





concerned, no."

Rick Baker, president and CEO of the **Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce**, said "a delicate balance" should be maintained between local store and restaurant owners and the national and regional chains that are moving into downtown.

"You are not going to be able to keep businesses out of the area," he said. "I think the vibrancy and success of downtown is shown by the chains' interest. They feel like they can come in and be successful."

Although Douglas Small, president and CEO of the **Experience Grand Rapids** convention and tourism bureau, described his organization as a "vocal supporter of locally owned businesses," he also pointed out that some tourists just feel comfortable with chains they trust.

"A balanced mix helps to satisfy all visitors," he said.

Resistance to national or franchise chains moving into a downtown dominated by local businesses does not surprise Gibbs.

"In some cases, people feel like we are pointing fingers at them, but that is not really our job," he said. "It is our job to explain what is supportable. People don't always believe it."

"We were told 20 years ago that no restaurants would work in Naples, Fla., because everyone ate at the country club."

A recent check of the **Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce** website now lists nearly 80 restaurants with Naples mailing addresses.