

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES



IMPLEMENTATION: “YOU’VE GOT A PLAN, WHAT’S NEXT”

INTRODUCTION

It is important to remember that downtown revitalization is a “journey” --- it is not an event --- it is not a project --- it will take time and the ongoing commitment of Elon’s government, business, University and community leaders.

Having noted the effort will be a journey, it is also important that Elon’s leadership create its leadership team (Board of Directors and staff), choose an organizational model (see Organization section below) and pick a project or two that can be accomplished in the very near future (6 months +/-). These accomplishments will demonstrate momentum to the entire Elon community and will show that its leadership is serious about this revitalization journey.

To be successful, the effort to revitalize downtown must have the demonstrated support (e.g., public investment in a project related to the Master Plan) of elected leaders and the Town Administration. Private investors will look for the “concrete” support (not just “rhetoric”) of the political and administrative leaders of Elon before investing.

You now have a plan, but equally important, you need a leader responsible for implementation of the Master Plan.

Your leader needs to use his/her communication skills to build support and create excitement within the private sector and general public if the revitalization is to be successful.

It is very important that whomever leads your Downtown Master Plan implementation effort be proactive rather than reactive. This person cannot “sit around” waiting for investors, developers, merchants and commercial office clients to walk in the door.

Finally, if you elect to create a new non-profit organization (see organization options below) to guide the implementation of this Master Plan, it is of critical importance that the leader of this effort works closely with a senior level contact person in government and a senior level person at the University. These colleagues must form a partnership that demonstrates to potential investors that Elon has a great “team” in place, and is ready to provide sound counsel for getting a deal done in Elon.

LEADERSHIP

Finding your leader of the downtown revitalization effort is Elon’s most important decision. Your leader can be found either from outside your community, or be someone who is already in Elon.

The most important criteria for your leader will be:

- Does he/she have, or have the ability to garner the trust of Elon’s community, business, political and University leaders?
- Does he/she have credibility with Elon’s leadership?
- Does he/she have the “passion” to lead the effort to revitalize downtown Elon?
- Is he/she a “deal maker?”
- Does he/she have the ability to raise money?

ORGANIZATION

There are three primary opportunities for an organizational model:

- Locate the organization in the Town government
- Create a non-profit (501-c-3 Or 501-c-6) organization
- Locate the organization in Elon University

If you choose to locate the organization as an arm of the local Town government, the position should be a senior level position that reports directly to the Town Manager. It is important that Elon’s community, business, political, and university leaders understand that they are partnering with a key administrative decision maker. An advantage of locating the organization within the Town’s current administrative structure is the operational costs associated with organization (office space, utilities, equipment, etc.) will already be in place and will be less costly. A disadvantage of locating the organization and the staff within the Town’s current administrative structure is that the organization’s leader will have far less legal flexibility for working with clients, putting deals together, and less ability to “agree to disagree” with the Town’s management on important public policy issues and potential development projects.

If you choose to create an independent non-profit organization, then our recommendation would be a three-way partnership among the Town, Elon University, and the private sector. This would require the successful application to the IRS for non-profit status; the creation of a Board of Directors composed of representatives of the three main partners, and an ongoing fund raising effort on the part of the leadership of the non-profit organization. The office location for the non-profit should be within the downtown geographical district so that the staff becomes very familiar with the opportunities and challenges of the downtown; becomes familiar with, and gains the trust of the business and property owners in the downtown, and the organization becomes a very visual reminder that the community is serious about its downtown revitalization effort. A challenge for creating a non-profit entity will be the start-up costs since the non-profit will need to raise funds for staff salaries and benefits, office space, operations and programs. Major advantages of a separate non-profit entity are: it can have more freedom of operation since it is not bound by government rules and regulations; it can advocate for downtown projects and issues with the administrative and political leadership of the community; it will have more flexibility in dealing with the private sector, and it can “agree to disagree” with political and administrative leaders when necessary as the Board and staff deal with public policy issues and development projects that may not have the full support of all the players within and outside of government.

If you choose to create an independent non-profit organization, it can seek IRS designation to be a 501-C-3 or a 501-C-6.

The advantage of a 501-C-3 designation is the ability to raise funds that allow for a tax deduction for the contributor. Such a tax deduction is not allowable if the organization is designated a 501-C-6. Contributions to a 501-C-6 organization are considered a business or personal expense.

