



Minutes Tempe City Council and Downtown Tempe Authority Joint Meeting March 24, 2016

Minutes of the Tempe City Council and Downtown Tempe Authority Joint Meeting held on Thursday, March 24, 2016, 8:30 a.m., at 80 East Rio Salado Parkway (Hayden Ferry I), Suite 401, Tempe, Arizona.

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Mark W. Mitchell (DTA Board member) *(arrived at 9:03 a.m.)*
Councilmember Robin Arredondo-Savage
Councilmember Joel Navarro
Vice Mayor Corey D. Woods
Councilmember Lauren Kubly

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT:

Councilmember Kolby Granville
Councilmember David Schapira

DOWNTOWN TEMPE AUTHORITY (DTA) BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Chair Charles Huellmantel
Treasurer Charles Goffnett
Past Chair Spike Lawrence
Executive Director/President Kate Borders (Board Secretary)

DOWNTOWN TEMPE AUTHORITY (DTA) BOARD OF DIRECTORS ABSENT:

Vice Chair Matt Mooney
Board member Daniel Dahl
Board member Tony Fletcher
Board member Darwyn Harp
Board member Ken McKenzie
Board member Jim O'Meara
Board member Angela Creedon
Board member Bonnie Ender
Board member Grady Gammage
Board member Cheryl Hornyman (Advisory)

DTA STAFF PRESENT:

Kate Borders, Executive Director/President
Jane Mitniss, Executive Assistant/Office Manager

OTHERS PRESENT:

Patricia Diross, Salt River Project
Katie Prendergast, Arizona Public Service
Daniel A. Biederman, President, Biederman Redevelopment Ventures (BRV)
Benjamin Donsky, BRV
Rod Rodarte, BRV
Sheila Schmidt, Ryan Companies
Richard Flierl, President/Principal, Katalyst
Clare McReynolds, BRV

CITY OF TEMPE STAFF PRESENT:

Andrew B. Ching, City Manager (DTA Board member)
Judi Baumann, City Attorney
Donna Kennedy, Economic Development Director
Dave Nakagawara, Community Development Director
Nikki Ripley, Communication & Media Relations Manager
Ken Jones, Deputy City Manager – Chief Financial Officer
Kay Savard, Deputy City Clerk
Ryan Levesque, Deputy Community Development Dir. - Planning
Shelley Hearn, Community Services Director
Elizabeth Higgins, Mayor/City Council Chief of Staff

Parrish Spisz, Council Aide
Sylvia Moir, Police Chief
Noah Johnson, Police Lieutenant
Craig Fredricks, FMR Assistant Chief
Paul Nies, FMR Assistant Chief
Hans Silberschlag, FMR Assistant Chief
Paul Bentley, Deputy Human Services Director - Human Services Administration

Kristin Gwinn, Council Aide
John Rush, Assistant Police Chief
Greg Ruiz, Fire Medical Rescue (FMR) Department Chief
Tony Miano, Deputy Public Works Director – Field Operations

The meeting convened at 8:49 a.m.

Kate Borders, Downtown Tempe Authority (DTA) Executive Director/President, welcomed participants to the meeting.

Downtown Tempe Authority (DTA) Draft Master Plan

Kate Borders, DTA Executive Director/President, stated that the DTA gave Biederman Redevelopment Ventures and Katalyst the charge of what can the DTA do to create a vision for the future of downtown Tempe. The process began in August 2015 with the goal of making the downtown a globally recognized destination.

Dan Biederman, President, Biederman Redevelopment Ventures (BRV), delivered a slide presentation of illustrations of areas in various cities that BRV has worked with to activate public open spaces to make the spaces more engaging; this activity generates value for citizens and increases property values. BRV has worked in 13 states and with eight clients that have a university in their city or town. Arizona State University (ASU) has an impact on potential downtown tenants, residents, and attracting conventions.

Mr. Biederman noted that Tempe is a business-friendly environment with its downtown located near light rail. Increasing density for retail activity would have a positive impact on the downtown. Street density complements pedestrian activity. Activating spaces is also a strategy to address homelessness issues.

Richard Flierl, President/Principal, Katalyst, discussed the environmental transformation of various communities and the benefits derived from those changes. He outlined Tempe's peer cities in the Valley and stated that Tempe's peers should be Austin, Berkeley, California, Raleigh, North Carolina and Boulder, Colorado. These cities also have research institutions. Currently public open spaces are impacted by people that invest in the community. Moving forward, corporations, workers, graduates, tourists, and residents will impact future public open spaces; this approach leads to growth and attracts visitors. Mr. Biederman stated that Tempe is positioned to attract conferences due to its proximity to light rail and various dining options; public open spaces could be a critical component to convention activity.

Benjamin Donsky, BRV, stated that leveraging public open spaces is an economic development tool that creates value. He discussed economic impacts that have occurred in various jurisdictions as a result of activating public open spaces. Various studies have been conducted regarding the effects that parks have on real estate values, taxes, and attracting development. He then outlined the goals of the strategic plan and discussed existing assets in Tempe; Mill Avenue is a world-class street that is compact and walkable.

Mr. Donsky outlined the findings of a 10-year real estate market analysis and a public space market analysis for the downtown. During non-event times, Tempe Beach Park is empty. In the future, he believes that Tempe will not have the issue of public spaces becoming too crowded or too dense. The goal is to assess and activate small public open spaces. Obstacles to consider include downtown noise, homelessness, panhandling, and unengaging retail storefronts and merchandizing displays.

Mr. Donsky discussed various workshops that were conducted to seek feedback regarding how the public would like the open spaces to be used, what types of events should be programmed in the spaces, day versus evening events, and how large the size of events should be. The findings indicated that there are a lot of large events in Tempe; residents prefer more small and medium scale events that can occur in smaller areas in the downtown. Tempe Beach Park in its entirety is 25 acres. Barriers to making Tempe Beach Park more active include the special events permitting process and substantial capital investments that are needed.

