



If a window of opportunity
appears, don't pull down the
shade.

Tom Peters

Aransas Pass

Historically, there are two irrefutable facts that follow a community incident or disaster:

It brings out the best in us - a proud determination and sense of responsibility to one another - all hands on deck to care for one another and a commitment to community recovery.

And, the sad, awkward and uncomfortable truth that opportunity accompanies such an incident or disaster - the opportunity that propels communities to leverage this awfulness and use it as a catalyst to tackle the bigger pre-conditions that existed before the incident or disaster.

The Downtown core of Aransas Pass knows that it is at a tipping point. Hurricane Harvey brought that fact into sharp relief. And Hurricane Harvey, although unwelcome, will not be its death knell but rather its pivot point.

Findings

- Aransas Pass is a community in the truest sense of the word. People genuinely care about their neighbors, the community and others.
- Aransas Pass is a special place to those who live there. They like the small town feel. They either choose to stay here because it is "home" or came back because they wanted to work here or raise their families here. Several waves of new residents moving into Aransas Pass are attracted to its small town attributes and simple lifestyle.

- Aransas Pass is expressed by most as a "laid back" lifestyle - it is not hurried, hustled or pretentious.
- Aransas Pass economy may be changing but it is still a "working town" at its core.
- Aransas Pass does not have a master plan to guide its development into the future. I am advised that City management is preparing to engage in such a master plan process.
- Aransas Pass residents and those who own businesses here are resilient, strong and very capable. There is no question in my mind that once they set their minds to a task, it will be done. Once they set goals, those goals will be achieved.
- Aransas Pass possesses one of the most globally envied assets - a waterfront that is functional, distinctive, unique and ripe with possibilities.
- Aransas Pass possesses a waterfront that competitively differentiates them from their beach community neighbors on Coastal Bend - offering a unique configuration that affords the added amenities of marshes, wetlands, open areas, waterways, docks.
- Aransas Pass has a good reputation among locals. Its reputation on the Coastal Bend is either not well defined, misunderstood or considered poor.
- Aransas Pass has a favorable reputation among those who visit for fishing, extended family who visit retirees and winter visitors - it is perceived as easy, simple and friendly.
- Aransas Pass was the Shrimping Capital of the World. That industry's slow decline - global competition, sea turtles and cost of doing business - coupled with an understandable denial and sense of loss, contributed to the failure of the community to pivot faster to adapt and adopt new industries to sustain the economy. This reluctance to accept and change was reflected in the Downtown.
- According to interviews and material readily available, the economy of Aransas Pass is fueled by an oil and gas industry in and around its city limits and tourism - seasonal fishing and boating visitors and winter visitors known as "snowbirds" who travel to the city in their campers and RVs and establish residence from November to April.
- Aransas Pass Downtown was not in the best shape before Hurricane Harvey, the two block core was by everyone's definition: tired, run down, sad and troubled.

- TXDOT owns the major thoroughfares through Downtown Aransas Pass. Generally, this is perceived as a positive although there are constraints.
- Aransas Pass has 10 hotels, 4 cottage rental companies, 2 vacation rental companies and 18 RV parks within its city limits. No one could tell me definitively how many hotel rooms, rental cottages, vacation rentals or RV slots are in the inventory pre-Harvey.
- There is not a group of support organizations you might expect given the strength of the fishing, boating, birding and outdoor recreation amenities available. There is a Fishing Guide Association and a private Yacht Club only.
- Downtown lacks coherency - in its mix of businesses and its aesthetics. It appears to have just evolved in response to economic conditions and as a result it lacks purpose, form and function. H.E.B. is the centerpiece of the downtown core but it is not connected in a meaningful or impactful way to the other businesses. The Bakery Cafe is the closest to a meeting and convening place as exists in Downtown Aransas Pass.
- Downtown needs rehabilitation - hard scapes, softscapes, streetscapes and infrastructure improvements that will attract and retain businesses and attract residents and visitors.
- The footprint of Downtown as defined by the original City code/ordinance maps is Harrison to Arch and Wilson to Greenwood.
- The north, south, east and west gateways into the Downtown core make a very poor impression. The hurricane damage notwithstanding, the property left and right of each gateway reflects dilapidated or abandoned buildings, unkempt yards and frontage, weeds, debris and litter.
- Downtown is very dark in the evening. Street lighting is inadequate and building lighting is inadequate. It appears that little is open and suggest nothing is happening. It also does not feel safe even though it may very well be safe.
- Store and business hours in the Downtown are erratic and incompatible with offering either residents or visitors reliable and consistent access to goods and services. In the absence of certainty, customers go elsewhere where the hours of business are reliable.
- The Conn Brown Harbor development will be a game changer for Aransas Pass. It will transform the waterfront and establish a new destination feature that will attract new visitors.
- Housing stock was negatively impacted by the hurricane. This contributes to an employment problem because hourly wage employees at hotels, restaurants and

seasonal businesses were unable to find housing or affordable housing. Almost everyone expressed a challenge finding, hiring and retaining employees for their businesses.

