

# DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

October 8, 2024

Louisiana Arts & Science Museum, 100 S. River Road

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mr. Eric Dexter-Chairman, Mr. Patrick Michaels-Treasurer, Mr. Gary Jupiter-Secretary, Mr. Joshua Hollins, Mr. Philip Jordan

**Absent:** Mr. Prescott Bailey-Vice Chairman, Ms. Tara Titone

**Others in Attendance:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Casey Tate, Iboro Udoh, Schuyler Olson, Ute Cress, Mary Jane Marcantel, Colleen Rials, Darins Kors, Bridget Gaffney, Jason Crain, Amanda Lanata, Adrienne K. Horn, Yolandre McCray-Moore, Amelia Gabor, Garrick Rose, Rannah Gray, Jordan Arceneaux, Laticia King, Reginald Brumfield, Marty Engquist, John Spain, Judy Foust, Chuck Booksh, Barry Gambold, Caroline Cassagne, Collin Lindrew, Sherreta R. Harrison, Landon Hester, Carolyn Coleman, Sarah Noles, Nick Lanata, Luke Lognion, Jasmine Thomas, Brian Gallion, Madelyn Neilsen, Mark Goodson, Tinesha and Adbel Raof, Jason Langlois, Carla Greenup, Brian & Molly, Dwight Green, Darlene Rowland, Landon Hester, Councilwoman Carolyn R, Coleman

Whitney Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone to the Louisiana Arts & Science Museum (LASM) for the DDD Commission meeting and introduced Karen Soniat, LASM's Executive Director. Ms. Soniat announced a new exhibit at LASM titled Discoveries on the Nile: "Exploring Kung Tut's Tomb and the Amin Egyptian Collection" that opened on Friday night at the gala. The year-long exhibit celebrates the 60th anniversary of acquiring the Egyptian mummy at LASM. Tracey Barhoirst, Curator and Public Programs Manager will lead a short tour of the exhibit after the meeting.

1. Eric Dexter called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.
2. Joshua Hollins moved to approve the agenda, Gary Jupiter seconded and the motion was approved.
3. Gary Jupiter motioned to approve the minutes from the August 13, 2024 meeting, Joshua Hollins seconded and the motion was approved.

#### 4. Governmental Issues:

- **DDD Government Issues Webpage** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. The DDD recently created a resource page for City and State Government commissions, boards, and committees on the DDD website. This page was created as our stakeholders' go-to source to find governmental resources and public information. The DDD navigates the complexities of regulatory requirements, advocates for policies that benefit the downtown area, and informs stakeholders about downtown items discussed/voted on at public meetings that impact them.
- **DDD/Visit Baton Rouge Gateway Enhancements** – The Commission viewed a rendering, via PowerPoint, of proposed artistic lighting under the I-110 underpass, a project DDD has been working on with DOTD. Whitney Hoffman Sayal thanked Visit Baton Rouge for contributing \$100,000 for this project towards the lighting enhancements that will be installed from Louisiana Avenue (which connects the Government Street bike lanes to the Downtown Greenway) to North Boulevard. The funding from Visit

Baton Rouge will go to the Metro Council for introduction tomorrow and to full Council in two weeks for approval.

- **River Center Economic Development District** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission. The River Center Economic District was previously approved by the Metro Council to help generate funding for the transformation of the River Center. A map was shown to the Commissioners which outlines the proposed River Center Economic District which will help attract developers in the RFP process.
- **2024 DDD Tax Millage** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the DDD Tax Millage. All City Parish agencies were given the option to either roll forward or roll back the 2024 Tax Millage. The DDD opted to roll back, keeping the same tax collection next year as this year.
- **Florida Corridor Update** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the Florida Corridor Update Plan. The Florida Corridor Plan was approved on August 19, 2024, by the Planning Commission and was approved at the Metropolitan Council Zoning Meeting, on Wednesday, September 18, 2024. Part of the plan includes the downtown area, referred to as the “I-110 Stitch”. The I-110 Stitch incorporates the areas east and west of Florida Street and I-110, considered the most socially vulnerable and has the greatest potential for change.

