

Downtown Bismarck Sub Area Plan Implementation Task Force

The Downtown Bismarck Sub Area Plan Implementation Task Force met at 8:30 am on October 14, 2014 in the Mayor's Conference Room in the City/County Building at 221 North 5th Street in Bismarck. Present were: Co-Chair John Warford as well as members Andrea Travnicek, Dawn Kopp, Kate Herzog, Jason Tomanek, Kayla Ver Helst and Jim Christianson. Also present were Keith Hunke, Carl Hokenstad, Jackson Bird and Bill Wocken.

John Warford opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. The minutes of the September 9, 2014 meeting were received and approved on the motion of Jim Christianson with Dawn Kopp seconding. All present approved of the action.

Kate Herzog and Dawn Kopp reported on the North Dakota Downtown Conference and invited the group to attend as many sessions as possible. They said Doug Burgum would deliver the keynote speech at 3:30 on October 15, 2014 in the Heritage Center auditorium. The conference would continue at Dakota Stage the following day.

Jackson Bird was welcomed by the task force. He reported that the planters that had previously been used at the Civic Center had been repurposed to Broadway Avenue west of Third Street as part of an Adopt-a-Planter program conducted by the Downtowners. The planters had been filled with colorful annual flowers. He reported that the juniper bed south of the courthouse had also been stripped and had been planted with colorful annual flowers. Perennial plants would be introduced over time. More aging juniper beds will be eliminated in the next few years.

When asked about tree plantings Jackson said he did not want to plant what he could not water with onsite irrigation. He said the irrigation along Main Avenue was in disrepair and that fixing this system or adding other irrigation to open up planting locations for trees was an expensive proposition. He would continue to work on this issue in subsequent budget years.

Jackson said he had a tree plan for the downtown that identified about thirty planting areas in the downtown. He estimated the cost to carry out the plan at about \$500,000. It was suggested that there may be grant programs such as the Outdoor Heritage Fund that may provide half the cost of the project. This could be pursued in future years. He did say that the 2015 budget had been approved with one additional position in the Forestry program as well as additional flower planters.

Carl Hokenstad reported to the group that his department was reviewing downtown design standards in the DC and DF zoning districts. He hoped by year end to be able to provide a finished design standard. He also noted that the boundaries of the DC and DF

zones would likely be expanded. Jason Tomanek said the Renaissance Zone Committee will review the design review process at its next meeting.

At this point John Warford exited the meeting and Jim Christianson consented to be acting chair.

Jim asked for recent developments regarding branding efforts. Kate distributed a number of ideas for the group to consider. The design of street furniture was of interest to several members. The group agreed that there was a need for continuity in the downtown area for benches, bicycle racks and other pieces of street furniture. The group wanted to talk to Jeff Heintz, Director of Service Operations about this concern at the next meeting.

The development of a Business Improvement District was discussed. This process will require considerable time and effort. It was suggested the Depot Plaza project may be a good project for the initial effort.

Contacts with the BNSF railroad were provided by Jason Tomanek. Andrea Travnicek will attempt to set up a liaison with the railroad so that planning can begin regarding the proposed pedestrian underpass on the west side of 5th Street. It was suggested Federal Rail Administration might play a part if it becomes difficult to open this dialogue.

Keith Hunke reported that the downtown project TIGER grant was denied the city but that the application did make it to the last review stage. The great magnitude of the unknown costs was a negative for the application. The city is allowed to re-apply if there is another round of TIGER grants. Kayla suggested a public input process would make the application more competitive.

Jason Tomanek said MetroPlains developers, who work with many low income housing projects, had shown an interest in the Boutrous property north of the post office. They were asking questions about available incentives. Jason said the CORE program offered a modest incentive but that it maxed out at \$100,000. He also said a tax increment project was a possibility.

The next meeting of the group was moved to November 18, 2014 in recognition of the Veteran's Day schedule conflict for the normal meeting date.

The agenda having been completed, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 am.

Reported by Bill Wocken