

SUMMARY

Fresh Look Milwaukie: Downtown Road Map Business Owner Coffee Klatch

April 30th, 2013

Morning session: 8:00 – 9:20am

Evening session: 6:30-7:45pm

Ledding Library Pond House (2215 SE Harrison St)

ALIGN planning held a Business Owner's Coffee Klatch on April 30th, 2013 for the *Fresh Look Milwaukie: Downtown Road Map* Project. This event was open to downtown business owners and available as a morning or evening session. An online scheduling platform, Doodle, was used to identify times of availability for event. Over 150 fliers were left with businesses in addition to personalized emails sent to businesses licensed by the City of Milwaukie, within the Downtown Study Area. This event provided ALIGN planning an opportunity to hear concerns of downtown business owners, which are different from the general Milwaukie community.

Participants

ALIGN team members present

AM Session:

Carine Arendes, Content Development Lead
Erica Smith, Public Engagement Co-Lead

PM Session:

Ryan Lemay, Project Manager
Jeffrey Butts, Public Engagement Co-Lead
Iren Taran, Production Lead

City of Milwaukie staff present

Steve Butler, Interim Community Development Director/Planning Director – AM/PM Session
Li Alligood, Associate Planner – AM Session

Downtown Business Owners present – Morning Session

Ed Aaron (Owner, Organon Professional Services)
Lawrence (Larry) Cole (Owner, Acme TV/DVDs)
Shalena Havens (Owner, Havens Acupuncture)
Greg "Frank" Hemer (Manager, Milwaukie Lumber)
Kimberly (Kim) Keehner (Owner, Enchante)
Charles Maes (Casa de Tamales, Think Soon Tienda)
Carmen Meyer (Owner, Cha Cha Cha!)
David Middlebrook (Owner, Dusty Tiger Collectibles)
Ray Peck (Owner, Wind Horse Coffee)

David Reid (Manager, Kellogg Bowl)
Rick Wheeler (Owner, Roseland Piano Co.)

Downtown Business Owners present – Evening Session

Karen Baranick (Owner, Milwaukie Spine & Sport, LLC)
Irene Fin
Charles Maes (Casa de Tamales, Think Soon Tienda)
Alex & Persens Hall (Owners, Pansophie P+C)
Hans & Silvia Schmidt (Owners, Sully's Café / Gaucho's Argentine Cuisine)
Peg Tarbox (Owner, Peg's Gift Box)

Connection to the Project

The Business Owner Coffee Klatch was an informal gathering held by ALIGN planning and the City of Milwaukie that allowed for business owners as a whole to discuss issues, identify common issues and propose solutions to a specific issue, which are ultimately shared with one another.

Purpose and Desired Outcome

The objective was to reach out to downtown business owners to:

- Identify concerns and aspirations for downtown development
- Promote solution generation within the business community

The project team asked business owners to share their experiences and opinions, to identify the barriers business owners may experience in doing business in downtown, and discuss what they would like to see it become. A full transcript of the discussion points is included in the appendices for both the morning and afternoon klatch.

Event Summary

During the morning session, Carine Arendes of ALIGN planning provided a brief introduction of the purpose and format of the meeting. Ryan Lemay of ALIGN planning provided the introduction for the evening business klatch. Participants were then asked to give a brief introduction: name and organization. The above questions discussed in order in a round-robin approach. Note that the responses provided are opinions; therefore some responses may have no factual basis.

Issue Identification

ALIGN posed the following questions to each attendee:

Issue Identification

1. As a business owner in Milwaukie, do you also happen to live in the city?
2. What is it about Downtown Milwaukie that attracted you to do business here?
3. Where else have you considered opening up a business?
 - a. How does Milwaukie stack up to those other places?
4. How will light-rail impact your business?
5. Is parking an issue for your business? If so, what kind of challenges does it present?
6. Feedback from our outreach activities suggests that community members believe a unified business-driven vision for downtown would have a really positive impact on the city's image
 - a. Do you think this vision exists? If not why?

Attendees identified the following key issues:

1. Parking challenges
2. Lack of a unified business vision
3. Potential impacts of light rail
4. Lack of foot traffic for customer base - outside of events such as the Farmers market

A summary of the responses to each Issue Identification question is provided below.