- There appears to be three resident groups in Aransas Pass - the affluent retirees/second home owners, those who reside there and work in the area year-round and the winter visitors. This suggests that there are three different levels of disposable income and three different sets of needs and expectations which the public and private sector must reckon with in their planning and development process.

Insights

In advance of arriving in Aransas Pass, I conducted online and offline research to acquaint myself with the city and community. These resources included scouring the internet for Wikipedia entries, images pre and post Harvey, reading the City's website, reviewing the Chamber's online presence, searching US Census and American Community Survey data, digesting some city history and evaluating the towns and cities within 50 miles of Aransas Pass to understand the context and environment in which the city stands.

As everyone proudly proclaims, Aransas Pass really is at the center of the towns and cities in the immediate surrounding area and the connective tissue between Rockport, Port Aransas, Ingleside and Corpus Christi. This is indeed a geographic advantage that can be more effectively leveraged to benefit the people and economy of Aransas Pass.

Aransas Pass is indeed at the crossroads of major highways into and out of other surrounding communities. "Passing through" can be altered with the addition of reasons to stop, stay and spend money. These reasons take many forms and functions - from provisioning to experiences - but in the absence of a reason and rationale to "experience" Aransas Pass rather than just drive through it, people will continue to just pass through.



- Experientially, downtowns that are built and sustained for the benefit of residents are more reflective of the character of their community and therefore more easily sustained and managed. As a consequence, they usually deliver the services and products the locals need and want and the qualities that attract visitors.
- Aransas Pass will be best served if it revitalizes their Downtown in a sustainable way that reflects the Downtown that residents and visitors deserve, expect, need and want. To retain and attract businesses Downtown, businesses must be able to survive and generate marginal profits 365 days a year, not just seasonally. Done well and thoughtfully, these features will satisfy residents, appeal and attract regional day visitors, overnight stay visitors and long term visitors.
- There are three organizations working in the private sector: Aransas Pass Chamber of Commerce, Destination Downtown and UNITY.
- There is a feeling among those interviewed that there is not a single, agreed upon source of community leadership. There are those who look to the City to assume that leadership and provide a plan and vision. There are those who believe the Aransas Pass Chamber best represents the leadership role. And there is a Destination Downtown volunteer - led non-profit trying to propel a downtown agenda. These are not mutually exclusive roles. In fact, the ability of these people and organizations to agree upon a plan of action and to align their resources to achieve a specific set of goals is essential to the successful revitalization of Downtown.
- The Aransas Pass Chamber is the most focused, proactive and mission-driven organization. In addition to producing major events that attract visitors, they market Aransas Pass for economic development including tourism promotion and represent the business community as a whole. The Downtown is included in their strategic plan. They are well-regarded, work to a strategic plan and appear to offer the most definitive business community leadership perspective.
- Destination Downtown, launched as a 501 (c) 3 two years ago is a well-intentioned and quite productive initiative by downtown business owners and property owners to restore and develop Downtown. Their enthusiasm has resulted in teak bench installations and bringing attention and remedy to issues and feature elements that will improve the experience Downtown. They have developed goals but as a volunteer organization are struggling with funding sources.
- UNITY, launched 3 years ago, is spearheaded by the Chamber and intended to bring all the public and private stakeholders together once a month to discuss Aransas Pass issues and identify solutions. UNITY has not developed specific goals or strategies.

