



MEMORANDUM

TO: William "Bill" Ware, Chairperson
Economic and Community Development Committee

FROM: William J. Heniff, AICP, Director of Community Development *wh*

DATE: February 2, 2011

SUBJECT: **Lombard Town Centre Update**

At the January 5, 2011 ECDC meeting, the committee continued the discussion related to the 6-month update from the Lombard Town Centre. Attached for the committee reference are the materials provided at the last meeting.



MEMORANDUM

TO: William "Bill" Ware, Chairperson
Economic and Community Development Committee

FROM: William J. Heniff, AICP, Director of Community Development *WH*

DATE: January 5, 2010

SUBJECT: Lombard Town Centre Update

Earlier this year, the Village Board approved funding in the amount of \$35,000 to the Lombard Town Centre (LTC) for a part-time Lombard Town Centre Executive Director (ED). In June, 2010, Karen Stonehouse was hired as the new ED for the LTC. The LTC President has provided the attached report highlighting their activities to date. A separate report from the Executive Director will be sent out under separate cover.

Lombard Town Centre 2010 / 2011 Annual Report and Goals

General Lombard Town Centre Overview

- Have new Executive Director in place by 6/15/2010 - Completed

Participants involved with the interview process; Village ECDC team, Dan Whittington, Kathy Hogan, and Kim Cotton. We also have potential outside participants, property owners Steve Elliott, Vern Hammerschmidt, Batavia Main Street ED. Schedule interviews on Monday and Weds after 3:00 PM to accommodate those involved with this important process.

We will utilize some of the Village resources during the process such as personality testing, leadership testing and panel interviews.

Currently we have 10 + resumes and the job is listed with Du Page County, link on the village web site and we are running an ad in suburban newspapers.

- LTC will work closely with the Village to put a training program in place for the new ED. We will look to the Village for training involving outreach as well as economic development. LTC will facilitate any programs available from the National Main Street Program and bear the costs incurred for that training. *Committee: Organization and Executive* IL Main St. does not at this time have any training available as they are still in a probationary period. LTC has provided all materials to Karen Stonehouse and we feel that with her background she is relatively up to speed.
- LTC and ECDC will facilitate formal introduction to all business and property owners, as well as key LTC and Village partners such as the Library, Park District, Historical Society, Garden Club, etc... The ED must be the new face of downtown Lombard and be viewed as accessible and accommodating. *Committee: Executive and ECDC* Karen has met with and spent time with all of the above. We feel that we have an excellent working relationship with these partners.
- Evaluate the downtown Passport program by interviewing all businesses that participate as well as those who have not. *Committee: Promotions* Promotion is revamping this program and has spoken with the majority of the businesses for their input; additionally Karen is working with a company to discover the feasibility of a Downtown credit card that may tie into the Passport program.
- Make relative changes and re-launch the Passport program. *Committee: Promotions and Board* When all is clear with the above we will plan a re-launch of the Passport program, including advertising and a kick off at a Forum
- Establishment of a Lombard Town Centre Facebook page, create friends of LTC and drive people to our web site. *Committee: Promotions* The Facebook page was launched in the summer of 2010, and has been a good communication tool, as well as a venue to get out information. We have I believe in excess of 100 friends and I receive a report of the sites activities weekly. We have posted pictures of our events and welcomed comments.

