CITY COMMITS FUNDS FOR DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

By Bryan Schnell

With the upcoming reconstruction of Main and St. Joseph Streets continuing to approach, the State and City government have committed funds to make the Downtown Master Plan a reality. The Downtown Development Corporation has also been fundamentally involved in all actions leading up to this point. The DDC helped secure the Common Council’s decision to commit up to $90,000 for the commission of a master plan for improvements in the downtown area. The State Department of Transportation has also committed $55,000, for a total of $145,000 worth of planning that is going to be invested in downtown in preparation for the reconstruction of Main and St. Joe Streets.

The purpose of the master plan is to identify solutions to some of the downtown’s problems and incorporate these solutions into the design of the reconstruction project. The intent is to capitalize on the opportunity to actually solve the problems, rather than simply study them. The master planning process should begin before summer and will require input and involvement from ALL business and property owners. We will notify you of workshops and forums where we will have the opportunity to express our ideas and solutions to the master planners and engineers. Please keep abreast of this subject!

Some of the early concerns include:

INFRASTRUCTURE - Take advantage of the access to the sub-grade infrastructure which will be created by the reconstruction project.

ON & OFF STREET PARKING - Evaluate all options for parking availability and management improvements.

TRAFFIC - “Tame” the aggressive nature of the traffic through the area and make the pedestrian more dominant, without interfering in the traffic flow to the extent that alternate routes become more desirable.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS/PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES - Additional landscaping and street furniture, including public restrooms. If they cannot be “built out” at this time, plans should be designed so amenities can be added later.

DISRUPTION CAUSED BY THE PROJECT - Preparation for the delay, detour, and disruption caused by the reconstruction process will keep adverse impact on business to a minimum.

CREATION OF NEW ACTIVITY HUBS - Increase the places that lend themselves to activity that is necessary to keep the downtown an active, profitable place.

PUBLIC SIGNAGE - Downtown signage should be readily distinguishable and fit into an overall scheme. There should be order and continuity in all downtown signage.

POSSIBLE UTILITY RELOCATION - The power service that is present in the alleyways is unsightly. With the concurrent sub-grade work, consideration should be given to this opportunity to relocate them, and to the expanded use of the alleys as a business and circulation routes once the alleys are made more attractive and functional.

If you have ideas or want more information, please call Bryan Schnell at 394-6036.