Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) Meeting
Hybrid Virtual / In-Person Meeting
Thursday, March 12, 2026, 2:00PM

MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present: Linzee Ott (Chair), Carl Dawson (Secretary), Matt Brockelman, Ennis Davis, Frederick Jones**,** Joseph Loretta

Board Members Present via Zoom: Joana Berling (Vice Chair)

DIA Staff Present: Guy Parola (Operations Director), Van Christiansen (Redevelopment Coordinator), Ava Hill (Administrative Assistant)

City Council: The Honorable Chris Miller

Office of General Counsel: Terrence Harvey, Rebecca Lavie

Office of the Mayor: Bill Delaney

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ott called the meeting to order at **2:02 p.m.** and confirmed quorum**.**

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. JANUARY 8, 2026 DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD (DDRB) REGULAR MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

Board Chair Ott called for a motion on the meeting minutes.

Motion: Member Dawson moved to approve the meeting minutes.
Seconded: Member Loretta seconded the motion.

Vote: **Aye: 7** **Nay: 0** **Abstain: 0**

B. Form B: Voting Conflict Disclosure

Board Member Loretta disclosed a potential conflict of interest related to DDRB Application 2026-003 (Fleet Landing), stating his firm may provide design services, and recused himself from that item.

III. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES IN LAVILLA DISTRICT

DIA staff (Mr. Parola) introduced the item as an informational discussion regarding the existing **75-foot height limit in the LaVilla District**, noting the limit originated from historical building heights rather than a policy-driven rationale. Staff indicated interest in reevaluating the height limits comprehensively, potentially as part of a broader design guidelines update.

Board Member Davis stated the 75-foot limit appears arbitrary and does not effectively preserve historic character. He noted that height restrictions do not prevent demolition and suggested broader policy review, including historic designation tools and community-based planning approaches. Board Member Loretta expressed support for removing the height limitation, indicating market-driven development should guide outcomes where feasible. Chair Ott stated support for reevaluating or removing the height limit and indicated the discussion may warrant further study or a committee-level effort.

Mr. Parola noted that evaluation of height limits will likely be incorporated into a broader Design Guidelines update, currently being scoped for an upcoming RFP. Mr. Delaney stated the Mayor's Office does not have a formal position but supports efforts to simplify regulations and reduce barriers to development, while acknowledging the importance of protecting remaining historic resources.

Public Comment: Adrian Swanigan, LaVilla preservation organization, emphasized the need to address broader design guidelines and preservation strategies beyond height limits, including stronger enforcement and LaVilla-specific development standards.

No motion or vote recorded. Discussion only.

IV. ACTION ITEMS (CONT.)

A. DDRB APPLICATION 2026-002 BAPTIST HOTEL (CONCEPTUAL APPROVAL)

Ms. Christiansen presented the staff report for a proposed 15-story, 226-key hotel development on the Southbank, including conference/event space, restaurant, café, and structured parking. The project was described as an infill development on an existing surface parking lot with constraints including a transformer yard and JEA easement. Staff noted the project generally complies with applicable Private Realm and Public Realm standards, including pedestrian zone requirements. Ms. Rewis, Driver MacAfee, provided the applicant presentation including an overview of the site and project team, noting the project activates the final remaining Baptist-owned parcel in the Southbank.

Mr. Bode, Baptist Health, described the programmatic need for the hotel, citing demand from patients, families, and visitors, and emphasized the project as both a healthcare-supporting amenity and broader Downtown asset.
Mr. Latimer outlined site design, including pedestrian plaza space, screening of utility infrastructure, streetscape improvements, and internal circulation.

