

Indiana Downtown Project Implementation Plan

October, 2003



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NOTE: Please contact Christine Owens, Community Planner, at (219) 462-1161 for copies of the Appendix documents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The HyettPalma Study included numerous recommendations as to what Valparaiso can, or should, do to build upon and improve our excellent downtown. In order to make sure that these recommendations were acted upon, Mayor Butterfield formed a Downtown Implementation Board. The Board became responsible for creating a list of short term to immediate term priorities for the downtown.

After a year's activity, the Board has issued its report. The Report identifies the criteria to be used in prioritizing the possible recommendations. It divides the priorities into two (2) classes: priorities which require funding, and those priorities which are more policy based and do not require funding.

Finally, the Board has recommended that the implementation process pass to the VEDC. The VEDC is an excellent example for the success of Valparaiso's public sector/private sector partnerships and it has the expertise to continue and further enhance the process.

Background

The Indiana Downtown Project began in March of 2002 with the creation of the Process Committee. The Indiana Downtown Project is a partnership between IACT and HyettPalma, a nationally known consulting firm specializing in downtown revitalization. The process committee was responsible for the data collection prior to HyettPalma's visit. In addition to data collection, they conducted resident phone and business surveys. HyettPalma spent a week in June of 2002 in Valparaiso conducting interviews, focus groups, a community vision session, and visiting many of the downtown businesses. The Downtown Action Agenda was presented to us in July of 2002.

The Downtown Action Agenda contains a vision for downtown for 2007, a market analysis, and recommended strategies (Appendix 1) to help us make the vision possible. The market analysis contains statistics on the current downtown market and what can be sustained downtown. The recommended strategies address things like landscaping, the one-way street configuration, parking management suggestions, recruiting and retaining businesses, marketing downtown, and so on.

In October 2002, the Downtown Implementation Board (DIB), at Mayor Butterfield's direction, was created and has been chaired by Jim Jorgensen. DIB was created with the charge of studying the suggestions made by HyettPalma and preparing a plan for implementation within a year. The DIB is a public-private partnership housed under the City and composed of the following members:

DIB Member	Organization
Tom Galovic	Greater Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce
Mayor David Butterfield	City of Valparaiso
Jan Dick	City Council
Larry Sheets	Porter County Commissioner
Jim Jorgensen	Redevelopment Commission
Mary Beth Witcher	Valparaiso Historic Preservation Commission
Jon Kilpinen	Valparaiso University Dept. of Georgraphy
Kyle Miner	Valparaiso University Student
John Seibert	Valparaiso Park Superintendent
Tony Shivley	Superintendent of Streets & Sanitation
Ed Howe	Banta Neighborhood Association
Doug Pierce	Central Neighborhood Association
Chuck Williams	Prop./business owner
Christine Owens	City of Valparaiso (staff)
Don Rapley	Valparaiso Community Festivals & Events
Jeanette Binder	Prop./business owner
Wayne Welter	Local Bank

The DIB created 5 working sub-committees to focus on related suggestions and bring recommendations back to the DIB. Those committees are: Traffic & Parking, Building & Public Spaces, Business Recruitment & Retention, Marketing, and Funding. A listing of the members of each committee can be found in Appendix 2.

The DIB has met monthly for the last year reviewing the sub-committees progress and final reports. Over 60 individuals have participated in this process through membership on the DIB or one of its committees and have put in more than 4,000 volunteer hours combined. Most of the sub-committees met at least twice a month throughout the spring and summer months and final reports were presented to the DIB beginning in July.

The DIB has also partnered with the Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation (VEDC) for the Rebuild Valparaiso program. This program sponsored by the US Department of Energy and the Indiana Department of Commerce is an energy efficiency program providing free energy audits to downtown businesses wishing to participate in the program. Another partnership, this one with the Valparaiso Community Festivals & Events (VCFE), is to produce the downtown newsletter, "It's All Downtown". The newsletter is hand delivered to downtown merchants with the intent to better inform merchants of downtown events and also to spur communication amongst them.

Implementation Recommendations

A. Priority Lists

There are several ways to classify the priorities, which have been established by the subcommittees. One method would rely upon the time needed to execute the project. Some priorities can be immediately implemented; others will - or should - take considerable time to complete.

Another method of classification is based upon the need for funding. The subcommittees have recommended priorities, which can be initiated with minimal, or no funding. The appropriate entity to whom the priority is assigned should immediately begin the following:

1. With respect to parking:
 - a. Continue to review the viability of a parking zone in the downtown.
 - b. Consider use of a parking validation program.
 - c. Review the desirability of changing - or abolishing - the current parking fees and fines system.
 - d. Update and change parking and entrance signage at all Public Parking Lots.
 - e. Paint additional parking stalls.
 - f. Change parallel parking to angle parking on Michigan, Lafayette and Jefferson.

2. With respect to Building and Public Spaces:
 - a. Develop methods of increasing the use of design guidelines.
 - b. Coordinate with the Plan Commission a review of the C-4 developmental standards.
 - c. Research the public restroom/public telephone issues.

