



Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
July 28, 2021 | 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Hybrid – Conference Room A and Zoom

Present: Dave Drown, Jon Dusek, Darryl High, Dawn Jaffray, Linda Mattes, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

Absent: Joe Ahmann, Emily Ellingson, James Klein, David Sorg

Guests: Casey Drew – City of Cedar Rapids,

Staff: Jessica Komisar, Maddix Stove, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta, Caleb Woods

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

High welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Approval of May Minutes

Dusek moved approval of the May minutes with Timko seconding. The May minutes were unanimously approved.

Confluence Gateway Visioning

High said the mowing/clean-up of the 8th Ave lot at I-380 has been complete and after talking with the City, the SSMID's obligation in all identified gateway improvements will be plantings and landscaping and the City's obligation will be any structural additions/improvements. Wasta asked where ongoing maintenance lands, High said we will have to work with the City on determining that. Thoeming said mowing would need to be done every 2-3 weeks at around \$5k each time. High said the mowing is a part of the Iowa DOT responsibility and the DOT will be resubmitting a proposal for bids and will also be changing the gray chain link fencing to black chain link. Thoeming said there is \$200k in the budget for gateways and so far have spent \$31k.

Commissioners were provided a revised proposal from Confluence for the Downtown gateways. Terfler moved to approve the proposal with Dusek seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

front door, interest in it and willing to put money into it but technically it doesn't start until A Ave.

Alleyway Plan for 2021

Timko and the alleyway committee met with Confluence right before COVID and did an analysis of Downtown alleys and the committee is beginning to revisit this initiative. Timko, Thoeming and others on the committee walked around Downtown to identify alleys in need of maintenance and to discuss potentials. Timko said the alleys that stuck out to them as priority include:

1. The alley between Alliant Energy and UFG (from 2nd to 3rd Ave, between 1st and 2nd Street)
2. UFG alley (from 1st to 2nd Ave between 1st and 2nd Street)
3. Between U.S. Bank and High Property (along the backside of the U.S. Bank flat lot on 1st Ave)
4. Between Theatre Cedar Rapids and U.S. Bank/Bricks.

Terfler asked if the vision is to make these a destination like other cities have done. High said as the group walked each alley, they had to keep in mind what was on the other side of the walls and day to day problems to solve such as trash collection. Thoeming said there is \$100k in the budget for alleyways. Mattes said we should still do something with the alleys even if it's just painting/abstract murals and lighting. Timko said if we can make these upgrades to the identified alleys above, it would make a big impact and might be the impetus to drive the other business/property owners that share alleys to get on board.

High and Timko said the next steps would be to conceptualize what we want the alleys to look like and the cost and looking for SSMID interest for the committee to pursue this project. Commissioners gave permission for the committee to move forward.

Pedestrian Signage

At the May SSMID meeting, Thoeming and Matt Meyers with the City of Cedar Rapids presented preliminary concepts of Downtown branded pedestrian signage. Thoeming said City Council has allocated \$500k to finish the signage and wayfinding plan which was originally put together in 2016 and the City will be funding 100% of the vehicular signage and they have asked the SSMID to consider financing pedestrian signage/kiosks. Thoeming said we have \$150k in the budget for wayfinding and signage and the City will have more information regarding costs in the fall.

Project Brainstorm

With the potential funds that the City (\$25M) and County (\$44M) will be receiving, High asked how the SSMID wants to position itself to have some projects tee'd up for if those funds become available. Drew isn't sure how the City will handle distributing funds or when the County will receive their funds. Thoeming said Barbra Solberg has made it clear to staff that the Governor will be considering placemaking projects and initiatives a priority. Commissioners discussed projects such as:

- Recreational activities – pickleball, indoor basketball/soccer, etc. – as ways to generate traffic
- All-district trolley – preliminary number from Horizons \$600k a year to run a bus Thursday-Sunday with 4 trolleys – if gains traction could look at expanding
- Providing assistance to the Downtown parking system after large hit during COVID and the Derecho and not qualifying for aid
- Take more advantage of the river
- Wasta suggested all three SSMIDs unify as one voice

Thoeming will also create a list of projects from the Downtown Vision Plan.

Other Business

Thoeming reviewed a brochure that highlighted accomplishments from 2021 including the façade improvement program, murals, new brand rollout and 4th street trail enhancements. Thoeming shared an upcoming event titled "It's Go Time" taking place on September 15 at Eastbank featuring Daniel Susskind, Dusek and Lura McBride to discuss the future of commercial real estate and the workplace in the wake of a pandemic and what we can do to seize opportunities.

Thoeming said the Community Development Innovation Council will be working on Downtown vacant storefront window coverings to enhance beautification and provide property information at a fingertip using QR codes.

Commissioners provide around-the-table updates on their business.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:23 p.m.