

**Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority**  
**Mid-Year 2007 Retreat Minutes**  
October 16, 2007 12noon-5pm  
The Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty, Gallery 2, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

**1. ROLL CALL**

Present: Gary Boren, Russ Collins, Dave DeVarti, Rene Greff, Leah Gunn, Roger Hewitt, Jennifer Hall, John Hieftje, Joan Lowenstein, John Mouat, Sandi Smith, John Splitt,

Absent: None

Staff Present: Susan Pollay, Executive Director  
Joe Morehouse, Deputy Director  
Joan Lyke, Management Assistant  
Lindsay-Jean Hard, Special Projects Manager

Audience: Jo Mathis, *Ann Arbor News*

Facilitator: Fran Alexander, Alexander Resources

**2. WELCOME AND BACKGROUND DISCUSSION**

DDA Chair Hewitt welcomed the Board and thanked them for their commitment of time and energy to this DDA retreat. Mr. Hewitt shared the desired outcomes of the retreat that were developed with support from ROC committee members as follows:

- Increase sense of optimism, energy, capacity for meaningful volunteer work of DDA Board members
- Develop shared commitment to a set of priorities for the DDA in 2008

He turned the meeting over to the facilitator, Ms. Alexander. Ms. Alexander provided background and a proposed agenda for the afternoon that was accepted by the group. She shared an overview of relevant elements of the dynamics of politically appointed boards. These elements included:

- DDA is a political body, with resources
- Other stakeholders are critical to DDA's mission and therefore solid relationships and partnerships are essential for success
- The mission of the DDA and how resources are generated and sustained is not well known
- Board is not a consensus board at this time
- Thoughtful, informed plans as developed by the DDA can offset politically expedient shifts in strategy...AND they can act as an obstacle to seeing emergent opportunities. Balancing this polarity is critical for successful work by the DDA with their political partners.
- Significant time from the Board, who are volunteers, is needed to guide the work of the DDA effectively

**3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

Ms. Alexander reviewed results from the DDA survey that included the following major points:

- Three of eight DDA members perceived effective work by the Board making progress on or adjusting the agreed upon 2006 strategic focus areas.
- Three groups were prioritized as most important for the DDA to engage in stronger, more effective partnerships: City Council, city staff/administration and downtown business owners.
- Strategies for improving relationships with City Council that had been most effective were
  - Involve Council members on DDA committees to build understanding and align work better.
  - Ensure explicitness in agreements and increase communication with Council during all financial planning negotiations.
- The strategies that need additional attention are:
  - Seek a maximum overlap in DDA goals and broader city goals.
  - Ensure that agreements to provide financial support are directly tied to TIF increases for the DDA.

- Have the city and DDA engage in a more ‘planful’ and deliberate financial partnership. Earlier assessment of needs is helpful and city goals can be aligned more readily with DDA goals when there is time for forward thinking.

Ms. Alexander invited the Board to offer suggestions or requests for improving Board effectiveness. The following comments were offered

**It would be helpful to me if the board would:**

- Recognize others as stakeholders of the DDA, i.e., tax payers and residents outside the DDA boundaries, library, and AATA
- Hear from a broad array of citizens on issues earlier in process rather than toward the end of project planning
- Continue to receive resolutions from City Council rather than individual Council requests
- Recognize that the resources of the Board is the real capacity of the DDA
- Have a real dialogue with City Council regarding financial priorities; “I feel a sense of powerlessness because we don’t have specific information on what the city may or may not request”
- Think in more regional terms – not just DDA boundaries
- Recognize the city is organic; the DDA is only an element of that organic body – it is not “the” City.
- Recognize there are many interests – we are the “Authority” not free flowing;
- We have a mission. Some on the DDA are confused about its role. The DDA is not the downtown – we are a piece of downtown.
- Act! We have planned long enough – it’s time now for action
- Be more proactive
- Consider incorporating water capture system(s) when doing projects downtown (i.e., resurfacing the 5<sup>th</sup> & Division parking lot).
- Understand and acknowledge the work that the DDA staff does.
- Improve system by which the DDA can approach issues i.e., the municipal building;
- Use the Partnerships Guidelines for all funding requests – including City projects [i.e., municipal building, police and courts, etc.]
  - be proactive in terms of what aspects of this project are most worthy of the DDA Mission and scope of investment
  - think in terms of a civic center rather than police/courts facility; think of it in terms of a Civic Center or Corridor
  - apply partnerships principals to city project (not TIF)
- Work toward a real, respectful partnership with shared vision

