

SPECIAL MEETING DES MOINES CITY COUNCIL

Police South Station
27041 Pacific Highway South
Des Moines, WA

MINUTES

April 26, 2008

The City of Des Moines Council Retreat was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Mayor Sheckler. The Mayor asked the people in the audience to introduce themselves.

ATTENDANCE – Present: Mayor Bob Sheckler, Mayor Pro Tem Dan Sherman, Councilmembers Dave Kaplan, Ed Pina, Carmen Scott, Scott Thomasson and Susan White. Also present were City Manager Tony Piasecki, Police Chief Roger Baker, Harbormaster Joe Dusenbury, Planning, Building and Public Works Director Grant Fredericks and Planning Manager Denise Lathrop.

Marty Curry introduced herself as the facilitator for today's forum and gave a history of her background. She explained that there will be a lot of visual aids to help with the discussions during the course of the retreat. She then outlined the "rules of the road" for the forum. Contribute opinions as clearly and quickly as possible, ask questions, allow each other to speak without interruption, respect others opinions and respect the time constraints. She then asked Councilmembers their expectations for the retreat outcomes.

Councilmember Scott stated she would like to understand others viewpoints, get some idea how to solve restrictions that may be causing problems with development, and get a better idea of other's concerns.

Councilmember Sherman's main concern is with downtown and preserving it so that it remains a good place to live. It is important to understand the niche of the downtown Des Moines and how it is visualized in terms of serving the community.

Councilmember Pina expressed major concerns with Marine View Drive and the downtown area. He would like to see added parking to attract people to the downtown area.

Councilmember Kaplan wants to get a better sense of downtown and what the potential is and where to go with it. He wants to lay the groundwork for future discussions and provide guidance so time is not wasted on a vision that may not happen. Also he is interested in making the downtown valuable for the entire community.

Councilmember Thomasson has been around a long time and enjoys the contemporary northwest nautical theme. Many people like Des Moines because of the small town feel, but the new buildings do not add to that feeling. He feels that Des Moines is moving away from being a desirable downtown.

Councilmember White joined the forum.

Councilmember White apologized for being late. She is passionate about downtown and has attended many conferences on Main Street policies. Regardless of all the development around the city, downtown is still a gathering and meeting place. She would like to see the City be more like Sausalito. Downtown needs nice little shops, art galleries, and restaurants. She would be in favor of narrowing lanes and adding landscaping to encourage people to stop and shop. She also favors higher building

heights where it will not harm views. She is hoping to come up with a consensus and move forward with a plan and would like the city to invest in property downtown.

Mayor Sheckler feels that the downtown issue has never been fully addressed. There has been a lot of focus on highways and the port buyout area, but downtown gets pushed off. He would like to see building heights resolved today. Downtown has a unique sense of charm and there should be more focus on improving the downtown area while maintaining its quaintness. He feels there is a great deal of improvement that can be made to attract the types of businesses that will add to the charm of downtown and make it more pedestrian friendly. Parking issues also need to be addressed to make these things happen.

Developer Forum

Speakers were: Mr. Rosenfeld (who joined the meeting via phone), Mr. Karden, Owner of Elliot Bay Brewing, Mr. Tom Rouch, who works in commercial real estate and has worked with SeaTac in planning and development, and Mr. Bob Bengford, a partner in Makers Architecture and Urban Design, a firm specializing in design guidelines and development regulations. This is intended to be more of a conversation with these speakers to exchange ideas and perspectives.

Mr. Rosenfeld feels the answers to the long term planning opportunities for the city are that they should be developed organically. He further stated that every community is different therefore planning should be different. The challenge in this community is to figure out who we are. Burien had characteristics that were unique to the community that allowed those to develop. Other communities do not have the same opportunities like the views of the water and the harbor community. Start from a strong position.

Councilmember Kaplan spoke about the planning being organic and stated that surrounding jurisdictions do not have defined downtowns. Des Moines has an existing downtown that needs to have its potential evaluated. There are hurdles to taking advantage of the positive attributes because people are used to what is and not what could be.

