Czech Village New Bohemia SSMID Meeting Minutes
August 15, 2019 | 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. | Alliant Energy Classroom at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library

Present: Lijun Chadima, Jessalyn Holdcraft, Pam Lewis, Chad Pelley, James Piersall, Bob Schaffer

Absent: Craig Byers, Stephanie Jelinek, Ana McClain

Guests: Abby Huff & Monica Vernon – Czech Village NewBo Main Street, Beth Orth – Geonetric, Adam Lindenlaub & Bill Micheel – City of Cedar Rapids, Mary Kay McGrath – Novak Investments

Economic Alliance Staff: Jessica Komisar, Melissa McCarville, Doug Neumann

Welcome and Call to Order
Piersall welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Approval of Consent Agenda
Lewis moved approval of the July Minutes with Chadima seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chadima moved approval of the agenda with Holdcraft seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

District Development Updates
McGrath, who currently owns several properties in Czech Village, provided an update on her projects where her main goal is to drive traffic to the district. She started the “Angels in the Village” project by painting angel wings on various buildings for visitors to take pictures with which benefits all generations. McGrath owns the current Aces & Eights building as well as the lot and seventy-two building next to it. The seventy-two building has received an updated façade and McGrath said she plans on adding an Airbnb unit on the top floor. McGrath also owns the Café St. Pio, Mug Shots (would like to see a restaurant/pizza place go in this building), Create Exchange, Rodina buildings as well. McGrath said she wants to build up the retail opportunities in the area to attract more visitors.

The former Roundhouse had to be moved and the remains of the building are behind Tait Cummins Sports Complex off of C Street SW. McGrath said when the Roundhouse comes back to the district, which is still in the planning stages, it would be located in the space behind Sykora Bakery and Lost and Found Provisions. This project would bring a seasonal farmers’ market as well as space for weddings or corporate meetings.

District Master Plan
The process for creating a district master plan started in February of 2018 when representatives from six organizations in the district came together to form an advisory group. Those six groups include the Czech Village Association, Main Street, CVNB SSMID, NewBo Association, Oak Hill Jackson Neighborhood Association and Southside Investment Board.

Elements of the master plan focus on connectivity, land use, streetscapes, character and placemaking. The role of the advisory group from the different organizations is to provide feedback, preview public engagement activities and encourage and advocate for the district. Common themes heard from the advisory group include:

- Continuation of current development trend
- Development of the Sinclair site
- River recreation
- Development that faces the river
• An Arts & Cultural District spanning both sides of the river and 3rd Street SE
  o Items that need to be avoided: Negative retail, parking issue perception, negative impacts to historic character, negative impacts to individual character
• Items to be considered:
  o Pedestrian mall, large public gathering spaces, gateway entrances, anchor grocery store

The master plan included several workshops to gain a better idea of how the public views the district and what they want to see:
  • Sinclair Site Design Workshop: September of 2018. $20k-$30k of technical assistance was provided for the Sinclair site. This workshop focused on urban design, character and facilitating opportunities for the site. Design elements include mix-use, district parking, pedestrian amenities, a park, bicycle accommodations and reconnecting streets.
  • Visioning Workshop: June of 2019. This workshop had about 50 attendees discussing strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/challenges of the district as well as a geographic mapping exercise.
  • Design Workshop: July of 2019. 3-days to review and refine concepts from the visioning workshop

The final draft concept will be incorporated in the open house material which will take place on September 18th from 6-7:30 p.m. The full presentation from Lindenlaub and Micheel was distributed to the commission for more detail.

The City has two RFPs for two parcels in the district (1 proposal for each pair - 1028/1032 5th Street & 1302/1306 3rd Street) that a stakeholder group will be reviewing this evening with the goal of City Council reviewing the projects in September. Construction for these parcels could potentially begin in 2020. Proposals include shotgun housing on the 5th Street lot and larger condo, retail and coworking space on the 3rd Street lot.

Cargill City Council Support
The Cargill Railyard project will come before City Council on August 27th for a public hearing. Chadima motioned for the SSMID to sign a letter of support for the City Council meeting with Holdcraft seconding. The motion was unanimously approved. McCarville will draft the letter for Piersall’s signature.

Holiday Décor Decision
The commission agreed it’s important to have a cohesive look with holiday décor along 3rd Street to match the existing décor on 16th Ave which include green lit garland and a wreath. The holiday planters on 3rd Street last year cost the SSMID a total of approximately $2,300 and were not impactful enough for the district. The Downtown District has 30 strands of green lit garland they are willing to donate to the CVNB SSMID for free to use on 3rd Street. The only other costs for holiday décor will be wreaths and storage.

Schaffer moved to approve using the garland and wreaths on 3rd Street instead of planters, and to unify the holiday décor look of the entire district. Holdcraft seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Main Street Updates
  • MainStreet Iowa presentation Monday August 19th at 8:30 a.m. at Village Meat Market
  • Dinner on the Bridge Friday September 6th, all local food and beverages. Need volunteers day of to help with set-up.
  • Looking for volunteers to help install pole planters on the 16th Ave bridge prior to Dinner on the Bridge. There are 4 up right now but need to install the rest. They are heavy and would need multiple people to help.
  • Main Street Challenge Grant application due September 20th – $75k grant used for restoration for the Quonset building (located between Soko and Lion Bridge) for a glass blowing company. Main Street to let the SSMD know what they are looking for and the SSMID can sign a letter of support.

Adjourn
Schaffer moved for the meeting to adjourn with Holdcraft seconding. The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 a.m.