



**DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE COMMITTEE**

**MEETING AGENDA**

**CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**109 EAST OLIVE STREET; BLOOMINGTON, IL 61701**

**TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2017 AT 12:00 PM**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Public Comment

*(Each regular Task Force meeting shall have a public comment period not to exceed 30 minutes. Every speaker is entitled to speak for up to 3 minutes. To be considered for public comment, complete a public comment card at least 5 minutes prior to the start of the meeting. The Chairperson will randomly draw from the cards submitted. Public comment is a time to give comment. It is not a question and answer period, and the Task Force Committee does not respond to public comments. Speakers who engage in threatening or disorderly behavior will have their time ceased.)*

4. Consideration, review and approval of Minutes from the June 27, 2017 meeting
5. Discussion and prioritization of recommendations received by Downtown Task Force for consideration
6. Downtown Task Force Committee discussion
7. Adjourn

DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE COMMITTEE MEETING  
SUMMARY MINUTES  
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

109 EAST OLIVE STREET; BLOOMINGTON, IL 61701  
TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2017 AT 4:30 PM

1. **Call to Order**

Chairman Buragas called the meeting to order at **4:30 PM** and asked Ms. Hon to call the Roll.

2. **Roll Call**

**List who was present of the Task Force:**

Committee Member Kim Bray, Committee Member Jamie Mathy, Committee Member Carlo Robustelli, Committee Member Justin Boyd, Committee Member Tricia Stiller, Committee Member Mike Manna, Committee Member Bobby Vericella, Committee Member Joe Haney and Chairperson Amelia Buragas

**Staff Present:**

Melissa Hon, Assistant to the City Manager; Tom Dabareiner, Community Development Director; David Hales, City Manager; Austin Grammer, Economic Development Coordinator, Jeanne Hamilton, Library Director and Jim Karch, Public Works Director

3. **Public Comment:** *None*

4. Items for discussion

a. **Review of the zoning ordinance update project (Presentation by Tom Dabareiner, Community Development Director)**

Mr. Dabareiner talked about some of the things that we are considering or that the consultant is looking at for the Zoning Ordinance. We are in the middle of this update of our Zoning Ordinance, which is a massive project. He then showed an aerial view. The area with downtown zoning right now is shown outlined in the red. The problem is it is too big and diffuse. In order to solve this problem, what are some of the physical things that we want to look at? We need to look at barriers to pedestrian movement - walkability is a big thing with downtowns. A major barrier is big roads with several lanes to cross and are not pedestrian friendly. So, when we are trying to define a core for the downtown, we enclose an area. All the areas where we have lengths of parking deck or lengths of building that are meaningless are highlighted and right in the middle there is an area that does not have these obstacles. So, based on this one tool that we have used – finding obstacles to pedestrians and finding areas where pedestrians do not like to walk, we can identify a core. If you add up all the

slivers of block and the full blocks, that is about 5-1/2 blocks. This is what a consultant would come up with and tell you your core is. What do you want to do in terms of expanding that or do you want to expand it? He spoke about Naperville's successful downtown area and that the Naperville area 20 years ago was nothing. If we look at a core area that already has a good amount of cohesiveness, that is the only area that we are talking about. Some of the things we are taking a look at making that one giant downtown district and making it into two, maybe three, different downtown-style districts. With that, we look at things like building heights, both within the core and then adjacent to. Our downtown district bumps right up to residential with no transition. There is no difference, right up against the residential, from being in the core, and we have to define that. We would also look at some kind of plan review process whenever there is a big expansion.

The recommendation is that we take a look at different types of downtown zones, one being the core but really we want to preserve that. It has the kind of character and walkability and is already there. But around it, we want to be able to figure out how we are going to transition, stepping down to the residential that is on the outskirts. We need to be realistic about what is our core.

**b. Benefits of historic preservation (Presentation by Lea Cline, Historic Preservation Commission Member) (Greg Koos also presented)**

Ms. Cline spoke about the Commission, the role that it plays in preservation of our historic infrastructure and some of our hopes for what is done going forward. She stated that everyone had been provided a section of the 2004 Historic Preservation Plan. Historic preservation came to Bloomington fairly late after the historic core of the City had already seen a tremendous amount of change. The Historic Preservation Commission was part of the implementation of what is known as the Certified Local Government program established by the National Historic Preservation Act amendments of 1980. These amendments gave municipalities, like Bloomington, the opportunity to participate as partners in state and federal preservation activities. Bloomington is a certified City and to be certified, a local government must have a historic preservation ordinance, establish preservation review commission, and have an active local survey program and provide public participation. Our City's 30-year participation in this program shows a long-term commitment to the goals of historic preservation as broadly defined by the National Historic Preservation Act.

