Report on DAC Meeting #3 Focus on Business Development

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Jason Sigler
George Sheffer

September 28, 2014

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Summary of Meeting

The Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC), commissioned by the Carbondale City Council, met for the third time on September 17, 2014, at 6:30pm at the Dunn-Richmond Center on SIU's campus. The DAC meeting was Chaired by Jack Langowski, and facilitated by Tel Brown. During roll call, Kristin Gregory and Jeremy Clow were asked to introduce themselves, as they were not present at the last meeting. Fifteen out of nineteen members were present.

Dr. Kyle Harfst, the Executive Director of the Southern Illinois Research Park, spoke about the Research Park, what it does and who it currently serves. He also answered some questions from the committee.

Jack Langowski introduced Tel Brown, who outlined the agenda for the committee and public comments section.

Jason Sigler, DAC member, presented information about the current business mix in downtown. He highlighted the fact that the majority of our businesses are small and locally owned. He showed photos of underused areas in the downtown and stated that we need to make efforts to keep students in Carbondale, and to grow our business ecosystem with small, medium and large companies.

George Sheffer, DAC member, discussed incentives and challenges that exist in Carbondale, and in the downtown. He described the downtown area enterprise zone, TIF District, façade improvement program, and talked about some intangible benefits, like our people, SIU University, and the local banking system. He outlined several challenges, both tangible and intangible. All of Mr. Sheffer's comments can be found in the full minutes of the meeting (found on page 9 of this report).

Meghan Cole, DAC member, discussed how the attractiveness of the downtown related to business development. She discussed methods that large companies used for site selection, and how the look of a community and the look of a site was a major part of those kinds of decisions. She also discussed what the City of Carbondale and local businesses could do to improve the look of downtown,

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without incurring major costs. Ms. Cole pointed out that investing in the downtown will grow the number of businesses, increase the sales tax generated, and bring more dollars to Carbondale.

Jack Langowski turned the meeting over to Tel Brown, who laid ground rules for public commenting and opened the floor to the public. The committee heard many public comments, including much interest for beautifying the downtown, keeping the small town feel while being friendly to businesses with reasonable rents, and making code changes to allow for sidewalk cafes and food trucks. The full minutes of the meeting (which can be found in this report, on page 9) include all public comments in detail.

Tel Brown called for a recess after all public comments were heard, at 8:20 pm. At 8:25pm, Jack Langowski called the meeting back into session. All committee members present made comments, mostly reflecting that the public seemed to want "vibrancy" in the downtown. All committee comments can be found in the full meeting minutes (page 9 of this report).

Jack Langowski asked all of the committee members to vote on their top 5 comments or ideas, generated from both public and committee comments, collected by Tel Brown.

Adrian Miller, DAC committee member, made a motion to table the approval of minutes to make sure all edits had been made before requesting DAC approval. The motion was unanimously accepted. Jack Langowski announced the next meeting, set for October 1, 2014, at 6:30pm at the SIH Student Health Center Auditorium. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.

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Summary of Concepts Generated

Through public and committee member comments, facilitated by Tel Brown, the following twenty concepts were generated from the DAC meeting on Transportation issues:

1. Consider the region and related areas.
2. Move the Farmer's Market and other local activities to the downtown area.
3. Implement the use of penny cabs.
4. Businesses need to create "safe" areas.
5. Hire artists to enhance the environment.
6. Hire local residents/utilize local resources.
7. Create more social activities for the downtown area.
8. Create reasonable rents so that businesses can function.
9. Encourage businesses to clean their sidewalks and curbs to make the building fronts more attractive.
10. Implement better parking for businesses.
11. Create an environment to cut down on panhandlers by businesses.
12. Expand the codes to allow for food trucks and public gardens.
13. Utilize reusable energy.
14. Implement methods to handle crowd control.
15. Façade rehabilitation (beautification).
16. Deal with IDOT issues.
17. Create a vision.
18. Expand the codes to support outdoor cafes.
19. Free WIFI in the downtown area.
20. Code reinforcement/revision.