- There is no evidence that the Chamber goals and aspirations, Destination Downtown goals and aspirations and UNITY goals and aspirations are in alignment in any meaningful way that would optimize collaboration and hasten outcomes.
- While it is not a requirement for Downtown development that it be led by an accepted and recognized private sector leadership, it is always preferable. Private sector leadership reflects the stakeholders and investors in the success and sustainability of Downtown areas.
- After interviews with dozens of residents, elected officials, city staff, community leaders, business and property owners and stakeholders, there is a remarkable and encouraging consensus about what Downtown Aransas Pass was, is today and can be tomorrow:
 - Downtown is in desperate need of attention. This expectation can be expressed in any way that is most comfortable and empowering for residents, community leaders, business leaders, City management and elected officials - re-imagining, re-inventing, reinvigorating, revitalizing, rehabilitation, transforming, re-building.
 - Everyone now agrees that Aransas Pass was slow to accept the loss of the shrimping industry. And they also know that in many ways, it still defines them today - Shrimporee. It was, and remains a generational affection and definition of who and what they were. That said, they also understand that more generally, fishing is their reputation and opportunity, now.
 - The current Downtown footprint is not indicative of the actual, active Downtown footprint. Almost everyone I spoke with volunteered that the Downtown Zoning did not reflect the actual Downtown core which extended further down Commercial and Goodnight.
 - Everyone agreed that the gateways did not create a very positive or favorable impression leading into Downtown.
 - Almost without exception, the following types of businesses were considered most important to the vitality of Downtown:
 - **Restaurants**
 - Italian
 - Chinese or Asian
 - Steakhouse
 - Sandwiches, soups
 - Coffee shops
 - Cafes - small menu, fast casual
 - Bars - beer, pizza
 - Bars - after-work place
 - Ice cream yogurt shop
 - Cakes, pies, cupcakes, sweets
 - **Retail**
 - Women's Clothing & Accessories

- Gift Shops- locally made crafts, foods, arts
 - Business Center
 - Shops that express Aransas Pass assets:
 - Fishing
 - Outdoors
 - Adventure
 - Birding
 - Kite Flying
 - Hunting
 - Boating
 - Nature

 - **Entertainment & Experiences**
 - Indoor family entertainment - Boomers, Chuck E Cheese - games, activities
 - Indoor family activities - basketball, rock climbing, bounce houses, tumbling, trampoline
 - Evening event venues for young people, adults and/or family to connect - music, improv, movies, games
- People who live here know that Downtown must change and adapt but they are proud to live here.
 - Downtown needs more parking, improved lighting, facade improvements, clean up of sidewalks, curbs, gutters and surrounding lots and alley areas.
 - Everyone agrees that its water assets - waterfront, bay, coastal waterway, fishing, hunting, boating, birding, outdoor adventure sports- kayaking, paddle boarding - eco-tourism, outdoor activities - hiking trails, walking paths, biking - define Aransas Pass and are its best known and most marketable assets.
 - Downtown needs a commonly shared theme, brand and aesthetic. Everyone gravitated to the coastal color palette with awnings or overhangs as distinguishing facade features.
 - Conn Brown Harbor development is considered by most to be an essential component in the revitalization of Aransas Pass. They are eager to see some progress in this area and see it as a means to re-claim a point of pride.
 - To the person, everyone interviewed believes that Downtown has potential – the “bones” and raw material are there and ready to exploit in positive ways. And, everyone agrees that a vibrant Downtown is essential to the community identity and economic vitality.

Recommendations

Grit: backbone, fortitude, guts, pluck, spunk, determination, purposefulness, resoluteness, courage, fearless, spirit, heart, boldness, nerve.

Towns and cities known for their fishing heritages are not of the same character, fabric or temperament as beach communities. Fishing towns are quintessentially American. They reflect the American spirit. The Texan spirit. They were born of fearlessness, determination and guts. They were how a town's people made their living, provided for their families and contributed to the economy.

As a consequence, fishing towns are working towns. They are not necessarily neat and clean or even respectable in some circles. They are often gritty, tactile, messy and rough around the edges. This is true of all fishing towns in this country and around the world. And those who lived and worked by the sea were defined by it - hard work, no nonsense, courage and great fortitude.

These characteristics defined Aransas Pass when it was the "Shrimping Capital of the World". And it still defines it today. While the shrimping industry is no longer at the heart of the economy in Aransas Pass, this fishing heritage and its fishing reputation are still the heart of Aransas Pass.

So, my most important recommendation is to build on that heart and heritage.

You need not turn your back on it to start writing your next chapter. But neither should you be constrained by it. Rather, let it inspire you to re-interpret it, re-discover it, re-imagine it and re-invent it for a 21st century Aransas Pass. Be your best, authentic selves. Take who and what you are today and leverage that character and heritage in ways that restore pride, delivers emotional comfort and satisfaction and stimulates a sustainable economy.

Note: for the purposes of these recommendations, I will use the word revitalize to describe what I recommend for Downtown.

