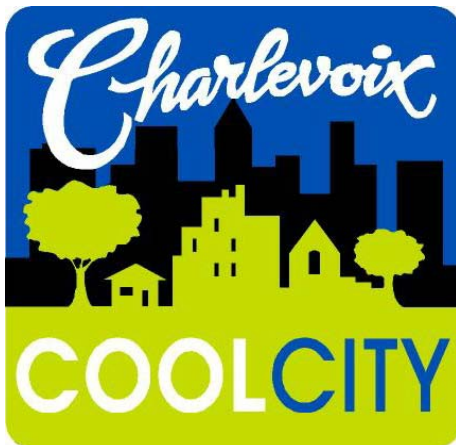


Charlevoix

Downtown Blueprint 2007



Executive Summary

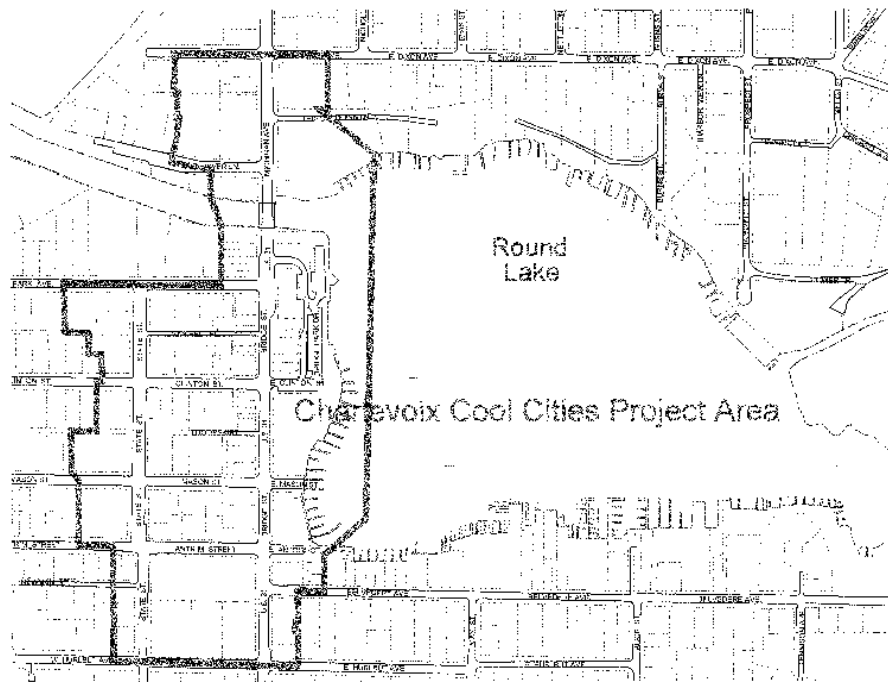
*Offered by the Charlevoix
Downtown Development Authority*

This document should be considered an executive summary of the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 – a HyettPalma-produced strategy for revitalizing Downtown Charlevoix. The content of this executive summary is taken exclusively from the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007, in some cases verbatim. Specific page citations from the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 follow each section should readers wish to peruse the specific sections of the complete report. For a full copy of the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007, please click on <http://www.cityofcharlevoix.org/CoolCity.pdf> or visit Charlevoix City Hall.

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW (PAGES 1-3)

Charlevoix is one of five communities selected as a “Cool City” in 2006. The other designees are Muskegon Heights, Oscoda, Petoskey and Tecumseh. Upon Charlevoix’s designation, the city qualified for a 50 percent state matching grant with which to undertake the creation of the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007. This resulted in a cooperative effort of citizens, businesses and government seeking to create a thriving year-round downtown business district to attract jobs, people and opportunity not only to our Downtown, but to our entire area. This effort seeks to utilize the proven success stories of the most competitive downtowns in the United States while preserving the unique charm and appeal of Downtown Charlevoix.

The Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 is an action-oriented strategy document produced by the nationally recognized downtown development consulting firm HyettPalma. HyettPalma utilized a wide array of information about Charlevoix’s Downtown to construct a strategy to revitalize Charlevoix’s Downtown in a 3 – 5 year period.



III. DOWNTOWN CHARLEVOIX TODAY (PAGES 4-8)

Downtown Charlevoix, while currently facing some challenges, also enjoys a number of factors that bode well for its future success. These factors include:

- An active and well-respected Downtown Development Authority (DDA);
- Traditional anchor establishments such as a grocery store, pharmacy, city hall, chamber of commerce and movie theater;
- Many established businesses reporting annual sales increases;
- An attractive mix of popular restaurants and bars;
- A variety of unique specialty shops;
- Many lodging options;
- Professional offices and a new library facility in close proximity;
- A lively summer waterfront location;
- Positive perceptions among its residents who use words like safe, quaint, clean, friendly, welcoming, picturesque and charming to describe its ambiance; and
- Convenient proximity to lakes, beaches, skiing and golfing.

These positive characteristics aside, Downtown Charlevoix does face challenges to becoming the vibrant, year-round community it aspires to be. These challenges include:

- Vacant storefronts;
- Seasonality;
- Affordability of rents for business owners and of merchandise for shoppers;
- Business mix and turnover;
- Possible niche, given that Downtown is “sandwiched between Petoskey and Traverse City;”
- Perception that Downtown is “too expensive for locals;”
- Traffic and parking; and
- Leadership.

Participants in the Downtown Blueprint process were asked to share their desires for Downtown’s future. The desires most often mentioned were:

- More emphasis on selective and aggressive business development;
- Grow and expand Downtown’s current three month season to year-round;
- Enable Downtown to serve local and seasonal residents and tourists;
- Improve the health of Downtown’s economy;
- Make Downtown more of a multi-dimensional, mixed-use area;
- Stimulate private investment in Downtown; and
- Retain Downtown’s uniqueness, charm, character, warmth, and ties to/views of the water.

IV. APPROACH (PAGES 8-10)

1. Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

The DDA should continue to take the lead role in spearheading Downtown's further enhancement by continuing to bring about public improvements of high quality, placing emphasis on conducting targeted, aggressive business development and hiring a Downtown Director to lead the day-to-day implementation of the aforementioned tasks.

2. Mix

Implementation of the Downtown Blueprint should be used to broaden Downtown's mix of uses in the following manner:

- Additional housing units at all price points located in Downtown;
- Retail, food, art and entertainment uses should be clustered on Bridge Street;
- The City ordinance prohibiting offices from being located in street level space on Bridge Street should be kept in place;
- The maximum amount of outdoor seating at food establishments should be encouraged – on sidewalks, decks, rooftops, etc.; and
- Office and service businesses should be located on Downtown's side streets, on State Street and in upper floors of buildings throughout Downtown.

3. Niche

Downtown should be positioned as having the following niche:

*Charlevoix's cultural center,
and the hub of its community life,
that's filled with music, art, food, and fun, and
offers a historic, waterfront experience.*

4. Marketing

A four-pronged marketing campaign should be developed for Downtown Charlevoix, as follows:

- The Chamber of Commerce should continue to hold events in Downtown and should add events to its calendar that grow Downtown's shoulder seasons;
- The CVB should feature Downtown in all its literature;
- The DDA should conduct a year-round advertising campaign and media relations effort, both of which should be aimed at year-round residents of the area; and
- Downtown business owners should participate in Downtown events and the DDA-led advertising campaign, as well as conduct their own marketing efforts.

V. RESIDENT & BUSINESS SURVEYS (PAGES 11-15)

Please see pages 12-15 of the complete Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 for details.