Q #1. As a business owner in Milwaukie, do you also happen to live in the city?

- 47% of attendees live in Milwaukie
- 53% of attendees live outside Milwaukie (Gresham, Happy Valley, Portland, Lake Oswego),
- 17% of attendees had children attending the local schools.

Q #2. What is it about Downtown Milwaukie that attracted you to do business here?

- 18% of attendees located their business in Milwaukie because it was cheaper to do business in Milwaukie than nearby cities or in Multnomah County, due to lower rents, taxes, and fees.
- 41% located their business in Milwaukie as they felt there was opportunity for growth in Downtown.
- Established businesses indicated that the market has supported their business activities, so it makes sense to stay
- 41% don't know exactly why they chose Downtown Milwaukie, other than their personal preference.

Q #3. Where else have you considered opening up a business? [Or have had a business in the past]

Responses included: Gresham, Sellwood, Westmoreland, and Portland.

How does Milwaukie stack up to those other places?

- 18% indicated that it was less expensive to operate their business in Downtown Milwaukie due to either lower taxes or rents.

Q #4. How will light-rail impact your business?

- 35% of participants agreed that they would be impacted by light rail.
- Of the 35%:
 - 17% believed the impacts would be positive, as light rail would generate more foot traffic and therefore more business
 - 11% were directly located by the construction area(s)
- 17% of participants believed they would not experience any impacts due to light rail, as they are located at the North end of the downtown.

Q #5. Is parking an issue for your business? If so what kind of challenges does it present?

- 76% of participants believed that there was a parking issue for businesses.

- Specific concerns related to the lack of employee parking – largely in part due to the “parking shuffle” game with the block rule and 2 hour zones, and employees rotating spots throughout the day.
- 17% stated that they were experiencing impacts to parking due to light rail construction.

Q #6. Feedback from our outreach activities is that community members feel like a unified business-driven vision for downtown would have a really positive impact on the city’s image. Do you think this vision exists? If not, why?

- 64% of participants believed there wasn’t a unified business vision but expressed a desire for such.
 - Identified challenges to accomplishing this task was establishing communication between business owners.
 - In the morning session, participants discussed efforts to unify businesses but noted that the existing ‘piecemeal’ efforts were not working.
 - In the afternoon session, 42% of participants cited difficulty in communications with ongoing efforts of the various downtown business groups.

Additional Experiences Shared and Issues Identified not associated with questions:

- Positive experiences with:
 - The 2011-12 downtown storefront façade improvement program
- Negative experiences with:
 - The financial impact of SDC and PAR fees
 - Difficulties with the recruitment of “quality” businesses
 - Communications with the City

Solution Seeking

ALIGN posed the following questions to each attendee:

1. What is some sort of initiative or mechanism (e.g. improvement district) that could help resolve identified issues?
2. What would it take in Milwaukie to make that happen?

Q #1. What is some sort of initiative or mechanism (e.g. improvement district) that could help resolve identified issues?

Issue #1: Parking

Potential solutions:

- Signs that would better clarify the 15 minute block rule and extend restrictions to Saturday, due to the traffic generated by weekend events
- Expanded permit parking for employees
- Metered parking
- Possibility of shared parking between businesses with private lots

Issue #2: Lack of/need for unified business vision

Potential solutions:

- Better communication between downtown business owners in regards to organizing a business association
- Business cohesion may attract other businesses to Downtown Milwaukie

Issue #3: Potential impacts from light rail -

Potential solutions:

- 24% suggested construction of a parking structure to mitigate the loss of parking spaces due to light rail. [Note: light rail is removing approximately 30 spaces; the Adams Street Connector project is removing 21 additional spaces.]

Issue #4: Lack of foot traffic except when Farmers Market is open

Potential solutions:

- 24% suggested that more signage is needed on McLoughlin – most travelers don't recognize the presence of Downtown Milwaukie

Q #2. What would it take in Milwaukie to make that happen?

- 23% suggested that there needs to be more meetings of businesses to network and attract businesses from outside of Milwaukie.

Conclusion

ALIGN team members thanked everyone for coming and invited them to participate in the May 9th public event.

