

**Downtown Development Authority
Board Workshop
Thursday, February 6, 2003
Whitman School, 248 South 4th Street**

PRESENT: PJ McGovern, Harry Griff, Bruce Hill, Janet Terry, Gregg Palmer, Pat Gormley, Harold Stalf and Sue Schore.

ABSENT: Doug Simons, Becky Brehmer, Bruce Bengel and Larry Botkin,

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by PJ McGovern at 7:38 a.m.

DOWNTOWN CULTURAL INVESTMENT: Harold Stalf opened the discussion by looking at the cultural assets currently located in downtown and those that the DDA would like to have downtown. His belief is that in order to be effective in promoting housing downtown there must be things here to do. There are a few smaller organizations that are struggling somewhat and Harold believes the Board needs to look at planning for an arts complex or something of that nature which would house the Grand Junction Symphony, the Chamber Music series and perhaps the Center for the Arts. There must be activity here in the evening to draw people. An arts complex and activities would enrich downtown so that housing would work.

Bruce Hill reported that he had recently talked with someone from the Center for the Arts and his advice to them was to reach out and establish relationships with other artistic organizations and plan together. He proposes to create a new organization composed of individuals from various cultural arts agencies to meet together quarterly to talk, interact and plan. He believes this would be an ideal tool to get the arts folks thinking and strategizing for their long-term plans.

Harry Griff added information he gleaned from conversations with Joe Stevens, Director of the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Joe endorses an amphitheater at Las Colonias, but that is not in the City's ten-year plan. Harry would like to see the Art Center looking to a new facility in the next three-five years, not ten. In the interim, he believes the City could better utilize some of the facilities they already have.

Discussion focused on Las Colonias as a home for an arts complex and opinions differed as to whether or not that location would be better than a location downtown. Because other groups are looking outside of the downtown area, Bruce Hill suggested that the DDA might facilitate a decision for downtown by assisting other agencies financially with the project or with property acquisition. With that suggestion he recommended that everyone think inside the box rather than outside of it. Harry then said that it would be important to utilize some of the other facilities such as the Avalon, Stocker Stadium and Suplezio Field for various types of performances. He believes that the DDA must act in the short term in order to enhance Grand Junction's image as a regional center.

Janet Terry explained that any long-term planning relating to parks goes to the Parks Board. She recommended that the Board network with them, as well. Council looks to the Parks Board for its recommendations, and the best way to put ideas on the table for Council's consideration is to talk with members of that Board.

Harold reiterated that the whole rationale of getting a dynamic downtown is to be able to walk in it. The downtown should be the focal point, but in order for that to happen, there must be a constant flow of smaller events downtown to create constant traffic. That will not happen with just a few large events on the calendar.

Janet suggested that Harold meet and talk with the Development Department regarding any downtown planning.

Harold referred to the Avalon as the heartbeat and landmark for downtown, but said, unfortunately, it's empty night after night. The idea of bringing in talent would require heavy subsidies and the question is, what can any agency do to make that building come alive without taking great risk? His answer to that is--film. Film is relative low risk and the cost of renting film is based on overhead and 40% of ticket sales. He has met with the Avalon committee to discuss his ideas and, according to the original mission statement of the Avalon, it was built for vaudeville acts, lecture series and the "best quality film in America." He believes for that building to show a profit, the lights must be on every night and he looks to models such as the Wheeler Opera House in Aspen and Fargo Theater as examples of such success. He has also presented a draft business plan to the Film Board and proposed that the Saturday Cinema could run it. Seed money in the amount of approximately \$25,000 would be required for set up fees. This could be acquired by donations and sponsorships. He asked the Board to consider a commitment for a trial run for the next nine – twelve months.

Bruce Hill suggested that the DDA be the catalyst for such a venture, but it's important to let Joe Stevens approach the City Manager and City Council with this idea. Bruce is not in favor of the DDA fully funding this endeavor. Gregg indicated that in order for something like this to be successful, the Avalon Board, the Parks Board and Saturday at the Cinema must come together. Janet said that Council would look to the Avalon Board for direction and support. According to Harry, if the Saturday Cinema group would take the responsibility of administering this program, it could be their dream come to life. Harold's recommendation regarding capital expenditures which the DDA could support would be the Avalon sign for approximately \$60,000, possible projection upgrades of \$10,000 and replacement of seats by acquiring used seats at approximately \$25 each. He believes there's nothing easier or cheaper than film to promote night activity in downtown.

ART ON THE CORNER: Harold reported on past expenditures for Art on the Corner brochures and stated that the current publication is not the right tool for general distribution. He displayed other designs which are far less costly which could be placed in stationary street boxes and used for walking tours. He suggested empowering galleries to assist in the sale of the art work by providing some commission for their efforts. He also recommended removing some of the pieces of the permanent collection in order to have room for more temporary exhibits. Harry promoted rotating some of the permanent pieces through other locations to expand the exhibit's borders. Harold is waiting for a recommendation from the AOTC committee regarding the purchase of a piece for 2002. This year the de-installation and installation of sculptures will take place on two different weekends rather than on one. The temporary collection will be removed on May 31 and the new pieces installed on Saturday, June 14, during the Art and Jazz Festival.

ISSUES UPDATE: Grand Valley Transit has requested a letter of support which it can use in its drive for capital funding. Doug Simons will provide that letter.

Gregg reported that he had received recommendations for revisions for the MOU from Harry, Harold and Janet and that he had prepared a document using those revisions and forwarded it to John Shaver for his review. Gregg believes that the agreement is very close to completion and hopes to have it for final review at the next Board meeting.

Harold informed the Board that City Council had approved the revised resolution to support the Downtown Partnership with the contribution of \$75,000 from the parking fund. The Downtown Association also received a letter from the IRS designating it as a 501(c)(1).

In a conversation with Kelly Arnold, Harold learned that City Council was walking away from the Greyhound Bus Depot and would not exercise its option. Janet added that the City would no longer be involved except to negotiate a parking lease with Greyhound for the property they use for parking buses. Harry reiterated that the Smith family is interested in cash flow and Greyhound will probably determine in the next three – five years that they don't need to be at the current location any longer because they've outgrown the property. Until then, it appears that the family is content with the status quo. He believes that someone needs to meet with an environmental engineer and learn what the clean-up costs will be.

PJ asked that the record show that he had proposed an option to the City that would not lean on the City or DDA for clean-up. That opportunity is now over. Janet added that Greyhound had not cooperated; they never looked elsewhere for a new location. The City no longer needs to be involved with that issue. Bruce Hill said that the DDA must propose to buy that property, do the due diligence on it and give Greyhound a short-term lease so that they will be forced to look to relocate. PJ said that it would take approximately six months to learn of the availability of superfund monies and it's important to move forward without the support of the City. The application process would cost approximately \$5,000. Harry will contact Dick Scariano and find an opportunity to talk about renewing the Greyhound lease for a moderate length of time so that the DDA could pursue the superfund money.

Harold reported that the lowest bid for the renovation of the Reed Building façade was \$125,000 over Chamberlin's estimate. Dave Donahue, Josh Comfort and he have been working to find ways to reduce that fee and at this time have found changes to reduce that figure by \$90,000. Josh will be in contact with CHS to get its approval. The buyer has verbally agreed to pick up 60% of the additional costs. In response to Harry's question of whether or not the Board needs to ratify any changes, Harold responded that CHS is a much better judge of historical significance than any of the Board, and approval by the CHS should be the verification that the Board needs. He has been in constant communication with the buyers so they understand the current dilemma.

A total of \$80,200 has been borrowed from the \$600,000 line of credit that the City opened for the DDA.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

