

## Q4: George Traikos, president, Traikos Development LLC

### TRAIKOS

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**Q:** You recently held a series of focus groups regarding services downtown. What prompted you to conduct them?

**A:** Traikos Development, the developers of the Academy Building, hosted focus group discussions designed to elicit opinions, attitudes and perceptions of people working in the downtown Rochester area. The purpose of the focus groups is to gain insight on the types of commercial categories needed in the Four Corners district of downtown Rochester. Our starting point was the principle of "growing the pie," rather than "slicing it differently." When I first announced that office space would be available after the Academy's renovation, several brokers approached me wanting to fill it with law firms currently located in other downtown buildings. To us, that was a zero-sum game: Our gain would be someone else's loss. In the meantime, the shortage of services and retail tailored to the daytime population would go unchanged. After extensive research, we decided to test our findings by consulting with the people who work

downtown. We invited a group of people who were selected randomly from the Four Corners District daytime working population to discuss their needs.

**Q:** What was the key message you heard from those groups?

**A:** We asked the invitees open-ended questions regarding the types of retail and services that they feel are missing from the downtown area. We also asked about the types of service or retail purchases they make during the daytime hours. Finally, we tested some of our ideas that are a direct result of our prior research on downtown retail. Focus group participants stated that there is a serious need for a café—for breakfast, coffee and pastries, and generally to have a place to meet during the morning hours. The main complaint about the lunch hour is that there are very limited options for eating. This includes both carryout foods (soups, sandwiches, salads) and sit-down restaurants. There are no dessert and pastry shops to go to after lunch. Certain participants stated that a

formal restaurant (such as the former Edwards Restaurant located in the lower level of The Academy) is needed.

There's a market for business lunches as well as after-hours dining and entertainment. The group stated that they often use the lunch hour to go to certain suburbs to make purchases. Product categories purchased in those trips include gifts, men's and ladies' business apparel and shoes, and certain personal or convenience items not readily available downtown. The services they look for include personal services (hairdresser, mini-massages, day spa), as well as alterations and dry cleaning, shoe repair, and copying and package-shipping services. A fitness club in the central business district would also be welcomed by many. They stated that a limited-product-

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line grocery store is sorely missed downtown (ever since Wegmans closed their Midtown Plaza location). They would like to see a store that carries convenience items as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, some meats and fish, and prepared foods.

**Q:** What do you see as the most important service to bring to downtown?

**A:** I believe that increasing the number and variety of restaurants within walking distance is most important. Essential considerations include the quality of the food, customer service (courtesy and speed), and appropriate price points. I would think that prepared foods (carryout, to the home) should be available. Personal services—such as a day spa, fitness club, dry cleaning, clothing repairs and alterations, and even a concierge service—should do extremely well in the central business district of downtown. There is a tremendous retail gap (the difference between market potential—what people would buy—and existing outlets) for many products downtown. Men's and women's clothing, shoes, personal care products, a camera shop or electronics store, office supplies, and gift/novelty item stores will have great opportunities, if they choose to locate in the central business district.

**Q:** What is the status of the Academy Building?

**A:** The design development of the Academy is progressing nicely. Renovations will begin at the end of the summer and the building will be ready for occupancy by the summer of 2009. We are currently evaluating different options for mechanical systems. The Academy will seek LEED "green building" certification at the silver level, and all systems will contribute to decreasing the carbon footprint of the building.