#### 5. Update from the Previous Board Meeting

- **HPC-2-24 (103 France Street)** - Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission of the Maritime II Building located at 103 France Street. Previously the casino owners requested a building demolition, however, the Historic Preservation Committee denied the request. The owners then appealed the decision to the Metro Council but deleted the request. A bus tour was formed with community partners to talk with the owners about available historic tax credits and opportunities that can be pursued. In addition, they talked about all the projects around the casino including the River Center, the connection to the River Front, Plan Baton Rouge III, and all the construction taking place around the Water Campus.
- **Plan Baton Rouge III** – Eric Dexter updated the Commission. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation kicked off the initial steps of Baton Rouge III a few months ago members of the plan's advisory committee gathered to discuss how to expand on the accomplishments of Plan Baton Rouge I and II in this new plan. The partners have convened a core steering committee and a broad, diverse set of community advisors to help guide the work of a master planning team. The deadline was closed last month for submitting questions for the proposal; over a dozen questions were submitted. The Plan BR III Questions and Answers and the Request for Proposals (RFP) can be found on the DDD’s website at [www.downtownbatonrouge.org](http://www.downtownbatonrouge.org). The RFP response deadline is October 25, 2024. The selection committee will start reviewing the proposals and then create a shortlist. The candidates from the shortlist will be invited to be interviewed in person, hopefully somewhere downtown. A consultant team will be selected by late November or early December, kicking off the Master Plan by early 2025.
- **River Center Steering Committee** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the River Center Steering Committee which is overseeing the development of the transformation of the River Center. There were two meetings in August and the committee is working on developing an RFP for the developer.

#### 6. Development Initiatives:

- **Downtown Data Update (Placer AI)** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on downtown event data obtained with Placer.ai, a program DDD has been using to determine how many people visit downtown during certain times. The AI data tool can also determine the psychographic demographics within a boundary. This information can be used to determine how to market to those groups. The

DDD has had this program now for about one year. Casey Tate stated the office is learning more about how this data can be applied. The data has transformed our Development Toolkit and has given us different data options on how it can help with businesses and visitors. There is a “civic dashboard” where the DDD can pull up more detailed demographic information on visitors, workers, and residents. Casey stated he pulled the number of visitors during the last 12 months downtown, which is a total of 8.6 million total visits. Looking at the Experian Mosaic tool to look at the demographics, it outlines the five key people into groups, who are visiting downtown helping us to market to these:

- O - Singles and Starter – Young singles starting out and young families living a city lifestyle
- D - Suburban Style – Middle-aged, ethnically-mixed suburban families and couples earning upscale incomes
- A - Power Elite – The wealthiest house households in the US, living in the most exclusive neighborhoods,
- N - Pastoral Pride - Eclectic mix of lower middle-class consumers who have settled in the country
- C - Booming with Confidence – Prosperous, established couples in their peak earning years living in suburban homes.

Casey stated he pulled information from a recent event, the Frankie Beverly Tribute concert, produced by the Mayor’s Office. There were 4.8 thousand unique visitors, the main group visiting was group D the Suburban Style which is a little older crowd, 36-45, with a \$75,000 income range. That was a 12% bump from the normal visitation from that group for an event like this. These are some of the tools we can use from Placer Ai. The DDD can help businesses identify the amount and type of visitors passing by and include the most frequented time.

- **IDA Top Issue Council** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission stating she was honored to be asked to participate in the International Downtown Association's Top Issues Council. For the past few months, she and five other participants representing large, mid-size, and small cities, identified the top issues affecting downtowns adapting to a post-pandemic environment and offered solutions for addressing them, with Downtown Baton Rouge being highlighted as a key case study. The team identified critical issues of investment and offered tools/recommendations for addressing them.