3. With respect to business attraction and retention, encourage the engagement of the private sector in all aspects of the implementation process. This should include the formation of a downtown business advisory group, which might develop into a stand-alone organization primarily responsible for the process.

The balance of the recommended priorities require, to varying degrees, the expenditure of funds on either a one time or continuous basis. In order to rank these recommendations in order of priority, the Board agreed upon the values or criteria which would drive the decision making process. These values/criteria include:

1. When possible, highly visible projects, which deliver an immediate and recognizable benefit, should be encouraged. These immediate successes will sustain the momentum created by the HyettPalma study and the subsequent work of the DIB.
2. The availability of funding should be critical. When possible, expended monies should serve to leverage other funding sources.
3. The engagement of the private sector must occur. Some priorities can only be implemented and continued by the private sector.
4. The final list must be perceived as being fair to the different downtown constituencies. In part “fairness” can be reached by a list of priorities, which cuts across all of the subcommittees.

With these values in place, the following priorities emerged:

1. Install way-finding signage for parking lots, traffic loops and business location.
Funding Sources: CEDIT, TIF, Fees
Estimated Cost: \$30,000 & \$40,000
over a 2 year period
2. Acquire the Locks Vending Building, tear down the Fire Department’s haunted house and construct a new parking lot.
Funding Source: TIF, CEDIT, Private sector ownership
Estimated Cost: \$130,000
3. Jump start the Downtown Marketing Plan, including but not limited to introduction of branding, development of a brochure, banners, direct mail, bag stuffers and the like
Funding Sources: CEDIT, Private Sector (with or without match)
Estimated Cost: \$30,000
4. Maintenance of Courthouse while redevelopment of it occurs:
Funding Sources: Private Sector Contributions; CEDIT
Estimated Cost: \$15,000
5. Parking lot beautification and enhanced lighting:
Funding Sources: CEDIT, TIF
Estimated Cost: \$20,000
Lighting: \$100,000
6. Implementation of Courthouse Plaza - Phase I
Funding Sources: TIF, CEDIT, Private Sector Partnership
Estimated Cost: \$196,000

7. Creation of revolving loan programs, grant monies, matching funds for improvements:
Funding Sources: CEDIT, TIF
Estimated Cost: unknown availability
8. Streetscape Improvements:
Funding Sources: CEDIT, TIF
Estimated Cost: \$35 per square foot/
\$175,000 per block

As noted above, another method of creating priorities focuses on the timing of implementation. These priorities, without an attempt to rank them, seem best considered after 2 or 3 years.

1. Marketing Phases II and III (this presumably will be private sector funded).
2. Courthouse Square Phases II and III.
3. Purchase of white house next to haunted house.
4. Construction of Chicago Street Parking Lot (City owns the land)
5. Work with County to install stairwell on east side of County Parking Garage and increase its lighting
6. Construct a new City owned Parking Garage.

B. Successor Entity

The mission of the Downtown Implementation Board was to prepare, and present to the Mayor, a plan to implement the recommendations of the HyettPalma Study. The Implementation Board decided to limit its efforts to the creation of short term priorities which could be implemented, in whole or in part, in the next two (2) or three (3) years. Additionally, where possible, priorities for years after year three (3) would be proposed.

The Board had to decide which entity(ies) will be responsible for carrying out the short-term priorities and finalizing the next set of priorities. It appeared that there are at least four (4) alternatives:

1. Retain the Implementation Board. The Implementation Board could continue to exist. The sub-committees would function and monitor the implementation of the priorities, delegating responsibility wherever necessary. Christine Owens would continue to be the staff person who would oversee the process.
2. One Person Can Be Put In Charge. A second alternative would be to name a Downtown "Czar" who would have the authority to implement the recommendations. Some tasks would have to be delegated to other individuals or entities. In order to be able to receive and administer funds, the individual would have to come from the public sector.

3. An Existing Entity Could Be In Charge. A third alternative was to pass the implementation process to an existing entity, such as the VEDC, the VCFE or the Chamber. Using an existing entity assures continuity in the process. Christine Owens could remain as the "hands on" staff person to coordinate the implementation process. The entity, which is selected, would delegate specific tasks to one of the other entities or to the City.
4. A New Entity Could Be In Charge. A new tax-exempt entity could be formed to carry on the implementation process. This entity would come from the private sector and would partner with the City when appropriate. This new entity would be responsible for creating and funding a staff position(s).

The Board chose alternative number Three (3) and recommends that the VEDC be responsible for the implementation process. The VEDC is a successful public sector/private sector partnership and has demonstrated the ability to handle major projects. The implementation process is an economic development issue best handled by those who understand economic development best.

CONCLUSION

The Downtown Implementation Board, and the process it has engaged in, exemplifies the best of Valparaiso. The Board continued the tradition of the public sector/private sector partnerships that have long distinguished our community. The Board believes in the downtown and is convinced that the process of implementing the recommendations of the HyettPalma Study will continue.