

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Meeting of the DDA Board of Directors/City Council
January 19, 2023

The January 19th meeting of the City Council/DDA Board was called to order at 7:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: *Mayor Brian Turnbull, DJ Boyd, Margene Buckhave, Steven Huprich, Jim Long, Shawn Riley*

Absent: *David Cole, Aaron Cozart, Mike Jaafar, Ryan McKindles, Greg Presley*

Also Present: *Lori Ward/DDA Executive Director, Jeri Johnson/DDA Marketing & Communications Director, Jessica Howlin/DDA Marketing & Administrative Assistant, Mark Wollenweber/Interim City Manager, Marilyn Price/City Council, Barbara Morowski-Browne/City Council, John Carter/City Council, Andrew Krenz/City Council, Dr. William Demray/Resident, Denise Jenkins/Resident, Jim Nield/Resident, Bob Buckhave/Resident, Derek Blair, Will Hundley, Jayme Hundley, David Field/HDC, Carol Maise, Paul Gabriel, Brian Sherle, Nancy Darga, Mishelle Lussier, 35 Attendees via Zoom*

GRISSIM METZ PEDESTRIAN PLAN PRESENTATION

Riley thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. Riley said to quickly recap, in June 2020 City Council voted to close E. Main Street and N. Center Street as a response to the ongoing Covid pandemic. It allowed restaurants and retailers to expand their outdoor footprint and safely distance customers. Over the next two years, City Council extended the closures three additional times. In August 2022, Council voted to make the street closures permanent and tasked the DDA with preparing a plan to transform the temporary closures into a permanent plan where the community can gather safely.

Riley said after an interview process, Grissim Metz Andriese Associates (GMA) was the design firm selected to create a pedestrian plan for Downtown Northville. GMA has worked with Northville previously to design the Town Square, which is an award-winning project. GMA has met one-on-one with Historic District Commission (HDC) members, DPW and the Building Department as part of the design process. Fleis & Vandenbrink (F&V) has been retained to address impacts due to traffic routing downtown as a result of the street closures. Sue Grissim and CJ Thompson of GMA are presenting tonight to both the DDA and City Council. The design presentation encompasses feedback and comments that have been received throughout the conceptual process. There will be a chance to offer public comment after the meeting presentation.

Councilman Carter said that he joined EDC prior to joining Council, and has been a part of the advisory committee for the pedestrian plan. Carter said tonight's goal is to foster a partnership between DDA, Council and merchants. The committee has asked GMA to put together a

recommendation on a broad scale of what is possible. Carter said this presentation will help set priorities, provide a basis for what each phase looks like and how the City can show a commitment on how to be successful in the long term.

Grissim said she and Thompson will talk goals of the project. The RFP included a list of goals. The team focused on two, first being the need to make Northville engaging and livable for everyone. Secondly, how can the space be successful and prosperous for commerce. The plan includes: Accessibility – curb transitions, emergency and fire access; Infrastructure Planning – electrical, furnishings, lighting, support systems; Operational – housekeeping, trash, maintenance, events. The next element is how to make this plan an experience. Grissim said the basis for the design plan took feedback provided during meetings with the advisory committee, a public workshop, a meeting with emergency personnel, DPW, HDC and the traffic engineering team. GMA also reached out and reviewed case studies of other communities with pedestrian-only areas, including Church Street in Vermont and Pearl Street in Colorado.

Thompson said looking at the current design of the street, there is a 13' -16' sidewalk, 8' parallel parking and a 12' travel lane on each side of the road. GMA is not recommending heavy duty construction on the current layout. GMA is proposing an elevated decking system. The existing 20' wide road is going to be a pedestrian promenade that pedestrians will use to activate the space. Thompson said GMA has added a replicated diamond pattern from Town Square into the Center/Main gateway. The four main areas will include an 8' pedestrian clear space, 13' -18' merchant space, 16' clear zone and an 8' common space.

Thompson said the decking system is a major component to the proposal. The asphalt will stay in place and the decking is a pedestal system that is installed above. Utilities and infrastructure can be hidden under the decking system, with boards coming out easily for access to the utilities. The design is ADA accessible in that it will include ramps every so often to get onto or down from the street. The deck edge is discernable so it is not a trip hazard. Shelters would be attached to the deck substructure below, effectively removing the heavy concrete barriers that are currently holding down structures. Thompson added that the design allows for a cohesive look that will preserve the architectural integrity of Downtown Northville.

