

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Meeting of the DDA Board of Directors
August 22, 2023

The May meeting of the DDA Board was called to order at 8:03 am.

ROLL CALL

Present: *DJ Boyd, David Cole, Aaron Cozart, Mike Jaafar, Jim Long, Greg Presley, Shawn Riley*

Absent: *Brian Turnbull, Margene Buckhave, Steven Huprich, Ryan McKindles*

Also Present: *George Lahanas City Manager, Lori Ward DDA Director, Stacy Pearson DDA Assistant Director, Sarah Prescott, Dave Gutman, Fred Sheill, Bob Buckhave, Susan Hafleigh, Barbara Moroski-Browne, Marilyn Price*

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Ward noted that the DDA had not received the usage report for item 4.e of the Consent Agenda the EV Charging Station Usage Report. The document will be forwarded to the DDA once it is received.

Motion by Boyd, seconded by Cozart, to approve the modified consent agenda. **Motion carried unanimously.**

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR CURBLESS STREET DESIGN

Lahanas given floor by Ward for curbless street discussion. Lahanas gave background on curbless street thought development. Upon his arrival the main discussion was on the downtown experience and how to make that experience more engaging as a destination. Bollards are part of this administering of ideas. Idea came when the concrete alongside the clock tower area began failing sooner than usual. Ward noted concrete budget for year is \$100,000. Engineers agreed that fixing was a difficult task. This along with the discussion of platforms to continue the outdoor dining experience opened a time to look for new solutions. Curbless streets may be a positive solution to this. Lahanas continued to explain his past experience with this in a street scape improvement project that changed the scope of his previous downtown and utilized curbless streets. Summer closed said area two months a year and it has proven a huge success. No issues have been noted. Lahanas noted he spoke to council and they adopted it as a priority in July, siting the wording of the July action item from July. A special note was made by Lahanas that it was a study, not implementation. The intent is to study the opportunity and get renderings to show people what this could look like. If there is a decision to move forward these renderings would be used in application for

place making grants. Council approved an expenditure on 8/21/23 of \$2,500 to go towards the city's portion of the renderings, and if approved today the DDA would cover the second half at \$2,500. Following would be moving forward in getting the drawings from GM. Lahanas noted that at the council meeting 8/21/23 some criticism was raised in the incorrect thinking that this item was trying to be pushed through on consent agenda, which was untrue as it was a low dollar amount that was deemed unnecessary to place differently in the council in the process.

Lahanas noted that the intent with the documents and renderings from GM is to call in all of the downtown businesses to talk about the direction of the downtown. First, how the load out of the street structures will work by November 7, and what the possibilities are for the future. We are at a fork in the road. Do we carry on with what's existing in terms of structures and repairs, or do we explore the possibility for new endeavors like the curbless street. We have asked GM to show us bands on where the sections of dining, street, parking would be in terms of what that might look like for summer versus winter.

Presley asked if this information would be helpful in procuring grants.

Lahanas responded that it indeed would be very helpful. The timing would line up with a \$400,000 Revitalization and Place Making (RAP) grant that has been applied for to put towards the Fort Griswold play structure. He noted that the city will find out this fall if that is approved, that project would be implemented next summer, and then there could be an application submitted for another RAP grant in spring. We would try for a \$500,000 grant, or more, and add the GM drawings to that package. This step is just preliminary, just pictures that we can use to help the discussion, and the next step would be the engineering step to research feasibility. We already have a small sense of this because we had the engineers walk with me downtown. From that walk around we know there is no underground infrastructure that needs to be done. This would be a surface only project. All water, sewer, everything else is already done. Asphalt, concrete, curbs, and that's about it.

Lahanas responded that engineering and services would come after community engagement and a decision by the city and DDA. It would be a bigger expense at that point.

Cole asked if there was a higher engagement in the community Lahanas came from with the retail vendors as opposed to just restaurants. Lahanas responded that the area in question is primarily a restaurant area, but it did work much better for festivals, less trip hazards, and it was only in a single block area. Cole noted there might be more opportunity for the retailers since there would be less push between the sidewalk and the curb, they could spread out more. Lahanas said that there was no seam, even with a decking solution there was a seam, and this has a single surface and it makes everything easier. It's much safer for people not walking off of the curbs.

Jaafar asked if with the roads open, the curbless streets still functioned well. Lahanas answered that it did work much better, and that there have been no issues in three years. Jaafar asked if it was striped parking, and Lahanas responded that it was sidewalk, ribbon of concrete for drain where a curb would be, then asphalt, and then the travel lane but no parking. However, parking is what would be designed into the Northville plan.

