



DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE COMMITTEE

MEETING AGENDA

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

109 EAST OLIVE STREET; BLOOMINGTON, IL 61701

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2017 AT 12:00 PM

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Public Comment

(Each regular Task Force meeting shall have a public comment period not to exceed 30 minutes. Every speaker is entitled to speak for up to 3 minutes. To be considered for public comment, complete a public comment card at least 5 minutes prior to the start of the meeting. The Chairperson will randomly draw from the cards submitted. Public comment is a time to give comment. It is not a question and answer period, and the Task Force Committee does not respond to public comments. Speakers who engage in threatening or disorderly behavior will have their time ceased.)

4. Consideration, review and approval of Minutes from the October 10, 2017 meeting
5. Presentation on downtown beautification (Presented by Robert Moews, Superintendent of Parks Maintenance and David Lamb, Assistant Superintendent of Parks Maintenance)
6. Downtown Task Force Committee discussion
7. Adjourn

DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE COMMITTEE MEETING
SUMMARY MINUTES
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

109 EAST OLIVE STREET; BLOOMINGTON, IL 61701
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2017 AT 12:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Chairman Buragas called the meeting to order at **12:04 PM** and asked Ms. Hon to call the Roll.

2. Roll Call

List who was present of the Task Force:

Committee Member Kim Bray, Committee Member Carlo Robustelli, Committee Member Justin Boyd, Committee Member Vericella, Committee Member Joe Haney, and Chairperson Amelia Buragas

Staff Present:

Melissa Hon, Assistant to the City Manager; Tom Dabareiner, Community Development Director; David Hales, City Manager; Steve Rasmussen, Assistant City Manager; Jim Karch, Public Works Director; Katie Simpson, City Planner; Izzy Rivera, Assistant City Planner; Austin Grammer, Economic Development Coordinator; Jay Tetzloff, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Director and Jeanne Hamilton, Library Director;

3. Public Comment: None

4. Minutes: The Committee reviewed the September 26, 2017 minutes. Committee Member Bray moved to approve the minutes; Committee Member Vericella seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously by a voice vote.

5. Downtown Task Force Committee discussion of draft recommendations

- Chairperson Buragas stated that she had provided a beginning of a draft document that was based on all the conversations we have had. We can focus on two areas: Number one, are there any changes to the language to make it more accurate to some of the proposals that have been included in there and number two, are we missing anything that we would like to have considered in our final document?
- Committee Member Bray commented on the last page concerning catalyst projects. We have three that appear there but think is it really six because starting at the paragraph that is “convert Monroe Street,” that formatting-wise would come out as a separate and distinct idea, perhaps.
- Chairperson Buragas stated it should be Market Street instead of Monroe.

- Committee Member Bray stated that we had an idea that came to mind a couple of times and perhaps it has been blended into another piece, but it was the idea of closing off a section of the courthouse square for public space and interaction, so that would be a catalyst project potentially.
- Chairperson Buragas stated we already have that listed on the first page under public places/walkability, speaking specifically about the public plaza at the Law and Justice Center and asked if Committee Member Bray was thinking of a larger project or something consistent with that.
- Committee Member Bray stated she thought when we had a presentation in regarding creating spaces, she had heard that there was opportunity to create space and have a gathering area with some kind of featured item in the middle of that, so there may be an opportunity here to connect back to that plaza piece and adding art or adding a visit feature. She recommended that possibly could be something that could be passed along.
- Chairperson Buragas asked if the boundaries of any such public plaza in that area would exceed their current boundaries or were the suggestions based on working with the space that already exists.
- Committee Member Bray stated she felt that what we heard from public comments, and thought maybe Tom may had spoken to this, but instead of paving over some areas -for instance Jefferson Street is up for repaving - instead of spending the money repaving that full section, to take a section right there parallel to the courthouse, the McLean County History Museum. If we do a public space, then you can add some kind of a feature. She then stated that while visiting Columbus, Ohio last weekend they had a public feature of a safari Jeep sitting in the public plaza and families gathered around this safari Jeep with luggage on it to pretend you were going on an adventure. Something like that can be a low-cost catalyst feature. They also had some musical instruments and there were different stations that families could visit, take pictures and enjoy. That could be a catalyst that may have lower costs than other types of new infrastructure or enhancing infrastructure.
- Committee Member Boyd asked if it was within us to designate a specific street or should our recommendations be more of asking the Council to explore that pedestrian mall feel?
- Chairperson Buragas replied that that we should probably try to get tiered recommendations. She was hoping in a final report we could identify a need, provide some examples of what those look like in other communities, and then point out some areas within our downtown that could create an advantage to meet that need.
- Committee Member Bray stated that a really good idea was presented by Phyllis Halt last week in public comment that related to some kind of covered space for events that kind of aligns with the Saturday morning market. She wondered if that would be classified as a catalyst project, something that brings people in, or if that should go somewhere else? She felt this was a good idea to push forward for

Council consideration.

