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Book Details

Title:

From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories

Author:

Deb Brown

Book Genre: Nonfiction, community building

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Book Description:

From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with These Uniquely Do-able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories is a workbook written with you and your small town in mind. Our early readers say they use it to empower residents, entrepreneurs, and community leaders with practical strategies and real-world examples.

Each section tells success stories and gives actionable advice. It is a comprehensive guide filled with stories and actions from the author's own experiences working with small towns as cofounder of SaveYour.Town and case studies of innovative initiatives from small towns nationwide.

The workbook covers a wide range of topics crucial for small-town success, including:

- Bringing people together through creative community events
- Engaging youth and attracting young families
- Using art as a driver of economic development
- Breathing new life into empty buildings
- Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs
- Effective promotion and marketing strategies
- Innovative funding solutions

Key Selling Points

- *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* is written for small towns and rural communities.
- Case studies of innovative initiatives from small towns nationwide are written in an easy-to-understand format.
- Used as giveaways to attendees at conferences like Illinois Main Street Annual Meeting and San Juan County, Utah, Small Business Summit

Why buy this book?

From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town is a workbook that provides communities with the tools and resources they need to revitalize their downtowns, attract new businesses, and create jobs. It includes stories from other communities and ideas for your town, and each section has space for you to write down your next steps.

This workbook is a great way to bring your community together and work towards a common goal. By using the resources provided, you can help save your small town and create a brighter future for everyone who lives there. Remember, small towns are the heart and soul of America, and by working together, we can ensure that they continue to thrive for generations to come.

One-sentence summary:

From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town shares ideas and stories of successful small-town revitalization projects and show you how to get started in your own town.



Author Bio

Deb Brown is a dynamic small-town advocate and community development expert with a wealth of experience empowering rural communities. As the co-founder of SaveYour.Town, she has been working alongside Becky McCray for a decade, providing practical advice and innovative solutions to shape brighter futures for small towns.

Deb's background is diverse and practical. She served as a Chamber of Commerce Executive Director for 4 years, holding certification from the Institute for Organization Management. Prior to that, she was a Tourism Specialist for 4 years. Her varied business experience includes roles as a foreign casualty insurance underwriter, retail manager, and bartender.

Expertise and Approach

Deb specializes in addressing common rural challenges, including:

- Revitalizing empty buildings
- Downtown rejuvenation
- Youth retention
- Marketing and promotion for small towns
- Business development and economic growth
- Innovative rural business models

Her approach is rooted in joy and uniquely achievable strategies. Deb excels at building connections, storytelling, and active listening. She guides people in taking small steps toward their ideas and helps them find the resources and connections needed to bring those ideas to fruition.

Services and Presentations

Deb offers a range of services to help small towns thrive:

- Keynote presentations
- On-site visits
- Virtual consulting and webinars
- Coaching sessions
- Workshops, both in person and virtually

Her presentations are interactive and engaging, designed to provide attendees with actionable ideas they can implement immediately. Deb has spoken at local and national conferences, addressing chambers, economic developers, tourism specialists, museum experts, volunteers, residents and business groups.

Publications and Resources

Deb is the author of "*From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories*," a comprehensive workbook filled with practical strategies and real-world examples for small-town revitalization.

Through her work with SaveYour.Town, Deb provides weekly newsletters focused on small-town challenges and offers exclusive video content to Megaphone Members.

Deb Brown's passion for community development and her ability to provide real-world, practical solutions make her an invaluable resource for small towns looking to create positive change and build a thriving future.

Availability

From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories is available through major retailers, including Amazon and Barnes and Noble. For bulk orders or special requests, please contact the author Deb Brown deb@buildingpossibility.com ISBN 979-8-218-44464-8

Talking Points

What is the Idea Friendly Method?

Give us a couple of examples where folks have used this method successfully.

Do you need a lot of money to get started?

How can I get started on this kind of project?

What about young people, what can they do in their town to build community?

Why is public art important to a successful community?

There are so many empty buildings in downtowns. How can the Idea Friendly method help fill them up?

Tell us about your book. What do you mean it's a workbook? Why did you write it? What will I learn?

Contact Information

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Writing Journey Insights

Inspiration: I've been collecting stories of rural community successes and sharing them at events and workshops. It was time to put them into a book format so more people could take advantage of them.

