

DDD Commission Meeting  
October 13, 2020, 8:00 a.m.  
Old State Capitol, 100 North Boulevard

Attending: Scott Hensgens, Melanie Montanaro, Jude Melville, Eric Dexter,

Absent: Erin Monroe Wesley, Madeline Brown, Prescott Bailey

Others in Attendance: Davis Rhorer, Holly Duchmann, Jay Gaudet, Rosehn Gipe, Jeannie Magdefrau, Aaron Molwa, Mary Jane Marcantel, Taylor Jacobsen, Diane Zhang, Elizabeth Walker, Carolyn R. Coleman, Chris Nichols, Paul Arrigo, Karron Alford, Miguel Rodriguez, Suzette Crocker, Tim Boone, Renee Chatelain, Deborah Buckley, Casey Tate, Gabe Vicknair, Ute Cress, Ashton Breeding, Frederick Sargent

1. Mr. Scott Hensgens called the meeting to order.
2. Mr. Scott Hensgens declared a quorum.
3. Mr. Eric Dexter moved to approve the agenda and the September 8, 2020 minutes, Mr. Jude Melville seconded and the agenda & minutes were approved.

**4. Board Action** – There was no board action.

**5. Governmental Issues - 2021 DDD Budget Request** – Mr. Davis Rhorer presented the Commission the DDD 2021 Budget Request which is introduced in October and voted on in November. The budget request is \$812,230, based upon the 2020 budget. Mr. Rhorer explained the original budget for 2020 was \$762,590 but the actual was \$838,481 which left DDD with a portion of funds that were not budgeted. There is a fund balance of \$500,000 of which \$100,000 will be available to fund some additional items. These Riverfront projects within the Master Plan/ Plan BR II include Riverfront Plaza Visitor Amenities, Downtown Interstate Gateway Enhancements under the interstate and energizing approximately 500 free additional public parking spaces for office workers and service industry personnel who cannot afford to pay for parking. Mr. Rhorer stated the City of Baton Rouge will be installing 800 parking meters/stations. Other initiatives are River Road Pedestrian Improvements & the Arts and Entertainment Beautification and Streetscape Improvements.

**Mission, Goals and Strategic Initiatives:**

- Effective & Efficient Government: to interact with the City on a daily basis for implementation of various projects, such as the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Street bike lanes.
- Public Safety Interfacing: working with BR Police Department and also “street people”- those people who are homeless and those who do have homes, but live on the streets.
- Infrastructure Enhancements Growth Management: developing the Riverfront Plaza as recommended in Plan BR, complete construction of the North Boulevard Town Square, continue to work with the administration on Capital Outlay Funds, Federal Grants and Federal Appropriations.
- Economic Development: implement action items recommended from Plan BR II, increased housing, connectivity and greening out the realms in addition to a host of other projects. The downtown commercial activity continues to increase along with the residential units in and around downtown, increasing the amount of greenspace and bicycle amenities.

- Design Resource Center: developing the use of the DDD office for meetings for both private and public sector developers and designers while providing additional outreach service focused on downtown development.
- Arts and Entertainment District: Develop economic strategy, develop private streetscape maintenance program, including maintenance of tree wells, general litter and sidewalk cleaning. Quality for community and family life, constantly promoting events in the downtown area. The downtown area was having 1000 events per year, both outside and inside; this obviously has slowed down but is starting to pick back up such as the Arts Council's, "Sunday in the Park", this past Sunday which was successful.

**Current COVID 19 Orders** – Currently Baton Rouge is at Phase III with bars allowing to open at a 25% capacity limit indoors (or up to 50 people, whichever is less), tableside service only, an outdoor capacity of 50 people, alcohol sales ending at 11:00 p.m., and a ban on live music. Live music and other entertainment venues remain closed.

**Scooter Ordinance (Draft)** – Mr. Rhorer highlighted a proposed draft ordinance, regulating electric scooters/share mobility devices in Baton Rouge. The ordinance will allow licensing for up to two companies for three years. The devices will not be allowed on sidewalks and parking "corrals" may be defined in certain areas. The devices will also be rebalanced daily; the intent of the ordinance is to keep the public safe and the public realm uncluttered. The ordinance will be introduced at the Council meeting tomorrow, Wednesday, October 14 and go before Council for action in two weeks on October 28, 2020. A copy of the draft ordinance will be placed on the DDD website.

**6. Update from Previous Board Meeting** – International Downtown Association (IDA) Award of Excellence: Downtown Baton Rouge was featured on the IDA zoom where DDD was presented with the Award of Excellence for the Central Green in a virtual awards presentation. Mr. Davis stated the IDA members were able to read and ask questions about Baton Rouge which was great exposure both nationally and internationally. Mr. Rhorer thanked all those who worked on this project; there were many people involved, his staff, the Mayor's Office, DPW and the visionaries who came up with the idea of the Central Greenway.