Presley asked what the engineering plan. Lahanas responded engineering comes after discussion with businesses and gaging involvement.

Long asked what the estimated down time was for sidewalks. Lahanas responded that the attempt would be to leave six to eight feet of the sidewalks in place for uninterrupted business access for the entire project unless they needed repair. Long noted that the pitch of some sidewalks were there purposefully because Steve Laurence raised issues for wheelchair accessibility ADA compliance when they were initially installed. Ward noted it might have been Steve Lomske. Lahanas said that all sidewalks would have to be assessed.

Lahanas noted that engineers noted this could be a two-month project due to the nature of the project.

Presley asked if there was an option for overlay versus complete tear out. Lahanas responded that no, they would tear everything up. Ward also noted they would not leave the current street and build over. Lahanas noted that the idea would not have to touch water, sewer, or electrical. Long noted that there may be some tricky water run off issues in certain areas such as his building at 190 E Main, and all agreed that the engineering findings would address these notes if moving forward.

Cole asked if this plan affected the bollard placement. Lahanas responded that it did not, the curbless design would work inside of the bollard placement.

Presley asked if crosswalks would be raised. Lahanas said if they were, they would be more visible but this would be a question for GM and the engineers as well as pricing concerns.

Presley noted that the value of all of this would improve use of the right of way and create a pedestrian oriented space that vehicles were able to come through. He also noted other communities have done this in the Midwest.

Ward noted many communities such as Ann Arbor, Brighton, East Lansing, Hudsonville, and others have working curbless streets that could be visited to see. Lahanas said that the East Lansing location was close to his office and he was there all of the time and it worked well, but that we had to make sure it would work well here as we move forward in discussions and examinations. Lahanas said that moving up onto the curbless streets make it a better pedestrian experience and safer because it creates a natural slowing of traffic. Lahanas took issue with the idea that Main St was thought to be a main traffic thorofare to get through as fast as possible. He disagreed, saying it should not be 30 mph. Jaafar noted it is supposed to go though, and Lahanas said that yes, it is but it needs to be slowed down. Lahanas noted that even the clock tower area was put in place to slow people down and calm traffic, and Ward added that 10 -12 years ago the speed limit was 10mph. Lahanas noted that this idea might be appropriate for Main St but not for Center Street. Main St is where we have the stage, Marquis, main area of town.

Cole noted that there may a good thing to do to see if it works well before using it in other areas.

Presley brought up noise concerns with traffic close to diners and asked if there was a way to minimize that to which Lahanas answered there was not a good method for that type of

noise reduction. Ward added that summer dining would enjoy the street closures and that it may not be as much of an issue in the off season. Lahanas also noted that slower speeds might help.

Cole asked about the timeline for GM plan. Lahanas went over the current November 1 removal of structures, and then went on to note that GM will have a quick turn around for the initial requested plans in the next two weeks followed by a September meeting to create a plan. Lahanas said that 2024 will most likely not happen, perhaps next fall but most likely implementation would begin in spring 2025 if approved.

Presley asked for clarification that for one year the streets would be “pre-Covid” design, and Lahanas responded yes. Lahanas noted we are not tied to a time frame and that for one year we would be going back to how things were in terms of platforms, umbrellas, and tables. Ward noted many places still have those things in storage waiting to see if they would be used. Riley asked if the permits covered this. Ward responded that March is that date. Following up she also noted March was the closing of the streets and November 1 was the opening. Ward added that businesses had to fit into the space closest to the business unless it was approved by their neighbors to spread out into their spaces when streets were open. Riley asked how close areas could be next to buildings. Ward responded five feet out meets current ADA requirements, and there needed to be a wheelchair accessible table on the sidewalk as per the current permits but it may extend further than that depending on the area. Riley asked about Rebecca’s tables being directly next to the building to which Ward responded it could be that they are in ADA compliance because of the slope of the sidewalk there.

Riley asked what the downside of the curbless streets might be. Lahanas said that it all has to work, community, engineering, support. Everything needs to be in place to be successful. If it won’t work, we explore and go over this now.

Long noted challenges with parallel parking, possible putting lamp posts at risk. Lahanas said heavy planters and other key items can be placed to help alleviate that issue in the design. Lahanas also said light concrete barricades could be placed to keep cars out of dining areas as well.

Motion to approve by Boyd moved, seconded by Cozart the motion to approve the professional services for the curbless street design.

