

**Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority
Annual “Not A Retreat” Retreat Minutes**

October 29,2008 8AM –12noon
Sh/Aut Conference and Retreat Center

1. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Dave DeVarti

Staff Susan Pollay, Joe Morehouse, Joan Lyke

Audience: Dave Askins/Ann Arbor Chronicle, Keith Orr/Aut Bar, Nancy Shore/getDowntown

Facilitator: Fran Alexander, Alexander Resources Consulting, LLC.

2. WELCOME

Chair Hall thanked the DDA for their time and energy, as DDA Board membership requires dedication. She noted that the DDA had recently approved Fifth/Division and the S. 5th Ave structure, and she asked that members bring forward smaller scale, creative and strategic initiatives that would also support downtown social and economic vitality. Ms. Hall noted that the Board and the community hold a common vision for an economically vibrant, diverse and active downtown. While there may be differences in preferred strategies, there is much commonality in the overall vision. Ms. Hall said that a commitment to continued open dialogue will help the DDA act in the best interests of the community and the focus on vision will allow the DDA to be more strategic on project investments.

Ms. Hall turned the meeting over to Ms. Alexander who presented an agenda for the morning:

- Achievements of 2007-08
- 2009 Priorities and Creative Initiatives
- Board Committee Options
- Summary: Decisions and Next Steps

3. 2008 ACHIEVEMENTS

Ms. Alexander reviewed results of a pre-retreat survey in which 9 of 12 DDA members responded. The following accomplishments in 2007/08 were cited:

- Decision to build parking structure, cooperation with library, nearing Council approval (3)
- Fifth & Division pedestrian improvements (2)
- Recycle Bins
- Demolition of the Y and creation of two new temporary surface lots
- Green energy program in place.
- Visibility as an advocate for downtown, and downtown businesses.

In this survey the DDA also evaluated outcomes on the projects that were identified at last year’s retreat as top priorities. Most positive outcomes were noted for wayfinding, parking location, and green guidelines/grants. Less progress was seen in parking demand management and the role of DDA in infrastructure expansion projects. Ms. Alexander said that most DDA Board members felt there had been good progress in communication and working relationship between the DDA and the city since last year’s retreat. Ms. Pollay cited a number of other accomplishments this year, including:

Commitment to alternative transportation

- Increased funding for the LINK, go!passes and getDowntown

- Funding approval for 3 years (total \$750,000) for WALLY
- Zipcar sponsorship

Commitment to downtown affordable housing

- Avalon Housing grant for 6-unit apt building at 819 Third Street
- Avalon Housing grant to refinance/rehab 6-units at 201 W. William
- Avalon Housing grant for energy saving upgrades at 520 and 522 S. Division

Construction of new / improved infrastructure

- Sculpture plaza repaired
- Maynard alley repaired
- 75% of downtown sidewalk curb ramps were replaced by June 2008
- 100+ dead trees replaced downtown & 80+ new bike hoops installed

Commitment to encouraging what is special in downtown

- Grant to Think Local First - Buy Local Week Campaign
- 415 W. Washington lot created to safeguard former Road Commission building
- Wayfinding budget and project approved
- Grant to the Art Fairs to survey patrons

Commitment to encouraging a more sustainable downtown

- 2nd grant to the City (total \$100,000) for solar electric project/Farmers Market
- Grant to the City for 20 sidewalk recycle containers / pilot program
- Downtown Energy Saving Grant Program, including free energy audits
- Grant to the City (\$200,000) to certify the new court/PD building Gold LEED

Commitment to helping the city meet its downtown redevelopment goals

- Approval of a 1st & Washington parking agreement & funding for parking spaces
- Demolition of former YMCA & construction of downtown's first pervious pavement lot
- Design of the "big ass" underground parking structure completed
- Grant to the City (\$8 million) for the new court/PD building

4.

PRIORITIES FOR 2008/09

Ms. Alexander reported that in the pre-retreat survey Board members rated 3 ideas from the 2007/08 retreat as having potential interest in the coming year: "eyes on the street", retail recruitment, and regional marketing. The survey also indicated that several DDA members were cautious about adding much more work given the large projects currently underway. The full Board then discussed the following potential projects for 2008/09.

Transit Analysis:

1. Analysis of outcomes of current investments (Go Pass, Link etc)
2. Partner with AATA and getDowntown! to understand roadblocks to commuter use of alternatives.

Also possible for later review:

- *Analysis of downtown commuter bus needs: where are the opportunities to add service to routes to increase commuter use, such as more frequent/express bus service?*
- *What infrastructure is needed to support the use of alternative vehicles – e.g., electric plug ins? Should there be incentives for low carbon vehicles parking in parking structures?*

Downtown Planning Studies/Visioning

1. Analyze the downtown street grid, assessing the best functions of each street. Felt to be the most immediately useful element of downtown planning.

