

Downtown Design Guidelines Task Force

March 24, 2010
5:30 pm to 6:30 pm
City Hall Sixth Floor Conference Room

Meeting Summary

Present: Marcia Higgins, Bill Kinley, Peter Pollack, Kirk Westphal, Norm Tyler, Tamara Burns, Wendy Rampson, Alexis DiLeo (Absent: Dick Mitchell)

Guests: Ethel Potts, Alice Ralph, Brad Moore, Ray Detter

Marcia Higgins reviewed the charge of the Task Force, noting that the goal was complete the significant work that had already been done by merging the draft Downtown Design Guidelines prepared by Winter and Company (dated September 30, 2009) with the version prepared by the citizens review committee (dated December 11, 2009). Marcia stated that she very much hoped that the downtown design guidelines could be finished well before their December 6, 2010 deadline.

Members questioned and discussed what research and comparisons had already been done. Staff referred members to the A2D2 website.

Norm Tyler distributed a possible discussion topics list for the Task Force. Members discussed these points. Staff noted that most of the points were addressed in the draft work program.

Bill Kinley noted that coordination with the historic district review process would be very important. Wendy Rampson reminded the group that the downtown design guidelines and the historic district design guidelines were deliberately separated to avoid conflict and confusion. The historic district design guidelines are fully drafted and have been informally used by the Historic District Commission for about a year now. They will be adopted after the downtown design guidelines are completed to allow for any necessary changes.

Kirk Westphal asked about the possibility for a staff review/board review hybrid. Marcia Higgins noted that many people were previously supportive of staff design review for smaller projects and, overall, a mandatory review-voluntary compliance process seems to be the direction to focus. Marcia also noted that the guidelines should be a living document that changes and evolves over time. The most successful elements should make their way into the zoning ordinance.

Marcia Higgins also noted that the draft documents would reside with staff, who will make all revisions desired by the Task Force. The draft versions will be posted online for public review. She also reminded the Task Force that each member represents large groups of constituents – Marcia will be reported back to Council, Kirk Westphal will be reporting back to Planning

Commission, and Peter Pollack and Norm Tyler will be responsible for keeping their many contacts up to date.

Alexis DiLeo reviewed the draft work program. Norm Tyler wondered why discussion on the design guidelines was separated from the implementation process. Alexis explained that either could be done first, but it would likely be easier and quicker to go through each revision suggested by the citizens review committee regarding everything but the implementation process. Once those are addressed, the Task Force can focus on the more difficult task of developing an implementation process, knowing that any other section of the document still can be revisited at any time.

Peter Pollack commented that it was important to keep the public informed as much as possible and wondered about opportunities for general public meetings. Marcia Higgins noted that most of the budget for the project had already been spent and there would be limited opportunities. She again reminded the group they should be continually working with and representing their constituencies to keep them informed and involved.

Tamara Burns noted that the Huron Valley AIA chapter may have funds which could be used for Task Force, or review board, training. She noted that local architects have already prepared test cases of new development using past versions of the downtown design guidelines. She felt that the local architects might be interested in a panel discussion about their results.

Norm Tyler suggested public review opportunities at the end of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the work program. He also volunteered to be the Task Force's photographer to replace some of the draft photos with better examples.

It was decided that the next meeting will be Wednesday, March 31, 5:30 to 6:30 pm. The Task Force will review the official September 30, 2009 draft, the unofficial December 11, 2009 draft, and the comment matrix prepared by staff. These documents will be provided to the Task Force by email prior to the meeting. All Task Force packet materials and summaries of meetings will be posted online after meetings for public review.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo
March 25, 2010