Mr. Rosenfeld said review the history of the land. Historically, downtown is where people met. The crossroads of the Puget Sound regions became little villages. In order for a downtown to work it has to have an economic vitality. SeaTac never had a downtown so they have a very different challenge. Then the hard questions start such as will people live there, the heights of buildings, how to get connected and the technical issues of connecting the water area to the downtown area. Then there are the issues of buildings on Main Street and new buildings with the height issues because the higher they are built, the more views are blocked. People are possessive of views of the waterfront. Some suggestions are to widen sidewalks, landscaping, public art, and create a village.

Councilmember Kaplan commented on the view preservation issue saying there is a balancing act between protecting the views as an asset to the community and what is economically viable to build. There are few lots in downtown and the expense of consolidating lots would economically impact the vision of how downtown should be built. How does the City balance out preserving assets and still create an environment that is economically viable to construct what the vision is?

Mr. Rosenfeld's thoughts were that the community density is consistent with quality of life in Des Moines. The scale of downtown calls for small and modest buildings in reference to building height. The question of lot size is a difficult one; there is an article in Seattle Magazine about relocating alleys. With smaller lots, a nice development can be done, but the key issue is parking.

Councilmember Scott asked Mr. Rosenfeld to share his thoughts on how to decide between things that serve community and things that bring in tourism dollars. How does the Council decide how to serve both?

Mr. Rosenfeld's response was that that is a decision that only the Council can make. Burien had a long discussion over it and in the end not everyone was happy. The likelihood of selling condos and adding retail was feasible. Ballard and Fremont and Kirkland are successful examples. Hotels need to be studied specifically, but it might be premature for downtown Des Moines.

Councilmember Sherman spoke of the historic context of downtown in that it was built to serve the community. Large shopping centers changed the purpose of downtown, but it still provides services and is a naturally occurring incubator for small businesses. Is that something the city could look at as a function of downtown?

Mr. Rosenfeld agreed that it was a great idea and a good way to double the density of a property.

Marty thanked Mr. Rosenfeld for his part in the forum as he had to leave the discussion.

Mr. Bengford gave a presentation on "Keys to a Successful Town Center". Downtown is a place people have to go to for a reason, not a pass-through. He has been working with Tacoma to create a design review process. He also works with Sumner, Lacey, Bonney Lake and the North Shore Golf Course. He works with 3D modeling and will speak on that also. The bullet points on the Keys are as follows:

1. Walkability – the most important.

- Compact development
- Connectivity
- Safe, comfortable and attractive sidewalks
- Interesting things to look at and go to.
- Greenery, people watching. City of Vancouver a good example. Bellevue doing interesting things.
- Without sidewalks, mom and kids will not be able to get around.
- Kirkland – NE 85th Street corridor. A standard shopping center can be redone to provide multiple uses. Break up buildings and add pedestrian areas.
- Mercer Island – traditionally 1–2 story downtown. Added pedestrian amenities. Lots of greener and spaces to sit. Public art. Lots of interesting details
- Redmond Town Center. Attractive connections through parking lot.
- Bellevue – Washington Square. Condo podiums. Intergrading mid block connections. Encourages people to get out and walk around. More desirable place to live.
- Residential areas – some decent family uses. Missing sidewalks.
- Auburn – streetscape and façade improvements. Provided parking and sidewalk improvements.
- Des Moines – Still feel the marine atmosphere. Add greenery. Make it more walkable. Big downtown. Focus.

2. Vehicular Circulation

- Minimize impacts to pedestrian environment
- Circulations/connections
- Safety
- Parking
- Way Finding
- Comprehensive Streetscape Design
- Snohomish – parking map. Some deficits, some surplus. Ways of finding and providing connections to parking and where pedestrians want to go.
- Tumwater – each street has a different function

3. Integration of Parts:

- Need to provide multiple gateways and enhance connections from residential neighborhoods.

4. Mix of Uses:

- Complicated. Parking is the most critical thing.
- Benefits. Saves resources. Moves towards sustainability.

For example: If you add 150 units, that means 300 more residents. 100 work downtown and 200+ work elsewhere/don't work and the benefits would be:

- Saves gas
- Reduce commuting time
- Less travel miles
- Less emissions
- As a general rule Supports 5,000 sq. ft. of retail at \$300 sq. ft
- Job occupancy +/- 30,000 sq. ft office space @ 1 person 200 sq. ft.

