

**Columbia Special Business District
Board of Directors Special Meeting
May 17, 2007, 4:00 p.m.
Orr Street Studios**

Present:

Mary Wilkerson, Boone County National Bank
Leigh Lockhart, Main Squeeze
Mike Vangel, Vangel Marketing Communications
Skip Walther, Walther, Antel, Stamper & Fischer, PC
Gene Gerke, Facilitator
Carrie Gartner, Executive Director

Blake Danuser, Bingham's
John Ott, The Tiger-Downtown
Mark Timberlake, Timberlake Engineering
Rosie Gerding, Gerding, Korte, & Chitwood

Leslie Gale, Assistant Director

Absent:

Chuck Wilms, Engagement Ring Center

Guests:

Tom Brinker, CycleExtreme, CCA Board

Jennifer Perlow, PS: Gallery, CCA Board

Gerke began the retreat by briefly reviewing the items discussed at the April 24th meeting. Then he moved on to a discussion of the survey results, and what they mean for the SBD. He noted that while they are not statistically significant, the results are still valuable because it gives a sense of what the membership is thinking.

Gerding stated that she was surprised to see what the members' opinion was – especially on development.

Ott stated that it is the Board's job to look at the bigger picture, but we still need to take care of the other things.

Wilkerson wondered if it is our job or the City's job, and stated that we should figure out the best use of available resources.

Timberlake talked about the difference between things that are important and those that are urgent, such as development being important, but safety being urgent. The board concurred that this was important to remember, and he stated that it would explain the divergence in opinions.

Perlow stated that it is a chicken or the egg type of situation, which should come first, but that she believes the current problems should be dealt with before moving on to bigger projects.

Ott stated that the SBD should be doing all of it – important and urgent.

Wilkerson stated that it is not possible for Gartner and the office to do that.

Ott stated that the Board should find a way, and work on consolidating resources with the City.

Gerke stated that what surprised him the most about the survey results is the wide range of scores. He believes this is telling that everyone has different needs and wants. He believes that in order to deal with this issue, a lot of leadership and communication will be needed from the SBD Board.

Vangel stated that perhaps a more strategic approach, rather than a tactical one should be the SBD's job. He asked what the board wants people to say about what they did 20 years from now, implying that big picture things will matter more.

Gartner stated that it may be hard to get the genie back in the bottle on the things like trash and parking now because everyone has become so used to it happening.

Ott stated that he doesn't think those things should get neglected, but that the board should move in the other direction overall.

Vangel stated that it will be hard to attract developers to help revitalize the downtown without a good perception of things like trash and security in place.

Wilkerson asked that the word "revitalization" not be used, because we already have a vital downtown.

Vangel asked what word should be used then.

Gartner responded that words like growing and increasing density like it is on 9th and Broadway have been used in the visioning process.

Ott said he liked the phrase, "enhance the vitality" and everyone agreed it was a good fit.

Timberlake stated that at this point, the board has a mix of long and short-term goals on the priority list, and suggested that maybe they separate them. Beautification and development issues were classified as long-term, vacancies was determined to be both because it is continuous, and the others were short-term.

Wilkerson made the note that many of these are "unsolvable" issues.

Timberlake suggested that it's like bathing though, it doesn't permanently solve the problem, but he's going to do it every day anyway. He believes that is the way to approach some of these issues.

Gartner stated that it's important to remember that there is sometimes a difference between who pays for capital improvements, the SBD or the City, and that it is usually a negotiation process.

Walther described it as a moving target, because it changes with every project.

Timberlake asked for clarification on the term "infill development" and Wilkerson explained that it is simply filling in empty space and parking lots with usable buildings.

Gartner stated that she is currently working on the development priority, in that she meets with developers and is a resource for them on getting information and land put together.

Vangel asked how developers know to go to her, and Gartner responded that somehow they just know.

Ott stated that the board should remember how hard it is to get things done like putting property and land together, but the Sasaki group suggested the creation of a program to help with this.

Wilkerson stated that none of this is going to happen without the City on board, and that the board should go to them, understand what they need, and advocate for these project that we want to see happen.

Gerding concurred, saying that the board should be stating its opinion publicly about the projects as well.

Gerke asked what the board has done in the past, and stated that it would be good for them to do more advocating because it seems to work.

Wilkerson stated that she wants to see the board play a bigger part of the process of development.

Gartner stated that the SBD Board can be a catalyst, for example they were a big reason that historic tax credits are being used by so many people in The District already.

Wilkerson added that the board should also help to educate its members and property owners about certain opportunities and why development projects will be good for The District.

Ott stated that he thinks the SBD Board should hold a meeting with people from the City, developers, and SBD Members, to talk about development plans. He believes that the board, as stewards, should take a stand on this issue they feel so strongly about, and make sure these projects happen.

Gerke moved the discussion to those issues that are more operations/short-term/ongoing/urgent, such as maintenance and parking.

Wilkerson also wanted to include vagrancy and safety to the list of discussed items.

Vangel asked what the word "parking" means to the people who filled out the survey, suggesting that it means different things to different people.

Lockhart stated that to her, it's not the rates. For some people it's the distance from parking to stores, and for others it's the time limit.

Brinker stated that to his customers, its definitely distance, because they complain about parking in the garage that is less than a block away from his store. He stated that because of places like Malls and Shopping centers, people are too used to parking right in front of the store.

Lockhart suggested a campaign putting a positive spin on the walking; noting how many calories you can burn doing so.