Thompson said the 8' common space areas within the pedestrian promenade, feature moveable seating, lighting, and heat, giving visitors a space to gather and hang out, but also flexible to clear out for events. During events, tents would be aligned down the middle of the street to effectively keep storefronts more open and visible. The gateway design is classic and elegant, with monuments and entrance features to tie into the downtown aesthetic. The mast arms would be repurposed by removing the traffic signals and adding decorative lighting features to make it a more welcoming gateway. Bollards would also be added at the gateways to separate traffic with attention to safety. The bollards also will prevent vehicles parking for drop off/deliveries at this intersection. Thompson said there is also a decorative pavement design element to add a contrast to the roadway – the idea being to remove markings and use a sealcoat and paint overlay to what is already there.

Thompson said one area of concern is the loss of about 30 parking spaces with the streets being closed permanently. The design team looked at areas of potential, including reconfiguring the lot behind Main Street to add parking and be more efficient. Another area to consider is converting right turn only lanes into parking spaces. GMA is working with F & V to

figure out how these options might work with traffic flow. Another area that the team has worked on is loading areas with respect to both deliveries and ADA/mobility issues – how can drop off and deliveries be close to downtown without blocking traffic.

Grissim said action items include working with the advisory group to determine immediate actionable steps, including clean up, repair and removing items not being used in the street. This includes removing traffic and parking references that are no longer needed. This is followed by activating the streets and how merchants can increase outside participation within their respective spaces.

Grissim pointed out a few categories to review on the budget. The team tried to be as accurate as possible on pricing. The promenade, including pavement treatment, sealcoating and painting, is approximately \$30,000 and the pavement repairs needed are approximately \$155,000. The deck system is about \$420,000 on Main Street and \$360,000 on Center Street - these figures are for the decking to run the entire length of the closed streets. Grissim added that the conversion of tree planters to grates would cost about \$150,000 and lighting projections would be about \$50,000. The team met with the City electrician and an electrical engineer, and realized businesses can't pull power because they just don't have it available. The electrical study will be \$14,000. Once the study is complete, an accurate estimate can be determined for the electrical system.

Grissim said the major gateway would be approximately \$401,000 and includes pavement treatments, planters, iconic monuments, bollard system and decorative modifications to masts. The minor gateways are \$461,000 and also include pavement treatment, planters, monuments, bollards and mast modifications. The team received pricing from three companies for bollards. The middle bollards in the design plan would drop down in less than 10 seconds to allow for easy access for emergencies. The perimeter bollards are removable and would need to be lifted out manually. This cost would be about \$190,000 at the major gateway.

Grissim said items excluded from the initial budget include removing temporary barricades, structures, signage and gateway intersection control. GMA is waiting for the traffic study to come back to plan for pedestrian connection improvement, including the Comerica Connections walkthrough and alleys. Grissim added that the merchant shelters were not included in initial budget as the team is still working with the HDC on design elements. Other items not included are pod renovations, common space furnishings, parking/loading renovations, and Town Square improvements, which includes pavilion repair and fire pits.

Grissim said high priority items currently include: electrical, gateways, merchant shelter design, parking/loading/service, pavement treatment and repair existing pavers and concrete. Next steps include determining budget, begin design development phase, incorporate traffic study and work with HDC to move forward on shelters, gateways and additional elements. Grissim said operations, maintenance and guidelines will also be part of next steps, and a great resource that will be utilized is other pedestrian friendly communities.

Riley thanked the team at GMA for their in-depth work so far. The DDA will continue to work with the design team to implement the pedestrian plan. Turnbull opened the discussion to any public comment.

