

GRAND JUNCTION DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
BOARD MINUTES
THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 2012
248 SOUTH 4TH STREET
7:30 A.M.

PRESENT: Jodi Coleman-Niernberg, Bennett Boeschstein, Les Miller

ABSENT: Peggy Page, Steve Thoms, Harry Griff, PJ McGovern, Kevin Reimer

STAFF: Harry Weiss, Kathy Dirks, Diane Keliher

DISCUSSION OF TOPICS FOR JOINT MEETING WITH CITY COUNCIL: The first hour of the meeting will be dedicated to the Avalon Theatre renovation to frame the City's participation in the project. The base project is \$4.5-5 million and includes an HVAC system, new seats, ADA accessible bathrooms, an elevator, and an upgraded lobby. The City is expecting a request of \$1 million from the DDA. The Avalon Foundation Board would need to raise \$1 million. There is question about who is leading the project. There needs to be an agreement with all interested entities. Michael Schwerin declared a "no go" to the expanded thrust stage. Weiss explained that the objection of the Symphony to the thrust stage was a matter of sight lines. The Foundation would like to launch its capital campaign, but they are waiting for the City to make a financial commitment. Foundation grants cannot be accepted until January of 2013. The plan is to let the Foundation capital campaign go until December, 2012, and then see what the budget looks like. Jodi asked if the Symphony is still involved in the fundraising. Weiss stated that they have representation on the Foundation board. The auditorium renovation would begin in January, 2013, and in April, 2013, the annex and the multi-purpose room would begin construction. There are potential asbestos issues in the ceiling which could cost up to \$250,000 for abatement. The next question is, "Is City Council in?"

Where is the logical growth of the DDA? What is the long-term vision for Downtown? The mission of the Downtown Strategic Plan was never formally adopted by City Council, and has been incorporated into the Greater Downtown Plan. Downtown should be the engine of growth with regard to zoning and planning. What direction should Downtown grow? The downtown core and south downtown should connect. The growth should be from the center out and around the core. The Downtown Plan calls for catalyst projects to the north of downtown. What should Grand Avenue look like? Bennett added that the library expansion project is a good start for Grand Avenue.

The real prize is the south section of Downtown. For this area to develop, it is imperative that I-70B be realigned. We may not see in-fill results for 20 years. The existing plans have already been environmentally assessed by CDOT regarding the transportation element. The DDA would need to propose a new project based on the community development element. Weiss has spoken with the Partnership for Sustainability which is a program made up of HUD, CDOT and NEPA and they are excited about the concept. The idea is to move Ute and Pitkin to Pitkin and South Avenue for I-70B. In order to swap right of ways, we will have to go through a Federal Highway Administration assessment, which is expensive and labor intensive. Bennett mentioned that Riverside Parkway has reduced the traffic on Ute and Pitkin. The DDA is looking for direction from Council as far as if the vision is worthwhile. Bennett would like to see the train depot connect to Downtown.

The DDA should participate in the Las Colonias Park as a catalyst project to the south of downtown. The question is what happens first; investment first and then the park or does the park itself generate investment. The park is a part of the Riverfront corridor and a community-wide resource. The DDA's funding needs to come from a broader base. This could be accomplished by expanding the DDA district to the south. The DDA should develop the opportunities for development with strategic land acquisitions rather than funding a park. (Bennett mentioned the beet factory as an economic driver)

TIF revenue has compression since we are only guaranteed 50% of the increment. Bond council has to base the bonding capacity on the guaranteed amount. This could lead to more loans with the City and/or conventional financing. Weiss would like to expand the DDA district boundaries to increase the amount of TIF available for projects to the south of downtown. The core paid for 7th Street, Colorado Avenue, Main Street, and the parking structure. There would have to be a compelling argument for the property owners to vote for an expansion. Bennett mentioned that Grand Junction Steel has a huge facility that is vacant. He feels that could generate a lot of TIF dollars. The Van Gundy property which has been purchased by a national company and Whitewater Building Supply are both located in that area. Weiss feels that this is a great argument for changing the traffic pattern of I-70 B to help those businesses thrive. Bennett also mentioned that there is a large Hispanic population in south downtown that needs to be involved in the conversation.

The other concern is the Art on the Corner program. What is the DDA's role in developing an arts economy? We need to create a collaborative marketing opportunity for reaching people who will buy high-end art as well as provide a facility for artists to sell their pieces. Weiss would like to do a community-wide assessment of the program. Bennett added that the program started as strictly a downtown program to compete with malls and it is critical to the vitality of downtown. Weiss agreed, but said it has not been leveraged as an economic driver. What does it mean to be an art destination? What does it mean to attract artists to the community to live and work? Weiss feels this issue goes beyond the DDA's mission. The other question is what does the community want? Bennett mentioned that the steam plant could be used as a foundry. Les added that the train depot would be a great facility for art work.

The Assembly of God purchase has a wrinkle. The bond council has concerns about the use of bond money for the purchase since it is not blighted. The statute says that the purchase has to be in the DDA's plan of development. Since the Strategic Downtown Master Plan was never adopted, we don't have a plan for bonding. Bennett said the DDA board should adopt the Strategic Plan. Weiss added that the DDA should think about acquiring strategic properties for planning purposes. There was further discussion of the details of the AOG purchase.

White Hall has the potential for senior housing. There is a developer looking at the property. The clean up should be manageable. There is little asbestos in the debris. City Council's concern is why there was no insurance on White Hall? It was an oversight and the bank will have to take a \$650,000 loss. The property is in a good location and can be developed into something that will generate tax revenue.

Les brought up the conflict with North Avenue, Horizon Drive, and the 29 Road's connection to I-70 for the I-70B realignment as far as Council's priorities are concerned.

There was further discussion of downtown becoming a retail and entertainment regional center.

