
DOWNTOWN

AURORA



"GETTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

ULI Presentation

Saturday, May 31, 1997

ENTERTAINMENT

"What kind of urban entertainment center are you going to be?"

BROAD SPECTRUM

- Active recreation
- Entertainment, "Casino to Canoe"

MULTI-MARKET

- Casino and Roundhouse (regional destination)
- Museum and education (area)
- Outdoor recreation (corridor)

MULTI-ETHNIC

- Embrace and promote cultures

ASSETS

River
Views
Urban "Feel"
Architecture
Traffic
Attractions (Casino, Roundhouse, Sci-Tech)
Bikeway System
Progress over past 5 years
Residential Pioneers
Paramount (120 events)
Governmental Offices
Financial Institutions
Property Inventory
Colleges
Ethnic Diversity

LIABILITIES

Perception of crime
Insular Casino
Lack of coordination
Unfinished Riverwalk
Lack of coherent Downtown Plan
City's fiscal problems

Building on Entertainment, Recreation, Culture, and Education

INTENSIFY PROGRAMMING

- More Festivals & Events
- Farmers Market
- "Flea" Market
- Arts

ADD ATTRACTIONS

- IMAX (large screen) with SCI-TECH
- Restore / Establish 2nd-Run Movie House
- Encourage / Market to Clubs/Music (help entrepreneurs)

PHYSICAL STRATEGIES

- Complete bike trail through downtown by extending biking "on street"
- Design guidelines: Link Roundhouse to Casino "Entertainment and Eating Zone"
- Create Riverwalk/Riverfront eateries oriented to the river

EXPLORE EDUCATION LINKAGES - SCHOOLS -

- Expansion Potentials?
- Student Services

BUILDING & UPSCALE RESIDENTIAL BASE

INSIDE / OUT REVERSE COMMUTERS

ATTRACTIVE FOR URBAN EXILES

SMALL SCALE START

- West side, East side, housing rehab

STUDY POTENTIAL MARKETS

- Casino Employees
- Urban Bohemian Mix
- "Suburban" singles
- Artists
- Geeks
- Couples/Empty Nesters

USE SURVEYS, FOCUS GROUPS FOR MARKET RESEARCH

LONG-TERM-TYPES OF SITES TO CONSIDER(Map)

- Singles Apartments (Suburban transfer)
- Townhouses (Urban single family)
- Large Lofts and Upper Story Conversions
- Rehabs

ENCOURAGE & SUPPORT MARKET

- Do not over-subsidize
- Create proper climate
- Repair/Improve Infrastructure

- Facilitate/Market 203K Program
- Concentrate on both Downtown and surrounding areas with programs similar to city homes (Milwaukee) and vintage homes (Chicago)

OFFICE

ENCOURAGE USE OF EXISTING STOCK IN ORDER TO INCREASE DAYTIME FOOT TRAFFIC

FREE PARKING FOR EMPLOYEES

PROBABLE TENANTS ARE SMALL GROWING SERVICE FIRMS WHO GO OUT TO MEET THEIR CLIENTS

Traditional
Legal
Accounting
Insurance

Emerging
Graphic Artist
Web Page Designer
Software Developer

GOAL: FIX UP EXISTING STOCK

- Upgrade existing inventory over time as tenancy turns over
- Capitalize on existing architectural details

REALITY CHECK

- Do not expect new office construction downtown

RETAIL

QUIT LOOKING FOR BIG SOLUTIONS, START WITH THE NORTH EAST QUADRANT FILLING SOUTH AND WEST ONE BLOCK AT A TIME

PEOPLE WILL NOT PAY FOR PARKING WHEN THEY CAN PARK FOR FREE AT STRIP CENTERS AND SHOPPING MALLS - PARKING INCENTIVES NEEDED

"GIVE AWAY" RIVERWALK SPACE & OTHER PUBLICLY OWNED PROPERTY TO GET IT OCCUPIED & ATTRACT PEOPLE

% OF SALES FOR PUBLICLY OWNED RETAIL SPACE

SURVEY NEEDED - WHAT ARE PEOPLE BUYING? WHO IS DRIVING THROUGH?

