

Introduction

The following is a market analysis and strategic program for downtown Fennville, Michigan. This effort was prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc. under contract to the Downtown Development Authority and the City of Fennville. The effort included significant primary data derived from field reconnaissance, face-to-face interviews with major stakeholders, telephone surveys of current residents and potential consumers, and a mailed questionnaire to business owners and operators. In addition, computer models for non-residential activity, based on United States Census of Business information, were used to compare the community to other areas having certain similar characteristics in other sections of the United States. Other secondary sources of information was employed.

Estimates of demand found in this assessment are considered conservative in nature, tending to understate rather than overstate opportunities. They represent only TCG's opinion based on the presented information and experiences. It is noted that success of any geographic area, collection of activity, or individual components is dependent upon other factors as well as marketability. Some of those other factors are management practices, financial feasibility, regulations and collective cooperation.

The comparative assessment and demand analysis indicates that the following is or will be marketable in Fennville.

- ✓ 4,000 to 5,000 square feet of additional supermarket space.
- ✓ Auto service space (TBA) expansion of about 1,500 square feet.
- ✓ About 4,000 square feet of home furnishings space.
- ✓ Potentially additional food service space beyond that associated with the expanding Mexican supermarket and restaurant operation.
- ✓ Medical offices & facilities.
- ✓ Other professional offices.
- ✓ Activities which appeal to younger households and growth in an effort to develop a long-term relationship with future generations of shoppers. One possible opportunity is to pursue a children's museum in downtown.
- ✓ Higher education activity or institution. Initially this could involve a limited number of classes at a temporary location associated with an extension of a community college, college, or university, but could evolve to a permanent building, buildings, or space.

There are a number of significant suggestions and recommendations put forth in the strategic program. These include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Expansion or new "tenant" activity or users in the following arenas being sought first to increase critical mass.

- ✓ Continuation of the perception of a main street area and an atmosphere conducive to increasing visitor based activity, through blending new space with the current character.
- ✓ Assisting with a smooth transition of business ownership by developing an entrepreneurial and apprenticeship program.
- ✓ Fostering the provision for some industrial growth opportunity outside of downtown.
- ✓ Fostering the expansion of additional quality housing in Fennville or surrounding areas.
- ✓ Fostering further investment in existing businesses through enhancing linkages to resources, conducting an annual survey of all businesses in the community, and enhanced marketing to the community. The latter efforts should be directed toward new residents, repeat customers and senior citizens.
- ✓ The development of new and expanded events that will assist with both market penetration and expansion of markets.
- ✓ Development of a recruitment effort that will involve both paid staff and volunteers from the business community and elected officials.
- ✓ Enhancing the effectiveness of organized business interests. This implies both enhanced coordination of business interests, such as the DDA and Chamber, and increased commitment of resources to establish some dedicated paid professional person-power.

In this market analysis and strategic suggestions names of specific businesses, education institutions or others are mentioned. These names are used simply to indicate a certain type of operation. Their inclusion represents neither an endorsement by The Chesapeake Group nor any indication of interest on their part.

TCG believes that this report can be instrumental in efforts to undertake economic enhancement in Fennville that is sensitive to the needs of businesses and residential community interests. The suggestions are based upon sustainable economic development principals. We recognize that economic development is a dynamic and evolving process and commitment.