

Iowa City Downtown District
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting Minutes from January 26, 2023

Voting Members Present: Nick Lindsley, DingYu Ding, Susan Felker, Tony Branch, Jason Paulios, Josh Immerfall, David Kieft (via zoom), Diego Lasansky, Wendy Zimmerman, Maka Pilcher Hayek, Greg Turner

Non-Voting Members Present: Abby Restko, Chastity Dillard, Rachel Kilburg, Monica Nieves, Keaton Zeimet, Austin Korn

Staff Present: Nancy Bird, Christopher Hunter, Joe Reilly, Julie Watkins

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Nick Lindsley at 9:03 am.

Prior to addressing the November minutes, Nancy Bird shared that the board's secretary position is open as Nancy Ginsberg is moving, and encouraged any interested parties to follow up with her. The board welcomed Austin Korn as he replaced Tom Banta's seat on the board. Austin is the Director of Business Development at ICAD. Additionally, the board welcomed Keaton Zeimet, a third-year political science student and the city liaison for USG. Betsy Potter has handed off her responsibilities and as of Tuesday, January 24th, she is on maternity leave though the baby has yet to arrive. Betsy will return from maternity leave on May 15th.

November Minutes: On motion by Maka Pilcher-Hayek, second by Tony Branch, the minutes of the November meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Financial Updates:

Greg Turner shared that we have a reserve of funds set aside, as seen on the balance sheet. It has been a normal two months while the board has been on recess, and there is not much to be noted. What was of note was that the ICDD has been reimbursed for city power washing and that Top Chef has created notable revenue for the ICDD. Greg Turner suggests adding a project summary for the fourth quarter.

Nancy Bird expressed that the ICDD passes its budget in June of each year which is contingent, in part, on sponsorships. ICDD received a \$30,000 grant from Think Iowa City which is funding the Winter Night Lights experience alongside sponsorships from MidAmerican, OPN, Axiom, and Neumann Monson. Nancy notes that the year's end sees a larger budget, but that the aim is still to get to zero. Extra spending is spread throughout various line items.

The 'Tis the Season holiday campaign was a success; it doesn't bring any revenue in, but markets our downtown as a destination for shopping and holiday experiences. ICDD was able to hire extra contractors for the pop-up shops. Other contractors include delivery driver Anne Stork and Frankie Schneckloth with the online market. ICDD hired Unique Events to jazz up the tractor rides. He expressed that Santa Saturdays were a great success alongside the tractor wagon rides, as both had lines each Saturday. The Kids Market hosted many returning and new families, and it produced more sales than last year. The teddy bears from the Teddy Bear Room were available for purchase to be donated; over one hundred bears were taken to DVIP and UAY.

Thomas Agran is contracted to support our art programs. Our project fund is low right now, though we have our reserve.

Joe Reilly gives an overview on the gift card program. It was a very robust year for gift card sales; in 2021, the program surged following Ulowa's vaccine incentive program. People are naturally thinking of using the gift card program as an Amazon gift card alternative in small office settings. Total sales for 2022 is \$174,000 and total redeemed is \$127,000; overall, about 66% redemption rate. By this time next year, Joe expects a million dollars in total sales throughout the life of the 10 year program. He also notes that the ICDD does not capture the unused funds.

November Financials: On motion by Diego Lasansky, second by Maka Pilcher-Hayek, the November Financials were unanimously approved.

Winter Night Lights:

Nancy Bird shares that Winter Night Lights is a self-guided tour experience made up of both existing and new light installations downtown. These light installations include Ali Hval's Doodle Trees, the Singing Trees, a new canopy lighting project in the alley between the Fieldhouse and Park 201, and Amanda Parer's internationally-recognized *Intrude* installation featuring larger-than-life inflatable bunnies. Installing the bunnies will be a team effort made possible with the help of Public Space One and Sustainable Landscaping.

Julie Watkins discusses Hello Lamppost; in order to help the community engage with the bunnies, the ICDD has enlisted the help of HLP. Hello Lamppost has created a QR code which will be on signage next to the bunnies, that when scanned, allows people to go through a guided text-conversation with the bunnies about the environmental message behind them.

Downtown will be further activated each Friday in February with silent disco being held in the Ped Mall from 6-9pm; CAB will be sponsoring two of the discos. Opening day for Winter Night Lights is February 1, and the experience will go until February 28. The Chinese Association will close the Lunar New Year with bunny lanterns in various trees throughout the Ped Mall. Christopher Hunter will be handling marketing and photography for the experience. The first week will be the launch, the second week is right before Valentine's Day, the third week coincides with the Hot Cocoa Crawl, and the fourth week with the One Book Two Book festival. Security is coming for the first two days, security is on call but not hired; currently outside costs. [Edit- there will be security each Friday and Saturday as of 2/1].

