MINUTES

COUNCIL DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 – 4:00 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Gary Daniel, Chair, Council Member Geraldine Dinkins, Vice Chair, Council Member Nicole Bentley, Exec Dir. Heart of Brevard Billy Parrish, Heart of Brevard Representative Lee McMinn, Citizen Member
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager Paul Ray, Planning Director Alex Shepherd, Assistant to the City Manager Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator Katherine Buzby, Planner
Guests:	Citizens: Monica Driscoll, Al Platt ; Jim Koffman, First Victory; Clark Lovelace, TDA
Media:	Jon Rich, The Transylvania Times

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Gary Daniel welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified by Assistant to the City Manager Alex Shepherd.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Ms. Dinkins, seconded by Ms. Bentley to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes of October 11, 2023 Meeting

Motion by Ms. Bentley, seconded by Ms. Dinkins to approve the minutes of the October 11, 2023 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Downtown Tree Update

Mr. Ray informed the committee that staff has been exploring options for replacing downtown trees due to the committee pointing out their lack of size. He said that Arbor was the firm that we used during the Downtown Project, so I have worked with them to identify potential opportunities for changing out some of the trees, and they provided us with a report. In the report, they point out that there are existing underground utilities such as new electrical conduit and irrigation. Mr. Ray said that because of this, there are only a few locations that are suitable for an increase in tree size. He said in Times Arcade Alley, the current plan calls for a three-inch caliper tree but that we may be able to upgrade to a four-inch caliper tree depending on when they complete landscaping. Mr. Ray said the American Yellowwood and American Linden trees are the two trees that were recommended.

Mr. Daniel asked does this report includes the idea that we should be more focused on urban trees rather than native trees.

Mr. Ray said the trees we focused on were from the plans that council approved.

Mr. Daniel mentioned I understand that you may feel constrained by what council originally approved but there is a valid question of whether or not these are the right trees because the original list was made using native trees.

Mr. Parrish said I think that having native trees is a great idea; however, in this urban environment, they may not be the best choice.

Ms. Dinkins asked when Arbor presented their elevation sketch of the trees, was it a representation of the trees at maturity or what they would look like after a few years? Also, how large were the original trees.

Mr. Ray stated that the sketch showed the trees at maturity and that the original Bradford Pear trees were a couple of stories tall. He said that the American Yellowwood grows to be twenty-five to thirty-five feet tall.

Mr. Hooper said that he will communicate with the engineer at Times Arcade Alley to construct this space in such a way to accommodate a larger tree than what the plans state.

Mr. Parrish added that if the designs could also include tree sizes as the tree ages so that we can have a better idea of how that will look in the future.

Mr. Ray said that we are looking for medium-sized canopy trees that will do well in a confined urban area. Also, it would be nice if they were native, but they don't have to be, and we will also ensure that they are non-evasive.

F. Times Arcade Alley Update

Mr. Hooper informed the committee that we held the bid opening last week, and we did not have the required three bidders to proceed. It is currently being readvertised, and we plan to hold the second bid opening on Monday, November 13th. At that time, we can open the bids; it doesn't have to be three. Our consultant will then spend the week ensuring the bid is responsive and meets all criteria. The consultant should have their recommendation back to us by November 20th so we can come to the Council Meeting that night with a recommendation on which bid to accept. Currently, we have $1.08 million budgeted for this project; if they come in over budget, then we will bring Council a funding strategy and the corresponding budget amendments. If all goes according to schedule, then the notice to proceed will go out right after the first of the year, with construction starting in the first or second week of January. One of the requirements of the contract was that a portion of the alley will remain open at all times so that it will never be completely blocked during construction.

G. Clemson Plaza Fountain Update

Mr. Koffman communicated to the committee that he built the proposal similarly to the original plan. He added a heater for year-round operation and increased the size of the water collection basin. The proposal also includes lights, river rocks, and brick pavers to act as a barrier between the river rocks.

Mr. Parrish mentioned that if we are going to have a more artistic fountain, then we need additional visuals to know exactly what we are getting because I think everyone has their own thoughts about how it's going to look.

Mr. Daniel said that during my career, I have had to provide physical samples, and I think the committee would like to see a sample piece of rock from which the fountain will be constructed.

Ms. Dinkins informed the committee that Clemson Plaza is at the half-million-dollar mark in terms of construction costs. In my opinion, we are going to throw good money after bad. She said that I think we need to do better in terms of the soundscape because the traffic noise coming from the road is too loud. Ms. Dinkins said I don't think we are thinking about adding a purpose to the plaza.