VI. DOWNTOWN CHARLEVOIX TOMORROW (PAGES 16-19)

A series of discussions, focus groups, and meetings were held to define the communities preferred vision of Downtown Charlevoix – as it would ideally exist in the year 2012. These thoughts and preferences expressed during these sessions are listed below. Downtown Charlevoix would feature:

- A charming, welcoming, classy, family-friendly Downtown;
- Mixed and complimentary uses and open space;
- Better mixes of activities for all generations;
- Clean water and beautiful views;
- A respected and celebrated local artist community;
- A marketing plan in place to help property owners fill vacancies with year-round, viable businesses;
- A variety of year-round, practical businesses allowing it to serve all;
- More activities after 5:00 p.m.;
- More sidewalk cafes and benches;
- More winter activities, such as an ice rink;
- More pedestrians on Downtown’s sidewalks during the winter months;
- The preservation of historic building and homes;
- More parking and more convenient parking;
- Continued strong leadership from the DDA.

VII. DOWNTOWN MARKET ANALYSIS (PAGES 20-35)

Please see pages 21-35 of the complete Downtown Blueprint 2007 for details.

VIII. COURSE OF ACTION (PAGES 36-39)

Please see pages 36-39 of the complete Downtown Blueprint 2007 for details.

IX. PUBLIC ACTIONS (PAGES 40-46)

1. Wayfinding

A comprehensive sign system should be created to direct motorists and pedestrians to Charlevoix, to community attractions, to Downtown and to Downtown’s major attractions.

2. Tree Lights

Local interest in having small white tree lights remain lighted all year long is strong. At a minimum, lights should be kept in trees year-round and lighted when not obscured by foliage.

3. Water Views

The City and DDA should be most protective of view corridors to and from the water and should encourage the creation of Downtown housing and restaurants with water views, whenever possible.

4. Paths

Downtown should be made an integral part of Charlevoix's hike/bike path system. In addition, a hike/bike path should be created to connect Downtown and the new library.

5. Bike Racks

Bike racks should be strategically placed on side streets in Downtown in close proximity to Bridge Street.

6. Accessibility

Care should be taken to ensure accessibility for those in wheelchairs and strollers at Downtown intersections, the bridge and in East Park.

7. Winter Activities

Consideration should be given to opening an ice rink, bowling alley and/or a YMCA-type facility in Downtown to encourage year-round use of the Downtown.

8. Bridge

The feeling of pedestrian-safety should be increased for those crossing the drawbridge that spans Bridge Street by considering placing a railing at the curb line to buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic and/or creating a wider pedestrian section of the bridge crossing.

9. Snow

All owners of first-floor businesses located on Bridge Street should diligently keep their sidewalks free of snow.

10. Traffic and Parking

Regarding traffic issues, the City must continue to work with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to:

- Seek ways to protect pedestrians while maintaining traffic flow;
- Make sure crosswalks are clearly marked;
- Explore options for a possible through-truck route; and
- Not create one-way streets.

Parking challenges should be address by:

- Paving and signing all existing public parking lots in Downtown;
- Encouraging business owners and employees to park in off-street spaces – and NOT on Bridge Street;
- Considering the removal of parking meters from Bridge Street;
- Institute a two-hour parking limit on Bridge Street;
- Increase current parking fines;
- Offer over-parkers one “grace” ticket per month, and;
- Abolish the City’s “in lieu of” parking fees assessed to businesses which create outdoor seating and reimburse fees already paid into this fund.

As Downtown's market is strengthened, Downtown property owners will see an increase in value. As this occurs, consideration should be given to:

- Marketing appropriate surface level lots to private investors for the development of Downtown housing. Developers should be required to provide on-site parking for residents as well as on-site public parking equivalent to the number of spaces contained on the surface level lot; and
- DDA-built parking ramps on current surface lots not appropriate for housing development.

11. DDA Concept Plan

The DDA is in the process of having a "concept plan" developed for Downtown. In doing so, the DDA should:

- Refrain from unduly planning private property;
- Attempt to convey the small town, quaint, historic character of Downtown with respect to future entry features, kiosks, signs, trash receptacles, benches, banners, etc.; and
- Utilize appropriate trees, and landscaping so as not to obstruct views of business storefronts or business signs and not jeopardize the feeling of safety by improperly screening parking lots and other common areas.

12. Historic District

The City's Historic District Study Committee is currently conducting the necessary research to create a local historic district in Downtown. This is a worthy effort since such designation will protect Downtown's ambiance, character, physical appeal and property values. In moving forward, the Historic District Study Committee and the Historic District Commission should consider the following:

- Retain an architectural historian to complete necessary research;
- Create specific guidelines geared to the types of architecture found in Downtown Charlevoix. These guidelines should address building facades, signs and infill construction through text and illustrations;
- Architectural "themes" should not be created for Downtown; and
- Consider completing a façade study for Bridge Street in order to assist, guide and illustrate to owners what the facades of their buildings might look like if they were to follow the design guidelines. The Historic District Commission should not, however, require owners to rigidly comply with the study illustrations.

13. Meeting Facility

If such a facility is built, it **MUST** be located in Downtown. This is essential in order to maintain Downtown's role as the hub of community life.

14. Post Office

The City should approach the United State Postal Service to discuss the possibility of locating a small retail facility in Downtown.

15. Boat Slips

Upon final completion of the marina expansion project, consideration should be given to creating more of a balance between the number of transient docks and the number of shoppers' docks offered. This allocation should remain fluid and be based upon market demand through an annual review and evaluation.

16. Public Safety

By all accounts, Downtown is considered to be tremendously safe at this time, for which the Charlevoix Police Department should be commended. The City should continue to make use of an on-street, friendly Downtown police presence during peak periods.

17. Outdoor Seating

The City should encourage as much outdoor seating as possible in Downtown food establishments by:

- Being as lenient as possible in allowing tables and chairs to be placed on public right-of-way; and
- Allowing licensed restaurants to serve alcoholic beverages (with food) at outdoor tables.

X. PRIVATE ACTIONS (PAGES 46-55)

1. Business Development

The DDA should conduct a targeted and aggressive effort to recruit businesses to Downtown. Goals of this effort should include:

- Filling vacant storefronts with businesses that serve Downtown's markets, attract more and more customers to Downtown and thereby, increase profitability in Downtown;
- Extend Downtown's season;
- Attract businesses that remain open year-round;
- Attract appropriate prospects willing and able to sign longer-term leases; and
- Encourage greater owner-occupancy in Downtown.

Steps to achieve the aforementioned goals include:

- A media relations campaign to grown Downtown's market, get the word out about the types of businesses sought for Downtown and stimulate the interest of prospects;
- Cooperation between the DDA and property owners to help them find and choose tenants that are of the optimum types for Downtown and that will sign longer-term leases;
- Appropriate progressive rent schedules offered by property owners, whereby rent levels increase as a proportion of a business's revenues;
- Internal recruitment of possible businesses first, including meeting with current business owners regarding opening additional businesses Downtown;
- A field investigation to identify business prospects throughout the primary trade and throughout northern Michigan featuring personal contact, invitations to visit Downtown, meetings with building owners and additional assistance; and
- Securing the assistance of the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance in taking the above steps.

Initial business sought for Downtown Charlevoix should include the following business types:

- Restaurants – ethnic, family, water view, with entertainment, with outdoor seating;
- Casual and affordable apparel;
- Craft and art galleries;
- Art classes;
- Day spa;
- Home décor and interior design services;
- Gifts;
- Indoor recreation – bowling, exercise, dance, etc. and
- Water/outdoor-related equipment rentals – bikes, boats, skates, skies, etc.

For a full listing of business and other uses for Downtown, please see pages 49-51 in the complete Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007.

2. Housing

The private sector should be induced to create additional housing units in Downtown by:

- Creating upper story loft apartments wherever possible;
- Participating in the Rental Rehab program offered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) to create a mix of affordable and market rate housing units;
- Encourage the construction of mixed-use structures; and
- Encouraging housing with water views, while protecting view corridors.