NURTURE MOM & POP RETAILERS

ENCOURAGE RETAIL USES NOT TYPICALLY FOUND AT THE MALL OR STRIP CENTER

- Arts
- Music
- Crafts
- Ethnic Specialty
- Antiques/one of a kind home furnishings
(Stained Glass store good example)

RECOGNIZE THAT RETAIL FOLLOWS RESIDENTIAL NEEDS

DO NOT EXPECT TO GET THE GAP OR ANY OTHER NATIONAL CHAINS

EXPECT "ONE OF A KIND" RETAILERS

NEED TO GENERATE WEEKDAY, WEEKNIGHT TRAFFIC IN ORDER FOR STORES, RESTAURANT, AND NIGHTCLUBS TO THRIVE

FOXWALK/ FOX RIVER TRAIL

- ❑ Complete Foxwalk around Stolp Island
- ❑ Implement Aurora section of Fox River Trail with combination of sections along the river & on street

West Bank Trail

Under Galena thru parking, Hoyt, Downer, cross bridge, connect to Foxwalk to Benton. Cross river again continue west bank south.

East Bank Trail

Ramp up to New York, traffic signal, cross thru parking and alley to Galena, traffic signal, crossing to Water Street (2 way) to Benton, cross bridges to connect to West Bank Trail.

TRAFFIC

DE-EMPHASIZE DOWNER PLACE AND BENTON STREET AS THRU STREETS

- Two-way traffic, one lane each direction
- Pedestrian/bike crossings
- Bike lanes (at least for trail continuity)
- Close for Events, on occasion

ADD SIGNALS FOR BIKE ROUTE CROSSING

- Galena & New York, east of River

RT 31 INTERSECTIONS WITH GALENA AND NEW YORK

- Traffic/Lane improvements

BENTON NEAR STOLP

- Straighten traffic lanes
- Add widened sidewalks

PARKING

PARKING STUDY TO CONSIDER

- Use of parking fees to enforce short term parking (1,2,3 hour meters)
- Garage with low fees-short term, higher fees all day
- Leasable parking for residential units
- More use of validated parking

BICYCLE PARKING

- To serve new trail route
- To serve commercial/retail/dining
- Consider establishment of program to supply on demand
- Consider as marketing potential

LEADERSHIP

GOALS:

- Improve quality of life for entire community
- Increase net municipal revenues from downtown

OBJECTIVES:

- Add people, supportive business environment for business, equals sales tax, property tax, and a better quality of life

CONSOLIDATE/COORDINATE FUNCTIONS:

- The Agency
 - Programs & Events
 - Remove barriers to development
 - \$ for incentives
 - Marketing
 - Sales
 - Represents interest of entire community
 - Requires long-term City support
- Marketing
 - Tourism
 - Recreation Department
 - The Library
 - Seminars & Meetings
 - Business
 - Housing
- Sales
 - Matching buyers and sellers
 - Target property sales
 - Tenant sales

PROGRAMMING/EVENTS

- Daily, weekly, monthly, annually
- Seasonal, farmers, winter festivals, etc.

- "The Island" should become the premier event venue in the Fox Valley
- Bicycles
 - Trail Plug-ins
 - Rental Bike Store
 - Land east of the river
- Coordinate "the island" with river park events

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES

- Remove Barriers
- Proactive Actions
- Partnership
- Ombudsman/one-stop-shop

FUNDING FOR INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

- Certain
- Simple
- Short

RESEARCH / ANALYSIS & PLANNING

Research/Analysis

RESIDENTIAL MARKETS - PRIMARY RESEARCH

- Students
- Downtown workers
- Regional growth

DOWNTOWN DAYTIME "POPULATION"

- Workers - Government, Casino, Office
- Students
- Traffic

OFFICE MARKET CHARACTERISTICS

- Square Footage
- Tenant Profile
- Rents
- Regional - Start-up/Technology

CASINO PATRONS

- Survey (Intercept) Re: Other Incentives

PARKING & TRAFFIC

- Counts of space & hours
- Time of day traffic counts
- Origins / Destinations / Needs (driver intercept survey)
- Alternate commercial parking strategies

- Regional Retail Holes

Downtown Planning

THE DOWNTOWN IS THE ONLY ASSET TO DISTINGUISH AURORA FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES / DOWNTOWN

- Planning framework & strategy
- Urban design concept - make sure zoning is consistent, other rules
- Traffic plan
- Parking plan

IMPLEMENTATION

- Organizational issues
- Small scale project orientation
- Aurora Downtown responsible for overseeing the allocation of TIF funds
- Capital campaigns (Budget / private use of TIF/SSA)
- Targeted developer recruitment & marketing for specific opportunities

The following is a transcription of the presentation given by ULI. This was transcribed from a cassette tape, and the document will read as spoken.