Mr. Parrish mentioned that if we don't have the cash on hand to spend funds on an expensive water fountain project, then we should look at making the plaza more purposeful by adding tables and benches. But I think that we should evaluate the purpose of Clemson Plaza.

Ms. Bentley pointed out that it's curious that the green space next to the barber shop and across the street from Clemson Plaza is used, but not the plaza. We know it's not a good event space because the traffic noise is too loud and it's difficult to have a conversation. However, I am not sure that investing $60,000 or $70,000 into a water feature is our next step, but I am unsure what to do. Unless it's very incremental, like

placing tables with umbrellas and benches. I think the pocket park across the street has the luxury of shade and grass, unlike Clemson Plaza, even though it is in the same exact position as the plaza in terms of traffic flow.

Mr. Parrish asked the committee if we can all agree that Clemson Plaza needs a feature to make it more comfortable for the users of the plaza.

Mr. Ray said, if we are trying to get people to go to the plaza, then art is related to this conversation. Art is something that people will cross the street to go view up close, like a mural, sculpture, or fountain.

Mr. Daniel mentioned that there is validity in the committee concluding that the plaza is uncomfortable and not pleasant to use due to traffic noise, temperatures during the summer, and the benches. I would like to see the committee establish a direction or action at this point, but I personally do not know what that may be. It seems to me the original idea of placing picnic tables there is a cheaper alternative at this point.

Mr. McMinn said that we already have picnic tables downtown that are across the street and near Times Arcade Alley. I would like to vote to proceed with the fountain, a mural, and would also like to see us adjust the benches to make them more comfortable.

Mr. Platt said that he has been struggling with what to make of Clemson Plaza for a long time but didn't have any suggestions. However, he thinks that we need to gradually account for the purposes that we can accomplish there. It is a hot, noisy, and unsafe space, so we need to quiet it down. It does help that pedestrians can walk through the plaza instead of having to walk on the sidewalk close to the road where eighteen-wheelers are passing by. It is a question of what this committee would like to reintroduce carefully, like a place to sit because the seating is uncomfortable, some shade, and some sound control by adding soft materials like trees, plants, or adding greenery to the wall there.

Mr. Lovelace mentioned that Clemson Plaza was well-intended but it doesn't work. The TDA has three grant funding programs. However, the one that applies to this project would be the destination infrastructure grant. The TDA would be interested in possibly providing funding for an investment in Clemson Plaza, whether that be a mural or adding more comfortable seating. But there are other things like bike racks and signage. What matters to the TDA is that you have good projects that align with our objectives and that it's shovel-ready. I want this committee to know that you have an interested partner that is willing to make it better.

Ms. Driscoll said that she got excited about the possibility of adding a water feature that would make Clemson Plaza more soothing. She mentioned that she has problems with adding a mural to the plaza because it is so subjective. I think that by adding greenery, plants, and shade would help improve the plaza.

Mr. Hooper said the only thing that I was able to gain a consensus on at the plaza are items that we currently have in our inventory, like tables and awnings, and we can look into adding those.

Mr. Daniel stated at this point, let's not move forward with the water feature, and Mr. Koffman does not need to provide a sample of the materials.

H. Additional Comments

Ms. Bentley informed the committee that she spoke to the Mayor and confirmed that all downtown green space bulb outs were adopted. However, she has questions about what that looks like in terms of their service or maintenance schedule.

Ms. Buzby said when she designed the program, she left it open-ended. When you adopt a bulb out, it involves picking up trash, helping with weeding, and if adopters want to make changes, they can come back to the parks and trails committee for approval, such as adding native flowers.

Ms. Bentley commented that it seems awkward that the parks and trails committee could make a decision about the implementation of foliage in the bulb-outs downtown and not the downtown master plan committee.

Ms. Buzby said, technically, yes. However, the purpose of adopting a green space is to help maintain it, not to make changes to it.

Ms. Bentley stated that it is interesting that the parks and trails committee is making decisions that affect downtown, and decisions like this should be brought before the downtown master plan committee.

Mr. Hooper explained that they brought the adopt-a-bulb-out program to parks and trails because it was an established program, similar to adopt-a-green-space, which they modeled this program after. The bulb-outs were new and ready-made for evaluation. However, it is logical that they should come to this committee in the future.

Ms. Bentley communicated that she would like to see a downtown maintenance schedule made because it keeps getting brought up with business owners, residents, and visitors.

I. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council Downtown Master Plan Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 4:00 PM.

J. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:29 PM.

Minutes Approved - January 10, 2024

X _____
Gary Daniel
Chair, Council Member

X _____
Alex Shepherd
Assistant to the City Manager