John suggested having a parking lot on the fringe with a shuttle to the heart of The District.

Timberlake stated that people already park and walk for other events, and in other cities, but that they need to make everything better, more exciting and more fun.

Walther stated that creating visually interesting things for people right when they step out of their cars would make them not mind it as much.

Ott stated that he still likes the idea of a shuttle.

Gartner asked how the SBD should address this issue.

Ott said that they should get businesses to pool money together.

Gartner asked if the City, SBD, or someone else should be responsible for this.

Gerke asked how the board would go about taking care of this.

Danuser stated that first a subcommittee should put together a proposal and then the board should present it to City Manager Bill Watkins and that would get the process started.

Wilkerson talked about what Chicago does in the summer – run a specific shuttle route that just keeps going at all times and stops in the main areas of downtown. She really likes that idea.

Gartner reminded the board that the Chicago downtown association has a lot more money to use, and that the Columbia Bus system does have a downtown orbiter – the brown route – that it runs.

Gerke stated that he thinks there should be ongoing meetings with representatives of the City and Universities to interface and discuss issues related to The District.

Gartner stated that it's important to not go to the City with a to-do list, but a goal.

Ott agrees about a standing meeting with the City – he thinks it would help to raise the SBD as a priority for them.

Danuser suggested also using the Chamber of Commerce.

Gerke asked for Gartner's thoughts on all these things.

Gartner stated that the SBD needs to maintain credibility with the community, and not make promises it can't keep. She also restated the importance of having a plan when you go to the City, and that solutions to problems must involve many different groups and people.

Vangel stated that he thinks the SBD can use the Sasaki plan as a catalyst and for leverage because a Master Developer like them has more power.

Danuser asked if the board felt like it needs a full plan, and not just pieces and they responded positively.

Ott stated that he can't imagine being in Gartner's position and not having the resources and authority to get the things done that need to be done.

Walther stated that these problems continue to lead to changing the structure of the SBD.
Vangel stated that the mall charges a lot more so that they can do what they want, but clearly, The District is very different from the mall.
Walther stated that if the SBD changes its organization, it can get more money from people and therefore do more of what the mall does. He stated that the Sasaaki group will likely come up with ideas for funding projects that this organization can get behind.
Wilkerson stated that the thinking on development needs to change. She also feels that a disproportionate amount of time is spent by District staff on CCA matters.
Perlow agreed, saying that the lines need to be made clearer on what duties go with what organization.
Gartner stated that as the City moves forward with the visioning process and Sasaaki project, it is important that the SBD Board become a leader so that they don't get pushed aside. She thinks the SBD Board should be a big part of the process.
Wilkerson stated that reorganization of the SBD and possibly the CCA should be a priority for this organization.
Timberlake reminded the board that when they approach the city they should first present the problem, then state what the SBD will do, and finally what we need them to do to help.

Gerke shifted the discussion to the organization and structure of the SBD. He asked what the main reason for doing this would be.

Gerding stated that the primary reason is that the organization needs more money, and reorganization is the only way to really get it.

Ott suggested that it may be a good idea for the City to create a downtown department.

Vangel stated that basically it's an issue of resources.

Danuser stated that he would like to see one board from The District office, with someone from the City on it, and with a promotions department.

Lockhart added having someone representing the Colleges and University as well.

Vangel asked how the board would go about getting a new structure.

Gartner stated that the SBD members would be presented the plan and then would have to vote on it.

Danuser thinks that the board should also go to the City and that he worries members won't have the time or inclination to care about a decision like this. He stated that this is what they did with the H.U.B. project.

Vangel asked what the increase in payment would be for members.

Gartner stated that it would depend on the kind of organization they choose to create, and that she would recommend starting with what they want to do and build the budget for that.

Ott stated that he thinks the SBD should pay for security.

Lockhart stated that doing things like that would help business owners see the reason for the increase in fees.

Gartner stated that it is actually the property owners who pay the bulk of the SBD fees, but it is the business owners who are more vocal and involved.

Ott stated that he would like to see a difference in cost for different types of businesses so that those who make more money and more trash, like bars, are paying appropriately.

Vangel and Wilkerson agreed with Danuser on going to the City first.

Gartner said that a C.I.D. or Community Improvement District, would address Ott's issue by getting sales tax money from the businesses.

Danuser stated that he thinks the time is good now for this kind of change.

Gartner stated that if this organization had the money and resources to take care of cleaning, security, etc. those things would eventually run themselves, and then she and the board can focus on the fun things like development. She told them about what St. Louis did, which was to completely take over for the City and do everything themselves, and asked if the board would want to do that.

Vangel stated that he'd like to get the City's view on all of this.

Gartner stated that a C.I.D. actually creates a contract with the City, so that would make our ties with the City stronger.

Ott stated that someone in the City should be full-time for The District, directing traffic relating to downtown so that Carrie doesn't have to go to 5 different people about one problem.

Gartner stated that the board needs to have clear expectations of what they want a new organization to do before going any further.

Vangel stated that he thinks Sasaaki will change this discussion with the suggestions they will be making.

Perlow stated that she would like to see more responsibility put on the business owners.

Ott suggested that each block should have a captain, which would get the businesses more involved, who would be able to direct businesses and get them to do certain things.

Danuser agreed, saying that there used to be something like that and it worked well, but it must have drifted off over the years.

Gerke stated that the board still has a lot of discussing to do, but that it has made a good start. He will put together a summary for the board with suggestions on where they should go from here.