



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

## **DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.**

**September 16, 2014**

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

**3:00 p.m.**

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **Attendance**

- Members:** Chairman Breuer, Messrs. Doucette, Carroll, Fiorito, Howard, Nutting, and Koolakian
- Staff:** Mss. Holbrook, Finch, Reed, Romeo, Sherlock and Treier; Mssr. Campanie
- Guests:** Nathan Brown – Holt Architects  
Nader Maroun – Syracuse Common Council  
Peter A. Dunn – CNY Community Foundation  
Bill Hider - The Redhouse Arts Center

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present. He also welcomed to the Downtown Committee Staff, Kristine Sherlock as the new Assistant to the Executive Director who joined the team in August.

#### **II. Approval of July 18<sup>th</sup>'s Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Breuer asked the board for a motion to approve the July 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes. Mr. Fiorito motioned, Mr. Howard seconded; the motion was unanimously approved.

#### **III. Administration**

A. Authorization to execute the Downtown Committee Contract

Ms. Treier noted that this past May, the Common Council approved the Downtown Committee's Annual Budget. She stated that now the City and Downtown Committee need to enter into a contract so that the Downtown Committee can draw down on the special assessment funds.

Ms. Treier asked the board for a motion to authorize the executive director to execute a one-year contract with the City of Syracuse to draw down on the special assessment funds. Mr. Doucette moved and Chairman Breuer seconded the motion. The request was unanimously approved.

#### **IV. Financial Report as of August 31, 2014**

Ms. Treier provided the financial report as of August 31<sup>st</sup> and noted that income exceeds expense. She stated that it is still early in the fiscal year and expenses are on budget. Ms. Treier reported that all income is in from the AmeriCU Arts & Crafts Festival and is on budget. She also called the Board's attention to the new Horticulture Sponsorships line, which reflects payments received for sponsoring the hanging flower baskets. Ms. Treier reviewed the Expenses by Program and noted that under the Environmental Maintenance Horticulture line, this looks different from year's past as it includes the labor cost for the hanging flower basket program. She stated that all other programs are running as expected.

Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the financial report subject to audit. Mr. Doucette moved and Mr. Fiorito seconded. The motion was unanimously carried.

#### **V. Reports**

##### **A. Economic Development**

###### **1. NYMS Program Review**

Ms. Finch presented an overview of the Jefferson-Warren Street Revitalization Program which is a \$200,000 grant from the Office of Homes and Community Renewal. The Downtown Committee of Syracuse has made grants available to the following projects:

- a) MOST - \$10,000 – Funds will be used to improve the masonry on the western stairs.

This project is also paired with a Connective Corridor Grant, which is funding lighting upgrades.

- b) Onondaga Music Building - \$45,000 – This will be a mixed-use project including the construction of 24 apartments. The grant money is being used to support an apartment in the building. Mr. Howard inquired who is developing this building and Ms. Finch responded it is owned by Max from the Lemon Grass. Chairman Breuer asked if this project will be lighted under the connective corridor program, which Ms. Finch confirmed.
- c) Onondaga Tower - \$10,000 – the grant money will be used for façade improvements.
- d) Common Space - \$45,000 – grant funds will support the development of both working and living space. The co-living space targets young entrepreneurs and will be comprised of 10 small apartments. Chairman Breuer asked if there were any future facade plans and Ms. Finch noted that there are no plans at this time.
- e) Wood Building - \$30,000 – this building will be converted to a mixed use property which will include six apartments on the upper floors. The grant money will also support facade work.
- f) 431 S. Warren Street - \$25,000 – This building will become a mixed-use project. The grant funds will be used to support the façade renovation.

Ms. Finch also explained that as part of the NYMS grant program, the Downtown Committee is responsible for completing an environmental analysis of the sites. She explained that the quotes came in higher than budgeted and asked the board to approve up to \$15,000 from the NYMS Grant to use for this purpose. She explained that the Downtown Committee will be reimbursed by NYS for this expenditure. Mr. Doucette motioned to approve the increased allocation and Mr. Howard seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

## **2. Housing Market Analysis**

Ms. Treier circulated the Executive Summary for review. She noted that the Downtown Committee partnered with the Community Preservation Corporation to undertake a third-party analysis on the current housing market trend. She reported that the Downtown Committee contracted with Research and Marketing Strategies (RMS) to conduct research this past summer. The research consisted of a demographic trend analysis, competitive

assessment of properties, and a phone and online survey. From this research, a model was built to determine the depth of the downtown market. The Conservative model showed a current, unmet demand for 727 units in downtown. The report also suggested follow-up steps for how the Downtown Committee can collect data in order to improve our information, specifically to work with leasing companies to gather origin zip codes to better understand where our residential market areas exist and where we are pulling from.

