

May 20, 2008

To the Editor:

The Friday, May 9 editorial titled "Flight, blight, plight: Time to tackle empty big boxes" suggests the West Side Association take on the challenge of the "big box battle," suggesting it is a "perfect project to concentrate on for the good of the community."

We appreciate your confidence in our organization's level of influence and ability to affect change. Our mission is to assist and encourage the growth and promotion of west side businesses and our community through involvement in issues of growth and change, by educating our members in regard to political issues affecting business, through advancement of a consistent and positive image of Oshkosh's west side and our community in general, and by the organization's support and involvement in community efforts to make Oshkosh a better place to live, work and play.

We work to accomplish our mission through representation at the state Department of Transportation meetings as well as the Oshkosh Area Economic Development and Oshkosh Chamber boards. We financially support Junior Achievement, Live at Lunch, Celebration of Lights and the Annual Holiday Parade. Additionally, West Side Association has contributed substantial sums of money to projects we feel are an investment in the quality of life and future of Oshkosh. Those projects include the Pollack Aquatic Center, the Military Veteran's Museum, and the Titan Sports Complex.

Of course we welcome the development of those empty retail spaces and are willing to help by supporting and encouraging new ventures that are interested in filling those voids. While we appreciate the words of encouragement, the task of developing the abandoned big box stores is best left to the professionals—the folks at OAEDC, the Chamber, Chamco and commercial development companies. West Side Association is extremely supportive of economic development projects, but we are not organized to lead them.

Connie Drexler
President,
West Side Association