

Downtown gets studied for \$40,000

Firm will look at retail, offices and housing markets

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TRAVERSE CITY — A study of the downtown's housing, office and retail potential will guide city policy, officials said.

The Downtown Development Authority applied for a \$15,000 grant through the Michigan Economic Development Corp. to help pay for a \$40,000 market study of the downtown. The Grand Traverse County Economic Development Corp. provided \$10,000. The DDA will pick up the rest of the tab.

Rob Bacigalupi, DDA deputy director, said the study will examine retail, housing and office markets. The data will help guide downtown development, recruitment efforts and city policies, he said.

The last time the city conducted a market study was about 14 years ago and it only examined retail factors.

"Things have changed a lot since 1992, in some cases for the better," Bacigalupi said.

The old study suggested home accessory and apparel shops, restaurants and stores that sell food for home consumption likely would succeed in Traverse City's downtown. It also predicted the demise of the downtown JC Penney's department store and the movie theater.

Bacigalupi said the DDA tracked the findings and can show the study was correct in its assessments.

The new study will also examine the office market and what types of downtown housing are wanted and determine the most attractive "price point."

The study will take five months to complete.

IN BRIEF

From staff and wire reports

Fire breaks out at Manton restaurant

MANTON — Officials are investigating what caused a Mother's Day fire at a Wexford County restaurant.

Wexford County Sheriff's officials said a fire broke out at the North Side Restaurant on North Michigan Avenue in downtown Manton just before 5:30 p.m. Sunday.

The fire was under control just before 7 p.m., and some fire departments had cleared the scene, officials said.

NWA baggage handlers in court

MINNEAPOLIS — Northwest Airlines Corp. couldn't get its baggage handlers to agree to pay cuts, so it's taking them to court.

Northwest wants its bankruptcy judge to let it throw out its union contracts with baggage handlers and other ramp workers. A trial on that request begins today in bankruptcy court in New York.

Similar trials for Northwest and Delta pilots and Northwest flight attendants ended without a ruling by the judge or, in Delta's case, by a panel of arbitrators. But the threat of a ruling prompted the unions and airlines to make a deal.

Mediated talks between the International Association of Machinists and the airline last week in Minneapolis quickly fizzled, and there were no new talks over the weekend.

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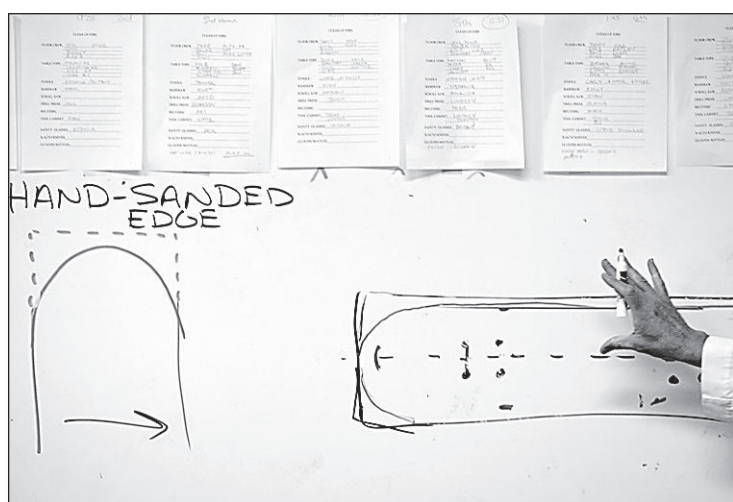
Paul Schmitt, owner of the skateboard manufacturing company PS Stix, skateboards with Traverse City East Junior High students at the skateboard park at the Grand Traverse Civic Center. Schmitt, a native of Wisconsin, sold his first skateboard at age 14. He has been in the industry ever since and has helped produce some 10 million skateboards. He works and lives in Southern California.



Schmitt explains skateboarding with students at the skate park at the Civic Center.



Eighth-grader Kenny Sarkadi, 13, is measured. Height is an important determinant in finding the appropriate skateboard size and shape.



Schmitt incorporates math and science into the pilot program called CreateAskate. About 45 students from Scott Diment's technology classes participated in the program.

LESSONS IN MOTION

Paul Schmitt — in his white lab coat and graying beard — looked out of place at the Grand Traverse Civic Center's skateboard park as he hopped on his board.

"This is a great little skate park. Good design," he said just before he took off.

It was, perhaps, an untraditional way to start a tech-ed class, but it provided a moving example of math, science and ecology principles he would bring up during his two-day visit to Scott Diment's tech-ed class at Traverse City East Junior High.

Schmitt started making skateboards when he was 14 and has sold more than 10 million since then. He is co-founder of Element, one of the most popular skateboard brands, and owner of California skateboard manufacturer PS Stix.

"I was chasing the dream of what I wanted to do," Schmitt told the class. "You're empowered to do anything in life if

you're willing to work hard enough for it."

The skateboard industry pioneer teamed up with Diment, a skateboarder for about 30 years, in creating a curriculum and pilot program called CreateAskate, to be launched nationwide next year. CreateAskate helps students apply math and science in constructing and engineering a skateboard.

Schmitt, also known in the industry as "Professor Schmitt," donated more than 45 blank skateboard decks for Diment's students.

"I thought it was awesome," Alex Miller, 14, said of Schmitt's two-day visit to the class in mid-April.

Two junior high classes spent about two weeks in April drilling, sanding and designing their skateboards.

"The kids loved it," Diment said. "Any time I can teach something students can relate to in real life, something they're passionate about, it makes a big difference."

Photo story by ■ Tyler Sipe

For a multimedia slide show, go to our Web site, www.record-eagle.com



Paul Schmitt helps Ari Bucco, 15, with skateboard measurements and design.