Mr. Koos stated that he had served as a First Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission. One of the first things that was engaged in was the study of downtown and this was done with a comprehensive architectural and historical survey of 135 downtown buildings, which was done in 1984-85. The study came up with a footprint of a contiguous historic district representing about 131 buildings. Approximately 80 of these buildings remain, so there has been about

a 30-35% reduction of the number of historic buildings in that district. The City has a tool that allows for historic zoning and the Historic Preservation Commission allows a zoning overlay. At this time, he stated he did not believe that there are buildings in the downtown area that have been zoned historic or S4. He answered Chairperson Buragas' question regarding S4 and stated that S4 addresses expansion and neglect and is an issue that the City of Bloomington took with the infamous Randall-Smith case on Franklin Square where Mr. Smith allowed that property to deteriorate to a point where the City had to take the building into a receivership-type of situation, apply the Historic Preservation rules to it, restore it and then return it into the possession of Mr. Smith. Preservation of historic buildings is one of the greenest ways to do building because you are looking at structures that exist, they have inherent energy tied into them, and the rule of thumb is that for every brick you lay, you burn about 8 gallons of gasoline and energy in terms of creation of the brick and the labor. Communities that are embracing historic preservation are also embracing this process in order to be kinder to the planet, use less of our declining resources, and in terms of becoming more energy efficient. There are a lot of positive reasons if you have a large area composed of historic buildings, that you take a lengthy, serious and thoughtful approach about how you integrate the preservation of those many historic structures into your planning activities.

## **5. Public Listening Session**

Mr. Herb Eaton stated that he had seen a lot of positive moves in downtown over the last 20 years and was very hopeful. He stated that for retail trade for the development of business downtown, we need to be a very pedestrian-friendly downtown. He also stated there was a parking deck that he overlooks across the street from his studio that got very little use and yet we need a City park and feels this would be an appropriate place to do that.

Mr. Bill Kemp stated that the lack of progress in downtown Bloomington is doubly frustrating given the wealth of our community. We are well positioned economically to rebuild our downtown. A revitalized downtown can provide a needed boost for the surrounding residential neighborhoods that currently suffer from underinvestment.

Pam Eaton stated she would like to see more outdoor restaurants as is being done in bigger cities. She would also like to see more visual art and sculpture, but there seems to always be such a fear of lawsuits and liability that everything gets axed. Other communities work with local businesses that actually rent the sculpture and put in on their facilities for a year so the artist gets paid a little bit for the rent and they have an umbrella insurance program that takes care of their properties.

Committee Member Manna stated that he thinks what it takes to change things is to go out and see what is out there. What he has noticed is that there is no continuity here. We need to change and reverse the thinking that has gone on.

Ms. Donna Brouillet talked about the homeless population issues and confirmed that we

are on the right track. She stated that a customer yesterday had not been by for a while. He does not like to come to downtown because he is accosted by panhandlers and that morning he was approached by three people in 20 minutes, which confirms the issue.

A discussion ensued concerning the panhandling problem in downtown Bloomington.

Ms. Brouillet stated that we want to help these people and the best way according to people at PATH and the Salvation Army is to refer them to PATH.

Ms. Jan Lancaster stated she had been downtown for 25+ years and the issue with garbage is still the same as it was 25 years ago. We need to look at the ordinances, the sign ordinance particularly. There is a lot of work to be done here. As for the homeless situation and panhandlers, we have met many times with PATH and Salvation Army trying to come up with solutions. If we could implement a plan, but the problem has been we cannot seem to all get on the same page.

Mr. Tyson Moore stated that what brings people here and keeps them here is it is a place that is nice to live and work. He stated he grew up in Europe on a military base and the context that he brings is how European cities are constructed. When he thinks of the goal of downtown revitalization, it is making more spaces where you can feel that sense of being safe and at peace with people of all ages.

Mr. Brian Dixon had some suggestions to make to the City Council. We need to look at loitering and we are having a big problem with that in the evening. We have had some violence lately, and some people have been seriously injured. Homelessness is an issue, but if you are talking about identity and this is what we are looking for – we are looking for a unified message. The big message that we are sending right now, especially in the 600 block, is you are going to get hassled by the homeless people.

**a. Committee Discussion**

Committee Member Mana stated that it is not all the homeless or the homeless issue that he has seen in every single City. We are talking about three or four different people who are not allowed into the homeless shelters, so they have elected because they are in a condition or something that is not part of the rules, they cannot go at the end of the night or some person that wants to help them, bring them to one of these places. There are many people in homeless shelters that we do not see because they play by the rules.

Committee Member Mathy talked about the comments made about the retail downtown. One of the things we have right now is a lot of buildings where the first floor is occupied by attorneys or accountants due to the fact that developers can sign a 10-year lease with them and know that they will be here whereas a restaurant or a retail shop might not be. Other cities have created a zoning overlay that includes keeping buildings where they believe retail is the appropriate thing to keep those as retail or restaurants.

Mr. Dabareiner commented that this was something that is perfect for discussing at the Planning Commission level.

Committee Member Boyd commented on the top 4 priorities from the last meeting – lighting, homeless, loitering, and garbage. Those are real actionable things that this Task Force can do immediately and we should develop something for those things specifically to suggest to Council relatively soon. He stated he is also hearing a lot about wanting to protect the character of downtown.

Mr. Dabareiner talked about the core and that we have good amount of core already established and we want to build from that. We may want to expand a little bit, but it can easily get too big. What we have right now is a downtown core like Milwaukee or St. Louis has. We have to define it appropriately for the size of this community for what works and this is in that 5, 6, 7 acre range. By defining a core, we are not ignoring what is around it. We are just defining it in a way that is going to allow it to thrive differently than the core.

Chairperson Buragas would like to start creating a master list of ideas and starting next meeting, we will have a list attached to our agenda of possible ideas that are out there that we can discuss as a group and begin to do something that we think is actionable. In terms of next week's discussion points, it seems that in terms of topics it sounds like two good topics for next time might be public safety and creation of public spaces. We also need to spend a considerable amount of time on economic development and barriers to downtown.

## 6. Adjourn