The advantage of a 501-C-6 is the ability to be a more proactive advocate for issues related to the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan. Advocacy by a 501-C-3 must be “educational” in its efforts.

If you choose to locate the organization within Elon University it should be a senior-level position that reports directly to a Vice President. The organization’s director, if located in the University, should have no other role other than the implementation of the Master Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION: “YOU’VE GOT A PLAN, WHAT’S NEXT”

INTRODUCTION

Similar to locating the organization with the Town’s administrative structure, locating the organization within Elon University has the advantage that operational costs will already be in place and thus less costly than an independent organization. In addition, the University has a vested interest in seeing that the Master Plan is implemented.

There are a number of issues for the University and community leadership to consider in this organizational model. A question that would arise is whether the Master Plan would be perceived as “Elon University Downtown” as opposed to the “Town of Elon Downtown.” Also, the community might perceive a conflict of interest in terms of what projects being developed are in the best interests of the Town versus those of the University. The University would face the difficult decisions of which projects should be placed on the tax books of the Town in order to grow the Town’s tax base and general fund, as opposed to those projects which might remain non-taxable as a result of being owned by Elon University. A final caution for this organizational model is the distrust that exists among some in the Elon community of the University.

STAFFING

Whether housed in government, as a non-profit development organization, or in Elon University, initial staffing is recommended to be:

- Senior level administrative position if housed with the Town administration or University, or a president/CEO if an independent non-profit
- Secretary/ administrative assistant
- Part-time Events Coordinator which is a contract position

FINANCIAL

- The senior staff person/president should be paid as if he/she were a senior level Town administrative director (range \$44,000 - \$65,000, plus benefits of 30% of salary --- mid-point of \$55,000 per year)
- The secretary/administrative assistant would be paid in the \$28,000 range. (plus benefits of 30% of salary)
- Benefits at 30% = \$25,000
- A contract Events Coordinator should be paid on a monthly retainer (monthly retainer range of \$1,000+/-)

If the leaders of Elon decide to locate the downtown revitalization effort within the Town Administration, the consulting team assumes the Town will budget for overhead. The same would be assumed if housed in the University.

If it is decided that the revitalization effort will be led by a private non-profit organization, estimated operational costs, in addition to the above salaries, are:

- Office space: \$10 - \$14 per square foot for a 1,000 square foot office = \$12,000 per year @ \$12 per square foot

- Capital equipment (leased): Copier, computers, printer, postage meter, etc. at approximately \$500 per month = \$6,000 per year.
- Taxes per year = approximately \$7,000 per year
- Marketing and other programmatic expenses: \$40,000+/- per year
- Office overhead = \$12,000 per year
- Total operating budget: \$200,000+/-

The collaborative structure for the non-profit organization is recommended to be among the Town (via an economic development contract with performance criteria), Elon University and the private sector (businesses, property owners, citizens).

MISSION & PROGRAM OF WORK

As an example of a mission statement and program of work, the consulting team would recommend:

- Mission Statement: To create an environment for private and public investment in downtown Elon by working in the following program areas:
- Economic Development
- Parking
- Appearance
- Promotion
- Safety
- Public events

HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

The staff that leads the revitalization should focus its daily work with clients on these activities:

- Information
- Research
- Deal making
- Networking people together
- Advocacy
- Public policy
- Public relations
- And, most importantly, making and keeping downtown a community priority

IMPLEMENTATION: “YOU’VE GOT A PLAN, WHAT’S NEXT”

INTRODUCTION

NON-NEGOTIABLE ISSUES FOR A PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

After the Elon Downtown Master Plan is adopted by the Town Aldermen, we strongly recommend that the leadership of the revitalization effort adopt the following “guiding principles” for any public/private partnerships:

1. Is the project consistent with the Elon Downtown Master Plan?
2. Is the project a good deal for the Elon taxpayers?
3. Is a public incentive needed to get the deal done? And if yes, the Town Administration (or a third party consultant) will vet the developer’s development plan, including the proposed financial plan.
4. Elon will not pay any incentive until the project is complete.

EXAMPLES OF INCENTIVES

Examples of potential incentive programs that have been successful in other towns and cities are:

- Downtown Revitalization Fund (Durham)
- “Synthetic” Tax Increment Financing based on capital investment and job creation
- Federal and state Historic Tax Credits (Is Elon eligible?)
- New Market Tax Credits
- Historic Tax deferrals
- Façade Grants
- Building Improvement Grants
- Retail-based building improvement grants

It is important to structure any incentive program in a manner which provides a return to the taxpayers of Elon, even with grant incentives.