**To be more effective I would like to:**

- Learn more about the mission, goals and role of the DDA
- Receive financial reports in a larger font size :)
- Be proactive in partnerships with the city; suggests DDA members meet with City Council members on a regular basis to improve collaboration and explore opportunities for partnerships.
  - Staff preparation
  - DDA discussion
  - DDA meets with City Council members informally

Based on suggestions from Ms. Lowenstein and Mr. Collins, the following actions were outlined to help the DDA and the City work effectively together on the upcoming conversations about the City Center Building:

- 1) Assume a partnership with the Council and the City and that the DDA has the capacity to influence
- 2) DDA Board identifies questions to pursue
- 3) Staff (Susan Pollay and Tom Crawford and others as needed) prepare possible scenarios for project, including details, elements that DDA could support, cost and revenue implications)
- 4) DDA Board review and draft initial reactions and ideas for DDA role
- 5) DDA meet with Council Committee on scenarios and implications

- 6) Review, revise, collaborate and negotiate a recommendation for core elements of the project for DDA support and investment

Ms. Alexander turned the meeting over to Ms. Pollay.

#### **4. PLANNING BACKGROUND**

Ms. Pollay provided a brief overview of the many downtown planning efforts that have been undertaken in the past four years: the 2003 DDA Renewal Plan, the 2003/04 Downtown Residential Taskforce, the 2005/06 Calthorpe project; the 2007 Non-Motorized Study, the 2007 Parking Study and 2006/07 A2D2 planning. She said that all took their cues from the 1988 Downtown Plan, and all were interconnected. For instance, the DDA 5<sup>th</sup>/Division/Huron project was called out in the Renewal Plan, was made necessary by Calthorpe's recommended development strategies for these corridors, and was recommended as a First Tier project under the Non-Motorized Study. She also said that she thought many people have had trouble keeping up with all these planning efforts, since one led immediately into the other, and it wasn't clear how all the pieces fit together.

Ms. Alexander facilitated a discussion of how the historical planning efforts, accomplishments, current trends affect the DDA now.

- Mr. Hieftje stated that we've done an incredible amount of work collaboratively.
- Ms. Hall stated that the DDA has planned long enough [5<sup>th</sup> & Division] and it is time to move forward.
- Ms. Gunn indicated she would like to recall the DDA resolution to approve 5<sup>th</sup> & Division.
- Mr. Mouat indicated that he felt it would not be productive if the DDA began to revisit resolutions that had already been approved.
- Mr. Collins agreed that the Board needs to take action; he said that on some issues the Board has planned for four years – it's time to move forward.
- Ms. Lowenstein suggested that it may be time to begin recruiting businesses to downtown.

#### **5. REVIEW OF 2007 WORK & IDEAS FOR 2008**

Ms. Alexander said that the following 2006/07 DDA accomplishments were noted on the survey:

- Fourth and William addition – on time, on budget
- Parking Study and Parking Strategies Report
- Funding for alternatives to parking
  - Extend Link operations until 11pm
  - North/south commuter rail support
  - Golpass & getDowntown funding support
- Comprehensive designs for Huron, Fifth & Division were completed
- Repairs to Sculpture Plaza – on time and under budget
- "Green" initiatives:
  - Partnerships Grant for 200 S. Ashley,
  - Solar electric project at the Farmers Market
  - Retrofit the globe street lights to LED's.
- Replacing 60+ downtown street trees
- Wayfinding – project is nearly complete
- Alley repairs

The group agreed that while many important projects have not been completed, the DDA has laid the foundations for success, including wayfinding, the web site, 5<sup>th</sup> and Division pedestrian/bike improvements, midtown parking and 1<sup>st</sup>/Washington.

