

Section 7: Marketing, Promotion & Organization

This section identifies potential marketing and promotional efforts that could support and reinforce implementation of Round Lake's Downtown Plan. This section suggests coordinated management activities to help build and maintain the vitality and desirability of Downtown Round Lake, and discusses how those activities might be managed and accomplished.

There are a number of programs and activities that can be initiated immediately to build interest in and awareness of Downtown Round Lake. As the Plan is adopted and implemented, an on-going, comprehensive marketing strategy should be conceived and put into action that will help keep Downtown vibrant and vital.

All across America, small and large cities are rediscovering and placing greater importance on their Downtowns as community gathering places, where citizens and visitors to a town can celebrate and experience the distinctive heart and soul of that community – a reflection of a town's heritage and identity. The successful reclamation of Downtown often requires a detailed planning process that the community may participate in; it often entails some physical changes; and it *always* requires a process to reacquaint the community and the region around it with the "heart and soul" that is Downtown. The process also requires some form of "management" of Downtown and assumption by the private and public sectors alike of the shared responsibility for that management.

A "plan" for Downtown revitalization and development cannot be considered successful until there is acceptance and support for Downtown and recognition of its valued place in the fabric of the community. Physical improvements alone are not enough. Attention must be paid to management of the environment and atmosphere in order to create and enhance the overall experience of

Downtown. Downtown must be perceived as being a predictably clean, safe, and easily accessible place to be. It also needs to be a place that is perceived as exciting, stimulating, surprising, reassuring, and revalidating, while providing unexpected sensory and psychological experiences.

Round Lake is seeking to revitalize and expand its existing Downtown area and add new shopping, residential, and entertainment offerings. The Village is seeking to establish Downtown as a place of pride and purpose, filling a void that cannot be provided anywhere else in the community, or in any surrounding community. This section suggests marketing and promotional tactics that can build public awareness of Downtown and its current and planned attributes while the *Downtown Plan* is adopted and implemented. The more positive reinforcement that can be built for Downtown will result in increased desirability of Downtown as a destination for citizens and visitors, and this can result in increased desirability for new businesses and destinations.

Marketing, Promotional Efforts and Public Relations

The purpose of this effort is to reawaken public awareness that Downtown exists, that things happen Downtown that are important and interesting for the rest of the community, and that Downtown is a valuable part of the Village. The ultimate objective is to make Downtown a familiar and recognized piece of the Round Lake experience, and to have every citizen recognize Downtown's existence and value. Ultimately, there must be "emotional reinvestment" in Downtown.

Immediate Actions

1. Establish a monthly communication vehicle to the community, such as a small column in local community newspapers, and/or a section in a Village newsletter, and/or dedicated space on the Village's web page, and /or the Village local cable channel, and/or a separate newsletter (done quarterly) to include:

- Details of the Downtown Planning process--what it is, why it is being done, and its timetable, ongoing progress reports and opportunities to react and give input;
 - Profiles of new businesses and histories of established businesses;
 - Teasers, explanations of upcoming events taking place in Downtown and events any place in the Village that have some Downtown connection; and
 - Trivia question or favorite memory about Downtown, occasionally featuring a response chosen from shoppers, diners or other Downtown visitors.
2. Utilize the planned outdoor open spaces and civic facilities in Downtown to initiate new activities and community events, perhaps relocating some existing community or regional events that are currently held elsewhere.
 3. Organize a new or expanded Downtown event for the summer of 2005, and one for the December holiday season that will involve businesses, community social clubs and other entities. It should be targeted primarily to Round Lake residents, but have appeal and draw from beyond the community. Possibilities include:
 - July 4th picnic with hot dog and corn roast, ice cream social, traditional games and competitions, decorated bike contest and parade, boat parade on river;
 - Farmers Market every Saturday in June – September.
 - “Day in our Village” modeled after an event held in Oak Park on a Sunday in June, where there are activities and booths highlighting organizations’ activities with music, food, organized children and family activities;
 - Holiday open house of Downtown businesses, strolling carolers, Santa Claus, free gift wrap for one weekend; and
- Establish a “Master Calendar” of events and promotions held by private businesses and other Downtown entities, in order to coordinate and communicate the breadth of goings-on in Downtown.
4. Establish a single sheet monthly newsletter specifically highlighting Downtown business and property owners, with more detailed and substantive information about the plan, schedule, upcoming physical disruptions, business issues, but also including some of the interesting information from the other communiqués.
 5. Create comprehensive data base of space available for commercial use in Downtown. Create simple, attractive package of the latest Downtown demographic and design plan information for potential businesses interested in locating in Downtown. Make available to realtors and property owners, with orientation of market information and the Downtown Plan’s recommended mix of uses.

All of the preceding should be considered in the context of what currently exists in Downtown and what is planned for the Downtown. Much of what the Plan is recommending, in terms of new development, will take years to realize. Village and other community support will be required, including funding for a part time coordinator. However, it is very important for all Downtown businesses to know about, participate in and support the promotional activities.

