

Downtown Bismarck Sub Area Plan Implementation Task Force

The Downtown Bismarck Sub Area Plan Implementation Task Force met at 8:30 am on September 9, 2014 in the First Floor Conference Room in the City/County Building at 221 North 5th Street in Bismarck. Present were: Co-Chairs Brenda Smith and John Warford as well as members Kevin Ruhland, Dawn Kopp, Kate Herzog, Jason Tomanek, Kayla Ver Helst, Larry Oswald and Jim Christianson. Also present were Sheri Grossman and Bill Wocken.

John Warford opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. The minutes of the August 12, 2014 meeting were received and approved on the motion of Dawn Kopp with Kate Herzog seconding. All present approved of the action.

Kate Herzog and Dawn Kopp reported on the banner project. All banners were received and installed on the decorative light standards with banner hangars in the downtown area. It was explained that the light fixtures are set up so that every other fixture has a banner hangar. The other light standards are set up to accept the Christmas star ornaments. The area of decorative light standards will be increased in the future which will allow for the area covered by the banners to be increased as well.

John Warford asked the banner committee to meet and discuss any further use of banners in the downtown area. The task force discussed other ways to “brand” the downtown and provide further improvements. Introduction of additional decorative lighting and the addition of sidewalk planters were discussed. A concern was voice for areas at which a tree has died and has not been replaced. Jason Tomanek said that Jackson Bird, City Forester, had a tree master plan for the downtown area and suggested that perhaps businesses might wish to sponsor a tree in areas where the plan advocates planting. Jackson will be invited to the next task force meeting to discuss downtown tree plantings in more detail.

Kayla Ver Helst told the group that she has made several reports to the City Commission about the activities of the Task Force but that she was concerned that the present monthly reports might be too frequent. The group discussed the need for reporting to the Commission and the public. Jim Christianson moved that the Task Force present a report to the public each Spring and that Kayla report on Task Force activities to the Commission at least quarterly with supplemental reports as needed. Larry Oswald seconded the motion and all present approved of the action.

Jason Tomanek reported that the design standards committee had used a preference voting approach to explore desirable and undesirable development options for the downtown at the last Urban Harvest event. He said the Community Development Department hoped to have a rewritten downtown zoning ordinance to the City Commission by January, 2015. The proposal would also extend downtown zoning south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad main line. Jason said the department has scheduled an input session with a young mothers group later this month. Task Force members suggested other groups who might be able to provide design standards input:

social media users, student government, YP Network. It was suggested that Dakota Media Access programming may also be of benefit.

Jason and Kevin Ruhland expressed that they did not want to stop development proposals while the design standards and regulation changes were being made. They hoped that both the adoption of new standards and redevelopment of the area could proceed at the same time. They hoped that some proposed standards could be under review in the near future.

Mayor Seminary introduced a Russian delegation to the meeting. Greetings were exchanged and group left for a scheduled appointment.

John Warford said he would like to review some of the committee activities from earlier meetings.

- Branding – the major elements of branding in the public space have been developed and are being utilized as new streetscape efforts go forward. Both public and private developments should use these branding components in their efforts in the public space. Elements from the downtown demonstration project should be embraced and expanded. Other brandings for the Petroleum Conference or other street themes will need further discussion. To be successful the city and the downtown owners will need to support the effort.
- Roadway re-design – the Main Avenue study is included in the proposed budget for 2015. A redesign of 5th street awaits future development projects on that street.
- BID – Discussions about a business improvement district are starting but there is concern that there is not yet enough streetscape to launch the effort
- BNSF Railroad contact – Andrea Travnicek will work on this area after contacts are solidified. Jason said he believed Jim Styron of NDDOT was a contact but that he would confirm that information.
- TIGER Grants – Pending.
- MDU – The company is talking to South 5th Street developers.
- Trolley – Concept is in discussion
- Housing – Kevin Ruhland suggested work be done to identify and address barriers to downtown housing. It was suggested IRET be contacted for input.

Jim Christianson suggested legislators be given a welcome to enjoy the downtown when they begin their session. He also announced that the 6th Street Ramp was nearly completed and that the Parkade remodeling was winding down.

The agenda having been completed, the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 am.

Reported by Bill Wocken