Motion paused for public comment. Riley approved public comment.

Hafleigh reminding everyone that design work and a professional study is needed before moving forward with a plan. The images shown to the public are just images. Additional reminders given to remember the merchants on Center Street and their needs, overall ADA concerns, traffic flow, and overlap with construction times with any ideas to come. Hafleigh noted she feels, as a designer, this is not a complete plan and that an additional firm beyond a design firm is needed.

Buckhave seconded Hafleigh’s thoughts on Center Street being an important part of the city to be included in any discussions as they often feel left out.

Prescott raised concerns over potential safety hazards with curbless streets and a lack of clear boundaries for vehicles. Primarily concerns with children not understanding the use or lack of visual cues with curbless areas. Prescott also did not agree with the multiple construction projects overlapping and it's negative impact on businesses from traffic, dust, and lack of accessibility for public.

Lahanas addressed an additional comment about areas being left out of plans by Long, saying that he has spoken with Ward at length about continuing street scape improvements for all of the downtown, not just Main Street. A consistent look, concrete improvements, and equity to all businesses are of the utmost importance and something that Ward has brought up at length for a long period of time. He understands the fairness, but also that the six to eight blocks of town are not all utilized the same. Lahanas sited that on the upcoming Thursday City Council will be receiving reports on traffic and motorized transportation, and that day at 5pm a work session will be held with FV to get their recommendations for council. After that, Greenway Collaborative will be giving the non-motorized report. Lots of discussions to come. It will be on Zoom, and all reports will be available on the website today.

Long brought up the issue of the new stop signs on Cady. Lahanas noted it was approved the previous night, and will be going up at Cady and Church. Ward noted it will be a three way stop. Long was looking forward to hearing what mobility had to say and asked that it be put on the agenda for September – Ward agreed.

Hafleigh noted that it is important to attend the meeting on Thursday to learn what will be on the mobility report and let them know if you disagree. Consultants may not understand the reality of the infrastructure of the city. Hafleigh noted she would be there.

Lahanas said that the meetings would be from 5pm – 7pm and would be recorded.

Ward noted that in adding items to the September agenda, F&V who was hired by the city to do the study and the Mobility team which is a committee that came out of the city council as well that doesn't agree with recommendations poses a question of who you have at the meeting.

Long noted that the politics would be on the DDA but that he would like to hear what they both have to say.

Motion to approve by Boyd moved, seconded by Cozart the motion to approve the professional services for the curbless street design. Motion Carried six to one, with Jaafar opposed subject to more information.

COMMITTEE INFORMATION AND UPDATES

- a. Design Committee: Ward noted no update or report.
- b. Marketing Committee: Riley reported that attendance is down. There is work being done to improve the meetings and implement training every other month enhancing the format. Ward announced Skeletons will be installed October 1,

and the kick off celebration is October 6th. Skeletons will remain throughout the entire month of October.

- c. Organizational Committee: No update or report
- d. EDC Committee – Boundary Expansion Update: An interjection was made by Presley asking what was expected from EDC. Lahanas noted that from EDC and Design that there would be check ins throughout the process, but it would not be a burdensome process. Ward noted EDC was the steering committee with GM meeting frequently, was open to public with lots of audience participation, and three additional members were added to the EDC to represent the downtown business community more vigorously and we anticipate them being part of that process moving forward as well. The expiration date for the taxing jurisdiction to opt out of capture on our boundary expiration and amendments ended on Friday. The district library will not be continuing in, but we have heard from no other members.
- e. Parking Committee: Ward noted the three-way stop was approved by the traffic control order.
- f. Riley gave a Victorian Festival music update.
- g. Ward gave an update on a letter from Department of Transportation for an ADA complaint that had been filed against the city with MDOT. Also, a civil rights division had been filed, listing Ward as a contact. The contact was incorrect. The baton was handed off to DPW Director Mike Domine who, along with the city attorney, issued a response. Lahanas clarified further saying the questions were answered and no handicapped parking spots were actually removed. A brief discussion on the history of ADA compliance in Northville followed. Lahanas stated that the information from this exchange can be given to the public if requested.
- h. Lahanas explained the FOG Ordinance to be implemented, removing the current grease collection containers throughout town.

BOARD AND STAFF COMMUNICATION

Motion by Presley, seconded by Long to adjourn the DDA Board meeting. **Motion carried.**
Meeting adjourned at 9:03 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Lori M. Ward, DDA Director
Northville DDA