



The article entitled "Combining Capital with Character in Historic Downtowns" was written by Adam Fishman, principal of Fairmount Properties. Fairmount Properties, along with Hudson Village Development Company was the chief developer of the First & Main Project

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these changes, visitors returning to Hudson after being away still find it to be the same place they remembered.

DEVELOP

Combining Capital with Character in Historic Downtowns

Formerly the social heartbeat of the community, many historic downtowns are slowly losing their relevance and place as pivotal social gathering areas. While some residents push for revitalization, others are bent on preserving the town's identity. Hudson, Ohio, is trying to do both.

Home to many of the area's "firsts," including the first rail stop and the first college—Western Reserve University, now a preparatory school—Hudson became an important center for commerce and



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education, becoming a premier suburb of both Cleveland and Akron.

But in the late 1980s and early 1990s, regional retail sprawl led shoppers away from the unique, quaint shops that made Hudson's historic downtown an original experience. Stores began to close and the center of town began to show signs of deterioration. In 1995, a coalition of residents and leaders realized downtown revitalization was pivotal to the community's economic recovery and made it a key initiative in the city's comprehensive plan. The challenge was how to avoid creating a cookie-cutter lifestyle center and preserve Hudson's historic district. The solution was a revitalization effort involving a unique partnership of residents, the city, and private developers.

First & Main, Hudson's newly revitalized downtown, embraces the town's historic culture by blending new local, regional, and national shops, and residences and offices with the 150-year-old Main Street. Ten years in the making, the \$60 million revitalization was achieved by incorporating the following concepts:

▷ **INCLUDING A NONRETAIL DEMAND GENERATOR.** In Hudson, the generator is the new regional library, but in other communities it can be a post office, a city/town hall, an arts center, or a recreation center. An anchor that is not a store, but that serves to generate consistent pedestrian traffic, is essential.

▷ **BUILDING ON PAST SUCCESSSES.** Most communities have a few features in which they take pride. These need to be embraced and a way

found to incorporate them into the planning. In Hudson, the features were the village greens and a series of quaint, two-story shops that populated the downtown. The redeveloped area has been completed in a fashion that is wholly contextual—incorporating a new village green and using architectural themes consistent with the historic structures.

▷ **CREATING COALITIONS.** A public referendum was required to push the project forward, so a public/private partnership between the developers and the city of Hudson was forged, fostering a design process that was collaborative.

▷ **SELECTING DIVERSE MERCHANTS.** National retailers such as Talbot's, Coldwater Creek, Chico's, and Ann Taylor Loft have been integrated with local restaurants and one-of-a-kind boutiques. The retail portion of the project is anchored by a 20,000-square-foot European-style grocer.

▷ **MARKETING TOGETHER AS ONE.** The existing downtown's commercial district has historically been known as Main Street, and the new area's primary commercial stretch was to be known as First Street. Thus, the moniker *First & Main* was selected to communicate to the community that the entire downtown district was offered as a whole. In addition, the new development merged its merchants association with the existing downtown association for event planning, marketing, advertising, and the like.

Today, downtown Hudson has an expansive new library, a grocery store, condominiums, more shops, and many new offices. Yet, despite all



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