

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Meeting of the DDA Board of Directors
October 31, 2023**

The October meeting of the DDA Board was called to order at 8:01 am.

ROLL CALL

Present: *Ryan McKindles, Shawn Riley, DJ Boyd, Margene Buckhave, David Cole, Aaron Cozart, Mike Jaafar, Jim Long, Steven Huprich, Brian Turnbull*

Absent: *Greg Presley*

Also Present: *Robert Miller, George Lahanas/City Manager, Barbara Moroski-Browne/Mayor Pro Tem, Lori Ward/DDA Director, Stacy Pearson/DDA Assistant Director, Dave Gutman, Susan Haffleigh, Fred Sheil, Marylyn Price/Northville City Council, Beth Saarela, Tim Obrien, Nancy Darga, Jim Neild, Fred Sheill, Wendy Longpre/Director of Strategic Planning and Special Projects, Alan Maciag/Police Chief, Seth Herkowitz/Hunter Pasteur Homes, Andrew Parin/Grissim Metz Andriese, Omar Eid/Hunter Pasteur Homes, Mary Keyes*

Riley welcomed back Robert Miller to the board. Miller will be sworn in at a later date.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Riley opened the meeting to audience comments for any item not on the agenda, limited to the approved three minutes.

Neild shared photos and notes on his experiences from a recent European trip regarding outdoor dining bollards, curb less streets, and traffic patterns. Images and notes were shared with the board. Neild also expressed the opinion that streets should be closed for special events but the main streets should not be closed all summer. He noted the need to reconsider the seasonal street closures, citing the school bus route disruption as an example.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Long requested an update to the previous meeting minutes to include his quote “concrete seating and concrete steps” regarding the Ford Field presentation. Pearson confirmed this update would be made to the September minutes.

Motion by McKindles, seconded by Turnbull, to approve the agenda and consent agenda as presented. **Motion carried unanimously.**

RIVER PARK AND CENTRAL PARK PRESENTATION

Herkowitz from Hunter Pasteur Homes (HPH) presented the River Park and Central Park plans. Herkowitz prefaced that along with the City Council and Planning Commission there has been significant progress on multiple fronts. HDC, earlier this year approved the apartment building and condominiums located along Cady Street. Additionally, Herkowitz said that they received

the support for the Brownfield Redeveloped Plan and that plan was later adopted at City Council. Last week the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) gave approval for the Reimbursement Agreement. Herkowitz clarified that the Reimbursement Agreement governs the reimbursements between the developer and the Brownfield Authority. Continuing, he shared that in September at the City Council meeting there was approval and adoption of the Development Agreement, the Brownfield Plan, and the PA210. The next step in the approval process is to go before the Planning Commission for the final approval. Herkowitz concluded his update by saying that at the October 17, 2023 Planning Commission meeting the focus was on architectural design. The next PC meeting will be on November 9, 2023 and will focus on open space, and the third meeting later in November will include deliberation on the site plan. The site plan and technical engineering package has been reviewed by OHM. Advancement of the architectural designs are consistent with what was presented during the preliminary approval process. Herkowitz then yielded the floor to Parin for further presentation.

Parin presented on the Central Park and River Park plans with slides and renderings, they both fall within the existing and new DDA boundaries. Prior to full presentation, Parin noted that both spaces accounted for roughly 60% of the development's total open space which is 15.01 acres. Central Park is 1.24 acres, and River Park is 7.85 acres excluding the retention pond. His presentation included base amenities, lighting, electrical points, wayfinding, vehicular entrances, security bollards, terraced seating, water supply, public restrooms, and additional landscaping and decorative elements that tie into the existing DDA streetscape standards. Clarifications were made by Parin based on audience questions regarding wayfinding signs, bollard access and security box use.

Parin continued to the River Park portion of the presentation which included an amenity overview that match DDA design standards to include pedestrian scale lighting, wayfinding, trash, drinking fountains, benches, bike racks, bike repair stations, and dog stations. In total the plan includes seventeen different locations throughout the park where these amenities can be found. Many components of the original plan have been improved to include pedestrian networks, enhanced connectivity to community, river access points, south bridge river crossings, home for the log cabin, and natural design for landscaping. The goal of the plan is to integrate the park with the organic surroundings, downtown, Hines Park, river access, and the community.

Parin answered questions about daylighting the river and the river bed rehabilitation. Barr Engineering, part of the current design team, is reviewing the technical engineering of the river opening. Their presentation will be given at the next Planning Commission meeting. Parin urged everyone to attend.