Parking is the biggest challenge especially for three stories. To have a three story mixed use building is tricky because parking must be provided and normally, underground parking is not provided in less than a five story building.

Councilmember Pina observed that Des Moines is a hillside city. When driving Pacific Highway to the Marina it is always sloping down, west of downtown is a sharp drop off. Without planning, parking is going to be a major problem.

Mr. Bengford stated that slopes will be a benefit with tuck under parking with shops on top, but the sacrifice is one side of the building on the downhill side is not usable. Tacoma is an example of this, but mixed use is not possible on every street as it depends on zoning codes for the City.

Chart of points presented at meeting:

5. Mixed use not appropriate for every street.

- Requires commercial on street level.
- Require only in areas where your market can support.
- If concerned about eliminating commercial area, City could allow residential to be put in.
- Vancouver – choose a few keys streets then let zoning organically happen

- Mercer Island – had a 25 foot height limit that made for zero development. Raised to four stories, five if affordable housing is added. Now all developments are going to five floors and had to change affordable housing rules.

6. People Places
7. Amenities and attractions
8. Multi model access
8. Strong identity
9. Ability to adapt over time
10. Green spaces

Mr. Bengford presented some 3D modeling that he is doing in Tacoma, to show what extra stories would actually look like which is a great tool for determining impacts on views.

Council asked for a copy of the slideshow.

Mr. Rouch began discussing what brings commercial real estate to a community. Ideally with retail and restaurants, they want to be where there is action, exposure and density of people. He suggests five story developments with underground parking. There is going to be a parking problem in the future, so target some land for a parking garage in downtown.

Councilmember Kaplan inquired about the ownership of parking garages in other communities. Mr. Rouch thinks it has to be publicly owned to be feasible.

Councilmember Kaplan stated that the idea has been broached to have the city develop parking then sell slots to shops and restaurants, so they would have dedicated parking.

Mr. Rouch commented that he had never seen that done before, the parking garages are usually open for all of downtown.

Mr. Karden interjected that in West Seattle they purchased 350 parking stalls funded through the Business Improvement Association. They have an agreement with the city to provide a lower tax on parking lots. The parking lots are owned by a group called Trustee Properties. They are very busy now and West Seattle is growing fast.

Councilmember Kaplan asked if West Seattle was busy because the parking garage was built, or were the people there already?

Mr. Karden stated that there is a correlation. Business is driven to bring in other business. Councilmember Kaplan asked how businesses were recruited to West Seattle. Mr. Karden stated that they would make a list of the types of businesses that are needed and then target those businesses.

Mr. Rouch stated that the people need to be there first, housing has to be available because if the people aren't there, the businesses will not come. Belltown evolved from union halls and taverns, then the first building when up and people decided living downtown could work.

Councilmember Kaplan inquired if Des Moines has the same core as Belltown, there needs to be that core to make a great downtown. Is there enough housing in downtown Des Moines to make that happen?

Mr. Rouch noted that from what he had seen of downtown, every time someone builds a multi-family unit, it gets filled. The city needs more density and housing in downtown.

Councilmember Sherman remarked that there are 1,000 residential units that are being built, but not in downtown. As revenue generators, Des Moines has the port which can now put together 100 acres for commercial development and the highway is beginning more densely developed. He envisions downtown as a place that serves the community instead of a revenue generator. The condos around the water have created a wall; does the City put up more walls? Why would the City want that development, when the City does not need downtown as a revenue generator. Des Moines is supporting good businesses and doesn't need to put up new buildings because what was already there has been redeveloped.

Councilmember Pina interjected that Mr. Rouch is talking about revenue for the businesses to come to the City, not revenue for the City.

Councilmember Scott talked about traffic issues and parking. Marine View in downtown has no parking. However, 7th Ave is virtually empty and has parking on both sides. She sees difficulties creating enough parking on Marine View Drive, but lots of opportunity on 7th Avenue.

Mr. Rouch stated that there is lots of parking on 7th Ave because it is hodge-podge. He would not widen Marine View Drive either, the slower traffic is better for business. Seventh Avenue needs to be assembled with parcels. There is opportunity there to go up to 4-5 stories and build in parking however someone's view will get blocked. All people living in that area make it a fun part of town to live in.