Appendix A

Business Owner Coffee Klatch Notes (morning session)

Note taker: Erica Smith

Facilitator: Carine Arendes

1. Rick Wheeler (Roseland Piano Co.)

- Business in south end of Downtown
- Lives in Milwaukie (16-17 years)
- Not sure what attracted him to Milwaukie
- Light rail will go in front of his building
- Didn't like doing business in Portland
- Doesn't think there is a unified business vision

2. Larry Cole (Acme TV/DVDs)

- Business at Monroe and 21st
- Lives in Gresham
- Came to Milwaukie because he sells old movie and is a good fit for antique-focused area
- Considered doing business in Gresham but didn't find good spot
- Light rail scares him, is part of what drove him out of Portland
- Parking is an issue
- Delivery trucks (delivering to neighboring businesses – window covering shop, Dark Horse) block his storefront
- Big believer in business community working together

3. Ray Peck (Wind Horse Coffee)

- Lives in Milwaukie
- Accident that ended up doing business here (came in 1992)
- Rent was reasonable
- He is always considering other locations – for expansion, not relocation
- Sellwood is attractive
- Milwaukie is improving
- Not sure about impact of LR since it will not be right next to his business
- Parking is challenging
- Shoppers don't understand "block rule"
- Employee parking is an issue – have to park blocks away Surprised that Milwaukie residents go outside of Downtown (i.e. into Portland or other cities) to shop
- Wants to instill the idea in the community that there *are* things to do and places to go Downtown
- Wants a unified business association - doesn't think there is a unified vision right now

4. Shalena Havens (Havens Acupuncture)

- Lives in Portland, kids go to St. Johns for school
- Likes “neighborhood” feel of Milwaukie
- Taxes better in Clackamas County than Multnomah
- Moved business here from Sellwood (also used to be in Downtown Portland) because of taxes
- Likes walkability of Downtown
- Light rail will bring sound increase
- Not sure about the demographic light rail will bring in, and if it will help her business (i.e. whether it will increase customer base)
- Light rail is necessary – hopes people will use it to commute to/from Portland but live in Milwaukie
- Parking in South Downtown Milwaukie is v. challenging
- Patients getting chiropractic treatments less physically disposed to walk long distances from car to clinic
- Not as bad as Downtown Portland
- Optimistic about Downtown Milwaukie, has a lot of potential
- Likes First Friday, Milwaukie Rules, although frustrating that it is not 100% local

5. David Middlebrook (Dusty Tiger Collectibles)

- Came to Milwaukie because likes hometown feel
- Mult. Co. taxes and rent were too high
- Relocated from Westmoreland
- Light rail will help bring more walking traffic
- LR will help make Milwaukie a more popular destination and bring about more awareness of the city
- Parking is an issue (but thinks Ed [Wells, City Parking Enforcement] is working on it)
- Increase parking limit from 2 to 4 hours
- Loading zones for window treatment company is an issue – doesn’t know what to do about that
- Wants to know more from City about when particular events are happening (i.e. movie filming with Geena Davis)
- Need information boards at north and south ends of Downtown
- Doesn’t use kiosk in front of City Hall

6. Kimberly (Kim) Keehner (Enchante)

- Lives in Lake Oswego
- Purchased an existing business [Milwaukie Candy & Popcorn]
- Milwaukie is on the cusp of something great
- Needs 15-minute parking spaces

- Is President of recently formalized “Downtown Milwaukie Business Association” with Troy Reichlein and Scott Barbur, downtown business owners
 - Will help with forming a cohesive group, reaching out to all business owners
 - Will help with advertising and marketing, website
- Efforts to establishing a unified business vision are currently fragmented -she is working on a new business association that will welcome everyone. Not a big advocate of light rail

7. Greg “Frank” Hemer (Milwaukie Lumber)

- Lives in Milwaukie
- 3 stores, original is in Milwaukie
- Light rail – have been working on it 6-7 years – 21st and Washington will be next to business
- Parking – have a small lot and large vehicles, but most vehicles spend majority of time in back loading/unloading
- Most of the time no one uses parking lot after business hours, even though it is not specifically prohibited – there is signage about towing, but thinks it only applies during business hours
- Believes there are common dreams and interests for business community
- Unification should be easy to come by based on fact of having a business in Downtown Milwaukie

