

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Meeting of the DDA Board of Directors
January 18, 2022

The December meeting of the DDA Board was called to order at 8:03 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: *Mayor Brian Turnbull, Margene Buckhave, Aaron Cozart, Mike Jaafar, Ryan McKindles, Greg Presley, Greg Richards, Shawn Riley, Mary Starring*

Absent: *DJ Boyd, Jim Long*

Also Present: *Lori Ward/DDA Executive Director, Jeri Johnson/DDA Marketing & Communications Director, Jessica Howlin/DDA Marketing Assistant, Dave Gutman/Resident, Nancy Darga/Resident, Fred Sheill/Resident, Marilyn Price/City Council, Barbara Morowski-Browne/City Council, John Carter/City Council, Bob Gibbs/Gibbs Planning Group*

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Riley introduced Mike Jaafar as the newest member of the DDA Board. Jaafar owns the Northville City Car Wash and is a long-standing resident of the Northville community. Jaafar is currently with the Wayne County Sheriff's Office. He brings over 28 years of service sector experience to the table and is excited to join the DDA Board.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

MOBILITY TASK FORCE PRESENTATION

Gutman said the City of Northville is currently experiencing exponential growth, creating challenges of safe walkable streets, connectivity and effective traffic flow. The Mobility Task Force has been created with the goal of researching how well key areas currently function, how they relate to proposed developments, and what is needed to achieve livable goals for the city. Gutman said the task force identified five action sites including Seven Mile and Hines Drive, Seven Mile and Center St., South Center St., Cady St./Hutton/Church/Mary Alexander Court (Old Core), and River Street. These were analyzed in relation to how they align with the Northville Downs project as a connector to the site and existing regional trails within Hines Park.

Darga said the five action areas that Gutman stated are a key role in connecting the business district and surrounding communities. River Street and Doheny Safe Schools

will both be affected by the Downs and Foundry Flask developments. Darga added that the Beck Road development will have a major impact on traffic that uses Main and Center Streets in Downtown Northville. Beck is currently the main pass through from M-14 and I-96.

The Seven Mile corridor presents many challenges including the railroad crossing and the “z” shape that cuts through the city with no access to parking lots. Seven Mile needs to have safe pedestrian and bike paths and dedicated entrances to the current parking areas and the future farmers market spot. There also needs to be storm water management along Seven Mile. Darga added that the biggest concern on Seven Mile is the intersection with Hines Drive. Trucks frequently have difficulty with this layout and there is no connectivity with the Northville Downs project or safe routes for pedestrians and bikers.

Darga said another action area on Seven Mile is at the intersection with Center Street due to the steep decline coming into town. The committee recommends roundabouts at both areas on Seven Mile. Another option would be a cruciform layout which would add four lanes. If action is taken on a roundabout, grant funding is available. Either proposed solution would also need to include dedicated safe crosswalks, bike lanes and pedestrian paths.

Darga highlighted the Old Core area as the spot with the most direct impact on the DDA. It is critical to add pedestrian friendly streets to the area surrounding the First Presbyterian Church. Cady Street will become a major thoroughfare once the Downs and Foundry Flask projects are complete. Darga added that consideration should be made on whether to keep Mary Alexander Court a one-way street and the addition of a dedicated turn lane at the intersection of Main and Cady Streets.

With respect to the entrance to the Highland Lakes development, Darga said that a safe pass needs to be added under the railroad bridge. The school district, Wayne County, City of Northville and railroad need to collaborate to make this functional. There is currently school funding available under a Safe Route to School grant and the committee recommends a box culvert be created under the railroad bridge to safely get students to school. Darga said there needs to be immediate action on this project to utilize the safe school funds that are available for this project.

Riley inquired whether the Beck Road project is also in Oakland County. Darga clarified that the Beck project would include Washtenaw, Wayne and Oakland County. Currently all counties are involved in the task force and road planning.

Darga said the Mobility Network is recommending that City Council obtain a mobility integration consultant on the five action areas and is encouraging a partnership between Wayne County, SEMCOG and private developers of the Downs and Foundry Flask.

NORTHVILLE DOWNS RETAIL MARKET REPORT

Greg Presley recused himself from this portion of the meeting.

Bob Gibbs, of Gibbs Planning Group (GPG), said the retail market study is intended to be a guide to a variety of possibilities that could work in Downtown Northville. The focus of the study is the Cady Corridor, which encompasses Cady Street from Center to Griswold. Gibbs said retail is currently in a major crisis and it is projected that 75% of malls will close by 2025-2026. This is a result of a demographic shift in households in addition to retailers not being able to compete with Amazon and other home delivery services. Retailers that are closing in malls are flocking to downtown areas due to the ability to build different types of stores to help with their brand. Gibbs added that the thriving areas have been strip malls with low rent and free parking, and industrial parks, which offer a cool and hip vibe.

Gibbs said the Cady corridor has approximately 200,000 square feet of potential ground floor retail. Retail spending in the Cady area is estimated at about \$1 billion in goods and services. Currently 48% of the spending is leaving the downtown area. The study shows under status quo the area could support 48,000 square feet of retail which would bring in \$24 million in annual revenue. Under best practices, sales capture would increase to \$45 million. Best practices include an attractive downtown and a Business Improvement District (BID) in addition to a DDA. It also includes retailers operating under best practices – being well merchandised, keeping regular hours and having modern storefronts to attract millennials.