If the city wants to make Marine View the spot, parking is the key. Add in parallel parking on the street and added landscaping. On 7th Ave, it is angled parking. It would be a good idea to review how parking will work. Look at examples in other communities and draw from their examples.

Downtown is long and linear and not able to support business at this level. The downtown function has changed due to malls. Has the City created a monster by creating a long, non-pedestrian friendly area?

Figure out minimum core area, and offer more options outside of the core area. Isolate critical 1 or 2 block area as the core area.

Councilmember White asked about slowing traffic with one way streets.

Mr. Rouch stated that the City needs to make sure that if there's a line of traffic moving, do not make it awkward. One way streets are things that they are trying to get away from in other communities. If the City puts in one way streets, there has to be logical circulation coming in; there can't be any awkwardness about it.

When trying to attract businesses, the city needs to get people excited about what's coming down the pike as far as development in Des Moines.

Councilmember Sherman reported reading in the newspaper about Bremerton's revitalization. They have a huge employer in the U.S. government, but the waterfront condos were not selling and they went to auction and sold for a very low rate.

Councilmember Pina reiterated that he would not like to see Marine View drive widened. If the City wants to discourage traffic from going through, lower the speed limit and leave 7th Ave the way it is. Most of the on-street parking is on the west side.

Mr. Karden had he's first two restaurants in Bremerton. While they do have a huge employer there it's also tough, because when a ship leaves, there goes 5,000 burger buyers. Naval station takes up a large part of the waterfront in Bremerton, but it is not attractive and hard to get to. It is not nearly as appealing as Des Moines.

The Mayor and Council gave thanks to all who participated in the morning session.

The meeting was recessed at 10:49 a.m., and the meeting was reconvened at 10:57 a.m.

Planning Context

Ms. Lathrop, Planning Manager gave a presentation about downtown Des Moines which the Councilmembers had copies of it in their notebooks.

- Downtown Des Moines
 - Current Vision Goal as laid out in comprehensive plan.
 - Will be updating element and vision and identify opportunities' for development.
 - Start asking "Is this still the vision for the downtown?"
 - If so, what policies/strategies need to be revised in order to reach this vision?
 - What are the pieces of this vision that are missing?
 - Based on discussion at last retreat:
 - Recent investments that are starting to influence activity in the downtown.
 - The most recent is Butlers and has been well received by the community.

Councilmember White wanted to know if due to the increase in activity, are there more inquires about downtown.

Ms. Lathrop stated some developers are waiting for financial constraints to be lifted; this wasn't a topic to discuss at this point. She further laid out the strengths the downtown area has.

- Strengths:
 - Waterfront
 - Theatre
 - Natural attributes
 - New development
 - Successful businesses

- Weaknesses:
 - Differing views of what downtown should be
 - Geographic size
 - No place to walk/spend money
 - Historic platting zoning mistakes
 - Traffic

- Public infrastructure needs
- No public presence in downtown

Councilmember Scoot indicated that there have been conversations with Councilmembers over the last year about the possibility of a city presence in downtown. Just think of the number of people that come in and out of City Hall, they could be a presence downtown if the City had a building in the downtown area. When talking about presence, talk about historical reasons why the city buildings are where they are now and should they be left as they are or try to find a way to have them downtown?

Councilmember Scott stated that they were looking for a piece of land large enough to accommodate growth over the next 30 years and couldn't find that in downtown so that's why the buildings were built where they are.

Councilmember Kaplan said that the lack of a city presence in downtown was a mistake that was made years ago. There may or not may be a facility type solution.

Ms. Lathrop continued on with her presentation outlining some of the threats.

- Threats:
 - No Action
 - No design guidelines or a clear set of goals and policies for interested businesses to see if they would fit in to the vision for the City.
 - That council will make "popular" but not "right" decisions
 - Water system/district
 - Effect of development on small town feel
- Images of downtown:
 - Kirkland downtown (mixed uses, steep slopes)
 - Kirkland waterfront
 - Signage and Lighting

Ms. Lathrop spoke about the image of downtown and showed slides of Kirkland and what they have done in their downtown area finding solutions to hills and waterfront.

With the hills, try not to make it a canyon feel, it can be stair stepped into the hillside.

