



James V. Breuer, Chair  
Merike L. Treier, Executive Director

**DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.**

**May 20, 2014**

**CenterState CEO Conference Room  
115 West Fayette Street**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance**

- Members:** Ms. Gagliano; Messrs. Carroll, Doucette, Fisher, Howard, Koolakian, Nutting, Shapiro, Simpson and Tripoli.
- Staff:** Mss. Finch, Hnatko, Holbrook, Romeo and Treier; Messr. McGann.
- Guests:** Nader Maroun – Syracuse Common Council  
Nathan Brown – HOLT Architects  
Larry Leatherman – MOST  
Elias Everett – Pyramid Brokerage Company

**I. Welcome and Minutes of March 18, 2014**

Mr. Doucette welcomed guests and members present.

Ms. Treier asked for consideration of the minutes of March 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Fisher moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

**A. Administration**

Ms. Treier welcomed intern Korey McGann back to the staff of the Downtown Committee. Mr. McGann is a junior in college and will be assisting the Downtown Committee with the annual meeting and other projects through the summer. Ms. Treier also reported that this will be the last board meeting for Heather Hnatko, who is the Administrative Assistant for

the Executive Director of the Downtown Committee. Ms. Hnatko has accepted another employment opportunity and Ms. Treier thanked her for all her work during the past 2 years.

## **II. Financial Report as of April 30, 2014**

Ms. Treier shared the preliminary April 30th financial statement. She noted that income is ahead of expense for the year. Ms. Treier stated that the Franklin Street parking lot is currently running below projected income, and is expected to end the year 6% short of projected income.

Ms. Treier added that Downtown Living Tour income has started to come in this month and will be fully reflected in the May statement. Miscellaneous income is tracking ahead of budget due to income from the Hanging Flower Basket program.

Ms. Treier stated that expenses are as anticipated. She noted an opportunity to cost share on a housing market analysis for downtown, which will utilize the \$6000 allocated within the office recruitment line of the economic development budget. This expense will show as an overage in the Special Projects expense line.

Ms. Treier asked for a motion to approve the preliminary April 30th financial statement, subject to audit. Mr. Tripoli moved and Mr. Doucette seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

## **III. Economic Development**

### **A. Pop-Up Program Application Submission**

Ms. Finch reported that the Downtown Committee would like to pursue a new program for how to active the vacant store fronts in downtown. The proposal is based on ideas gathered from the International Downtown Conference that she attended last fall. She described a Pop-Up Shop Program that lets a new business use a vacant ground floor storefront for a few months. Ms. Finch noted that this idea has been effective in other cities such as Dayton, OH, and Cedar Rapid, MI.

The Downtown Committee would work with property owners to identify vacant space and the owner would then offer the space at low to no cost leases for tenants for 3-6 months. A property improvement program would need to be implemented to improve applicable ground floor space. Once the improvements are made, they will need to be maintained by the property owner. To fund the program, the Downtown Committee would like to submit a Consolidated Funding Application.

Interested businesses would submit an application for a downtown space and a selection committee will choose appropriate businesses to participate in the program. Mr. Nutting cautioned against already established businesses taking part in the program.

Ms. Finch asked for a motion to approve submittal of an application for the Pop-Up Shop program to New York State. Mr. Doucette moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

Mr. Simpson recused himself from the vote and conversation given his roll with the Regional Economic Development Council.

#### **IV. Beautification**

Ms. Finch reported the City of Syracuse is leading a planning effort for a permanent redesign of the Perseverance Park area which would occur through a design competition. The winner of the competition will develop a design idea by the fall/winter, with construction planned to start in 2015. The Downtown Committee is partnering with the City and a number of community stakeholders for this project.

A temporary treatment for the area has been commissioned by the Downtown Committee and will involve painting to spruce up the area. Ms. Finch has been working with Jason Evans and George Curry to come up with a design. The design has been approved by the Mayor and the Public Art Commission. Volunteers will paint the “FlowScape” mural on May 31<sup>st</sup> through June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Benches that are in disrepair will be repurposed within the area. Mr. Shapiro suggested installation coordination around the Connective Corridor construction. Ms. Gagliano suggested painting on a weekend that construction is not happening.

## **V. Marketing and Communications**

### **A. Downtown Living Tour Recap**

Ms. Romeo stated that this past Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, was the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Downtown Living Tour. Ms. Romeo reported that over 2,000 people took the tour this year. Ms. Romeo has received positive feedback and was pleased with all the interaction that took place. Ms. Treier noted that the Downtown Living Tour had new sponsorship this year with American Credit Union. Ms. Romeo noted that the tour received good media coverage and was a very successful event.

### **B. Annual Meeting**

Ms. Treier announced that the Downtown Committee's Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at the Oncenter. The program will run from Noon to 1:30pm. The keynote speaker will be Mr. Matt Carmichael, editor of Livability.com.

### **C. Farmers Market**

Ms. Romeo announced that the opening day of the Farmers' Market will be Tuesday, June 10<sup>th</sup> and will run through October 14<sup>th</sup>. The market will be open daily from 7am-4pm in Clinton Square. Ms. Romeo noted that Mr. McFadden has vendors already lined up for the event. She also noted that the sale of organic products at the Farmer's Market increases each year.