Later Marketing Efforts

Over the next five to ten years, as Downtown Round Lake is being fully developed and revitalized, a comprehensive marketing plan should be created and approved annually to reflect the changing activity, perceptions and needs of Downtown. This can include, but will not be limited to:

1. Promotional events, expanded to a minimum of three per year, with other organizations using the civic facilities and Downtown open space for additional community oriented events.

2. Coordinated cooperative advertising campaign, including media, to be determined on an annual basis based upon constituencies that exist in the Downtown and the activity schedule.
3. Establish a peer-to-peer "Ambassadors" group, of no more than 3 business leaders that can undertake local outreach for new businesses, especially restaurants and other experience-oriented businesses. Keep information for prospective businesses up-to-date and ready to distribute.
4. Plan for the mitigation of impacts caused by construction projects. This will include some special advertising and promotions, intensive monitoring, meetings, holding of hands, etc.
5. Ongoing public relations and community involvement outreach.

Management and Organization

As previously stated, the process of revitalizing, expanding, and improving Downtown Round Lake requires public and private commitment. In preparation of the Downtown Plan, the Village is supporting the concept of a new and improved Downtown. Management and organization can play a critical role in the Downtown revitalization and improvement effort. As the area grows and becomes more successful, effective management and organization evolve, and help sustain the community's vision and investment in the Downtown.

The primary roles of a Downtown management organization are:

1. To act as liaison and communicator between the Village government, the citizens, the Downtown property and business owners, and other organizations.
2. To provide facilitation and to advocate for or against issues that specifically affect the Downtown and its stakeholders.
3. To build awareness of the Downtown, its activities, and its constituents and thereby enhance Downtown's position.

Immediate Organizational Option

This section highlights recommendations regarding the organization and operation of a Downtown Round Lake Business Association (DRLBA). A DRLBA may wish to consider the following recommendations as they see appropriate.

The formation and operation of the DRLBA should be under the auspices and umbrella of the Round Lake Chamber of Commerce. This recommendation is contingent upon demonstrated support by both the Chamber Board of Directors and the Village of Round Lake for the following guidelines that will ensure autonomy of the DRLBA. Such support should be demonstrated in the form of a joint resolution, or other similar agreement.

It is obvious that there are very separate issues and needs present in Downtown that are not the same as other areas of Round Lake. The DRLBA will need to engage and elicit support from a very diverse and disparate business mix that exists currently Downtown. The DRLBA will be an autonomous committee, representing the interests of all Downtown stakeholders, not only Downtown Chamber members. DRLBA will develop its own work program, separate from the Chamber's.

A part-time staff person should be dedicated to DRLBA. That staff person will initiate a dialogue with all Downtown business and property owners, and residents. Staff will undertake implementation of the Immediate Action marketing strategies, and in so doing will take on the role of liaison between the Downtown community, the Chamber, and the Village.

Careful consideration should be given to this staff appointment. The person should be outgoing, positive, knowledgeable about Village issues and the Downtown itself. This person's first priority and loyalty must be to the DRLBA, its interaction with the community, and the Downtown planning process. Taking all of this into account, the staff person could be a Village staff person dedicated to this position, or could be a person selected by DRLBA. It is suggested that initial funding for the staff person come from the Village, perhaps as part of the Plan implementation budget. As the

long term organizational structure and funding are decided, over the first two or three years, the staff and budget requirements will also be determined. It is not anticipated at this time that the staff person be funded by the Village longer than three or four years.

It is recommended that the DRLBA be comprised of 3-5 private sector leaders who can represent the interests of the Downtown community, appointed by mutual agreement of the Chamber Executive group and the Village. The committee should also have an empowered Village staff liaison and a Chamber representative, who may also be one of the private sector leaders.

The DRLBA will be jointly accountable to the Chamber and the Village, and a reporting mechanism should be agreed upon by both. Funding for at least the first year should be considered part of the planning process costs. One of the DRLBA's tasks will be to consider ongoing revenue sources and budgetary needs to support the management and promotional efforts.

As its mission and purpose are made clear, DRLBA sub-committees for various promotional and other functional activities will encourage involvement and emotional investment on the part of Downtown members, as well as share the workload of this important task. This should in no way impact the existing Chamber operations, but can serve as a membership engine for that organization. The Chamber will gain stature and credibility as a sponsoring organization of the Downtown revitalization.

Later Organizational Considerations

After the initial two-five years, depending on the progress of the Plan's implementation, the DRLBA, the Chamber and the Village may decide it is advantageous to consider an alternative organizational models in order to become more independent and self-supporting. Careful consideration and planning for that transition would be imperative.

Downtown Round Lake has a very bright future and needs only to be demonstrative in building awareness and realistic expectations of what is

and can become for the community. Well promoted and managed, Downtown Round Lake can become an important destination for residents and visitors alike.