

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Minutes  
Tuesday, September 3, 2019 7pm City Hall Basement

Liaison: Ray Detter

Members Attendance: Caroline Arcure, Ilene Tyler, Norm Tyler, Don Duquette, John Kotarski, Jeff Crockett, Chris Crockett, Peter Honeyman, Doug Kelbaugh

Guest: Susan Pollay

The group agreed there is a lot going on, and people can't possibly make every meeting. The best thing we can do this time is to tell the DDA exactly what we are talking about and need to talk about this year. The packet is a guide for us to work from. Everyone who attended tonight came interested to talk about a variety of topics, including how downtown connects outside downtown, including to the river.

At this point, everyone wants to make changes in the downtown. Most impactful is that all of what's happening at this point is trying to understand how everything is connecting to downtown (e.g. Lowertown has always been historically connected to downtown). Many living in downtown used to shop at the Lowertown Kroger. Some of us are interested to understanding what that connection is today. North Main is another corridor that connects to downtown.

Lowertown: It was noted that some living on Broadway reached out to convey their anxiety about a new roundabout out of a concern that it will channel traffic up Broadway. It was recommended that these residents contact the city with their concerns. The job growth over the last decade at UM Hospitals and campus was noted, along with the fact that the University has constructed two very large parking garages nearby, drawing vehicles. Plus it was noted that the RTA regional transit proposal was defeated in 2016 which could have helped address the increase in traffic by encouraging more people to commute using transit. Although there was a delay with the Lowertown condos, it was thought that the Lowertown project would ultimately be successful. Just a question of time.

Additional topics included Summit Street and proposed C1B to C1A zoning change, and the backstory behind the proposed zoning. It was anticipated that City Council will consider this zoning issue at its next meeting in September. It was noted that the gas station was changed positively, in some part due to CAC efforts.

Norm Tyler, one of nine serving on the Center of the City Taskforce, and someone that CAC has had a relationship with regarding the Library Block going back over time attended tonight's meeting.. Norm reported shared names on the Taskforce, noting that the members spanned ages from their teens to their 80's. The Taskforce is still at the beginning. Their goal is to produce a final vision which may be a concept or a series of concepts for the entire block. Some came with assumptions that they are trying to clear the air so that everyone can start from the same place. The group meets every couple of weeks, and there will be subgroups which allow the discussions to be more informal. All meetings are held in a public space. September will examine what is an urban plaza, and what data do they need to collect. October will be used to make contact with the public. Important stakeholders include First Martin Corp, Historic District

Commission, Library, DDA, and businesses on the block. November the group will distill the information, and December will be used to creation options. January will frame the final report for City Council which will set forward next steps. It will not include a physical design; it will show functions, but not form. It also won't examine the financials for how things might work. February will be used to finalize the report for City Council. Subgroups include 1) conceptual vision (e.g. what is a common, the culture of peace, and how the site could be programmed); 2) how do we engage the public; 3) dealing with those with vested interests, and 4) sustainability and finance. Norm said he will bring a history of this site to the next meeting.

The City Administrator brought a survey to the task force asking what the group wanted to see in the meanwhile, and they responded, including a suggestion that one activity could be a celebration of the city in 2024. The Taskforce has meetings on Legistar, but he noted that the group must try hard to get input. A big question is how all this will be financed; ideas include private fundraising or a bond issue, but the group will only look at this in a general way. It was recommended that the Taskforce do its outreach by asking the neighborhood associations to share their mailing lists. It was also recommended that the City use NextDoor to get information out. Norm said that they have a lot of previous surveys in hand they can start with. Norm was asked if a land swap was a possibility and he said 'yes', but they didn't want to risk politicizing any of this. Group has met twice as well as a subgroup meeting; there will be another meeting tomorrow at 3pm.