Board Member Jones stated the project addresses a lack of quality hotel options on the Southbank and supports medical tourism, noting its importance to Baptist's competitiveness and Downtown activity. Board Member Davis raised concern regarding the treatment of the San Marco Boulevard frontage, specifically the presence of a garage wall condition and limited usability of proposed open space adjacent to traffic. He noted broader considerations regarding primary street designation and pedestrian experience. Mr. Delaney (Mayor's Office) noted the project's relevance to broader design guideline discussions, particularly regarding identification of primary streets and future policy considerations. Chair Ott expressed overall support for the project as a strong addition to the Southbank, encouraging continued refinement of the pedestrian experience, particularly along Gary Street and San Marco Boulevard, and suggested consideration of shade or alternative design elements (e.g., public art) in areas with constraints.

Motion: Member Dawson moved to approve DDRB Application 2026-002 with staff recommendations
Seconded: Member Jones seconded the motion.

Vote: **Aye: 7** **Nay: 0** **Abstain: 0**

B. <u>DDRB APPLICATION 2026-003 – FLEET LANDING (CONCEPTUAL APPROVAL)</u>
Board Member Loretta recused himself from this item due to a potential professional engagement with the applicant. Multiple Board Members disclosed ex parte communications related to DDRB Application 2026-003.

Ms. Christiansen presented for conceptual approval of redevelopment at the Fleet Landing site. The proposal was introduced at a high level, with limited detail regarding final design, programming, and site-specific conditions. Discussion was substantive and centered on the lack of detail at the conceptual stage and the need for further refinement prior to final approval.

Board Member Davis stated he was effectively treating the item as a workshop discussion, noting that the level of detail provided was insufficient to fully evaluate the project. He indicated that key elements—including site design, frontage treatment, and programmatic clarity—required further development before meaningful review. Board

Member Davis also emphasized that his concerns were not with overall massing, but with the absence of specificity needed to assess compliance with Downtown standards and the quality of the public realm. Board Member Loretta acknowledged that many concerns raised—both by the Board and the public—would likely be addressed as the project advances, noting that additional detail (including garage configuration and streetscape treatment) would be critical at later stages. He suggested opportunities for improved vegetation and symmetry along Stonewall Street as design progresses.

Board discussion reflected a general understanding that the project is premature in design, with several elements expected to be resolved at Final Approval. Overall, the Board conveyed that while the project has potential, additional detail and refinement will be necessary.

Public comment was provided raising concerns regarding the project, including questions about the target demographic, affordability, and overall value of the proposed development. These comments prompted additional discussion among Board members regarding the project's program and assumptions.

Motion: Member Dawson moved to approve DDRB Application 2026-003 with staff recommendations
Seconded: Member Brockelman seconded the motion.

Vote: **Aye: 5** **Nay: 1** **Abstain: 1**

C. DDRB RESOLUTION 2026-03-01 – DESIGN GUIDELINES UPDATE (STREETSCAPE / TRASH RECEPTACLES)

Ms. Christiansen presented Resolution 2026-03-01 to initiate a targeted amendment to the Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines related to approved trash receptacle types. The amendment focuses on expanding allowable options, including enclosed high-capacity trash receptable units, while maintaining consistency with existing streetscape standards.

Board discussion focused on flexibility, design consistency, and implementation approach. Board members confirmed that multiple approved receptacle types would remain available, allowing flexibility by location. Discussion included considerations of visual consistency across Downtown, including the use of wraps/graphics and opportunities for design standardization. Board Member Loretta discussed the level of design development presented and the need for a more finalized approach prior to implementation. Board Member Brockelman requested that staff return with a finalized base design for Board and public review before rollout.

A member of the public provided comment related to streetscape elements and design considerations, which informed Board discussion regarding aesthetics, consistency, and implementation approach.

Amendment Action:

- Motion to strike Amendment 2 was made and seconded.
- Amendment was approved unanimously.

Final Motion: Member Brockelman moved to approve Resolution 2026-03-01 as amended.
Seconded: Member Dawson moved to approve Resolution 2026-03-01 as amended.

Vote: **Aye: 6** **Nay: 1** **Abstain: 0**

V. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:50 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 Van Christiansen at vchristiansen@coj.net to acquire a recording of this meeting.