Issues:

- Increasing office vacancies due to downsizing, flight to quality, a weak leasing market, and a shift to remote and hybrid work models.
- Growing ground-floor retail vacancy rates that are directly tied to rising office vacancy rates. This has increased issues relating to safety, and shifts in the retail industry accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A need for greater public-sector investment and how best to communicate that need in this environment.

Tools:

- Identify the changing needs of districts, and adapt to these issues going forward – through clear quantitative and qualitative data
- Tell the district’s story by clearly communicating its needs and engage new and old stakeholders in discussing solutions.
- Identify, advocate, and implement incentives/tools that address identified needs

After determining the top issues, the information was researched and then a brief was written; the brief is about 4-5 pages long and is on the DDD website.

- **Revitalizing Downtowns and Main Street Act (RDMA) Advocacy**—Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission. Whitney attended the International Downtown Association Capitol Hill Fly-In this past spring with other Downtown leaders from around the country to advocate for bills that help downtowns on a federal level. The committee helped advocate for incentives to help the funding needed to fill the financing gaps in office conversions to residential by providing tax credits for office conversions. After months of negotiations and outreach, legislation to provide tax credits for an office conversion bill has been introduced in both chambers of Congress, but more than likely it won't be voted upon until 2025. The bill is very similar to how the Historic Tax Credits work and is a bipartisan bill. If you'd like additional information regarding the bill or help to advocate for the bill, please reach out to the DDD office, our goal is to build as much support as possible now.
- **PARK(ing) Day** – The Commission viewed photos, via PowerPoint, of Park(ing) Day, Iboro Udoh briefed the Commission. Iboro first wanted to thank everyone who came out on Park(ing) Day and those organizations who helped and participated: CPEX, Reich Landscape & Architecture, Sweet Fern, Arts Council, CSRS, Strong Towns, QESLA our LSU Landscape Architect interns. Park(ing) Day is to creatively rethink how to look at the urban landscape, specifically parking spaces to temporarily repurpose curbside parking spaces and convert them into public parks and social spaces to advocate for safer, greener, and more equitable streets for people. This is a temporary installation, but the hope is that it inspires a permanent installation to further the DDD's mission to make downtown more people-centered and a more livable area. The goal is to have the parklets on Third Street from North Boulevard to North Street, this year we made it to Laurel Street. If you are interested in participating next year, the event is usually held in September, reach out to the DDD Office.
- **Third Street Master Plan Survey** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal announced the DDD received supplemental money from the city last year to look at improvements that can be made on Third Street. Whitney introduced Brian Goad with McKnight Landscape Architects who were hired to create a Master Plan for Third Street enhancements to provide general recommendations for streetscape improvements from North Boulevard to North Street. Brian showed slides of Third Street's historic and cultural context. It briefly investigates the cultural importance of Third Street and its relationship to the development of downtown. LSU's campus was located downtown in the early 1900's. During the 1960s student activists from Southern University staged a sit-in at the Kress Store on Third Street, which is now part of the Civil Rights Trail. In the 1970s Third Street was redesigned as an outdoor pedestrian space and rebranded as Riverside Mall. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Third Street started to decline as many historic and architecturally significant buildings were demolished to make way for parking lots and modern office buildings. A concerted effort to revitalize downtown in the 1980s when the DDD was established, with Davis Rhorer as the Director. He worked with developers and stakeholders to bring events and economic development to Third Street. Downtown has come a long way, however, there is still more opportunity for more life, activity, development, and more things to do. Looking at all the historical data, archives, and photos to understand all the historical significance that can guide the next chapter. A survey has been circulated through email and at Park(ing) Day seeking your input on what you love about Third Street and what needs improvement. If you haven't taken the survey, please scan the QR code on the table in the back of the room to take the Third Street survey.

- **ADA Transition Update** – Jason Crain, MOVEBR Deputy Program Manager for the enhancement projects updated the Commission on several ADA transition projects going on downtown.

