

## **First Avenue Business Corridor Meeting**

**May 8, 2007**

**Pioneer Workspace Solutions**

**11:45 a.m.**

**Present:** Kevin Platz (CR Area Ass. of Realtors), Phil Wasta (Pioneer Workspace Solutions), John Wasta (Pioneer Workspace Solutions), Richard Marsceau (Brewed Awakenings), Scott Crosby (EnCompass), Betsy Westphalen (Wells Fargo), Richard Luther (City of CR), Sandi Fowler (City of CR), Joe Nosek (Mound View Neighborhood Ass.), Brent Heinz (Hy-Vee), Rev. W. B. Harnish (Wedding Chapel), Carey Hamilton (Fun City), Scott Kallemeyn (Surgery Center), Matt Teply (Wells Fargo), Kristina Mattison-Bohr (Mound View Neighborhood Ass.), Doug Neumann (Downtown District), Gloria Johnson (Partnership for Safe Families), Cindy Davis (Health Hut), Craig Erickson (Music Loft), Rod Pritchard (Coe College), Erin Lenninger (Coe College)

### **Downtown District Information**

Doug Neumann, President/CEO of the Cedar Rapids Downtown District, spoke about Cedar Rapids' Downtown District. He described a "two-tiered" area of responsibility in these districts. The first tier being the SSMID (Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District) that financially supports the area and the second tier consisting of neighboring businesses that have a vested interest in the same area. The Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID ends at 6<sup>th</sup> Street on First Avenue. There also exists a "medical corridor" that needs to be more clearly defined. JLG Architects have suggested that this area be celebrated by the city, but the community needs to determine if and where it fits into the downtown plans.

Doug shared that there are two separate boards that govern the two tiers of the downtown district, one for the SSMID and another broader district board. A SSMID was described as a district that administers a tax and the money collected is used however those businesses want. The amount can change and the use can change according to the members. Doug shared that the SSMID previously collected \$3 on every \$1000 in assessed property value but will soon change to \$2.73 per \$1000. They also recently went through a renewal of the district and went out to recruit more businesses to join the group. It requires a considerable amount of sweat equity and determination to go after reluctant or absent property owners, but the district was expanded and the boundaries moved to include willing participants. He pointed out that you need to know the benefits of the membership and have concrete advantages to sell to potential members.

Richard Luther emphasized the SSMID's use as a tool for a group with boundaries and goals. It provides some funds that can be used for the district's own initiatives and can help in securing additional funding. It provides incentive to buy-in from other businesses and the city. John Wasta explained that the desire for improved streetscapes and increased ability to "draw" people into this Mound View area is what led to the discussion of a SSMID for this group. It will take money to recreate the atmosphere in this area and a SSMID is one way of securing that.

### **Boundaries**

Boundaries were once again discussed and it was agreed to continue mailing to the businesses/local deed holders between 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets. Kristina Mattison-Bohr wanted to ensure that there isn't a block or two gap between this and the downtown districts. The width of this district now includes businesses on either side of First Avenue, however, as interest increases, the group could broaden the boundary as needed.

### **Safety**

Mattison-Bohr also brought up the safety and security issues that residents and businesses alike face in this area. The concern about personal safety prevents many potential customers from walking around and patronizing the area. It was pointed out that there are many police in the area but that they are continuously busy. They themselves are frustrated at arresting criminals only to see them out in the neighborhood again the next day. Until the crime issue is addressed, improving streetscapes may not necessarily increase business. It was suggested that this business group invite the county attorney & sheriff/police to a meeting to discuss these concerns. Gloria Johnson also thought the Gary Hinzman, judicial district director for 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, should be included as many of his clients are in this neighborhood.

An executive committee was formed that will meet more frequently and ensure efficiency of the larger group meetings. The following members volunteered: Scott Crosby, Brent Heinz, Richard Marsceau, Cindy Davis, Rod Pritchard and Erin Lenninger. This group will meet on May 17 to gather name/logo ideas and draft a mission statement. The ideas will be presented to the larger group at their next meeting, June 12 at Wells Fargo at 8 a.m.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, June 12, 8 a.m., Wells Fargo, 1800 First Ave. NE – east entrance