- Tom Dabareiner stated he thought we are getting distracted on what the intention is behind a catalytic project. A catalytic project should be generating or bringing more people into the downtown and gave examples of housing and a transit center. Housing is just the one example that was given, but by catalytic project, he was talking about projects that actually bringing loads of new people to the downtown. He stated he had three categories - one that was the catalytic project, one that was kind of a place making attractive orientation, and then the third are that kind of infrastructure items that you need to help make it all work.
- Committee Member Bray asked if we wanted to establish some kind of a market space that was under roof, would you consider that or want to encourage that.
- Mr. Dabareiner replied that if it were seven days a week, then it would fall into a catalytic category. It does kind of cross the line somewhat because you are bringing new people downtown, but I do see that as kind of a public place/middle category.
- Chairperson Buragas commented that while Mr. Dabareiner was here, at our last meeting we did talk briefly about the potential for new residential development in the downtown core based on your presentation about how there is additional capacity for that type of development. The one thing we did not know is the current market for additional and new housing, because we do not want to get ahead of the market in terms of recommendations. Maybe this is something where you do not know and we would have to do a market study.
- Tom Dabareiner responded that a market study would answer a lot of questions. You do not want to get ahead of the market. To dump 950 units onto the market right now would be a disaster and you need to look at a process that kind of brings that in over ten years.
- Committee Member Vericella commented that the rental market is the softest that he has seen since 2005.
- Committee Member Bray asked Committee Member Vericella if he thought it was rental only. Are people buying because interest rates are so low?
- Committee Member Vericella stated that a lot of it has to do with jobs. People are buying houses, but does not think the housing market has gone up or down very much and is pretty stable.
- Committee Member Boyd stated to Mr. Dabareiner that we are talking about building either apartments or condos or home ownership, and asked if communities typically want to see the attractions first?
- Committee Member Haney stated we just had the Tour de Metro and it was attended very well. One of the major questions on one of our buildings was can we buy the units? I think it would sell out fairly quick, but with the buildings that need to be improved downtown, are going to be tough to get anybody in there who can afford to do them, who is willing to take a risk, and it is a risk. You see a lot of

“mature” people getting out because basically we do not like change a whole lot and things just keep changing so quickly that I personally do not want to deal with it. As the younger people come in, most of them cannot afford to get into these projects

- Mr. Dabareiner added that as a City, we have the luxury of thinking longer term. These are all very current issues and really, for the foreseeable future, they are probably going to be accurate. In the longer term, we have some options of how we time development and it needs to be timed with jobs, but we are also missing a middle market of housing style. In this community, we do a really good job of supplying apartments and single family homes, but there are townhomes, row homes, these kinds of options that you often see around the outside of the core of the downtown. That provides some lower density than apartment-style housing and they do not have the lawn care that goes with it. High-quality housing is always in demand.
- Committee Member Robustelli stated another idea was Alderman Bray’s idea of incentives that would encourage more housing. He asked Mr. Dabareiner what that looks like and what his professional advice is along the lines of incentives.
- Tom Dabareiner stated that incentives could be used to help advance some housing that would not necessarily have happened right at that time. Housing is a little more flexible than some other development markets and can react faster to changes in the marketplace. So, when you see something coming as a possibility if you think some kind of incentive makes sense because you really want to push that market or push that opportunity, it makes sense.
- Committee Member Robustelli as Mr. Dabareiner from his experiences having seen applications come forward for redevelopment projects downtown, have projects not happened as a result of there not being a particular kind of incentive?
- Mr. Dabareiner responded that people are interested in incentives but what seems to be driving that market more so is what banks are willing to finance and right now they seem to have a very narrow list of what they are willing to finance.
- Committee Member Haney stated that he took advantage of the incentives that were in place when he did his last project. I thought that they were good but such a small part of the project. The public does not realize how they work, that they do work for the taxpayer. When you are in the TIF district and when you are getting a tax abatement, if they actually research it and see how it works, it works for the taxpayer in Bloomington. Those are the only incentives that I see that the City should offer anybody, because we have enough on our plate already without expanding debt.
- Mr. Dabareiner clarified that when we look at incentives for anything, we are looking to fill a gap that exists between what the market is allowing and what we all would like to see in a certain location.
- Committee Member Bray commented that the City owns many properties in some strategic locations and maybe not so strategic locations, but would you envision

then this idea of filling this residential market need of townhouses or for-purchase condos, a particular location within or sitting on the edge of the core or within the core for this kind of development?

- Mr. Dabareiner stated we have talked in the past about having a core and we should always be looking towards mixed- use development in any location. . We have a tremendous opportunity outside of the core itself, which is pretty much built. There is room for redevelopment there, but it is pretty much built. But as you step out, there is space available I think for a wide range of housing
- Chairperson Buragas stated that Mr. Dabareiner mentioned that residential can be very responsive to the market and it can go in relatively quickly depending on market need. She asked about some of the other potential catalyst projects and what kind of lead time are we looking at. We have talked about hotel, we have talked about redevelopment of the Market Street garage in terms of a civic project, transportation center, perhaps looking at moving the library. What kind of timeline could we expect in a project like that?
- Tom Dabareiner stated those projects very much depend on incentives in one form or another. In some cases, you just use the word "cash" as opposed to incentive. In the commercial market, especially today, that is really what is driving those. We have a lot of inquiries but it all turns on the need for some kind of incentive.
- Chairperson Buragas ask Mr. Charlie Moore if he wanted to offer any comments to this body today with your perspective on how the business community views the Task Force. We like to take advantage of the knowledge that is in the room.
- Mr. Moore respond that today he would not offer any comments but after we get back from a trip that we are taking down to Arkansas, we will bring back some ideas for discussion of what we might look at for downtown Bloomington and business prospects.
- Chairperson Buragas noted that The Chamber is going down on a trip and a great opportunity for members of the community to see what other downtowns are doing, and there are several people from the City going. Are there other areas in this draft form that we have right now that you would like make changes or additions to? In parking, I did not include parking meters. It seemed to me that the consensus was to remove that for the time being.
- Committee Member Boyd stated that his thought with the parking meters is that it is not a bad idea, but it is just a bad first idea. When we do the draft, are we putting short-term, middle-term, or long-term goals in there because if so, I think parking meters could be a long term goal. I think it is a good idea but I think if we spent a million dollars on parking meters now, that is a huge mistake.
- Chairperson Buragas stated that there is already in progress this notion that we need to do a full parking study of the downtown area and I would assume that would have to include an analysis of how people pay for parking. So a note can be made for that in the long term to encourage a long-term analysis in that study moving forward.

- Committee Member Haney stated that to go to a one-lane street is going to be tough because pick-ups and deliveries and does not know if you could change the angle of the cars in order to keep traffic flowing.
- Chairperson Buragas stated that with any recommendations that we make that relate to traffic or parking, those will have to go through an additional process, the Transportation Commission and will be reviewed by our traffic engineer.
- Committee Member Boyd stated that going back to the parking, and this may be something that has to be in that study, but I think what we can do in the short-term, is the parking enforcement being enforced later until 7 p.m. He asked if we could recommend that as an immediate goal. He also wanted to touch on encouraging businesses to use alleys and plowing in the winter. He stated that in talking to Jim at the last meeting we realized that was unrealistic so we might want to remove that from our recommendation.
- Committee Member Bray mentioned in the category of parking, we have had some discussions here, had some public comment, and Mike Manna had also sent us an email with some ideas in regards to our parking garages feeling safe, having a good look about them so that they are welcoming. I guess that would come under parking as far as maintaining and beautification, but then I thought about beautification and just making what we have feel more user friendly even if we do not do anything else with them. I think at a minimum we would want to make the spaces just feel more ready for use.
- Chairperson Buragas asked Mr. Rasmussen if he had any comments as to what has been done in our parking garages to increase their safety or what might be in the works.
- Mr. Rasmussen responded that we have increased the lighting in the parking decks, increased cleanup, and we have a downtown parking committee that has been working on that and we have prepared in the budget the possibility of going out for an RFQ to automate the parking decks, which would then leave us more people to do downtown enforcement. Those things are on the books right now and we are kind of waiting to see which way this task force might direct us to move. The automating of the downtown decks is about \$1 million, so we did not want to do that and then turn around and find out we did not want to do that.
- Mr. Hales asked if that had to do with the structural. There was some major evaluations done on the Market Street garage as well as others, and over the last five years we have been spending significant money taking care of emergency repairs to make sure we got it back a good or fair condition. We probably need to update the reports with what we have spent, and what more needs to be done say over the next five to ten-year period to maintain the structural longevity.
- Committee Member Boyd stated that before we start talking about beautification of the Market Street garage and spending money on automating it, we need to determine the life cycle of that garage. Based on what we got from Russ Waller, they have spent \$1 million since 2009, looking at the fiscal year 2019 possibly

