

News Release

Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2017
For Immediate Release

President of Destination Rapid City Shares Story of Downtown Success

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TN. – On August 2, the Two Rivers Company relocated their scheduled board meeting to participate in a presentation by Dan Seftner, President and CEO of Destination Rapid City in Rapid City, South Dakota. Seftner described the six-year transformation of Rapid City’s downtown square and shared his belief that the success experienced in Rapid City and other cities he has worked with will be duplicated in downtown Clarksville.

He presented to a packed room that included; Two Rivers Board Members, downtown merchants, county commissioners, city and county employees, and others, at the Montgomery County Historic Courthouse. Seftner answered questions and assured the group that Clarksville had what it takes to revitalize their own downtown. The block that began the downtown revitalization in Rapid City, now known as Main Street Square, was formerly a parking lot with 52 parking spaces. Seftner discussed the pushback by people in his community, including the picketers who marched to keep the parking spaces downtown and the constant social media negativity in the early stages of development. He said there were many challenges along the way but within three years, everyone in the community was on board and taking part in the transformation.

Some of the successes he shared was their Business Partner Program which began with approximately 20 business in their downtown district and now has more than 200 members as well as their Partners in Progress, a private funding mechanism. All events at their downtown park are open to the public and covered by private funds. “It has always been our goal to have something for everyone in our community.” Destination Rapid City, a non-profit organization focused on business development and improving the quality of life for the community, started with a vision, a staff of three, committed private donors, and an army of volunteers. The non-profit went from hosting approximately 100 events in their first year to more than 200 events by year three and they currently have a staff of 14.

When questioned about the success with businesses and the restoration of existing buildings and construction of new housing downtown, Seftner continuously pointed back to Main Street Square as the reason for the results and the over \$50 million in downtown investment. “The success of the square and bringing people downtown is undeniably the result of the square being built,” said Seftner. Main Street Square averages more than 600,000 visitors per year, 220,000 who attend their main events annually. He added that approximately 80 percent of those visitors are from their own town of 67,000, showing that their residents average more than three events per year.

“Real estate agents, our university, and our corporations used to purposely avoid the downtown area when highlighting our city. Now our downtown is the premier quality of life attraction these same groups proudly showcase to visitors and use for recruitment,” said Seftner. Destination Rapid City’s

downtown revitalization movement started with seed money from their local government to build the park. Main Street Square is on City property leased to Destination Rapid City.

Clarksville's Downtown Plaza expects to host approximately 100 events within the first year of opening. One of the premier features will be the outdoor skating rink expected to open shortly before Thanksgiving in 2017. A web site and Facebook Page will be available before the end of August. Please watch mcgtn.org and the Montgomery County Facebook Page to partner with the downtown plaza through sponsorship, volunteering or attending events. You can also contact Downtown Event Program Manager Paula Atkins at paatkins@mcgtn.net or 931-216-0131 for information.

#

For more information contact:

Michelle Newell

Public Information Officer

Montgomery County

(O) 931-648-8482

(C) 931-217-3332

manewell@mcgtn.net