8. Ed Aaron (Organon Professional Services)

- Lives in Portland, just outside of Milwaukie
- Owns business and property in downtown Milwaukie
- Waldorf School brought him here (kids now in L.O. system)
- Attracted by small town with relatively affluent people coming in (i.e. who can afford to send kids to private schools – i.e. Waldorf)
- Feels that City fought Waldorf School tooth and nail
- Feels that hard to get things done in city
- Issues with costs of redevelopment – SDCs, change of use fees, big financial impact
- Feels that it is hard to bring quality businesses to town
- Parking being taken away by light rail
- 2007 parking plan – believes it was never implemented
- City would not allow marquee signs on McLoughlin – doesn’t think it is an issue with ODOT, rather thinks it’s a city issue with interior lit signs.
- Miniscule battles
- Need a change of politics
- Believes there is a unified business vision, but business group met in July and August, nothing came of it.

9. Carmen Meyer (Cha Cha Cha!)

- Lives in Milwaukie
- Has had a very good and welcoming experience with the City
- Already was in Sellwood location
- Sought nearby place to live (to Sellwood business location), and housing was most affordable in Milwaukie
- Also happened to find a good business expansion opportunity in Milwaukie (serendipitous)
- Not considering opening another location, very busy with current businesses
- Unsure about impact of light rail
- Feels very positive about Downtown Milwaukie
- Welcoming community
- Nice walking area
- First Friday and Saturday Market are good
- Fees posed some challenge to opening up a new business
- Good support for improving façade
- Parking is challenging, but not as bad as Portland (compared to Sellwood or Pearl District locations of Cha Cha Cha!)
- We should do something about the parking before it gets to the point of Downtown Portland

10. Charles Maes (Casa de Tamales & Think Soon Tienda)

- Lives in Canby
- Wants to add Garage doors to the tienda storefront feels intimidated by City/going to permit department
- Health department and code compliance issues
- Had trouble with the neighbors regarding putting grill outside on the sidewalk – added attraction
- No comment on Tri-Met
- Has off-street parking in alley spots
- Sees “musical parking” going on all day long
- Thinks Enchante window display is beautiful, but doesn’t understand why blinds are always closed
 - Kim responded that sun makes chocolate melt
- Believes there can be a unified vision, but have to get past fighting first

11. David Reid (Kellogg Bowl)

- Grew up in Milwaukie – manager rather than owner of business. Owner lives outside city.
- Kellogg is a 30 year + operation
- Parking not an issue for them because of large lot- in fact they have provide parking to other in the area (employees, commuters)

- Light Rail may not have a large impact on their business- no stop nearby
- Is here because owner does want to be involved
- Does not believe there is a unified vision for downtown

Solution-Seeking

- Kim Keehner:
 - Why is there no metered parking?
 - It is inconvenient to pay by month, why not hourly or by day? More flexibility needed.
 - Carine suggested that Dave [Reid] may be able to speak in more detail about shared parking options (example - - Kellogg Bowling rents spaces on a monthly basis)
- Greg Hemer:
 - Milwaukie Lumber may be available for parking during off-hours
 - Surprised that no one parks there after hours, since there is no enforcement at those times
 - Carmen commented people may be scared off by the “tow” signs, and may not read the fine print/understand enforcement only during business hours
 - Shalena: Dental office rents out parking spaces
 - ML rents space from property owners to the north – have specific spots
 - Give St. Johns Church free parking on Sunday
 - Milwaukie Lumber parking lot – people don’t use when business is closed—why?
 - Are there other businesses with similar parking situations? Karate school [in south downtown]?
- Funeral Home parking during off-hours – (don’t think they rent it out? But not sure) – Spring Creek Coffee customers and chiropractic employees/customers park there) Ed Aaron: “if it wasn’t for the funeral home, there would be no parking!”)
- Rick Wheeler:
 - What about metered parking area? At north end of town?
 - On Cash Spot lot?
 - would promote more foot traffic through town
 - Suggested x-press shuttle loop/trolley from north end of town to expedite journey
- Ray Peck:
 - Option for day permit parking
 - Use debit/credit card to pay for City permit parking
 - Kim Keehner noted this has been available for a month and a half, but most seemed not to be aware of this change. Confusion on the “block rule” – Look to Oregon City for example of how to explain
 - Charles expressed concern over cost of installing such signage
 - Wind Horse building – 15 minute parking signage confusing; needs to be moved from original spot (although original spot was per his request, it no longer functions in an effective manner – unclear which sign pertinent to which spot)