#### **Downtown ADA Transition Projects**

- Florida Street ADA improvements were completed last year
- Main Street is opening bids for construction next week on October 15
- East Boulevard is currently under construction beginning on East Boulevard near South Boulevard working towards Government Street. Most of the work has been completed from South Boulevard to France, finishing up the work between France and Government Street. In two weeks moving to the North Side of Government on TJ Jemison.
- North Boulevard has started sidewalk grinding and should begin construction soon working block by block. Construction will begin on the north side of North Boulevard and work west toward the river. Work will require temporary closure of on-street parking areas. Work within a block is expected to take 2-4 weeks pending weather. Once the north side is completed, work will move to the south side. Anticipated completion is March 2025.
- Laurel/Lafayette Street is beginning to advertise and should have a bid opening in November.
- South Boulevard should begin construction next week on October 14.

The MOVEBR Roadshow has 4 open house events the Mayor is hosting around the Parish this October. The meetings are to inform the public what projects are being done and the status of the projects. One key project being discussed is the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, part of which is located downtown. Construction has just started on Plank Road, however, there are some bus stops downtown that will be coming in the next few months. The next meeting will be held at the Bluebonnet Library on October 16, from 5:30 -7:30 pm. For any downtown resident or business having construction-related problems that require urgent attention, call 225-389-3123.

- **Downtown Curb Repairs** – Reginald Brumfield, Director of Maintenance with the City of Baton Rouge, updated the Commission on projects happening downtown. The Department of Maintenance is responsible for three divisions, street maintenance, landscaping, and drainage maintenance.
  - This year the Maintenance Department supported 30+ special events
  - The mini vac sweeper was introduced at the Blues Fest and since then, until mid-September 234 bags of litter have been collected from the curbs.
  - Replaced and repaired 337' of concrete curb, year to date.
  - Repaired a major irrigation system in Downtown Square.
  - Levee maintenance, currently has an A+ Rating
  - Daily 57 trash can liners are replaced
  - 24 tree trimming requests resolved
  - 5 sidewalk repairs
  - 4 homeless encampments cleaned, mainly under the Ninth Street overpass
  - Currently working on Christmas and New Year preparations.
- **South Baton Rouge Stakeholder Update** – Laticia King, MetroMorphosis Innovations and Partnership Catalyst, and Sheritta Harrison, Chief Executive Catalyst briefed the Commission. MetroMorphosis is a local nonprofit organization aimed at transforming communities through resident mobilization; they are the gap between residents and resources. For the past 12 years, their mission has been to equip residents with the tools needed to transform their lives. In 2022, Anthony Kimble with Kimble Properties, approached them to utilize his development experience and combine that with

Metamorphosis's community experience to do some amazing things in South Baton Rouge. The district overlaps the southeastern end of the Downtown Development District and is bound on the north and south by North Boulevard and Terrace, on the east and west by South 18<sup>th</sup> Street and the interstate. Future projects include the renovation of the Lincoln Theatre as well as Hotel Lincoln. Metromorphosis began identifying partners and organizations already working, interested in working in the area, and residents who are committed to building the community and making this area what the residents want to see. Stakeholders include DDD, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Baton Rouge Area Chamber, BREC, Arts Council, and others. The group began having conversations with residents as to how they want their community to develop and shape over the next few years. The community wants a self-sufficient thriving community that values its residents, history, arts, and culture with clean green spaces and increased homeownership among long-term tenants. The community aspiration developed four workgroups:

- Culture and community voice
- Business infrastructure and partnerships
- Public safety and quality of life
- Housing and homeownership

All workgroups have developed strategies and plans and are at the refinement and development stage of some of the workgroups. If you would like additional information and give us feedback contact [Laticia@metromorphosis.net](mailto:Laticia@metromorphosis.net).