Ms. Treier then distributed a chart which compared residents' important living factors and how downtown is perceived to perform on that same factor. As depicted on the chart, addressing the perception of safety needs to be a continued area of focus for our efforts.

Mr. Doucette inquired if the responses on the chart were downtown resident responses. Ms. Treier clarified that the responses on the chart reflected all who took the survey, including those who live outside of downtown. She volunteered to follow up with the Board via email to address Mr. Doucette's question.

### **3. REDC Overview**

Ms. Finch reviewed the 2014 priority projects of the Central NY Regional Economic Development Council (REDC). Several downtown projects were named priority projects in August of this year and awards are anticipated to be made the second week of October:

- a) *Hotel Syracuse* – Total project cost: \$61,890,000 / REDC request: \$3.9 Million. Renovations to be completed by the Syracuse Hotel Restoration Company, LLC. This project will invest in the redevelopment of one of the most culturally significant buildings in downtown Syracuse. The renovated property will provide guest rooms, three main ballrooms, a restaurant, lounge and new lobby.
- b) *Former Excellus Building* - Total project cost: \$19,572,637, REDC request: \$2.32 million. Paradise Companies will redevelop the former Excellus building into a mixed-use complex consisting of commercial office space and apartment units. This is currently one of the largest vacant buildings in downtown Syracuse.
- c) *Redhouse Arts and Culture Complex* – Total project cost: \$4,500,000; REDC request: \$900,000. The relocation of the Redhouse into the Sibley's building will increase the vibrancy of the city's main street. The renovation will include a complete facade transformation, a new courtyard, and new classroom space.

- d) *Sky Armory-Phase II* – Total project cost: \$1,100,000; REDC request: \$400,000. Sky Armory Phase II continues the development for the former Wells & Coverly Building into a top event space for the region. The expansions will create a food and beverage production area in an unutilized space on the first floor along with an additional ballroom. The building is adjacent to the Pike Block and is a key component of the ongoing revitalization of South Salina Street.
- e) *Common Space* – Total project cost: \$1,128,700; REDC request: \$225,000. This will be a redevelopment of a five-story, 30,000 square-foot building in downtown Syracuse which is currently 60% vacant, into a unique live/work space. In addition to residential space, the project will feature a co-working office that will house 100 new workers to downtown and create space for entrepreneurial events.
- f) *Mizpah Tower Structural Analysis and Feasibility Study* – Total project cost: \$50,000; REDC request: \$25,000. Funds are sought to conduct a structural analysis of the Mizpah Tower in downtown Syracuse on behalf of Shalimar Properties 407, LLC. The property has been vacant and unmaintained for the last 25 years and this feasibility analysis will determine the best path forward for the property.

Ms. Finch noted that there will be an official announcement of these renovation projects in October.

#### **4. City Center**

Mr. Doucette shared the plans for renovations at the Sibley's building which will be a unique partnership between Redhouse and Paramount Realty who will own the project together. The current Redhouse facility is too small to meet infrastructure needs and audience demands. The renovations of the new City Center will include commercial, office, and apartment space. A large entry plaza will be cut out through four floors, and the Redhouse will have frontage on the courtyard. 95% of Redhouse will occupy the first floor of the old Sibley's garage and the current warehouse area will become the theater. Office and conference space will occupy the second floor.

Mr. Hider, Board Chair of the Redhouse, added that the new and larger facility will be able to accommodate all of the educational program, theatre, music and film events that currently

utilize the Rehouse. As they regularly sell out on their events (92% average attendance, over 500 annual members and 50 community partners), they are confident they can draw future audiences. Redhouse @ City Center will also rent out their theater space for community use and will provide the service of the mass marketing, ticketing, and managing email lists. Chairman Breuer asked if there are any obstacles for this project. Mr. Hider responded that they need money to build out the facility. The total project cost is \$5 million of which \$2 million has been raised. There is a grant request in front of the REDC for \$900,000. They are also talking to major donors to finance the project. The project is anticipated to start construction in January 2015. Mr. Howard asked about the plans for the existing building. Mr. Hider responded they are looking into the possibility of renting the space in conjunction with other space next door. They are also considering keeping it as a small music venue for local bands with a state-of-the-art system. Chairman Breuer commented that the Downtown Committee and Board are excited about the City Center project which will bring activity back to the main street of downtown Syracuse. Mr. Nutting asked who designed the façade. Mr. Hider responded that Bob Haley is the designer.

## **5. Interstate 81 Update**

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Committee submitted their response to the Draft Scoping document on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. She noted that the Final Scoping Report will be released before the end of the calendar year and will include all comments received to date, responses to the more substantial comments and describe the alternatives moving forward.

