

## CITY OF LA PORTE DOWNTOWN ACTION COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

### OVERALL COURSE OF ACTION

Category	Recommendation	Status 11/1/06
1. Timing	The City of La Porte is on the brink of major development that will considerably alter the commercial face of the city. This includes the transformation of Maple Lane Mall into La Porte Town Square, the transformation of the Wal-Mart into a supercenter and the development of NewPorte Landing. Downtown's enhancement must become a top priority now!	Maple Lane Mall transformation is going more slowly than anticipated. Wal-Mart transformation into a supercenter is scheduled for spring of 2007. NewPorte Landing still has the potential of beginning development in late 2007.
2. Perspective	Downtown faces a variety of issues, all of which must be addressed in order to bring about its enhancement. They need to be kept in perspective rather than allowing any single issue to dominate the enhancement effort.	
3. Professional Advice	Care should be taken to obtain professional advice before making decisions on actions that will affect the downtown economy, image and success.	
4. Turnover	Business turnover is a natural occurrence in a commercial district where the base is small, independently owned businesses. Small business owners routinely decide to go in and out of business for reasons that often have little or nothing to do with business profitability	Transition of Droege's, addition of Symphony Center and Gallery, upcoming relocation and expansion of Thaddeus C Gallery, closure of Hispanic grocery
5. Distinctiveness	Linking downtown to other commercial areas is admirable, but care should be taken to ensure that downtown retains its distinctiveness in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Style of business improvements</li> <li>▪ Design guidelines and building appearance</li> <li>▪ Business mix</li> <li>▪ Customer service</li> </ul>	Design standards nearly ready for final approval Recruitment targets nearly ready for approval
6. Organizations and Entities	Gain the highest level of involvement of organizations and entities involved in downtown enhancement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clearly define roles</li> <li>▪ Gain their commitment to implementing the Action Agenda</li> <li>▪ Keep their advice and recommendations regarding downtown enhancement within their area of expertise</li> <li>▪ Be willing to coordinate and communicate with the other involved organizations and entities</li> </ul>	Redevelopment Commission, Urban Enterprise Zone Association, Greater La Porte Chamber of Commerce, Greater La Porte Economic Development Corporation, City Council, Board of Public Works and Safety, People Engaged in Preservation all represented on the Downtown Action Committee
7. Anchors	Work to assure that new anchors that serve the general populace are located in the downtown area	Recent discussion with the Post Office
8. Preservation	Recognize the importance of downtown preservation as an opportunity	Efforts by the Redevelopment

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9. Districts	<p>to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Keep downtown distinct, making it different from competing areas</li> <li>▪ Attract investors, business owners, real estate developers, etc.</li> <li>▪ Attract customers and residents, and</li> <li>▪ Attract heritage tourists</li> </ul> <p>Create three districts which are in keeping with the natural market forces at play in downtown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District #1: Specialty Retail, Food, Art and Entertainment District with housing on the upper floors. A cluster of specialty retail, food, art and entertainment venues should be created on the first floor of structures in this District</li> <li>▪ District #2: Medical District, including La Porte Hospital and associated professional and service businesses. Control growth and increase density so that the needs of the hospital and its associated uses are met without encroachment that will damage surrounding neighborhoods.</li> <li>▪ District #3: Office and Institutional District, including County government facilities as well as county-related services such as attorney offices, etc. This district is in transition as adaptive reuse of structures is occurring. This District can provide the link between District #1 and NewPorte Landing.</li> </ul>	<p>Commission to rescue deteriorating structures.</p> <p>Implementation of the Façade Improvement and Downtown La Porte Looking Up programs</p>
10. Focus Area	<p>Downtown enhancement should be focused on District #1 for the foreseeable future since it represents the greatest opportunity for making downtown a destination. In terms of business development and redevelopment efforts, the focus should be on Lincolnway</p>	
<b>PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS</b>		
Category	Recommendation	Status as of 11/1/06
Banners	<p>Customized banners should be designed, purchased and installed</p>	Done!
1. Landscaping	<p>The “adopt-a-planter” program should be modified to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Planting materials should be chosen to add the maximum amount of color year-round.</li> <li>▪ Planting materials to be changed seasonally</li> <li>▪ Requirement that those adopting planters be urged to adhere to the approved landscaping plan</li> </ul>	
2. Wayfinding	<p>Erect additional wayfinding signs that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Direction to “Historic Downtown La Porte” from major roadways</li> </ul>	

**PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS**

Category	Recommendation	Status as of 1/1/106
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Welcome to Historic Downtown La Porte at entrances to the downtown</li> <li>▪ Direct motorists to downtown public parking facilities</li> <li>▪ Mark facilities for public use.</li> </ul>	
3. Parking	<p>Parking availability and usage should be rechallenged to help assure that the needs of the following markets are accommodated in this order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customers and patrons in downtown</li> <li>▪ Downtown workers</li> <li>▪ Downtown residents</li> <li>▪ Infrequent users of downtown who need infrequent longer term parking (e.g., jurors)</li> </ul> <p>The needs of the following markets should be accommodated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Downtown uses that attract large numbers of individuals such as City Hall, the County Court House, the hospital, the library and the YMCA</li> </ul>	<p>Negotiations with La Porte County appear to be partially successful in improving the availability of parking for County employees</p> <p>La Porte Regional Health System is completing a significant new parking area on the former Thanhart Burger property</p>
4. Parking	<p>A parking consultant should be engaged to advise the city on the appropriateness of the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Signs erected on-street that read "Free 2-Hour Customer Parking"</li> <li>▪ An increased fine system to deter abuse of the 2-hour limit</li> <li>▪ Focus attention of the parking enforcement personnel on District #1</li> <li>▪ Enforcement should be designed to stimulate turnover and discourage abuse of the 2-hour limit.</li> <li>▪ Do away with the requirement for two parking spaces for each housing unit within the downtown area as it relates to housing structures</li> </ul> <p>Maximize parking supply by such measures as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Making improvements to enhance the condition, feeling of safety and use of parking lots</li> <li>▪ Eliminating the striping of on-street spaces</li> <li>▪ Creating additional on-street parking wherever possible</li> <li>▪ Creating additional on-street angled parking wherever possible</li> <li>▪ Eliminating "no parking" zones wherever possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The city's Monroe Street lot is being upgraded by the Redevelopment Commission</li> <li>○ Considered and rejected</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider creating a parking deck in the future in a location most convenient for the customers and patrons of District #1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Additional unlimited on-street parking provided on Lincolnway and State Street near Detroit Street</li> <li>○ Additional angled parking spaces planned for Washington Street between Madison and Michigan.</li> </ul>
5. Parking	<p>In District #3, the demand for all-day parking with minimal turnover is greatest. This can be accommodated by such measures as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encouraging the County to provide parking to accommodate the needs of its users</li> <li>▪ Enforcing parking time limits in this district on a spot basis</li> <li>▪ Giving consideration to allowing 3-hour on-street parking</li> <li>▪ Giving consideration to increasing the number of off-street parking spaces for which permits are issued to workers and residents of this district</li> </ul> <p>In District #2, the demand is for both all-day and turnover parking. With the hospital being the biggest traffic generator, the hospital should be encouraged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accommodate the parking demand of its workers, clients and visitors in proximity to its main campus.</li> <li>▪ Seriously consider building a parking deck</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Progress noted above</li> </ul>
6. Traffic	<p>The city should work with INDOT to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Downtown crosswalks are as safe, visible and convenient as possible</li> <li>▪ Downtown light timing makes crossing the street safe and convenient for pedestrians</li> <li>▪ Downtown traffic is moving at reasonable speeds</li> <li>▪ All walk/don't walk signals are in good working order</li> <li>▪ Existing walk/don't walk signals are replaced with countdown signals that show the number or seconds remaining before lights change from green to red</li> </ul>	
7. Problem Properties	<p>The following actions should be taken to encourage and stimulate private real estate investment in downtown La Porte</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with owners of downtown properties to help assure that all</li> </ul>	

