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From June 21, 2006 issue

Leaders help revitalize Miracle Mile

By Jaclyn Keller, Spotlight staff writer

It's not often that a group of business people join together to entice competing companies to their neighborhoods.

But that is exactly what several southside leaders did when they formed the Gateway Business Alliance, a group that hopes to bring economic redevelopment to the near southside Madison Avenue corridor.

Barely a month old, the alliance has already gained speed and support. Founded by 11 local community and business leaders, the alliance is set on bringing positive change to the south gateway to Indianapolis.

"The most important thing is to bring strong businesses back to the near southside," said Mark Bowell, contracted executive director of Friends of Garfield Park and founding member of the alliance.

"There was an ongoing level of concern about the condition of economic development," he added. "Years and year ago, this was truly one of the most vibrant areas of the city and we've seen places of

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By Jaclyn Keller, Spotlight staff writer



retail fall into disrepair."

To revitalize the area formerly known as the Miracle Mile, the alliance raised money from businesses. Alliance members then hired engineering and surveying firm Schneider Corp. to provide a future vision for the area.

Schneider's most recent southside project was providing a vision for the Emerson Avenue and Main Street gateway project in Beech Grove.

The Madison Avenue project recommendations will be similar to the Emerson Avenue gateway, according to Schneider project manager Kevin Foster.

"The ultimate goal is to provide a streetscape that is an improvement to the area. We want to show the future of what the area can be," said Foster.

Schneider will unveil preliminary images of the area during a reopening celebration Saturday at Carpenter's Council, 2635 Madison Ave.

The alliance hopes to capitalize on the excitement surrounding the recently finished construction on Madison Avenue by making the event a community celebration.

"We want to gather as much energy and excitement as possible," said Bowell.

He stressed that community involvement is a critical piece of any project's success.

"This revitalization process will not take place overnight. Nothing happens without a collective effort," he said.

In getting the effort off the ground, alliance members took the initiative to

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meet in Mayor Bart Peterson's office.

The city challenged the leaders to get the ball rolling, according to Bowell.

Peterson and officials from department of public works will be on hand during this weekend's celebration, which will include a ribbon cutting ceremony.

"It's a good time to sound the bell," said Bowell. "The road's done and this part of the south side is open for

business."

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