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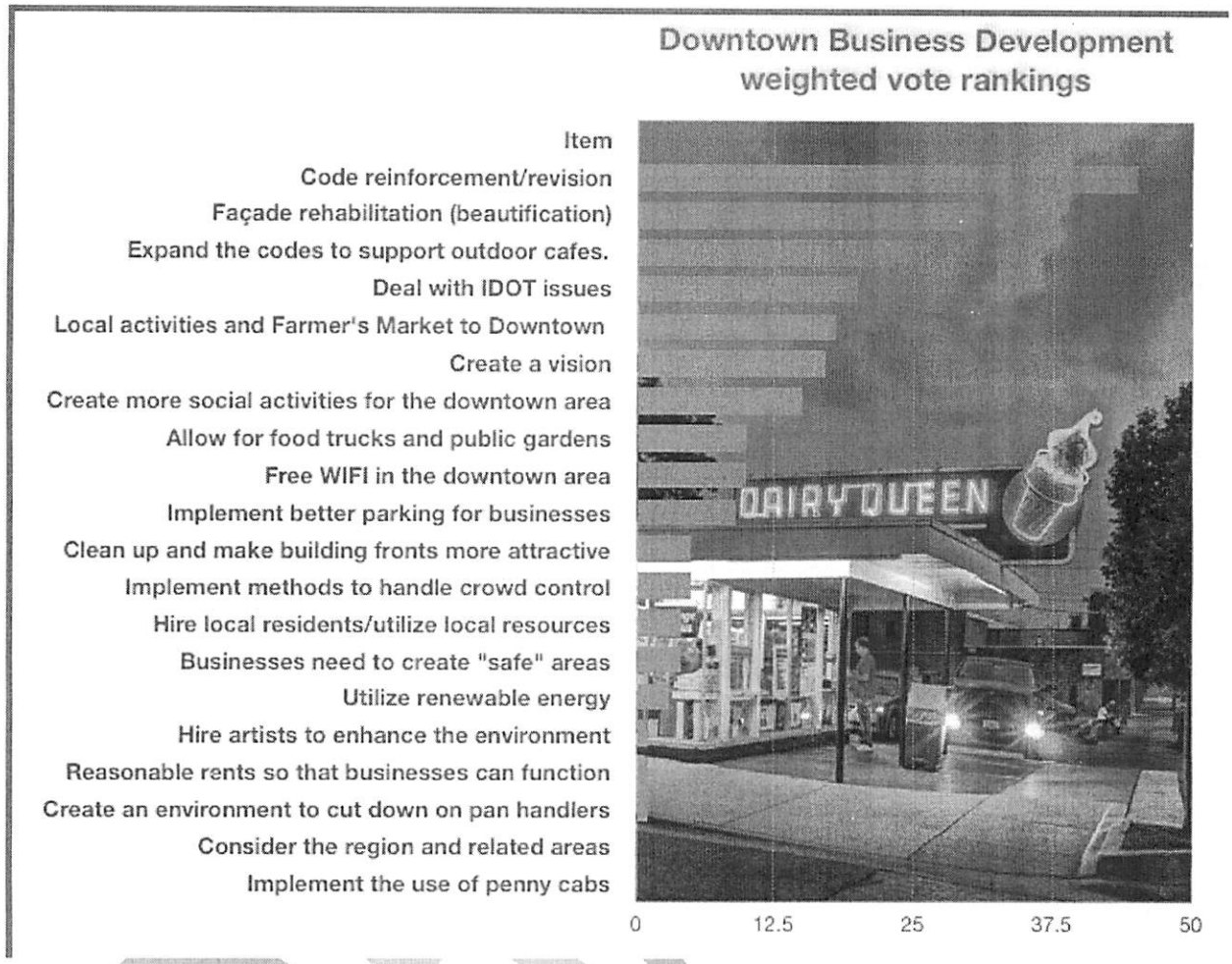
Concept Voting Results



The above graphic shows the top five concepts to be explored, as voted on by the DAC members at the meeting held September 17, 2014. For all results in detail, see the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet found here.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TALLY RESULTS

