

**SOUTH MAIN REVITALIZATION PLANNING AREA
MEETING WITH BUSINESS OWNERS
December 1, 2004**

After brief introductory comments from Ald. Victory Bell, the floor was open for comments.

[Jaime Salazar and Rudy Campos volunteered to translate for the two individuals at the meeting who did not speak English.]

The first speaker was extremely upset with how the displacement of Torres' grocery was handled. She felt strongly that there wasn't really any point in putting forth any ideas since the City would ignore them anyway.

Rudy Campos agreed that it was unfortunate the Torres had to pay the price for bringing a new store to South Main, but the community now needs to make IGA a success. There are museums on South Main, as well as the old Capital Theater, but they need foot traffic for these and local businesses to succeed. The more that happens, the better it will be for SW Rockford. He felt the community owes it to the Torres family to make SW Rockford a success. He then suggested that we just go around the table and let everyone make their comments.

Sergio Ortiz of Sotos Jewelry said his main concern is theft. He sees a lot of transients and would like the City to do something about them. He also said he hopes there are more meetings as we go along in this planning process.

The owner of Novedades Azteca said he has had problems with crime at both his old South Main location and where he is now on Charles Street.

The owner of La Despensa said there is a need for more security. There are people walking around, breaking into cars and businesses. She has had success with her bakery but sees lots of problems. Lots of people do not want to come to this area late at night. The parking lot at the corner needs more light and more spaces. The sidewalks are too narrow which makes people uncomfortable walking there. The alleys are really dark – there are no lights there. She is planning on putting up cameras to monitor the parking lot. People continue to break windows in cars. As a business owner, she would like people from all of Rockford to come to South Main, but they won't because of the security problem. This is made worse by the fact that it can take over 45 minutes for the Police to show up.

The next speaker [Candelorio Torres?] said that South Main is a great area but it lacks commercial space for people who would like to come there to develop. We need buildings to flank IGA so it's not sitting out there by itself. Put more there and the area will grow. If buildings on South Main are taken out for the road project but there is a place to move to here, he will stay on South Main.

Most people already own their own buildings, so why should they rent something new?

The shopsteads are nice but lack parking in front of them.

One individual mentioned that he had gone through the City and bought land at 1611 South Main three years ago and was ready to build. The property was zoned C-2 and had a parking lot, but the City wouldn't let him do anything.

What's going to be torn down for South Main and for the Morgan Street bridge? What will happen to businesses when Morgan Street is closed down for construction of the new bridge? [Vicki Manson indicated that we would bring someone from Public Works to our next meeting.]

Will the City invest in the Capital Theater?

People don't want to come on this side of town because "people get killed here."

John Pixler (One Stop Pharmacy and Foods) felt that what the area needs is more people. Replace the boarded-up homes with new ones. The City needs to know and support businesses that are already here. He doesn't see many people here at night, and those numbers will be even less when the River Hawks leave Marinelli Stadium. What comes first – a new street or new development? The area would be much more attractive if the street is redone, plus you eliminate the problem of tearing up the street to serve new businesses. We need to find a way for customers to get in during street reconstruction.

Vicki mentioned that she had brought brochures on the CD's housing programs.

Several people mentioned that they had received letters from the City saying we were going to take their property, and suggesting new locations for them on West State Street. They don't want to go to State Street, they want to stay here on South Main.

The owner of Monica's Jewelry said that all her jewelry had been stolen and never got a police report.

Irma Hernandez owns the business next to Monica's (1014 South Main) and asked if these buildings are going to be torn down.

Mrs. Campos (Taco Loco) said there is a major problem with parking along this section of South Main (1100 block). Lots of people get tickets for parking across the street in front of the Graham-Ginestra House. [Ginny Gregory suggested that they write to Ald. Bell to request that this be changed from a no-parking zone to 2-hour parking.]

There is an immediate need for lighting. Nobody comes here after 6:00 PM.

Next meeting: At Monica's, 1016 South Main Street