

When: Jun 8, 2020 03:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: DDA - River Street Village Square Input Session, June 8, 2020

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Elk Rapids Village Square

The Elk Rapids DDA proposed and the Elk Rapids Village Council has approved the closing of River Street, for the purpose of dining and shopping while staying appropriately distanced from one another, starting June 19, 2020 for the remainder of the summer season. We see this as a beautiful experiment in building the strength and resiliency of our community.

As small business in Elk Rapids finds itself operating in a year of business unusual. We are looking for ideas that are sound in concept and being embraced all over the country as well as Michigan. Both restaurants and retail are at a restricted capacity that could jeopardize their ability to continue into fall and through the winter.

The Downtown district between Cedar and Dexter will become pedestrian only with barricades placed at either end. Traffic flow will be rerouted north of River Street past the Marina, into the parking lot and on Noble. There will be convenient handicap parking on both side streets as well as enhanced signage for parking and other amenities. There will be beautiful areas provided for visitors to rest, relax and recoup for more shopping!

This past week, it has come to our attention that there are many residents and businesses that feel they would like to be included or contacted for their comments or concerns. We want to assure you that the DDA is committed to doing what is right for business in our district and the safety of our community in this very uncertain time.

The DDA Board, in collaboration with many other community organizations, has spent hundreds of hours learning, listening and

disseminating the new laws and safety requirements for retail stores, restaurants and professional services. We are very concerned for our citizens, as many are what is considered to be high risk if affected by COVID-19.

The River Street Village Square project was put together as a result of this information gathering and a vital part of a three part plan that DDA put into motion three weeks ago. Our number one priority is to stop or slow the spread of this virus in Elk Rapids while allowing businesses to reopen and bring employees back to work. Both retail and restaurant will be able to spill into the street with product and seating. We have watched many communities throughout the country turn their main streets into beautiful, pedestrian friendly town squares with success. The large outdoor area is considered safe and encourages strolling, shopping and dining.

The Three-Part Plan

- 1) Financial Recovery** - This committee was responsible for putting together options for grants to be distributed to local business that needed financial assistance to survive. This included rent assistance, safety supplies, inventory and any items that were above and beyond the distribution of sanitizers, PPE and signage by our safety committee. Through the generosity of residents, businesses and organizations, we have been able to award 17 grants to those who were in need.
- 2) Safety** - This committee was responsible for putting together a safety protocol that could be adopted by all stores, restaurants and professional services in our Village based on CDC

guidelines. This also included input and leadership by Board Members of Elk Rapids Park and Recreation to include areas outside of the DDA district. This ensured a consistent message for downtown and our parks. The message includes maintaining 6 ft distancing, sanitizing and washing hands, and wearing masks. You may have already seen this communication in many of our stores and restaurants. This committee also provided a comprehensive reopening toolkit to all small businesses for a safe and successful reopening.

- 3) Communication and Marketing** - This committee was responsible for putting together communication that lets both residents and visitors know that they are welcome in Elk Rapids but concerned for their safety. We were also tasked with researching and implementing creative ways to increase use of outside areas. This included River Street and pop up parks that would provide additional seating options in currently unused green space. Our vision is to see people able to get ice cream and find a safe and beautiful spot to sit and enjoy.

As this is OUR community, we will host a COVID-19 response workshop to allow both business and residents to provide input on the current plan. We want to make sure that everyone who wants a voice is heard. We will hopefully work together in a solution-oriented environment.

We will hold this session on Monday June 8th at 3:00p.m. Zoom meeting information will be provided on the DDA and Elk Rapids Village Facebook pages.

