

The DDA Reporter

A publication of the Berkley Downtown Development Authority

FALL 2001

DDA Board Meetings

The DDA Board meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 a.m. in the Community Center. DDA members are always welcome to attend.

A Vision for Downtown Berkley

By Dr. Jeff Allyn

For quite a few years now, the Berkley Downtown Development Authority Board, which is comprised solely of volunteer members, has watched the downtown area of our city fall into decline. You want to know what we have done? You want to know what we have accomplished? Very little, in your eyes we bet. You need to see something concrete, and we know it.

The wheels of government turn slowly. You may feel that this is just a cliché. Perhaps it is. You may feel this is an excuse. You are entitled to your opinion. However, we have tried, and very hard I might add, to keep the wheels rolling forward. For all of the four years that this DDA Reporter Editor has been a member of the board, I have participated in meetings that took place at 7:30 AM the second Wednesday of each month. The primary purpose of these meetings is downtown revitalization. Others have been involved far longer than I. All are committed to creating a "vision" and all are involved with the best of intentions.

The DDA Board has performed its function very successfully, I am proud to say. We have provided the city with a viable vision of what the downtown can be. Perhaps when we used

the word "plan," it was too much for some of you to handle. Perhaps you interpreted this as a dictate? So I am using the word "vision." Maybe the deterrents to progress can swallow that better?

Regardless, the city needs something! I shudder when I think of those of you who held in contempt the consultants who have not only provided "visions" to other communities, but have actually implemented them successfully. They are the experts. They do this for a living. They have proven themselves, yet there are those of you who seem to know better? Exactly what has your superior knowledge done for our downtown?

For those of you feel a little paint and a little sweeping can improve the city's look...to a certain extent, you are correct. With all due respect, however, you are naive to think that this is what will truly help our downtown. A vision and a renewed pride in this downtown is what will do it! Currently, there is little pride exuded, for example, by the property owners who do not use their buildings for their own businesses.

Our downtown has evolved into little more than a speedway for commuters going

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Berkley Downtown Development Authority Mission

The mission of the Berkley Downtown Development Authority is to encourage historic preservation, promote economic growth and revitalization, and correct and prevent deterioration of the Berkley Downtown district by working with the City to obtain or develop the necessary legal, monetary or organizational tools to revitalize the area, either through public-initiated projects, or in concert with privately motivated projects; to attract businesses to the Downtown area which meet the needs of the community's demographic makeup; to promote Downtown Berkley as an economically desirable place to own property and operate a business; to help improve the City residents' "Quality of Life" by providing a clean, comfortable, safe environment in the Downtown area.

Berkley DDA Board Members

Message From the DDA Chair

Greg R. Thom

Dr. Jeff Allyn
Chiropractor
398-1155

John Barbuscak
Image Builders
544-2800

Daniel Cherrin
Detroit Regional
Chamber of Commerce
248-596-0460

Jeff Dubin
Metropolitan
548-5025

Lawrence Gallagher
Berkley Schools
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Harry Hartfield
Hartfield Lanes
543-8550

Doug Ledger
Game Day Sales
544-7789

Keith Logsdon
Michael Willoughby &
Associates
540-7603

John McGovern
Attorney
547-7010

Tim Murad
313-202-7915

Greg Thom
G.T. Sales Co., Inc.
548-2202

Wayne Wudyka
Huntington Cleaners
541-6038

Jane DiSessa
City Manager
546-2470



By now, everyone has heard about the major changes that will be taking place at the intersection of 12 Mile Road and Coolidge. We'll have new light poles, brick paver sidewalks, landscaping, and brick walls on all four corners, welcoming visitors to downtown Berkley. But probably the most dramatic aspect of the new intersection will be an artistic design of brick pavers in the actual road intersection.

There has been a lot of discussion about brick pavers, and several people have asked why the DDA would include them in the downtown design. Some argue that the cost of pavers is two-to-three times the cost of concrete (a true statement) and that pavers don't hold up as well (a false statement).

Pave the way to successful revitalization

The *Detroit Free Press* published an article about pavers last summer, and it said that pavers have returned as the "stone of choice" for decorating in residential, commercial, and municipal markets. Paver sales have increased by over 47% in one year! But more importantly, the article went on to say, "*Still, taxpayers spend far more to pave roads, 'and if we care about our cities, we need to change that,' said Doug Kelbaugh, a University of Michigan expert on urban design. 'The ease and lure of walking in a downtown district is a direct measure of its vitality, making the price of pavers worth every cent,' said Kelbaugh.*"

In that same article, Betty-Lee Hepworth, an associate dean of architecture and design at Lawrence Technological University said about pavers, "*One reason for their popularity is that pavers make people feel good. When you walk on them, you're a part of the whole revitalization movement.*"

Brick pavers have become a part of revitalization projects nationwide. Look at the Daimler-Chrysler headquarters in Auburn Hills. Spend some time walking through downtown Northville. Go into almost any city that has gone through a major renovation, and you'll see pavers. Not only are they decorative, they're much sturdier than concrete. (Is there anyone out there who truly believes that the concrete roads in Michigan are robust? If so, why are our highways a sea of orange and white barrels every summer?)

Clear road ahead...Almost!