Ranking			Number of times selected 1	Weighted rank 1=5	Number of times selected 2	Weighted rank 2=4	Number of times selected 3	Weighted rank 3=3	Number of times selected 4	Weighted rank 4=2	Number of times selected 5	Weighted rank 5=1	Overall Rank
	Item #	Item											
	20	Code reinforcement/revision	4	20	5	20	1	3	1	2	0	0	45
	15	Façade rehabilitation (beautification)	4	20	0	0	2	6	2	4	1	1	31
	18	Expand the codes to support outdoor cafes.	1	5	2	8	2	6	1	2	5	5	26
	16	Deal with IDOT issues	2	10	0	0	0	0	5	10	0	0	20
	2	Move the Farmer's Market and other local activities to the downtown area.	1	5	2	8	1	3	1	2	0	0	18
	17	Create a vision	1	5	0	0	4	12	0	0	0	0	17
	7	Create more social activities for the downtown area	1	5	1	4	2	6	0	0	0	0	15
	12	Expand the codes to allow for food trucks and public gardens	1	5	0	0	1	3	1	2	0	0	10
	19	Free WIFI in the downtown area	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	2	4	4	10
	10	Implement better parking for businesses	0	0	1	4	1	3	1	2	0	0	9
	9	Encourage businesses to clean their sidewalks and curbs to make the building fronts more attractive	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	5
	14	Implement methods to handle crowd control	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	5
	6	Hire local residents/utilize local resources	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
	4	Businesses need to create "safe" areas	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	4
	13	Utilize reusable energy	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	3
	5	Hire artists to enhance the environment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	8	Create reasonable rents so that businesses can function	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	11	Create an environment to cut down on pandhandlers by businesses	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	1	Consider the region and related areas											
	3	Implement the use of penny cabs											

Future Direction

The voting results were not as clear-cut as they were at the meeting on Transportation, but we saw a heavy interest in the need for code revision (to allow for sidewalk cafes, etc), for beautification of the downtown to create a more attractive environment, and "to deal with IDOT issues", which refers to the concept of returning Illinois Avenue to bi-directional traffic.

There was a lot of public discussion on sustainability, food trucks, and food forests, but the committee clearly felt strongly that code revision, beautification, and gaining control over Illinois Avenue were sweeping changes that are needed.

The committee should recommend to City Council that these three concepts be looked into, and that investments be made in the beautification of downtown. Codes need to be adjusted or Illinois Avenue needs to become more controlled to allow for things like sidewalk cafes, outdoor seating, landscaping, benches and the like. How can we creatively use dollars to make these concepts happen? These are questions that need to be explored by City Council and staff, and by whichever consultant(s) the City decides to contract with as we further the Master Planning Process for downtown.

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MINUTES

Downtown Master Plan Advisory Committee
Wednesday, September 17, 2014, 6:30 p.m.
Dunn-Richmond Economic Development Center
150 E. Pleasant Hill Road

Mr. Langowski called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Members Present: Bleyer, Boeckman, Bukowski, Clow, Cole, Colombo, Gorton, Gregory, Langowski, Dr. Pink-Harper, Ramseyer, Schachel, Sheffer, Sigler

Members Absent: Carter, Dr. Reddy, Stevens, Terry

Staff Present: Price, Sergeev

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1) Bring to order:

J. Langowski made his opening remarks.

2) Roll Call and member/facilitator introductory remarks:

J. Langowski called roll and introduced **Jeremy Clow** and asked him to give his opening comments.

J. Clow stated he is an architecture student and business owner in Carbondale. He wishes to give the student and business owner perspective to the Committee.

J. Langowski continued to call roll and asked **Kristin Gregory** to give her opening comments.

K. Gregory stated she lived and grew up in Carbondale and wants to help the local government and community come together.

J. Langowski finished roll call and announced a quorum was present.

3) Introductory Remarks:

J. Langowski introduced the Executive Director of the Southern Illinois Research Park, **Dr. Kyle L. Harfst**.

Dr. Harfst spoke about the opportunities and capabilities offered by the Southern Illinois

Research Park. The park assists with business startup questions and plans as well as providing a place to start your business in the Small Business Incubator building.

Dr. Harfst spoke about the Small Business Development Center, which is also known as the Small Business Incubator, having helped over 500 clients per year over the last 30 years. The Center has helped most of those clients at no cost. The center primarily focuses on technological innovation and helps with finding funding for entrepreneurs to begin their business.

Dr. Harfst outlined the Small Business Development Center's place in the community by letting the committee know it is part of the University but not an academic unit. It is intended to provide resources and training to starting business owners. He also highlighted some of the technological resources that are available; a 3D printer and a large plotter are but two examples.

J. Langowski thanked **Dr. Harfst** for his time, building and information.

D. Gorton asked of **Dr. Harfst** who had access to the 3D printer

Dr. Harfst stated the clients of the center had access.