Mayor Turnbull stated that Parks and Recreation will be responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the park with an 85 / 15 split. Depending on the projected population of the Downs, the long-term percentage of responsibility may be slightly increased but it should fall very close to the current township/city split.

Ward noted that she and Lahanas were working on a memorandum of understanding that would memorialize the responsibilities of maintenance, operation, and programming costs over the life of the project. The agreement should be out by the end of the year.

Parin continued the presentation noting that pathways coming to the river included stone outcroppings to accommodate the fluctuation of river areas. No fishing railings have been considered at this point, and kayaking would not be desirable at this point in the river. Outcroppings on the map allow passive access and connectivity to the river. Trees along the riverbank provide stabilization and aesthetic viewsheds. Landscapes are to be planted specific to the exact site conditions and include native grasses and forbs for color. The park is to be sodded with a reinforced below grade plastic structural ring system that will provide proper drainage tied into the storm system and strength for multi-use events such as vehicles on the grass. The additional park space with surrounding structure and entrance landscaping was also presented along with site lighting, park entrance, and wayfinding design plans.

In conclusion, Parin clarified issues of driving within quadrants, transformer relocation from sidewalks to other zones for aesthetics versus accessibility, and quadrant layout. Parin also presented visuals of park plans for amenity stations, entrances, pathways, bridges, river access points, and open spaces. All designs reflect a continuation of current DDA design language found throughout the city. Parin clarified that final site plan approval containing all elements of the proposal will be provided to the Planning Commission on November 9, 2023. There are no plans to go back to City Council before the final site plan package is presented to the Planning Commission. It will be thoroughly vetted by city planning, city engineering, and DPW.

Ward requested that a public restroom sign be installed near the restrooms, noting that it is critical for wayfinding. Long asked about responsibility for maintaining the restrooms, to which Herkowitz stated that as part of the development agreement the DDA is retaining the first \$50,000 of new tax capture generated from the project that could be used for restrooms.

Boyd raised concerns over the decision to have wooden decking on the bridges, and Lahanas noted that it is a standard use three-inch-thick pressure treated lumber that will withstand years of use and will be easy to repair when necessary. Longpre noted that composite decking or concrete decking gets slippery with wet conditions.

Ward noted on lighting and spacing that the secondary streetscape design standards call for a different spacing than what is being recommended in the proposal. OHM is assisting the City in review the lighting and determination of the correct spacing. The size, location and type of trees are also on the list to update on the secondary streetscape design plan. Ward noted that what was proposed today has not been formally decided upon but is rather something being worked on for the final site plan submission packet.

Parin noted that public and private engagement with the study groups and task force groups have formulated these design strategies and today is the first time the renderings have been made public. Moving forward a detailed presentation will be made at the next Planning Commission on November 9, 2023 and after that the plans will be made public to the community. Parin added that they are happy to provide a copy of the presentation to the DDA Board.

Ward noted that the Planning Commission meeting date change from November 7 to November 9 was made to accommodate the election.

Ward introduced Saarela as the attorney assisting the DDA with boundary expansion, TIF and development amendments, and all legal requirements associated with it. Ward noted that as part of the prepared document for this project there needed to be an agreement between the DDA and the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA).

Saarela provided clarification on the agreement, what it achieves, and what is needed as a course of action for the current meeting. The Reimbursement Agreement is how the developer gets reimbursed. The developer only gets reimbursed for the agreed upon amount between the BRA and the developer. Subsequently, the Interlocal Agreement is a short, procedural agreement between the BRA and the DDA, and is the means by which the BRA gets funds from the DDA. The DDA obtains funds from TIF captured in the area of the downtown district within the Brownfield footprint. Saarela noted the Interlocal Agreement was reviewed by the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, Saarela's office, and independent council in the previous week. Terms of the plan and outlines of the DDA TIF capture are included in this document.

Ward answered Boyd's question on who would provide council for the DDA. The attorney overseeing the agreement was Rich Cherry of Miller Johnson. Independent council was sought because Saarela was already working with the BRA.

Boyd asked what the course of action would be if the developer appealed their taxes, to which Saarela answered that the developer would have a legal right to appeal their taxes but it is not likely.