**Ms. Alexander led the group in a discussion of possible 2008 projects. DDA members suggested the following projects:**

- Wayfinding
- Alternative transportation
- Midtown parking
- Huron, 5<sup>th</sup> & Division

- Work with City to design and finance space needs
- Downtown residential support
- Commuter rail
- Affordable housing
- Arts center
- 415 E. Washington
- Regional marketing (SPARK, A2CVB, Chamber)
- Partnerships Grant guidelines
- West Park – flood abatement project
- Recycle containers downtown
- Green solar City award plans
- Low interest loans for solar panels
- Capital improvements green standards – criteria for our projects
- Retail recruitment and retention
- Eyes on the Street (Ambassador Program)

<b>5.</b>	<b>PHASE II - SET PRIORITIES FOR 2008</b>
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From this list the group set priorities for the coming year - only items that had a consensus were included:

**DDA Agreed Upon Priorities for 2008:**

- Parking
  - Strategic plan follow up from A2D2
  - Identify preferred location(s) for additional public parking
  - Outline solution over time: short, mid and long term solutions
- Alternative Transportation
  - Strategic plan follow up from A2D2
  - Parking management changes, incentives to use alternatives
  - Grant program (Link, shuttle, etc.)
- Build partnerships
  - Partnerships Committee
- Identify draft guidelines for how DDA wants to be engaged in public projects
- Develop proactive outreach plan for DDA on Library lot, 415 W. Washington, Liberty Square
- Green Guidelines and Grants (include downtown recycle bins)
- Wayfinding
- Continued commitment to support affordable housing
- Infrastructure needs: Role of DDA

**More Conversation Needed;**

- Present 5<sup>th</sup> / Division conceptual plan to Council for approval (with understanding that money is TBD)

**Additional Opportunities for Further Review** (*bring to committees for further development and then consideration by full Board*)

- Retail recruitment .. Investigate and support
- Support for existing unique local businesses
- Eyes on the Street Safety/Ambassador programs
- Participate in regional marketing efforts
- Review approach to Partnership Grant support. e.g. assess approaches to the grant program to become more proactive in site selection process for potential investors
- West Park flood abatement investment...more emphasis on storm water impact reduction
- Leverage, partner with Solar City award (e.g. low interest loans for green improvements)
- Zip car partnership
- 721 North Main development involvement

**6.****NEXT STEPS AND FEEDBACK**

Ms. Alexander said that the next steps for the Board might be to set time frames for the work areas listed above; it may be helpful to break projects into short term, mid term and long term outcomes, given the extensive investment and implementation support that some of the priorities require. Ms. Hall asked for a meeting around the 10-Year Plan so that various scenarios could be examined along with the impact to the financials. Ms. Pollay will schedule a meeting next week and will invite members of City Council that may be interested in learning more about the DDA 10 Year Plan.

DDA members completed feedback forms at the conclusion of the retreat. This is summarized below:

1. The conversations we had today will help advance important work of the DDA.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
0	0	1	3	5

2. The strategic focus areas identified today provide excellent leverage toward achieving our picture of a thriving downtown Ann Arbor.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
0	0	1	5	3

3. I have increased confidence that the City and DDA can develop and maintain an effective partnership moving forward.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
0	0	3	5	1

4. And other feed back, comments, ideas?

- Many thanks!
- Difficult task. Thanks for pulling us together.
- Great focus.
- Best retreat ever!
- Great job Fran!
- Helpful if council members would commit time as rest of Board does

**5.****ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Pollay, Executive Director