



Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes

September 23, 2020 | 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Zoom

The Downtown SSMID Commission met virtually in regular session. Those present are listed below. The meeting was held as an electronic regular Commission meeting because a meeting in person was impossible or impractical due to concerns for the health and safety of Commissioners, staff and the public presented by COVID-19.

Present: Joe Ahmann, Jon Dusek, Emily Ellingson, Darryl High, Dawn Jaffray, Linda Mattes, David Sorg, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

Absent: Dave Drown, James Klein, Matt Miller, Andrew Morf

Guests: Bryan Potts – App Developer, Ryan Shenefelt, Jen Neumann, Becca Skalsky – de Novo

Staff: Jessica Komisar, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

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

Approval of July Minutes

High said the percentage for rebate through the app has been changed from the original 33% listed in the minutes to 35%. Mattes moved approval of the July minutes with Timko seconding. The July minutes were unanimously approved.

Downtown Branding Project Update

Shenefelt, Neumann and Skalsky provided an update via PowerPoint to Commissioners on the Downtown branding project. Highlights include:

- Owning the name “Downtown”
- Want to color within the SSMID boundary lines so people know when you are in and out of Downtown
- Implement and market “micro districts” such as Greene Square, Kingston Village and create the Downtown CR Experience campaign including attractions such as the Amphitheater, Farmers Market, etc.
- New Downtown logo captures energy of Downtown (orange = vibrant, blue = reliability and business) and the flow between the C and R being a nod to the river or trail.
- de Novo team presented variety of logo arrangements including what it would look like on banners, a mural and apparel. They have created various versions of the logo to avoid being rigid and to be flexible if we are publishing on social media, website or trade publication
- Leave room at the bottom of the logo for Downtown CR Experience campaign names or micro districts
- Survey feedback regarding favorite activities to do Downtown and how often they visit Downtown
 - 587 responses in a month
 - 53% visited weekly, 80% monthly
 - Major activities include bars and restaurants, entertainment (not museums or theaters), arts and culture, work, bikes and trails
 - Survey also asked to provide 3 words to describe Downtown, then de Novo created a word cloud to represent those responses
 - Survey included picture of SSMID boundary map

- Creating placemaking frames to redefine and reinforce the idea of the Downtown CR Experiences. Frames would go in various places and meant for people to take a photo behind them or picture of the frame with just the experience through it as a lens. Two versions of the frame – stationery and swivel.
- Rollout kit and strategy for internal audiences including stickers and education about the brand and some sort of “Return of Downtown” launch for external audiences. Could also include wall art mural, sidewalk trail signage or skywalk vinals.
- de Novo created mock-ups of existing wayfinding signage plan from City with new brand and logo
- Next steps include Commission feedback and approval, creation of brand standards document and messaging points, marketing plan and recommendations, video storyboard

Commissioner feedback:

- Timko asked how we will draw the “line” at 8th Ave to define Downtown vs. Czech Village NewBo. Neumann said that is where the campaign comes in and that is about defining Downtown CR and educate the public. We can define the district visually and with a feeling or vibe.
- Timko and Mattes said they think the R needs to be more defined in the logo
- Terfler said he likes the color scheme and sees it as fresh and more modern
- High said he likes the logo and brand and the versatility that it brings
- Mattes commented on putting more murals instead of the frames. Neumann said a mural could be more than just paint, it could also be vinyl but she saw the frames as being beneficial for a more personalized interaction and for events and wouldn’t think of it as frames vs murals but could do both.
- Sorg applauded de Novo for their efforts and for their creative solution. He did suggest if we don’t have to turn the logo vertical, such as on the banners, he wouldn’t as it loses some definition to the R in the logo. He also made notes on design of bigger frame and swivel frames and how it changes the logo. Neumann said over the years making logos more flexible has gained a lot of ground in marketing and said that we don’t own the branding, but the visitors and community members own the brand and we should let them do creative things with it instead of locking it in a box. Neumann added that if the Commission wants to pursue the frames, there would be a lot of design changes and finessing before we get to the final version for not only design but safety.
- Timko said he would like to see these newly branded banners on every light pole Downtown and asked if we are obligated to put up other banners. Thoeming said there are a lot of light pole locations and the Economic Alliance facilitates the banner program for non-profits. It hasn’t had the interest that it used to in the past so we shouldn’t have any problem getting our branded banners on most of the poles. Some non-profits contract for a section of poles or for just a quarter.

Thoeming said he would like to give Commissioners some time to think about what was presented and we can circle back for approval. A summary of the presentation and discussion will be sent to the Commission.

Downtown CR Dollars App Update

Thoeming reminded Commissioners that the app will be a \$425k stimulus program for Downtown bars, restaurants, retail and service providers. The goal was to have it launched early September but there have been some technical snags that have delayed the progress. Thoeming said we are at the finish line and want to include Commissioners on a soft launch when it is ready as he anticipates a lot of users and wants to ensure hiccups or issues are being addressed early on. Thoeming said there is the question of, “when does it end” and in several talks with Commissioners, it would be ideal if we had the problem of running out of funds in a month – meaning that money is going into these businesses quick. Thoeming said part of the rollout includes promo videos from KCRG koozies, decals, coasters and the Downtown masks.

Potts said one of the issues they have ran into is the testing on the Android version which isn’t as robust as Apple and since we are dealing with back accounts and financials, we want to make sure it’s up to standards. Potts believes we are getting closer to inviting users to test the Android app and then a test of the Apple app. Potts and Thoeming said they are aiming for a release date in the app store of October 15th. Potts said after seeing the new logo and branding, that could be something we update once that has been finalized.

Timko asked what the Iowa City program is providing. Thoeming said the Iowa City program included sending in physical receipts totaling \$100 and in return receiving a \$25 gift card and for \$500 spent you would receive a \$150 gift card. The article in the Gazette this week said it was a \$500k stimulus.

Mattes suggested a January 31 timeline of the program and extend if necessary. Komisar asked if that deadline is for when they need to earn the rebate or when they need to spend their rebate by. Timko said that date would be when they need to earn it by. Potts said it could be a liability concern of when to spend their rebate dollars for example if Apple received a notification that a consumer had credits that they couldn't spend, the app could be shut-down so we would need to give consistent notices on when they need to spend those dollars by. Timko said it could be something similar to the Hy-Vee Fuel Saver where they can accumulate rebate money and if they don't use them in a certain number of months they can expire and said we need to encourage a quick turnaround of spending. Potts said the notification setting within the app itself would be a good way to communicate that message. Mattes said we could open the app and earning timeline for 90 days and give consumers additional 90 days to spend. Potts said if we make these changes internally on the app now it could further postpone the start date so he suggested getting through the launch with what we currently have and then we can change later.

Thoeming will follow-up with Commissioners regarding a soft launch for Android users. Potts said he wants to stagger the soft launches a little to give us time to make any adjustments.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.