

## Downtown Ahead | Town Meeting & Workshop



A public town meeting and workshop was conducted on May 2, 2012 to collect community and stakeholder input on topics and subjects relevant to the Downtown Wayland Market Study & Strategies project. The open invitation forum was facilitated to provide an overview of the market study process and to collect local input and perspectives on downtown Wayland business development efforts and related topics. Following is a compiled summary of input collected during this the workshop.

### **Workshop Activity One: A Look Inside Downtown Wayland**

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A workshop exercise was facilitated to collect input and to begin to build consensus on possible “selling points,” short-term priorities and directions for the future of downtown Wayland. Following is a summary of compiled responses from six workshop groups.

#### **1. *Best things about downtown Wayland:***

- Attractive – good curb appeal
- Centrality of town – close to everything
- Community events – parade, Summer Celebration, Art Hop
- Convenience
- Existing businesses, library, park
- Friendly people
- Good base of elements to support needed growth
- Great library and mini-park
- Infrastructure potential
- Main Street program
- Parking , accessibility to downtown businesses
- Potential
- Safe and “great feeling” – kid friendly
- Safe – friendly – history
- “Small town” feeling
- Some nice local businesses
- Walkability – good architecture
- Walkability and easy access to City Hall, MMS
- Walkable



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### 2. *Single words or distinguishing features that best describe downtown today:*

- Compact
- Emerging
- Family-friendly
- Friendly ♥♥
- Historic ♥
- Information and classes
- Outdated
- Potential
- Quaint ♥♥
- Safe ♥♥♥
- Streetscape (flowers)

### 3. *Downtown Wayland's most glaring weakness or shortcomings:*

- Facades (some)
- Lack of diverse business opportunities
- Lack of diverse retail
- Lack of marketing of the city
- Lack of parking
- Lack of turn lane
- Lack of unique shops/shopping opportunity
- Marketing
- Nothing for kids/teenagers to do
- Outdated facades
- Parking
- Parking (signage, directing to)
- Poor curb appeal
- Poor self-image/complacency
- Senior center/entertainment
- Signage – lack of compliance
- Traffic flow – turn lanes needed
- Vacant buildings ♥♥

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### **4. *Reasons for someone to expand, open a business, or invest in Downtown Wayland:***

- Affordable
- Boomers moving here
- Casino draws more people to the area
- Casino drives traffic
- Close to 131, Grand Rapids, Gun Lake Casino and lakes
- DDA/Chamber/support
- Five schools located downtown brings in a lot of parents
- Ground floor opportunities
- Growing community
- Healthy community and balanced community
- Largest location between Kalamazoo and GR
- Location
- Location – bedroom community of GR and Kazoo
- MMS Program
- School district
- Start a business and family in Wayland “family friendly”
- Support from Chamber, Main Street program, etc
- Tight-knit community
- Untapped market

### **5. *Issues or challenges to business development efforts in Downtown Wayland:***

- Absentee property owners
- Available space
- Capital – hard to find financing
- Conditions of buildings
- Cost of renovations of vacant buildings
- Downtown too far from highway
- Easy access to GR businesses, Hastings, Plainwell/Otsego
- Expansion of businesses by 131
- High taxes
- Lack of attractions/activities
- Lack of identity
- Lack of knowledge/education for start-up businesses
- Lack of space for business expansion
- Lack of zoning and enforcement
- Limited space in downtown businesses
- No reason to invest in real estate
- Owners not reasonable on base or sale
- Parking



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**6. *Things that should be done within the next three years in order to make Downtown Wayland an even better place to start a business and/or invest:***

- Add parking
- Bakery, banquet center
- Business incubator downtown: DDA buy building then rent space
- Continuation of the MMS program
- Create a niche – find something unique and make it “Wayland’s Own”
- Cut taxes for incentives/millage decrease
- Events to draw people in
- Expand facade program – grants
- Family establishments: restaurant, theaters, skating, etc.
- Market property/assistance available
- More activities for kids, teenagers, families
- Motel/hotel
- Real estate investors
- Trails and completion of the Complete Street Project
- Wayland needs “brand”



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### Workshop Activity Two: Downtown Wayland Business Opportunities

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Work groups completed a business development exercise designed to collect input on specific types of new and expanded businesses that could be successful in downtown Wayland. Following is a summary of the results.

