

Economic Revitalization Post-Disaster



Outline

- Challenges and opportunities
- Mobilizing for change
- Developing a vision for revitalization
- Assessing revitalization needs
- Revitalization tools & strategies





From 2000 to 2010, the total number of vacant housing units in the U.S. grew by over 4.5 million, an increase of 44%

Vacant, abandoned properties are linked to increased crime (particularly arson) and declining property values.

Maintenance or demolition of vacant properties is a huge expense for many communities.



Vacancy & Blight

Complex causes:

- Owner leaves and can't find a buyer
 - Population decline due to local business or industry losses
 - Foreclosure
 - Obsolescence of building
 - Manmade or natural disaster – rapid or widespread loss
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- Left alone, a problem can grow rapidly and it affects businesses around it
 - Properties located within 500 feet of vacant buildings lose as much as 8.7% in value, according to HUD



A holistic approach is
required



Revitalization Process

- Leading community or neighborhood for change
- Assessing neighborhood needs
- Developing a shared vision
- Putting together a revitalization plan
- Identifying champions to drive improvements
- Mobilizing resources





Challenges



- Difficulty in seeing revitalization potential
- Small neighborhood businesses hit hard
- Divisive social lines or underlying issues
- Worsening of poor pre-disaster conditions
- Lack of capacity
- Neighborhood-oriented commercial activity overlooked

Opportunities

- Chance to re-group, re-connect, re-focus
- Ability to leverage prior distressed status for resources and services
- Opportunity to build back better



Opportunities

- Rehabilitate or repurpose existing assets for new purposes
- Improve quality of life for existing residents and adjacent neighborhoods
- Establishing commercial uses for vacant property helps reclaim problem areas and plant seeds for local economic growth





Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities

Successful neighborhood revitalization takes your leadership

- Driver of redevelopment
- Inspire and motivate stakeholders
- Organize resources
- Support strategies for revitalization
- Appoint local volunteers to expand your capability to get things done
- Support local economy and businesses.
- Embrace or work against a negative neighborhood image or identity.

Roles and Responsibilities

Economic developers and elected officials have two strategic focuses

- the larger, long-term strategies for economic growth and business success
- the potential for community improvement in the recovery and rebuilding process



Roles and Responsibilities

Residents and business owners

- Participate in organizations
- Provide input for planning efforts
- Provide volunteer resources



Roles and Responsibilities

Community leaders can drive revitalization by:

- Recognize the individual needs of each neighborhood
- Enforce housing codes to fight blight and vacancy
- Streamline permitting process
- Work with community organizations to stimulate neighborhood confidence
- Provide planning services and data in support of neighborhood revitalization





Developing a Vision for Revitalization

Mobilizing for Change

**Identify
Relevant
Stakeholders**

**Identify a
Revitalization
Champion(s)**

**Gather
Residents to
Spur Interest
and Educate**

Developing a Vision for Revitalization

- Sustainability and success depends on engagement
- Engagement can awaken authentic desire for change from the community
- Jump-start the process with an inclusive gathering
 - e.g. charrettes or activities that get attendees identifying issues, recognize progress



Case Study: Tuscaloosa, AL

- Struck by an EF₄ tornado in April 2011. Ripped through downtown Tuscaloosa.
- “We wanted to build it back to where they’re proud of living there, and give businesses incentives to build in that area.”



Case Study: Tuscaloosa, AL

- Led to the “Tuscaloosa Forward Generational Master Plan”
- Included rezoning from purely residential to mixed-use to drive commerce opportunities
- Tuscaloosa used the lag time -- it was waiting on (HUD) rebuilding funds -- to build support for its new vision



Case Study: Tuscaloosa, AL

Key to the success, Mayor Walter Maddox says, was identifying early on that the city will be rebuilt differently -- better -- than before, and it would address the concerns of citizens who want their city back as fast as possible





Assessing Revitalization Needs

Assessing Neighborhood Revitalization Needs

Business and Community Surveys

- Great way to gather needs and current issues
- Provide qualitative and quantitative information
- Information collected can be used to:
 - Formulate issues
 - Gather ideas for redevelopment
 - Gauge what is valued in the neighborhood

Assessing Revitalization Needs

Information to gather:

- Estimates of property and equipment damage
- Economic activity loss
- Workforce disruption and loss
- Utility disruption
- Loss of suppliers
- Loss of customers
- Financial and technical assistance needs

Tools for assessment

Survey methods

- Large group meeting with businesses
- One-on-one meeting with business owners or managers
- Neighborhood gatherings or meetings
- Neighborhood asset mapping



Case Study: Partnering with Community Colleges

- Three Partners:
 - Copperas Cove (Texas) Economic Development Corp.
 - Central Texas College (CTC) Business Department
 - Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) program
- Students volunteered to be trained to conduct interviews with 45 local businesses.