Boyd asked if the proposed decking system is flexible throughout the year. Thompson said the base is more permanent and structurally sound to hold the merchant structures. Grissim said the proposed decking material is Timbertrek and is not as slippery as Trex decking product. Huprich said it sounds like the decking is not conducive to move for events or to open the street, and is there a more portable option. Thompson said the decking does not interfere with the 24-ft wide existing roadway, so it can still be utilized with ease. Carter said the EDC has discussed adding bollards even before Covid and adding these will be useful regardless of which aspects of the design plan move forward. Carter added that he is not sold on the idea of running electrical down the entire street and asked if there was consideration of asking merchants to participate by running a feed line out as an alternative solution. Grissim said this will be part of the electrical study. Carter asked how often the checkerboard pavement design needs to be repainted, and what are associated costs. Thompson said the sealcoat is a darker gray and holds up for a long time, but the diamond pattern is like a typical highway paint and needs to be freshened up every 2-3 years, however, this timeframe may extend longer since there is no vehicular traffic in that area. Carter said repairing existing concrete and pavers should be a priority, as well as reconfiguring parking to get as many of the lost 30 spaces back as possible.

Long said most stores at the intersection of Main and Center have rear accessibility, one that does not, but has the most drop offs, is Genitti's. Long said Genitti's currently relies on this area now for drop offs as they at times bring in 2,900 on a weekend. Thompson said for public safety, one priority has been clearing that intersection. The design map includes a space just west of the intersection that will be used for drop offs and deliveries. Thompson added that using this area as a drop off also avoids having people walking across the intersection since they will be dropped off into the pedestrian area.

Huprich said he parks in the lot behind Main Street daily and the exits are very dangerous to get out of due to traffic and shrubbery. Huprich asked what is in the report and how the design plan is affected if there are additional concerns in that area. Thompson said F & V hosted a public workshop and has an online survey for feedback; GMA will be reviewing and relying on the study results to move forward with future design on the project. Price asked if the bollards are ice prepared and agrees that this would be an immediate improvement. Grissim said the bollards have heat control and a battery backup. Riley asked what the difference in pricing is between deployable and removable bollards. Grissim said it would be about half the cost if the design included only removeable bollards.

Krenz said he fully supports bollards and would also like the HDC to consider finding ways to incorporate historic nods to when Northville didn't have cars in the early 1900's. Krenz added that while Downtown Northville is typically quiet in winter months, he would like to find an activation strategy for next winter. Krenz considers the Council to have a fiduciary responsibility to the city and said that Council will make smart decisions when moving forward with this project.

Morowski-Browne is pleased with the focus on pedestrian safety and bollards have been a need in the community for years due to pedestrian and traffic safety concerns. Electrical plans are critical as well as the boardwalk. Morowski-Browne said she is not in favor of the boardwalk design and the team needs to go to a more modular business driven partnership. Businesses would be able to pay for space if they opt in and can invest in electrical and platforms if they choose to. Morowski-Browne added that there was a lot of federal money

available with a focus on revitalizing Main Streets and the team should research how much is left.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Derek Blair, 123 E. Main St: Blair inquired how exhaustive the case study research was when looking at Vermont and Colorado, and is there a way to look at the Township, SEMCOG and others to help with funding the project.

Brian Sherle, 120 E. Main St: Businesses do not expect City Council to pay for everything. If businesses are investing in the decking and structures, how does this become a cohesive design. Sherle said maybe there is an opportunity for the City to install the structures, because business come and go. The City would be able to manage and rent out the structures.

Will Hundley, 141 E. Main St: The ADA ramps and capability would have a different look if businesses have the choice to opt in or out of the design. Hundley likes the idea of having a cohesive design and having the structures be part of the rental program as part of the outdoor seating permits. The longevity of use of structures needs to also be considered if the investment is made up front.

William Demray, 371 E. Main St: Demray is hoping to have clarification on what removeable and deployable bollards are and where they will be located. The heaters will be a significant part of electrical construction costs that are not included in the details. Demray asked if there will be City accessible restrooms, and will the City invest in porta john type stalls that flush top to bottom.

Nancy Chirri, 661 W. Main St: With regard to reconfiguring the lot behind Main Street, look at moving entrances between the curve on Hutton and people turning off of Main to Hutton. It is difficult to exit the lot. It is also difficult for people driving on Hutton because drivers cannot see people turning out of the lot. This is the same for the entrance on Dunlap. Chirri finds people coming up Hutton from Cabbagetown, cutting through to avoid Hutton. Chirri hopes the team will consider removing parking near entrances and move another of the entrances.

Turnbull closed audience comments. The meeting tonight was for informational purposes and there will be no action tonight on this discussion.

Motion by Morowski-Browne, seconded by Carter to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Howlin, Marketing & Administrative Assistant
Northville DDA