

## **Downtown Rock Island Steering Committee meeting**

July 20, 2021, JTM Concepts, Downtown Rock Island

**In-person attendees:** Jan Masamoto, Monta Ponsetto, Kyle Peters, Arron Sutherland, John Friederich, Dylan Parker, Miles Brainard, Nathan Parch, Brandy VandeWalle, Barrett Essman (on behalf of Steve Ollenburg), Eric Rowell, Jon Keim, George Crouse, Paul Phares and guests from Streamline Architects Andrew Dasso, Saloni Sheth and Luz Upegui

**Virtual attendees:** Thanks for the attempt, Matt, Liz and Nicole. I apologize for the technical difficulties.

### **Agenda**

#### **I. Welcome & thank you to Jan Masamoto for hosting**

Things are heating up in downtown RI event-wise: Farmers market with multiple vendors on Aug. 7; Ya Maka My Weekend on Aug. 14; Alternating Currents on Aug. 19; St. Patrick's Day Parade on Aug. 28; Rock Island Grand Prix over Labor Day weekend

#### **II. Organizational structure and governance**

- a. Reminder of our group's primary goal and purpose: Creating a downtown place management organization within Quad Cities Community Partnership that has its own legal entity inside the Chamber with its own staff and a budget
  - i. We need to establish a Board of Directors, including leadership of a chair and vice chair – a real organization with bylaws
  - ii. The dream goal is to have an annual budget of \$500,000 that would have dollars for programming, capital improvement projects, general administration of organization and contract staff
- b. It's possible to do this with fewer dollars, but to address all of the core needs I've heard from people on our committee and other stakeholders, we're looking at a minimum of \$500,000.
  - i. Specifically, it's our professional recommendation that this amount would support my core work as director, a second person to assist with daily administration and implementation of programming as well as oversight of contract staff for **regular cleaning and maintenance of downtown**
    1. Other potential support services: downtown marketing, smaller special events, seasonal decorations, security, grant programs, streetscaping, alley activation, lighting enhancements, signage, etc.
  - ii. We need a sustainable funding model to support this work
    1. As we've previously discussed, we're looking at creating a Special Service Area (SSA) for downtown, which is a financial tool that

collects an annual fee from property owners to help pay for downtown support services and projects and staff to keep everyone and everything moving in same positive direction; these are called different things in different states, but essentially we're creating a business improvement district – every other community in QC has at least one of these. In Illinois, it must be approved by City Council, the City would receive these funds on annual basis and give to Downtown Rock Island Partnership to administer

2. **SSA alone is by no means the sole tool to make this work**, nor should it be. In addition to an SSA, we think there are other groups outside of the SSA boundaries that will help fund this and lessen the burden on property owners
  - a. SSA boundary under consideration aligns closely with Downtown TIF District, covering the area south of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 13<sup>th</sup> Street (west) and QCCA Expo Center (east); stay tuned for map
3. We're in the process of developing permanent relationships with Modern Woodmen as well as other institutions in the community outside of or exempt from the SSA, including the City, Augustana and MidAmerican Energy, that are interested in contributing to this organization; we've had really encouraging conversations with Modern Woodmen. They want to support this organization and special services it would provide for downtown through a creative mechanism that would add to what the SSA could produce; they're still working through what that looks like, but there's some exciting chatter about a potential development project that would generate funds for the bottom line of the organization
4. We believe the SSA tax levy should be the least amount it can be to generate enough money to get the work done, and other funding sources will help make that happen
5. We have the formula from the County on how to measure this, and once we know more from the different entities we're talking to, we'll know more about the percentage property owners would pay using this model
6. Dylan Parker and Miles Brainard reminded the group the City contracted with the Chamber to take over revitalization efforts because the City does not have the capacity or the resources to clean, maintain, program and update downtown.
  - a. "Our staff numbers have decreased over time. We're spread too thin to adequately maintain a space that's heavily used." -Miles

- c. **Next steps:** We'll build a budget that can pay for this base level of services, adjust that budget as we learn what revenue sources look more like.
- d. **Call to action for group:** We need this group to help inform prioritization of categories of services, so please start thinking and sharing services you believe this organization should provide. For example, George Crouse mentioned enhanced snow removal would be beneficial
- e. For reference, other downtown organizations in QC:
  - i. Downtown Bettendorf Organization has one staff member and a budget of \$300,000, funded by a business improvement district and significant investments from the City and Isle Casino (\$150,000 from SSMID, \$150,000 from downtown property owners)
  - ii. Downtown Davenport Partnership has four permanent staff members, a part-time operations and hospitality crew and a budget of \$1.3 million, funded by a business improvement district and significant investments from the City (\$150,000) and Rhythm City Casino
  - iii. Moline Centre has one staff member, plus a lot of support from City staff, and a budget over \$500,000, funded by multiple business improvement districts

### III. Plaza redesigns

- a. Option 1 – ped mall renovation
- b. Option 2 – shared street creation
- c. Option 3 – ped mall renovation incorporating elements from Option 1 and 2
- d. **Staff recommendation:** Move forward with Option 3 as it reimagines the existing ped mall and introduces exciting new features that will ideally draw more visitors and businesses to the core of downtown; there seemed to be consensus among in-person meeting attendees that this is the right path
  - i. It was suggested that crosswalk art be added across 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to connect The District with Schwiebert Park as well as other crosswalks throughout the downtown
  - ii. Excitement around potential of turning existing parking lot next to Daq Fac into a versatile turf-covered greenspace with multiple uses, possibly to include interactive art-playground feature – “reasons for people with young kids to go downtown ... brings variety to community.” -Eric Rowell
  - iii. Kyle Peters urged power supply on Plaza needs enhancement
  - iv. Questions raised about ongoing maintenance and management of new space, which led back to the importance of getting the downtown organization off the ground
    - 1. “This downtown organization is such a key to this. Without a private-sector partner to program it, maintain it, we’re going to be in same seat we are now.” -Dylan Parker
- e. **If you missed the meeting, please review the three options as well as a video tour of Option 3 and report feedback to Jack by Monday, July 26**

- f. Jack will then work with Streamline to make any updates before taking concept to City Council