

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 29, 2010

TO: Bingham Farms Roundtable Participants

FROM: David C. Birchler, Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.

SUBJECT: 2010 Business Roundtable Proceedings

Thank you for your recent participation in Bingham Farms first annual Business Roundtable. We have attached the “Proceedings” from the Roundtable for your review. The document has been approved by the Planning Commission and the Village has already set certain implementation actions in motion. Those include:

- Village Council has agreed to create a Business Marketing & Development Task Force that will include Village Council, Planning Commission and Business representatives – look for more on this soon.
- The Planning Commission has already begun a discussion of how the Village sign regulations might be amended to afford better identification of Village businesses.
- The Planning Commission has requested funding from Council to develop a concept and design guidelines for Village entry signage that would establish a unique identity for the Village. The Commission will be concentrating on design features that are transferable to some business sign designs and could be incorporated into wayfinding signs throughout the corridor.

Please watch for future updates at the Village Website:

<http://binghamfarms.org/>



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Business Roundtable Proceedings

Village of Bingham Farms

August 10, 2010

As an element of its 5-year Master Plan Reevaluation, the Bingham Farms Planning Commission convened its inaugural Business Roundtable in order to solicit input directly from the business community. The Roundtable drew 19 participants including: property owners, business owners, leasing professionals, commercial developers and Village Officials from the Council and Planning Commission. Representatives included such professions as commercial leasing, attorneys in private practice, investors, property developers, design professionals, and members of the Village's Council, Planning Commission and Design Review Board.

Participants Experience

Most, if not all, the participants had experience with the development review and approval process, either in Bingham Farms or another community. For those from commercial development, real estate law, and property management and leasing backgrounds, this often included experience in many cities and states other than Michigan. Each attendee participated actively in the stakeholder exercises and the discussions were lively.

Survey Exercise

Fifteen of 19 participants completed a questionnaire (the Village Manager and Village Planner facilitated but did not participate). Eighty percent 80% of the completed questionnaires came from stakeholders other than Village Officials. Ninety-three percent 93% of respondents indicated that a community's development review process was an important locational decision; however, 80% answered that there were more important considerations than the approval process alone. 80% of respondents also indicated that the special land use approval process would not cause them to avoid Bingham Farms as a community in which they might do business. (This is consistent with the findings of national studies that suggest investors believe quality community regulations protect their investment from the adverse impacts of a bad neighbor).

Online availability of a community's master plan and zoning ordinance was rated Important or very Important by 100% of survey respondents. Likewise 100% indicated it is important for a community to have a development procedures manual to help guide applicants smoothly through the approvals process.

All but one respondent considered it to be very important that the Village offer pre-application meetings, designed to acquaint applicants with the Village's procedures and to permit them to present their proposal informally for feedback. 86% of respondents would like to be able to

track their application's progress online. All respondents indicated it is important that a community exhibit a positive attitude toward development, and 80% felt it was important that they only be required to seek approval from a single board or commission. The same 80% indicated that an efficient approval process is a factor that identifies a community as a good place to invest.

Individual Survey Results

Participants offered a variety of suggestions regarding ways that the Village could stand out as a location for new investment. These included:

- Provide greater flexibility within the development approval process
- Engage in marketing efforts design to present the Village as pro-business and a good place to invest
- Consider giving priority in the review process to "green" projects by assembling packages of pre-approved incentives
- Strive to maintain high quality standards for Village board and commission membership
- Require approval from a single board or commission and promote more involvement by staff
- Provide greater recognition of the importance of time in the development approval process
- Provide as much online assistance as possible
- Strive for quick response time – if answers are not available immediately, let the applicant know when to expect an answer (ensuring certainty in the process)
- Make staff available for guidance from the pre-application stage all the way through to final approval
- Provide clear, objective standards in place of "design" meetings with boards or commissions
- Make the review process efficient: multiple meetings, levels of review, and approval stages result in delays that drive up the cost of a project

Group Exercise Recommendations & Priorities

The Roundtable's primary group exercise was a lively discussion on a wide range of topics – all oriented toward improving the economic health and vitality of the Village's business districts.

Before adjourning the meeting, each participant was asked to help prioritize the resulting ideas by placing colored dots next to those deemed most important.

The priority exercise was not designed to diminish the importance of any one idea – only to help Village Officials and private parties decide on a starting point and identify an orderly strategy for implementation.

- Facilitating the development review process in order to make the Village a more attractive business location **(15 votes)**
- Review Village Sign Regulations to allow for more effective corporate identity **(12 votes)**
- Improve landscaping and aesthetics of the Telegraph median to help justify rents similar to those in Bloomfield Hills **(12 votes)**
- Develop an Urban Design Plan for the corridor that would provide visual and functional identity for the Village business district **(10 votes)**
- Develop a system of amenities that provide a community feel and make it possible for workers to walk – for exercise, to lunch, and the like **(8 votes)**
- The Village should concentrate on providing amenities that help tie the many private properties together – with landscape design, pathways, and functional or interest area nodes **(8 votes)**
- Develop a marketing package of basic PR for the area through print ads, the Village website or a new website devoted exclusively to the business district, as well as the use of such tools as Facebook, Linked In, Twitter and the like for interactive new media PR practices. **(5 votes)**
- Continue the Roundtable dialog beyond today’s meeting through the creation of a public-private, Village-business task force that would be oriented toward implementation actions **(4 votes)**
- Create an ambiance or atmosphere for the corridor through a unique system of signs and landscaping **(4 votes)**
- A sluggish approval process can result in a lost tenant **(3 votes)**
- Better coordination of individual building management within complexes **(3 votes)**
- Design and install entry / identity signs for Bingham Farms **(3 votes)**
- Developer needs to be perceived as a contributing business **(3 votes)**

- Most Zoning Ordinances require too much parking – wasting valuable land **(3 votes)**
- Provide a Business Directory on the Village website **(2 votes)**
- Some Village development is stuck in a time warp with nothing making it special or contemporary **(2 votes)**
- Should strive to become a showcase for innovative design & development **(2 votes)**
- Individual properties would benefit from internal pedestrian and auto connections **(2 votes)**
- Time & certainty are most important commodities Village can offer **(2 votes)**
- A single priority vote was cast for the group’s recommendation that a promotional package be assembled that identifies what the Village has to offer to prospective new businesses, developments, and redevelopment **(1 vote)**
- Base approval on objective standards instead of a design charrette **(0 votes)**
- Objective criteria should reflect the Village’s desired outcomes **(0 votes)**
- Visibility of back buildings is a challenge – better wayfinding signs **(0 votes)**
- Maintenance of public improvements is essential **(0 votes)**
- Allow more creative forms of development with less concern about use **(0 votes)**
- Need more, convenient barrier-free and customer parking **(0 votes)**
- Building management coordination may need to be facilitated by Village **(0 votes)**

Next Steps For Action / Implementation

- 1) Appoint 5 - 7 members to a Business Promotion & Development Task Force
- 2) Review the Village Sign Regulations for ways to enhance business identification
- 3) Develop effective promotion of Village’s streamlined approval process
- 4) Promote Village through low-cost, interactive, new media public relations avenues
- 5) Outline the content and scope of an Urban Design Plan for the business corridor