reviewed and implemented findings from City Manager's working group on Building Inspection and Maintenance Issues.

**PROPERTY MAINTENANCE**

**What the Task Force found:**

- Many of the problematic structures have been addressed and readdressed by city officials. Recently, the city has implemented more effective steps in dealing with abandoned and derelict properties. The result has been more rapid response and greater compliance.
- Some long-term problematic structures continue to be tied-up in the legal system.

### **CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS**

- Judgment of inspectors is subjective in reviewing projects and properties
- Provide citation of code – not just told to “Go look it up in the IBC and make it right
- Code officials should offer alternatives, do not just say this will not work
- Interpretation of the code is not consistent
- Publish same rules for everyone
- Inspectors/code officials need to know FEMA requirements
- Confusion over whether an electrical contractor is required to secure a “Building Permit” in addition to an “Electrical Permit.” Electrical contractor should not have to obtain a building permit as they are not altering the structure. Why not a blanket permit for “service type work.”

### **Recommendations for Property Maintenance**

- Adopt recommendations for a user-friendly system
- Provide citation authority to inspectors
- Enforce penalties for non-compliance
- Once a property is razed by the city and a lien is filed for demolition and other appropriate costs, also file a credit report on the property owner for the amount of the lien.
- Develop systematic field inspections on all properties
- Develop a building analysis and loan program for vacant downtown buildings

### **Requirements for Implementation:**

- Citation authority will require code amendments.
- Additional personnel for field inspections
- Adopt new loan program for vacant downtown buildings

### **Procedural / Software Changes:**

**Risk Analysis:** (Legal, Reputation, Environmental, Compliance, Financial, etc.)

- If code enforcement officials are given citation authority, run risk of abuse.

**Other:**

**Submitted by:**

**Building Inspection/Code Enforcement Task Force**

**Date:**

**Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board  
Task Force Report Form**

Task Force Name:	Downtown Wheeling Business Association
Members:	

*Goals of Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board:*

- 25. Education and engagement of a broader base of Wheeling residents*
- 26. Job Creation – retain and bring back our young people with quality jobs*
- 27. Mixed use of properties including downtown living*
- 28. Increase foot traffic in downtown*

Task Force Objective: To create a community businesses, property owners, and individuals who are committed to making Downtown Wheeling the destination of choice for shopping, dining, entertainment and downtown living.

Vision: Downtown Wheeling is a welcoming, vibrant and prosperous destination that offers the people of Greater Wheeling a unique, authentic and high quality experience.

Task Force Procedure: The task force met with individuals having an interest in Downtown Wheeling. Our open discussions reinforced the need to re-establish a Downtown Wheeling Business Association.

Requirements for Implementation: The Downtown Wheeling Business Association will be an advocate for downtown business and a catalyst for action. The responsibilities of the Downtown Wheeling Business Association will not duplicate those of other organizations, but will strive to work with a broad range of organizations, agencies, and elected officials, adding to the resources committed to the objective of improving the health and vitality of downtown.

The Downtown Wheeling Business Association will be accountable, fiscally, responsible, and transparent. As a non-profit entity, the Downtown Wheeling Business Association will ensure it is accountable to and representative of its members through their participation in various meetings, committees, and surveys associated with creating a strategic plan and the ongoing operation of the organization.

An involved and visionary Board, representative of a cross-section of downtown business interests, will lead the Downtown Wheeling Business Association. The Association will work with and for the City of Wheeling and other partners to

ensure that we are strategically positioned to initiate and respond to any opportunities for strengthening the role of Downtown Wheeling as the business center of Greater Wheeling.

Procedural / Software Changes: Downtown Wheeling Business Association would be a 501-c3 non-profit organization governed by a Board of Trustees. The Downtown Wheeling Business Association will be funded in part through memberships, fund raising, and a yet to be determined City of Wheeling revenue stream for downtown events and revitalization. A contact person, working 10-15 hours per week, will be needed to coordinate activities and to interact with various agencies. Ultimately, the Association would become the Business Improvement District for Wheeling.

### **Organization Chart for Downtown Wheeling Business Association**

#### ***Executive Committee***

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- City Representative

#### ***Promotion Committee***

Goals and Objectives:

- Public Relations and Media Relations
- Create Annual Events Calendar
- Enhance Atmosphere
- Promote Downtown Cleanliness
- Promote Downtown as Community Center

#### ***Economic Restructuring Committee***

Goals and Objectives:

- Help Identify Strategic Businesses
- Create a Marketing Plan
- Create Business Assistance/Recruitment Package/Tools
- Recruit Businesses to Fit Niches
- Work with Businesses to better Utilize All Day Parking

#### ***Design Committee***

Goals and Objectives:

- Design Guidelines
- Document Historic Building Appearance
- Directional Signage
- Enhance Safety/Atmosphere
- Downtown Streetscape
- Develop Off-Street Parking
- Development of Secondary Store Fronts
- Develop Downtown as Community Center

**Organization Committee**

Goals and Objectives:

- Build Membership Base
- Increase Communication with Members and Stakeholders
- Develop Downtown Wheeling as Community Center
- Establish Partnerships to Help Keep Downtown Wheeling Streets and Sidewalks Clean
- Work to Identify Better Parking of Downtown Parking Utilization
- Coordinate Implementation of Streetscape and Public Improvement Projects

**Executive Committee** – The President of the Board of Directors is chair of this 11 member committee whose composition is established by the DWBA Bylaws. The immediate past president is ex-officio member. Manages the activities and affairs of the Association and exercises all powers granted to the Board by the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws. Makes policy, advocacy and program recommendations to the Board.