- **DDD Neighborhood Event** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on a neighborhood event the DDD will be hosting. Last fall the DDD Strategic Plan was approved, part of the plan discussed connecting with the downtown neighborhoods. The Downtown Development District is hosting a neighborhood resident meet-up on Tuesday, October from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the River Center Branch Library. The free event will give residents a chance to share ideas and explore how the downtown neighborhoods can unite to build a stronger and more connected community.
- **New Businesses:**
  - **Violet Night Club, 214 3<sup>rd</sup> Street** – Violet Nightclub is a luxurious, Vegas-inspired venue held its grand opening on Friday, Oct. 4
  - **Downtown Seafood, 130 3<sup>rd</sup> Street** - Rick Volland, the owner of Capital City Grill and Stroubes Seafood and Steaks, purchased Downtown Seafood and Grill in August. He plans to remodel the inside and modernize the building's exterior.
  - **Kids Orchestra, 647 Main Street** – The Kids Orchestra moved their office downtown on July 1. Private lessons will resume at the new office starting July 15th

## 8. Events -

Schuyler Olson updated the Commission:

- Digital Knomad, 227 Florida Street - Arts Market, October 18 – 20, 8:00 pm – 12:00 am
- Live After Five Fall Concert Season, Rhorer Plaza - Line-Up announcement - Friday, September 13 – October 25. Concludes with a Second Line!
- Sunday in the Park – Sundays 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm Shaw Center for the Arts Plaza
- Jambalaya Jam – Thursday, October 17, 11:00 am – 8:00 pm, North Boulevard Town Square
- 8th Annual Taste of the Deep South Festival, October 19 – 20 from 12:00 pm – 8:00 pm, North Boulevard Town Square
- Halloween Parade (Fifolet Festival) - Saturday, October 26 @ 4:00 pm, begins @ Government, ends at Laurel
- Walk a Mile in Her Shoes - Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 pm, Rhorer Plaza

- Cap City Beer Fest – Sunday, November 3, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm, North 4<sup>th</sup> Street
- Turkey Trot – Thursday, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 am, North Boulevard Town Square
- Festival of Lights – Friday, December 6, 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm, North Boulevard Town Square
- Manship Theatre – Movies, Music & more
  - Carrie
  - Across the Pond Guitar Festival
  - Live from Laurel Canyon
  - Improv Comedy Night
  - CJ Solar
  - The Rocky Horror Picture Show
  - Frankenstein
  - Anthony Devito
- LSU MOA – Current Exhibits
  - Art in Louisiana: Views into the Collection
  - Cherished: The Art of Clementine Hunter
  - Southern Reflections: Arty by Kathryn Keller & Shirley Rabe Masiner, September 12 – November 27
- LSU MOA – Events
  - In a New Light: American Impressionism 1870-1940, Works from the Bank of America Collection, October 18, 2024 – March 23, 2025
  - Rembrandt, Goya, and Durer: The Marvel of Old Masters October 31, 2024 – February 2, 2025
  - 21st Annual Holiday Shopping Event, Friday, December 6, 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
- Capitol Park Museum – Lunchtime Lagniappe with Dr. Petra Munro Hendry, Tuesday, October 15 from 12:00 – 1:00 PM
- Old State Capitol – Exhibits and Events
  - Spirits of Louisiana: Royalty on the River, Thursday, October 24 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm
  - Lawyers Without Rights: Jewish Lawyers in Germany Under the Third Reich, Friday, November 1 – December 21, 2024
  - Halloween Fall Craft Workshop, Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
  - Fearless Lawyers – Wednesday, November 14, 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
  - Holiday Winter Crafts Workshop, Sunday, December 1, 2024, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
  - Santa in the Senate, Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
- Raising Canes River Center –
  - Brantley Gilbert, Thursday, October 10
  - Zydeco Vs Seawolves, Thursday, October 17
  - Whiskey Myers, Wednesday, October 30
  - Zydeco vs River Dragons, November 7
  - Joe Gatto, Friday, November 15
  - The Nutcracker – Saturday, December 14
- LASM – Shows and Events
  - Halloween Day at the Museum, October 26
  - Night at the Museum Tour, Saturday, October 26
  - Eat Like Egyptian: A Talk, Tasting & Mini Bazaar, Thursday, November 7
- LASM - Changing Exhibitions
  - Treasures of the Nile: Exploring King Tut's Tomb
  - Pinpointing the Stars

