



FREMONT DOWNTOWN BLUEPRINT PROGRAM

APPRECIATING THE PAST
PROVIDING FOR TODAY
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

STATUS REPORT
MARCH 24, 2006

The Fremont Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has been working since June 2005 to implement the Year-One Implementation Sequence as detailed in the Fremont Downtown Blueprint Plan. To date, the following actions have been taken:

PARTNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

- The Fremont City Council and Fremont DDA formally adopted the *Fremont Downtown Blueprint 2005* document as the official guide for the further economic enhancement of Downtown Fremont.
- The Fremont DDA assumed the responsibility for overseeing implementation of the Downtown Blueprint; the Blueprint Process Committee then sunsetted.
- The DDA Newsletter will be an insert to the City's City Beat newsletter that is distributed three times a year to every resident and business in the City.
- The Program will also be marketed through the City's new website, www.cityoffremont.net. City staff also prepares press releases (e.g., rental rehab program) on Blueprint Program issues.
- The City submits an annual report to the State on the Fremont DDA's programs and budget.
- The DDA strives to involve local groups or individuals who would have an interest in the work of the DDA. For example, when the DDA was considering the design of the proposed Fremont Farmers Market pavilion, the Fremont Farmers Market Committee was invited to participate. Also, the DDA has invited Downtown business and property owners to many of the DDA meetings to receive their input on various issues.
- The City is meeting with small groups of business and property owners to give them an update on the Downtown Fremont Enhancement plan and to invite their comments.
- The DDA invited all citizens to participate on the following DDA Subcommittees:
 - Marketing
 - Public Art
 - Parking Issues
 - Façade / Historic Preservation
 - Business / Property Owners Issues
 - Streetscape / Signage

Anyone wishing to serve on these Subcommittees should contact DDA Chair Lon Vredevelde, at 924-3920 or Michele Ribant, Fremont's Neighborhood & Economic Development Director, at 924-2101.

DESTINATIONS / DRAWS ACTIONS

- The City of Fremont, through a City Council Resolution, supported the Fremont Public School Board in its desire to locate the proposed new high school in its current Downtown location.
- The City is proposing to build a Fremont Market Place pavilion in the parking lot directly north of the ArtsPlace. It is anticipated that the pavilion will be constructed by June of 2007. The City is pursuing three grant opportunities to obtain funds to aid in the cost of constructing the pavilion.
- The DDA has had two meetings with Downtown restaurant owners to encourage them to work together on an on-going basis to support Downtown and City-wide events. Restaurant owners are being encouraged to offer entertainment in their establishments.
- The Chamber of Commerce has set the dates for the 2006 Summer Concert Series. This year the Chamber will have a more diverse range of concerts that will appeal to many age groups and tastes.

Art Placement Plan

- Draft guidelines for the Downtown Fremont Public Art Program have been created. The DDA's Public Art Subcommittee is fine-tuning them.
- A plan for the placement of public art has been created. The DDA's Public Art Subcommittee will also fine-tune the art placement plan.
- The Public Art Subcommittee is developing a banner placement plan.
- The Public Art Subcommittee is exploring ideas as to how the SBC/AT&T building in Downtown can be enhanced aesthetically to include artwork.

Farmers Market

- The DDA has worked with local farmers and the Fremont Farmers Market Committee to create a design for a permanent farmers' market pavilion in Fremont.
- The City Council approved operating procedures for the proposed market pavilion. It will be a multi-use facility that can be used by many groups in the City. The Farmers Market pavilion will be named the "Fremont Market Place," and the City will book the pavilion. The ArtsPlace is proposing to also use it as an Artisans Market.

Local Historical Museum

- The City contracted with Germann & Associates of Ohio to create a Fremont Museum Economic Feasibility Study to determine whether it would be prudent for the Fremont community to establish a local history museum. Among other topics, the museum or interpretive center could promote the Gerber story and Fremont's history. The study will be provided to the City on March 31, 2006.
- Germann & Associates toured Windmill Gardens to determine whether the windmills could be used as landmarks throughout the City. The owners want to provide the windmills to a windmill museum or to experts who understand how to maintain the windmills.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS

The DDA is working with Fleis & Vanderbrink, an engineering and design firm, to create a Downtown Enhancement Plan for Fremont that will include the following:

- A farmers market pavilion
- Parking lot improvements

- New or refreshed landscaping
- Public art
- Streetscape furniture (flower pots, bike racks, benches, etc.)
- New signage (including wayfinding signage for the entire City)
- New signage and landscaping for the Fremont Industrial Park

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

- The Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Newaygo County Economic Development Office, Inc. (NCEDO) and offered a “Customer Service” training seminar, which was offered to Downtown business owners. The seminar was held in February 2006.
- The City has been meeting with business owners and introducing the idea of keeping businesses open one night a week. Thursday evenings is the evening that is being suggested.
- The DDA is working to create a recycling program for Downtown businesses.
- The City’s Planning Commission is working with its zoning consultants from Langworthy, Strader & LeBlanc to create a new “Form-Based Zoning Code.” The new ordinance may allow for projecting signs Downtown that are pedestrian-oriented and of appropriate size, design and lighting.
- The Police Dept. is enforcing speed limits and continuing to offer Downtown its Community Policing program. An additional seasonal bike patrol officer was added to concentrate efforts in Downtown.
- The City’s Neighborhood & Economic Development Director is meeting with Downtown business and property owners this spring to conduct business retention visits.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

- The DDA’s Façade / Historic Preservation Subcommittee is working to create a Downtown Façade Renovation program.
- The State Historic Preservation Officer has toured and evaluated Downtown Fremont and has preliminarily determined that a large portion of Downtown is eligible as an historic district.
- The City was awarded a \$305,000 grant to develop upper-floor housing in Downtown. Program guidelines and applications for the Fremont Rental Housing Rehabilitation Program will be available in May 2006.