A. Miller asked if **Dr. Harfst** could speak to what the city could do differently to encourage the new entrepreneur to come and stay in Carbondale.

Dr. Harfst stated he was not prepared to answer that question specifically, however he stated the navigation of regulations tends to be the road block for most new business owners. The rules themselves are not typically the issue.

J. Langowski introduced **Tel Brown (Facilitator)** for this meeting.

Tel Brown (Facilitator) reviewed the rules for the evening and requested the audience follow them.

J. Langowski introduced **J. Sigler.**

J. Sigler spoke about the current mix of downtown businesses. He stated the city currently has 250 businesses in the downtown area. They specialize in retail, entertainment, dining, service oriented businesses such as lawyers and doctors, and government services.

J. Sigler asked the Committee to remember and think about how all downtown businesses are owned by local business owners and not chain or corporate stores.

J. Sigler wanted to ensure the previous meetings and the goals from those meetings are still kept in mind in this meeting. He reviewed the top five ideas from the last meeting.

J. Sigler felt the goals of the committee are missing and need to be defined so ideas can grow from that. Does the committee feel the city should grow as a cultural center, a

business center, or as a gathering area for the community, or all three?

J. Sigler stated he walked the strip the first Thursday students were back in town at about 7:30 p.m. and found the streets were empty and businesses appeared to be closed. The only location that had activity was the Dairy Queen. He noted the open spaces we do have, we do not use.

J. Sigler stated the community needs to tell the Committee what to do and keep in mind that the actions of today will impact the future. He asked what we are doing to keep students in the area. He felt the University and the City need to have a set of goals to keep students in town and keep businesses growing here. He believes in a Business Ecosystem that keeps a city running. A few large businesses, several medium size businesses and a lot of small businesses help to keep the community moving. He also asked how do we market downtown and its capabilities.

J. Langowski thanked **J. Sigler** for his presentation and asked for **G. Sheffer** to give his presentation.

G. Sheffer stated he is going to talk about incentives and restrictions.

G. Sheffer listed multiple incentives that are currently in place to help grow businesses. He described the Downtown area Enterprise Zone and stated how the Enterprise Zone works.

G. Sheffer described the TIF district and how that helps the business owner.

G. Sheffer described the Façade Loan Program and how that program can help.

G. Sheffer also provided the following list of additional incentives and benefits.

1) The ability to use the resources of the research park.
2) Carbondale is the largest town in Southern Illinois
3) The great people of Carbondale
4) The great University
5) The large amount of diversity in the population.
6) SIH hospital and the personnel that want to live downtown.
7) The local banks that help the local entrepreneur are better than corporate banks.
8) The great entertainment and the great businesses that already exist downtown.

G. Sheffer provided the following list of Restrictions, Disadvantages and Challenges.

1) Lack of a vision for downtown is preventing the revitalization.
2) Convenient parking is a requirement for business.
3) The water retention problem in the downtown needs to be solved.
4) Code restrictions need to be discussed.
5) The limit on the number of liquor licenses needs to be removed.
6) The restrictions on sidewalk cafes need to be lifted.
7) Parking meters are a problem and need to be removed. It should be two hour parking and free.
8) Engineering Assistance Committee is a problem. The changing of personnel

on the committee is the primary issue.
9) The City and City Council need to be business friendly.
10) Too much talk and no action. Too many committees and studies are required.
11) IDOT controls too many streets in Carbondale.
12) The area is not pedestrian friendly. The no standing ordinance needs to be removed.
13) The Sign ordinances are too strict.
14) Downtown needs a truly free Wi-Fi system.
15) Outside music is not allowed and this needs to change.
16) Building Design Standards should not exist.
17) Provide way finding signs that look attractive.
18) Cameras should be installed to provide safety downtown.
19) Improve the downtown appearance.
20) Improve business diversity downtown.
21) Do not stereotype the customer. We should welcome all.
22) Remove the undesirables from downtown.
23) Snowballing can be good or bad. If things go well they get better, if it goes bad it gets worse.
24) We must compromise to achieve goals.
25) Provide economically feasible ideas.
26) We need more Businesses and events downtown to draw more people downtown.
27) The community must make it so businesses will want to invest in downtown and it must address the needs of the downtown customer.

G. Sheffer wanted to note that business community comes in many different forms. It comes from the restaurants, arts, businesses, entertainment, offices and apartments.

