

**Building Momentum: Battle Creek Downtown Transformation Year 3
Community Forum Co-Hosted by Project 20/20 and Battle Creek Unlimited
November 10, 2011, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Burnham Brook Community Center**

After presentations by Dr. Julia Bradsher of the Global Food Protection Institute, Dr. Linda Hicks and Connie Duncan of Battle Creek Public Schools, Ken Tsuchiyama of the City of Battle Creek, and Karl Dehn and Jim Hettinger of Battle Creek Unlimited, attendees (107) were asked to work in small groups to answer one of the two discussion questions (What norms do we want to hold ourselves and others to regarding the promotion of our community? What norms do we want to hold ourselves and others to regarding the physical maintenance of our downtown and community?). A recorder wrote down all ideas from individuals in each small group. Attendees were then asked to answer the following question “Based upon your discussion, what are the top two norms most important to the future of Battle Creek?” Each group then chose their top two responses (although some wrote multiple ideas) from their assigned question, wrote each on a post-it note and placed the notes on easels. Representatives from Project 20/20 then reviewed the ideas, identified themes and reported those themes to all of the attendees. The notes below contain the top themes identified, a compilation of the top responses recorded on post-it notes and ALL responses recorded by groups.

Top community promotion norms most important to the future of Battle Creek –

- **Help leadership develop standards/ways to promote Battle Creek**
- **Use new, innovative ideas and technology to promote**
- **Help everyone to “tell the story of Battle Creek” (brag, answer questions, embrace the negative and overcome it)**

1. WHAT NORMS DO WE WANT TO HOLD OURSELVES AND OTHERS TO REGARDING THE PROMOTION OF OUR COMMUNITY? (COMMUNICATION, WORK WITH OTHERS, ETC.)

Compilation of Post-It Notes (top group responses)

- Define downtown and expand the lines
- Positive, vibrant atmosphere
 - Increase entertainment
 - Arena at higher capacity for a variety of events
 - Amenities
 - Housing environment (tower, condos own vs. rent)
 - Educating the “connection people” on highlights (realtors, employers, relocation specialists, transportation contacts (cab drivers, limo drivers, etc.)
- Need to expand promotion throughout communities/townships, inform of common goal of our one Battle Creek downtown
- Educate ourselves using sources of credible, reliable information and positively communicate to others
- Every resident, employee, mother, father, and child be prepared to “tell the story” of Battle Creek
- Develop consistent talking points so that we are all on the same page. Templates that are consistent and giving same information

- Communicate with the existing “vehicles” i.e. neighborhoods, websites, companies that are inclusive and encompass all information
- Need to embrace good and bad parts of downtown, and combine the two to improve our city and our reputation
- Focus and promote our positives
- Use new and innovative ideas
- Centralized online site for “everything that is Battle Creek”
- Education – strength in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
 - Send same message from realtors, companies to new families coming in
 - Feeder program for all of our schools to where? Community colleges, universities, etc.
- Hold on and expand and sustain whole event focused on downtown
- Let your actions communicate your respect and value for the diversity of the Battle Creek community

Compilation of ALL Discussion Notes (in no particular order)

- More positive information
- Reach out to diverse populations
- Bring the message to neighborhood councils
- Shop local!
- Downtown merchants/orgs giveback facility use
- Coordinate and communicate events w/ restaurants
- Out of the box (food truck)
- New things (not supported)
- Share positive messages (out of town)
- Concentrate on positives not negatives
- Community support of innovative ideas
- People not claiming city, only location (south, school district)
- STEM program (great) transportation
- Media and word of mouth for Battle Creek (positive)
- Business, schooling opportunities
- Woodland Park – treasure of 145 acres, telling everyone of access, personal presentations, promote BC to the reservation, parks and rec link to Woodland Park
- Consistency of message – promoting same thing, factually correct
- Talking points – 3 or 4 – where are they available?
- Being inclusive and all-encompassing for all of Battle Creek
- Resources are here – flyers that include all resources
- HandsOn Battle Creek – volunteer from H.S. level right through college
- Promote through homeowners – neighborhood planning councils that meet regularly
- Need to get out better information on activities - technology exists, need to utilize
- Talk about good/bad? Goals we have
- Bring ideas/comparisons from other cities/communities
 - Use comparisons to encourage promotion/businesses
 - Make into a downtown destination
- Need to encourage new ideas (not simply focusing on bad)
- Open up residency outside of downtown
 - Need retail shopping, movie theaters, pharmacy, grocery
 - More like Malia’s and Arcadia
 - Add condos/rental space

