



Northern Tier Cultural Alliance: Recap of March 18-19 Visit and Focus Groups COMMUNITY MEETING RESULTS

Meritage Consulting made a March trip to Mansfield. During that visit, they held a series of focus groups and a public meeting to gather input from local community residents, regional artists, Mansfield University art majors, and other interested parties. There was a focus group of college students held on the afternoon of March 19th, and later that evening a community meeting and more focus groups were held at the Mansfield Fire Hall.

The evening meeting began with a brief overview of the project and concept, and then Becky Anderson presented a power point on Craft Centers around the US. This presentation focused on other craft centers/schools that provide relevant examples for the type of site that Mansfield is considering. She also outlined some commonalities and lessons learned from all of the sites that were interviewed and researched. This presentation is a small part of a larger study that is being compiled for the NTCA by Meritage.

The visioning session began with general discussion of the scope of the project and its regional impact. The participants were engaged in this visioning process and the following notes were taken:

2028 – Mansfield, PA – What is your vision?

- Sunshine – flowers, window boxes awnings, quaint community
- North Hall is still standing
- Full storefronts
- Small craft shops
- Clean
- Parking, restrooms, infrastructure
- Regional hub of retail development – sees Mansfield as regional and business side of Wellsboro, who is the tourism draw
- Retail strip – needed to develop area
- Lewisburg, Ithaca, etc...
- Phase I and II of the Industrial parks will be done
- Beautiful entrances into town
- Booming and bubbly
- The barn... Arts, the Business of Mansfield
- Diversified age groups beyond the university students

- Same beautiful natural resources – vacation destination – love the idea of the family reunion
- People are still on the street doing things – still safe
- Artisans, or products ... “Made in Mansfield”
- Local artists or students highly regarded and sought after
- Welcome Center features Mansfield
- Economy – the retail, artists and businesses all work together

How are you different?

- Lifestyle – have a sustainable job that will pay your mortgage, still live in a rural areas where you can hike, bike, etc – and still get to retail and shopping nearby
- Growth, but still less than 15% franchise

How Does a Center of Art and Craft Fit in?

- Recognizing our current strengths in the local University – there is a base of students that are already attracted there – way to “piggy back” with some of that
- What will we have for the seniors at that point – assisted living etc
- Need facilities for artisans
- Green homes?
- Arts can provide our longer lifespan with something worthwhile - Infrastructure for that through the center
- Cultural opportunities to create a feeling of community
- University and the town are intertwined

What is your Unique Selling Proposition?

- Has to be some synergy between community, university, outdoor lifestyle – these are similar to the other schools in many ways
- Need to rethink the aesthetics of everything that we do – we have missed that boat in many opportunities
- Needs to be visually distinct – character that we portray for our community
- Welcome center and drive down the valley maintains some high expectations

At the end of the visioning session, the participants were split into three focus groups and asked a series of questions, some general and some related to the group they represented (craft persons, local businesses and civic leaders, community at large). The following is a synopsis of the findings of these discussions:

- Many residents are from here and have moved away and then come back. They choose to live here for several reasons that include a family lifestyle, natural beauty, mix of urban and rural, University, safety, and friendliness
- There are challenges to living in the region as well. Topics brought up included: no developable land available, soil problems, need of single family homes in Mansfield.
- When broached about the center/school concept, many brought up the same ideas and needs for that. Something is needed in the community for kids after school, as well as summer and Saturdays. The timber industry is such an important part of the heritage of the region – can't we keep some and work with that? Artists need a place to sell work locally.
- There is a demand it seems for evening classes or weekend classes.
- Market is beginner to intermediate was the feeling of the craftsperson group.
- Homeschoolers are often an overlooked market and one that is relevant in the area.
- Culinary and or lifelong learning courses as well as Elderhostel were ideas that resonated with participants.
- Challenges would include funding, sparse immediate population, administrative costs, and sustainability.

Notes taken by Carole Summers Morris and compiled on 3/21/08

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