Case Study: Partnering with Community Colleges

- Benefits of the partnership:
 - Students make new connections with local businesses
 - Trained volunteers who in a time of disaster can support local business assistance efforts with little instruction.
 - Independent perspective. Business owners may speak more openly with the students than economic developers

Assessing Neighborhood Revitalization Needs



Asset Mapping

- Shows assets of the neighborhood and highlights interconnections among them
- Doesn't have to be very detailed
- Assets are not only physical
 - e.g. relationships, cultural mapping, and human capital

Redevelopment Revitalization Taskforce

- Group of key neighborhood and community stakeholders
- Pool financial and human resources
 - Take advantage of existing resources
 - Can be community clubs, organizations, personnel from a nearby military base
- Scope of the task force varies - can oversee redevelopment or bring neighborhood needs to city level

Revitalization Opportunity Areas

Improving Infrastructure

- Distressed neighborhoods *pre-disaster* often face issues with infrastructure
- Improved infrastructure should be aligned with redevelopment vision
- Post-disaster, local leaders and economic development professionals should identify revitalization funds or grants



Examples of Building Back Better

Examples:

- Rebuilding damaged bridges so that they include wider access to make a business district more marketable
- Implementing long-desired street redesign when water and sewer lines are replaced downtown
- Planning a new parking garage in a damaged area to accommodate denser future development



Case Study: West Liberty, Kentucky

- **City organizes to build back better after harsh tornado hits.**
- Twofold approach: individual empowerment along with rebuilding a new bank, housing, and a health and wellness center.
- Aided by approximately \$30 million in private money.



Case Study: Goderich, Ontario “Canada’s Prettiest Town”

EF₃ Tornado passes through downtown Goderich on August 21, 2011.

Tourism and mining are key industries for the town of 8,000. Most tourists did not mind the repairs as they returned.



Case Study: Goderich, Ontario “Canada’s Prettiest Town”

16 days later: Safto Salt Mine, the largest employer at time of tornado, was the first to be hit. It started returning its 460 employees 16 days after the tornado. At one year, the mine employed 584 people.

One year later: 152 of 170 downtown businesses reopened including 8 new stores in the square.

Two years later: The farmers market and flea market returned to square. New reconstruction attracted new vendors.

Four years later: new performance stage in the square for festivals to the town.

Sparking Retail

- Shop Local Campaigns
- Farmers Markets
- Popups
- Special Events



Local vs. National Retail

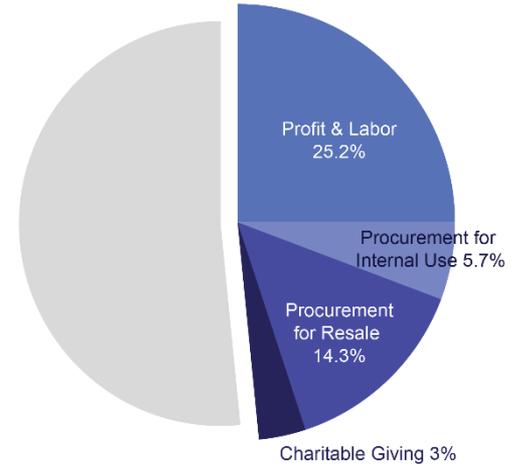
Local Economic Return of Indies v. Chains

Chain Retailers



Local Recirculation of Revenue: 13.6%

Independents

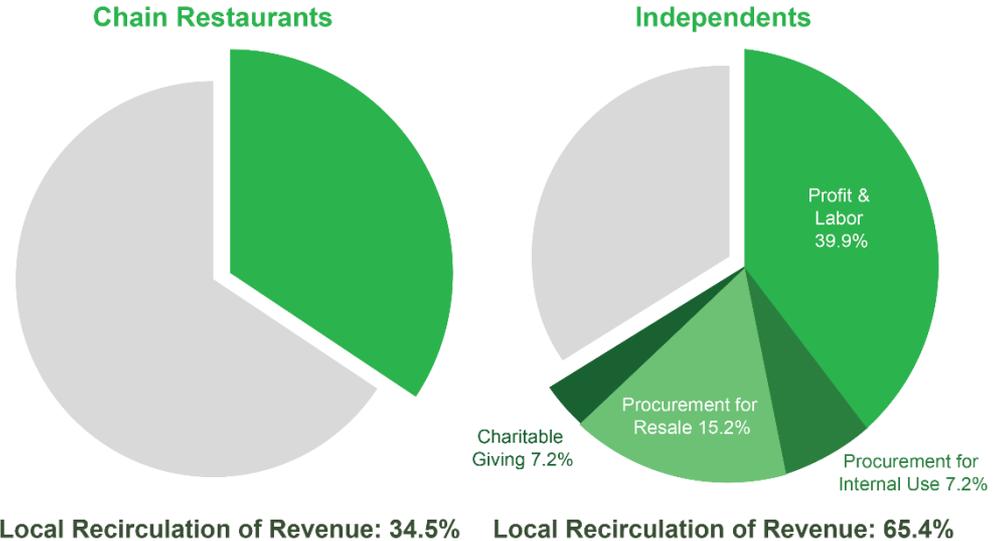


Local Recirculation of Revenue: 48%

*Compiled results from nine studies by Civic Economics, 2012: www.civiceconomics.com
Graph by American Independent Business Alliance: AMIBA.net