- Upgrade LTC web site for a cleaner more informative look, create links to our partners and businesses. It needs to be very easy for those looking for the happenings in downtown to find dates, times and the activity. *Committee: Organization / Board* This project is in the planning stages with some great input from Lynne M. it should not be as cumbersome as in the past, hoping for completion or at minimum beginning changes in Jan / 2011. Readus (our web master) is also assisting.
- Establish stronger working partnerships and co host events with the Library, the Park District, the Historical Society, Garden Club and others. *Committee: ER and Board* As stated prior LTC and our partners have held joint events and shared in each other's events, also sharing ideas and in some cases sitting on each other's committee's
- Renew and invigorate the quarterly newsletter, include articles from our above partners and committee chairs and co chairs E mail delivery and paper based at high traffic locations. *Committee: All and Board* Winter issue in process
- Add qualified board members (up to 4 additional) from our passionate volunteers and leaders that are currently involved, as well as looking to property owners at minimum to join committee's and look to them as potential board members. *Committee: All and Board* Belinda – Colleen – Lynn – Wayne – Walter have agreed to be nominated. Annual meeting 1/10 will host elections, re-election nominees are Kathy and Krista hopefully bringing our board to 9 sitting members.
- Strengthen our 4 committees with new volunteers and additional leadership by adding co chairs. *Committee: All and Board* With new Board members we will attract new committee members, we have added strength with volunteers 27 for Spook and can draw on them for future events, added 2 interns for various tasks
- Establish a recognition program for all volunteers and investigate the qualification of the Presidential Volunteerism Award for LTC volunteers. *Committee: All Presidential Award ER* Registered for the Presidential award process, waiting for approval and to begin the process.
- Continue the Downtown Forum and look to draw 20 – 25 per session. *Committee: All* Capones has closed on Monday's. It seems that the best thought is to utilize the old Just Be with Mr. Elliott's blessing. That plan would be to have 2 banners made announcing that as the Forum meeting place and hang in the windows 1 on St Charles Rd and 1 on N Park as well as directing folks to gain additional details on the LTC web site and LTC Facebook page
- Plan to establish two additional special events in 2010 and 2011, we feel a need to have something in early Spring and again in the Summer. Jingle Bell-Dec, Arts and Crafts-May, Spooktacular-Oct. Some ideas have been brought to the table and we hope to add one in 2010 and another in 2011. *Committee: Promotions and Organization supported by all* An Easter time event has been discussed – egg hunt etc... Possibly a late spring / summer Ladies / Mens / kids nights out to promote the downtown businesses including a sidewalk sales of sorts.
- Conduct a survey that the business owners collaborate on retail driven events such as a downtown sidewalk sale possibly twice a year with suggest that our restaurants be involved by creating a special themed menu and hosting outdoor cooking as well as potential discounts for their fare based on customers total spend with our retailers during that day. These events will

be for the purpose of driving business as a retail event. *Committee: Promotions driven supported by all* Planning is underway details to follow in Feb.

- A better definition of the benefits of business membership in LTC. Survey all businesses not just our members to better understand how we may enhance and communicate these benefits. *Committee: Organization* This topic has been discussed on many occasions at many BOD meetings, the best method probably is to take a page from the DuPage County Visitors benefit statement and realign that to conform to LTC. Re-launch with the Passport program
- Formalize a static evaluation format for all events from all committees, report to the board and offer suggestion for improvements. *Committee: Board* We have surveyed the businesses for the Spooktacular but this process needs to be formalized. Due date end of 1/2011.
- Committee chairs to better track all volunteer hours worked, this is a must for recognition. *Committee: All* An electronic form needs to be completed, when we receive approval from the Presidential Recognition Forum they will provide all materials needed.
- Establish a report in Excel for reporting quarterly for all LTC goals and reviewed by the board. Automate as much of the report as possible. *Committee: Organization* This needs to be a priority will be addressed at the Dec board meeting
- Investigate grant possibilities to produce a downtown brochure that outlines all businesses, historical information and annual events. *Committee: ER* Karen is taking the lead with this, but has hit some financial roadblocks w/ the State
- Investigate marketing companies cost (possible grant) to produce a promotion piece on the downtown via video or inclusion in hotel / motel materials or promotional TV channel. *Committee: promotion and Organization* Looks to be cost prohibitive as of 12/10, I do not believe this is a possibility at this juncture unless we can obtain a grant.

Promotion Committee Goals

- Increasing the volunteer base by 20% to better manage events. Promotions has built a solid base of single event volunteers as well as by our board growing to 9 we have a number of new avenues that can be pursued.
- Develop a Facebook page for LTC that informs and drives patrons to our web site. See prior overall LTC goal
- Introduce a new Ladies Night Out event(s) during the summer. This is in the Promotion planning stage, after elections this will be headed by a Promotions co chair to be named
- Work closely with the Organization Committee in assisting with promoting their fundraising events. Working well
- Tightening up and expansion of Spooktacular, closing St Charles Rd during the event adding vendors and entertainment venues. Successfully completed and plans will be under way for 2011 in March.