Environmental scan

Joe Reilly presents his work on the environmental scan of downtown after David Kieft's suggestion of a 'night audit'. In an effort of harm reduction and crime prevention, Joe, local stakeholders, and student leaders from sorority and fraternity life identified public or private spaces that could be bettered through environmental design. This looks like restricting access or installing better lighting to increase feelings of safety in a space. Joe had many partners in this effort, one of which being University of Iowa's Harm Reduction team that takes preemptive action to protect students.

In walking the district, the environmental scan took note of gut feelings and visuals. They counted over 50 individual places downtown that would benefit from restricted access or lighting improvements. Joe reached out to public safety for data on assault and SA, and then used Placer data to overlay a heat map indicating foot traffic from 5pm-7am. This was done with the intention of finding what are the most highly utilized spaces downtown at those times. Joe and his team examined the heat maps, public safety data, and the results of the in-person nighttime scan to see where they overlapped, and therefore where to restrict access and place lighting improvements. The next steps involve the

property owner taking action or using harm reduction funding to encourage them to make the necessary improvements.

The board discusses using SSMID dollars for the repavement of the private alley – the sentiment is that it improves upon our values of clean and safe for everyone, not just those private stakeholders. There was discussion of trying to get a 300,000 loan. There are almost 25 owners involved, two of which are not inclined to sign on. Material improvements will be stormwater drainage, striped parking, ability to roll the garbage cans in and out, greater ease with shoveling and powerwashing. These things are made much more difficult by the current state of the alley, which is muddy and full of potholes.

Due to the events that took place a few weeks ago, ICDD is planning an ALICE training; while we aren't able to make regulatory changes, we are able to better prepare one another in the case that something were to happen.

Event Schedule

Christopher lists the events that the ICDD is planning for this coming year, as well as budgeting information. One piece of the budget that has yet to be solidified is the street furniture for the Northside. The goal is to find a cohesive look for the street furniture and lighting, which the board estimated to be about \$20,000. Christopher is in conversation with the city about liquor licensing on Linn Street. Susan Felker is the Northside liaison and will provide information as we get closer to the street closure, estimated to be in May.

Retail updates

Nancy shares that Keto Kitchen has left its space. Harry's Diner will be coming in and expects to open in April or May. Restaurants seem to slowly be reopening for lunch. A smoke shop has opened in the old Beadology space. Question of if we need a 500 foot ordinance for not just liquor licenses, but smoke shops.

Ex-Officio Updates:

Abby Restko – Friday night concert series will extend into September this year, and Summer of the Arts will be doing a fundraiser in March with the Englert.

Rachel Kilburg – Twelve officers downtown within minutes after last week's shooting; the man was arrested. The police are responding with an increased presence downtown. Andrew Dunn is Janice Weiner's replacement. Officer Jack has been selected to help with 988.

Keaton Zeimet – USG is hosting a town hall to discuss affordable housing, public safety, and climate on February 9th.

Chastity Dillard – Cocoa and Cookies was a success. Chastity also shared that their youth pre-employment apprenticeship program is looking for business partners. Additionally, there will be a Black History Month event at a date TBD.

Monica Nieves – Monica provided Better Together 2030 updates and that the annual meeting is coming up February 8th with Rebecca Ryan as the keynote speaker. Think Iowa City is hosting Girls' State Wrestling at the Xstream Arena with 450 wrestlers. Additionally, Foodie February kicks off next week which will include Foodie Philanthropy, a food drive for three area food banks. Monica shared that they are still looking for restaurants to participate in Restaurant Week.

Austin Korn – Liz Hubing is busy with entrepreneurial services, including a new cohort of Builders and Backers. Builders and Backers is a program that provides a \$5000 grant to help start up an idea or a program. Additionally, Merge hosted the first business startup basics class with 27 people there to learn how to scale up their idea. Austin discusses a strategic doing training, also hosted at Merge, which will be March 6-8. The next Ed Tech talk is coming up. Austin directs questions about the merge between ICAD and the Business Partnership to the FAQ page on the ICAD website.

David Kieft – He is presenting a master plan to the board of regents, which will include information on east campus residence halls and updates on bigger construction projects. Contractors will be visiting before the next meeting, so he will provide updates.

Maka Pilcher-Hayek added a few points about the passage of the School Choice bill, saying that it's a tipping point but that Iowa City will be a last bastion for public schools. She says that in four years, Iowa will spend a billion taxpayer dollars on private (Christian) schools in Iowa with a projected increase of only 4000 students. She reminds everyone that Christian schools segregate and can legally discriminate, and that there's a lack of funding for kids for disabilities and universal pre-k. Maka says that she can field questions. She also suggests that Angie Jordan comes to share what she's doing sometime soon.

Greg Turner shared that he would like to start having the opportunity for businesses to talk about their industry during our board meetings, and would like to see it incorporated into the agenda.

Next meeting will be February 23, 2023 at 9am.

On motion by Maka Pilcher-Hayek, second by Tony Branch, the meeting of the Board was adjourned at 10:15 am.