



## Battle Creek's new look revealed

### Plan D of streetscape unveiled

Andy Fitzpatrick • *The Enquirer* • March 12, 2010

Downtown Battle Creek is one step closer to a modern makeover.

At a Thursday open house hosted by Battle Creek Unlimited and the Battle Creek Downtown Partnership, a plan was unveiled that detailed the changes that could be coming to the Cereal City.

The streetscape is part of a larger revitalization program that, according to BCU's Web site, is expected to utilize \$85 million in public and private investments over the next three years.

Organizers presented Plan D -- an amalgamation of the best parts of other designs for the streets, sidewalks and surroundings of downtown -- on several large placards in the McCamly Place atrium.

"We want it to be the next step that's also going to accommodate many of the things that people want to see downtown," said BCU president and chief executive officer Karl Dehn. "This isn't going to solve everything for downtown, but it is the first step in improving the appearance of downtown."

Dehn said the public has offered a lot of input at previous discussions, and that the new design reflects that input.

Features include a twisting, curving design on sidewalks, light-emitting diode lighting, green spaces and public seating.

There is also a plan for an enclosed, elevated fireplace in a gathering space at the corner of McCamly Street and West Michigan Avenue. That area will also have an interactive water feature, wireless access and an interactive performance wall.

Cheryl Beard, technology and marketing director for BCU, said lights laid into the concrete on sidewalks will be able to vary in color. They could all be changed to green for St. Patrick's Day, for example.

Trees dot the pedestrian walkways, something Dehn said was a compromise. He said about half of the people that offered ideas wanted more trees and about half wanted very few, if any, trees.

Juliette Jacobs owns the building at 34 E. Michigan Ave. and was at the open house. She said she also was concerned about trees.

"I know that when we've had trees in the grates before, they haven't been able to keep the grates clean," she said. "We want things that are going to be long-term and easy for the city to maintain."

Beard said planners were comfortable with the proposed design with regard to maintenance and that the weather of all four seasons has been taken into account.

Beard said she's hoping construction on the project will begin in June or July. Dehn said the plan still is under evaluation for cost estimates, as certain features, such as lighting design, still may change.

The open house drew about 25 people 45 minutes after it started, although people were filtering in and out throughout the catered event.

The curvilinear nature of the streetscape design appealed to the aesthetic senses of Carrie Miles of Portage, who works for Battle Creek-based Greenscape Services.

"Downtown is so boxy and square," she said. "I'm excited to see it. And bid the project, of course."

Kelly Farrell of Battle Creek was checking out the downtown plans from her perspective as a real estate agent for Troxel Realty Co.

"I think Battle Creek needs something new," she said. "In the real estate market, people that may be doing a new business ask us, 'Why Battle Creek? Battle Creek seems so dead.' This make it looks like we're not dead."

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