

DDA seeking ways to market downtown

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
sbuck@calhome.com

Finding ways to promote the Farmington Downtown Development Authority District without hiring a separate marketing firm is an on-going goal expressed by DDA members who met Jan. 28 with the Farmington City Council.

"I do see the DDA as being the cheerleader for the downtown merchants," said Suzanne Paul, a DDA member. "Sometimes people can become jaded and say, 'Oh we tried that 15 years ago.' We have new merchants there now. They aren't aware of what happened 15 years ago. We need to be proactive. There's a little bit of sensitivity that comes in on both sides."

A Downtown Farmington Business Association faltered in the past because of declining interest at a time when there weren't any "hot button" issues to keep people interested.

"The organization gets together when there is a gripe," said DDA Chairman Ron Oglesby. "I don't know how to blow the balloon up to keep the air in. We have all been frustrated."

DDA Executive Director Judy Downey said only 30 of 85 businesses participated in the Shopping for Holiday Dollars event. "They want to open, close and go home," she said.

Frank Clappison, a DDA member, wondered whether a better idea would be to create a City of Farmington branch of the Chamber of Commerce, or another organization with a new image and enthusiasm.

"A chamber of commerce has the connotation of a businessman's organization," Clappison said. "We need to create a new vitality, a new nomenclature to attract these people."

A smaller organization would better benefit smaller, downtown merchants, he added.

The DDA board was disappointed recently when only 21 of 100 businesses in the district returned surveys about DDA events and fewer than 10 business people showed up at a meeting designed for them to share ideas.

Some merchants don't live in Farmington and may not know much about the demographics, Paul said. She suggested developing a Welcome Wagon package for new merchants, with information about demographics, business neighbors, what the DDA is and can do, and who to contact.

"It's harder to get them to buy into what's good for them, but it can be done," she said.

Councilwoman Mary Bush asked how the DDA connects with businesses — by mail, phone or "belly-to-belly."

A little of both," Downey said.

Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff said it's all about communication, and Assistant City Manager Bill Richards noted all the components of a marketing plan mentioned at the meeting could be implemented. "It's not that hard," Richards said.

The board and council also discussed a performance review for Director Judy Downey.

"All the members of the board know what we are directing Judy to do," Oglesby said. "We have been totally analyzing what Judy does."

Oglesby asked if a similar performance review process was in place for city department heads like the directors of public safety and the department of public works, for example. Lauhoff said it's done in an oral, not a written form.

Oglesby asked for assistance with some general guidelines, which Lauhoff will provide. However, the DDA's guidelines won't be patterned after the city's.

"It's not a fair comparison," Lauhoff said Tuesday. "The city has a different operation. We see these people every day, several times a day."

Downey answers to the board of directors, but they don't have the same type of frequent contact, Lauhoff said.

He explained though state law creates downtown development authorities and they are considered independent, they exist within the city whose officials answer to taxpayers. The council also appoints DDA members.

Farmington Mayor Jim Mitchell noted the Eight Mile Boulevard Association, sets goals for its executive director and if they are successfully accomplished, includes a bonus incentive.

Council, DDA will emphasize productivity

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington City Council and members of the Downtown Development Authority District brainstormed ideas Monday.

In a recent goal-setting session, council members decided to put special emphasis on DDA productivity this year, developing six objectives.

"This is not a list of priorities," said Farmington Mayor Jim Mitchell. "The DDA has done great things but we wanted to emphasize some things we wanted the DDA to accomplish."

The objectives were listed according to the order each came up in conversation, Mitchell said.

The objectives are:
■ Obtain an Oakland County Main Street grant. A recent application was rejected.

■ Develop a more proactive and positive relationships with businesses.

■ Establish and conduct an annual performance appraisal of DDA Executive Director Judy Downey.

■ Develop a marketing plan to enhance use of existing and proposed public properties like the Civic Theatre on Grand River, east of Farmington Road and the proposed Walter Sundquist Community Pavilion.

Sundquist, a Farmington funeral home owner and longtime community booster, contributed \$75,000 as seed money for the pavilion.

Breakfast speaker: Governor John Engler's appearance at Walsh College in Novi drew a crowd that filled the room with Detroit area people interested in hearing about expanding high-speed internet access.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL HANSEN

Engler from page A1

new business it will help promote.

She considers high-speed service no different than any other utility. Detroiters in the early days had to subsidize the expense of bringing utilities to

rural parts of Michigan, she said. This process is no different.

"We're lagging," she said of making the state "high-tech."

Engler said helping businesses grow in this field will benefit companies and residents.

Keeping costs down, he said, "will invite competition."

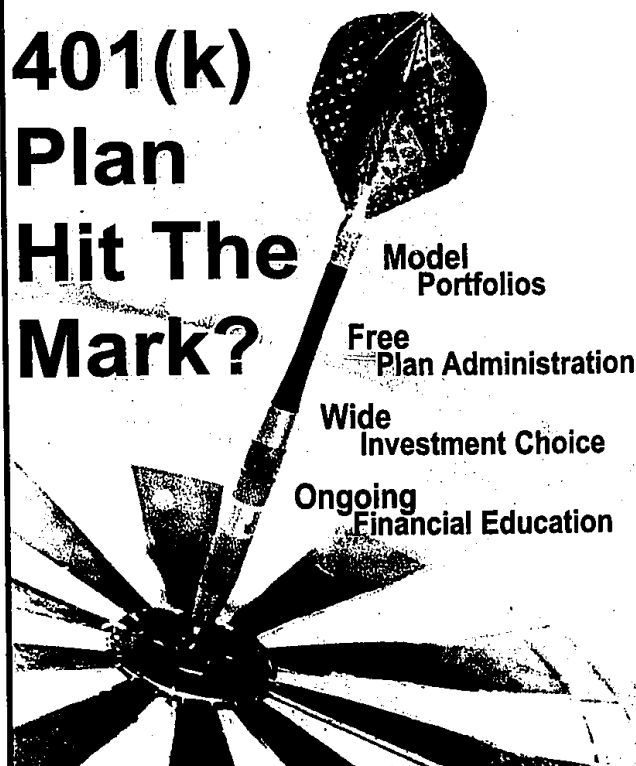
Engler's proposal is expected to be before the House for review this week.

e-file **Fastest Filing**
Fastest Tax Refund!

e-filed Refund in 7 days **e-filed Refund in 7 days** **Did Not e-file Still waiting...**

www.efile.state.mi.us

Does Your 401(k) Plan Hit The Mark?



Call Tom Palka, CFP. The Investment Advisor Online, toll-free at 877-984-6300 or visit www.investmentadvisoronline.com.

Advice given through Investment Advisor Online a registered investment adviser

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!

RED TAG **BROSE ELECTRICAL**
LIGHTING SALE

50 to 70% OFF
ALL RED TAG SPECIALS!

Lighting Fixtures
Lamps
Ceiling Fans
Mirrors
Art Work
Clocks
Something For Every Decor!

Red tags are final sales

37400 W. Seven Mile Rd. • Livonia, MI 48152
734.464.2211

WWW.BROSEELECTRICAL.COM

Mon., Tues., Wed., Sat. 9:30-6:00; Thurs., Fri. 9:30-8:00

