

In Newport

# What can be done about Main Street?

by Joseph Gresser

NEWPORT — What is to be done with Newport's downtown? Is Main Street on the verge of a renaissance?

More than 70 Newport business owners, officials and residents gathered Wednesday evening, January 24, at the Gateway Center to seek answers to these pressing questions.

They showed up on a bone-chilling night to move Newport's business district toward recognition as a designated downtown. Vermont has 21 cities with downtowns that have been recognized by the Vermont Downtown Program, which is run by the state Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

If the Newport business district is given designated status, property owners will be eligible for such benefits as tax credits, loans and grants from various state agencies. To qualify, the city is required to demonstrate broad public support for a comprehensive revitalization strategy.

With a grant it received in 2006, the city hired Patricia Sears as downtown coordinator on an 18-month contract.

Ms. Sears was hard at work Wednesday, walking from table to table, introducing herself to unfamiliar faces and bidding them welcome.

The evening started with a keynote address  
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John Woodward, Joss Besse and John Watson listen as Newport business owner Katy Kavanagh offers her ideas on how to revitalize the city's downtown. They were among the 70 people who attended a meeting Wednesday, January 24, at the Gateway Center.  
Photo by Joseph Gresser