- **Reclaim your Downtown.** This should be the centerpiece of the City's new master plan. While the Conn Brown Harbor will be a game changer for the city as a long term strategy, the Downtown located so prominently on TXDOT highways, is your 24/7, 365 day a year billboard! It will always define you, your priorities and your character. It tells investors that you are serious. It tells residents that you value them. And it tells visitors that you are alive and well. An active and economically viable Downtown becomes a meeting and convening place, a source of community pride and encourages business attraction and retention. Downtown deserves to be rehabilitated at the very least and re-imagined at the very best.

- **Downtown improvements begin with a plan.** An organization (public or private sector), or a collaboration among public and private sector organizations is the first step. This organization will be responsible for developing a plan based on community surveys, consultant work including this IEDC project and other

sources of data, information and inspiration. This organization will be responsible for developing the vision, establishing priorities, strategies, tactics and time tables for executing. This organization will be responsible for rallying a variety of public and private sector constituencies to this common vision and purpose, share and assign tasks and hold groups accountable. This organization will be responsible for identifying, securing and allocating funds appropriate to execute the plan and vision.

- In the absence of dedicated and recognized leadership, Downtown may fall prey to attention and resource diversion or lack of sufficient funding to sustain progress.
 - Identify and adopt a reliable, dedicated funding source. Downtown must be a priority and its reinvigoration must be funded sufficiently to achieve the short and long term strategies necessary to deliver a desired outcome. The funding sources to support and execute a Downtown rehabilitation plan must be a City and private sector commitment. In the absence of a dedicated funding source to fuel Downtown revitalization, the strategies will be harder to implement in a coherent and timely fashion.
 - Therefore, it is recommended that the public and private sectors discuss and agree upon the leadership that will represent Downtown stakeholders and drive the agenda to achieve Downtown development. This can take the form of an existing organization, a new hybrid entity or collaborative apparatus that will accept responsibility for, and be accountable for, execution of a Downtown development vision, goals, progress and outcomes.
- **Funding the Plan.** This report identifies five potential funding sources which do not appear to be in-play in Aransas Pass currently and offer reliable funding sources for the purposes described:
- **Improvement District:** The State of Texas has enabling legislation which allows cities, business owners and property owners in a specific group, geographic footprint or an industry sector to establish an assessment which allows stakeholders to manage, improve and maintain their assets. It is the purest form of self-governance and self-determination. Those assessed are in charge of how the funds are allocated to achieve strategic plan goals. The same level of municipal services are expected to be maintained which contributes to an augmented and enhanced level of service and activity in the district. Based on a 50 + 1 formula, the district can be formed with consent of the majority within the footprint, group or industry. Entrusted to the right organization for administration and management, Downtown revitalization can be catapulted, accelerated and sustained.

- I have created and managed several Improvement Districts in three states. I believe in their power to generate dedicated resources and empower defined constituencies to change their environment for the better. Improvement Districts are game-changers. Very empowering, self-directed and self-funding, they make things happen. There are hundreds of case studies available, testimonials from business owners and property owners to its stabilizing value. And once in place, they are always renewed.
 - Once enabled, an Advisory Council must be formed of stakeholders who will then develop a Strategic Plan.
 - The Improvement District funding option would also allow for and enable a Director to be hired to manage the district, its events, activities and programs.
 - Improvement Districts may invest their funds in a wide variety of projects allowed by the legislation including all those things necessary to revitalize Downtown Aransas Pass:
 - Management and administration of the district operation;
 - Landscaping and streetscaping;
 - Building enhancements, facade improvements, incentive programs
 - Structural amenities like fountains, benches, arts installations;
 - Marquee, monument or district-wide markers;
 - Signage, street and sidewalk lighting and augmented lighting features;
 - Cleaning sidewalks, streets, curbs, parks, gutters, trash containers; cleaning equipment;
 - Supplemental safety programs like walking or bike patrols;
 - Marketing and promotion of special events and activities;
 - Construction of parks, parking lots, parking structures
 - Acquisition of real property in conjunction with or support of a specific improvement.
 - And other items and programs...
 - **Texas State Legislation:**
<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.372.htm>
 - Case studies and more information can be found on the website of Civitas Advisors, the premier improvement district advisor. While it may not be necessary to consult or contract with Civitas or another such organization to establish your Improvement District, I would recommend reviewing the website for inspiration and assistance in formulating your plans.
 - <http://www.civitasadvisors.com/>