Research: I'd never written a book before, but I have written many articles, stories, and such. I knew the book needed to be easy to read, look professional, and be laid out in workbook format. I asked friends for recommendations to people who were book layout specialists and that's how I found Mars Manderico. His design work has made this workbook even more special!

Challenges: There were a few challenges. What did I want to include in chapters? What chapters even! I verified every story and image also.

Discovery: I was surprised there weren't more books written for rural communities sharing successes and ways to create your own success.

Media Hooks

In today's economy, funding for large projects is often not available in small towns and rural areas. *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories* show you how to use what you have to get things done!

1 in 5 people live in rural areas, over 66 million people. And most of them have learned to work with what they have and not rely upon big government or big cities for support. Enjoy the stories in *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-*

able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories of what rural communities are doing and how you can do it too.

According to the Survey of Rural Challenges, common themes in media coverage and policy conversations around rural communities don't match rural views. *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories* shares stories of people in small towns who are making a real difference where they live and encouraging people to move to a kind of town that cares.

Praise for *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories*

Your book is going to be so valuable to many people. One thing I really love about your writing is how voice-y it is. Nothing dry or manual-like about it. It's fun and casual, sounds like you, and hits just the right tone. I feel inspired when I read it. – Kim Lozano, Development coach and contributor to Scribbler

“From Possibilities to Reality’ is filled with real-world examples and practical strategies to help breathe new life into small towns and rural communities. You won’t make it through the book in one sitting because you are going to find action steps you will want to put into action immediately. The book focuses on using the resources you and your community already possess, building community involvement, and improving the quality of life of everyone involved. ‘From Possibilities to Reality’ gives you steps to bring out the vitality of small towns and leaves you with hope that it’s possible to make a difference.” – Melinda McGuire SaveYour.Town Reader

“This has been a bible for me, chairing my small Village’s planning board.” Marilyn Higgins

“Save Your Small Town is a game changer for everyone trying to make a difference in their small town. It's not just a book of ideas. It's a hands-on guide. Each chapter has practical project ideas, inspiring success stories, and action steps you can take right away. And then, there's space in each

section for you to write out how you are going to implement the idea in your community.

If you are trying to make a difference in your community and are bogged down in committees, read this book and be set free to get things done.”
Marci Goodwin, principal at SmartStartCommunity.com

“ Deb is a leading expert on small town economic development who has worked with rural groups nationwide. This book takes her knowledge and shares it with everyone. Full of ideas that you can take and make work where you live. Everything you need to get started and no fluff!”

C.C. Chapman Senior Professor of Practice - Business and Management,
Wheaton College

DEB BROWN

SMALL TOWN SPECIALIST



DEB@SAVEYOUR.TOWN LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Book Excerpts:

- Forward
- Coffee and Calendars
- Don't Forget the Youth

Forward

After spending nine years as co-founder of SaveYour.Town I've heard many stories, seen communities come together to create magic, and learned more from talking to rural people than I ever learned in school. I've been thinking about this book for a long time, and I'm thrilled you've found yourself reading this forward. Thank you for coming along for the ride.

THERE ARE EIGHT SECTIONS IN THIS BOOK:

Bring People Together.....	10	Empty Buildings	80
Community	20	Business	102
Youth and Young Families	36	Promotion and Marketing	116
Art as Economic Development.....	52	Funding.....	130

These sections cover most rural topics I have seen in my work. There are chapters in each section that talk about a rural solution, tell success stories, and give you a space to create your own Idea Friendly projects.

Mary Redmond, a local newspaper editor and one of my beta readers, said about the following paragraph, "To me, this is the heart of the book. You've been there in the middle of this phenomenal experience countless times – and that's where the people picking up this book so want to be!!!!"

BUT THIS GATHERING WAS MORE THAN JUST A BRAINSTORMING SESSION. IT WAS A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. AS THE CONVERSATION FLOWED, THE ROOM BUZZED WITH A SENSE OF UNITY AND SHARED PURPOSE. THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS DELVED INTO LOCAL ISSUES, GAINING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR TOWN'S NEEDS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS. THIS DIALOGUE FOSTERED A SENSE OF BELONGING, MAKING EACH INDIVIDUAL FEEL MORE INVESTED IN THEIR TOWN'S SUCCESS.

