



Village of Morton Downtown Development Plan Community-Wide Workshop Summary

February 10th, 2011

On February 10th, 2011, a community workshop was held at the Bertha Frank Performing Arts Center in order to obtain the community's perspectives about Downtown Morton and gauge consensus on issues and concerns. Over 50 attendees participated in the workshop which included an overview of the purpose of the study, the planning process, and an interactive exercise to obtain input and comments regarding Downtown Morton.

This report summarizes the results of the Community-Wide Workshop. The summary reflects the opinions and comments stated by individuals during the workshop and in response to the workshop questionnaire.

1. *Identify five (5) issues or concerns confronting Downtown Morton.*

Participants in attendance discussed a variety of issues and concerns confronting Downtown Morton. In general, the primary areas of concern were: 1) parking; 2) lack of a destination; 3) greening and open space; 4) lack of retail/business diversity, and 5) lack of a central civic feature. The following is a summary of the key points that were raised for each of the primary areas of concern.

Parking: Participants desired a range of parking improvements for Downtown including additional parking; improved location of parking; greening of parking areas; and parking wayfinding signage.

Lack of a Destination: Many participants noted the lack of a destination to attract out-of-town visitors or a "draw" to attract locals to Downtown on a regular basis. Specific desires were for upscale dining, outdoor dining, evening activities, and additional special events.

Greening and Open Space: Those in attendance stated a desire for additional green space within Downtown. Suggestions included greening parking areas, creating areas to rest and linger, and reduce the amount of paved surfaces within Downtown.

Business Diversity: Participants commented that the business mix in Downtown was weighted towards offices and service uses and that Downtown did not have enough retail uses and restaurants (particularly restaurants open in the evening).

Lack of a Central Civic Feature: Participants desired the creation of a civic amenity (e.g., festival grounds (covered or open), gazebo, pergola, town square, intergenerational community center) that was functional and distinctive.

Other issues and concerns included a lack of restaurants, the presence of vacant/underutilized buildings, lack of an architectural theme or identity, unattractive buildings, lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities/circulation, and a lack of evening activities.

2. *List, in order of importance, the three (3) most important issues discussed thus far.*

After compiling a list of issues and concerns from the group, participants were asked to rank their three most important issues discussed thus far. The most frequent response was "no draw/evening atmosphere" followed by "no central activity/event area" and finally, "too many services/not enough retail"

3. Identify three (3) specific projects or actions that you would like to see undertaken within Downtown Morton.

When asked to identify specific projects or actions they would like to see undertaken in Downtown Morton, the most frequent responses were to create a civic gathering space/community center/event space, focus efforts on business attraction (specifically new retail and restaurants), and incentives to improve business facades (also to modernize spaces and reduce vacancies). Other suggestions included create new parking areas, create a unified architectural theme for Downtown, improve landscaping and streetscaping in Downtown, create more Downtown events, encourage mixed-use development improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and create permanent public restrooms.

4. What are the primary strengths and assets of Downtown Morton?

Numerous strengths and assets were identified in response to this question. Frequent responses included specific businesses such as Dairy Queen, Lulu's on Main, Ackermann Farms, Eli's, Sweet Treats and Rocke's. Qualities of Downtown were also listed as strengths including: clean and safe; the high quality/maintenance of the street infrastructure; historic buildings, events (e.g., the Pumpkin Festival); stable, locally-owned businesses; seasonal decorations, banners and landscaping; Downtown's central location and accessibility and the great community spirit and people of Morton.