INTRODUCTION:

"In November, Paul Borek, and John Banbury met with ULI and asked that we come out to take a look at downtown Aurora. They asked if they would be able to give Aurora recommendations on attracting development. ULI is a national organization of local branches, that does these types of panels. Not all members of ULI are present today, however, they did attend Friday, May 30th to put together this presentation." (Mr. Goldsmith took this time to introduce the ULI members present.)"

ENTERTAINMENT:

"What we want to do today is share with you inside observations or hypothesis that derived out of a rather limited and short look at the downtown. The process that we went through, as most of you know, was the tour of the downtown area, a series of interviews with a whole bunch of people that are involved with businesses or business development, and we went through a process with the group to identify the assets and weaknesses from the people that were interviewed. We then went back out and did some walking of the core of the downtown, and the specific area we were asked to look at, and then we came back to our working session. One of the key things we were looking for was "the hook", what is the "hook" to bring people into the downtown. Hopefully we have addressed that to some extent. We recognized the massive amounts of change that already have occurred in this area. The other thing we did, is we did not stay focused on the small study area that was provided to us. We have addressed issues that we believe will lead to redevelopment, and touch on specific properties that were included in the study area, but we frankly moved beyond, away from that, as we felt that we needed to deal with other issues before we focused in on that area. What we saw as our sense getting to the next level, as we recognize that many changes have occurred, is that this is an enormously different place then it was in the past 7-10 years. We think that the key question to address at this point is still, what kind of entertainment center is downtown Aurora going to be? This may not be totally original, but the future of downtown is tied intrinsically to leisure, recreation, and entertainment. The nature of the economy, land use, and transportation has shifted what is known as, traditionally sorts of activities, major office, major retail, away from downtown, and they cannot effectively compete. As we went through all the other thoughts, we felt that the key piece we still need to focus on is the entertainment section. It needs to be broad spectrum, multi-market and multi-equity. Broad spectrum being, tying into the Fox River Trail, from Casino to Canoe. It's multi-market, by that I mean geographic markets as well as demographic markets. The Casino and the Roundhouse are regional destinations. You have some people coming in from very big areas. We did not have the benefit of knowing which areas they were. Education sources are drawing from the greater Aurora area. Outdoor recreation is a corridor market. 95% of that area is from Elgin to Aurora, Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles. We don't know for sure, but people move along that corridor are on roller blades, bicycles.

You need to view these as individual markets and build on each one. The other thing we noticed is the growing strength of the ethnic community. The primary evidence is by the number of Hispanic, and African-American businesses. If the community has the opportunity to embrace this ethnicity, we feel that is a strength to build on. That is kind of a global conclusion. What we would like to do it to go through our assessment of your assets and liabilities, strategies related to residential, office, retail, and then physical planning ideas, organization, and future ideas. Everybody who is here will participate in these segments."

ASSETS/LIABILITIES:

"You have a great city here, many assets. The river is a wonderful asset, with various uses, and beautiful views. The urban feel: a strong city, a place where people want to be. The architecture: a lot of beauty, very attractive. Incredible traffic on the city streets. The attractions: Hollywood Casino, The Roundhouse, Sci-Tech. The Fox River Trail. The progress the city has made in the past few years adds to a sense of momentum, a sense of a future. Residential pioneers: people who are settling in, making investment. The actions the city has taken to restrict subdividing of units. The Paramount has a very heavy usage. Governmental offices: recognizing that draws people to the downtown. Financial institutions: providing a service to the community. Property inventory. Colleges: three universities in the immediate area. The ethnic diversity. Now liabilities. This came up in a number of interviews, the perception of crime. Now whether or not there actually is crime doesn't matter. Perception is just as damaging as the actual crime. The insular casino is a community itself, as they are providing a lot of services there. Lack of coordination was in reference to the governmental interplay, many organizations involved. The unfinished Riverwalk. Lack of a downtown plan. Cities fiscal problems."