3. Marketing

A four-pronged marketing campaign should be developed for Downtown Charlevoix, including:

- Charlevoix Area Chamber of Commerce – The Chamber of Commerce should take the following steps in marketing Downtown:
 - A. Evaluate all existing Downtown events and activities sponsored by the Chamber to determine how to freshen, improve, or augment them;
 - B. Grow Downtown's shoulder seasons by adding events/activities in the last half of May, September and the first half of October;
 - C. Augment the Downtown farmer's market to include prepared foods, art, crafts and entertainment;
 - D. Consider revamping the Christmas Open House to cover a shorter period of time – such as prime evening family hours – and become a “homecoming” for local residents;
 - E. Ensure that the Downtown section of the Chamber's website contains up-to-the-minute information regarding Downtown activities, entertainment, business promotions, etc.;
 - F. Continue offering hospitality training workshops for those who deal with the visiting public and increase attendance by having the sessions taught by a “big name”; and

G. With the DDA and CVB, create a “lure brochure” that conveys the unique experience offered by Downtown that shows the location of public parking and that is widely distributed throughout the trade area and Michigan.

- Charlevoix Area Convention & Visitors Bureau – The CVB should feature Downtown in all of its literature by creating a separate Downtown section in each of its print pieces that conveys all there is to see and do and enjoy in Downtown.
- Charlevoix Downtown Development Authority – The Chamber and CVB should market Downtown as a great place to spend time. The DDA should market Downtown as a great place to spend time AND to spend money – e.g., to shop, eat, stay overnight, etc. This should be done via the following:
 - A. The DDA should create an image ad campaign for Downtown. The image ads should be used to market Downtown as a unique experience and should be run year-round;
 - B. Working with Downtown business owners, the DDA should create a collective ad campaign that also runs year-round. The collective ads would promote specific businesses that participate in the campaign;
 - C. The DDA should consider seeking professional assistance – from a marketing firm – to create the image ads and collective ads;
 - D. The DDA should conduct a tireless, year-round media relations effort. This would entail developing a rapport with all major print and electronic media throughout the trade area and getting positive stories about Downtown placed on a regular basis. The media campaign should be aimed at attracting customers and business prospects to Downtown; and
 - E. The DDA should work with the Chamber and the CVB to develop the Downtown brochure mentioned above.
- Downtown Business Owners – Downtown business owners should assume personal responsibility for marketing their businesses by:
 - A. Participating in the collective advertising campaign and in Downtown events;
 - B. Individually advertising their own businesses, on a year-round basis;
 - C. Developing in-house mailing lists through in-store guest books; and
 - D. Offering a discount for local residents, perhaps through the presentation of a driver’s license or local library card.
- Coordinate – The Chamber, CVB and DDA should meet periodically to coordinate their marketing efforts and to ensure their actions and resources are being leveraged to the greatest degree possible.

XI. PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS (PAGES 56-60)

The most successful Downtown enhancement efforts nationwide are those implemented by a partnership of the public, business, non-profit, and residential sectors of the community. For Downtown Charlevoix to reach its full potential, Downtown's key leaders and constituents from those sectors must continue to:

- Plan together and implement together – in partnership;
- Embrace a shared direction and unified voice;
- Provide the strong and persistent leadership needed for implementation to occur; and
- Take effective and quality action – and stimulate others to take such action – that is in the best interest of Downtown as a whole.

In addition to the recommended responsibilities outlined earlier for the DDA, Chamber of Commerce and CVB, the City Council should continue its strong support of the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007.

Revenues are vital to the long-term success of the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007. The following sources should be considered:

- State, Township and County governments;
- City government;
- Bed tax;
- Federal programs;
- Non-profit groups;
- Industry, corporations, and major employers;
- Business owners, commercial property owners, and real estate developers;
- Banks, utilities, and other institutions;
- Area foundations;
- Service clubs; and
- Any individual entity or institution that stands to benefit from an enhanced Downtown Charlevoix.