- Offered “right now” solutions: fix 15 minute sign, add signage to explain block rule, change from Mon-Fri to Mon-Sat limits because many park on the street all day Saturday.
- Dave Reid
 - Shared parking is a good opportunity
 - Made parking arrangements with Farmers Insurance and Milwaukie Cleaners in the past
 - Now monthly parking at Kellogg Bowl
 - Enforcement – owner knows license plate #s
 - Not sure if daily option is available – need to ask owner
- Ed Aaron
 - Diagonal parking to increase # of spaces
 - Believes that 21sts Ave., Monroe between Main and McLoughlin, Jefferson, are wide enough to accommodate 45 degree parking spaces

Appendix B

Business Owner Coffee Klatch Notes (evening session)

Note taker: Iren Taren

Facilitator: Ryan Lemay & Jeffrey Butts

Introductions – What kind of business do you have and where?

Peg Tarbox, Owner, Peg's Gift Box in North Main Village townhomes at 21st & Harrison. Lives in Milwaukie.

Hans & Silvia Schmidt, Owners, Gaucho's / Sully's Café at 21st & Jefferson Live in Happy Valley.

Charles Maes: Think Soon Deli at Main & Scott.

Alex Hall and Persens : Pansophie Personality and Color. North Main Village town homes at 21st & Harrison. Alex lives in Milwaukie, outside of downtown.

Karen Baranick, Owner, Milwaukie Spine & Sport LLC at 21st & Lake. Close to light rail when it opens.

Irene Fin: Business Owner at 21st & Lake, next to light rail station that is coming. Project looks really nice when it will be nice.

Business Owner Issue Identification

Issue Identification Questions asked:

- What is it that attracted you to do business in Downtown Milwaukie?
- Where else have you considered opening up a business? How does Milwaukie stack up to those other places?
- How will light rail impact your business?
- Is parking an issue for your business?
- Do you think a unified business vision exists? If not why?

Peg: I had business in California. If you will park and ride. Parking issue? Yes because cars park right in front of us. Parking is a miserable problem in DT. When you go to city offices you have to find whom you need. It was difficult what was the requirements were. That needs to be simplified.

Hans: We don't live here, we live in happy valley. We choose Milwaukie because it is a better community, higher average salary. Light rail is positive. Parking issues is really bad. Q6- I have been here only 1 year. I think vision exists, but nothing is happening.

Silvia: Obviously half the town is owned by Dark Horse and they have friskiest storefronts and those will not move. Two hr. limit on the parking is a disaster. Every 2 hrs you have to run and move your car.

Charles: What about parking near indicated locations? Silvia & her husband responded that those are Dark Horse parking spots.

Hans: The problem we have is a Church, when they have services it is 300 people, so they take up a lot of parking lots. Monday through Friday is very bad, but Sunday is ok.

Silvia: I think LR will be good, it will bring good and bad, but I think overall it will be good (upgrade, etc.).

Charles: I want to share with you, I have two neighbors that are the challenge to me. In regards to Milwaukie, I want to be a good business person. I think we are on the right step. The kickoff we have was very positive. Morning was very negative, coming back to all the negativity we had before. I try to create environment at my business that has more foot traffic. I think LR will not make any difference for me, because it is too far.

Hans: for us if it would not be for farmers market – we will be out of business.

Persens: Choose Milwaukie because of location (close to 99, etc.) and rent. LR – I don't really know. I don't know what that would do to street traffic. Will see.

Alex: LR – will increase foot traffic, but it will impact the area around it, which will be better for small business. It can do what it did to Beaverton or what it did to ... ????. It may bring in crime.

Persens: Parking was an issue for us. We had to choose different place because of parking. How far customers in pain (patients) would walk. Trimet took parking they had for MAX. Now patients had to go upstairs to see me. Parking had been an issue before.

Alex: we lost parking at more than one location.

Peg: talked about removal of parking in front of Archery for pedestrian mall.

Persens: It just feels like ... I don't know if there is enough talking like this. When I first opened I went to Milwaukie business owner meeting and that was 3 yrs ago.

Steve: From City's side if you organize and then communicate it's much easier for all of us.

Peg: Big workshop with Clackamas County was big disappointment because we see no results.

