

# 'Social revitalization' needed

*Agencies in city core want input in how downtown will look*

By **CHRISTIANA WIENS**

Free Press staff writer

A group of downtown social service providers wants in on discussions to revitalize the downtown core.

"The Downtown Business Improvement Association wants economic revitalization, we want social revitalization - but we need input in the plan to be able to change that," says Rob Rail, of Intersect.

Mr. Rail joins former city councillor Murry Krause (Native Health Centre) and David Coflin (United Way) and a list of 12 organizations that help homeless, needy or at-risk people out of the downtown core in opposing the draft plan as written. They wonder where they fit in to the DBIA's shiny new Empori-ums, public markets and

entertainment complexes. "There's a perceived lack of detail around social issues in the draft plan," says Mr. Rail, who penned a letter of opposition to the DBIA last week.

"There are clearly some displacement issues here. We need to be more proactive and ask ourselves how do we deal with some of the underlying causes of social problems."

One of the plan's only mentions of 26 service providers is "the most serious constraint with respect to creating a vibrant downtown area is the concentration, in the downtown area, of social services and agencies."

The group agrees some of its organizations which service a more suburban clientele could move, but the DBIA has failed to see the "strong economic bene-

fit that the social services sector can and do provide in the downtown."

Plus, if some services are forced to move during development, Mr. Rail wants to know who will pay the cost of moving and finding new office space.

"Our presence represents many millions of dollars in payroll, property and investment in the downtown," writes Mr. Rail in his letter to association. "For a strong and vibrant downtown we believe there needs to be a representational mix of retail, education, entertainment, social and other services downtown."

Ultimately the issue has to be discussed in the city's official community plan by people who know about social development, he says.

DBIA president Kirk Gable responded by agree-

ing to work with the service providers in deciding which services could be located elsewhere.

"It is not being suggested that there should be no social service agencies in the downtown area but merely that we should not have substantially all such organizations in one area of the city," says Mr. Gable. "We are quite interested in working with you to determine what services may be established in other areas, to the obvious economic benefit of those other areas, as you so well argue in your letter."

The group has notified city council of their intent to be more involved in development discussions. Their letter is expected to be included in December 4 city council agenda package.



**Gable**

▼ **From Front**

## No penetration potential: Clare

Lazerhawk for five years would be \$78.

"The RCMP tested these guns using lightweight pellets so they went faster. Under the Criminal Code if they have a certain velocity they're firearms," says Mr. Clare, adding that the over 1,200 stores carrying the listed airguns haven't been informed that their stock falls under the firearms act and many current airgun owners are unaware that they could be committing a criminal code offence as of January 1. "Anything that can be used as a weapon is dangerous, but I don't think these are. They have no penetration."

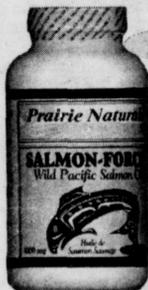
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