

Section One

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT *and* JOB CREATION

(cont'd.)

Subcommittee on Downtown

RECOMMENDATION #1

Security - Implement a Zero Tolerance Approach.

Downtown Syracuse must be perceived as safe to retain major employers, to attract small businesses, to provide a home for prospective residents and to appeal to shoppers and visitors. The subcommittee believes that this is best achieved by taking a “zero tolerance” approach to criminal activity, disturbance of the peace or disregard for the public realm downtown. We recommend that the Syracuse Police Department continue to strictly enforce laws and regulations to maintain public order. However, we believe this approach should also be applied to code violations, loitering for illicit purposes, littering, or neglect of property owner responsibilities.

We recommend that the City consider the application of the “Broken Windows” theory to downtown Syracuse and the city as whole. Recent research reinforces the notion that crime can be significantly reduced in areas that are clean, well maintained, free of graffiti, and orderly. This will require the cooperation of downtown property owners and agencies that maintain downtown. The City should also work closely with National Grid to ensure 100% performance of public lighting downtown.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Address Parking, Transportation and the Pedestrian Experience.

The recent parking study for downtown Syracuse indicates that in most areas there is a surplus of parking available during most of the day. In a city, people have to feel comfortable walking from lots and garages to their destinations, as in most cases it is not possible for customers to park directly at the location to which they want to go. In addition, one of the great economic advantages of downtown is its public transportation system, which makes the center city one of the easiest places to reach in the community. There is also an increasing use of cycling and walking as the primary means of people commuting to and through downtown, particularly as new residential development takes place in the City. Therefore, the committee recommends:

- Utilizing a comprehensive way-finding and signage system to identify available parking options.
- Recognizing that structured parking is a crucial component of accessibility. Maintenance and repair of parking garages is critical to downtown’s economic competitiveness. Façade appearance, cleanliness, lighting, security, availability of parking on a 24/7 basis must be areas of focus.
- Planning ahead. Early in her administration, the Mayor will need to address aging infrastructure downtown, such as the condition of older public and private garages. Viable solutions are needed to address parking before more issues arise. For example, the City plans to close the first two floors of the Sibley’s (City) garage by January 1 because renovations are needed and money is not available. The balance of the structure may be closed in the future. This takes away valuable employee and customer parking in the heart of downtown.

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- Finding new methods of financing expensive public infrastructure replacement. For public parking, this may require the establishment of a parking authority or merging all parking operations under one responsible profit center in City government.
- Looking for opportunities to create additional on-street parking, or adding to its structured parking, without resorting to demolition (except in very rare instances) to create new parking resources.
- Finding a combination of innovative alternatives (e.g. shared monthlies, parking products priced for part time employees) and enforcement techniques should be used to discourage meter feeding in the central business district.
- Encouraging convenient and safe off-street parking such as 24 hour card key access should be provided to encourage residential development downtown.
- Continuing to emphasize the role of mass transit. The construction of the new transfer hub should boost bus ridership downtown. The City should encourage transportation oriented development (TOD) around the new hub.
- Encouraging alternative modes (e.g., transit, cycling, walking) as part of a strategy to reduce parking demand, enhance healthy lifestyles, appeal to center city residents, and reduce Syracuse's carbon footprint. The City should fully participate in the work of the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council to examine transit alternatives, create additional bike lanes, encourage park

and ride shuttle operations and develop transportation demand management techniques and should be a leader in their adoption and implementation.

- Playing a leadership role in the future planning for I-81, and make sure that the needs and desires of Syracusans are well represented.

RECOMMENDATION #3

View cleanliness and beautification as a cooperative effort (Point #30).

- Maintaining an attractive public realm is the first step towards the longer term goal of filling ground floor vacancies.
- The appearance of downtown is the responsibility of the property owners, the City and the Downtown Committee. Areas of responsibility for all parties need to be clearly defined and communicated.
- The City needs to dedicate more resources to downtown maintenance efforts.
- The maintenance efforts of the City's Department of Public Works and the Downtown Committee should be coordinated to maximize the positive impact on the public realm.
- City ordinances regarding cleanliness and snow removal need to be enforced.

