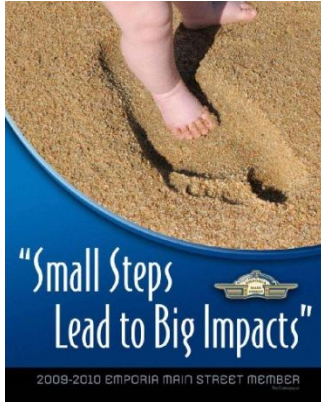


Design is an...

Art, Science, Process, Problem Solving Tool and a story telling mechanism for a community...



One of the sessions attended during the National Main Street conference was entitled "From Awful Space to Great Place". While the definition of "awful" in design is somewhat subjective, I think we can all agree on a few things that can make our spaces better. Some of these design techniques require time, some require effort by our citizens and some require political will to give our building owners access to incentives packages that fit their project sizes. One full point of the Main Street process is dedicated to Design, so this complex topic cannot be covered in full here, but below is a synopsis of things learned at Nationals and potential applications here in Emporia.

Design is a way of seeing- I know, that's a little obvious, but think about that for a second. The visual nature of Design can make a store more (or less) inviting, can make an area seem more safe, can encourage pedestrian traffic or give people a place to "hang out". Successful businesses try to put themselves in their customer's shoes. From a design standpoint, we create aesthetics to enhance our ability to attract and retain our target audiences. With a little extra effort, we can create "wow" factors that make things more visually interesting and attract consumers.

Take advantage of existing resources- The wonderful thing about buildings in an older community is that most of them have served multiple uses. Restaurants, hotels, recreational facilities and service businesses have existed in different forms in several different buildings. That's a good thing... Our structures give us character and define the community's history. By taking advantage of conceptual drawing Design Assistance and other tools through Emporia Main Street, we can find new uses, or expanded uses, for existing buildings.

Get your concept out to the public. Secrecy has it's place when

acquiring property, signing contracts and completing business deals, but the community generally wants to support individuals and projects that benefit our community. Remodels, new construction and development plans should be shared to build public excitement. This holds true for both big AND small projects.



National Main Street conference teaching session on Design.

Want some FREE HELP? The Emporia Main Street Design Committee has a budget of \$500 and 40 hours of volunteer labor set aside to help business owners with a design project.

Cleaning up a back area, painting, caulking, assisting with design and more... Your Design Committee can help! Simply submit your design request to main.street@emporia-kansas.gov.

Incentives must be part of the equation. Last week, we brought up the idea of a historic district- again. For qualifying structures within the district, businesses can seek tax credits for everything from air conditioning units, windows and wiring to tuck-pointing brick, upper story redevelopment and facade improvements. At an RDA meeting, we were told that Building Futures goals (which included tearing down housing structures to produce more apartment complexes) were at odds with the creation of a historic district. Let me be clear- a historic district cannot stop the demolition of anything. Individuals in a community can, and do, sometimes get involved with a historic building. However, a historic district only requires that the public be allowed the chance to address an issue at a public meeting (like with the Arts Council Building or a house next to a historic church; both demolitions were allowed after public comment). Right now, we have individuals that want to develop upper stories, businesses that need bridge financing to renovate their buildings and investors looking for tax credits as an incentive to invest in our downtown. Should we prevent those reinvestment scenarios that are occurring right now in order to placate individuals that may want to build an apartment complex later (even though they still could build that complex with a historic district)?

So we are absolutely clear- a historic district does NOT mean that someone tells you how to design your building, or what you can or cannot do in regards to design. All final decisions regarding design or demolition still reside with the local government. A historic district does allow financial incentives for those business or building owners that CHOOSE to implement historic preservation practices in qualifying structures. Most structures in downtown already fall within historic "environs", which mean they are subject to the same rules as a historic district, but without any of the financial incentives that encourage building maintenance/redevelopment.

[For more information on State Rehabilitation Tax Credits, click HERE.](#)

To talk to an expert on historic districts and preservation tax credits, **it's not too late to register for the [2010 KANSAS PRESERVATION CONFERENCE](#)**, June 2-5 in Newton and North Newton. Register at www.kshs.org/resource/preservationconf.htm .



Building a sustainable community means keeping our property in good condition for businesses and generations to come. Emporia Main Street isn't into unfunded mandates, so we are seeking a number of different ways to make building maintenance and rejuvenation more feasible for our business members. Through your support, we will continue to build a better community by enhancing our existing businesses and encouraging the rejuvenation of existing commercial corridors.

[For past editions of the Emporia Main Street E-News, check out our E-News archives by clicking HERE.](#)

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