- Gain feedback from all businesses and tally some members on the effectiveness of the Passport program. Evaluate with the Board and re-launch the program. Completed
- Expand the committee to 8 effective people to better distribute the work load. Promotions currently has 4 active members that have been stressed to carry the workload, however some of the assistance has come from Organization as these two committees work hand and hand. Still need additional members.
- Look into any grant programs that may be used to promote the downtown. Karen is heading this up
- Begin focus on a spring event for 2011. Working on an Egg Hunt but will need a work plan by Feb 2011...
- Appoint Co-Chairs for all events This has been working well for some events but all Chairs need to really prepare for all events and projects better in this area

Organization Committee Goals

Chair, Kim Cotton

- Gain a total of 10,000 in fund raising for 2010. New estimate including wine dinner 6000.00
- Expand the wine dinner and increase attendance to 70 from 35 last year, offer a better selection of pairings during dinner. 68 confirmed as of 11/29 – completed great result
- Add a golf outing fund raising event in August 2010, to be held at Western Acers Golf Course Completed went very well for our first outing, and expanding into 2011 looks good work plan beginning in Feb 2011
- Create a 3 level sponsorship program for donations. Completed, needs to be expanded and enhanced
- Continue with 2nd fund raising events Cut-a-Thon, Swap Meet, and Wine Dinner. Completed
- Create membership drive by hosting a get together at current member homes each month drive membership by promoting the Passport program and raising awareness of LTC to our residents in close proximity to the member's homes. Completed re-engage in Jan 2011
- Appoint Co-Chairs for all events.

Design Committee Goals

Committee Lead Ken Gallt

Based on the Design Committee's losing Tom Knapp in late 2009 we have been without a qualified leader until April 2010. Ken has shown much interest in LTC and has is a Landscape Engineer by profession. We welcome his leadership in our Design Committee, however, Design's goals are currently being established therefore we have very few. Ken has had some personal issues and has not been able to attend. LTC does not have a lead for this committee, as no one has any background that would be necessary to lead a group dedicated to design.

- Continue to support all committees where design is concerned from Spooktacular layout to greenery design for all events.

- Work with downtown businesses to increase the look and feel of the street scapes and entrances to their business.
- Work closely with ER and the Village to design and recommend the new entrance signage for W St Charles, E St Charles, N main and S Main St.

Economic Restructuring Committee Goals

Committee Chair Wayne Kankovsky

Wayne has only led this committee for a few months and this committee will add goals by June 2010, but only goals with a reasonable success factor.

- Work closely with Design and the Village for our new entrance signs. *Now a part of the Downtown Plan workgroup*
- Re-launch our quarterly business education series held in Capone's banquet room on the lower level. Probable topics include 1) Who what and where in the Village of Lombard, 2) Educational programs at COD, 3) How to increase sales by driving your web site, 4) How secure is your network? *Create a small ad-hoc committee, Dan and Karen, working on the first in the series for Feb 2011 – May 2011 – August 2011 and November 2011*
- Investigation and possible plan to bring Wi Fi to downtown. *Installation in December the Wi Fi is functional and being tested for expansion*
- Survey of business owners and their concerns regarding our downtown opportunities. *Working Colleen has also been involved as Promo Chair*

Executive Director

This new PT position will be officially employed by Lombard Town Centre but will be reporting to the Director of Community Development with a dotted line to the LTC President.

The primary purpose of this position is to promote economic development activities, keep the pulse on downtown, and fill vacant tenant spaces within downtown Lombard by understanding and utilizing Lombard development programs.

The essential functions of the position are recruitment of new business, retention and expansion of our current business base, develop and conduct on-going public awareness to enhance application of downtown Lombard.

Become familiar and communicate regularly with all businesses that may be or become interested in the various grant programs available.

Assist individual tenants and property owners as needed with improvement projects, and act as a liaison to the Village.

Monitor the economic development and track the progress of the downtown. This will be done by developing files that contain available properties, base rent, and appetite of the property owners to bring in new businesses and fill vacancies. These files will include photos, building files, documentation of any physical changes, recruiting efforts, follow up on those efforts, tours that have taken place, the

results and next steps of those tours, and statistics on job creation and potential sales tax that would be generated.

Represent LTC with presence at various Village functions as well as downtown grand openings and open houses.

Be present at various LTC and Village meetings.

This position should be filled with the following competencies.

Minimum of a bachelor's degree or experience in one or more of the following: Main Street programs, economics, finance, public relations, urban planning, business administration, commercial real estate, retailing, architecture, and small business development. Previous experience in the aforementioned areas is highly desirable.

The ED must be sensitive to economic development issues and understand the issues confronting the downtown businesses, property owners, public agencies and community organizations.

