

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Minutes - February 2, 2016
City Council Workroom / City Hall, 301 E. Huron St. 7:00 pm

Members Present: Ray Detter, John Chamberlin, Hugh Sonk, Don Duquette

Visitors Present: Ethel Potts, Ellen Ramsburgh, Peter Nagourney, Amber Miller, Marc Gerstein, Eleanor Linn, Christine Crockett, Betsy Price, Susan Pollay, Steve Kaplan, Jeff Crockett

Members Absent: Jim Kern, Sue Kern, Joan French, Kathleen Nolan, Marsha Chamberlin

The Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council strongly supports DDA efforts to develop a plan for improving the pedestrian experience, and traffic and parking design of South University in preparation for the future development of that area. Last night Amber Miller and Susan Pollay joined a large meeting of CAC members and downtown neighbors to give us an opportunity to participate in this important process of shaping a better future for South University.

Those who participated in last night's survey and very active discussion now seem to agree that we are not going to recreate S. U. the way it once was. Much of the village identity is gone. Three high-rise student rentals now dominate the area with another on the way. Much of what remains on S. U. will continue to be changed. Our commitment is to be actively involved in helping to encourage future developers to design changes that will make use of DDA and other public efforts to improve the potential of the area. What kind of buildings, what kind of stores, what kind of pedestrian and auto traffic, what mix of residential possibilities, and business possibilities will create a new South University that will be identified as particular place, that will benefit those who live there as well as those who are attracted to visit there as a part of their downtown experience—good design, a mix of attractive retail shops, variety of dining and entertainment experiences, etc.—but still with a certain funkiness that has always been a part of the area.? We look forward to continuing to be a part of this creative process.

In the few minutes left at the end of last night's meeting, we briefly discussed the recent City Council decision to move ahead with negotiations with representatives of CORE SPACES LLC for a possible building on the City's Library Lot.

Last month the CCA asked me to express our position to Mayor Taylor and City Council that we did not want anything to be built on the Library Lot until the community has a public examination of the possibilities to connect that block to related benefits in the area. We now have the 12,000 square foot plaza as a requirement. We also want whatever goes on the Library Lot to consider the possibilities of connecting to and improving Liberty Plaza, cooperating with First Martin on whatever they hope to develop on their sites, relate and connect to the Blake Transit Center and the former YMCA site, avoid negative impact on nearby historic and residential properties, and clearly benefit the continued operation of the District Library on the block. We should also be thinking of the way in which development of the Library Lot will eventually connect to and relate to the future development of the Allen Creek Greenway.

Council's passage last month of a resolution "to Affirm and Approve CORE as the selected developer" of the Library Lot may be a critical piece in creating a successful downtown environment. Unanimous passage of an amendment submitted by Sabra Briere added affordable housing and a higher LEED certification to the above list of benefits. The CAC looks forward to the process of public discussion on all the above important area concerns that may or may not lead to a negotiated sale of the property.