

OPINION

Downtown Ludington's Framework for Success

By JAY C. JUERGENSEN

Downtown Ludington has the making of a great place to live, work and recreate. With its relatively compact size, historic buildings and committed leadership, the downtown could become a vibrant place that is active 12 months a year.

At tonight's Ludington City Council meeting, we will unveil Ludington's "Framework for Success." The document outlines a clear strategy for capturing the enormous potential of Ludington.

Through our work, we have identified five key assets within the city that are the basis for a long-term revitalization strategy. Our approach from the beginning was to work from the city's strengths and maximize the existing potential.

First, the city has committed public and private leadership. When over 200 residents come downtown on a Wednesday afternoon to participate in a public exhibit and almost 900 residents take the time to complete and mail a consumer survey, the commitment to Ludington is clear to those of us involved in



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The presentation by Juergensen & Associates is part of tonight's Ludington City Council Meeting at city hall beginning at 7:30

the project.

Second, the size of the downtown is manageable. The city is not so large as to be unwieldy but big enough to encourage investments.

Third, the city has extensive historic resources. From its beginnings as a lumber town in 1873, the city has accumulated an impressive stock of historic homes and structures. Numerous incentives are available to assist home and business owners with repairs and renovations.

Fourth, Ludington has Michigan's premier harbor. No other town in Michigan has a downtown district within walking distance of a harbor and a beach. Access to water is a premium luxury that Ludington has in abundance. It should be treated with care and developed strategically.

Fifth, the city also has a strong base of year-round consumers. While the city is perceived as a tourist town, the market trade area can support good retail investment in the downtown. In addition, there is room to grow housing opportunities in and around downtown, which will add consumers and increase spending downtown.

The recent media spotlight on downtown's challenges in Michigan and around the country brought attention to something any keen observer can easily

recognize: downtowns could use some help. Our traditional centers of commerce (historic downtowns) have lost the luster of their retail heritage and are remaking themselves as mixed-use districts, with new and diverse entertainment and housing opportunities.

In our work in other Michigan communities and around the country, we find three key elements for success. They are:

- Clear and concise planning – An agreed upon vision that outlines the future
- Consistency – Embraced by every stakeholder and effectively communicated
- Public and private leadership – Interest, support and partnership in an organization exclusively focused on and advocating for downtown

Ludington's Framework for Success is a comprehensive strategy that we believe will serve as a tool to guide the public and private leaders in the community. We are confident that Ludington can overcome its current challenges and realize its potential as a vibrant place to live, work and recreate.