spending more than that. Before we spend any additional money on automating it, we should look at the longevity of that garage.

- Committee Member Bray stated to build on that, almost a tiered approach. When you look at any of the parking garages and the parking areas, making sure that they are easily usable, visible, well-marked and these are some of the things that we have heard from our public comment as well as our experts. Do they stay as they are and if so, are they safe, are they well lit, do they beautify the community, do they add a sense of space? Maybe you add murals, maybe you add something to that space to make it a place to go and rest, a bench. If someone has a greater vision, then they could go to the next tier with the idea of now maybe a parking garage can be more than just a parking garage; maybe it can be a Connect Transit Center.
- Chairperson Buragas stated that was an excellent point and hopefully will become a theme in our final report that even if we cannot spend a lot, we can do things to improve the downtown area.
- Committee Member Boyd stated he agreed with Committee Member Bray and he had read a lot from other communities over the last month and just building a parking garage is not happening as much anymore. Especially the Market Street garage, it is such a large block that he thinks it could be a bigger asset than what it is to the surrounding businesses.
- Committee Member Vericella asked if we put a library or catalyst project there, where will we relocate the parking to.
- Chairperson Buragas replied that parking would be part of any potential project there. Obviously if we want to bring more people in the downtown area, removing parking would not be probably the smartest move, and that would get into the feasibility and the programming of any potential structure. Connect Transit sent out some examples that I shared with the group that show how it can be a transfer station, something else and parking to support those people who are coming to that facility.
- Committee Member Vericella stated he was downtown for dinner a couple of weeks ago and noticed the lighting in the garage is yellow. It is fairly dark at night and recommended a bright white light in there.
- Committee Member Boyd stated that he was surprised when he heard there was new lightning. When you are in there at night, it still seems dark. If there is anything we can do to make it brighter, I think that would change the perception.
- Committee Member Bray noted that we have had a lot of public comment about the distractions that occur when folks visit and they are approached by panhandlers or there are disturbances. She stated that Mike Manna spent some time talking to us about trying to live in the downtown area with folks who do not live there causing disturbances, noise levels and messes. We have spent some time listening to public comment about that and some members of the Task Force have spoken, as well. She asked if we include something like that in our draft to make mention of the

need to address that problem?

- Chairperson Buragas replied we should not omit that from our report. She felt the question is, do we have an action item we would recommend in addition to commenting on it or just recognize that that is a significant problem that is going to require its own special study and analysis? She states she was open to suggestions how you might like to see an action item. Maybe it is just a matter of mentioning and saying this is something that needs to have a long-term view, needs to be analyzed, but it is just too complex for this particular body to handle.
- Committee Member Robustelli stated he thought there was some discussion. One particular idea that came up at some point was the idea of some kind of public education/public information campaign that would provide, what I think is really great about our community, the generosity of our community, people's interest in wanting to help people who need it but encourage them to do that in a different way, in a way that maybe is more constructive, that would provide supportive services to some of the people that are asking for money on the streets as opposed to just giving them money for whatever they end up using it for.
- Committee Member Boyd stated the three notes that he had down was an education campaign, public restrooms, as well as someone had visited a city that had these boxes on every corner that went along with the education campaign saying do not give your money to the panhandlers. If you feel the obligation to give, put it in this box and that money is then distributed amongst the nonprofits in the community that care for the homeless. Those can be real recommendations that we put down.
- Committee Member Bray stated that she believed part of that conversation also involved partnering with some of the religious organizations in town that traditionally work with the population and checking in with what programs they currently have in place and maybe an encouragement to persist and maybe part of the recommendation could be these donations go over to those programs.
- Chairperson Buragas noted that our next meeting will be one week from today and the Parks Department is going to come chat with us about what we can do to support beautification of the downtown area. This is exciting to hear from them because we know that they do really good work when given the right amount of support.

6. Adjourn