Gibbs also said the different areas do not need to be identical. They could be different in retailers and merchandising. The parking structure on Cady is well designed and could be utilized for retail space. Gibbs recommends contracting an architect and broker familiar in liner retailer. This would remove one row of parking spaces and add a grocer or deli type restaurant. Johnson asked if parking capacity was included in the study. Gibbs said under status quo there is not enough parking and GPG assumes that under best practices there would be adequate parking to accommodate development. Gibbs added that Cady presently has ample street parking available.

Johnson asked how the city attracts these types of businesses to open in the downtown. Gibbs said businesses can be attracted by implementing best practices and retain a business recruiting person that has the knowledge and expertise to make contacts and present data to potential retailers. There is a strong market potential in Northville and the area on Cady is severely underperforming. Gibbs added that pedestrian corridors are not walkable or friendly. The stairs from the Cady Street parking deck are intimidating, Center Street is unattractive to walk on and Hutton is not a becoming pedestrian path to walk through between the Cady/Main district. Gibbs added that it would be helpful for Northville to become a Main Street City.

McKindles inquired whether the DDA should approach the Downs developers to hire a business recruiter to take on this project and attract more retailers. Gibbs said that initially further analysis needs to be done and then the community needs to be involved to get an idea how much interest is out there for adding retail. After this is done, a business recruiter should be hired and a new master plan should be created. Gibbs said he will not comment on whether the Downs developers should be involved in this discussion.

Buckhave asked how the current mix of retail and office space in Northville affects future rents. Gibbs said if there is an overabundance of first floor office space, most shoppers will turn around and leave. Many cities have a policy where one area is dedicated office and another is retail.

Richards asked what the process is to find out what the entire downtown could support. Gibbs said an advanced study would show what is supported in the downtown. Ward said that what the DDA worked with GPG several years ago, surveys indicated that people were not interested in national chains coming to the downtown area. Gibbs noted that millennials are also not interested in national chains unless they are deemed “hip” – such as Patagonia and Converse. Gibbs concluded that Northville is currently geared toward the 50-80 age range and not appealing to millennials. Northville is in a strong market and underperforming, and there is a market potential if the City is interested in moving forward with growth.

ELECTION OF DDA OFFICERS

Ward said there are four officer positions available with one-year terms. The Board annually at its first regular meeting in January elects a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. The Secretary and Treasurer do not need to be members of the Board to serve in this office. Current DDA Board Chair Shawn Riley has indicated he is interested in continuing to serve as Chair. DJ Boyd has indicated that he is willing to serve as Vice Chair. The staff recommends that Jessica Howlin take over as Secretary from Jeri Johnson, as Howlin currently prepares the meeting minutes. The Treasurer position is also open and would serve as an alternate for Chair/Vice Chair if those members were not available. McKindles expressed interest in the Treasurer position. **Motion by Starring, seconded by Buckhave** to approve the election of Shawn Riley/Chair, DJ Boyd/Vice Chair, Jessica Howlin/Secretary and Ryan McKindles/Treasurer for a one-year term. **Motion carries unanimously.**

COMMITTEE INFORMATION AND UPDATES

- a. *Design Committee:*
None.
- b. *Marketing Committee:*
Riley said the committee is continuing to meet regularly to brainstorm new events and ways to help the downtown community.
- c. *Parking Committee:*
No meeting was held.
- d. *Organizational Committee:* Johnson said that she and Boyd attended the City Council meeting on January 10 to represent the DDA during the Council review of goals and objectives. The review went well and there were no issues or changes made to the DDA goals and objectives.
- e. *Economic Development Committee:*

Ward said that the EDC met with Gibbs prior to the board meeting. GPG will be presenting the study during the February 1, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting. Buckhave added that it would be beneficial for retailers and landlords to see the presentation as well. Presley asked if there is additional funding to continue with Gibbs services. Ward said there was an earmarked dollar amount and the DDA will need to reevaluate if the board wants to continue paying for additional services. Services that may be beneficial include studies on the street closures and a retail market study on the entire downtown area. Presley added that the undeveloped areas between Cady and Church St. need to be evaluated and the DDA needs to be more proactive with development in these areas.

John Carter from City Council added that the Mobility Task Force really focused on the underdeveloped area on Cady as well as the connectivity issues between Cady and the main downtown in their studies as well.

Richards said that handicapped access needs to be increased. Additionally, Mary Alexander Court could have signs implemented to highlight connectivity between the parking garage and the downtown. Johnson said that it should be looked into on whether Mary Alexander Court should remain one way or convert to a two-way.

Ward said that the last two master plans recommended Northville having a BID/principal shopping district. There would be a tax imposed on the landlords to cover costs. The DDA now needs to determine how to proceed with the Cady Corridor given the new information from the GPG study.

- f. *Sustainability Committee:*
None

BOARD AND STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Presley inquired if future meetings are able to be hybrid. Turnbull said at the moment the city does not have technological support to host hybrid meetings but there are bids out to set up a hybrid model. A hybrid model would allow attendees the option of participating during a meeting but board members would still need to be present in person to count as a part of a quorum and to vote.

Motion by Turnbull, seconded by Starring to adjourn the DDA Board meeting.
Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 10:21 am

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Howlin, Marketing Assistant
Northville DDA