**7. Development Initiatives – Developments Underway** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, videos and photographs of current projects. Mr. Rhorer briefed the Commission on the following projects:

- A. **Travel and Tourism** – Karron Alford with Visit Baton Rouge (VBR) updated the Commission on tourism and travel facts for Louisiana. VBR follows a research company, "Destination Analyst", who does a weekly survey to monitor and track travel, in which VBR participates. The most recent findings show that for the first time, people are more willing to travel now or to begin thinking about traveling in the near future. This information is being monitored closely because this summer when Louisiana experienced a resurgence of Covid cases, the travel sentiment quickly changed. They also are looking at how face masks are viewed in travel and tourism related advertising placement. As determined from the most recent research, there is a positive perception by individuals who see masks on ads that are promoting tourism.
- B. **River Center Theatre** – The Commission viewed a PowerPoint showing new images for the completion of the River Center Theatre with a goal to be completed by March 31, 2021. This date will not be the opening date; a punch list will be completed before officially opening. Mr. Rhorer showed an image of the lobby which will be much larger,

approximately 8,000 square feet, which will also function as a reception hall, huge lights that will have sculpture pieces hanging from them, and two elevators in the facility.

- C. **Water Campus on Oklahoma Street** – Mr. Davis Rhorer showed the Commission, via PowerPoint, photographs of the near completion of the Water Campus Street. Mr. Rhorer stated they are probably waiting on the railroad in order to be complete with this project. This will open up the east/west corridor from River Road to Nicholson Drive. 200 Water Street is the residential development, the 20 plus units are scheduled to open in November 2020.
- D. **Spencer Callahan Offices** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, an image of the completed office complex. Mr. Casey Tate stated the DDD Commission will have a meeting scheduled there in 2021.
- E. **The Elysian III Apartments, Spanish Town Road** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint images of the Elysian III development. These are residential apartments under construction, with a total of 42 units. These will be a mixture of workforce housing and market rent, Gulf Coast Housing Partnership is the developer for this project.

**Hollywood Casino Landside Improvements** - The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of an aerial of Hollywood Casino. Jeannie Magdefrau, Hollywood Casino General Manager briefed the Commission on the plans for the renovations and additions to the Casino. The existing pavilion is 64,000 square feet and they plan on adding 38,000 square feet for a total of over 100,000 square feet. This will include a 27,000 square foot single level casino. The existing casino/ship will be moved from the dock allowing cruise lines coming to Baton Rouge to dock there. There will be two entrances into the Casino. One of the entrances will be utilized for non-gaming guests. This entrance will include a sports bar/entertainment venue with seating for about 250 and a mezzanine/outdoor area overlooking the Mississippi River. Ms. Magdefrau shared a video from LSU legend Shaquille O’Neal, who’s bringing his Big Chicken restaurant to the Casino. Big Chicken is a fast-casual restaurant offering fried chicken, barbecue and “adult milkshakes.”

The new construction will create approximately 166 construction jobs with a \$10 million payroll; construction is expected to begin in spring 2021.

**MLK Sculpture Restoration** – Renee Chatelain, President of the Arts Council briefed the Commission on the proposed restoration of the MLK Sculpture. The sculpture, which is in a state of disrepair, was created by Arthur Silverman an artist from New Orleans. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation approached the Arts Council to raise funds and coordinate the restoration. Ms. Chatelain explained there is an Ordinance #9390 which requires the Arts Council to have an Art in Public Places Advisory Committee (APPAC) comprised with individuals in certain expertise. The Committee raises funds and will work with the Arts Council to oversee the maintenance and restoration of the MLK sculpture and many other public art pieces in the Baton Rouge area.

**333 Third Street Acquisition** – Mr. Rhorer briefed the Commission on the acquisition of the property at 333 Third Street by Chad Hughes, which houses his City Bar. Mr. Hughes will open a Mexican restaurant, Rio Tacos and Tequila, on the ground floor of the building, beneath City Bar, and plans on opening in November.

**Downtown Multi-Family Leasing** – Mr. Davis Rhorer briefed the Commission on the increase of multi-family housing available in the downtown area, such as The Heron, The Commerce

Building, The Elias and the conversion of other buildings for residential use in addition to new construction.

**Valencia Park Apartments** – Mr. Davis Rhorer showed the Commission images, via PowerPoint, of the new Valencia Park Apartments. Valencia has been approved and permitted, it is a 122 unit located off of Spanish Town Road in Downtown East. The development will consist of 62 one bedroom, 54 two bedroom and 6 three bedroom which 80% of the units will be Government assisted.

**Motor City Apartments** – Mr. Davis Rhorer showed the Commission images, via PowerPoint, of Motor City, a proposed new residential development in the Downtown East area at the corner of North Boulevard and Scenic Highway. The apartments will consist of 110 units on a two acre tract of land. Renaissance Neighborhood Development is developing this and also the Valencia Park Apartments. The Planning Commission will consider this Development this month.