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- Stepped up code enforcement should be addressed toward vacant or neglected properties downtown.
- Pursue some short term cosmetic solutions. Recent examples such as the Larned Building window decorating and the placement of artwork in vacant windows in the 300 block of South Salina street has improved public perception of those areas.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Adopt a System to Prioritize and Address Vacant Downtown Properties.

- Prioritize development projects in downtown and remain committed to seeing those priority projects to fruition. South Salina Street is an area that offers the next best opportunity, given the progress of projects underway and as a logical expansion area for Armory Square.
- The new administration should accentuate the positive development activity taking place on Salina Street as that represents downtown's core, and the public's perceptions of downtown's health is largely set by the condition of the traditional downtown main street.
- The City and Syracuse University should work cooperatively to ensure that funding from the Connective Corridor Project will be used to rebuild critical infrastructure downtown as its first priority and that key locations, such as the intersection of Salina and Fayette streets will be addressed by that project.

- Consider partnering with Onondaga County and others to create a Land Bank Authority that will be able to hold and dispose of vacant properties that the City has acquired. This assists redevelopment efforts by providing the opportunity for redevelopment of strategic properties, rather than leaving them in the hands of inactive or tax delinquent private owners while relieving the City of any potential liability.
- Encourage more education and medical uses downtown to give the institutions room to expand and give people more reasons to come downtown.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Creative Partnerships with Cultural Organizations (Point #29).

- Cultural organizations are downtown anchors and require the same basic services as others in downtown, namely cleanliness and safety.
- Organization performances, exhibits and events draw thousands of visitors to downtown annually. At the same time, due to funding constraints, events and exhibits may have to be downsized without creative partnerships and in-kind service provision by the City.

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- Mayor Miner should continue to promote the many cultural amenities of downtown.
- Encourage organizations that have advertising resources to work together to promote the cultural and entertainment offerings within downtown.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Encourage More Housing Development.

- Everywhere that new residential development has occurred downtown (Armory Square, Clinton Square, Hanover Square, and the adjacent Franklin Square) has resulted in new life and vitality in the center city. Housing improves the reality (and perception) of safety, and new housing usually leads to increased demand for retail and commercial services which activates the ground floor.
- Market rate housing has proven to be a “talent magnet” for the young and has provided new urban options for empty nesters. The vacancy rate for market rate housing in the center city core (Downtown, University Hill, the Lakefront and James Street) is less than 2%. In many cases, projects are leased before they are complete.
- It should be a goal of the new administration to reverse population loss in the center city.
- The new state historic preservation tax credit has created an additional source of financing to encourage the transformation of historic properties in the city.

- The administration should seek to encourage the creation or location of a grocery store or food market in the center city to meet the needs of its residents.
- The Mayor should take an active role in promoting and marketing residential living in the center city.
- Create new parking options that meet resident needs downtown.

RECOMMENDATION #7

Timing and Prioritizing Downtown Development and Infrastructure.

- In the first 100 days, look for simple things that can be immediately accomplished such as implementing zero tolerance, or using building wraps to cover vacant store windows. Focus on some simple things that can get done.
- In the first two years of the new administration, several projects on Salina Street are moving toward completion: the Dey Brothers Building, the new transfer hub, the 300 block project and the first phase of the Landmark Theatre project. Celebrate these near term successes to build on the sense of positive momentum downtown and the center city in general.
- The lack of downtown hotel rooms emphasizes the need for a signature downtown hotel. Work with community leadership to focus resources to complete such a

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project. Find the strongest development team, with sufficient financing, and the greatest likelihood of success and community impact – then support that project.

- Have the city’s engineers provide the Mayor with an analysis of the infrastructure that serves downtown and the center city. Try to get ahead of the need to avoid infrastructure failures that lead to business disruption downtown.

RECOMMENDATION #8

Communications.

- Developers and the public need clear, concise communications about the city’s plan and policies downtown, and for the city’s overall economic development strategy.
 - The Mayor must lead in the communication of this plan.
 - The Mayor should have a strategic communications plan for her overall goals.
 - Partner with organizations such as the Downtown Committee to maximize the value of private volunteer efforts to support the Mayor’s goals
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