Additionally the ED must be: Entrepreneurial, energetic, imaginative, well organized, capable of performing independently, manage change very well, as well as possess excellent verbal communication and written skills. Project management skills are also desirable.

Finally, proficiency in Microsoft Office, Excel, Power Point, Quick Books, Constant Contact and other programs are desired. Web site management is a plus.

Happily completed with the addition of Karen Stonehouse

REPORT TO VILLAGE OF LOMBARD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

December 29, 2010

Prepared by: Karen L. Stonehouse, AICP, Lombard Town Centre Executive Director



Subject: Six-Month Assessment of Executive Director Position

Introduction: This report is intended to evaluate the role of the Executive Director (ED) of Lombard Town Centre (LTC), now that the position has been occupied for six months. A separate document accompanying this memo has been prepared to describe activities of the overall LTC organization over the last six months.

Background: In early 2010, the position of the ED was changed to part-time (30 hours per week) and the job description updated to reflect the Village's goals of bringing additional businesses to the Downtown area, strengthening existing businesses, and supporting other revitalization efforts such as the Downtown Plan.

On June 22, 2010, Karen Stonehouse started work as the new Executive Director of LTC. Karen has 20 years of urban planning experience in the public and private sectors, much of it focusing on Downtown revitalization.

In her first six months on the job, Karen has become acquainted with the people, the places, and the many issues that are integral to Downtown Lombard. She spent time familiarizing herself with the programs and policies of the Village that are so important to the process of revitalization. She also has visited and talked with the planners and Downtown Directors of other communities facing some of the same challenges. These information-gathering activities are ongoing while LTC moves forward with strategies to make the organization more representative of and responsive to the business community.

Discussion: The LTC ED job description (prepared by the Village Staff and LTC Officers) included the following list of "essential functions." Following each is a short commentary from the ED.

- 1. The primary purpose of this position is to promote economic development activities, keep the pulse on downtown, and fill vacant tenant spaces within downtown Lombard by understanding and utilizing Lombard development programs.***

The first order of business has been to understand the needs of businesspeople, property owners, and patrons, and begin to identify the obstacles that stand between the Downtown of today and a vibrant, economically sound commercial district. While a few of the current businesses do very well, others that are more reliant on pedestrian traffic are struggling. I believe that even in this auto-oriented world, a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streetscape is a necessary cornerstone that desperately needs to be improved in Lombard. While this is addressed in recommendations of the soon-to-be-adopted Downtown Plan, there are some

short-term measures that could be taken to make the area more welcoming for strollers and cyclists.

Lombard prides itself on being business-friendly, yet that is not coming across to many Downtown businesspeople. I believe that the solution needs to be multi-pronged: part communication and part substantive changes to policies and procedures that could be changed to stimulate investment and activity. On the communication side, which I feel is one of the most important reasons for the Village to support LTC as a critical partner, we are planning business workshops and producing a newsletter. On the public policy side, there are a number of discussions that should take place in coming months with the ECDC. I am keeping a list of potential policy updates and development incentives that could spur interest and investment over time.

The businesses in the Downtown are not like the corporate entities whose businesses occupy the mall and line the major arterial streets. Most of them do not have people, time, or extra money to spend on anything but maintaining the status quo. Helping these existing businesses and property owners to make small upgrades, however, is another “foundation” that could encourage expansion and attract new businesses. I will discuss these ideas and more detailed recommendations with Staff in preparation for future ECDC meetings. I feel that the success of efforts to recruit new restaurants and retail businesses hinges on fortifying the current businesses and the environment in which they operate.

2. *The essential functions of the position are recruitment of new business, retention and expansion of our current business base, develop and conduct on-going public awareness to enhance application of downtown Lombard.*

Due to the high vacancy rate, low pedestrian traffic, poor economy, and overall challenging conditions for businesses in the Downtown area, my main focus has been stabilizing and retaining existing downtown businesses. In addition, I have actively sought out entrepreneurs and have talked with several dozen potential business owners to discuss locating in downtown Lombard.

While I am currently working with several individuals about start-up businesses, few existing businesses are thinking about expansion. In addition, tight credit markets may hamper efforts for businesses to establish or expand. Next month I will meet with local bankers to discuss solutions to this problem.

In the area of public awareness, I am attending many events, talking with everyone I meet about the Downtown area, With the help of others at LTC, I am preparing a newsletter for publication in January.