It is also important to structure any incentive program to insure that the client seeking the incentive “has skin (money) in the game.”

Finally, it is critical that those charged with implementing the Elon Downtown Master Plan develop a very close and coordinated working relationship and partnership with key staff in the Town administration and Elon University to demonstrate a strong development team partnership and provide assistance to clients.

MASTER PLAN REVIEW TIMETABLE & QUESTIONS

The Master Plan should be reviewed every 5 – 7 years, or anytime a development project is proposed that has value but conflicts with the Master Plan. The downtown leadership should ask itself:

- What did we say we were going to do?
- What did we do?
- What did we not do?
- Why did we not do it?
- Where do we plan to go in the next 5 – 7 years?

CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONCLUSION

The Town of Elon, North Carolina, desires a downtown that is vital, identifiable in the consciousness of its residents and memorable for all those who experience its built environment. Kauffman and Associates along with The Elon Downtown Committee envision such a downtown as a possibility and something achievable through ordered and visionary growth occurring over time. The Regulating Plan, Master Plan, has provided a cohesive look into the future possibilities for Downtown Elon by defining optimum locations for all built components that together create the visual fabric for achieving a memorable "sense of place" while maintaining an infrastructure promoting successful and viable development opportunities.

New development, adhering to the vision, rules and guidelines of the Master Plan, will occur over time and it is anticipated that some adjustments to this future vision will most likely occur as details become reality. The Pattern Book, however, provides the Town of Elon with flexible guidelines that will outlast the process and will espouse a common "downtown" story while demanding quality in any development as it integrates itself into the planned fabric of the Master Plan. Ultimately, sustainable community spaces will be created, the visual character of tree lined shopping streets will be preserved and expanded, ease and purpose of pedestrian and vehicular movement will be evident and the recognizable identity of Downtown Elon achieved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to the Elon Downtown Committee for their direction and participation in the development of the Downtown Master Plan.

ELON DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE:

Mr. Mark Green; Elon Board of Aldermen
Mr. Davis Montgomery; Elon Board of Aldermen
Mr. Sean Tencer; Elon Town Planner
Mr. Gerald Whittington; Elon University Senior Vice President for Business, Finance and Technology
Mr. Ed Wyatt; Interim Elon Town Manager

The following firms are recognized for their contribution to the Master Plan and Pattern Book.

ANALYSIS AND MERCHANDISING

Kauffman Associates
ATTN: Ken Kauffman, President
422 Rubia Place
Lancaster, PA 17601-2677
1.717.490.2008 ken.retail@gmail.com

MASTER PLANNING AND AMENITIES

DDG, INC.
ATTN: Mr George Black RA.
3700 O'Donnell St
Baltimore, MD 21224
1.410.960-0505 gblack@ddg-usa.com
www.ddg-usa.com

ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES

Roughton Nickelson De Luca Architects PA.
ATTN: Lucien Roughton AIA, LEED AP BD+C, Principal
3608 University Drive, Suite 204
Durham, NC 27707
1.919.490.1266 lroughton@RNDarchitects.com
www.RNDarchitects.com

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

McBride Hess Design Group, PA.
ATTN: Tim Hess, RLA, CAI, President
1073 Bullard Court, Suite 100
Raleigh, NC 27615
1.919.954.8200 tshess@mcbridehess.com
www.mcbridehess.com

TRAFFIC AND ENGINEERING

Don Bryson, P.E., Principal
VHB/ Vanasse Hagan Brustlin, INC.
4000 West Chase Blvd., Suite 530
Raleigh, NC 27607
1.919.829.0328 dbryson@vhb.com
www.vhb.com

ZONING

Thomas Comitta Associates, INC.
ATTN: Tom Comitta
18 W Chestnut St
West Chester, PA 19380
1.610.696.3896 tom@comitta.com
www.comitta.com

IMPLEMENTATION

Bill Kalkhof
39 Westridge Drive
Durham, NC 27713
1.919.423.6091 bill.kalkhof@gmail.com

CLIENT
THE ELON DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE
104 S. Williamson Avenue
Elon, NC 27244
t: 336.584.2859 f: 336.584.5334
www.elonnc.com

©2014 Downtown Elon. All Right Reserved.