

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Minutes September 2, 2014
DDA Office, 150 S Fifth Ave Suite 301 7:00 pm

Members Present: Ray Detter, Kathleen Nolan, Joan French

Members Absent: Hugh Sonk, Marsha Chamberlin, John Chamberlin, Jim Kern, Sue Kern, Felicia Flores

Visitors: Susan Pollay, Steve Kaplan, Doug Kelbaugh, John Giessler, Joanne Navarre, Christine Crockett

The Downtown Area CAC came together last night after a two month break and invited DDA Executive Director Susan Pollay to bring us up to date on the work that the DDA has been doing in the downtown. Covering the development and use of the DDA Grant Program, the plans for the William Street Parking structure, the Street Framework Plan, and others--even the valuable parts of the Connecting William Street Study. We are impressed and are very supportive of your work.

But most of our meeting was devoted again to a discussion of the future of Liberty Plaza and the entire Library Lane Block and area. On August 19, I spoke at the Parks Advisory Commission meeting against spending money on developing plans for changing the shape of Liberty Plaza and instead advocated for using that money to develop more programming for the site and the other future parks (or Plaza) sites on the Library Lane Block. The Parks Advisory Commission decided to do exactly that.

A lot of work and outreach has been done over the years in developing integrated planning for the Library Block and the nearby area. It's time to use that vision. The CAC was involved in the 1991 Luckenbach/Ziegelman study, the Calthorpe Plan of 2005, most recently in the DDA's Connecting William Street project, and last year's Park's Advisory Commission's survey of public preferences for downtown parks. In all of these reports, connectivity of walkways, public, private, historic interests and properties, and the input of neighborhood associations, public interest groups, the Library and the DDA were to be considered in the development of a carefully integrated block built on a broad vision for the area. Connecting Liberty Plaza and the proposed Library Lot Plaza have always been a major consideration of our planning.

Members of the CAC strongly support development of a public plaza of significant size on the Fifth Avenue side of the Library Lot site, as well as use of Library Lane all the way to the parking structure entry for scheduled community activities. We also continue to support pedestrian walkways to Liberty Plaza Park and believe that all future development decisions on the site must take into consideration the needs of the District Library, possible connections to the Blake Transit Center, the UM Credit Union and nearby historic properties, historic districts, residents and businesses--including the former Y site. The CAC also supports the walkway along the Federal Bldg. side of Blake Transit Center and we hope that it too will be developed in relation to an overall plan for the area that includes the plaza across Fifth Avenue and connections to Liberty Plaza.

We also favor the possibility of a new, tax producing, private or public development on the major part of the property—a development that will work cooperatively to integrate itself with, and provide eyes on a future adjoining public plaza.

In April the City Council resolved, that the City will work with the developer of the remaining portion of the Library Lane site to ensure that the designs for both spaces, an urban public park, and the adjacent public or private development complement and support each other's successful uses.