

# EARLY BIRD WEEKLY



NewbergRotaryEarlybirds.org

March 18, 2021

Last week was Downtown Coalition by its new executive director, Polly Peterson. We were, as it turns out, her first "formal" presentation.



[Newberg Downtown Coalition](#) is part of [Main Street America](#) under what Oregon State Parks' State Historic Preservation Office calls [Oregon Main Street](#).

While some of what Newberg Downtown Coalition does overlaps with the Chamber of Commerce, NDC's focus has a strict geography of downtown.

Polly used (what's now known as) Chapters to illustrate the history of America's "Main Street."

Known originally in 1891 as Morris, Miles & Co this building's story has had many chapters. In the 1950s, with the advent of the G.I. Bill, it became easier for veterans to buy

land and buy or build homes. This drove demand for homes, but downtown space was limited. So we got what's come to be known as urban sprawl. This was great for housing developers but not so much for the downtown core.

Need for services moved away from downtown nearer the developing communities bringing us strip malls and big box stores.

Downtowns began losing their identity as a center of the community.

Downtowns tried to keep up, knowing they didn't have the look and feel of the malls so let's transform the buildings we have.

[editor's observation ... ever notice that the malls are trying to make themselves look like old downtowns?]

Bill and Maureen Rogers, as part of Main Street America, got a "[Diamonds In The Rough](#)" Grant to restore the building's original design, or at least as close as reasonably possible (seismic, accessibility, etc.), and try to reclaim the Main Street feel.

Polly shared a one minute video from its Board Chair, Ed McMahon, promoting the project: [Main Street America - Power of the Movement](#).

Quoted by board member, Irvin Henderson, "often, not only will people share their best practices with you, they will come to your community and help you implement them."

The "Four Points" of the program are Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.

Economic Vitality includes a diverse economic base, smart new investment catalysts, and cultivation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Design involves creating an inviting, inclusive atmosphere. Celebrating historical character. And fostering accessible, people-centric public spaces.

Promotion is kind of obvious. Market the area's defining assets and communicate them through storytelling. And support the buy-local experience.

Organization is leadership and strong organizational capacity. To ensure broad community engagement and forge cross-sector partnerships.

The intersection of those four points is Community Transformation.

Polly reminded us something in that I didn't know. The Diamonds In The Rough grant, that funded the Chapters, project is also being used to replace 350 of the seats in our beloved 84 year old Cameo Theatre.

Distinctions: NDC vs Chamber vs Taste Newberg. Polly was really kind to me here and bold-faced key differences.

Chehalem Valley Chamber of Commerce - creates business development opportunities.

Taste Newberg - attracts tourists through food and wine.

Newberg Downtown Coalition - fosters physical improvements, events and promotions with a focus on art and history.

All three organizations feed each other and draw on each others' strengths for a stronger Newberg economy.

Q: Dan Burns reminded Polly that our club funds and builds things and, are there projects here that we can "take a little bite out of."

A: That was a quick yes. "We are just getting started with the Beautification Committee. Ronnie Vostinak is part of that. One immediate need is that the Cameo is still short on funds for its portion of the matching grant."

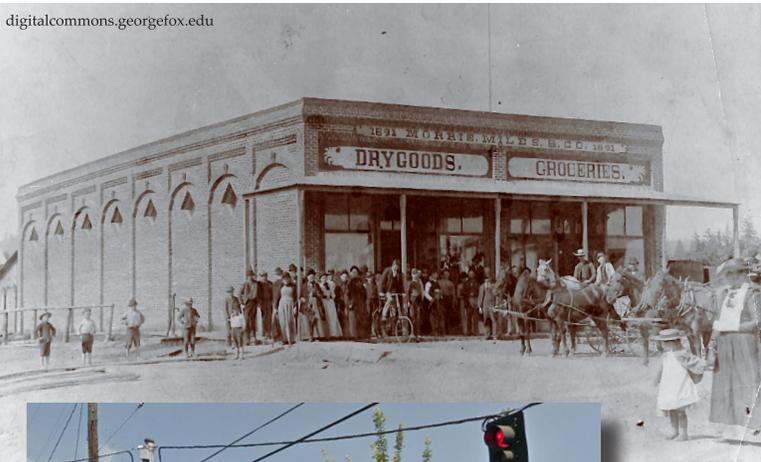
Q: Bob asks, "Are we able to close First Street for future events?"

A: Only after the Bypass in fully completed so First Street is no longer registered as a state highway which sounds like 8-10 years.

Q: Mark Moisan asked whether she at some dinner table conversation mused "wouldn't it be cool if we..."

A: Polly describes her though as "pretty pedestrian," and getting the traffic off the road. I know she meant the adjective "mundane, dull," not the noun "person walking along the road." (*you've got competition, Frank*)

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