Rural communities are often neglected and we've had to learn how to take care of ourselves, to build the kind of communities we want to live in and raise our families in. This book shares some of those stories from rural places, and encourages you to continue to take care of your town too.

Thanks, Deb

Coffee and Calendars

PARTNER TO COMPARE CALENDARS

Invite the nonprofits and organizations that plan activities to an hour or two of Coffee and Calendars. Hold this gathering in a comfortable location with tables where people can spread out. Provide coffee! Ask them to bring their calendars.



You'll find out things about the organizations you didn't know. You'll figure out how to create a day full of events, instead of a day with events happening all at the same time. Coming together helps to build community.

We did this when I was a chamber director in Webster City, Iowa. We had about ten non-profit people at our first gathering. I thought we knew pretty much everything there was to know about each organization. Boy, was I wrong! **Each person had the opportunity to talk about what they did for the community, what they needed to be successful and share what they were planning.** One example of a project I didn't know anything about came from Building Families. They had a funding program to help people who wanted to have a daycare from their home. Funding to fence in the yard, get their state licensing, and other small items they might need to bring their home up to code.

Don't tie yourself to just nonprofits. Your businesses could do this too. It's a great activity to do quarterly to prepare for the next quarter. Learn to work together to promote each other, and that starts by sharing what you do with others.

Success Stories:

WALL, SOUTH DAKOTA POPULATION 695

Wall held a "Coffee and Calendars" event. Cheyenne said, "The event was a success! About ten community members joined the meeting, shared their calendars, and enjoyed coffee and conversation. This was a community need that is now filled. We look forward to more "Coffee and Calendar" events and continued community collaboration."

RINGGOLD COUNTY, IOWA POPULATION 4,670

Jodie, the Ringgold County, Iowa Development director told us they hosted two cookies and calendar meetings. One was for town representatives and one for the Mount Ayr retail businesses. The town reps wanted to meet again. That's a sign they thought it was worth their time! The retailers met and planned dates for the ladies' night out events for the entire year. Normally, this is done sporadically, with not enough communication.

Jodie also started a Google doc for each group to communicate within their groups. She's finding out that the younger people don't read email!

Don't Forget the Former Youth Who Moved Back Home With Families

FIND THEM!

People are moving back to their small hometowns, bringing their work and young families with them. Do you know who they are?

We've heard for decades about the "brain drain" of young people graduating and leaving small towns, but we are not noticing a significant return of young adults. It is easy to miss because we don't have anything like a graduation ceremony to draw our attention to our "Brain Gain" families.

Dr. Ben Winchester, a rural sociologist with the University of Minnesota, found that these 30 to 44-year-olds arrive with college degrees, years of experience in the workplace, and large professional networks. Often, they are families with young children, boosting rural school enrollments. **Sometimes, they pick a small community they have never lived in before, representing a recruiting opportunity.**

Younger families today are choosing where they want to live first and finding their work second. Frequently, they find it online or start their own businesses. Ben says there are three reasons young people 30-44 move to rural communities: a slower pace of life, safety and security, and the low cost of housing.

So, if you focus on creating jobs to help recruit new residents, you're missing the key motivators.

HOW DO YOU FIND
THOSE PEOPLE WHO
WANT TO START A
BUSINESS AND MOVE
TO YOUR AREA?

- **Look at sites like Kickstarter and Etsy**, and you'll likely find entrepreneurs already in your area.
- **Join online communities** or forums related to entrepreneurship, work from home, or the industry gaps you're looking for entrepreneurs to fill.
- **Use social media platforms** like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or Threads to network with and find entrepreneurs, join groups, and participate in discussions.

SOME OF THESE
FOLKS ARE ALREADY
IN YOUR TOWN AND
HAVE ENTREPRENEURIAL
BUSINESSES!

Reach out to them in a couple of ways:

- **Attend local or virtual events**, workshops, or conferences related to entrepreneurship or your industry. You can meet other business owners, exchange ideas, and learn from experts.
- **Consider visiting a coworking space** or a business incubator in your area. You can find other entrepreneurs, hear their stories, see what resources they are being exposed to, and attend their events.

Target audience:

Small town community members, non-profit organizations, city staff, county staff, Main Street people, IEDC people, anyone who lives in a small town who wants to make change.