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	<p>buildings are downtown assets and contribute to the overall quality and character of downtown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If owners of problem properties (deteriorated or substandard) do not wish to take the necessary steps to correct deficiencies, then efforts should be made to find buyers for the property who will purchase the property and correct deficiencies.</li> <li>▪ If the owners of problem properties refuse to repair deficiencies or market the properties to others who will make the necessary repairs, the Redevelopment Commission should consider taking possession, working with the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana to see if its programs can help.</li> </ul>	
8. Housing	<p>To create an additional element that will bolster the health and success of the downtown area, the greatest number of housing units possible should be created in the upper floors of buildings located in District #1. To facilitate this the following actions are needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The parking requirement pertaining to downtown housing units should be done away with, but only as it relates to creating housing in currently existing buildings.</li> <li>▪ Create an overlay zone for District #1 so that zoning permits housing in selected buildings in the District.</li> <li>▪ The city should continue its efforts to encourage owners to rehab the greatest number of housing units in neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown area</li> </ul>	<p>The city has formulated a residential revitalization program for the area immediately south and east of the downtown area and intends to implement it in 2007.</p>
9. Central Station Plaza	<p>Develop Central Station Plaza and provide new office and meeting space, a public plaza and adjacent parking</p>	<p>On target for completion in January 2008</p>
10. Design Guidelines	<p>Design guidelines that are customized for and specifically tailored to address architectural styles in the downtown area. They should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clearly lay out “do’s and don’ts” for making façade improvements.</li> <li>▪ Address appropriate infill construction as well as existing facades</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be defined by a professional preservation architect or architectural historian having experience with downtown historic districts.</li> <li>▪ Require adherence to the design guidelines as a condition to receiving any financial incentives that are made available in downtown, such as grants or loans.</li> <li>▪ Establish a review body which involves the Historic Preservation Commission.</li> <li>▪ Provides for design assistance</li> </ul>	
11. Building Codes	<p>The city should continue to consistently enforce building codes in the downtown area. Annual inspection programs should be instituted.</p>	
12. Public Safety	<p>The highest levels of public safety should be maintained in downtown. The visibility of bike, foot and vehicle patrols is important.</p>	
<b>BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT</b>		
Category	Recommendation	Sattus as of 11/1/06
1. Business Retention	<p>Existing businesses should be strengthened by providing such services or providing guidance as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Business counseling by the Small Business Development Training Corps and "one-on-one" consulting by staff and volunteers</li> <li>▪ Striving for consistent and customer-friendly business hours, including evening hours.</li> <li>▪ Bi-lingual business signs and advertising</li> <li>▪ Enhanced customer service</li> <li>▪ Providing incentives for employees to park off street or in remote on-street locations</li> <li>▪ Helping building owners and business people recognize the importance of maintaining attractive ground floor window displays at all times, changed regularly and lighted until at least 11:00pm nightly.</li> <li>▪ Maintaining business signs to the highest levels of aesthetic quality.</li> </ul>	
2. Pro-Business/Pro Quality	<p>The City should assess all of its review and application processes and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Streamline them</li> <li>▪ Help quality investors understand and navigate those processes</li> <li>▪ Uphold and adhere to high standards of quality in all of its actions</li> <li>▪ Adhere to the design guidelines that are created for the downtown area</li> </ul>	
3. Farmers Market	<p>The Farmers Market needs to be recreated in the downtown area. Important issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High quality'</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Great variety of products, including produce, food, art, crafts and entertainment</li> <li>▪ Hold on Saturday mornings near District #1</li> </ul>	
4. Business Recruitment	<p>A concerted effort should be made to attract and place an appropriate range of businesses throughout the downtown. This effort should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Internal recruitment—work with existing businesses to expand and upgrade</li> <li>▪ External recruitment—when existing businesses do not respond to the needs of the marketplace, seek new ones through prospecting for new businesses.</li> </ul>	Recruitment plan in development
5. Marketing	<p>A well-rounded and multi-faceted marketing campaign should be implemented to establish downtown as a destination that attracts customers, resident and investors. Among the components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Definition of markets (downtown workers, residents, patrons of anchor entities, day-trippers, heritage tourists, etc).</li> <li>▪ Story placement—getting stories about downtown placed with print and electronic media</li> <li>▪ Web presence—each existing website should have a downtown section that is designed to interest people in visiting, patronizing, living and investing in downtown.</li> <li>▪ Billboard—consider placing billboards promoting the downtown on the four major traffic routes leading into the downtown area</li> <li>▪ Downtown Brochure—develop a professionally designed downtown “lure brochure” and widely distribute it.</li> <li>▪ Referral Cards—easy to read cards should be produced that list all downtown shops and what each carries. These should be available at cash registers at all downtown businesses.</li> <li>▪ Advertising. Three types of advertising should be considered for downtown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Image ads that promote downtown as a whole</li> <li>○ Shared ads by business and anchors that share customers</li> <li>○ Every downtown business owner should advertise his or her own business throughout the year.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Special Events—Efforts should be made to grow the Sunflower Fair and Santa Parade so that they become more “signature” events that draw increasing numbers of attendees each year. All events should be supported by adding art, food and entertainment in the downtown area.</li> </ul>	