

Appendix A.

Downtown Niles “Looking Ahead”
Town Meeting & Workshop Summary

Downtown Niles “Looking Ahead” Town Meeting & Workshop Summary

An open invitation Town Meeting and Workshop was held on February 16, 2005 as a featured participation component of the Downtown Niles Market Study. More than 50 people – including elected officials, community business leaders, downtown property owners and interested residents – participated in the visioning & strategic planning workshop. Following is a summary of ideas and results emanating from a series of team and individual exercises conducted during the workshop.

Marketable Assets, Challenges, Priorities and Values

Workshop participants participated in a group exercise designed to identify marketable features, challenges community values and priorities related to Downtown Niles.

1. The Three Best Things about Downtown Niles today

(#) = Indicates multiple responses from various work groups

- River/Park (4)
- Streetscape and Façade Improvements (2)
- Community Spirit/Support (2)
- History (2)
- Accessibility/Location (2)
- Setting/Ambience (2)
- Safety/Well Lit
- Proven Potential
- Parking
- Downtown Revitalization
- Unique Shops
- Pedestrian Friendly

2. The Three Single Words or Distinguishing Features that Best Describe Downtown Niles today

(#) = Indicates multiple responses from various work groups

- Historic (4)
- Quaint/Charming (3)
- Restoration/Improvement/Fresh (2)
- River (2)
- Hill (2)
- Events
- Warm
- Energized
- Appearance

3. Downtown Niles Three Most Glaring Weaknesses or Shortcomings

(#) = Indicates multiple responses from various work groups

- Empty Storefronts (5)
- Truck Traffic (3)
- Parking (2)
- Lack of “Good” Retail/Anchor Retail (2)
- Lack of Identity/Image (2)
- Limited Merchant Advertising
- No Consistency of Hours
- North Gateway
- Lack of Commercial Leadership
- Lack of Restaurants
- Kids Skateboarding
- Lack of Connection River/Park-Downtown

4. “Selling points” that should be emphasized in business recruitment efforts – things about Niles and/or the downtown that make Niles a great place to expand, start a business, or invest in the downtown?

(#) = Indicates multiple responses from various work groups

Active Main Street/DDA/Support of Local Government (3)
Sense of Renewal/Poised for Boom (2)
Available Locations (2)
Opportunity for Growth (2)
Streetscape, Façade, Park Improvements (2)
Location: Chicago/South Bend/US Hwy 12/60/90
Local Patrons
State & Local Grant Funds
Low Rental Rates
Distinctive Architecture

5. Three Issues or Challenges to business development efforts in downtown Niles

(#) = Indicates multiple responses from various work groups

Lack of Cohesive Theme/Identity (2)
Competition from Malls/Strip Centers/Grape Rd./WalMart (2)
Truck Traffic
Community Support
Lease Costs Too Low
Parking
River Development – Past Mistakes
Electrical Utility
Empty Storefronts
South Bend
Attitude
Image
Lack of Visitors
Definitive Draw
Variety of Businesses

6. Things that should be accomplished within the next 3 years in order to make Downtown Niles a more attractive place to start a business and/or invest

(#) = Indicates multiple responses from various work groups

Advertise/Raise Awareness (5)
Divert Truck Traffic (3)
Recruit New Retail (2)
Add Housing/Mid Income/Upper Floor (2)
Successful Market Study & Follow Up
Parking
Bring Strollers up the Hill
Move Focus to Main from Front
Add Weekly Farmers Market
Maintenance/Street Cleaning
Continue Façade Improvements
Water Feature

Business Development Exercise

Workshop participants worked in teams to complete a business development exercise designed to provide insight regarding the potential for new and expanded businesses in downtown Niles.

Team A Results

Top Recruitment/Expansion Candidates:

- Restaurant
- General Merchandise
- Boutique/Gift or Clothing

Best Recruitment/Expansion Candidate:

- Restaurant

Reasons it will succeed:

- It brings people to town

Range of Products/Services Offered:

- Upscale restaurant

Likely Customer Segments Served:

- South Bend/Granger market

Existing or New Complementary Businesses in the Downtown:

- Antique Shops
 - Riverfront Café
 - Majareks
 - Candy Shop
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Team B Results

Top Recruitment/Expansion Candidates:

- Quality Restaurants with Entertainment
- Upscale Ice Cream Shop
- Butcher/Deli/Wine/Cheese
- Frame Shop

Best Recruitment/Expansion Candidate:

- Quality Butcher/Deli/Wine/Cheese

Reasons it will succeed:

- We don't have it

Range of Products/Services Offered:

- Butcher shop, delicatessen, wine, cheese, etc.

Likely Customer Segments Served:

- Middle/upper income families

Existing or New Complementary Businesses in the Downtown:

- Rosales
- Stein & Vine
- Riverfront Cafe

Team C Results

Top Recruitment/Expansion Candidates:

- Working Person's Store (Boots, clothes, etc.)
- Deli/Bakery/Ice Cream Soda Fountain
- Christmas Store

Best Recruitment/Expansion Candidate:

- Working Persons Store

Reasons it will succeed:

- Niles is a working community, and it's a trendy business now

Range of Products/Services Offered:

- Working clothes, boots, etc.

Likely Customer Segments Served:

- Locals

Existing or New Complementary Businesses in the Downtown:

- Rosales
 - Doodles
 - Color Me Christian
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Team D Results

Top Recruitment/Expansion Candidates:

- Ice Cream Parlor
- High-end Fabric Store
- Internet Café

Best Recruitment/Expansion Candidate:

- Ice Cream Shop

Reasons it will succeed:

- Everyone loves ice cream

Range of Products/Services Offered:

- A lot of ice cream

Likely Customer Segments Served:

- All visitors, people using riverfront, everyone from town

Existing or New Complementary Businesses in the Downtown:

- Restaurant
- Movie Theater
- Bakery

Team E Results

Top Recruitment/Expansion Candidates:

- Clothing Store – Teens & Kids
- Pet Store
- Pubs & Clubs

Best Recruitment/Expansion Candidate:

- Clothing - Family

Reasons it will succeed:

- Upper end clothing, brand names

Range of Products/Services Offered:

- Tailoring, all ages, shoes, complete line – “one-name” line of clothing

Likely Customer Segments Served:

- Families of all age groups

Existing or New Complementary Businesses in the Downtown:

- Elizabeth Bradford Designs
 - Bakers Needle
 - Action Hobby & Skatrix
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Team F Results

Top Recruitment/Expansion Candidates:

- Small Café/Restaurant
- Specialty Men’s or Women’s Store
- Art/Craft Store

Best Recruitment/Expansion Candidate:

- Art/Craft Store

Reasons it will succeed:

- Need

Range of Products/Services Offered:

- Stained glass, oil supplies, craft classes

Likely Customer Segments Served:

- Artists already in the community

Existing or New Complementary Businesses in the Downtown:

- Antiques
- Art Association
- Restaurants