3. *Become familiar and communicate regularly with all businesses that may be or become interested in the various grant programs available.*

I have talked with 80-90% of the business and property owners Downtown and a few dozen area residents. There is a valued group of residents that are actively involved in LTC as volunteers, and a handful of business owners. Recently, LTC has made efforts to build stronger participation from business and property owners, and several are running for the Board of Directors of LTC in the upcoming election.

The three incentive programs offered by the Village are a good start to piquing the interest of passers-by. There have been many conversations about potential businesses locating Downtown. More people on the sidewalks (back to the pedestrian-friendliness discussion) would certainly give a boost to the level of interest from potential businesses. Sensitive and appropriate modifications to the existing incentive programs should enhance their effectiveness.

4. *Assist individual tenants and property owners as needed with improvement projects, and act as a liaison to the Village.*

I have responded to several dozen inquiries about the Village's grant programs, sign code and other zoning code questions, property maintenance issues, and service requests. I regularly make suggestions to property owners and tenants as to property upkeep (requesting salt on sidewalk or dumpster moved out of pedestrian path, for example). I share information as requested and proactively with Downtown stakeholders as to Village plans, programs, policies, and resources for more information.

There are many small improvements to buildings that are not addressed by the grant program. While it is easy to argue that property owners should take care of these, a property owner without incoming revenue is hard-pressed to make any improvements. A few examples of the needs I have observed include: furnace and metering upgrades, interior work to make spaces ready for businesses other than retail and restaurants (in many cases it makes sense to fill spaces with office uses or other non-retail tenants just to get them filled and add activity in the area), business signage (write-down of Village permit fees), and assistance with improvements such as flooring or paint even before a tenant has been found for a space.

An issue that should be noted is that a few property owners seem relatively unconcerned that their buildings are vacant. While this is not the attitude of most owners, it does have an effect on the overall situation when not everyone is "on the same page." It may be that the tax write-off for unoccupied rental property is working against the desire to fill the spaces. Where this situation exists, discussions are needed with those owners to encourage potential marketing and sale of the buildings.

5. ***Monitor the economic development and track the progress of the downtown. This will be done by developing files that contain available properties, base rent, and appetite of the property owners to bring in new businesses and fill vacancies. These files will include photos, building files, documentation of any physical changes, recruiting efforts, follow up on those efforts, tours that have taken place, the results and next steps of those tours, and statistics on job creation and potential sales tax that would be generated.***

These efforts are underway. A great deal of work has been done to organize and add to the property data that exist. In January, a new student assistant to the ED will begin working at the LTC office 10 hours per week, paid for by a work-study program at Midwestern University. He will help with organizing the data and documentation on individual properties and keeping computer files up-to-date to allow less ED time in front of the computer and more in the field, working with current stakeholders and assisting potential new businesses. We want to prepare a map of property owners, a map of available properties, and other overlays as needed to easily track and convey Downtown conditions, issues, and progress. There may be a need for some upgrades to the computer system (both hardware and software) to enable useful mapping. The new assistant can also help our hard-working volunteers with special events and various committee projects.

6. ***Represent LTC with presence at various Village functions as well as downtown grand openings and open houses. (See #7)***
7. ***Be present at various LTC and Village meetings.***

I have attended and participated in meetings of the LTC Board of Directors, the LTC Downtown Forum, Village of Lombard Board of Trustees and Economic and Community Development Committee, Downtown Plan Working Committee, and various events such as Taste of Lombard, Cruise Nights, the Historical Society's Pub Quiz, local business events, French Market, Spooktacular, Jinglebell Jubilee, the LTC dinner fund raiser at Praga, and events in nearby communities.

Conclusion: Downtown Lombard is the historic heart of the Village. It is, for people who pass through the Village every day (on the train, and on St. Charles Road and Main Street), the front yard, the first and often only impression many people have of Lombard. While the intent of the ED position is focused on bringing new businesses to the Downtown, and to retaining and strengthening existing businesses, there are a host of issues need to be addressed in the process.

The volunteers of LTC work extremely hard to improve conditions in the area, and should be commended for the time and effort they put in. LTC is creating stronger working relationships with the local business community to maximize its efforts, and the ED is leveraging all available resources to renew the spirit of cooperation and sense of opportunity. We appreciate the high priority of the Downtown to the Village of Lombard, and look forward to a new year of accomplishments.