

Roseville - Eastpointe EASTSIDER

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Eastpointe plans to continue to work on the downtown area to keep it distinct. There have been many upgrades over the years like bike racks, benches and a clock tower.

Photos by April Lehbeck



Let's go downtown

BY APRIL LEHMBECK
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EASTPOINTE — Back in the 1950s, most people would head to a city's downtown for shopping and entertainment, but the modern-day mall all but killed many downtowns.

The Eastpointe Downtown Development Authority has big plans for its downtown, which is considered the Nine Mile and Gratiot area.

"The DDA intends to make numerous improvements to the Nine and Gratiot district in our ongoing efforts to make the DDA a distinctive, attractive and noteworthy shopping area," Eastpointe Economic Development/DDA Director Steven Horstman said. "Our goal is to not only make the downtown a vital shopping district for Eastpointe residents, but to also attract nonresidents to our town."

They are planning changes to signs so that people can easily recognize where the DDA area is located. Crosswalks, parking, landscaping and other issues will be addressed.

"We not only want to attract shoppers with these improvements, but also stores and developers," Horstman said. "It is extremely important that we continue to make these public investments to bolster the confidence of the development community in our town."

"It proves that we, as a city, continue to make necessary investments so that developers and shop owners can invest with confidence," he said. "These investments by the DDA will also have a positive effect on Eastpointe as a whole."

The DDA is working with Giffels-Webster Engineers on the plans.

Changing the atmosphere in communities will attract people who are looking to live in urban areas with distinct qualities, said Scott Clein of the engineering firm.

By making some initial changes that cost little, the city can develop and grow so that it can look at bigger

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improvements.

"Eastpointe, for example, is currently discussing some striping changes with the Michigan Department of Transportation to more clearly delineate on-street parking on Gratiot," Clein said. "In addition to aiding existing businesses by more clearly identifying parking opportunities, this move will also clear up driver confusion in some areas and provide a

safer pedestrian experience."

The DDA needs to work out its vision for the area so that they can launch a plan that will take them through at least the next decade, Clein said.

"It will be a valuable tool to ensure that the community's vision for their downtown is clearly outlined for MDOT, residents and visitors alike," Clein said. "It may include the desire for expanded sidewalks, bike lanes, decora-

tive lighting and entry signage."

Clein emphasized the need for communities to set themselves apart by creating a downtown area with a distinct feel.

"The beauty of urban environments, in my opinion at least, is the heightened interaction of people and the availability of new experiences that comes with the mixing of uses," he said. "Residential components that are adjacent to commercial, office and enter-

tainment venues provide a community with a pulse. If you take the full-time residents away, you might be left with an interesting destination, but not a true urban village."

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