ENTERTAINMENT, CONT'D:

"Some ideas to help build on the entertainment aspects of the community. The first thing we noticed is that there is a need for the potential, the intensity of the programming of the downtown. We saw the need for more festivals and events, such as bringing back the farmers market, adding a flea market, or more arts related things. There needs to be a focus on events and programming, that is what brings in a lot of people. We don't think we counted enough events. That is an inexpensive low risk way to attract people downtown, experiment, find what works, and doesn't work. The second area involves more work. We thought a large screen IMAX theater at Sci-Tech, would work as there isn't one in this geographic location. It would be a draw to this industry and would be unique in this part of the region. It would cost some bucks to bring it here. Another idea is trying to attract a second run movie house. This should be done along with the theater at Sci-tech, not in place of. There may not be a building existing, but a commercial second run movie house is a very successful contributor to downtowns. Tivoli Enterprises is quite successful. The question came up about having the Paramount operate the second run movies. The Paramount is quite large for that type of venue, and it is a union house, causing it to be very expensive to open. The second run theaters make their money off of the popcorn, and concessions. An older

building would be great for this type of development. The third area, is trying to encourage marketing for clubs and music houses. The guys that run clubs have a high failure rate. These guys are ego driven, they are not well capitalized. You need to find someone who is able to help these entrepreneurial types. Sometimes, landlords can deal with these type of venues. They need to know how to finance the restaurant, and live with the financial insecurity these users bring. You need the entrepreneurial people. Physical strategies, expanding the bike trail, using the streets, link the Roundhouse to the Casino. This may become the entertainment district, find some way to connect these two. The Roundhouse is a huge draw anchor. You are working very hard on the Riverwalk, and we will talk about inexpensive ways to complete this. The education linkage is seeing what the students and faculty are doing."

RESIDENTIAL:

"The next thing to help build the entertainment, is to build a residential base. We had a lot of argument in our group regarding this, (the how, what, why, when) things will work. We put out a lot of ideas that we need to look at much further. It is critical to have a residential base in the downtown. The theory is an inside out strategy. The downtown has a better potential to attract a residential market, then it does major employers. I am not saying that you won't get any, but your not going to be a corporate headquarters. You are not going to get people to drive into the downtown because the interstate is too powerful for that. People are not going to drive another 20 minutes to get to the downtown. But conversely, people will drive 20 minutes from their home to work. Those people are the targets to live in the downtown. I feel this could attract what is referred to as "urban exiles". People, that because of work, are forced to live here. A lot is going to be very small scale at first, it should not necessarily be a big market. You need to study markets, see what they want, how many there are, what would bring them downtown. Is there a possibility of building a singles community/complex in the downtown? Build up the architecture a bit. We need to understand our market, and will need to look at all markets. You can slice and dice the census information so much, but it doesn't tell you what their interests are, and what draws them to the downtown, you need to do that. Survey them. Indianapolis did this, and now has a successful residential market. Large lofts, not expensive, not small lofts, and do not oversubsidize. Public funding should not be more than 20%, if it is over 20% your in the danger zone. A great FHA funding program, the 203 K, should be marketed and there should be people here that know how it works. Concentrate on limited subsidy. We think along with the entertainment, this is a very high, and duable priority. You need to focus on this, it will not happen automatically. One thing on elderly, god love them, but they don't spend a dime. They are not going to bring you anything, the do not bring you activity, the people that bring in the activity are the young, and the enthused."

OFFICE/RETAIL:

"The key point is, you need to get people downtown to increase foot traffic. People walking downtown will one, go into stores, two, eat at restaurants, and three, increase the perception of safety. We heard complaints on existing inventory, that there is no renovation dollar fee invested into this to finish up space. Parking: I can go to any place along I-88 and get free parking. If you charge people, businesses, and their employees to come down here and park, you are at a competitive disadvantage, conceptually, versus going up on the highway. Your probable tenant is slow growing service firms, as they go out to meet their clients. Housing: getting larger units is for people who want to test the market instead of buy. If you don't like the area, you can move out, versus buying property. Smaller firms aren't going to be as sensitive, and they are looking for somewhat funky space, it does not have to be your normal office space. What we need to emphasize here is that you need to realize that you are not going to get "Starbucks" with the type of space you have. You seem to have a lot of C space, very little A & B space, therefore your not going to get a company with 15 employees to move downtown with the stock that you have. One thing you have to do is be realistic, what you have got is what you have got, so don't market to those guys unless you are 100% sure that you are going to get them. With the small slow growing service firms, they may be a web page creator. These types of people may work all night, and they will probably ride their bike to work. These people go to their clients, therefore they do not need to worry about parking for their customers. These are the guys that sit at their computer hacking away, and are knowledge workers. They tend to want to live close to their work. There is cross-over here as well, most of these people live and work out of lofts. A lot of these people live on the 2nd and 3rd floors, above a store front, in a loft, and work out of their home. These are the people that you should market. They are not concerned with the beauty of their living or work space. You need to work on filling up the existing space you have. Your stock turns over a lot, and every time it does, the space is upgraded just a little bit. You cannot bomb the space and bring it up to grade. Capitalize on the existing buildings you do have, you have great architecture here. Many people like to work in unique buildings as opposed to the typical high-rise office complex, market that. You have some magnificent facades. You appreciate the wonderful facades and buildings when you are walking, not when you are driving. Frankly, you should market the architecture of Aurora, and the Architectural Tour. You have them, and no one knows they exist. Bottom line, is a reality check. You are what you are, so don't try to make yourself something that you cannot be. Don't expect someone to come here and build a 150,000 space office facility, they will go to I-88. Something that came out of the interviews was putting a hotel or convention center on Galena and River. That is not a reality. Aurora is not a convention draw. Maybe eventually, but you have nothing else to offer at this time. Convention people want a lot of things to do outside of the convention. They like small specialty shops, restaurants, entertainment. (Example: Springfield, IL works for a two day convention. They have the museums, history, etc., but more than two days is pushing it.) If someone comes downtown and has a good experience, they will probably only tell three people. If they have a bad time, they will tell 10 people, that's

the reality. You need to focus on one day events, not multi-day events, such as a convention. (Example: Continuing education at Waubensee)"

"Retail: don't look for that big draw, that is not going to happen. The casino and the Roundhouse could be a great entertainment district. You don't want to go into Berlin, put one store in the middle, and let everyone else see the bombed out area. Don't expect "The Gap" to build a store downtown. Start by bringing the little people here first. You have some wonderful little retailers down here. You're not going to compete with the mall, or with the strip centers, and quite honestly, you don't want to, they will kill you. They have free parking, you drive in and drive out. You want to compete by offering one of a kind retailers, things they can't buy anywhere else. These people create the mix downtown. The Hispanic retailing is that one of a kind retailing, you won't find that anywhere else. You should embrace that and see that as an opportunity to show something different. Parking issues: people don't want to park in a parking garage if they want to run in and out of a store. People will park in a deck if it is free for the first 30 minutes, or if they get a stamped validation. What your competing with is the power centers, and regional malls, you need to think about how to attract those customers. Retailers have a great need to fill the streets Monday through Friday during the day. (Example: if you own a golf course, you don't need to worry about filling it up on Saturday and Sunday, you need to worry about Monday through Friday during the day.) Creating employment downtown is critical in providing the foot traffic. Restaurants and night clubs go through the same thing. During the week how do they make a living? What do they do with their staff during the week? You have a fair amount of space that is publicly own, and empty, use it, give it away. Create a critical mass down here. Work out deals, cut rent rates, etc. You need to fill the storefronts up with mom and pop businesses."

MAPS:

"One of the things that we saw when we looked at the maps, is the island in the center. I think that actually this really is a pedestrian area. Once you park, you can easily walk around anywhere. You have to include the Roundhouse in your thinking. Bring structural engineers here. To a certain extent we could find an area that is a 10 minute walk that creates the downtown. We found some open spaces that are just growing grass at this time. These could be used for periodic events that occur as result of your programming. There is a broad lawn that slopes off of Broadway, there is a bike trail, and then a parking lot. There are two lawns that across the river that face each other, and there is a great deal of space south of the city. We told you that there is no hope of class A office space, that is probably true until we can get class A tenants that realize the value. How do you maintain civilization when your waiting for a development? We feel that this open land could be kind of an asset. (Referring to maps/drawings.) We talked about how do you connect all of this, of course the trolley system would get over the perception of a 10 minute walk. You can have things around that make it seem that things are going on, it might be weekend events to stimulate traffic. This is the section through the city where you have the two parts that slope down towards the river. I came up with three versions of multi-use space. First, have a great concert.