Chain vs. Independent Restaurants

Local Benefit of Indie v. Chain Restaurants



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Graph by American Independent Business Alliance: AMIBA.net

Case Study

Lancaster, CA



Local Economic Stimulus Programs

Persons Spending \$300 or More Within The City Can Receive a \$30 Gift Card

“We’ve designed the Shop and Dine program to keep funds circulating within our city. The gift cards can only be spent at Lancaster businesses, and studies have shown that people will typically spend 140% the value of a gift card. Our local merchants are excited about the program,” said Lancaster City Manager Mark V. Bozigian.



Case Study – REVOLVE Detroit

REVOLVE uses “pop-ups” as a catalyst to accomplish objectives:

- recruit and grow permanent tenants
- spark public and private investment
- change the image and experience of neighborhood business districts.



Case Study – ReStore Event Suffolk, Virginia

- Aims to fill vacant retail properties with entrepreneurs considering opening a business downtown
- For one weekend, city opens vacant properties to pop-up businesses
- First time created an event atmosphere with live music downtown and extended restaurant week
- Currently planning its 3rd ReStore Event on Small Business Saturday, November 26, 2016



Revitalization Opportunity Areas

Incentive Zoning and Permitting

- Work with local businesses and the city to ease the permitting process
- Address current zoning that may be detrimental to redevelopment
- New designations can improve commercial streets with little business activity
 - Example – Feret St, New Orleans – overlay as “arts and culture district” to ease permitting – 20 new biz’s opened 2008-2012

Art Centers as a Catalyst for Revitalization



*Glasstown Arts Center,
Milleville
Cumberland County, NJ
One of the poorest towns is
experiencing revitalization in
its arts district*



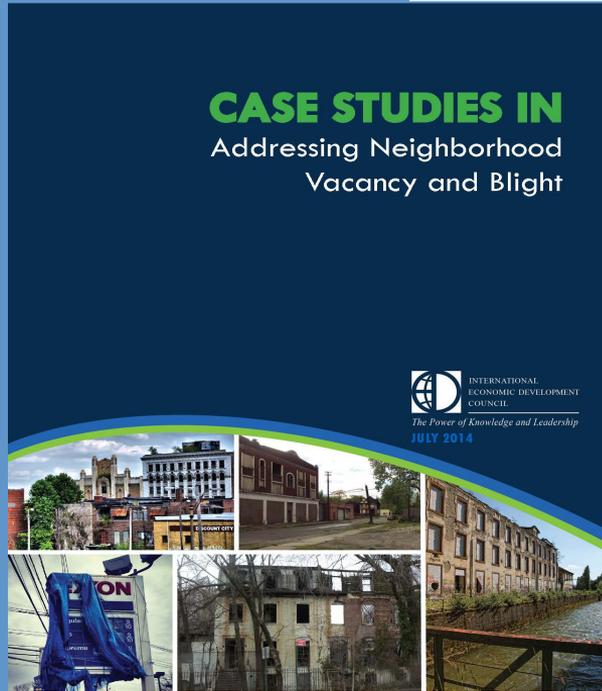
*Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria, VA
A surplus federal building became a landmark attraction and special
event space – attracts \$16M annual economic benefit*

Creating Events to Attract People

- Huntsville, AL “Downtown Open: Pop-Up Putt Putt Experience”
- Bay St. Louis, MS “Bridgefest”
- Gaston, NC “Cash Mob”
- Pacific Grove, CA “First Friday”



More Resources



6 Case Studies in Vacancy and Blight

- In July 2014 IEDC launched a publication highlighting case studies from across the country

<http://restoreyoureconomy.org/case-studies-addressing-neighborhood-vacancy-and-blight>



Additional Resources

Rural Community Downtown Revitalization -
<https://ric.nal.usda.gov/downtown-revitalization>

Thoughts on the Economic Revitalization of
Small Town Downtowns -Econ Dev Journal -
<http://goo.gl/JfRcKl>

Final Thoughts:

How to Drive Revitalization

- Listen to your community – 2-way dialogue
- Create a better vision
- Supportive policy environment
- Leverage resources - grants, public-private support
- Secure, safe environment
- Use a variety of tools
- Product development: maximize existing assets
- Enlist community support – appoint future leaders
- Persevere: this is a long-term process