To gauge the success of the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 and to satisfy requirements of participation in the Downtown Blueprints program, annual benchmarks should be collected and submitted to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). These benchmarks include:

- Total taxable value of property in Downtown;
- Number of new jobs created;
- Dollar amount of new private investment;
- Public improvements and their costs;
- Economic development tools utilized;
- List of business openings;
- List of business closings;
- Total number of businesses in Downtown;

- Total number of housing units;
- Occupied retail space (sq. ft.);
- Vacant retail space (sq. ft.);
- Occupied office space (sq. ft.);
- Vacant office space (sq. ft.);
- Occupied residential space (sq. ft.); and
- Vacant residential space (sq. ft.).

The Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 should be adopted by the DDA as its official guide for Downtown's further enhancement. And it is hoped that the City Council will adopt the Downtown Blueprint as the Downtown element of the city's comprehensive plan.

Further, the DDA, the City Council and all of their staff and advisors must recognize that – to yield the desired results – the Downtown Blueprint **MUST** be implemented in its entirety. Since all of Downtown's issues are inter-related, so are all of the Blueprint recommendations. Therefore, selectively choosing which of the recommended actions to implement and which to not would be a great disservice to Downtown Charlevoix.

XII. IMPLEMENTATION SEQUENCE (PAGES 61-64)

The Downtown Blueprint contains numerous actions recommended for revitalizing Downtown Charlevoix. Below are the recommended actions that should be carried out within the **FIRST YEAR** of the enhancement effort:

Partnership and Management Actions

1. Formal adoption of the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 by the DDA as the Downtown plan.
2. Formal adoption by the City Council of the Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 as the Downtown element of the City's comprehensive plan.
3. Hire a Downtown Director.
4. Seek additional funding as needed, as per the recommendations of the Downtown Blueprint.
5. Document results through benchmarking.

Public Actions

1. Design and install wayfinding system.
2. Extend tree lighting.
3. Continue to protect water view corridors.
4. Fully link Downtown with City's path system.
5. Create a pedestrian path to connect new library and heart of Downtown.
6. Place bike racks strategically throughout Downtown.
7. Ensure that Downtown is accessible to wheelchair patrons and patrons with strollers.
8. Reintroduce ice rink into East Park plan.
9. Work with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to enhance pedestrian safety on Bridge Street bridge.
10. Ensure timely removal of snow from Downtown sidewalks.
11. Continue working with MDOT to ensure maximum pedestrian safety, particularly on Bridge Street.
12. Clearly mark pedestrian crosswalks.

13. Remove parking meters.
14. Introduce two hour parking time limit and license tag monitoring system.
15. Abolish “in lieu of” parking fee for restaurant outdoor seating expansion.
16. Create a Downtown local historic district, as per recommendations of the Downtown Blueprint.
17. Work to create a balance between transient and shopper’s dock slips with opening of new slips.
18. Continue providing the maximum number of foot and bike police patrols in Downtown during heavy pedestrian times.
19. Encourage maximum amount of outdoor seating at food establishments – extended into shoulder season with use of heaters.

Private Actions

1. Conduct targeted business recruitment, as per recommendations of the Downtown Blueprint.
2. Encourage development of the maximum number of Downtown housing units – both market-rate and affordable, particular in mixed-use buildings.
3. Institute and implement four-pronged marketing effort, as per recommendations of the Downtown Blueprint.

XIII. APPENDICES (PAGES 65-67)

Please see pages 65-67 of the complete Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 for related documents.

IXV. THE RETAIL REPORT® (PAGES 66-116)

Please see pages 66-116 of the complete Charlevoix Downtown Blueprint 2007 for The Retail Report® -- a market and demographic study of Downtown Charlevoix primary retail trade area.