- **RV Assessment**
 - There are 18 RV parks in Aransas Pass. While no one could precisely identify the exact number of RV slots within these parks, it is clear that a significant amount of land is absorbed by these RV parks and a significant number of RVs are utilizing these spaces – primarily by winter visitors.
 - While Aransas Pass welcomes these winter visitors, based on experience and observation, these self-contained RV winter visitors spend relatively little money in Aransas Pass on food, beverages, entertainment – grocery purchase being the dominant expenditure. This being the case, it is suggested that you explore:
 - Make the RV slots/parks eligible for H.O.T. collections up to 30 days
OR
 - Assign a fixed assessment value to RV slots/parks that helps generate sufficient revenue to invest in Downtown improvements.
 -
- **Increase the H.O.T.**
 - Apparently, the H.O.T. in Aransas Pass sits at 13% - 7% city and 6 % state. This has not been increased in quite a few years. Port Aransas and Rockport also collect a 13% - 7% city and 6% state H.O.T. However, Corpus Christi and Galveston are collecting 15% - 9% city and 6% state. This gives you some room for movement if increased judiciously and proportionate to what you need to generate to achieve your Downtown goals.
 - <https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/2016/june-july/hotel-tax.php>
- **Apply the H.O.T. to vacation rentals and cottages**
 - Again, while no one could tell me how many cottages and vacation rentals are available in Aransas Pass, a search of the VRBO websites would probably reveal a greater number than might be thought. And these rentals, competing as they do with hotel rooms that generate H.O.T., should be brought under the City's H.O.T. lists of eligible properties.
 - Galveston has successfully achieved this and it generates significantly more H.O.T. as a result. This additional revenue could be dedicated to Downtown improvements which will benefit the homeowners and temporary occupants alike.
 - The City Parks Commission Director, the Destination Marketing Organization Director and the owners of Sand n Sea, the major vacation rental company in Galveston would be happy to talk to you about how they established this H.O.T. addition.

- **Grants** - grants offer a community options for funding specific projects. While I understand and appreciate the value of grants, they should not be considered a substitute for a more consistent and reliable form of funding. Grants are useful tools and should be applied to the task. However, they are very competitive, arduous and cumbersome application processes, often challenging to administer, require separate bookkeeping and exhaustive reporting. In addition, they are single project specific, time-dated and may require matching funds.

That said, there appear to be several grant sources currently not in play for Aransas Pass and available through the State of Texas and Corporate Foundations that may prove useful to augment development projects and accelerate the Downtown revitalization. These include:

- Texas Agriculture Rural Economic Development Capital Fund Grants:
<http://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/TexasCapitalFund.aspx>
- Texas Agriculture Rural Economic Community Block Grants:
[http://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrant\(CDBG\)/CDBGResources/Applications/DRPMS.aspx](http://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrant(CDBG)/CDBGResources/Applications/DRPMS.aspx)
- [http://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrant\(CDBG\)/CDBGResources/Applications/CommunityDevelopmentFundApplicationGuide.aspx](http://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrant(CDBG)/CDBGResources/Applications/CommunityDevelopmentFundApplicationGuide.aspx)
- Texas Museum Grants:
http://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/museums/files/grants_December_2017.pdf
- Texas Historical Foundation Grants:
<https://texashistoricalfoundation.org/grant-application/>
- Texas Agriculture Community Enhancement Grants:
[https://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrant\(CDBG\)/CDBGResources/Applications/CommunityEnhancementFund.aspx](https://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrant(CDBG)/CDBGResources/Applications/CommunityEnhancementFund.aspx)
- Texas Main Street Program Grants:
<http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/texas-main-street/about-texas-main-street-program>

- Texas Grant Watch:
<https://texas.grantwatch.com/grant-search.php?search=advanced>
 - Community Development, Private Sector Foundations & Trusts:
<http://www.fundsnetservices.com/searchresult/27/Community-&-Economic-Development.html>Engage H.E.B in Downtown Revitalization. Whether it is an improvement district which would require
- **Extend Downtown footprint.** By personal observation and experience, it is clear that the Downtown extends beyond the current zoning boundaries. I concur with those who recommend that the Downtown zoning footprint needs to be extended. While there are certainly options for your consideration, most suggested an overlay that would extend from **DeBerry to Stappe**. There are several advantages to extending the Downtown footprint, chief among them:
- Connectedness to Downtown businesses with a greater number of businesses dependent upon the same arterial highways and gateways for their overall health, vitality and impression.
 - Embraces a larger number of businesses inherently related to and linked by commerce to the vitality of the Downtown.
 - Allows zoning and code ordinances to be applied so that there is more effective property owner and gateway management.
 - This extension allows the City, and the appointed Downtown leadership organization, to tap existing revenue-producing businesses that can immediately contribute to the dedicated funding source established - necessary for the desired development of Downtown - this will benefit all the incorporated businesses measurably.
- **Adopt a Gateway initiative.** The condition of the properties and parcels on either side of the highways leading into and through Downtown reflect very poorly on Aransas Pass. The condition of these spaces does not present a clean, welcoming landscape that encourages and invites visitors to explore more, stay and spend their money. Quite the contrary, even in a "live and let live" state like Texas, it conveys a sense of despair and a lack of pride.
- It is imperative to the short and long term health and vitality of Downtown that property owners be held responsible for the condition of their properties and the resulting impact their properties have on the Downtown.
 - To assist in achieving this essential objective, The City's Code Enforcement Office must be sufficiently staffed and empowered to manage and mitigate these challenges and sustain the results achieved and compliance expected.

