



DOWNTOWN DIARY

by
Patricia M Sears

January 2007

NEWPORT, VT—Welcome to a series of occasional columns about the Newport City Downtown Renaissance project. My name is Patricia Sears. I am the Coordinator for this immense, daunting and *very exciting* project.

We all know that a vital downtown is a community's front door. It is a snapshot in time of the success of a community. It's a reflection of the community's pride.

With the efforts of many people involved in *Newport City Downtown Renaissance Project*, Newport's downtown district will feature several healthy retail stores, restaurants and professional businesses. And more than that, it will enjoy being a vibrant destination that's safe and enjoyable.

For the past few months, a working group has been working diligently on getting this exciting project rolling. Members of the working group are people you know: The Honorable Elwood Guyette, Mayor of Newport City; John Ward, City Manager; Olivia Bebeau, Gilman Housing Trust; Tim Hamblett, Pick & Shovel; Mike Marsh, Community National Bank; Jim McKimm, Memphremagog Arts Collaborative; Sherry Norris, The Landing Clothing Store; Tina Norton, Chittenden Bank; Heather Sevigny, North Country Chamber of Commerce, and Rick Woodward, Mywood Properties. Over time this group has grown in number and will continue to grow.

One of my immediate challenges will be to help Newport City earn Downtown Designation, a state-awarded designation that has already been conferred on more than 20 Vermont communities. With Newport's achievement of this designation, it will complete the enrollment of all of Vermont's cities in the program. Administered by the State of Vermont's Downtown Program, downtown designation offers substantial tax credits on certain improvements to downtown buildings. Through it, Newport will gain greater access to funding resources to improve our historically significant downtown.

To qualify for Vermont's Downtown Program, towns must develop a comprehensive revitalization strategy for the downtown district and demonstrate broad-based community support. The strategy must involve a long-term commitment to enhancing economic opportunities, preserving historic buildings, and improving public spaces and infrastructure in the commercial district.

Patricia M Sears, Newport City (VT) Downtown Coordinator
802 334.5136 or 744.6600
pmsears@gmail.com



DOWNTOWN DIARY

by
Patricia M Sears

So, what does all this mean to you? Economic vitality will provide economic and community stability and ultimately improve property values enhancing the pride all will have in an energetic downtown. This will give us all a way to keep profits in town.

What about Newport's future? Newport, and its neighboring communities, can become leaders in technology, environment, education, tourism, culinary arts, and alternative energy...all possible because we have the necessary assets now. The goals of those hard at work on the project will continue to be fearless and bold in ideas and actions.

Join us on Wednesday, January 24th, for the first community forum on the Downtown Renaissance Project; it will be held at the Gateway Center on the shores of Lake Memphremagog, in Newport. The event will start at 6pm and will be catered and childcare will be provided.

Premiere sponsors of this kick-off occasion are Chittenden Bank and the City of Newport; an excellent demonstration of private-public partnership. The private sector's socially responsible leadership and the public sector commitment are critical to the success of the downtown enhancement effort.

Bill Stenger, CEO of Jay Peak Resort, will be the keynote speaker who will herald Newport City's assets and future prospects. Joss Besse, director of the Vermont Downtown Program, will present the stories of Vermont cities that recently received their official Downtown Designation and explain the Program's goals. The community participants will specifically address Economic Restructuring, Promotion, and Design and determine action goals for the workplan.

We want all to understand this is a long-term project which will require long-term effort and commitment.

We invite the community to embrace the challenges. We need individuals who care about Newport City to step forward and make a commitment to action that will benefit Newport.

For more information you can contact me (Patricia Sears) at 334.5136 or pmsears@gmail.com. Go to www.kingdomcommons.com/NCDRP.htm for updates. In the meantime, 'stay tuned'...

[Published in the Newport Daily Express, January 15, 2007]

Patricia M Sears, Newport City (VT) Downtown Coordinator
802 334.5136 or 744.6600
pmsears@gmail.com