

Downtown Development Authority

Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 19, 2017
Noon, Council Chambers



City of South Haven

MISSION STATEMENT: The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is to be a leader in helping to fulfill the City of South Haven Municipal Plan; through planning, funding, and development of projects within the DDA District which promote, encourage and contribute to the overall economic growth and development of the community.

1. Call to Order by Olson at 12:02 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: John Braun (12:35 p.m.), Bob Burr (12:06 p.m.), Chris Campbell, Jim Marcoux, Scott Maxwell, Sally Newton, Kevin Whiteford, Andrea Olson

Absent: Sue Frederick

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Jim, second by Kevin to approve the April 19, 2017 DDA Agenda as presented.

All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Interested Citizens in the Audience Will be Heard on Items Not on the Agenda

None at this time.

5. Janis Johnson of Main Street Planning will seek feedback regarding the Master Plan Review

Deb Davidson, Downtown Development Authority Director, introduced Janis Johnson of MainStreet Planning Company.

Janis Johnson explained that by state law every city is required to review their master plan, or land use plan, every five years.

Ms. Johnson introduced Tim Johnson, member of the team, noting that other team members will be available at neighborhood meetings and workshops.

Ms. Johnson explained that she and Mr. Johnson are here to get feedback including any concerns or issues that impact the DDA. "The Master Plan will have a small section on

economic development. What decisions of the DDA might impact what the future land use map will look like?" MainStreet brought a land use map with the DDA overlay and a zoning map and it was pointed out that the DDA encompasses several zoning areas.

Ms. Johnson explained that today MainStreet wants to concentrate on issues, concerns and ideas that you have. "We already know the strengths of your DDA: tourism quality, pedestrian access and a variety of businesses. We know those; what we are looking for are your concerns or issues."

Ms. Johnson outlined things to look for; things in the Zoning Ordinance that you feel are inhibiting or challenging to you. For example, the B-2 district does not allow residential on the second floor. "Street issues? (I have your project list and Deb has given me an update on what is already ongoing). Bike paths? Parking issues? Uses on the border of the DDA? Your comments could go beyond the border of the DDA. Gateway issues; residential properties that fall within the DDA; recommendation on converting or not converting residential to commercial."

Marcoux asked if this parallels the survey that went out to residents to which Ms. Johnson responded that it is all part of this project.

Burr noted that the city has 14 different zoning districts and only encompass 3.5 square miles. "We spend so much time with people having to get a variance because they are in a certain district. Is there a way to simplify this? Remember, we are only 3.5 square miles." Burr explained that the city's zoning ordinance was a package received from William and Works, supposedly from another lakefront city, and we were told we had to adapt it to our community.

Ms. Johnson responded that it would be good to include a recommendation considering combining zoning districts.

Burr also questioned if it is necessary to require two parking spaces per residential unit, particularly if you are try to develop one bedroom apartments over retail/business space in the downtown.

Marcoux asked when the review process will start to which Ms. Johnson responded that Planning Commission started in October 2016. Johnson elaborated that the future land use part will occur in August or September. We have utilized surveys; these groups and Planning Commission is having monthly workshops seeking community input. Ms. Johnson informed the board that a calendar is available, although it is tweaked a little each month. You can always check the city website; the city Facebook page; ask at City Hall.

Campbell referred to downtown parking, noting the tourist season is a hot period for parking and asked if there is any way for downtown not to require parking spaces for apartments. Burr agreed, "Reduce 2 (parking spaces per dwelling unit) to zero." Campbell feels that we need incentives. Johnson pointed out that some communities, if they have municipal parking available, do not require parking for downtown apartments.

Newton asked for an update on where we are at with the downtown secondary spaces to which Davidson responded that the Planning Commission is recommending to City Council a reduction in the number of spaces required for each dwelling unit – from 2 to 1.

Burr asked if the Master Plan could be less lengthy. “Could it not be condensed?” Janis agreed, stating, “We want to make it a more concise, usable document. A Master Plan is for use by the Planning Commission when making decisions for development, something they can have beside them when they meet. We will try to bring it down to 1/3 or less of the current size.”

Marcoux remarked that in consideration for zoning change, he is very sensitive to what Burr said about all the zones we have. “We recently had duplexes in R-1A turned down; maybe a consolidation of R-1A and R-1B. We need moderate income housing, not low income, that’s a different issue. We’ve become a city that caters to tourism and second home owners which is great for restaurants and service type businesses. People who work in the service industry have a hard time finding housing.”

Ms. Johnson said a term has been coined, “missing middle” housing; this could be housing for young couples starting out, empty nesters and singles. Van Buren County has a target market analysis of that.”

Whiteford commented that maybe we should look into what Holland is doing. A developer just put up five small residential homes on one lot. In the course of discussion the term “tiny houses” was mentioned. Ms. Johnson explained, “There are 3 things going on: 1.) you rely on on-street parking; 2.) trying to encourage people to not have cars at all; 3.) usually an ordinance has that every dwelling unit needs a driveway. Whiteford stated he didn’t think there were driveways. Janis is not sure how that would go over in Michigan in general. It was suggested that the residential no-parking ordinance be checked.

Burr asked about 3-hour parking which is criticized by many of the merchants. Ms. Johnson responded that Robert Gibbs, a well-known urban planner and speaker, advises that municipalities keep their meters. As soon as you get rid of your meters you’ll have employees parking in the spots. Burr asked about putting the meters out in summer and taking them down in winter to which Ms. Johnson responded that is a possibility. Aesthetics, expense and enforcement were all mentioned during discussion.

