



Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes

November 19, 2025 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust

Present: Graig Cone, Jon Dusek, Loren Hartelt, Ted Kepros, James Klein, Randy Rings, Jake Ryan, Robin Sempf, Fred Timko, Danette Tobin

Absent: Landon Burg, Joe Ahmann, Jared Hanlin, Sara Madsen

Guests: Lt. Robinson; Cedar Rapids Police Department, Brittanie Clarke; CRB&T

City: Jennifer Pratt and Noah Zeker; City Liaisons

Staff: Juliet Abdel, Jennifar Basett, Peggy Degnan, Caleb Knutson, Audrey Wheeler, Phil Wasta

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

Klein called the meeting to order at 3:03pm.

Klein was presented a gift of appreciation for his leadership, as this is his last meeting as Chair of the Downtown SSMID. Klein will become Chair of the Board of Director's for the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance starting January 1, 2026. Brittney Clarke of CRBT will be taking his seat on the Downtown Commission.

Consent Agenda/Approval of October Minutes

Hartelt moved to approve the October 1st minutes with Timko seconding. The October minutes were unanimously approved.

Cedar Rapids Police Update

Lt. Robinson gave an interesting presentation on how the City of Cedar Rapids maintains a network of stationary and mobile camera systems. Robinson shared the cameras have great value for criminal investigations and safety. He explained the system includes Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technology to enhance real-time crime detection and response. This technology has the capability to generate "hot lists" of vehicles flagged as being connected to various crimes. The City has seven stationary ALPR's at major throughfares.

Flock Safety has built expansive networks through public-private partnerships, including retail and commercial sectors. Locally, Robinson mentioned Lowe's uses this vendor to identify when a vehicle enters their property that has stolen from them in the past. The police hope to have this same type of partnership with the casino as they do with Lowe's. A license plate is not required to search for a suspect vehicle, as other vehicle descriptors

such as color, type and make of vehicle can be used to identify and locate vehicles. Cedar Rapids has 200 cameras at intersections and other busy sites.

Downtown has five PTZ cameras attached under the skyways. Also known as Pan Tilt Zoom, they provide 360-degree view. Lt. Robinson reported shootings and violent crimes are significantly lower than in the past.

Draft Budget

Attention was drawn to several line items for discussion: renewal process, downtown maintenance team, VenuWorks sponsorship, music festival and marathon. Race-for-the-Space to be held every other year. Knutson to determine line item for Murals. There are 3 murals planned for 2026 per Bassett.

Dusek asked if the new casino will become part of the downtown SSMID? Rings said the downtown district can be amended to include Local Pour Street Foods (LPSF) and the casino. LPSF has expressed desire to be in SSMID.

Knutson suggested to have task force or committee discuss the expansion of the SSMID and have talking points ready for when it's time to bring in Casino.

Update Vision Plan Initiatives

- Third St SE – is not on CIP plan for several years and will take 3 construction seasons to complete. The SSMID will address public art, placemaking and wayfinding during 2026.
- CR Marathon - already has over 900 registrants. Bassett will be co-chairing this event. She said 1000 volunteers will be needed.
- Music Festival—SSMID will be partnering with Gazette and McGrath to make sure downtown is vibrant. Plans are to have this be an annual event.
- Freedom Festival – 2026 will be their 250th year. The SSMID typically is a sponsor. Bassett will arrange for them to pitch/speak to the SSMID at an upcoming meeting.
- Mays Island - received a positive structural report so public art can be constructed there.

Holiday Trolley

The City is doing trolley study, so they've instructed Downtown not to have the holiday trolley until the study is done. After much discussion about last year's success, wanting to keep momentum by not skipping a year, being able to reuse last year's signage, and Horizon's to use a larger vehicle, etc., it was decided to move ahead with having the trolley run as it did last year during the Holidays. Organizations can contact Horizon's directly if they want to schedule the shuttle. The Commission directed staff to run a Five Seasons Lights Shuttle throughout the month of December.

Retail Study

Knutson shared a retail consultant had been in Cedar Rapids and reported his findings during a meeting today.

Dusek shared that Michael Berne from NYC, has served on the Board of the International Downtown Association. Burns spent five days getting a feel for Cedar Rapids. He went to Lindale and Westdale as well. When asked what grade he would give Cedar Rapids, Berne responded a grade of C.

Staff Updates

PlacerAI Data has been incorporated into the Downtown website, Knutson said they will provide an update in real time. He shared 70% of downtown traffic comes from outside the community.

Marketing

On November 21st, Bassett will be on *Everyday Iowa* on KCRG promoting downtown events for the holidays, so she will also now promote the trolley.

MOU/Beautification

Bassett reported the repairs on the 4th Street Trail have been done eliminating any trip hazards. She also mentioned Geneva Towers has plans for a mural and façade improvement. Murals & More commissions the artist and we contribute a maximum of \$10K and help maintain it. Bassett shared Interns from City View High School have been helping the downtown maintenance crew and it's been a good experience for both parties.

Other

Timko and Dusek shared some information from the Parking Board. They said more money is made on transient parking than on monthly parking. Occupancy rate on both sides of the river is at 40%.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:20pm.

/pd