

CITY OF NORTHVILLE
Planning Commission
August 19, 2014
Northville City Hall – City Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Wendt called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Steve Kirk
Carol Maise
Dave Mielock
Anne Smith
Jeff Snyder (arrived 7:31 pm)
Jay Wendt

Absent: Matthew Mowers - excused
Marc Russell - excused

Also present: James Allen, Mayor Pro Tem
Patrick Sullivan, City Manager
Lori M. Ward, DDA Director
Don Wortman, Planning Consultant

Chair Wendt led the Commission and audience members in a moment of silence in honor of long time Northville resident and business owner John R. Genitti, Jr., whose unexpected passing on August 16, 2014 was a great loss to his family, friends, and to the City.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: August 5, 2014.

Commissioner Kirk noted that Planning Consultant Wortman was sometimes referred to in the minutes as “Don.” This should be corrected to read Planning Consultant Wortman in all instances.

Motion Snyder, support by Kirk, to approve the August 5, 2014 minutes as amended.
Motion carried unanimously.

4. AUDIENCE COMMENTS: None

5. REPORTS:

A. CITY ADMINISTRATION: None

B. CITY COUNCIL: Mayor Pro Tem Allen reported that last night City Council had approved the conceptual wayfinding report/package presented by the DDA.

C. PLANNING COMMISSION: In response to questions from Commissioner Kirk, City Manager Sullivan said 1) that the dead trees north of the Chamber Building were actually on railroad property and 2) he would follow up on the overgrown lot at the corner of Griswold and Cady Streets. Commissioner Kirk noted that the bridge over the Rouge River was “wonderful.”

D. OTHER COMMUNITY/GOVERNMENTAL LIAISONS: None

6. DISCUSSION

DDA Presentation on Wayfinding

Chair Wendt introduced DDA Director Lori Ward, who gave some background on the conceptual wayfinding report that would be presented this evening. The Wayfinding Committee, made up of Historic District Commissioner John Argenta, Planning Commissioner Carol Maise, Arts Commissioner Joan Potter Thomas, Resident Alan Somershoe, DPW Director Jim Gallogly, and DDA member Greg Presley, along with DDA staff had worked for six months with Buzz Bizzell of Bizzell Design, Davidson, North Carolina, to design a wayfinding plan for downtown Northville. Mr. Bizzell was in town for three days so that this presentation could be made to a variety of groups, including City Council last night, DDA this morning, Planning Commission tonight, and the Historic District Commission tomorrow night. They were continuing to take input on this project. The purpose of tonight's presentation was to give and receive information; no motion would be required.

Ms. Ward introduced Mr. Bizzell, who thanked the Commission for this opportunity to present the Wayfinding Project to them. Utilizing the report in the Commissioners' packets entitled "Wayfinding Signage Design Study/August 8 2014", along with changes shown on the overhead projector, Mr. Bizzell explained that one goal was to create a pattern on the wayfinding signage that worked with the City's "brand." They had started by identifying elements of the City important to visitors and residents, by utilizing photographs of Northville taken by people all over the world and posted on social media. Interestingly, the number one photo – out of thousands – that repeated in these images was the bandshell; therefore the design of the bandshell was subtly referenced in the wayfinding signage by the utilization of oversize swirls, trapezoid shapes and slightly rounded tops. The DDA's slogan – "Timeless with a Twist" – was also highly relevant and reflected in the visual design, emphasizing that in Northville, history was not boring, but rather was dynamic and fascinating.

Mr. Bizzell introduced a "family of signs" of various sizes and purpose, yet which were consistent in color and design. Various signs included:

- Large scale wayfinding signs, including gateway signs. Certain large-scale wayfinding signs would have magnetized message panels that could be changed "in an instant." Others would help easily locate civic and cultural destinations, such as City Hall, the Post Office, the Football Stadium, Theaters, etc.
- Pedestrian downtown directional signs.
- Main road directional signs.
- Single position directional signs, including parking signs.

Other important elements included:

- Colors were chosen utilizing special software that extracted a color palette from photos of all downtown buildings, so that the colors would "match perfectly" what was already downtown.
- The signs simplified and decluttered road and streetways while improving the overall streetscape, and would be a pleasure to read.

