

## **Battle Creek Downtown Transformation in Progress**

A Project 20/20 Leadership Meeting  
September 22, 2010  
Burnham Brook, 7:30 a.m.



### **Welcome & Introduction**

Talia Champlin opened the meeting with introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda. She explained that Project 20/20 was a bridging organization rather than a bonding organization. Bonding organizations pull like-minded people together, forming networks of people who see themselves as similar in crucial respects. The important work of Project 20/20 is to be a bridging organization, forming networks that transcend boundaries, creating the energy and trust, the resolve and cohesion, necessary to make real change across the entire community.

The importance of attending a Project 20/20 meeting is to give attendees the opportunity to: 1) build community and get everyone on the same page, 2) expand knowledge and understanding of what is happening here, 3) to give input on the topic at hand and 4) most importantly, to build trust and cohesion that comes from knowing and understanding each other. So what can you do? You can extend hospitality/ affection, understand another person's perspective, present alternative viewpoints and invite others for broad representation and health cross-pollination.

The topic for the meeting was economic development and title was "Battle Creek Downtown Transformation in Progress". Project 20/20 formed a Strategic Alliance with Battle Creek Unlimited to help facilitate discussions and move initiatives forward in regard to economic development topics. Project 20/20 also has Strategic Alliances with three other organizations to address youth engagement, education and healthcare. Talia then introduced Karl Dehn, President and CEO of Battle Creek Unlimited.

### **Karl Dehn, President & CEO – Battle Creek Unlimited**

Karl Dehn gave an update on the Downtown Transformation Plan. Almost two years after the plan was unveiled in November 2008, significant progress has been made on each of the four pillars: food protection, education, Kellogg presence/other private investments and infrastructure/amenities. The Plan will help to make progress toward Battle Creek becoming a food science, innovation-growth community with sustainable infrastructures that nurture family friendly, healthy and educated lifestyles.

#### *Food Protection*

The Global Food Protection Institute was founded in 2009 and created the International Food Protection Training Institute (IFPTI). Since its inception, 1,000 food professionals have been trained from 44 states. Work also continues on the development of an Emerging Technology Accelerator to assist in the development of new technologies to protect the food supply.

#### *Kellogg Presence/Other Private Investment*

Covance, a food testing company, is investing \$14.5 million in Battle Creek with the acquisition of the former Semco Energy building on Hamblin Avenue. It will open in October of 2010 and

will create 43 new positions (research assistants, technicians and management) with the potential to create additional jobs very soon. Also, the W.K. Kellogg Institute for Nutritional Research completed their \$54 million R&D expansion at the end of 2009. Kellogg Company signed a long-term lease on 67 W. Michigan Avenue with Hinman Company and will complete \$4 million in renovations to accommodate a relocation of 600 associates downtown. The Battle Creek Tower has also undergone \$4 million in renovations. Tower occupants include 12 entities from 67 W. Michigan Avenue and Kellogg Company, among others. Due to the Transformation Plan and additional investment in the downtown, there has been additional interest from restaurateurs and retailers in the downtown. Also, a new restaurant, Malia, will open soon in the space that BiCi Bistro previously occupied.

### *Education*

The movement of the Battle Creek Area Math & Science Center to the former Cereal City USA building is still being explored. Funding (\$16.5 million) is still needed. Moving the Center downtown will allow room for expansion and for student internships and related program development with businesses in close proximity to the Center. Renovations continue on Battle Creek Public Schools and St. Philip Catholic School and add to the overall educational environment in the downtown.

### *Infrastructure/Amenities*

The proposed infrastructure enhancements will make the downtown more visually appealing for pedestrians, more enjoyable for residents/visitors and will attract more people to the downtown. Several beautification projects have been planned. Streetscape enhancements along Michigan Avenue will begin in the spring of 2011. A downtown bridge lighting project will be complete in December. The M-66 Gateway Project, which consists of screens containing art pieces designed by area students, will be complete in November. Due to the closure of a portion of Jackson Street (between Kellogg Company and 67 W. Michigan Avenue) a new entrance drive will be constructed where Horse Park currently is located (next to Shrank's Cafeteria). This drive will be complete in late November. Several renderings of streetscape enhancements (new Jackson St. entrance drive, seating areas, landscape designs, green wall arch designs, water features, etc.) were shown to attendees.

BCU is also focusing on other activities such as: property acquisition, blight reduction, an outdoor festival and events center, parking development/enhancements, residential development and an art mural program.

### **Group Discussion and Input**

Following the presentation, members were asked to consider the following question: **What additional information would you like to know in order to be an advocate for the four pillars in the Downtown Transformation Plan?**

An individual from each table shared their top key point with the group. Please note the record of all additional notes taken is at the end of this document.

### **Key Points Reported by Each Group**

- Who is implementing the plan for downtown, no one presently on board specifically downtown development director
- How do we involve small, local business in the development of downtown – not only attract, but contract for work on this project. \*Support our BC businesses\*
- What can we do to leverage the economic activity of trainings downtown? How can we attract people to live in Battle Creek?
- Who is going to maintain the project?
- Keep emphasis on jobs
- How can the city develop a system that supports business growth, innovation, eliminating red tape? How can the process be modified to be more business friendly?
- Retain the young professional. Corporations/businesses create foot traffic out of their building
- How do we define who we are as a city? Why don't we use incubator businesses to help grow downtown?

After the group report out, members were then asked to make a personal commitment. Each member was asked to think about their answer to the following question: “What action will you take to support or learn more about the Downtown Transformation Plan?”