Long quoted Planning Commission notes from February 1, 2022 by HPH, "The development team had financial depth with the financial capability to complete this project no matter what occurred in the economy in the next five to ten years." Long complimented Herkowitz and the Interlocal Agreement creativity and supported them in finding grants and financial assistance, but stated that he wished to abstain from voting because in the beginning they noted that they would not need financial assistance. Saarela noted that Long could not abstain without a conflict, but had to vote yes or no. Clarification was made Lahanas on tax issues and project funding. Lahanas went on to state that the financial risk is in the hands of the developer, not the city, and that promise of the repayment is what incentivizes the project for the developer. Riley opened the floor to Public Comment.

Darga, chair of River Taskforce, thanked HPH for their work. She noted that the Log Cabin could have stayed in place if the river was arched, however the plans do not accommodate for that scenario. Therefore, the River Taskforce and the Historical Society has taken on the responsibility for raising the additional funds needed to relocate the Log Cabin on the site. The site presented today is not agreed upon by the River Taskforce. The desire is to make the Log Cabin into a picnic shelter by extending the roof, removing the breezeway, putting award winning gardens around the cabin honoring Mary Gilbert, unisex bathrooms inside, and graphic panels inside with the fireplace. Fundraising is upcoming and future grants will be pursued. Darga continued with details on the riverbed stating that it would be too shallow for boats. Darga thanked HPH for redesigning the base of the river to accommodate fish habitats, and noted that it takes up to two years for the riverbed to develop. During this time the bed will be dry while it grows in and stabilizes prior to water release, and the suggestion is to develop public education to explain the look of the river during this stabilization process.

Riley closed the public comment.

Motion made by McKindles to approve the Interlocal Agreement, **supported by Boyd, motion carried unanimously.**

REOPENING OF DOWNTOWN STREETS

Update on Lawsuit – Lahanas shared news about the “Let’s Open Northville v City of Northville” lawsuit by reading a statement, “City administration has reviewed the lawsuit and is confident that all actions were implemented consistent with policy and law, and further the city attorney will actively defend the matter.” Lahanas went on to say that no further comments will be made at any point.

Bollard Update - Lahanas noted that bollards are at the ends of Main / Hutton and Center / Dunlap, signage has been installed. Long cautioned that someone may run into bollards. McKindles asked if the sign was freestanding and Lahanas answered that it is a free-standing sign. Upcoming bollard install will be made when bollards are delivered from the fabricator as they are currently running behind. Further delays may push installation to spring. However, November 1, 2023 all roads will be reopened to traffic. Lahanas thanked DDA and DPW for the hard work clearing the roads and reopening the streets. Turnbull noted that all holes for upcoming bollards are precut and ready for installation.

Ward noted that winter events will call for use of bollards, and if all the bollards aren’t installed, we can go back to type three barricades for these happenings. Lahanas noted that all staff and other departments have been trained in raising and lowering bollards. The final cost was \$168,000. A question was asked if tax payer money was paying for the legal fees of the lawsuit. Lahanas answered that the city has an insurance premium paid to risk pool, so a portion may be coming out of the premiums and a portion may be coming out of tax dollars, but it remains to be seen.

Buckhave asked about the openings on the sidewalk sides beyond the bollards. Lahanas noted that the planters would be an obstruction on the sides. Ward noted that the triple planters have been moved into place, and that there would be work done with the Design and Economic Development Committee to come up with a long-term solution.

Removal of Structures - previously discussed

Reopening of Streets - previously discussed

Next Steps - Ward stated that the EDC and Design chairs will meet with staff and then call a meeting with committee to address the planter replacement with a permanent solution.

INFORMATION AND UPDATES

Design Committee – no update

Marketing Committee – Riley noted Marketing Committee continued to meet. Riley applauded Lori and team for an outstanding Skeleton event. Turnbull noted that news crews were on site, Channel 2 and the Mayor are meeting today. Streets of Treats also drew thousands of people.

Organizational Committee – Boyd noted that the Board can anticipate an update of bylaws at the November meeting.

Economic Development Committee – No update, Cozart to set meeting. Ward said the boundary expansion will be going to City Council on November 6, 2023. There will be a second reading of the two ordinances, a resolution, and the additional information that council requested on DDA boundary expansion overlays.

Parking Committee – no update

BOARD AND STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Riley again welcomed Miller and announced that Greg Presley who served on the DDA Board for over 30 years and has been involved with the community for nearly 38 years will be missed. Ward noted that he would still remain on the EDC and attend DDA board meetings when available.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Turnbull seconded by Cozart to adjourn the DDA Board meeting. **Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:54 am.**

Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Pearson, Assistant DDA Director
Northville DDA