- **Transform Downtown.** Universally, all those interviewed agreed that a coherent appearance for Downtown was essential to its health, vitality, ability to attract and retain businesses and its ability to attract residents and visitors. Attracting residents and businesses has many desirable outcomes but chief among them: the ability to generate revenue that fuels business success.
 - When asked to describe how best Downtown can express themselves in a way that would be reflective of their heritage and geographic location, it was universally agreed that a coastal color palette was most appropriate. While this coastal color palette can be interpreted in a variety of color schemes, the bottom line is that a coastal color palette captures the wide variety of sands, grasses, sea and nature colors that distinguish the Aransas Pass experience.
 - This color palette is not intended to imitate the fun, carnival-like colors of Key West, the garish colors of the Caribbean or the deep primary colors of the fishing village in Murano, Italy.
 - Rather the color palette associated with Aransas Pass is one inspired by its relationship to the coast line, waterway and the sea. It is a subtle, natural, rich, sea-inspired color palette that provides a wide variation, choice and contrast for texture among the blues, greens, neutrals and greys associated with the coastal experience. I have attached some samples for consideration as a starting point.

- **Make Downtown Building Façade Improvements a Priority.** Adopt a facade improvement strategy that encourages, or requires, compliance to a coherent theme or brand designed to revitalize the Downtown. These expectations, if presented and managed properly by designated Downtown leadership, will engage business owners and property owners in a shared vision and initiative to re-claim Downtown and present a fresh face to locals and visitors.
 - All impactful Downtown revitalization begins with pride and commitment by property and business owners to present a welcoming, safe and lively exterior to the public. By adopting a Strategic Plan to which “ownership” is taken and pledged, and establishing a reliable and dedicated funding source as described earlier in the Report, Downtown leadership can create and sustain facade improvement programs and accelerate the transformation of Downtown.
 - Specifically, a reliable and dedicated funding source managed by designated Downtown leadership can:
 - Establish incentives, low-cost loans required for funding major facade improvements.
 - Mount a facade improvement program which subsidizes, provides matching funds or funds specific exterior paint and exterior elements.
 - Assist in procuring textural elements including rock, slate, sandstone, shells, boat trimmings, fishing gear and wood as appropriate and affordable accent pieces to build interest.

- Help owners purchase and install awnings, overhangs or other distinguishing building front features that add warmth, charm and protection from summer sun.
 - Exterior window enhancements and accents.
 - Outdoor dining patios or seating areas.
 - The adoption and installation of branding elements like fish and heritage graphics, or elements and art pieces.
- **Develop Short & Long Term Downton Parking Solutions**
- There is consensus that parking is a challenge. This can be managed and mitigated with help from the City management and leadership from the Downtown property owners.
 - There are vacant, untended lots adjacent to and in back of the Downtown corridor. If not being used for a higher value purpose, property owners can be approached to lease, loan or give the lots to the designated Downtown leadership to use as short term parking lots or at the very least, seasonal parking lots.
 - Long term solutions, particularly once Conn Brown Harbor is developed, would include everything from rental bikes, Pedi cabs, a variation of a duck boat or small shuttles to move people from one part of town to another while employing major parking lots or structures.
- **Develop a Long Range Plan to Re-purpose or Re-Claim Vacant Buildings**
- Pre-Hurricane Harvey and post Hurricane Harvey, vacant buildings or buildings in disrepair need to be managed. People can interpret tired buildings in a variety of ways. But consistently vacant and abandoned buildings just say that the Downtown is distressed. This discourages investment and business attraction. Nothing less than the survival, health and vitality of your Downtown is at stake.
- Take inventory. Understand which owners intend to re-invest and which owners intend to walk away. Contacting them with options, alternatives and assistance will help you make better decisions about how to manage each property situation more effectively.
 - Understand your options:
 - Review the full range of ordinances that may be available to you to help manage the situation.
 - Understand the full range of code enforcements available that can help you negotiate and manage each situation.
 - Be prepared to establish new ordinances if necessary.
 - And if all else fails, know what your legal options are and be prepared to exercise them if property owners fail to respond to reasonable requests.