- Show market our success
 - Parades/Christmas events are a good time to market
 - Need word of mouth to tell how great downtown is
- Need to change our stereotypes
 - Other schools need to see
 - Need to show how great Battle Creek Central is
- “Downtown environment is what you make of it”
 - Rumors of “non-safe place to be” – need to show
 - New places to draw kids to show the friendly environment
 - Affordable housing
- Need to stop people from leaving Battle Creek – expand jobs/housing
- Show that even with dropouts we are still great
- Make it so that going through downtown is required
- “One Battle Creek”
 - Need to unite all different communities/townships
 - Show all our one common goal to better our city
- Find out the facts – educate ourselves, then others
- Our full expectation is a source of credible, reliable, accessible information
- Positive communication, holding ourselves accountable for positive knowledge and share it
- Respect and value community diversity and communicate that positive message
- Get personally involved – Project 20/20, city government, volunteer to make a positive change locally, an aspect of your life

Top physical maintenance norms most important to the future of Battle Creek –

- **Develop consistency and standardization of building renovations and overcoming blight**
- **Create the awareness of a clean and safe downtown**
- **Provide opportunities for the younger generation to develop ownership in downtown**

2. WHAT NORMS DO WE WANT TO HOLD OURSELVES AND OTHERS TO REGARDING THE PHYSICAL MAINTENANCE OF OUR DOWNTOWN AND COMMUNITY? (BLIGHT, MAINTENANCE, CODE ENFORCEMENT, ETC.)

Compilation of Post-It Notes (top group responses)

- Strategic plan for demolished properties
 - Before it becomes a vacant lot
 - Ideas for lots before demolishing
 - Eco-friendly options
- Standardization of lease and “for sale” signs, reduce visual clutter
- Consistent standard for what blight is and what to demolish
 - Balanced approach
 - Progress on some properties (not always demolishing)
 - Due process
 - Invitation for feedback from businesses
 - Incentives such as tax breaks or partnership plans
- People must support ownership of buildings – who is responsible, social justice
- Taking responsibility for environment
 - Picking up litter
 - Following
 - Volunteering to take time to gather, clean up the streets

- Safety and maintenance of facades/buildings including increased cooperation/collaboration of fire inspector and building inspector
- Clean and safe, no broken windows
- Inspire ownership with younger generation
- Human approach rather than code enforcement: volunteer efforts by business owners, barter services, “Habitat for Humanity” for businesses
- Create an atmosphere for respect: listening, responding, communicating

Compilation of ALL Discussion Notes (in no particular order)

- Develop citizen incentives to reward those who maintain a favorable physical image of their property
- Proper maintenance should be the norm and expectation
- Balanced approach
- Incentives – tax breaks, proof of funds quickly available, several businesses
- Involvement – several businesses to provide input
- Descriptive, picture examples to guide enforcement, due process?
- Shocked there is not a standard – balanced, then review
- Help others to take care, helping each other work on blight
- Urban farming in Detroit – creates economic opportunities, livable spaces, gardening is a deterrent to crime, multiple community organizations fund urban farming
- Urban gardening – SPROUT Urban Farms could help in BC
- People are very protective of their “gardens”. Ownership is key, very proud of that garden space
- In Europe, small plots and housing are very productive
- Picking up litter, trash automatically; put cigarette butts elsewhere
- Impact of Michigan bottle return law is a positive
- Expect respect
- Is there adequate parking?
- Owners of historic buildings – uncertainty of making a go of the business – being successful
- Looking for investors to help with renovations
- No peeling paint – important standards to have in place
- Codes are restrictive – make it difficult and expensive, costs too high – some codes are needed for safety (disability, ADA restrooms, structures, plumbing, fire codes – sprinklers, elevator requirements (\$25,000 per story), two stairways out)
- Passion for Battle Creek is found in this group
- Join neighborhood planning councils to get involved. NPC example: to combat crime, starting neighborhood watches, housing ordinances, rental ordinances
- Respect neighbors
- Neighbors have responsibility to self and to others
- Physical is improving with street improvements
- Come together to physically (financially) help – pick up a paint brush
- Spending money at small businesses (spend local)
- Finding dollars for capital improvements
- Events downtown – persuade and promote
- Marketing: theater and arts
- Maintain the awesomeness of awesome stuff
- Taking activities to underused areas
- Public art

- Broken windows theory
- “Pride” campaign to promote beauty and cleanliness
- Defining the gray areas of code enforcement and blight reduction
- Simple cleanliness goes along way
- Riverfront
- Rain garden
- Step up enforcement in severe cases
- Construction activity is producing positive vibe with out-of-town employees
- With value dropping – what is its potential value – taxes to align with rent
- Need to draw to downtown
- Need to want the “community of downtown”
- Where are we in technology downtown?? (WiFi)
- Norm – malls have requirements – do we establish that? Act as a community not individual
- Destination businesses
 - Vegetarian restaurant
 - Critical mass attraction
- Younger population downtown
- Encourage entrepreneurs - youth