Float the band out on the river, if you don't like them, you could just cut them loose. You could sit on both sides of that. That is the sort of thing that the city should offer them. After the concert, they will meander around the town a bit. The second, is sort of an instant urban "ravina". Another concept is a farmers market or a flea market as a periodic happening. Again, at looking at office plazas, a lot of them bring in a lot of modern art, or concerts, that give the illusion of a lot of activity for a short period of time. This would be operating on a much smaller scale. Finally, you could use this space, if it is landscaped properly, as a parking lot. I have seen parking areas in Spain, where instead of painting yellow lines to direct the cars, they plant poplar trees. After the cars leave, what you have is a park that looks like it is available for picnics and such. The final thing is the completion and the enrichment of the Riverwalk is important. One of the things that Marty suggested, is what can you do to let the world know that this is really an island. You have the same problem that San Antonio has, that you have a very narrow river and sort of a vertical environment around it, so that you could drive across the river, without even knowing it. The one thing that would identify the river without costing a lot of money is the landscaping. You have look to the Riverwalk for opportunities to break into adjacent buildings to get restaurants, coffee, things of that sort, to get a greater interaction between the existing properties and the walk itself. I think that you have gone so far with that, and it would be a shame not to complete it."

FOXWALK:

We had the opportunity to briefly review the Riverwalk plans. It could bring further beauty to the infrastructure. We recognize that it is expensive and that funding is a little shaky now, so we had another thought. The Riverwalk has two components, one is the actual Riverwalk, and the other issue that the Riverwalk faces is getting the fox river trail, that larger trail, down further, to connect with the larger regional trails. We need to separate those two goals. Priority needs to focus on finishing the Riverwalk, especially on Stolp Island, and then combining some of the other ideas of the Riverwalk with opportunities to go up street. This will bring a couple of benefits. One being that it will be less expensive, and it would quickly tie the center part of Aurora with the county forest preserve and the park district to complete the trail south, and to the west side. The other advantage, besides the cost, by bringing the bicyclists up onto the street, is you are bringing them into the downtown, your putting them right next to the shops, and that is going to be a big boon then to Aurora. We can come up some pretty quick ways to do this, taking advantage of some ally streets that you have. We do have some suggestions of changing some traffic patterns, that John LaPlante will get it to in a bit. These pieces here are the bigger ticket aspects. This particular ticket here would build on the concept of the Riverwalk. By building out here, and completing a piece of that, would contribute, which when the bridge is done, depending on how much of the Riverwalk you going to have done, this piece would be built for the trail at this point. Temporarily, at this point, you could take the trail back up on a raise, fairly easily, by the dye house, and in the meantime, you can have a piece of your infrastructure for your Riverwalk even if you do not get the whole infrastructure for the Riverwalk, and you will have a critical piece of your Riverwalk completed. Then on coming up to your

local streets, you'll draw the pedestrians into the downtown. That is really it, and changing traffic signals, and patterns, into two way streets, Benton and Downer. Another thing, that we thought about is, that Aurora is the hub for the regional trail system because of the Gilman trail to the south, and the prairie path, you really are in a great place. I think that you could market yourself as a real hub that way, and that could be very beneficial because the trail goes into that huge system. The Fox River system, as you know, is a huge asset to Kane County, so you want to build on that, and as quickly as possible."

TRAFFIC/PARKING:

"Right now you can go on either side of Aurora, and there are great trails already, but when you get to Aurora, there is a hole in the donut, it stops here. The entire Fox Walk system is around \$20 million dollars. You can do something for a fraction of the cost, to get the bicycles going through, and you still have a wonderful Fox Walk system. That is something that you move towards, but let's not wait for \$20 million dollars to appear to fill this donut hole. (Steve Freidman) What you may not know, in Chicago, despite their 5 month season, is either the largest, or the second largest market for mountain bikes in the USA, for sale of mountain bikes. Bicycling is a big deal. (Susan Pintoff) Chicago has over 1000 miles of bicycle trails. Another thing I should mention, is that quite a few studies have been done where trails that have gone through the cities, the vacancy rate, the retail vacancy rate, goes from 35% to zero in a matter of years, and they attribute it to the trails."

