



March 11, 2008

To Downtown Business and Property Owners:

This morning twenty-two people met at Bj's Deli to discuss the future of downtown Buffalo. By the end of the meeting, we had formed a committee called Downtown Economic Development Committee (DEDC). The enclosed minutes list the attendees as well as the volunteers that signed up to be on the committee.

There were several main concerns brought forth: lack of tenants, buildings in disarray, and lack of customers. Suggestions were to do joint advertising, create events to advertise and talk to property owners about maintaining their property.

Merton Auger, City of Buffalo Administrator, was present with two representatives from the Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA). He shared that the HRA had approved a \$49,000 expenditure to have a market analysis done on Buffalo for the purpose of finding what types of businesses would be needed and where to find them. One report by the McComb Group is entitled *Wayzata Retail Market Study*. The other is a proposal to do *A Retail Economic Development Strategy*. You can view the reports on a newly created page on the Chamber's website at www.buffalochamber.org/economicdevelopment. You can also go to www.buffalochamber.org, pull down the Community Information menu and click on Economic Development.

Last year the City had an architect firm develop concept drawings of various plans for the downtown area and we have posted that report on the website. **We also created a link to properties for sale and/or lease. If you have a property not on the list, contact us and we will post it.**

Due to the economic conditions, there are many that want to take an active role to sustain and enhance the rest of the downtown area. We need EVERYONE to do their part, whether you are a property owner or a business owner.

In the upcoming months, we will keep you informed of the DEDC efforts to revitalize downtown Buffalo and we will be asking you to do your part as well.

If you are renting the property, please contact me with the property owner's name and address and I will mail them the information.

Please email me your email address for future mailings - sally@buffalochamber.org.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,
Sally A. Custer
President

Downtown Economic Development Committee

March 10, 2008 - 10:00 a.m.

Bj's Deli

MINUTES

Present: Michael Zumbusch/American Family Ins, BJ Brengman/Bj's Deli, Steve Hatkin/Buffalo Hospital, Morynn Marx/Buffalo Orthotics & Sole Comfort Shoes, Merton Auger/City of Buffalo, Rick Flaata/Coborn's, Dale & Ione Olson, Dave Wilson/Edward Jones, Jackie Wurm/IntegriPrint, Inc., Randy Haskins/KleinBank, Rainer Pensky/, Diane Veches/Renaissance West, Doug Schroepfel/Schroepfel & Schroepfel, Ted Schroepfel/Schroepfel & Schroepfel, Pat Szarke/Szarke Law Office, Jim Holm/Tan on 1st/HRA, Jeannie Hintz/Team USA Mortgage, Ava Stensby/Team USA Mortgage, Sally Custer/Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce, Dean Frieler/Freight Management, Judie Rose/HRA.

Rainer Pensky thanked everyone for attending. He shared that he was traveling in a Wisconsin town and noticed the same problems that our downtown district is facing - shortage of businesses. Rainer then passed around a sign in sheet.

Sally, President of the Chamber, thanked Rainer for initiating the meeting and everyone that was there. She said that numerous members had been talking with her in the past couple months about their concerns regarding the downtown area. Sally spoke to her Board about it and is in the process of creating a page on the Chamber website (www.buffalochamber.org) listing available properties for sale and lease. Sally also recently met with Merton Auger, City Administrator, to discuss what can be done. Merton said he was researching companies that do City studies and was going to be taking two proposals to the HRA on last Friday. The HRA did approve the allocation of approximately \$49,000 to have a case study done on Buffalo. Sally thanked Judie and Jim (HRA members) for approving it.

Merton then spoke about his concerns regarding the downtown buildings not being properly maintained and the loss of tenants. He said the study will be just one part; others need to do their part by talking to property owners about maintaining their sites and that a plan needs to be created to go forward from here. He handed out a CD that included the Vision Plan from last year, the Wayzata Retail analysis and the Community ID (Buxton Report).

Judie said she was very excited about the Vision Plan that was developed last year and said there is a possible developer that is interested in downtown Buffalo. The rest is confidential at this point. She commented that the occasional stores (only open four days a month) have been a nice asset for Buffalo because they do a beautiful job of decorating their storefronts, but she wished that they were open more often.

Pat said there was a really interesting article in the Star Tribune recently about the Galleria versus Southdale and encouraged everyone to read it. She also said she has filled Pandora's old space with another retailer.

Sally read some of the highlights from the Wayzata report and emphasized the need to get businesses to agree to be open later, even if only on Thursday and Friday nights. Many people don't get back to Buffalo in the evenings until 5:30 or 6 p.m. The suggestion for Wayzata was to stay open until 8 p.m.

Randy said he recently spoke with a representative of the Waconia Chamber as they are going through similar struggles. It dawned on him that Buffalo is ahead of the game, per se', because we do have a HRA board that can provide loans and a City that fervently works at keeping up the landscape and even won a national competition last year - America in Bloom. He reiterated the need for property owners to maintain their property and keep their businesses open longer in the evening.

Judie suggested getting the Boy Scouts or some other civic organizations to provide food stands downtown on the nights "Concerts in the Park" are taking place, or some type of event to draw the people there first.

BJ said the women's "Ladies Night Out" was extremely busy and suggested more events like this.

Jeannie suggested getting a youth group to help paint some of the buildings. Judie said it has been very difficult to get some building owners to do anything to improve their area, even when it has been for free.

Rick was asked if Coborn's would be moving, and he said not at this time. His sales have gone up since he took over the store from Gordy and he is pleased with that. He thinks corporate will be pacified for now if the sales keep going up. He did look at other downtown sites for a video and hardware store but Corporate said no. He is concerned about the kids that hang out at the "Vault" on the corner and said they come through the store and hang out and it is costing him more manpower to watch them.

Rick was also asked if he would notify the group when he is doing event advertising so other businesses can offer something special and advertise at the same time. He said he would keep the committee abreast of his future events.

Dale said we need to form a core group to get the ball rolling. Sally asked for a show of hands. Dale, Ione, Rainer, Bj, Jeannie, Morynn (on behalf of her father Dan Husom), Pat, Diane, Randy, and Rick agreed to be on the newly formed Downtown Economic Development Committee (DEDC).

At the next committee meeting, we will discuss more specifically the goals and purpose of this committee (i.e., creating events to draw people downtown, joint advertising, building upkeep, etc.)

Sally said the Buffalo Tourism Bureau, which is part of the Chamber, spends over \$20,000 per year in advertising to bring shoppers to Buffalo. They also print the Visitors Map that is distributed around town. Sally thanked Bj for sponsoring the fruit and muffins; the Tourism Bureau paid for the coffee.

Sally will continue to coordinate the meetings and will type the minutes. A chair will be chosen at the next meeting on March 18 at 10 a.m. at Bj's.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Sally Custer.