- **Re-purpose Key Downtown Assets.** There are a great many creative people and resources in Aransas Pass. In my short time there, it was clear that they are capable and ready to think about their Downtown differently. And, in doing so, I encourage everyone to re-purpose existing assets in resourceful, interesting, intriguing and exciting ways.
 - **Re-discover The Rialto.** Somewhere along the way, this well-envisioned and well-executed venue and opportunity have been somewhat neutralized. Likewise for the art gallery established next door. While an arts district as a focus for Downtown revitalization is not being recommended, these assets play a vital role in re-establishing the vitality of Downtown. Whatever the causes for this disconnect, these are amazingly valuable assets in the scheme of Downtown revitalization because they offer:
 - Evening entertainment options for all ages - improv, movies, theater, comedy, music and more - entertainment that the Downtown needs to attract residents and visitors in the evening hours.
 - Meeting and convening venue - Downtown organizations and City organizations, small meetings and activities would benefit from better utilizing this space.
 - **Dolphin Alley.** This charming arcade is dark, rather forbidding looking and largely vacant. But it is an amazing asset that could serve Downtown very well if it were re-invented.
 - Include it in your façade improvement program, light the interior.
 - *Farmer’s Market* – a weekly place for meat, fish, and fresh produce.
 - *Co-Op* - subsidize the rent and create a co-op - invite locals who make arts, crafts, clothing and foods reflective of the area to sell their items together. This minimizes the burden of capital investment in their own storefront, lowers the rent paid by a single business owner and restores life to this space.
 - *HUB, Co-work space* – next generations are always looking for hub or co-work space. They want to connect with others who share their interests in coding, platform design, app development, gaming, digital arts and media and all things technology. Perhaps you might engage the Library Board and the School District in helping design this space to serve as a Meet Up space for younger residents from which businesses could be launched.
- **Vacant lots as “parklets”** – so many abandoned or unused lots surround the Downtown corridor could be re-purposed to add pleasant, comfort spaces for residents and customers alike. Described as pocket parks, these small spaces usually contain simple amenities that are easily maintained by either the City or designated Downtown leadership.

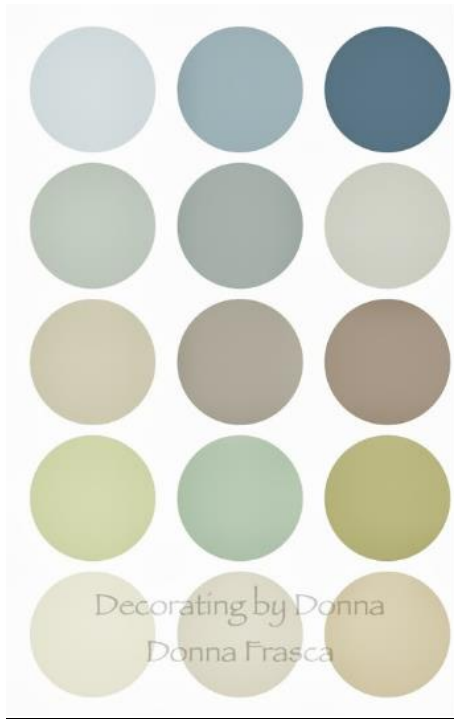
- In the case of Aransas Pass, benches, composite gravels rather than grass and the feature of an old row boat in which people could sit and kids could play would be fun. But their value is in how they positively accent the businesses and reflect on the quality of life of the community.
- **Exclamation Points for Downtown.** There are many ways that the people of Aransas Pass can express themselves, their character and the “brand” of Aransas Pass. My recommendation is to be authentic. Be true to your heritage, nature and character and you can’t go wrong selling, developing or sharing that story. To this point, in addition to the adoption of a coherent color palette, employ:
 - **Iconography** – if everyone agrees that shrimping and fishing define Aransas Pass, then build on it by exploring and adopting a wide variety of ways to re-purpose old fishing equipment, nets, cages, hooks, anchors, boat apparatus, gauges, block and tackle, gears, raw materials and so forth. Build them into exterior textures or establish graphic representations that can be easily adopted by business and building owners to incorporate in exterior walls or windows.
 - **Bike racks** – currently under consideration by Destination Downtown, customize the bike racks to reflect fish shapes, palm trees and other sea items.
 - **Arts as a punctuation point** – celebrate your heritage and connect yourself to the sea with art installations by local artists. These need not be expensive, huge or traditional. They can be reflections of the sea, its life and your culture that are displayed in small but prominent and interesting ways throughout Downtown – fish hooks, shrimp cages, anchors, block & tackle, boat pieces, fish.
 - **Murals** – amazing exterior wall space is available for amazing murals! One of the fastest growing outdoor revitalization strategies and one of the most effective and affordable, murals are a great story-telling technique, welcome sign and splash of color.
 - Often achieved with grants, but also funded by more traditional sources, Downtown can inventory the available space and gain approval from owners.
 - Create a contest for and/or bid for concepts and designs consistent with the adopted Downtown theme and get people to work!
 - Don’t forget to engage local high school artists and local artists.
- **Experiential Tourism** – you have the makings of it in abundance. Both the ability to share your history and to experience your environment. With little investment but a lot of commitment, you can share your history and experience with visitors, and residents, in easily accessed and impactful ways.
 - **Walking Museum** - instead of investing in a static museum which is expensive and requires ongoing maintenance and curation, inspire your locals and engage the Library Board and other history buffs to assemble