### **Closing Comments**

Members were encouraged to attend the next Project 20/20 event on November 10<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Burnham Brook Community Center (200 W. Michigan Avenue in Battle Creek). The title for the community forum will be “Downtown Transformation – What’s in it For You?” Please note, the October 19<sup>th</sup> forum will NOT be held. Members were also reminded of the next Leadership Meeting on November 24<sup>th</sup> from 7:30 – 9 a.m. in the Valentine Room at the Burnham Brook Community Center. This will be the annual year-in-review meeting, which will help Project 20/20 plan for 2011.

Members were asked to complete a survey, make a donation, become a fan of Project 20/20 on Facebook, follow our tweets, visit the Project 20/20 website at [www.BCProject2020.com](http://www.BCProject2020.com) and invite others to join us.

### **Compilation of Additional Ideas Taken from Table Top Note Pads**

- More specifics on infrastructure and amenities (details, timeframe)
- Understand how to engage MORE young professionals’ input into planning
- What specifics around RIVER development? Better utilize currently un-used river space for business.
- Maintenance plan – how do we ensure the greenscapes are maintained?
- What’s the plan for hiring locally for these projects?
- What are current private investors doing to encourage their people to live in BC?
- Investment in boarding neighborhoods – so people can LIVE + WALK to downtown
- Science → High School ties – are students aware?
- Math/Science Center – ensure the new building allows for growth with move downtown

- As events are held downtown – local downtown businesses need to be promoting the events.
- Airport usage – increase commercial use
- Kellogg relocation – equal representation between BC and Kzo – too many people going to Kzo
- How do we help shift the “culture” of discouraging BC living? – too many negatives
- Close corporate cafeterias (1-2 days) to encourage downtown use
- Zoning? How is downtown incentivizing current and new businesses to choose downtown vs. Beckley Rd? Ex: Move Nina’s to a Mich. Ave. location
- Move Farmer’s Mkt to a better location – where people know what’s happening
- Before we build MORE parks – need a plan to get people to use the parks we already have. Greenscape = good parks=??
- More Math & Science Ctr. Info
  - Program Development and curriculum? (How does this compare with other centers?)
  - Accessibility county-wide (how addressed?)
  - Who is responsible for funding?
  - How address vacation of our Math & Science Center?
- What is approach for addressing blight and empty buildings?
  - What buildings are under discussion?
- Perception of safety regarding downtown – need to address (not felt to be an actual problem)
- More info about targeted activities and businesses to come to downtown
- More inclusiveness with neighboring areas – townships – how does downtown relate to outlying areas?
- Streetscape – more grass, trees, fountains – for gathering areas. Pocket park good example but not enough
- Communicate potential for attracting new employees as a result of food science training
  - How many will go through annually?
  - What do they want to do while they are here?
  - Potential to return
- What do we need to do to attract new employees to choose to live in Battle Creek?
- How do they extend more vertical streetscape enhancements?
- What ancillary and spin-off businesses are likely and/or will be encouraged?
- How does the rink fit into this?
- How do we incorporate downtown historical churches?
- How is cultural diversity incorporated into our Downtown Plan? Ethnic groups?
- Visual – video – history, legacy, vision for future
- Reframe presentation to emphasize “benefits” more than “features”
- We want to see the project start and stop. Bring to completion.
- How do we bring all the community into the project?
- How does the Transformation Project tie into the mall area?
- Appreciate that there is an effort to make BC better
- Need to think about the stores, etc. that will draw residential living (pharmacy, grocery store, etc.)

- What is the connection with BCU and the Chamber?
- How does this effort connect to residential areas around downtown?
- How do we create unity for the Project?
- How are existing businesses incorporated into the Project?
- Why aren't more merchants investing in downtown?
- How do we engage youth professionals in downtown after 5:00?
- Why LIVE in BC – visually stimulating?
- Are there businesses interested in occupying these buildings?
  - Road blocks to opening businesses – signage, no other businesses open on weekends
  - City administration is a huge problem!!! How can it be more helpful? No fulfillment of DT façade improvements...
- How do we attract more people?
- How do we envision businesses cooperating together? Associations, common events, networking
- What does the end/big picture look like?
  - Comparison to other cities
  - Success look like?
  - Business/residential/retail/restaurant
- Historic Commission creates too many road blocks
  - Why are they so difficult/bureaucratic?
  - How can H.C. align with future development?
- How are we attempting to draw the small business owners and not focus on our large corporate giants only?
- What is long-term intent → how will corporate campus be integrated into downtown a community asset
- Community plaza – any consideration to have Cereal City USA as that space?
- Park space, green space, functional use of space involving community more into those spaces through programs and activities geared towards health and wellness
- Physical spaces need to attract and retain people for larger periods of time. Parks with functional use, YMCA, exercise spaces, gardens, etc.
- Corporations embrace education of students
- Multi-generational activities
- Presence of people in the downtown, living, playing, working → creative blending of co-op campus with functional community spaces
- Corporate campus that gets people out of their building
- Engage youth including those under 35
- 4<sup>th</sup> pillar strategy – how the community and businesses will support the retail
- How do we support the Math & Science Center's move to downtown?
- Why don't we start with the BCPS's image and PR?
- Why do we want to cannibalize the mall instead of getting a niche for downtown?
- Why not demolish house on Cherry St. and make a park to welcome people into BC?
- The white collar and blue collar rental and ownership don't mix well. How can we cater to either or group?