University of Washington's store front studio group is going to be assisting Des Moines to help make the connections to the waterfront.

Edmonds is another waterfront community like Des Moines, with an active downtown while maintaining that small town charm.

Councilmember Kaplan stated that Edmonds may be instructive for Des Moines Council as they also have the downtown away from the marina and still maintain the connection between the two.

Councilmember Scott interjected that Edmonds is also having controversies with development building heights

Ms. Lathrop suggested that the Council may want to make some field trips to some of the different communities to decide what they like and don't like about how other communities are set up.

Councilmember Scott expressed concern about possibly relocating the farmers market.

Ms. Lathrop suggested that in her experience, the farmers market is a big draw and if it was moved into the downtown corridor, it could have a positive impact on the entire area. (e.g. people may stay and eat or shop)

Mayor Sheckler commented on the parking problem that move would cause.

Councilmember Scott voiced an opinion that the Des Moines Farmers Market is really nice, it's on the waterfront and musicians play there. There is lawn for the kids to play on. People come for the fresh produce and the marina experience.

Ms. Lathrop was not suggesting moving the Farmers Market, but there is an opportunity that the Farmer's Market can bring people into the downtown area. A couple of other images to look at are Gig Harbor and Port Townsend in the redeveloped areas. Cannon Beach is another small scale waterfront community to look at.

There is an inventory on the website of historical buildings in downtown.

Councilmember Scott shared that the Historical Society was given a photo with IOFF Hall at its grand opening with a neat sign painted on it and the IFFO is looking to see if they can obtain a grant to replace window and repaint the sign.

The facilitator asked for any other comments from the Council before the start of the visual preference portion.

Councilmember Sherman feels the strengths of downtown are that Des Moines is not over developed and is an incubator for businesses. Plus it has the proximity and connection with the small business development center. He then handed out an article about what happened to East Maine in Vancouver.

Councilmember Scott felt that an East/West profile on the various streets showing the existing buildings and how tall they could be under current zoning rules would be helpful.

Councilmember Kaplan expressed the weakness, in his opinion, is that there are two defined corridors to the marina currently. A more hospitable way to bring people up and down that corridor is important. Perhaps an equivalent to a Chamber of Commerce would help bring in business into downtown.

Councilmember Sherman related that 15 to 20 years ago there was a strong chamber. They became too heavily involved in city government and it declined after that.

Councilmember Kaplan commented that city staff is actively involved in organizations like the Kiwanis, etc. and that has pros and cons.

City Manager Piasecki observed that an independent agency such as the Chamber of Commerce has the possibility to get political and split up. One solution may be a city supported process that works with council to create an attraction plan. That would stay more focused on bringing in the business and stay with the vision.

Visual Preference Evaluation and Discussion

The councilmembers were given six dots in each category to place on photos displayed to indicate their preference for buildings and spaces they might like to see in the downtown area. The categories are: Commercial/Retail, Urban Design, Open Space and Parks, Mixed Use and Parking.

In summary the most dots were placed on the West Seattle in the mixed use category and the comments indicated it has a strong historical feel.

On the larger five stories building, the comments from the Council were that these buildings were too tall, too big and bulky.

Councilmember Thomasson felt there was some architecture that was pleasing, but not much else on the poster had his vision of downtown. The parking lots were not good choices either. There some thriving businesses in town, it may look terrible, but it is thriving. People are saying they want art and clothing stores and boutiques. The Council can do all the visioning it wants, but if what's bad is not eliminated, it won't make a difference.

Mayor Sheckler looked more at the aesthetics of buildings than the actual building. The north end of Marine View Drive might be a good location for structured parking.

Councilmember Kaplan chose some things because of the aesthetics and others for functionality. A parking structure makes the most sense and it would address the parking issue. Fountains in strategic places and having human scale buildings downtown, may draw people in. Gateway's at entrances will attract people and be inviting to businesses. Creating a core with similar style buildings between 223rd and 220th, Marine View and the Marina would help too.

Councilmember White thought it would have been helpful not to have named cities on the poster

Councilmember Thomasson states that it is easier to say what he doesn't see. There is so much vacant land in Des Moines, if the city were to buy land for parking, which he is not in favor of, the only affordable parking is surface parking, not structure parking. The people that are developing the land should build the required parking. The city should not have to build parking and structured parking will never be cost effective.