Unique selling proposition (USP):

From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town shares stories of rural communities successfully revitalizing themselves and provides hands-on advice on starting and implementing similar projects. This workbook encourages you and your team to take small steps to achieve your big goals.

Let's talk about this:

Have you witnessed the slow decline of your beloved small town? *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* offers real solutions developed by locals to breathe new life into these communities. Be part of the change!

Small businesses are the backbone of small towns, but they're facing unprecedented challenges. *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* shares innovative ways to support local entrepreneurs and boost economic growth.

From reviving Main Streets to attracting new residents, *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* is packed with actionable strategies to rejuvenate small towns across America.

Small towns offer an unmatched quality of life, but they need our help to thrive. *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* offers a comprehensive guide to tackling challenges like population decline and lack of investment.

Abandoned buildings, shuttered businesses, and dwindling populations - these are harsh realities facing many small towns. *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* offers hope, with crowdsourced solutions to revive these communities.

From creating jobs to attracting tourism, *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* is brimming with innovative ideas sourced from locals to boost small town economies. Be an agent of change by sharing this book with your community and turning these possibilities into reality.

Small towns have a rich history and cultural heritage that must be preserved. *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* shares community-driven approaches to celebrate local traditions while paving the way for growth.

Don't let your favorite small town become a ghost town. *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town* provides a comprehensive playbook developed by locals to breathe new life into struggling communities. Be part of the solution to save our small towns..

How will the reader benefit from the book *From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town*?

There are 8 chapters and lots of dig-deeper sections filled with stories from small towns we've worked in, visited, and heard from. I share what they did, and how you can do it too in an Idea Friendly way.

The book is designed for easy reading and has color pictures of some of the stories. It's not a boring workbook!

The reader will learn the **Idea Friendly Method**, and how to use it.

Gather Your Crowd: This well-structured workbook includes actionable steps, allowing you and your people to apply what they learn directly to your community. This hands-on approach can lead to tangible improvements in local conditions.

Build Connections: Engaging with the workbook encourages you to build connections and that fosters critical thinking and information-gathering skills. This process helps individuals learn how to find and utilize resources effectively.

Take Small Steps: You can develop problem-solving skills as you work on local issues and brainstorm potential solutions, and take action right away. Taking small steps creates impact and just developing theory doesn't. (More action, less talk.)

Placemaking is fun! It's all about small steps and doing things that make a difference. It helps to generate more positive attitudes in town. It attracts both locals and visitors.

Book Club Discussion Guide (in the book)

This book provides a wealth of inspiring stories and practical ideas for revitalizing small towns. Here are some questions to guide your book club's discussion:

1. Which story or example from the book resonated with you the most? What made it interesting and you want to take action on it?
2. The Idea Friendly Method is a core concept – gather your crowd, build connections, and take small steps. Discuss a situation where you could apply this method in your own community. What would be your “big idea” to start with?
3. Several chapters highlight the importance of promoting and marketing your town's assets and events. What are some quiet gems in your community that could be better showcased?
4. The book emphasizes involving and engaging the entire community, from youth to seniors. How could you facilitate more conversations between youth and seniors?
5. Discuss public spaces, art, and placemaking ideas that would help create more community pride and attachment. What opportunities exist in your town for creative placemaking projects?
6. Many examples illustrate repurposing vacant buildings and lots. What kind of empty spaces do you have in your town? What could you do with them?
7. The book stresses the importance of celebrating your town's unique history and culture. What would you like to celebrate in your town?
8. Several stories highlight successful fundraising efforts for community projects. What fundraising strategies or events could work well in your town?

9. Discuss the challenges of rural brain drain and engaging youth. What initiatives could help in your community?

10. After reading the book, what is one concrete action step or small project you want to take? Who will you ask to help?

Thank You!

Feel free to reach out for questions, comments and interviews.

Deb Brown

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Deb Brown is an acclaimed rural speaker who delivers impactful talks on topics like rural development, economic revitalization, and downtown development.

Her work has been praised for her ability to engage audiences with powerful stories and her skill at providing practical solutions to rural challenges.

She's engaging, inspiring, and has proven success in helping rural communities thrive.

Bring Deb
Brown to
Town!



www.BuildingPossibility.com

