

DOWNTOWN SUMMIT
Discussion and Comments
November 19, 2013

Panel Discussion –

Led by Bob Whetsel; participants: Kim Henry, Mark Heinz, Tim Hill, and Joe Petre with questions and comments from the audience

Lost a lot of office space – every project depends on financing.

Is there enough space? How do the new buildings get integrated through design?

Aggressive TIF/PILOT program

Working with partners KCDC/IDB/City; old buildings are a challenge.

Not a burden to the taxpayers – assets to the area. The market is still in a mini-recession. Community Development – quiet, but important player. Last deals in downtown are the hardest projects. Market is catching up downtown.

Community Development is bridging the gap. TIF is still guaranteed by developers.

Valuation is still important today – assessment goes to support CBID; it is a good cycle.

Public/private partnerships – help with infrastructure improvements

Jackson Ave. implementation – tie to areas outside the core

Expand on the organic nature of development and tie to the South Waterfront

Legacy Parks Foundation Board (Joe Petre is the upcoming chair) – critical need for park space

Urban Wilderness needs to connect to Knox and Blount Counties. It will be a game changer – is and will be a reason for people to come and stay here.

What's happening just outside of the core?

Investment on N. Gay – shows connection to downtown, investment in what has been known as the “mission district” tells a story of an area ripe for redevelopment (Downtown North). New build planned for area near White Lily.

Knoxville Museum of Art and World's Fair Park improvements, adding new hotel, the MUSE, public improvements, need a vibe to get residents from Jackson Ave. to walk to KMA.

Downtown Guidelines – came out of the 9 counties/1 vision process – guide, board is there to help with interpretations, guidelines, dealt with redevelopment and signs.

New interpretations are coming with demolition requests and new buildings.

The Guidelines were debates as suggestions vs. enforceable – built in flexibility; some subjectivity.

Set the style and guide for redevelopment. Many ways to interpret.

What about Clinch north of Hilton garage?

Locust Street – UT Conference Center presents a blank wall and little activity

Numbers vacancy rate office/retail; banks lend in Knoxville

What are we going to do to connect to West, across Henley to University and WFP? It is currently not pedestrian/bike friendly.

Day to Day Life Downtown

Rick Emmett with questions and comments from the audience

Working on better education about Convention Center parking, connecting to downtown, and wide range of uses for parking

Hesitation regarding parking, turn over to create better environment for users, PBA has been helpful

Commercial loading is a challenge with reduction of sign clutter

Parking meters – there is new technology. Apps and 21st Century approach to parking - start small but build on success.

Security – PBA officers help with panhandling. Panhandling is a moving target.

Overall downtown is a safe environment.

Beautification – street furniture; sitting benches; balance between different uses and needs

Previously there has been an ad hoc approach for planters – now partnership with PBA/CBID/Dewhurst properties and a desire to expand that program.

Clean Water Network – wants to provide drinking fountains downtown that are accessible, program to place around downtown.

Restrooms downtown – restaurants bore the brunt “nowhere to go.” Human decency is the issue.

Health of our downtown trees – city has hired an urban forester who is working to protect tree roots along with other issues.

Sodding four times a year at Market Square, may shift to include a walkway and benches to reduce impact to trees. The fencing to protect the trees in the Square has helped and works well.

Broadband – issue was identified by a posting on Facebook. Headway has been made with KUB and providers to provide service. Broadband is not as big a problem as once thought. Make sure to have conduit added during construction.

The Entrepreneur Center was launched at Market Square – upcoming event for new startups.

Special Events – Judith Foltz creating a “Guide to Special Events”; help people know what’s going on and how to make an event happen in downtown

Utility coordination, construction, and impact to sidewalks and streets, bagging meters, all create a challenge of timing. Gay Street Sidewalks have been blocked on both sides at one time; now require builders to provide an overpass that keeps the sidewalks open.

Public notification of construction projects is important. Try to provide for unintended consequences.

Broadway Viaduct likely under construction in 2016 or 2017 by TDOT

South Central Park ideas – extend the dog park, utilize un-used land for park space, connect to waterfront

Government – keep moving forward

Someone asked about the former KUB building at Gay and Church Ave.? Going to be redeveloped into residential; it will have a different look

Demographics of downtown recently seen younger population and strong movement of empty nesters

L&N Stem School is an option for high school downtown

Downtown is zoned for Sequoyah Elementary which is a good school; challenge of families moving in when there are rarely more than 2 bedroom living spaces.

Facebook – downtown Knoxville residential

World's Fair Park - looking at master planning process; still in the exploration stage; no decisions
Connectivity from downtown to Fort Sanders & west is important; WFP, Henley St. just a passage
Hospitality sector – owner/business taxes; 72% of taxes go to school; 28% general fund.

CBID assessment stays in area in addition to the State recapture program

Where are the food trucks going to be allowed? City is establishing a pilot program, working on solutions; 2nd reading at City Council on November 26. Knoxville is modeling off of Nashville – zones.

Question and concerns about Broadway and Central:

1. Do other cities have such a high concentration?
2. What effect do you see the mission having on the area?

Every city is dealing with homelessness issues; Knoxville has a roundtable to address homelessness.

Looking at what did we learn from 10 Year Plan/Compassion/Federal Guidelines

Draft plan – partners working together. Where are gaps in the system of dealing with homelessness?
Future funding.

KARM – opened courtyard, safer place. Bob Whetsel noted as a 30 year resident – property values going up; other things are going well in the neighborhoods surrounding this area.

South Lawn of World's Fair Park – submit ideas at December 9th task force meeting

There is a problem of blank walls, need to have something on the street; retail in Locust Garage is minimally successful; can't force retail.

What's happening in the Old City or on Jackson Ave.? Jackson Terminal building is seeking historic tax credits; John H. David Building – 100K+ option on building. Patrick Sullivan's is under construction.

Railway Building – Depot Street redevelopment.

McClung Warehouses are now owned by the city; the city has a 3 part strategy – stop water intrusion/stabilize the buildings, seek public input, put out RFP for process within year.

Gay Street resident was wondering why there was a 2 hour time limit placed on Gay Street parking – it was done to encourage turn over and prevent long term parking by residents so that retail could benefit.

A commercial realtor offered comment about retail – very little small retail should be encouraged!