Olson asked about permit parking, where you purchase permits for a month, or a year. Mr. Johnson noted that East Lansing does have parking garages with permit parking. Ms. Johnson noted that a city can go up with their parking. You can have retail below and parking above to maximize the use of the property. Marcoux said our City Manager is death on parking garages to which Ms. Johnson spoke about the expense and liability issues, adding, “You can have permit parking without parking ramps, where a certain percent of parking is dedicated to the downtown residents for permit parking. Burr noted that the cost of a parking space is \$20,000 in a parking garage and asked, “How would you recoup that?” Ms. Johnson explained you have to have huge parking fees just to get in and out.

Burr said the St. Joe planner says, “Don’t worry about it; they’ll find a spot somewhere.” Ms. Johnson said while that is true, parking then becomes a neighborhood issue. Marcoux said, “Absorption hits a limit. We bus them. It’s a never-ending problem.” Janis is not sure there’s

an ultimate solution to that, noting that Ann Arbor for their art fair has it down to a science, with parking shuttles.

Campbell asked about in hot times for parking, for instance Saturday morning Farmer's Market, what about limiting parking to 2 hours? Ms. Johnson noted that it only works if you can enforce it. Campbell suggested a ticket option instead of towing. It was noted that is less time consuming and less expensive.

Newton asked what the downside is of metered parking, "Who doesn't like that option? What is the cost?" Burr asked if the Johnsons know of another tourist town that has metered parking. Braun responded, "Traverse City." Ms. Johnson said Virginia Beach, which they visit frequently, has tons of meters. Discussion ensued regarding maintenance on meters; cost of enforcement and that supposedly it helps downtown revenues. Ms. Johnson noted that Robert Gibbs says women shop so shopping environments are designed for women. Braun pointed out that shopping malls have free parking. Ms. Johnson noted that one thing people like about malls; free parking.

Burr brought up the issue of long trucks parking in downtown, extended length vehicles, we do not have enforcement. Newton said we certainly have extra manpower during the summer months.

Newton asked how the DDAs project list plays into the master plan to which Ms. Johnson responded that she would take the DDAs project list, when actually putting future land use categories on a map, "Let's say there was something you had planned, even on a specific parcel, maybe you want to designate it as public use. On the future land use plan it says public, because even though it's zoned commercial, it's planned for public use."

Ms. Johnson continued, "If there was an area of downtown where you'd like more mixed use; that you would like housing included with that, it may not be currently zoned for mixed use, but we can designate it a future land use. The Planning Commission would have to say whether they want the future land use included. Ms. Johnson noted that the Master Plan in South Haven is adopted by City Council. State law allows that option, either the Planning Commission or City Council can adopt future land uses, which is decided by the city.

Janis asked if the DDA has any specific ideas about future land use. Do you want B-2 that falls under the DDA to be allowed to have dwellings above permitted uses? Campbell asked if there is anything there that would allow that and Ms. Johnson explained that the Master Plan could show potential redevelopment of an area. "Is there anything that you are aware of, any place where "live-work" units would be allowed?"

Burr asked whether we want to address expanding or contracting our central business district to which Mr. Johnson explained that there is always a line where the business goes up to the residential. "What streets would be logical to extend the CBD?" Burr said from Phoenix Street to Conger along Broadway is being looked at, nothing there are advantages if you're in the CBD; you can get assistance on developing residential. Newton would support expansion of the CBD; thinks there has always been an issue of the businesses along there (Broadway) being kind of left out of things.

Burr said stores have moved outside the CBD could be qualified. Whiteford asked if taxes go up if a business is included in the CBD to which Burr responded, "No." Whiteford asked, "Why not go all the way on Broadway?" Janis explained that sometimes it is not changing the zoning but changing the uses permitted in a particular zone. Burr said the advantage of CBD is you can get matching grants or other grants. After questions, Davidson clarified that there are different programs, criteria has changed, and many are based on a case by case basis.

Whiteford observed that it seems you could combine zoning districts or change uses when there are not tremendous amounts of differences and it simplifies things; opens up new opportunities for many property owners. Newton added, "If we want to promote development, why not look at it?"

Burr said he has property in B-3. A financial advisor wanted to set up an office but that is not allowed in B-3. Burr had to go through the zoning appeal process to permit that and observed, "You should be able to put an office in a business district." Burr suggested looking at ZBA appeals minutes for the last 5 years and figure out what we could address.

Newton asked, "Can you think that possibly in the future there could be financial assistance or state programs for middle income housing?" Ms. Johnson explained that Michigan State Housing Development Authority - MSHDA holds the key to funding for housing in the state; sometimes have criteria you have to meet to qualify. "Last we knew it was place-making; which has a lot of hoops to jump through. Even with redevelopment-ready communities, one of the principles is to have middle income housing available to qualify for redevelopment ready certification. Some cities are working on it; it takes two years."

Olson asked what could be done about vacant or dangerous structures. Mr. Johnson said that is an enforcement issue. Ms. Johnson said when there was a large area of dilapidated or vacant property, sometimes an owner is happy to have it designated as a master plan category, for instance, a community gathering place. Having it on the Master Plan map automatically gives it more support.

Marcoux, regarding the opportunity to have a community gathering venue, asked whether that is an issue to be addressed. Ms. Johnson said the Planning Commission is very open to that, noting that if we don't identify an exact location, it can still make it into the text to keep looking, to try to identify an area.

Ms. Johnson opened up voting on the various topics. This is prioritizing but all input will be passed on to the PC. Ms. Johnson reminded members to choose their top five and no double voting.

6. General Comments

There were none.

7. Adjourn

Motion by Marcoux, second by Newton to adjourn at 12:57 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary