



**Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) Meeting
Hybrid Virtual / In-Person Meeting**

Thursday, May 9, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Board Members (BMs) Present: M. Brockelman (Chair); L. Ott (Vice Chair); G. Monahan (Secretary); C. Dawson; F. Jones; and J. Loretta

Board Members Excused: J. Berling; E. Davis and T. Lee

DIA Staff Present: Susan Kelly, Redevelopment Coordinator; Guy Parola, Director of Operations; and Ava Hill, Administrative Assistant

Office of General Counsel: Carla Lopera, Esq.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Brockelman called the meeting to order at **2:02 p.m.** He noted that action item 2024-005, the special sign exception for the RiversEdge Townhomes, would be deferred due to a noticing error. He then asked for introductions from Board Members and Staff.

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 9, 2024 DDRB SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

The Chair asked for a motion regarding the April 9th special meeting minutes. Board Member Monahan made a motion to move the meeting minutes, and Board Member Ott seconded the motion.

The April 9, 2024, meeting minutes were approved, 6-0.

B. APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 11, 2024 DDRB REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

The Chair asked for a motion regarding the April 11th regular meeting minutes. Board Member Monahan made a motion to move the meeting minutes, and Board Member Jones seconded the motion.

The April 11, 2024, meeting minutes were approved, 6-0.

III. OLD BUSINESS

None.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

The Chair provided introductory statements regarding the new business items, explaining that these presentations were for design review resulting from the recent code changes (Ordinance 2024-039-E). Chair Brockelman reminded the Board that their comments and feedback would be noted but that no action would be taken on these items. Two (2) park projects were presented.

A. DDRB 2024 DR.1: JAMES WELDON JOHNSON PARK

Jill Enz, Chief of Natural and Marine Resources for the Parks Department, provided an introduction, and Katie Barsanti with Hood Design Studio gave the presentation. Ms. Barsanti gave an overview of the site and the project, including a brief history of the park space. She then walked through the schematic design proposed for the park. The park space has been designed to feature nine (9) squares of programming, with a pathway to circumnavigate the entire site.

Following her presentation, the Board Chair asked for questions and/or feedback from the Board.

- Board Member Dawson asked what elements were designed to create permanent shade. Ms. Barsanti explained that shade structures would be incorporated, and a mix of tree species would provide shade year-round. Mr. Dawson asked about activities for kids and, overall, the materials used for the hardscaping. Ms. Barsanti stated that the square identified as the “Children’s Garden” was for exploration and that the great lawn in the center of the park was a place for kids to run around. She also reminded the Board that playgrounds were being provided at park spaces along the riverfront. Regarding materiality, she explained that, depending on foot traffic, the hardscaping would likely be either concrete or decomposed granite. Board Member Dawson noted that he had seen a large LED screen in one version of the design. Ms. Barsanti stated that it was not going to be included in this iteration, but possibly in a future phase. Lastly, Board Member Dawson commented that the statue from the “Women of the Southland” monument in Springfield Park should be repurposed here.
- Board Member Loretta asked about the sidewalk along Laura Street, noting that it looks as though the existing sidewalk would be used as the park’s pathway along this edge. Ms. Barsanti stated that the sidewalk would be different from the “Poet’s Circuit,” and that the rendering had a graphic error.
- Board Member Monahan asked about the seating for the amphitheater. Ms. Barsanti confirmed that the amphitheater would have an elevated seat wall.
- Board Chair Brockelman confirmed with Ms. Barsanti that the amphitheater was sloped.
- Board Member Ott asked about the possibility of food trucks, noting that the food trucks have been a successful and important part of activating the park currently. Ms. Barsanti said that food trucks would have dedicated spaces and hook-ups in the “Market Garden” square. Ms. Ott asked about the purpose or programming for the triangular spaces within the “Oak Hammock” and the “Gaming Garden” space. Ms. Barsanti explained that these spaces were meant to be an extension of the grand lawn. Ms. Ott suggested increasing the shade trees in these areas.

- Board Member Jones echoed Ms. Ott’s comments regarding food trucks, and he also suggested that there be some future consideration to reclaim the space under the JTA’s Skyway structure.
- Board Member Monahan asked about a dedicated public restroom. Ms. Barsanti said that a restroom was currently being discussed.
- Board Chair Brockelman asked about the timing of the project and the relationship with the Friends of James Weldon Johnson Park group. Ms. Enz said they were anticipating 60 percent drawings this summer, with 100 percent drawings next year. Construction is anticipated for 2026/2027. Daryl Joseph, Director of the Parks Department, said that the relationship between the City and the Friends of the park group would continue and security would be the same, as well.

B. DDRB 2024 DR.2: SHIPYARDS WEST (PARK)

Ms. Enz provided an introduction and passed the mic to Gina Ford from Agency Landscape and Planning. Ms. Ford reviewed past uses of the Shipyards site, its history and legacy. Stating that the site plan was at 60 percent design, she explained the design of the site plan, the proposed circulation and park programming. She also provided a brief overview of WXY Studio’s architecture for the events pavilion.

Following her presentation, the Board Chair asked for questions and/or feedback from the Board.

- Board Member Loretta asked about the grade change from Bay Street to the park property, expressing concern that the park would not be visible from Bay Street. Mr. Loretta also commented that providing parking under the events pavilion was a good use of the space. Ms. Ford stated that Bay Street is being designed as a broad, green promenade, and while there would be a grade change from Bay Street, it would not be substantial (about 2-3 feet) so the park would still be visible from the street.
- Board Member Dawson asked whether the view of the St. Johns River would be compromised because of the trees along the east side of the subject site. Ms. Ford commented that there would be somewhat of a tradeoff between providing shade and obstructing the view, but they would be planting a variety of tree species to address this concern. Mr. Dawson also asked about the circulation, concerned that it was overdone, and about the access that motorboats would have to the site. Additionally, he would like to see a large carousel or merry-go-round. Ms. Ford addressed the hierarchy of the circulation paths, noting that the Riverwalk is the dominant pathway. She also stated that the park is not designed for motorboats, but more for concession-based water sports.
- Board Member Monahan asked about the size of the flex lawn and whether a concert would be possible there. Ms. Ford stated that a deck on the south side of the lawn is planned and could be used as a stage, and that the sunset deck could also be used for concerts. Mr. Monahan asked about the intent of the picnic/grilling area (reservations, charcoal or gas, etc.). Mr. Joseph with the Parks Department said that specifics related to the picnic and grilling areas were still to be determined. Lastly, Mr. Monahan asked about coordination with the JTA U2C project. Guy Parola with the DIA, and Ms. Ford,

both stated that there has been full coordination with JTA regarding their project, and no conflicts are anticipated.

- Board Member Ott asked about the intent of the events space. Ms. Ford commented that about 10,000 sf of event space is being held as a placeholder. Ms. Ott commented that a flora feature and/or rooftop feature would be a nice enhancement. She also commented that, if possible, it would be beneficial to have some portion of the pavilion space be provided along the waterfront. Lastly, she asked Ms. Ford about the public reaction to the recreation programming. Ms. Ford stated that there had been some back-and-forth between providing flexible spaces or fixed courts. The current approach is to design for the scale of various sports so that there can be some flexibility. Ms. Ott stated that she preferred the more flexible approach.
- Board Member Jones asked about the possibility of a living shoreline or similar. Ms. Ford highlighted the floating wetland areas and stated that they are exploring the possibility of a living edge along the Creek side of the site.
- Board Chair Brockelman agreed with the other Board Members and stated that he likes the number of paths that have been provided.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Brockelman asked for public comment.

One member of the public commented that art and cultural opportunities should be included along the “Poet’s Circuit” in the James Weldon Johnson Park and that open conversations about slavery should be had (a trail of truth). Regarding Shipyards West, the commenter wants to connect Bay Street to the entertainment center and requested that basketball courts be included.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately **3:15 p.m.**

The written minutes for this meeting are only an overview of what was discussed. For verbatim comments for this meeting, a recording or transcript is available upon request. Please contact Susan Kelly at 904-255-5307 or ksusan@coj.net.