- USS Kidd – Veterans Museum Open Daily from 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM
  - Strong and Calm Warrior Yoga, Saturday, November 8 & December 10 from 8:00 am – 9:30 am
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – First Saturday of the month, from 8:00 AM – 12:00
- Red Stick Farmer’s Market – Every Saturday 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

## 9. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- **LASM Director** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced Dr. Karen Soniat, the newly-appointed President and Executive Director of the Louisiana Art & Science Museum.
- **International Downtown Association (IDA) Conference** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the IDA held in Seattle, Washington. The DDD Staff attended the conference in September except for Casey Tate due to Hurricane Francine. It’s important to get together with allied organizations, both DDD and business improvement districts from around the globe, and discuss topics and issues that affect them and what we can learn from one another. Hot topics discussed this year were AI and different trends such as the increase in residents and the decrease of workers and how we adapt to that. Also, how climate and resilience play into a downtown district, stereotypes on crime that are not necessarily true, and how to break those stereotypes through marketing initiatives and media relationships.
- **Hotel Indigo Renovation** - Barry Gambold, General Manager, stated the project actually started in 2019 but was put on hold due to supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Construction began in November of last year. The newly refurbished restaurant, King Bar & Bistro, reopened in June with a Creole-centric menu while work continued on the rest of the property. The renovations included 93 of the hotel’s guest rooms stripped down to the studs and completely redone. The hotel’s gym and lobby were remodeled and the building’s exterior received a fresh coat of paint. The total cost of the renovations was approximately \$8 million. The work was performed by Louisiana-based construction firm Lemoine with the help of an out-of-state design team.
- **Main Street Market Renovation** – Darlene Rowland, BREADA Executive Director, announced the Farm Fete fundraiser recently held raised over \$140,000 to support BREADA’s mission. Main Street Market, managed by BREADA, was first built in the early 2000s to serve as a companion concept to its Saturday Red Stick Farmers Market, and to add a creative retail element to the state’s Galvez Parking Garage. An indoor public market was part of Plan Baton Rouge, the city’s original downtown revitalization plan. The State of Louisiana, which owns the building, allocated \$1 million toward the renovations. The market’s west side now has no permanent retail pods. Instead, there is open, flexible space for temporary pop-ups and vendor stands. The new design leaves more room for crowds to maneuver comfortably. The market continues to have plenty of seating for dining and relaxing, bathrooms have also been significantly improved and relocated for convenience. BREADA will have its own programming space with a full commercial kitchen to be used on Saturdays for cooking demonstrations and will be used for education and outreach during the week as well. They are hoping to be open by the end of the year, the restrooms will be open on Saturdays. The first Saturday in November Main Street Market will be celebrating its 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## 10. Public Comment:

- Whitney Hoffman Sayal acknowledged and welcomed Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman to the meeting. Councilwoman Coleman stated she was glad to be attending this wonderful platform to find out what is going on in Downtown Baton Rouge.
- Mary Durusau, Old State Capitol Executive Director announced the Old State’s Capitol fundraiser, “Spirits of Louisiana” is being held on October 24. This year’s theme is Royalty on the River. The



Southeast Museums conference will be held in Baton Rouge on October 20 – 22, all the downtown museums will be hosting participants from all over the United States.

- Dr. Brian Gallion, Operations Director of the Kid’s Orchestra, announced that on October 24 they will be hosting an open house that coincides with “Lights on After School” which is a national celebration of after-school programs. The theme is Lighting up Downtown and the Capitol and Tiger Stadium will be lit up in blue everyone is invited on October 27 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm.
- Khalil with Digital Knomad located at 227 Florida announced they will be hosting a late-night art market to be held in the Taylor Building parking lot on October 18 – 20 from 8:00 pm – 12:00 pm.

**11. Meeting Adjourned** – Eric Dexter moved to adjourn the meeting, Gary Jupiter seconded and the meeting was adjourned.

DRAFT