John LaPlante, cont'd:

"I am a traffic engineer by trade. One of the things that I am involved in is bicycle training, so it is something that I have a personal feel for. It appears that in the system, by the details, by the canoe chute, it wouldn't take much to complete it under the bridge, and extend it over to the park that Jack was talking about, by Hoyt Place. Use Downer as a two-way structure, take it over to Stolp, and back on Benton, and this area here, south of Benton, is right for a bike path, you don't have to tear up anything, just put the trail. The city of Aurora should be pushing this. Eventually, making a connection to Downer. I am not afraid of bicyclist on street, as others, but that is another big deal. At Downer and Benton, what we feel would help, is to turn them back into streets that service the community more by making them two way streets, and continuing Galena and New York as your major thoroughfares for moving people from the casino and de-emphasize this, and allow bicycles on the streets and adding crosswalks and it will be a safer operation. A signal at New York and a cat walk at the edge here for bicycles only, markets on Water Street, and using this as a two-way and then again Benton. These are things that can be done with little to no money at all. You lose five parking meters on Water Street, some traffic signals, the adjacent intersections so that traffic flows, and you have something done for little money. One of the things that I noticed is that Rt31, getting on and off, is a little complicated. I cannot help but feel that there is a better way of laying out the street lane there so that it is easier. The river is kind of well done, that is very unique cooperation by the casino. Rt31 is just a disaster and that is a little thing that can be done for very little money at

all, maybe just repainting the street. Maybe something with the signals, I am not sure. It is the kind of thing that could help with access to the area, this intersection here, Stolp and Benton, by making it a two way operation, you could straighten this area out, and plant grass on either side. Right now a two-way would be unsafe, but you could lay out a left turn lane onto Stolp, add more grass, more sidewalks, bike lane, then behind the Riverwalk Inn you could add pedestrian crossing lanes, getting people to understand that once they are on the island, particularly by New York, this is an area that the pedestrians outweigh the automobile. Those are the kinds of things that could be done for very little money. In the area of parking, we already touched on this, but the use of parking fees in an area such as this is primarily to enforce turnover. The other way of enforcing turnover is by having a bunch of people out writing tickets. The parking meter is not to make money at all, the parking meter is only to get people here for short term. I think what we are suggesting, is getting a parking study. We heard many different things about parking, many people told us that they thought that parking was not an issue, no problem, others merchants say that it is an absolute disaster. We don't know what the real answer is, but we think it that there should be a study to see what your needs are now that this area is developing differently. What you have made a whole bunch of sense originally, but your not there now. What we need to do is know where are you are going?, and what should you be doing to encourage the short term parking? What do we do about the long term parking for employees that need to park all day long? Does the city offer a lot, does the employer subsidize it? Downtown residential need to be reassured that they will have a place to park. You will not sell any place if parking isn't available, because even though their day to day needs may be met downtown, they will have to go somewhere else, and they will need their car to get there. Pace just doesn't have the capability to meet all their needs. Validate parking. Bicycle parking, I haven't seen many racks for bikes. There needs to be more. If we develop this bike system we would like, you will have to put them along the path, and throughout the downtown for people that move around the downtown. It will encourage people to get off their bike and walk around and feel comfortable about leaving their bike while they move around. (Susan Pintoff) The city of Chicago has a program where they supply bike racks at retailers requests due to a grant that they received. There also is the opportunity to market, "from bike to retail" or something of that nature. If you ride your bike, you get a discount, use it as a marketing tool for downtown. (Steve Freidman) Ok, everyone says that there is no time for leisure, most of you wont' believe this, but the reality is that apparently that is true. Despite the major economic sector that is growing most rapidly is leisure, including the entertainment industry, all the while, none of us apparently have any time for leisure, and these industries are all making money."

LEADERSHIP:

"What we have chosen to theorize as leadership is really is the mechanism all the policy issues that are associated with making a successful enterprise. What we are calling leadership, is what is required by an organization, and what levels will they be able to do that. We cut that in terms of experience, what we have seen, and also because a lot of the comments from the interviews dealt with the overlapping of governmental