**Finance Committee** – The treasurer is chair of the committee. Performs an oversight function of the fiscal condition of the Association. Establishes and maintains adherence to financial policies and procedures. Makes budgetary recommendations to the Board.

**Planning & Development Group** - Ad hoc group dedicated to developing and monitoring a long-range planning process for the Association. Assists in planning the Board retreat, setting primary goals and developing a five-year plan.

**Board Membership Committee** – Committee membership is composed of all Board members whose terms expire at the end of the current year. Members serve one year. The committee takes responsibility for recruiting new Board

members and for orienting and integrating Board members. Meets as needed.

**Wheeling Downtown Foundation** – An independent 501-c3 non-profit organization governed by a Board of Trustees. The Foundation’s mission is to raise funds for programs which enhance the cultural, aesthetic, and educational environment in downtown.

**DWBA Sub-Committees:**

**Advocacy** – Represents downtown business and property owner interests to government and elected officials. Develops recommendations on public policies and budgets impacting downtown. Supports other committees such as parking and frames positions on specific issues like housing, retail, crime, cleanliness and shuttles.

**Downtown Operations** – Works with government (City, County, and State) staff to address downtown maintenance, safety and operations concern. Includes Quick Response Team, ad hoc groups charged with tackling concerns raised in regular meetings.

**Parking** – Addresses public parking program and its effect on downtown business and property owners. Makes recommendations to the Downtown Parking Board and City Council.

**Marketing** – Acts as a forum to analyze existing and new marketing opportunities. Ensures that a consistent message is being delivered to the public about Downtown Wheeling.

**Downtown Arts & Dining** – Advances downtown as a regional center for culture, art and fine dining through collaborative promotional and advocacy programs.

**Heritage Port** – Directs marketing and advocacy programs to promote Wheeling Heritage Port district.

**Victorian District** – Creates projects, promotions and special events that enhance the historic business district on Main Street.

**Entertainment Zone Committee** – promotes downtown night life and manages issues affecting bar and nightclub policies, operations and security.

**Retail Task Force** – Ad hoc group whose purpose is to develop and implement a

successful retail strategy for downtown. This group does ongoing retail analysis and works with the Wheeling Development Office and business and property owners to develop a successful retail environment.

**BHAD Committee – Beautification, Historic Preservation and Architectural Design** group identifies business owners who have made improvements to downtown’s landscape. Presents Golden Nail awards in recognition of outstanding rehabilitation projects.

**Risk Analysis:** The goals are to better the common good of the downtown. Without an organization of their peers, we risk alienating future downtown business owners. Businesses are comforted knowing the downtown is concerned about their surroundings. The Association demonstrates a sense of continuity to perspective new businesses.

**Other:** An improved civic development environment will help change the perception of downtown. Moving the city from “process to product” will attract more investor interest and investment. The message of downtown can be a very positive one, especially when we show there is a business-friendly environment with pro-active programs, policies and projects. Recruitment of companies to locate offices downtown, in existing or new buildings, should be an ongoing coordinated effort from public and private sector leaders. Recruitment of retail remains a priority, including local retail representatives of the community’s diversity.

Submitted by: Joe Santinoceto / Frank O’Brien	
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Date: 5/23/05	
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# **Calls for Action**

## **I. Business & Occupation Tax**

Create a “Downtown Revitalization District” incorporating the recommendations made by the B&O Task Force. These include:

1. A 50% reduction of B&O Tax in the categories of Retail, Service, Amusements, and Rents.
2. New businesses in the district would pay zero B&O for the first three years of operation.

Increase B&O Rates City-wide in the following categories:

1. Contracting would increase from \$1.56 to \$2.00 per \$100
2. Electric Utility would increase from \$3.00 to \$4.00 per \$100

A 3-year B&O tax abatement on new Manufacturing businesses city-wide.

The Finance Office should review this plan and report to City Council after a 5-year implementation for council to consider the future of the program.

## **II. Building Inspection**

Adopt recommendations for a user-friendly system

Institute Citation Authority to inspectors

Develop a building analysis and loan program for vacant downtown buildings

## **III. Downtown Living**

Fund an initial project in the amount of \$50,000 for the structural and architectural evaluation of a building to be renovated for high-end loft-style apartments.

## **IV. City Development Assistance**

Increase visibility of loan and grant programs through the City of Wheeling website with program details and application information.

Recruit specific businesses to downtown that will support future growth.

Improve Market Street Plaza.

Consider the establishment of a Business Improvement District.

Continue to fund the Façade Renovation Program or a Building Renovation of some kind in the amount of \$150,000 annually.

#### **V. Back Office Business Development**

Work with RED and Ohio County with existing property owners to implement a comprehensive marketing strategy to attract companies and jobs into downtown. This will require the City to contribute financially in the sum of \$55,000 toward the effort.

#### **VI. Entertainment**

Facilitate the re-emergence of an Entertainment District by assisting cultural-type entities in locating in the downtown.

#### **VII. Downtown Business Association**

Support a Downtown Business Association by asking for updates from them on economic progress. It is the idea of the Downtown Wheeling Economic Development Advisory Board that a Downtown Business Association could pick up where the Advisory Board left off in its mission for Downtown Wheeling.

#### **VII. Other**

Change Downtown Traffic Patterns. One-way streets can become two-way. Most importantly, work with the DOH to change the lane assignments on Market Street leading to Interstate 70.

Make the Downtown Cleanup an annual event. Involve business and property owners to create community pride.

Continue diligent work with irresponsible property owners who allow their properties to create a slum and blight appearance for the downtown.

Support the National Civil War Memorial Project. Should this project need financial assistance, the advisory board strongly recommends the City assisting with this process. The National Civil War Memorial is projected to bring approximately 250,000 additional tourists through the city and downtown every year.