**Riverview Condominiums** – Mr. Davis Rhorer showed the Commission images, via PowerPoint, of 40 newly renovated units by Tiger Town Realty at Riverview Condominiums. These are located on River Road in the northern part of the downtown area, just north of Hollywood Casino. James Crump with Tiger Town Realty will be attending the DDD meeting next month to speak more about this project.

**Bike Improvements Fifth/Sixth Streets** - Mr. Davis Rhorer showed the Commission images, via PowerPoint of the bike sharrow on Fifth and Sixth Streets between Spanish Town Road and North Boulevard. The bike sharrow is just temporary and bike lanes are being proposed, however a study needs to be conducted on a few busy intersections along the route.

**Mayor's Homelessness Prevention Coalition** – Mr. Davis Rhorer briefed the Commission on the update of the Mayor's Homelessness Coalition. The Coalition has met and is trying to coordinate the agencies involved through communication so each agency will know what the other is working on. The goal is to have a Shared Personal Identification System and have dedicated Case Workers for the downtown area in order to help prevent and eradicate homelessness, in addition to work upon the work and success Ms. Chris Nichols and Ms. Mary Jane Marcantel have done with the homeless.

**Rotary Sculpture Upgrades** - The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, an image of the proposed upgrades for the Rotary Sculpture. Mr. Davis Rhorer showed images of "The Bean" sculpture in Chicago being illuminated by colored lights; this is similar to what is being considered in the next phase of upgrades to the Rotary Sculpture.

**Downtown Programming – Outdoor Programming** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, photographs of individuals engaged in a Pop-up Barre class on Sunday morning and Jolie Pearl Yoga Club on Thursday evenings, in North Boulevard Town Square both have joined up with Jolie Pearl. Busking on Third is a new entertainment series with individual acoustic artists performing on the streetscape during the weekdays on the corner of Florida and Third Streets at the Starbucks.

Mr. Davis Rhorer introduced Ute Cress as the DDD's new employee as the replacement for Mary Olinde who retired earlier this year.

**Riverfront Plaza Phase II & III** – Mr. Gabe Vicknair updated The Commission on the completion of Phase I, Riverfront Plaza. Mr. Vicknair highlighted the different phases of construction for Phase II & III. Phase II includes landscaping along River Road with an

additional pedestrian crossing as close to the River Center Exhibition Hall as possible. Phase III will include a shade structure on the landing area close to the Dock, providing shade for general public use and will include an exercise area/fitness station. The next step will be to select design consultants. Construction is expected to begin in 2021.

**Downtown Greenway / Public Parking** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, photographs of the Downtown Greenway showing numerous runners over the weekend utilizing the Greenway path, which will take you to the LSU Lakes. Mr. Rhorer informed the Commission that the lighting is being completed and a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony will take place soon.

Mr. Rhorer stated the DDD is seeking funding for improvements for the area under Interstate 110 for public parking. Mr. Rhorer informed the commission there are over 400 free public parking spaces available, he stated the importance of energizing the space with lighting, cameras and other amenities to beautify the area for public use.

**New Businesses** - The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, photographs of the Legacy on 14<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Rhorer briefed the Commission regarding Anthony Kimble who redeveloped the former art studio as shared working spaces for several businesses during the work week and as an event space on weekends with a rooftop deck.

**8. Events** - The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images for the following events. Mr. Casey Tate briefed the Commission on the following events and stated events are returning to the downtown area.

- Preserve Louisiana / Old Governor’s Mansion – Ghost Stories and Rituals
- Manship Theatre – In person event - Spoof Night
- LSU MOA – Film Screen and Exhibition
- Capitol Park Museum – Lunchtime Lagniappe & Movies After Five
- Old State Capitol – George Washington: The Myths and the Man
- River Center Events – Ice Skating Beginning after Thanksgiving
- LASM – Frank Hayden: Downtown Walking Tour & Free First Sundays beginning in November
- USS KIDD – Open Daily
- Opera Louisiane – October 23 Riverfront Plaza

**9. Ongoing Projects** – Mr. Davis Rhorer recognized Mrs. Copper Alvarez who announced she’ll be retiring as Executive Director of BREADA at the end of the year. Mrs. Alvarez has been with BREADA for 19 years and has run the Red Stick Farmers Market and Main Street Market. Mr. Rhorer commended Mrs. Alvarez who has done an incredible job on the many years of work she has done with the markets. Mr. Rhorer stated the BREADA Board is seeking applicants for a new Director.

**10. Correspondence** – There was no information to report.

**11. Public Comment** –Mr. Frederick Sargent introduced himself to the Commission as the company that has the “walking billboards” downtown and wanted everyone to know that they now have small advertising trucks.

**Meeting Adjourned** – Mr. Scott Hensgens moved to adjourn the meeting, Mrs. Melanie Montanaro seconded and the meeting was adjourned.