- Existing light posts in downtown Northville would be utilized for sign placement. There were enough light posts for the wayfinding signs while still providing plenty of availability for promotional banners and seasonal decorations.
- The inclusion of a removable mural, shown in concept as “Race Day in Northville,” utilizing Northville historic themes and colors. This mural would be one fourth the cost of a traditional mural, and would offer significant advantages, especially that it would be easy to remove or change, as it would be digitally printed on thin flexible material that would adhere to an exterior wall but could easily be pulled off. A mural (or murals) such as this provided a photoscape – a place for people to have their pictures taken and then post on social media, thus providing free advertising and marketing for the City.

DDA Director Ward discussed various conversations she had had regarding this wayfinding project, especially as it related to giving other organizations, such as Northville School District, options to piggyback onto the final product. The School District, for instance, might want to adopt a variant of the signs for their own directional needs. Certain legacy businesses that were location driven might be able to utilize signs that named them generically, i.e., “Winery,” or “Cider Mill.” Districts could also be identified: i.e., “Theaters.”

In response to questions from the Commission, DDA Director Ward and Mr. Bizzell explained that:

- As new signs were placed, others would be eliminated. For example, currently there were 129 parking signs downtown. Approximately 100 of these would be eliminated.
- The backs of the new signs would be simply painted, perhaps including a subtle pattern, providing no visual clutter. MDOT would not allow decoration on the backs of the signs.
- Applications for hand held devices existed that would link the signs to actual locations; this was a whole different process and proposal, however. Apps currently in use such as google maps would accomplish the same thing.
- The signs would be highly reflective and could easily be read at night.
- The signs would be made of material that could handle salt in winter. They would be constructed of aluminum, with either a surface powder coating or an automotive finish. An automotive finish would allow for touch ups should the signs should be damaged.
- Sign heights would meet MDOT requirements.

The Commission thanked DDA Director Ward and Mr. Bizzell for their presentation. Chair Wendt asked that the Commission receive a copy of the final proposal, after all tweaks and changes were made.

Cady Street Overlay Ordinance

Planning Consultant Wortman led the discussion regarding the proposed Cady Street Overlay (CSO) District Revisions. A public hearing was set for September 16. No action was necessary this evening; the purpose of tonight’s discussion was to review changes in the proposed text, which had been modified to reflect comments received at the August 5, 2014 Planning Commission meeting, including:

- Figures 5 and 6 had been modified to include the full extent of Griswold Street.
- Several optional bonus height standards previously contained within Section f were now required and had been moved to Section n (Streetscape) and Section p (Architecture).
- A new Section r had been created to encourage LEED building design.

- Minor modifications had been made to Sections e (Area, Height, Placement), g (Setbacks), and k (Parking).
- Figure 8 had been modified to show “6’ Right-of Way/Easement.”

Planning Consultant Wortman reviewed these revisions in detail utilizing the document *City of Northville Zoning Ordinance 10-12 Revised Draft Rev. Aug. 12 2014* in the Commissioners’ packets.

Planning Consultant Wortman affirmed that this proposed Ordinance fit very well with the proposals outlined in the wayfinding report presented this evening. Public art, passageways, etc., were incorporated in this Ordinance - perhaps there would also be a place on Cady Street for a mural.

Regarding Figure 6, Commissioner Kirk suggested that South Main Park at the end of Cady Street also be shaded blue.

In response to a further question by Commissioner Kirk, Planning Consultant Wortman noted that the straightening of Cady Street to connect to Main Street was in the Master Plan, which was conceptual.

DDA Director Ward spoke to DDA concerns regarding having residential as a permitted first floor use in this proposed Zoning District. What would the financial impact of this be? How would it affect the vitality of the area? Was it possible that first floor residential use, especially in existing buildings that were built right to the sidewalk, would result in first floor windows covered with closed drapes? She had seen this happen in other communities.

Discussion followed. First floor residential was not required by the proposed ordinance; it was an available option only. On the other hand, a requirement to keep first floors non-residential was a deterrent to some developers. However, allowing first floor residential in existing buildings such as Cady Center that had not been planned with this in mind could result in a negative for the area. Regarding new construction, buildings could be deep enough to allow first floor residential in the rear while providing storefronts at the front.

DDA Director Ward again expressed concern regarding unintended consequences of permitting first floor residential in certain existing buildings, especially west of Center Street and Cady Center.

7. ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further discussion, Chair Wendt adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl McGuire
Recording Secretary

Approved as submitted 09/16/2014