



MINUTES

**Downtown Master Plan Advisory Committee
Wednesday, October 14, 2015, 6:30 p.m.
Carbondale Civic Center
200 South Illinois Avenue**

Mr. Langowski called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Bleyer, Boeckman, Clow, Cole, Colombo, Gregory, Langowski, Ramseyer, Dr. Reddy, Schachel, Sheffer, Sigler, Terry

Members Absent: Bukowski, Carter, Gorton, Miller

Staff Present: Taylor, Wallace

Approximately 32 persons in attendance.

1) Bring to order:

J. Langowski made his opening remarks. He stated he believes all the data has been collected and now the opportunities can be explored.

2) Approval of minutes:

J. Langowski asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 29th, 2015, meeting.

B. Bleyer made the motion and **Dr. Reddy** seconded the motion and all were in favor.

3) Progress report on America's Best Communities:

J. Langowski made introductory remarks and discussed the America's Best Community Project. **J. Langowski** introduced **M. Cole** to discuss the project.

M. Cole stated we are selected as one of the 50 quarter finalists to receive \$65,000 dollars for a planning grant. They are using the Gigabit city designation as an item to build a plan on. She discussed the grant award process and the amounts for the rewards.

J. Langowski thanked **M. Cole** for her information.

4) Consultant (Housel Lavigne and Associates) Update:

J. Langowski introduced the consulting team, Devin Lavigne and Paul Finn with Housel Lavigne Associates, LLC.

D. Lavigne said the group is in the home stretch. He stated that we are now focusing on solutions instead of problems. He discussed all the outreach they have completed and discussed seeking out solutions from the community about the problems that have been identified. They will begin creating the guiding vision after the meeting they had last night. The draft document being presented tonight serves as a current snapshot of the community.

D. Lavigne discussed all the items on the web site for the project. He discussed the SMAP program and the Visual Preference Survey. He also discussed the participation they have received in all the surveys they have produced. He mentioned they found that streetscape improvement is very important. Open space has become very important along with a community gathering space. He discussed signage showing events downtown to draw students into downtown. He discussed areas for development opportunities.

D. Lavigne stated the SIH-SIU connection will be part of the entire plan not just its own section. The downtown really consists of four areas. The northern end is auto centric. The western downtown area has historic character and lots of opportunities to build the urban fabric. The eastern town square area serves as the example for development, and the southern downtown is the entertainment and student center of downtown.

D. Lavigne stated the coordination of developers, land owners, and the City, is a critical issue that needs to be improved. The arts and entertainment section needs to be emphasized. New venues for entertainment and city events year round to attract visitors and residents to downtown are needed.

D. Lavigne stated that IDOT is leaning towards not turning over Southern Illinois Avenue. The multimodal transportation center would be a great asset to downtown. The parking is an issue but it is compounded by the desire to redevelop the parking lots into buildings.

D. Lavigne stated they will be establishing the priority areas that should be the pedestrian cores of the downtown. The accessibility issues and the sidewalks need to be better maintained and how do we pay for it. Bicycle infrastructure needs to be improved.

D. Lavigne asked how we bring our streetscapes into pedestrian scale. Code enforcement was discussed as a reason for the decline in building maintenance. What cooperative projects can the school, hospital, and the City work on to better downtown? He will address those in the plan.

D. Lavigne stated all these items will be addressed in a document to be presented at the November 18th meeting. They plan on having a draft framework for the final plan to staff by the end of 2015. They will have it to the committee in January of 2016 and have an

open house then as well. They will move into implementation plans in February. They will also have a branding meeting in late February and hopefully have a final plan to the committee in March of 2016.

5) Comments from the members of the Downtown Advisory Committee:

J. Langowski began the committee comments portion of the meeting by asking **J. Clow** for his comments.

J. Clow asked if the comment cards from SIU come back to the group.

D. Lavigne responded that they had. The majority of the cards received had been from SIU students.

N. Columbo thanked the consultant for their work.

B. Bleyer thanked them for breaking the downtown into four areas. He asked if they were focusing on what a student was looking for or what the downtown could benefit from the student.

D. Lavigne stated the students wanted more places to eat downtown. The students are a major driver for the southern end of downtown up to the town square area of downtown.

G. Scheffer stated for the downtown area to be successful the business community needs to invest in the downtown. It is going to take more money than the government can put into downtown to make it work.

D. Lavigne stated the final piece of the plan will address those issues. He stated investors need an incentive to invest and the plan should help provide guidance for investors and help them see ways to have development make sense.

D. Boeckman stated the hospital is excited with the work the consultant has performed so far. He asked how the consultant proposes dealing with the infrastructure.

D. Lavigne stated they are working with two other firms to develop this plan. The area was built prior to storm water control. Underground detention is probably the best solution but it increases the cost of development.

E. Ramseyer stated she appreciated how comprehensive the report is and it gives her confidence that they can deliver the goods and have the plan speak to the community.

P. Finn stated the City of Champagne built the bone creek corridor and it helped introduce many students to the downtown.

M. Cole had no comments.

D. Terry asked how the 22 redevelopment sites were defined.

D. Lavigne stated it is the vacant areas with potential to improve or thrive. They have a catalyst to grow and thrive.

D. Terry asked that the consultant could place the properties that should be sold to develop.

D. Lavigne stated City property is the easiest way to provide incentive to developers.

K. Gregory thought it was interesting that people thought downtown should be expanded.

Dr. Reddy stated investors invest to get a return. SIU alumni should be invited to downtown to try and get them to invest in the city. The high speed internet can be used for telemedicine. Identify things in downtown that are there and available for use. We should help develop and improve things that already exist. We need to establish a quiet zone in downtown. We need to use the area behind the police station for a sports stadium or outdoor recreation place.

K. Schachel thanked the consultant for their work.

J. Sigler stated demographics are extremely important to this process. What is the feasibility for a town like us to complete these projects?

D. Lavigne stated they are going to research that a little more. He noted the population count includes the students and that helps attract retailers. The downside is it draws down the median income. It helps with grant funding but hurts with certain retailers. There needs to be two different pitches developed that takes the students out of the equation and one that uses them. No part of the plan, so far, has been seen as unattainable. He will help to calibrate the plan to the needs and wants of the community. He stated the only portion of the plan maybe in jeopardy is the proposed Multi Modal facility because of the need for state funding.

J. Langowski stated this is a good and solid report that contained very good detail. He stated the opportunities chart needs some revision. He appreciated the four area breakdown of downtown. It helped to organize the results. He reviewed the need for repair of the sidewalks to allow for all the accessible needs of our community.

J. Langowski reviewed upcoming events for the committee.

6) Comments from the public:

J. Langowski opened the floor for public comment.

There was one comment.

D. Lavigne stated the outreach portion of the website is open throughout the process. He said it's never too late for a good idea.

7) Announcement of next meeting, date, time, and location:

J. Langowski announced the next meeting for 6:00 p.m. on November 18, 2015. He then asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

8) Adjournment

E. Ramseyer motioned to adjourn the meeting.

G. Scheffer seconded the motion and all were in favor.

J. Langowski closed the meeting at 7:36 p.m.