shrimping and fishing artifacts and heritage items that can be displayed and explained and distribute them to all businesses to display in storefront windows or as small corner installations. Produce a postcard or brochure that visitors can use to walk about, visit stores and businesses and actually experience the pieces in a natural environment.

- **Tell stories** – the Chamber’s website does a good job of sharing stories. My recommendation is to take it to the next level. This helps Aransas Pass develop multiple dimensions, market to different audiences and create a new facet to your personality.
 - Assemble and share the funny, strange and unusual bits and bytes of your history that intrigue and engage people.
 - Exaggerate story lines - not hurtful or untrue stories - but ghost stories, family sagas. Expand them and build a "culture" around them to intrigue people.
- **Expand tourism marketing** to include the light adventure travel, birding, nature, photography, biking as new target markets – the coast line, biking trails underway, walking paths are affordable experiences that can attract special interest groups and extend the visitor stay.
- **Conn Brown Harbor & Downtown:**
 - **Bake in connectedness between Downtown and Conn Brown Harbor.** As has already been said, everyone agrees that the development of Conn Brown Harbor is essential to the evolution and vitality of the city. That said, it is imperative that any development at Conn Brown Harbor be connected to the Downtown AND the Downtown connected to the new Conn Brown Harbor.
 - Anything less than a commitment to connect these two assets in a meaningful way – walking paths, trails, bike trails, shuttles, pedi-cabs, signage, cross and co-marketing – could easily degrade, impair or jeopardize one or the other.
 - There are too many cases in point across the country, Long Beach’s transformation included, where the failure to connect two necessary and essential developments proved challenging – and once done, difficult to manage and remedy. With the City squarely in the driver’s seat at the top side of these negotiations and plans, there is no reason for this risk to be taken.

Color Palettes





 Benjamin Moore Coastal Paint Colors		
Benjamin Moore Deep Secret	Benjamin Moore Dusty Cornflower	Benjamin Moore Spa Day
Benjamin Moore Bellbottom Blues	Benjamin Moore Cool Breezes	Benjamin Moore Antique Glass
Benjamin Moore Stained Glass	Benjamin Moore Barely There	Benjamin Moore Intuition
Benjamin Moore Fair Isle Blue	Benjamin Moore In The Tropics	Benjamin Moore Silken Blue
Benjamin Moore Mystic Lake	Benjamin Moore Skydive	Benjamin Moore Picnic Basket
Benjamin Moore After Midnight	Benjamin Moore DayDream	Benjamin Moore Avalon Teal
Benjamin Moore Adriatic Sea	Benjamin Moore St. John Blue	Benjamin Moore Antiqued Aqua
Benjamin Moore Hidden Sapphire	Benjamin Moore Sea Glass	Benjamin Moore Wild Blue Yonder
Benjamin Moore Dark Harbor	Benjamin Moore Cable Knit Sweater	Benjamin Moore Baltic Sea
Benjamin Moore Porch Swing	Benjamin Moore Tropical Oasis	Benjamin Moore Sylvan Mist

Main colors (blues and earthy greens & browns)



Secondary (accent) colors