Also possible for later review:

- *Document strategic direction/vision for downtown. Align the vision with the principles of planning guidelines and use DDA resources to realize the vision.*
- *Conduct a vacant parcel analysis that addresses long term use and creative short term uses, focused on vibrancy, activity, community building.*
- *Conduct a data driven downtown residents' study about their actual needs and desires.*
- *Outline economic development needs and opportunities specific to the downtown area. Assess retail balance and viability.*

Business Encouragement/ Downtown Marketing

1. Connect with business associations and the Chamber on critical needs and opportunities. Ensure that any future grant process align with these needs and with vision for downtown areas.
2. Conduct a near term education outreach for educating property owners on current retail climate. Engage commercial brokers to use DDA website to share relevant information.

Also possible for later review:

- *Educate property owners on current business climate and strategies to maintain their business tenants. Develop a property owner database. Alert retailers to Small Business Administration resources.*
- *Develop tools, incentives, resources that encourage downtown visitors to expand beyond their primary reason for visiting downtown. (i.e. guidebooks and marketing materials)*
- *Younger demographics are natural users of downtown. Find new ways to reach them.*
- *Act as a information clearing house for small businesses searching for help with City permits*

Infrastructure

1. DDA staff to develop draft parameters for DDA role in infrastructure expansion costs associated with downtown development. Goal is to maximize equity for developers in a given area. This may take a variety of forms, including a "bank system" to amortize the costs.

Board members noted that work on many of these initiatives should be done in close partnership with other organizations, agencies and governing bodies. DDA does not need to be the lead on all of this work, and in all cases DDA should focus on the downtown related elements of the issue.

5. DDA BOARD-COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Board member Hewitt requested that the DDA assess its committee structure. The pre-retreat survey provided the following feedback from DDA members on how well the current structure is working:

- I think it works pretty well.
- Too much overlap. Simplify committees (e.g. ROC and Partnerships or possibly consolidate large projects in one committee)
- Good structure overall, but too rigid
- Committees are diligent and the work gets done
- Too many small decisions brought to committee by staff

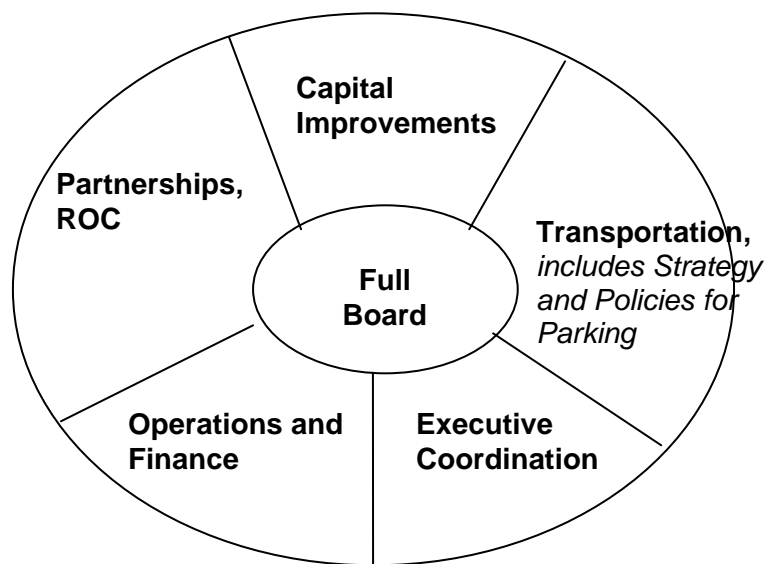
Ms. Alexander said that based on survey comments and conversations with DDA members, it appears that the DDA wants to preserve the following aspects of DDA Board functioning:

- Empowered committees with meaningful charters
- Adequate membership on committees for effective planning, dialogues
- More reasonable volunteer workloads

- Focus on existing opportunities and future planning

Ms. Alexander provided some alternate committee structures to prompt discussion. Comments were varied. A concern was raised that project-specific committees could lose context and become disconnected from the larger group. The current Executive Committee does not act as an executive function of the Board, but instead provides staff with insight on community issues; this lack of a committee hierarchy was important to Board members. Board members encouraged staff to exercise more authority in making DDA decisions within a certain set of parameters. Ms. Pollay said that she would work with her staff to frame parameters to recommend to the Board.

The final structure, documented below as recommended by the Board has only modest changes from the current structure.



Committee assignments for 2009 were defined as follows:

- Capital Improvements: Fifth and Division and Parking Structure
- Partnerships/ROC: coordinated downtown planning, small business encouragement
- Transportation: transit analysis

All committees: small, short term projects to create vitality downtown during the big project construction

6. NEXT STEPS AND FEEDBACK

Committee membership for 2009 will be drafted by Ms. Pollay and shared at the November DDA meeting for comment and edits.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Pollay, Executive Director