



To: Downtown Business and Property Owners

From: Sally Custer, President, Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce

Date: March 19, 2008

Subject: Downtown Economic Development Committee (DEDC)

The DECE held its second meeting on March 18 at BJ's Deli to formulate a plan of action. Enclosed are the minutes from the meeting.

There are two items that require your attention. The DEDC would like to ask that business owners keep their businesses open on Friday nights until 8 p.m., especially during the summer months. The committee will be creating events throughout the summer to draw people downtown, and all in attendance agreed that Friday is the busiest night.

The other item is maintaining your property. Everyone is asked to make sure there are no trash, weeds, etc., by their buildings. Merton Auger, City Administrator said there are some funds available for exterior maintenance on your storefront. For more information contact the City at 763-682-1181.

The DECE is excited about working together to revitalize the downtown district. We hope everyone will do their part as well.

If you have any questions, contact me at 763-682-4902.

Downtown Economic Development Committee
March 18, 2008 - 10:00 a.m.
Bj's Deli
MINUTES

Present: BJ Brengman/Bj's Deli, Steve Hatkin/Buffalo Hospital, Dan & Christine Husom/Buffalo Orthotics & Sole Comfort Shoes, Merton Auger/City of Buffalo, Rick Flaata/Coborn's, Randy Haskins/KleinBank, Teresa Hettwer/KleinBank, Rainer Pensky, Diane Veches/Renaissance West, Sally Custer/Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce, Tom McDonnell/Drummer, Betsy McCarty/Perfect Image Salon.

Sally opened the meeting by presenting a brief overview of the objectives from the last meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Sally opened the meeting for any additional comments before going onto the agenda items. Mert said that the City Council met last night, and Judie Rose/HRA informed them of their decision to approve a \$44,000 expenditure for having a marketing research study done.

Mert said they will be choosing a company to do the market research within the next couple days, and then it will probably take about three months to get the results. Steve said once we get the data we need to court companies to come to Buffalo, the town needs to look good, and we need to develop a long-term strategy.

Creating Events - Sally informed the committee that Morrie's Ford would like to put on a car show in downtown Buffalo this summer – Sally is in the process of forming a committee for this event. Rainer said we need to focus on getting the buildings filled before we plan events. Mert said it is more than just filling the buildings; you need a plan to define what you want the town to evolve into. Rick said if you drive the customers here the businesses will thrive, so the more events the better. Ron suggested doing a pork chop feed like they used to. Rick said they have one at the Delano Coborn's as an appreciation day for their customers and that they have a huge turnout. He has been contemplating doing one here. Teresa said KleinBank served Sloppy Joes in the back parking lot years ago for their customers as well.

Joint Advertising - Sue will organize an advertising sub-committee with the local retailers and restaurants to do joint advertising. Sue said Lillian's will be open on the Friday before their occasional weekend starting on April 25 through July. Others are encouraged to do joint advertising for that night. All agreed businesses need to stay open until 8 pm on Friday nights, especially on the last Friday of the month to piggy-back Lillian's. Sally will mention that in her cover letter to the businesses. Rainer said he would meet with those businesses that do not respond. Rick said he will check with Coborn's Corporate about doing some joint advertising.

Building Upkeep - Mert was asked if there is an ordinance to deal with blighted properties, and he said no. There is a nuisance ordinance; for example, someone recently complained about a lot of trash behind one of the downtown buildings, and an officer spoke to the landlord. The City has had to go to court with property owners that do not comply. He reiterated that the City has zero tolerance level for graffiti and the same for broken windows. They are taken care of immediately. If a property owner has concerns about illegal things going on around their property, the City can put up a wireless camera to monitor the situation.

Rick asked Mert when the parking lot was going to be paved - Mert asked what everyone thought about the brick pavers. Sally clarified they are called “brick pavers” not “cobblestones.” Everyone agreed it would be nice to keep them on Division St., east of 1st Ave., since the buildings are maintained and have a historic design, but it didn’t matter if they were removed west of 1st Ave.

There was a discussion about cigarette butts being thrown on the sidewalks, public trash cans not being emptied, and the large round planters’ looking messy when the landscapers change the plants. Mert made a note to notify the proper people. He also said if anyone has suggestions about buying uniform ash trays or anything for the downtown, to let him know.

Mert said there are some funds available for maintenance. Steve suggested we let the businesses know that and encourage them to keep their property clean. Sally said she will mention it in the cover letter that will be sent with the minutes from this meeting. Steve asked Sally to check with the newspaper about writing an article about our concerns and to encourage all the businesses to take part with upkeep and staying open longer in the evening.

Dan asked if there were any incentives from business owner to fill their vacant buildings. Ron said they typically do give renters a break when they first rent from them. Mert said the findings from the market research report will also reflect incentives for a new business to come here. Sue commented that out of the 14 stores that they manage their two highest rents are in Buffalo and Waconia. Her downtown Hopkins store is much cheaper. Sally asked how we can encourage a property owner to be more competitive whether they are selling or renting. Rainer asked Sally to put together a survey of the downtown prices. She will try and get that done by the next meeting.

In closing, we discussed advertising avenues. Sue said most of her traffic comes from their website and their email customer database. Mert commented that he thought we should create a separate website for the downtown area that would be similar to “Amazon Buffalo.” Sally asked everyone to keep in mind the things we discussed and bring back additional suggestions at the next meeting.

Sally asked for someone to volunteer to be chair the Downtown Economic Development Committee - Rainer asked Sally to be the chair. All agreed.

A date for the next meeting will be set after the marketing research firm is ready to come to Buffalo (approximately 2 weeks).

Respectfully submitted by Sally Custer