Ms. Lathrop added that at some time the tipping point is reached where the land becomes so expensive that structured parking becomes necessary. It makes more sense right now to do surface parking, but demand might increase enough that structured parking is the best answer.

Councilmember Thomasson offered that he has always found parking downtown. If everyone who comes in now, builds the required parking, we will not have a parking issue. The reason people own land downtown is either they live there or they are an investment group and it's not the right time to make money off the investment. There are several businesses doing well in downtown.

Councilmember Kaplan talked with land owners on 7th Ave and it is not economically viable to build something with the required parking. There is not a big enough chunk of property downtown to make a profit for developers if they have to put in the parking.

A topic of discussion about property benefits and land owners should be brought up at a different time.

Councilmember Scott feels that the city has made it very difficult to open a business. Most other waterfront cities have parking on both sides of the streets or lots with a shuttle. She believes that if there is going to be commercial zoning there needs to be parking on the streets. Most of the downtown population is over 60 and the city needs to consider that in their vision.

Councilmember White echoes Carmen's thoughts on the mess that has been created in downtown and that it needs to be fixed.

Ms. Lathrop said that the city has a transportation consultant that is going to be looking at the issues with parking and so this is good input for them to look at in their analysis.

Mayor Sheckler commented that Council has identified the problems with downtown, now solutions are needed to enable forward motion. If Council is serious about this, they need to start finding solutions.

Councilmember Pina offered that a solution for the short term could be a shuttle to and from downtown.

Councilmember Sherman believes that Metro is willing to team with cities to provide intra city shuttles with \$60,000 a year contribution with a 5 year commitment.

Staff says there needs to be a study concerning economics and parking issues. The goal is to update the goals and policies of downtown.

City Manager Piasecki reminded Council to remember the comprehensive plan and vision. Once the meat of the issues is arrived at, goals that lead to strategic objectives and activities can be discussed. One of the strategic activities could be a study of the parking issues would help in coming up with some alternatives.

Perhaps Council needs to look at City codes and regulations on building.

Ms. Lathrop responded that if the codes are too restrictive, there is risk of being so prescriptive that the creative ideas of builders are dampened.

Councilmember Thomasson stated that the Council needs to figure out if Des Moines is an urban or a small town downtown.

Councilmember Kaplan is concerned that if the businesses are not expensive to build, the City will get the same thing it has now. Quality and things that will last are needed, not strip malls.

A recess was called at 12:37 p.m. and the meeting was reconvened at 12:48 p.m.

Commercial/Retail:

Staff began the afternoon session with talk of opportunities in related to goals and recapped the previous discussion points. The waterfront is a big attraction for the area. Marine View Drive is about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long from S 216th to S 227th Street. Typically, people are willing to walk $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to take transit and get to their destinations. The Marina is about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from Marine View Drive. The center of downtown is S 223rd. There seems to be a hub of activity around the theater, so the focus of attention should be on what is currently happening and build on that.

Opportunity Areas Roundtable, each Council member has a say.

Councilmember White would like to see the city buy the property by the theatre and restore the theatre. Maybe add a restaurant that would create an anchor for Marine View Drive. She would like to see more public investment in downtown.

Councilmember Sherman states that the downtown area has been providing services primarily for people and incubator business. He would like the city to focus on making the connection, if the school is sold to provide two entrances to the marina. Connections from school to field house and downtown could be made walkable. The downtown areas strengths are the existing service industries and restaurants. Smaller scale buildings and lower rents are attractive to new businesses.

Councilmember Scott commented that the theatre is for sale at a price of \$2.7 million which she feels is not feasible for the city to consider purchasing. There is a nice flat, walkable path that draws people in and they do spend some money downtown after their walks. She felt that the properties that are re-developable can connect down to the marina. Also, 223rd is another major entrance to the marina and beach park, however, better signage is needed to direct traffic from S 223rd and S 227th to the marina. She pointed out that if there is development in the lower lands like the Big Catch/QFC block, it would not negatively impact views.