## **VI. Board Discussion – Interstate 81**

Ms. Treier reported that on May 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Mark Frechette, Project Manager for NYSDOT, presented 16 alternatives for the Interstate 81 project. She noted that these alternatives were discussed in the Downtown Committee I-81 committee meeting held on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Treier noted that the committee identified three significant concerns with the alternatives presented (1) Number of properties taken, (2) Dead-ending roads, (3) The actual land acreage that is utilized for each solution. She stated that there is still a lot of information and data that needs to be reviewed by the community before a final decision is made. A few of those items are:

replacement costs, ongoing maintenance costs, the effects on property tax value, connectivity to the Hill and other neighborhoods, land development opportunities, etc.

Ms. Treier noted that she is part of the Economic Development working group established by NYSDOT to review the varied alternatives. The next meeting will be on May 29<sup>th</sup> to review options and traffic data, and again on June 4<sup>th</sup> to review additional alternatives. Another round of public scoping is being planned for late June and Mr. Simpson noted that following that will be the final period for public comments.

Ms. Treier informed the board that inside their binders they would find a working chart of the 16 options presented by the NYDOT. Ms. Treier noted that the chart is color coded to reflect which options align and don't align with the Downtown Committee's articulated goals. She asked the board to review the materials.

Mr. Shapiro noted that there was no mention of the impact on retail shops or restaurants and suggested that be added as additional criteria. He stated the solution should have the best positive effect on the downtown businesses. He suggested a marketing fund be established to let people know how to get to downtown during the construction period. The need to talk about how downtown will be impacted and the need for development of a long term marketing plan to insure people can still come to Syracuse should be a focus area.

Mr. Fisher noted that the criteria identified as 'generating new property taxes' is about the economic development and return on investments. So solutions that achieve those goals should be identified.

Mr. Doucette noted the need for increase of signage along the highway system to direct visitors to destinations.

Mr. Nutting stated from a retail view, what is best? He noted that a boulevard would get people onto the city streets. Mr. Shapiro noted that some may want to skip right over Syracuse and all the exits. Mr. Nutting noted that the boulevard would make the properties worth more and the area more attractive. He stated that if the Downtown Committee believes the boulevard is the

best option then an advocacy group needs to be formed.

Mr. Doucette stated that we need a vibrant downtown and that the viaduct alternative wipes out significant value and negatively impacts buildings close to the structure. He believes the main focus on the alternative selected should be the economic impact on downtown.

Mr. Shapiro questioned if the boulevard would be considered a federal highway? He stated that he needs his clients to be able to get to his store. Mr. Doucette stated that with the boulevard construction, more residential housing could be created and that in turn would bring in different clientele. He asked if Mr. Shapiro would prefer the same clients or more residents. Mr. Shapiro noted the he doesn't want to see his clients redirected around the city.

Mr. Tim Carroll questioned where the construction would be starting from. Ms Treier stated that it would begin near the Martin Luther King School.

Mr. Howard asked how we bring groups together to act as one. Mr. Doucette stated that he is meeting with other groups in the near future as a member of Rethink 81.

Mr. Nutting noted that he is an advocate for getting all the information on the total cost of the project. He stated that acquisition and maintenance will drive costs up but these costs need to be known. Mr. Doucette also stated that construction time needs to be considered, with the boulevard having the shortest build time. Mr. Koolakian stated that the viaduct is a viable option but the boulevard is more sensible and inviting. Mr. Nutting asked why Route 481 to Route 690 wasn't being studied as an alternative.

Mr. Tripoli noted that he likes the 11x17 chart as it is very understandable of the Downtown Committee's perspective. He suggested taking a second look at the goals and including the downtown business perspective.

Ms. Treier noted that the Board asked for a meeting with University Hill Corporation and that is in the process of being scheduled. Ms. Treier would like to create some focus groups to fine

tune the chart and revise the criteria. She noted that people are just starting to talk about Interstate 81 and that it is important to educate the constituents.

## **VII. Public Comments**

Mr. Doucette opened the floor for public comments.

Mr. Leatherman suggested gathering all the information and getting it out to constituents. He noted there are no highways in Charleston, SC and more visitors. He stated that he believes the boulevard is the way to go and that people need to be educated with regards to that option.

Syracuse Common Councilor Nader Maroun noted that adding more residential living in downtown is good as it adds to the tax base. He stated that the council needs a stronger role in the Interstate 81 project, and that they need to be more aggressive and more visible.

Mr. Tripoli noted that the Downtown Committee needs to be activists for their position.

Ms. Treier stated that based on a measured and data driven review, the street level options best align with the Downtown Committee's articulated goals and that the community needs to be educated.

Mr. Nutting suggested taking the new info that the Downtown Committee has and adding that to the working chart. He suggested scheduling a meeting within the next couple weeks to discuss the new information. At that time he would like to see a quorum, a vote, and the Downtown Committee get behind a decision. Ms. Treier stated that she will rework the document with the new criteria, get feedback and schedule another meeting.

Councilor Maroun suggested following the funds for this project to find out how it will flow. He noted that the Downtown Committee will need to know the facts to build the framework.

Mr. Nutting noted that the ongoing maintenance costs need to be kept in mind.

Mr. Shapiro recommended, with the current Connective Corridor construction, that the Downtown Committee keep informed on where they plan to position the crosswalk signals, with

regards to snow plowing access. He suggested taking a look at the most current plans. Mr. Doucette noted that the engineers need to be keep these types of issues in mind.

### **VIII. Other Business and Adjourn**

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:40 pm.

Next Board meeting: **Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm**  
*(changed from original date of July 15<sup>th</sup>)*  
**Location: CCEO, 115 West Fayette Street**