

What Youth & Young People REALLY Want

A Community Forum Hosted by Project 20/20

February 17, 2011, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m., Burnham Brook Community Center

After presentations by Nicole Finkbeiner of the Battle Creek Area Young Professionals, Gabriel (Gigi) Fitzpatrick of the Youth Alliance Committee and Jeremy Andrews of the Battle Creek Metropolitan Moustache Society, attendees (113) were asked to work in small groups to answer the questions below. Youth and young professionals under 40 years of age were encouraged to talk while other individuals (not within that age category) were encouraged to listen and take notes. A discussion question was assigned to each table (each question was discussed by 3 tables). A recorder wrote down ideas from individuals in each small group. Below is a compilation of each group's notes separated by question.

1. WHAT DO YOU WANT COMMUNITY LEADERS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE/YOUNG PROFESSIONALS?

Compilation of Notes (in no particular order)

- Have big dreams – believe young people's dreams
- Affirmation of all people (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender)
- Young professionals go where there is a good community diversity – language, ethnicity, food
- Give young people a chance – not label them
- Young professionals have buying power – need to be respected
- More opportunity to believe young adults help
- Internships with career pathways
- Mentors – not just for seniors
- Kellogg Company would take interns
- Arts/music – youth spend more time in Kalamazoo
- More communication with restaurants
- Downtown needs to be open
- Environmental shops – not downtown
- Hard to get jobs – too young
- Non-trusting adults
- Increase opportunities for activities/hobbies (basketball, snowboarding, outdoor activities)
- More positive, cultural, community-building events (build pride in the community)
- Walkable cities
- Mixed-use neighborhoods (commercial and residential)
- Non-school based mentoring and internship opportunities
- Focus energy on engaging and interacting with youth
- Promote new business development
- Accept the fact: youth like to stay busy, always be active

- Improve public transportation
- Young people would like to come back to BC; need to market Project 20/20 and ideas better
- BC needs a place to sit, eat, talk, perhaps a coffee shop that stays open later
- Not enough culture around within walking distance, too much driving to businesses
- Business hours not conducive to walking around
- Need more things to do, perhaps more Chicago-like
- Need to figure out what's here and focus on it
- Themed festivals would be a good idea
- Encouraged by turn out at events like this one
- Young people have great ideas about what's needed; wonder if there are barriers to participation in BC
- Is downtown dangerous? How to overcome that perception
- Doing a good job but need to do more, still the perception is there's nothing to do, need to better promote what's here
- Better mass transportation/hours for it
- More walking around activities
- More weekend activities
- More coffee shop type activities
- More festivals
- Use vacant buildings for vendors at festivals (ice cream, burgers, coffee, etc.)
- More art activities
- Develop a community calendar
- Stuff to do
- Public transit?
- Music venues
- Art/culture
- Inclusion and diversity
- Things to do (what kind of things?)
- What kinds of job are available?
- Downtown is just 2 blocks (concentration of activities within the 2 blocks)
- Who is the target audience – what attracts 20 year olds is different from what attracts 30 year olds
- Which age bracket is the peer leader
- Too many restrictions for businesses
- Surrounding environment is not conducive (sales penetration)
- Festivals – Taste of B.C. cancelled, IFOL, Summerfest
- More variety of restaurants
- Teen club, dancing
- Affordable kid activities
- Ziplines
- Bars/entertainment
- Shopping
- Rugby

- Greater advertisement of existing events
- Events/clubs that cater to younger age group
- Art hops/walks
- Wii dancing
- Free/cheap “weird” events, BCMAMS inspired
- Alternative to the “mall”
- Sustainable food
- Affordable downtown living
- Employment
- Racial diversity
- Unique small shops
- Safe place to “hang out” – very affordable
- Good infrastructure for young children
- Vibe @ 5
- Youth education – non-traditional (OASHA, CPR, Construction)
- Free access to sports
- Fun – no preaching
- Kalamazoo music festivals – have the same in Battle Creek
- Open, fun community
- More business participation in events by sponsoring events for young adults
- Live music downtown
- Outdoor eating
- Walking trails
- Community houses – new venture already

2. WHAT WILL YOU LOOK FOR IN A COMMUNITY AFTER GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE?

Compilation of Notes (in no particular order)

- Place to spend free time
- A better mall
- Friendly downtown, little shops, street musicians
- Perhaps a Facebook page for the City that updates weekly activities that are available!
- We need better restaurants (Cold Stone, Qdoba)
- We need “Creation Stations”, arts and music
- Unique locally owned and operated shops
- More networking events and “alternative events”, organic events – “fun recycling projects”
- A place that’s open after 11:00 p.m. (dessert place)
- Skateboarding and surfing at Full Blast, rollerblading, disc golf, etc.
- Diversity of cultures – parades, infusion of culture, music
- Internships leading to jobs → creates hope for 20 year olds too
- Sense of community – family
- Multiple job opportunities