functions, lack of clarity, and lack of a plan. If there was a plan, we did not see it. Doing that will clearly form a vision of what is going to happen, so this whole aspect of it is very important in addressing some of the concerns. Everything that I am going to say is with deep respect for those of you involved. You need leadership. In looking back at what you have already heard, the entire community would be improved if downtown Aurora was a vibrant place, most importantly, increase the municipal revenues from downtown. I have never met a merchant that if you bring people to them in a supportive environment for business, can't sell them something. What were about is us trying to find away of how do we bring the people. This part is about a supportive business environment, is so that we can come out of this with, sales taxes, properties taxes, and leisure, and finding the hook. One thing that people wanted to talk about is how someone can coordinate all the different functions. Someone came in and named eight different groups that people have to go through for a development project. Someone else came in and said it took eighteen months to open his business, because of the numbers of commissions they had to appear before. Other people told us about the uncertainty of getting all the way up to the flood, having seen the flood happen, and seeing the policies change, and sending them all the way back to the beginning of the process. I would not want my life to be on hold for eighteen months, and I will tell you that one of the things we would like to see, is easy development. It should be just as easy to develop downtown Aurora, as it is on Galena and Orchard. Ideas: some sort of agency that runs programs and event, removes barriers, creates and manages dollars, markets, and sells downtown. That agency is going to be a viable agency. It will stand on three legs. It has to have funding, it has to have authority, and it has to have a mission. Give it the authority, tell it what to do, and give it some money, but if it doesn't have all three of those things it is unlikely to work. The stool has to sit on a foundation, which is long-term city support. The long-term city support means that there has to be some certainty. Funding means that it is funded so that things run more smoothly. Leadership and marketing: it should have tourism, a recreation department, the library, seminars and meetings, marketing businesses and housing. Sales: I am not saying that you have to match buyers and sellers, if tenants come in, steer them in the right direction. Don't, for example, put the bike shop three miles away from the bike trail. Programming and events: daily, weekly, monthly, yearly. I have people in the downtown it is perceived as successful, crowds beget crowds. (Example: giving away tickets at a theater to get the line started. Programs in the library that bring mothers down here with their children. Imax theater, at night use it for replay of classic movie, Make it an event. You go to Disneyland once in your life, think about things that people will want to come to, but more than once a year.) We heard someone say, that if you say "The Island", it should be identifiable. That is a large statement, but a great concept to work towards. The trail plug-ins, the island focus, there may be times you may want to close the whole thing off and run events. New York and Galena can be your main through streets. Utilize the parks for events as well. There are some steps you can go through for a supportive business environment, first by removing the barriers, make it easy, then take proactive actions, then make partnership. Make a one stop shop, someone who will get you through this process, and make it easy. Buy-in from government support is crucial. We are all about getting

people in the downtown in a supportive business environment. When we do that, it will be equal to more property taxes, sales taxes, and a better quality of life."

RESEARCH ANALYSIS/PLANNING:

"We felt as we went through this, that there is a lot of research and analysis that needs to be done. One thing you need to remember about research, is that it does not have a long shelf life. When you compare research done by shopping centers, and they do extensive research, they have an office in the mall, its ongoing. We identified some areas that we felt need some serious research and analysis. Residential market: downtown daytime population, what are people here for?, how long are they staying?, etc. Office market characteristics: what is here?, what is out there? Potential tenants: what is out there?, where are they coming from? Casino patrons are not likely to spend a lot of time in the downtown. We asked, they are only here for two hours, they usually only spend \$40 dollars, they are not high spenders, \$40 is not a lot of money. You need to find out more about them, not the casino, someone else. Traffic, parking spaces: counts of parking spaces, and hours being used, time of day traffic counts. A driver intercept survey: stop cars and ask drivers why they are here?, and where they are going? They won't like it, but it will give you a better understanding of who your potential customers are. You don't know why you have all this traffic, find out. Regional retail: be proactive, instead of letting them find you."

DOWNTOWN PLANNING:

"Downtown is the only asset to distinguish from other communities. That is a harsh statement, but we think it is true. How is Aurora any different than suburban Naperville, Plainfield, if it isn't downtown. Downtown is what you use to create your image. We did not see a downtown plan. So instead of going through a more detailed plan, we felt that you needed a strategy, so all that the issues that we have talked about, look at urban design, make sure that curb cuts are consistent, for example. Have control over who has a say about infrastructure downtown. Opportunities for sites and site concepts, there is a philosophy of focusing on what the opportunities are, create believable pictures. Traffic plan goes back to the concepts and issues that John spoke about. Organization issues: you want to remember is that the casino is nice, but 90% of your opportunities will be small stuff. You don't want to discourage the small guys, encourage them, help them. Part of planning is knowing where you want that big project to go, so that you can easily help the small guys. Financing programs: in line, and the right kind of programs, they need to fit the market. Programs need to be re-looked at so that they are a realistic fit with where the city is, and to meet existing needs. Capital budgeting, capital campaign: the downtown organization must take the responsibility for raising the capital downtown. You may get money from the city, but you need to be proactive and tell them that you want this much money set aside for this project. You need to be willing to fight for the money. Last thing that we heard is some rather sad stories about past developers. Don't give them a block, take the responsibility to know your market place so that you are out there shopping for what you want. Do not let developers tell you what to do, find out what you want, and let them fit into your plan."