

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

1. How has the project impacted the local community?

The program was originated and grounded in the community's responses and ideas generated through a continuing public input process that laid the foundation for the goals, objectives, elements, and recommendations of the neighborhood plan. The plan was formulated as a comprehensive approach to revitalization of this historic neighborhood. Components of the plan include an evaluation of existing conditions, an evaluation of existing city policies affecting those conditions, and conclusions with recommendations for implementing better strategies to accomplish these goals. Research and subsequent recommendations were given on the topic of land use, transportation, public transit, lighting, crime, housing stock, building code enforcement, rental rates, infrastructure improvements, and education. Every component of the plan has been successfully implemented to date. Implementation of the plan includes the installation of 144 historic street lights; increased police patrols; aggressive code enforcement; new traffic signage; and the main goal of revitalization through the Artist Relocation Program. 'Using' or letting artists/bohemians revitalize a neighborhood is nothing new, however, in our program city government and a private bank take on that challenge and create a program that advertises nationally for artists to relocate, purchases properties at market rate and sells it at a discount, offers the artists ownership, provides marketing, provides excellent financing options, and undertakes the rehab of the existing public infrastructure. This kind of plan provides a sense of security, a sense of ownership, and a sense of value to those willing to undertake such a move. The project has impacted the community by reclaiming its oldest historic neighborhood. It has created a sense of local pride and the feel that things are improving in downtown. It has added additional tax base, created many new construction jobs, brought in new residents who are now contributing in many ways. The artists sit on boards, they volunteer, they help with local schools who have suffered arts education cuts. The growing impact of the growing influx of new human capital is having a revitalizing effect on the entire community. Its future impact will be enormous.

2. Describe the underlying values of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

The underlying values of this project is based on the significance of pride in one's sense of place. Had the City continued to allow once valued neighborhoods to decline, it would itself suffer that decline. Nothing is more important than healthy neighborhoods. The broken window theory applies not only to buildings, but to neighborhoods and to communities. Older, inner city, dilapidated neighborhoods plague cities around the world. Paducah wanted a solution that would start with renewing the Lower Town area and which then could be fine-tuned and targeted to other areas of the city. Community participation, input, and ownership were considered the only viable option for any chance of success. We asked the neighborhood residents to 'kick' the tires, take a 'test drive', 'pick the colors and the options' and ultimately 'drive it home'. The kind of support we enjoyed as a result of following this process made it a simple choice for policy makers to support. This concept plays into the plan and program's transferability as well. Due to the plan's success, property values continue to rise and the neighborhood's image is changing (both internal and external). It is becoming safer as tourists are now walking and driving through a neighborhood that a few short years ago, locals would have warned them to stay away from and deemed the neighborhood as being 'dangerous'. As we pass our benchmarks for success and the neighborhood is considered stabilized and self-sufficient, we plan to 'reprogram' and move to other parts of the city. It is our intent to continue to foster revitalization and grow the city's population by redevelopment instead of sprawl, while preserving our cultural and historical heritage. Comprehensiveness, inclusivity, adherence to previous plans, and a dedicated effort to address both immediate and long-range issues are what drove this plan through completion from the outset. There were no significant trade-offs required to implement the plan. It required attention, dedication, continuing support, stout hearts turned to the naysayers, some monetary support, and faith. These are required for any project worth doing.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

The process started by developing an inventory of all 333 structures in the historic neighborhood. The inventory provided a solid understanding of the area to be revitalized by analyzing the existing housing stock, existing and past land uses, and identifying historically significant structures. The next step in the planning process started with a series of meetings between the City and the Lower Town Neighborhood Association, neighborhood residents, and interested parties. There were four initial public meetings where planning staff and residents participated in the process of ranking the importance of the positive and negative aspects of their community and ended with a list of those items which would make their neighborhood a better place to live and work. Paducah made a special effort to include low-to-moderate-income persons in the planning process. Planning staff went door to door handing out notices and offering help through housing programs. The goal of the plan was revitalization, not gentrification. Simultaneously with the planning process, national advertising was implemented for the Artist Relocation Program. These ads invite artists to come to Paducah to discover the community. Once here, the artists are informed about the program incentives, talk with Paducah Bank about financials, and then leave being able to make an informed decision on whether they would like to become a part of Paducah's new arts community.

Financing of the program comes from the City of Paducah general fund; specific individual project financing has been done almost entirely by Paducah Bank. There are no state or federal grants involved. To date, there has been approximately \$2,250,000 in city monies spent with a private investment return from the artists of over 14 million dollars since August 2000. \$1,750,000 of city money has been spent on staffing, national marketing/advertising, professional fees, artist incentives, and buying and stabilizing dilapidated properties, as well as infrastructure improvements in traffic signage, streets, curbs, and gutter replacements. The incentives that the city provides directly to each artist is up to \$2,500 to pay for professional fees. Some properties purchased by the city are also given or discounted to artists. Additionally, the city has spent approximately \$500,000 in sidewalk and other infrastructure improvements which helped match a \$650,000 Federal grant to complete the 140 light historical street lighting project. The city's private partner, Paducah Bank, provides the main financial incentive to the artists in order to make the program work. Paducah Bank offers the artists a loan package that includes up to 100% of the purchase and rehab/construction of the property and a loan to value ratio of over 400% as well as relaxed underwriting standards. This extraordinary risk taken by this local community bank is perhaps the most vital element of this program.

Our project is unique to Paducah, though transferable to others. It addresses core issues for every city in this country by providing a road map to revitalization that could be copied either in detail or in its intent. It involves a comprehensive approach to every aspect of the neighborhood's physical environment, the bureaucracy of the local government, goals of private business, needs of the participant/catalysts, and the social characteristics of the target community. The key is to inventory the public perception of the community's strengths, needs, and desires and create a program tailor made to improve that sector of its economy or cultural identity based on public input. In Paducah, the investment ratio has been about 6:1 or a six-dollar return for every one-dollar spent. Paducah's Artist Relocation Program runs on an operating budget of about \$65,000 a year which includes a staff person heavily supported by other Planning department functions. The quality and strength of the partnership makes the program successful and easily implementable. The understanding that economic health is an underpinning to the program and all revitalization efforts made all partners: City of Paducah; Paducah Bank; Individual artists; concerned citizens; secure enough to invest their own dollars.