The next phase is for the NYSDOT and FHWA to develop the Draft EIS which will take place over the next 18 months. The draft will consider construction/short-term impacts and operational/long-term impacts of alternatives. A public review of the Draft EIS will take place during another public hearing and record all comments received. Ms. Treier also noted the following:

- In the final EIS, NYSDOT/FHWA will need to address all comments received during the public hearing
- The final EIS will identify the preferred alternative
- The later stages of the EIS will involve the development of the financial plan.

- The record of decision will be made and the FHWA and NYSDOT will be involved in the decision making.
- NYSDOT is hesitant to assign any timelines with the process past the next 18 months.

## **B. Marketing and Communications**

### **1. Syracuse Style-September 18<sup>th</sup>**

Ms. Reed announced that the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Syracuse Style will be held Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> on the 100 block of Walton Street. Twenty downtown shops will be participating, which is more than ever before. This has been a successful program which has drawn people downtown and supports the retail businesses. Ms. Reed also noted that the Downtown Committee received a merit award from the International Downtown Association recognizing this event.

### **2. Holiday Decorations**

Ms. Reed reported that the Downtown Committee has selected Able Events as the contractor to provide holiday decorations for the next four years. She noted that they will provide similar decorations as in the past as well as some new and interesting treatments in Armory Square. Ms. Reed stated that the Downtown Committee is exploring the option of working with another contractor to secure private sponsorship for some new signature pieces for downtown. Ms. Reed explained that for the primary contract, the Downtown Committee will need to enter into an agreement with Able for the full amount of the program, \$106,650 over four years. The Downtown Committee will also need to contract with the City for reimbursement of half that amount. Ms. Reed asked the Board to authorize the Executive Director to sign and execute both contracts. Mr. Doucette moved, and Chairman Breuer seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

## **C. Security**

### **1. Security Cameras**

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Committee received written approval from the NYS Assembly two weeks ago approving the purchase of 10 security cameras for downtown. The next step is to finalize the Agreement with CenterState CEO for the

funds. Ms. Treier noted that she doesn't anticipate any problems with the process, but is still waiting to hear back from ESD, who administers the grant program. Mr. Koolakian asked when the cameras would be installed. Ms. Treier responded she would like the cameras to be installed this fall, but that is dependent on ESD's timing.

## 2. Panhandling Meeting

Mr. Campanie noted that there are currently few laws to control the panhandling issue being experienced in downtown Syracuse. He stated that the police can only make arrests if it becomes aggressive, which is seldom. Police are able to enforce the current loitering laws, which states that individuals cannot loiter within 50 feet of businesses that serve alcohol. In order to curtail the panhandling issue in Armory Square, two officers have been assigned to patrol Tuesday through Friday nights between the peak hours of 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. There has been a significant decrease in panhandling activity since this has started. As long as they have the manpower, the continuous security measures can stay in place.

Mr. Campanie stated they are looking to expand on the loitering laws to include retail and financial institutions as well, which would increase the geography to enforce no loitering laws. Mr. Koolakian asked what happens if an individual (panhandler) enters the business and doesn't leave. Mr. Campanie responded that it would then be considered a trespass. Mr. Howard stated that there is a need to move forward to expand the loitering law to financial institutions and to let him know if he needs help pushing it at a local level. Chairman Breuer added that the ordinance also needs to be reworked to give law officers the authority to make arrests for loitering. Mr. Koolakian asked what about the "Just Say No" campaign, or creating signs to encourage the public to avoid supporting panhandlers. Ms. Treier responded that they are looking at models with the City along with a research class at Syracuse University to share ideas and campaigns to address the panhandling issue. Ms. Treier will extend an invitation to the Board Members to participate in a final findings review from the Syracuse University class. Mr. Carroll suggested that Ms. Treier get in touch with Melissa Marrone, Coordinator of the Housing and Homeless Coalition.

Mr. Doucette noted that the bicycle riding on sidewalks has gotten worse and if there is anything we can do? Mr. Campanie responded that they can only warn them to stay off the sidewalks.

Mr. Koolakian expressed concern over loiterers charging their cell phones for “free” in Hanover Square. Ms. Treier responded that the Downtown Committee will send a note to the DPW to lock the outdoor outlets that are being used as charger stations by people.

## **VI. Public Comments**

Chairman Breuer opened the floor for public comments. There were none.

Chairman Breuer commented that the residential units in the Creekwalk Commons project were completed on August 1<sup>st</sup> and the space is 80% leased. Café Kubal will be leasing space on the corner of Franklin St. and Erie Blvd. A formal opening ceremony for the project is planned.

Mr. Howard expressed concern of the grass and weed overgrowth in Armory Square, behind the clothing store on the steep incline to the Creekwalk. Ms. Treier responded that she will ask the City to cut back the weeds as it is tough for Downtown Committee staff to get to that area to maintain.

## **VII. Other Business and Adjourn**

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

Next Board meeting: **Tuesday, November 18<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m.**  
**Location: CenterState CEO, 115 West Fayette Street**