



# Portland officials receive results of marketing study



Written by

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PORTLAND - Downtown Portland has many assets, but could benefit from some new business and a marketing campaign.

Those were the results of a downtown marketing study conducted by students in the Urban Regional Planning program at Michigan State University. The students developed a downtown market study at the request of the Main Street Economic Revitalization Committee. The results were presented to the Portland City Council at its May 2 meeting.

Austin Colson, Josh Kluzak and Ann Sojka presented the results to the council. Other students who helped develop the study included Brian Keeseey, Maria Kornakova and David Wood.

The students provided an overview of the downtown area and also provided a list of perceived strengths and weaknesses based on discussions with business owners and clients. Strengths included:

- Location between Lansing and Grand Rapids;
- the Portland Rivertrail;
- the variety of businesses.

The list of weaknesses included:

- Businesses close early;
- not enough entertainment options;
- need for better usage of the Rivertrail and boardwalk.

"Based on the results, we feel that the businesses have not really embraced the trail or the boardwalk and brought them into the downtown," said Colson.

As part of the study, the students conducted a survey of downtown businesses with 29 of the 61 businesses returning the survey. Among the results of the survey were:

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- 60 percent plan to expand their business or increase their marketing.
- 45 percent felt more retail businesses were needed in the downtown.
- 32 percent felt more food and beverage businesses were needed.
- 39 percent felt that the downtown had enough service-oriented businesses.
- 32 percent felt that the downtown had enough food and beverage businesses.

The students then offered some recommendations. One of them centered on the old Portland Opera House.

"We think the opera house should be refurbished so that you can have live performances here," said Colson. "Right now, residents are going out of town to attend live performances."

Other recommendations included adding more specialty food stores and increasing the amount of marketing to bring people into the city.

Patrick Reagan, Main Street manager and Downtown Development Authority director, praised the students for their efforts.

"This is a very good product for us to have," said Reagan. "Not only will the downtown and the Main Street program benefit from it, but we got a \$30,000 project for only \$2,000."

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