Alex: Was this planning group successfully able to chase down Dark Horse? I think having those large corporations as part of the group will help to drive the process.

Solution Seeking

Ryan: What would help address the issue for the lack of foot traffic?

Hans: Do you have knowledge of what other cities have done?

Alex: Not enough attraction. Park is not in the center. All traffic on Mcloughlin. A lot of people who drives by don't even know downtown (Main Street) is even here.

Charles: New center (w/ plaza) proposal at Dogwood park and removal of Kellogg Treatment Plant

Steve Butler: Clarified that that is in flux.

Charles: If I have to choose, I would choose center place at plaza instead of parking lot in front of the City Hall.

Persens: I agree w/ Charles on that center spot.

Charles: Community should be focusing on making that parking lot into multi-use plaza (like one in Lake Oswego).

Alex: I also think making this space in a green kind of space is a good idea.

Ryan: What kind of mechanism or initiative could be taken to help resolve some of these issues?

Peg: City needs to lower its expectations of businesses. Startup costs are too high. I read all things city sends us and I still don't understand what changes are.

Steve Butler: explains PARS changes. Removal of PARs for change of use by council. Same goes for minor additions. That is a step one. In subsequent months we are trying to figure out what else can we do?

Silvia: I vote for parking tickets to go straight to the city and city can use it as needed. I think business attracts business. More we attract – better we will be.

Persens: what about night time?

Alex: There is no night time traffic.

Charles: I think what is going on with planning right now will bring more businesses. I wish this meeting would be one meeting with everyone here at the same time.

Peg: For past 10 yrs the world has heard that it is very hard to make business in Milwaukie. So we need to change that perception. Milwaukie is known as a great place to live, but not to do business.

Ryan: What type of businesses would you like to see?

Peg: Seven neighborhood associations can do a lot if they will do it together – in reference to building cohesion between business owners.

Hans: this whole place (pointing at the map – on Main and in front of and around the Dark Horse) is all dead.

Persens: I used to live by Hawthorn. We might be overlooking a movie theater as opportunity.

Peg: We have a lot of duplication.

Steve Butler: The question is - is the issue of attracting more of nearby residents? Or is it creating more residents in downtown?

Alex: Unless we figure out how to create more traffic through the area. I think apartments on top is double edged sword. It will bring issues to parking.

Persens: I think it depends whom you bring in DT. I am 32 yrs old. Whose opinion do you take? How do you mix it with family stuff?

Charles: At this point we need to bring any business that wants to come. City needs to advertise vacancies.

Silvia: Our own neighboring space was vacant for 2 yrs now.

Peg: Commercial spaces on the ground of North Village were vacant from 2007. Since the day they were constructed.

All: *Multiple discussions about where places have the most expensive rents and why it drove them to locate their business where it currently is*

Ryan: To summarize – lack of attraction; high rent charges by some owners; and parking.

Peg and Hans: Before you do anything – you need to resolve parking issue. Solution – parking structure.

Silvia: Seconds both.

Alex: Bringing in people will bring more business. Milwaukie is not a destination.

Jeff: Do you want it to be a destination?

Silvia: Absolutely!

Alex: What is the demographic that TriMet will bring in?

Hans: I don't think people in Milwaukie don't have the opportunity to take MAX. There is no parking to leave their car in.

Jeff: The destination question - Do you see DT center for Milwaukie residents or people from outside?

Hans: If there is attraction here it will be positive.

Silvia: Milwaukie residents.

Alex: Is there a way we can alert business on McLoughlin that there are businesses here?

Few voices: Signage!

Persens: I think the gateway is a great idea.

Charles: Farmer's Market lost a lot of business because of the banners are not allowed on McLoughlin anymore. Farmer's Market – original and still the best.

Alex: pedestrian bridge over McLoughlin.

Peg: agreed.

Persens: Dogwood festival in spring and plant Dogwoods everywhere to brand MLwk.

Ryan: What will make this happen?

Peg: More meeting of businesses.

Silvia: agreed.

Peg: You have to go to Neighborhood Associations.

Charles: Proposed a downtown business garage sale.

Persens: Some kind of organization. I heard about this because of stickers on my door. I didn't know about all this.

Steve Butler: explained that ALIGN is part of a larger effort and there will be more efforts by the city.