J. Langowski thanked **G. Sheffer** for his presentation and introduced **M. Cole** and asked her to give her presentation.

M. Cole stated she was going to speak on Downtown Attractiveness.

M. Cole discussed methods that large corporations use to evaluate a town where they are looking at moving a new business or factory. She said they look at infrastructure, available talent in the area, land and the quality of life. The consultants hired by the firms do the site visits and suggest a town, however the CEO makes the final decision.

M. Cole discussed the purpose and methods of the Main Street program. It looks at the physical attributes of the community, economics, promotion and organization.

M. Cole also discussed what the business owner could do to help the city look better without any major additional costs occurred to the business owner. Things like, clean the outside of your business, pick up trash, paint and clean the building. The look of the town can speak to how the hidden infrastructure is maintained. The look of the town will affect business. If you cannot get the customer to the front door, they will not spend money in your business. Investing in the downtown will bring better businesses.

4) **Comments from the public**

J. Langowski asked for public comment at this time.

Jesus Poncedeleón (audience member) stated that in the past we had forty manufacturing facilities in southern Illinois, now we only have a few. We need to help bring the businesses back to southern Illinois. In the mid 80's Toyota and Boeing were told "no" by the City because a new factory would have driven the wages too high for the area. He encouraged the Committee to think beyond Carbondale and think how their actions might affect the community at large.

Simone Beck (audience member) We need to build on the past meetings and current ideas to help the community. The farmers market moving to downtown would be great. She said projects like this would involve a small amount of investment for a large reward.

Danielle Zelisko (audience member) stated she likes our small town and the well maintained infrastructure. She requested the committee encourage food trucks, cabs to take those that have chosen to drink home safe, and provide over 21 and under 21 spaces in our local bars. She liked the discussion of the positives of downtown. She also had an issue with how we define "undesirables." She felt it should be people that make you feel unsafe or make the space feel unsafe. She stated the city should be "pretty in our soul" i.e. pretty based on our values, based on our inspirations, not our vision.

Nick Smallago (audience member) He disagreed with the assumption that we must compete with all towns worldwide for the "blessings a corporation would bestow on us." He felt we should strive to achieve "food sovereignty." He also felt the businesses in Carbondale are only about making money and not about creating vibrancy. If we wish to have spaces or things to create vibrancy we should provide those. He also suggested a food forest for downtown.

Ellis Reed (audience member) stated 200 million dollars of construction is going on in downtown right now and none of it is going to local construction companies. He also stated when we lost the union hall we lost a lot of good union jobs. He stated the ordinance we have on record to keep people from gathering together was put in place to prevent another Halloween-style riot from happening. He stated we could bring the Halloween party back as a festival that is family friendly.

Sandy Litecky (audience member) stated the rental rates for commercial spaces need to be reasonable. The streets and sidewalks need to be kept clean and in good repair. The customers need to be year round and not just during the school year. Parking needs to be provided close to businesses with strict enforcement of parking times. Parking generates $80,000 to $90,000 per year in sales. Employee parking must be provided but far off. The "street people" need to be addressed.

Susan Fehrenbacker (audience member) stated as a business owner she has had a great experience with the City of Carbondale and has no idea what everyone is talking about

with the City not being business friendly. She feels the business owner should be proud of their location and keep it clean.

Cody Roach (audience member) stated he stayed in Carbondale because of its small town feel. He also supports the idea of pretty to the soul for downtown. He also feels we should have a festival and cultural event space.

Joshua Kidd (audience member) stated the Food Trucks could be allowed by expanding the ice cream trucks and hot dog carts section of the ordinances. He suggested extending operating hours to 3 am. He felt it is an opportunity for underemployed service professionals and hospitality and culinary arts students to start a low cost exciting business.

Sabrina Hardinberg (audience member) stated she was concerned about how the community could convert to renewable energy. She asked if we could give incentives to businesses that use renewable energy systems. She asked if we could use empty factories to create and build renewable energy resources. She liked the idea of sidewalk cafes.

Winslow (audience member) stated he was co-owner of El Greco. He asked the Committee to address both large and small crowd control methods downtown.

Karriem Shariat (audience member) feels that façade rehab and beautification engenders community pride.

Jesus Poncedeleón (audience member) wanted to inform the Committee that several members of the community just started the entrepreneur coalition. They want to try and make an area that is similar to Silicon Valley that removes the shackles and allows for free thought and a free flow of ideas.

