



OKLAHOMA MAIN STREET CENTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING
AUGUST 25, 2021

SPEAKER AND SESSION INFORMATION
JEFF SIEGLER, REVITALIZE OR DIE



Civic Pride and Civic Apathy

Thousands of communities have been devastated by the effects of apathy and unless we do something drastic, the problem is only going to get worse. Apathy destroys everything it touches and cannot be mitigated with planning or money. Residents' lack of care and concern cannot be fixed by continuing down the same path. We have to take a new approach and help restore people's relationship to their town.

Only in fostering a sense of civic pride, can we begin to beat back the effects of apathy. We have to bring people together, restore beauty, foster affection and give people more meaning. By taking a small scale, simple and incremental approach, we can begin to replace apathy with pride. The key is getting to work. There is no silver bullet needed and no one is going to come along and fix it for us. We simply have to do our part, every resident, every day, taking part in making the community just a little bit better. When everyone participates, we can all have something truly special, a community we can be proud of.

Taking Pride in Place

When we think of placemaking, we typically imagine how we dress up our favorite public space, but the concept of place is so much bigger. Place is ubiquitous. It effects everything we do and it is one of the largest determinants of the type of life we lead. We are always surrounded by place. How places are built, how they function, and how they are designed dictate how people go about leading their lives.

Our places have the ability to make us proud, or make us feel ashamed. They have the ability to bring us closer to one another, or make us feel alone. The places we shape, determine our physical, mental, social and economic health. In understanding how much our places shape our lives, we begin to understand how much better we need to do in shaping our places.

Badass Your Board

The workshop is a frank and honest conversation with local programs about the shortcomings of most Main Street Boards. With good intentions in mind, most boards are assembled with the idea that board members will not be asked to do very much, this creates a situation where boards are flawed from the very beginning and an organization struggles to meet its mission. We then discuss how important a Main Street program is to a community and what should be expected from board members. In coming to some common understanding of what it will take to meet the mission and make an impact in their community, we can develop a consensus around board expectations. Finally, we will discuss potential accountability measures and how they can be incorporated to ensure expectations are being met and the Main Street program has standards that can be upheld.

Speaker Bio

Jeff grew up in a "down on its luck" rustbelt community where the downtown was considered dangerous and all the affluence had migrated to the suburbs. After graduating, he lived in a rural community in Montana and later, a dense urban neighborhood in Brooklyn. The experience taught him that strong communities were not dependent on location, size, or ethnicity. These two places functioned in similar fashions despite being extremely different and both places provided a much higher quality of life than the suburban, "well-to-

do", community in which he grew up. This experience sparked a life-long interest in the role places play in people's lives.

Jeff started his career as the director of a downtown organization at the intersection of rustbelt and Appalachia Ohio before taking charge of the Ohio's statewide revitalization organization. The opportunity to work with hundreds of communities attempting to change their trajectory afforded him a unique perspective and through this learned that all dysfunctional communities behave the in the same manner and create the same issues for themselves, which then grow insurmountable. His interest providing help to the most dysfunctional towns led him to start Revitalize, or Die. It is through this work he realized we are not applying the necessary thinking or resources to these struggling rural communities and its having an impact on our country as a whole and by taking a different approach focused on existing assets, investing in local people and fostering a sense of civic pride and community, these places can be restored to their former health.