In the short term, Mr. Donsky stated that the recommendation is to concentrate on activating the network of small public spaces over the next couple of years; the spaces total approximately four acres; daily programming would be highly orchestrated and organized, and intensively managed. This will create a walkable environment from Tempe Beach Park to University Drive, and could extend to Gammage Auditorium. Mr. Donsky outlined various programming activities that could activate the spaces and provided illustrations of proposed spaces that could be used for these purposes; wireless technology and seating should be available throughout the downtown. Special events would complement the daily programming. The DTA could coordinate activities with ASU. Because of Arizona's climate, programming can be done year-round.

To accomplish the activation of spaces, Mr. Donsky stated the noise will need to be reduced. Ways to do that are to change the noise ordinance and incentivize bar owners to not play loud music from speakers aimed towards the street. Resetting the homeless to non-homeless ratio will also need to be addressed; the sidewalk sitting ordinance will help. Enforcement of the aggressive panhandling ordinance is important. The DTA will retain experts to advise retail business owners on ways to improve their storefront appearance; physical upgrades to spaces may be needed. The DTA is assessing their resources to ensure that they are able to manage these programs.

Mayor Mitchell noted that Tempe has some narrow streets and asked how appropriate density and scalability are determined to ensure that the public does not avoid the area due to traffic congestion. Mr. Donsky stated that certain types of dense projects that are the appropriate scale can reduce traffic congestion. Traffic should be encouraged on streets that offer retail options. Mayor Mitchell stated that the City Council supports density and that the City offers multi-modal transportation options, but traffic congestion is a challenge. Mr. Bierderman stated that in his opinion, the traffic movement in Tempe is in a favorable range, even during rush hour. He added that there are many benefits of residential density in the downtown.

Councilmember Kuby discussed the importance of having a buffer zone between density and historic neighborhoods. Mr. Donsky stated that one of the goals is to provide tools that channel development to the appropriate places. There is a demand for growth in this region. Councilmember Navarro asked how dense development impacts historic neighborhoods. Mr. Bierderman explained that retail density creates an atmosphere that encourages walking, which would not adversely impact a historic neighborhood. Mr. Donsky stated that there are cities where density and historical neighborhoods co-exist. Vice Mayor Woods stated that he feels that having spaces more activated is good for economic reasons and provides a safer environment. He also believes that residents would embrace smaller scale events versus large events.

Mr. Flierl discussed the streetscape and the scale of the street wall. There is a study underway regarding linking streetcar stops. There are multi-modal transportation options that co-exist in equal proportion to one another. Sidewalk linkages create foot traffic, which is an economic generator for retail businesses. Scale is addressed when the pedestrian zone and the auto zone are the correct dimension to the street wall. The quality of the lower levels of buildings is critical to space activation, with the upper level of buildings becoming part of the street scene.

Mr. Flierl stated that Ash Avenue, University Drive, Mill Avenue, and Rio Salado Parkway are streets that link to larger spaces. There are various infill opportunities in the downtown that could support density. Tempe Beach Park consists of 25 acres of public open space; scale is an issue. Mr. Donsky noted that coordination of public and private sector resources can be used to redevelop and manage public open spaces.

During the workshops, Mr. Flierl stated that residents indicated that they are not able to use Tempe Beach Park because it is too crowded during large events. Mr. Donsky showed an illustration of a bifurcated Tempe Beach Park, which can serve as a location for special events and can be used daily by Tempe residents.

Mr. Flierl then discussed a recommendation to expand the underutilized lawn at the Tempe Center for the Arts (TCA) into a sculpture garden and expand activities at the TCA facility. Infill facilities could be added along Rio Salado Parkway to make it a walkable street. Extension of the Town Lake to the east could serve as a research facility along the waterfront. Activation of the University Drive and 9th Street surface parking lot could be used as a space for an entrepreneurial village to activate the streetscape; when the parking lot is developed, the village can be relocated. Public open space activation leads to growth and development on vacant sites. There are also opportunities to relink the street grid at Gammage Auditorium.

Councilmember Navarro left the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Donsky stated that activation of public open spaces will require resources from the private sector, the City, and ASU. Councilmember Kuby discussed climate change and asked if trees, shade, and installing solar technology are included in the planning of spaces. She noted that ASU is currently working with various stakeholders on community cooling stations; community engagement is an important part of this process. Mr. Donsky stated that detailed recommendations include information regarding public engagement. He also agreed that community outreach is a key component to the process.

Donna Kennedy, Economic Development Director, suggested extending the walking path from the TCA to Gammage Auditorium to create a master arts plan. She also supported the entrepreneurial village concept and suggested that this process be taken into considering during the Character Area planning process. Ryan Levesque, Deputy Community Development Director – Planning, stated that there may be constraints and land protections in the Town Lake area that is proposed to be used as a research facility. Mr. Flierl stated that the research could be moveable and would not necessarily impact the ground area along the Town Lake. The research environment will provide an opportunity to determine what types of shade vegetation are sustainable in Tempe’s climate; the research could also include a food garden and would beautify the space. Flexibility with the space includes creating shade that is relocatable and creating rooms in various areas. Mr. Levesque stated that the City has an Urban Forestry Program that may provide useful data for this project.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

I, Kay Savard, the duly-appointed Deputy City Clerk of the City of Tempe, Maricopa County, Arizona, do hereby certify the above to be the minutes of the Tempe City Council and Downtown Tempe Authority Joint Meeting held on March 24, 2016, in Tempe, Arizona.

ATTEST:

Mark W. Mitchell, Mayor

Kay Savard, Deputy City Clerk