Councilmember Pina wants to focus on the area north of Red Robin and south of China Sea as that area is densely populated by small businesses. He wants to encourage Destination Des Moines to look at the downtown area and develop plans to encourage new businesses into downtown. He would like to see the City adopt new codes so that new buildings may offer parking behind their storefronts.

Councilmember Kaplan feels that whatever changes are made at either entrance to the marina are equally important. Access to the beach park is mostly at the north end and 223rd is really the heart of downtown. Centering on 7th and 223rd will bring people into the area and provide the connection to the marina and the beach park. From the vertical lot up through the psychology building are places for additional business opportunities. The Council needs to decide on what is the center of downtown and make it a focal point and he feels the center is 223rd. Creating some financial incentives is another idea to attract investors and businesses.

Staff and Council discussed that 223rd connects further into the community than other streets as it's the most southern connection to the communities.

Councilmember Thomasson thinks the Council will struggle with Des Moines Elementary School and how it may be handled in regards to tearing it down or persevering it as historical. There are a variety of options for the school property that include but are not limited to being turned into a large retail/condo project, expand the field house and park, or turn the property into quaint little shops.

Staff interjected that when families move into downtown, the demand for a school could increase.

Councilmember Thomasson stated that perhaps the Council needs to meet with the school district to discuss the situation. The city could also look at buying what property they can in the same block as the police station. He agrees with Mr. Kaplan that core of downtown is at 223rd. Odd Fellows Hall is the oldest building downtown; the City needs to determine if that building is an asset that should be retained

for the public. Biggest asset in the downtown area is vacant/under-developed land which is mostly zoned commercial. He would be open to rezoning it for multi-family units.

At some point when the multi-family units were built in the past, the parking issue was not resolved, so more multi-family units could make the parking problem worse.

Councilmember Thomasson indicated that a street plan for 6th, between 223rd and 227th with sidewalks and angle parking, would be one solution. The boatyards could be converted to retail with multi-family usage above and that boat storage should not be in downtown. The city needs to focus more on the opportunities for investors.

Councilmember Scott brought up the idea of putting in angled parking at 219th on the north side of the ball field to help ease the parking crunch at the field house. Another option is to use the grass field on the east side of 8th Ave. for a parking lot.

Mayor Sheckler feels good about the direction the Council is heading. The Mayor is confident that investors have picked up on the fact that the City of Des Moines is serious about attracting new businesses and development. There is a lot of under-utilized property that the Council should be encouraging investors to take a look at and invite them to develop it. The same concept of public/private partnerships that was used on the Highway projects can be utilized to encourage investors. If the City purchases the elementary school, they will be able to solve many issues. Furthermore, the Mayor stated that the Council could work on signage and should direct staff to start that immediately.

City Manager Tony Piasecki stated that there is a work order for signage already in motion. The water system problem is currently being worked on; once the water problem is solved, development will start moving quickly. Funding is the biggest hurdle concerning the water issue.

Staff stated that the challenge at this time is how to take what the Council has said and formulate it into an action plan. It was felt that a caucus should be held at the staff level to come back with a proposal to move forward with Council's ideas. Some of those will affect the downtown element of the comp plan; some will affect strategies on how to achieve those goals and objectives. Then staff can submit a plan to the Council with time lines and budgets that will allow re-prioritization with current projects.

Councilmember Kaplan summarized that there appears to be a consensus that Council's priorities are: a downtown core, connections to marina, clarifying the Council's position on Des Moines Elementary School, and looking at whether or not there is too much commercial property and if it should be scaled back.

The staff can respond with a recap on what the Council has set forth and take what may be a conflict and come up with a plan.

Mayor Schekler stated that if the Council is serious about signage, it needs to be done now before another season is gone. Staff should be instructed by Council to work on it immediately.

Councilmember Thomasson is not in favor of a lot of signage as it causes visual clutter.

Councilmember Pina suggested staff return with a list of signage for the Council to select the ones that they want.

City Manager Tony Piasecki wanted to know what level of public input the Council wants in regards to any changes the city is making. All land use changes have to be mailed out to the public according to the City code.

Councilmember Pina suggested that another Saturday session is needed to review what was accomplished today and move forward.

A Leadership Summit was also suggested to help augment future Saturday sessions. In addition, it may also be necessary to have a series of meetings with downtown property owners.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lady of Letters, Inc.