



**Downtown Investment Authority**  
**Redevelopment Plan Committee**

**City Hall at St. James**  
**117 West Duval St., Committee Room B.**

*Friday, September 27, 2013 – 3:00 p.m.*

**REDEVELOPMENT PLAN COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Board Members Present:** Chairwoman Melody Bishop, Board Member Oliver Barakat, Tony Allegretti, and Don Harris

**Office of General Counsel:** John Sawyer

Council Member: Lori Boyer

**Attendees:** Alex Rudzinski, Director of Development, OED; Karen Nasrallah, and Eric Lindstrom, Downtown Development and Redevelopment Managers; Aundra Wallace, DIA CEO; and Karen Underwood, Recording Secretary.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Board Member M. Bishop, Chair of the DIA Redevelopment Plan Committee, called the meeting to order at approximately 3:09 p.m.

Chairwoman Bishop asked everyone to introduce him-or herself.

**REDEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE**

**Lara Diettrich Consultant**

**I. BRT Plan (Southbank Improvements):**

Brad Thoburn, Director of Strategic Planning and Research, JTA; Suraya Teeple, Transportation Manager, JTA; and Neal Nance, Senior Project Manager, provided the Bus Rapid Transportation presentation to the committee

Comments from the committee:

- Chairwoman Bishop commented about the benches not being up to City standard. She will ask the DDRB to go back and determine whether they should be set up according City standards.
- Chairwoman Bishop commented about Southbank, that it seems to be located at an intersection.
- C/M Lori Boyer asked if the JTA was taking up a 60 foot sidewalk. Neal Nance responded that the sidewalk would be 30 feet and would be 120 feet if there were two stops.
- C/M Lori Boyer commented that since there is a desire to have retail on the street level, sidewalk cafés and activity on the street that a long stretch would be taken off the sidewalk area with a shelter, benches, trash cans, and facilities.

- C/M Lori Boyer questioned in terms of downtown, as to what the commercial usage was on the first floor in certain locations. Ms. Teeple responded that most are located next to buildings where there is activity. All of the stops have been examined and JTA has met with all of those businesses in the surrounding areas during the process.
- C/M Lori Boyer commented about identifying each stop with a visual picture as part of the package, showing what is there and what was the use of the adjacent property behind it.
- Chairwoman Bishop stated that she has concerns about trying to develop downtown as opposed to always keeping off-street parking with chain-link fences. In that regard, the
- Board would be interested in knowing in the future how those could be changed.

Chairwoman Bishop opened the floor for public comments for regarding the JTA.

- Carnell Oliver referenced a map and suggested the JTA focus on long-range plans, plans on how meet those needs on East Bay Street and those bus stops are needed.

Tony Robbins pointed out that this project will be presented at the DIA regular meeting on October 16, 2013. Lara Dietrich stated that a separate workshop would be held prior to the DIA regular Board meeting to discuss the project in full.

Board Member Allegretti asked if the board was going to meet with JTA to update them. Brad Thoburn responded that the JTA met with a smaller group previously. Board Member Allegretti stated that he felt better if the walk from Riverplace station to the new stop was a safe and family-friendly experience.

Tony Robbins stated that the committee meetings are designed to offer updates and to receive ideas from the public about certain aspects of the Redevelopment Plan.

## **II. Strategy/Targets:**

Tony Robbins stated that the DIA could come in and have a visible result of an impact of downtown.

### **Past Strategy**

- Large-scale projects (i.e., Shipyards, new county courthouse, garages
- Scattershot, not cohesive or holistic, because downtown is so vast
- City process = to many chefs in the kitchen

### **Future Strategy**

- Continue talking about projects and start talking about places
- Concentrate on where money is being invested today.
- Focus on incentives, loan programs, subsidies, and even program funding
- IBM Report, "Epicenter of Growth"

## **Downtown Housing is Key**

Adding a vibrant critical mass of residents will help solidify downtown's position as a center of commerce, tourism, and the arts.

- Target the millennial generation
- Investigate progressive micro-loft housing
- Interesting and more livable alternatives to the suburbs will lead to other forms of growth.

## **Targets**

1. Inviting the public realm for all greater Jax to enjoy downtown and the river
2. Attractive housing alternatives leading to an increase in downtown residents
3. Supporting existing DT businesses to foster greater services for residents
4. Increasing downtown assessed (taxable) value
5. Decreasing total downtown vacant buildings
6. Increasing total downtown employees

## **III. Near-Term Projects**

### **Inviting the Public Realm**

#### **Green up Hemming Plaza (2006 Plan)**

- Program more interaction with the river (kayaking, riverboat ecological tour, passive parks on riverfront)
- Permit outdoor seating throughout the Core
- Wayfinding and landscape augmentation for the Southbank Riverwalk
- Weekday programming at Hemming Plaza, weekend at the Landing.

Board Member Harris asked Mr. Robbins and Mrs. Diettrich if they attended the chamber trip in Charlotte. They responded they did not. Board Member Harris stated that everything that has been presented that the DIA is doing has already taken place in Charlotte, NC. Mr. Robbins responded that there would be several representatives bringing information back from the trip.

Aundra Wallace commented that more would be shared from the public at this meeting.

Lara Diettrich explained micro-lofts. There is a lot of movement in urban, metropolitan areas concerning micro-lofts. Micro lofts are very small square footage types of lofts that are in high-density urban dwelling. The lofts are efficiently planned, much smaller, very space oriented, and at a much more affordable rate.

- **Beautification of Key Streets**

- **Attractive Housing Alternatives**
- **Support Existing DT Businesses**

Chairwoman Bishop noted that the Board needs to understand what the pedestrian connection is and what transit is available.

Mrs. Diettrich referenced the JTA BRT presentation and commented that the Bay Street entertainment district was missing from the discussion.

Board Member Barakat added that he was excited that so many people were in the audience and ready to hear what they have to say. Secondly, he agrees with Tony and Lara indicating that the board needs to focus on serious resources. Funding should be in one of two definitive areas. He mentioned that all of the incentive policies, capital improvement projects, and events are dispersed in one or two areas. He encouraged focusing on one or two areas within the next three to four years. Lara Diettrich responded that they have been in communication with DVI.

Board Member Harris stated that the board should look very hard at the transportation core because so many different areas that are not connected could make an impact. Many assets need to be enhanced. The DIA needs to identify what are the best areas regarding transportation.

Aundra Wallace asked the committee why we need Brooklyn/Riverside. He stated that Brooklyn was needed because they have the financial comparables that can help the board in the other areas of our city in the urban core.

Council Member Boyer shared two general thoughts. She mentioned infrastructure issues faced regarding the wide, one-way, and fast traffic should be implemented by the City. The downtown master plan receives a lot of negative comments but that happened in response to a negotiation of an agreement over Florida Georgia. In reference to the infrastructure there needs to be somebody looking at that from a broader prospective of what the impact is.

Chairwoman Bishop noted that the reversible lane was one of the items of the initial action plan.

Council Member Boyer commented to Aundra Wallace and Chairwoman Bishop that when getting into the businesses investment plan, when discussing Brooklyn from a development prospective, when there is an area that is hot; you do not need to incentivize the next development as much. Aundra Wallace responded that you allow and keep inducing Brooklyn to do exactly what it is doing. He stated that there are different developers that would do a neighborhood of a downtown type because it fits with their business model.

Council Member Boyer commented that when getting into developing the plans, develop a separate Southbank plan and a separate Northbank plan. Tony Robbins responded that they are currently

doing that. Lara Diettrich pointed out legally there will be three because there are three TIF districts.

Jim Catlett concurred with Aundra Wallace and added, if acting as a public land developer you have to look at it if as if you own the whole thing, that you own the right and responsibility from the Mayor and City Council to develop it

**Committee and Citizen Comments:**

Bruce Fouraker submitted seven ideas for consideration (see attachment)

Barbara Ketchum: Late Bloomers Garden Club has a plan similar to what is being discussed at the meeting calling for uniformity of beautification efforts from City Hall to the river and from the Times Union Center for the Performing Arts to the Hyatt Regency. She suggested promoting a café culture with wide sidewalks with outdoor seating.

Jennifer-Hewett-Apperson: DVI agrees with the direction the consultant is proposing. She stated that there needs to be a focus on a walkable Core. The plan should not ignore incentives for historic preservation.

Alexander Safakis: There are many good ideas from the recent Chamber trip to Charlotte. As a private investor, he needs the DIA to set a plan (and make sure they follow it) so he knows when he is going to invest. Brooklyn and Springfield are moving along fine on their own. Downtown needs City assistance. The Plan should focus on the river.

Jennifer Jones: Not impressed with JTA's, "Max" brand for the BRT. Need to work towards health and wellness. Move the jail, support a trolley.

Carnell Oliver: Supports the use of history in New Orleans with horse and carriage rides. Festivals and programming should reflect a city of cultural diversity (i.e., different nationalities).

Dane Beard: Dream big. Three financial resources: (1) amend/extend the Better Jax Plan (make it better); (2) look at Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust which utilizes a 1% tax on food and beverage for and indigent fund. (3) Get great elementary, middle and high schools downtown.

Alex Safakis; Diversity is a huge catalyst that encourages growth, attracts younger generation. As for homeless, it makes no sense to care for them at a location on the most expensive real estate downtown.

Shannon Nazworth: Interested in how redevelopment can combat homelessness. City, non-profits, and service providers can collectively deal with the homeless problem.

Tony Robbins informed the board that this focus was on a short-term and that the eventual plan does have a long-range goal as well.

Board Member Barakat stated that the DIA has not solved the homeless transit issue. He suggested a three- to five-year plan or to have some kind of mutual event with the folks that are currently redeveloping downtown.

Board Member Harris mentioned that a trolley would be beneficial at some of the action points in Jacksonville to bring them back to the core.

Tony Robbins stated that next month is National Community Planning month and the team is launching a community outreach. He stated that the board should have a specific focus on the Northbank versus the Southbank

Mr. Wallace wanted a show of hands from the audience if the format was helpful for receiving input into what the DIA is proposing to be done. Alex Safakis stated that he preferred how it was done in Charlotte where the board would sit at the head of the table and a moderator would go around and select more input. Lara Dietrich stated that the forums would be in that format in the future.

Council Member Boyer commented regarding some of the new audience that participated in Charlotte. She stated that one of the reasons the format is different here is because of the Sunshine Law.

Lara Dietrich stated that the DIA has two hats they are wearing: (1), community redevelopment agencies that manage and allocate the TIF funds, but then also go beyond that into the same boundaries. (2), In addition to the TIF, the sky is the limit on grants, loans and incentives.

Council Member Boyer commented that she attended the ULI Tour in Springfield yesterday afternoon. Locating in an Enterprise Zone, which is downtown, is an incentive. There are many incentives out there and the DIA is not presenting an array of those to people.

Board Member Barakat wanted to make sure all of the comments from the public would be submitted to the board. Mr. Robbins responded that they would commit to having a draft format by Monday.

Aundra Wallace will call a special meeting regarding the Bus Rapid Transportation Study. The issue has to be addressed in the particular plan.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chairwoman Bishop adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:08 p.m.

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The next scheduled DIA CRA Redevelopment Plan Committee Workshop meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 9, 2013, at 3:00 p.m., in the Lynwood Roberts Room.

Please note that all attachments referenced will be posted on the DIA Web site [www.coj.net/departments/office-of-economic-development/downtown-investment-authority-\(dia\)](http://www.coj.net/departments/office-of-economic-development/downtown-investment-authority-(dia))

The written minutes for this meeting are only an overview of what was discussed. For verbatim comments of this meeting, an audio CD is available upon request. Please contact Karen Underwood, at (904) 255-7567 or by email at [karenu@coj.net](mailto:karenu@coj.net).