- More positive places to go for recreation, etc. social venues
- More entrepreneurial opportunities e.g. small business start-up spaces
- More youth downtown – a place for it to happen (interaction)
- Entertainment downtown – movies, shopping, cafes
- Try new things
- Outdoor art – group events
- Better communication on events – social media
- Promote Downtown Partnership, Project 20/20
- Community calendar – anybody can post
- Young governing body supporting City
- Outdoor music festival
- Employment/racial diversity/family/safety
- Fully engaged community/funny/energetic
- Openness/acceptance
- Single events, such as art hops, arts and outdoor activities, safe community
- A LOT of stuff to do, variety
- A place that will challenge/variety/intellectual community
- Open/fun/diversity
- Activities, ways to meet new people
- Family/safety
- Openness/closeness of community
- Outdoor art activities
- Jobs
- Communication
- Work/study
- Bringing people together
- Survey to all youth
- Neighborhood/community action (e.g. parades, food vendors, etc.)
- Jobs for youth 20 years of age
- Positive programs for youth
- Diversity within the community
- More youth drawn downtown to Battle Creek (social opportunities, events, youth interactions)
- Open-minded to do different things
- Shopping
- Concerts
- Good food (Panera, Cold Stone)
- Attractive City (music, food stands)
- Facebook that updates the kids
- Arts/music complex (indoor/outdoor), creative institute – CIR/Arts Studio across from Y
- Unique businesses
- Networking areas
- Movie theater
- Roller derby

- Busy downtown like Ann Arbor

3. WHAT WOULD MAKE BATTLE CREEK A MAGNET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Compilation of Notes (in no particular order)

- Having fun things to do e.g. with date or with friends – bowling alley/movies/mini-golfing in summer
- Kids look towards other things – not always positive, need to reach out more to kids – help your community
- If big corporations gave local kids a shot/or come back/stay
- Artistic outlet e.g. graffiti wall, hang out and play music, go hang out and be artsy
- Need more jobs, hard to find
- Need good art places to turn to, more arts and culture
- Fun stuff to do, communicate – might be stuff to do but don't know about it
- Everybody could see and be part of better sense of community
- Fix perception that BC is ghetto, crime rate is awful
- Not able to have tattoo shop seems closed-minded
- Street performers, more artsy/cool
- Downtown living, more affordable housing
- More jobs
- Make BC more sellable to more businesses, make it stable, BC needs to rebuild
- Most teens don't read paper, BC is average on Facebook, not shown in places seen daily, econ teacher makes watch news
- If graffiti wall were allowed then graffiti would be legal, you know everyone is going to see it
- Art prize – bring people in from around country/world
- If say BC – no one knows where it is
- Dog friendly, encourage restaurants/stores with dogs and pet friendly
- Free dog park
- Would go downtown if graffiti
- Lakeview students don't know what's going on downtown, only know because of YAC
- Photography class to take street photography – hard to find
- Better, more popular stores, get stores to come back to BC, help original competition, affordable
- Hearing about places and anything new
- Hears downtown is shady
- Music, arts, cultural festivals, festivals all year
- Not a lot to do, people are going to Kalamazoo
- Employment issues, need to upgrade infrastructure to encourage employment
- Advertise ourselves more new media, the “word” is not out there, events have been phenomenal...but you don't hear about them
- Kalamazoo's downtown use “to be scary” but Festival Park changed that
- 60% of teenagers spend 60% of their time on the Internet – it's all about the new media; Things missing from IFOL, it was only 30 minutes, nothing to follow-up on

- Want to rent not buy, renting in BC is scary
- More jobs too, give downtown stores tax breaks, people spend money in Kalamazoo
- The stores are the same, get name out about businesses, Sgt. Peppers Pizza is really good but people don't know about it
- More Wi-Fi
- Lots of religious stuff does promote positive, can turn off more non-religious
- Anything Kellogg's – great breakfast, Cereal City shot down
- Taste of B.C.
- More cultural awareness
- Planet Rock – sketchy area on Angell St. though

Attendees were then asked to answer the following question: “Based upon your discussion today, what needs our immediate attention going forward?” Each group then chose the group's top two responses, wrote the responses on separate post-it notes and placed the post-it notes on table top notepads in the front of the room. Representatives from Project 20/20 then reviewed the responses, identified themes and reported those themes to all attendees.

Top three themes identified: outdoor activities, jobs and communication

All responses from post-it notes:

- Outdoor activities (art, music)
- Festivals, particularly breakfast festival, summer arts festival, international festival
- Safe activities e.g. movie in park, outdoor activities
- Walking, biking, mass transportation to get around
- Vendors and street musicians on the street
- Cheap, fun entertainment e.g. shopping
- Walkable city, better public transit
- Not enough activities (festivals, etc.)
- Functional, attractive Full Blast for young and old! Skate park, rock wall, arts and music room
- Jobs – get promise from BC area biz that they WILL hire BC people FIRST before outside BC folks
- Appeal to young people – internships, job shadowing, career building – take them seriously
- Youth job opportunities
- Communication – iPod app, radio (103.3, 94.1), school announcements, Facebook
- Failure to over-communicate activities that do occur
- Communication
- Affordable housing downtown or near downtown
- Become inviting/appealing to young people – get them interested in leadership
- Draw inspiration from the big cities – but emphasize the small city characteristics of our community
- Organic, green environmentally friendly industries
- Active downtown, diverse – more often than twice a year; arts, music