The big question about the intersection renovation is, "When is it going to happen?" I wish I could tell you that it was going to be completed this year, but unfortunately, projects of this magnitude move glacially slow. After our engineering designs were completed, we had to have "grade inspections," and receive approval from the Oakland County Road Commission (since the project involves 12 Mile Road). Because we will be using grant money from the Michigan Department of Transportation, we also need their approval. Our intersection is not the only project on which these two groups are working, and as a result, we must wait our turn for their go-ahead. The good news is that the OCRC has given us the green light, but we still must wait for MDOT to complete its review. Also, we need to obtain easements from the four property owners at the 12 Mile/Coolidge intersection. We've received some of the sign-offs, but are still awaiting others.

So while the DDA is ready to move as quickly as possible, our hands are tied by outside forces. Once we have all of these steps completed, we will put out a bid request for the project, and then examine the costs to insure that they fall within our budget. After we select a contractor, the work can finally begin. Because we have chosen to keep the roadways as open as possible during the construction, the project will take a little longer, but we want to minimize the disruption to businesses and motorists as much as possible.

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New DDA board members will work toward building improvements

On another front, the City Council approved changes to the DDA's bylaws at a recent meeting. The DDA proposed several modifications, many of which were merely "housekeeping" activities. Probably the most significant change was the make-up of the Board of Trustees. Instead of requiring five property or business owners from both 12 Mile and Coolidge, the revised bylaws now state that the Board must have four members from each road, plus four "At Large" members (as well as the City Manager).

This change allows the DDA to appoint (if they so choose) more Berkley residents to the Board. Keith Logston and Daniel Cherrin, both Berkley residents, were approved by City Council as new members of the Board of Trustees. Mr. Logston is an architect with Michael Willoughby and Associates in Birmingham, and Mr. Cherrin is an attorney with the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Because of their backgrounds, I have appointed these two gentlemen to an ad-hoc committee to study methods in which the DDA can help property owners within the DDA fund building renovations. There are various low-interest loans available, and Mr. Cherrin is investigating which ones might apply to this endeavor. Mr. Logston is determining ways that architectural firms could provide some type of design services to persons wishing to upgrade their buildings. When this study is complete, you will be notified of the options available to you. I am extremely pleased to have both Mr. Logston and Mr. Cherrin on our Board.

As always, if you have questions or would like to discuss the DDA and its projects, please feel free to contact me. You can call me at (248) 548-2202, or e-mail me at gregrthom@gtsalesco.com. By working together, we can turn Berkley's downtown into a place that we can all be proud of.

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from point A to point B. We have let this define who and what we are. Small town businesses do not flourish with high speed, high volume traffic. They succeed because patrons can walk to them and gather in an environment that is calm and enjoyable. They succeed because the businesses are destination oriented, the shops and small bistros can be driven to, and because parking is easily accessible. They are successful because they are unique and provide a friendly, small town service and environment that larger stores cannot offer.

Think about the times in which we live...Berkley is in a PERFECT position to make a move for a revitalized downtown. Royal Oak, Birmingham, Ferndale...these communities have made great strides to improve and maintain their downtowns, but some things are changing there, too. The real estate is becoming too expensive. Rents are soaring. Smaller business owners may look to Berkley for a future location.

Think about gasoline prices...we may commute all week long, perhaps it would be

nice to be able to walk to our downtown area with our families and have something to do?

Think about our children...where can they go? Think about a safer, more pleasant downtown where traffic is slowed and the driving is safer. Children can ride bikes up to an ice cream shop, the comic book shop or the pizza place.

Think about the elderly in our community who still drive...can they feel safe parking on Coolidge in order to patronize a particular shop they like? They certainly cannot park on 12 Mile Road! Can they feel safe walking on our sidewalks?

A few more words regarding this "vision." The DDA has not shoved anything down anyone's throat! The DDA does not expect things to change overnight and neither should you. We do hope, however, that you can share a vision and help to keep the downtown moving forward. To those of you who have recently moved into our downtown, you have inspired others to make improvements. Welcome and thank you! We need an epidemic of PRIDE and VISION!

FYI

Watch the DDA's web site for news and upcoming attractions:
www.cityofberkley.com

Find out how to link your business's homepage to the DDA's. Call Greg Thom at 548-2202.



Berkley Downtown Development Authority
P.O. Box 725505
Berkley, MI 48072-5505



Attention DDA Members:

Please check your address on the newsletter's mailing label. If it is incorrect, contact the DDA office at **248-988-1301** and leave a message with the correct address. Thank you.

**What's New With
Your Business?**

Is your business offering a new product or service?
Are you celebrating a business milestone or other accomplishment?
Let us help spread the word.

Fax or mail us your business news and we'll include it in the next DDA "Reporter."

Contact:
Dr. Jeff Allyn
2745 Coolidge
Berkley, MI 48072
248-398-1155
FAX: 398-0713

Welcome to Berkley...

The DDA welcomes the following businesses that have moved to Berkley or relocated within the DDA district:

MHG Jewelry: Matthew Gross, owner. Relocated from 12 Mile Rd. to 2689 Coolidge. Specializes in jewelry redesign, repair, appraisals, and restoration of antique jewelry.
248-584-0253

Liss & Shapero: Robert Liss and Anthony Shapero, partners. Moved from Birmingham to 2695 Coolidge. 248-642-1300

Party Cakes: Valerie Jackett, owner. Specializing in custom-designed cakes for all occasions, as well as gourmet cookies and brownies. www.party-cakes.com or 248-541-2253

Interested in business properties in Berkley? Go Online.

The DDA is listing available business properties in the downtown district on the City of Berkley's website. Go to www.cityofberkley.com and click on "Available Business Properties." A list of business properties for 12 Mile and Coolidge will appear. Click the address of a property and you'll find photos and a description of building or lot. This is another way the DDA is promoting the business district and attracting more business to Berkley.