Larry Weatherford (audience member) stated he felt that progress was being made. He felt if IDOT retained control of S. Illinois Avenue, it would really kill most of the redevelopment ideas for downtown.

6) Brief Recess

Tel Brown (Facilitator) began a recess at 8:20 pm.

7) Comments from the committee members

The meeting was called back into session at 8:25 pm by **J. Langowski.**

G. Sheffer stated the Committee needs to decide on a vision for downtown. Convenient parking must be provided. Sidewalk cafes should be allowed and an unlimited number of liquor licenses should be issued. The downtown should be bike and pedestrian friendly. Free downtown Wi-Fi should be provided. Outside music should be allowed. Great directional signage should be a priority. Cameras should be installed to promote security in our downtown. Any project proposed should be economically feasible.

K. Schachel felt the idea of focusing on food in the downtown was a great one. Food forests and turning the area into a foodie mecca is a fantastic idea.

M. Cole felt that we should make the downtown attractive and vibrant.

M. Bukowski stated attractive towns help development with both façade improvement and incorporating art into the downtown.

K. Gregory felt the small business needs to connect with the students and University. She thinks the idea of growing and selling things downtown would help to promote downtown. She likes the idea of promoting the farm to table concept and she felt that we should find a way to make money from this.

E. Ramseyer stated the Committee needed to develop a vision to serve the community and support the diversity of the community. She would like to expand what her block did all around the downtown. She thinks we should have an area that would serve to attract people outside and that would cater to families. The community should have a space dedicated to community gatherings. She suggested changing the code to allow for outdoor beer and wine. She felt the silliness should be written out of the code.

J. Langowski stated he has heard the community wants vibrancy and fun in the downtown. He also felt the codes needed to be made more business friendly. We need to attract businesses not turn them away.

A. Miller asked who would pay for the improvements and said it is the downtown business owners. He said we should look at how the interactions occur between members of the community and the downtown environment and see how other communities handle them. He also stated that customer service is a big part of government. He stated the City helps sell the town to investors and also provide for fair code enforcement.

D. Gorton reminded the Committee that they were appointed by Mayor and confirmed by the City Council and they were tasked with telling the city what they can do to improve the downtown. He asked what we want our downtown to be. He discussed the removal of the limit on the number of the liquor licenses and the potential consequences of that. He also mentioned the railroad tracks are a major corridor for the fiber optic utilities.

Dr. Pink-Harper likes the idea of focusing on the beauty of downtown and promoting sustainability.

D. Boeckman stated grants are available from IDOT to improve sidewalks and streets. Façade improvements need to happen and the infrastructure needs to improve. The City should focus on façade improvements and wait on the train station.

B. Bleyer stated the more people attracted to downtown the more viable downtown is. Beautification is critical to improving the downtown. He feels the power lines need to be buried as well.

J. Clow stated he believes festivals are a great idea. The incoming tourists need to be captured and directed into the downtown area. The Small Business Incubator needs to have a downtown presence. When looking for ideas remember that Carbondale is a small community. Large towns were suggested for pulling ideas from. The city should develop a FAQ for new business owners containing information on who to contact for what resources. Remember to not ignore our outlying communities as a lot of our customers come from there.

J. Sigler noted there is a lot of creative energy in Carbondale. He noted a manufacture of bikes would go well here as we have a biking community, three bike retailers and several bike trails. Bringing the farmers market downtown could cause downtown businesses to open earlier and produce more economic trade. We have lots of open space downtown and it should be used for things like traveling museums, traveling gardens, or moving artwork. All day festivals would be a great addition to downtown. We should make downtown pet friendly. He suggested the city develop an entrepreneur center to bring businesses from the incubator to that location to help build the businesses faster.

J. Langowski asked for the committee to pick its top 5 comments or ideas.

9) Approval of Minutes

A Miller made a motion to postpone minute approval as J. Langowski wished to ensure all edits have been made.

D. Gorton seconded the motion and a unanimous yes vote was had.

11) Announcement of next meeting

J. Langowski announced the next meeting October 1, 2014, 6:30 pm at the Student Health Center Auditorium.

12) Adjournment

A. Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting

J. Sigler seconded all were in favor.

J. Langowski closed the meeting at 9:05 p.m.