#### Group A

1. **List three specific types of new or expanded businesses that have the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Movie theater/arcade
  - b. Community center
  - c. Water park
  - d. Bookstore
  - e. Fabric/clothing store
  - f. No resale shops
  - g. Upscale restaurant
  - h. Frame shop
  
2. **From the list above, select the one business you feel has the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Upscale restaurant
  
3. **For the business selected above, briefly describe:**
  - a. **Why you chose this business; why it has the best chance to succeed:** can go on a nice place to relax, more family time
  - a. **Range of products and/or services offered:** healthy food not bar food, good service, potential catering and banquets
  - b. **Customers doing business there most frequently (i.e. age, gender visitor vs. local, etc.):** everybody, families, couples, people outside of town
  
4. **List three specific types of business in the downtown area that are complementary, or which will help support the business you selected:**
  - a. Stores to shop at after eating
  - b. Ice cream and coffee shop
  - c. Art gallery



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### Group B

1. **List three specific types of new or expanded businesses that have the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Movie theater
  - b. Bookstore
  - c. Community center
2. **From the list above, select the one business you feel has the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Movie theater
3. **For the business selected above, briefly describe:**
  - a. **Why you chose this business; why it has the best chance to succeed:** draws a diverse group of people, all ages, family friendly
  - b. **Range of products and/or services offered:** 2 theaters – affordability – movie snacks
  - c. **Customers doing business there most frequently (i.e. age, gender visitor vs. local, etc.):** all ages, regional, casino proximity, close by traffic for those who don't want to cable all day/weekend
4. **List three specific types of business in the downtown area that are complementary, or which will help support the business you selected:**
  - a. Eateries – ice cream shop
  - b. Future arts shops/antique shops
  - c. Future unique one of a kind shops for persons to walk to/explore

### Group C

1. **List three specific types of new or expanded businesses that have the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Bike/sport shop
  - b. Michigan made beer/wine/cheese
  - c. Fine dining restaurant
2. **From the list above, select the one business you feel has the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Bike/sport shop
3. **For the business selected above, briefly describe:**
  - a. **Why you chose this business; why it has the best chance to succeed:** trails, customers, families in Wayland needed
  - b. **Range of products and/or services offered:** bike repair/sales, soccer equip, running shoes, apparel
  - c. **Customers doing business there most frequently (i.e. age, gender visitor vs. local, etc.):** families, everyone, visitors (off trail) and residents local
4. **List three specific types of business in the downtown area that are complementary, or which will help support the business you selected:**
  - a. Beer/wine/cheese shop
  - b. Coffee shop
  - c. Ice Cream shop



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### Group D

1. **List three specific types of new or expanded businesses that have the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Senior Center
  - b. Young adult nightlife
  - c. Health store (harvest health)
2. **From the list above, select the one business you feel has the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Senior Center
3. **For the business selected above, briefly describe:**
  - a. **Why you chose this business; why it has the best chance to succeed:** senior population in the City of Wayland
  - b. **Range of products and/or services offered:** fitness, dancing, nutrition, entertainment, activities
  - c. **Customers doing business there most frequently (i.e. age, gender visitor vs. local, etc.):** 45+, both genders, local and visitor, intergenerational activities
4. **List three specific types of business in the downtown area that are complementary, or which will help support the business you selected:**
  - a. Henika District Library
  - b. Schools
  - c. Restaurants – promotional tie ins
  - d. Churches

### Group E

1. **List three specific types of new or expanded businesses that have the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Specialty-type shop – wine/cheese, bridal, bakery, sporting goods
  - b. Antique/pawn
2. **From the list above, select the one business you feel has the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Specialty shop – sporting goods
3. **For the business selected above, briefly describe:**
  - a. **Why you chose this business; why it has the best chance to succeed:** you can't get it at Wal-Mart! There is a need and want.
  - b. **Range of products and/or services offered:** sporting goods – i.e. running, biking, school sports
  - c. **Customers doing business there most frequently (i.e. age, gender visitor vs. local, etc.):** Families - athletes
4. **List three specific types of business in the downtown area that are complementary, or which will help support the business you selected:**
  - a. Health services
  - b. Running club



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### Group F

1. **List three specific types of new or expanded businesses that have the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Barber shop – “Old Time Style”
  - b. Bike Shop
  - c. Green Grocer – Trader Joe, Whole Foods
2. **From the list above, select the one business you feel has the best chance to succeed in Downtown Wayland.**
  - a. Bike Shop
3. **For the business selected above, briefly describe:**
  - a. **Why you chose this business; why it has the best chance to succeed:** no competition/location relevant
  - b. **Range of products and/or services offered:** alternative transportation, repair, clothing
  - c. **Customers doing business there most frequently (i.e. age, gender visitor vs. local, etc.):** all ages, both genders, visitors, family oriented
4. **List three specific types of business in the downtown area that are complementary, or which will help support the business you selected:**
  - a. Restaurants/bars
  - b. Ice cream
  - c. Gym/physical therapy, chiropractors