

**MEETING MINUTES  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)**

**Wednesday, January 4, 2006  
7:30 AM – 9:00 AM  
Fremont City Hall  
Council Chambers**

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 AM.

**Members Present:** Lon Vredeveld DDA Chair  
Kim Deur Downtown Business Owner  
Ryan McNally Downtown Attorney  
James M. Rynberg Fremont Mayor  
Ron Vliem Executive Director, Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce  
Rob Zeldenrust Main Street Business Operator

**Members Absent:** Marianne Boerigter Director, Newaygo County Council for the Arts  
Kevin Conley Downtown Business Owner  
Lee Ann Glaser Head - Fremont Retailers Association  
Kristie Van Simaey's Downtown Business Owner  
Ric Zahrt Fremont Business Owner

**Others Present:** Kay Cummings Farmers Market Committee member  
Larry Brueker Fremont City Councilmember  
Kathy Huschke Farmers Market Committee member (arrived at 8:15 am)  
Bob Rottman Farmers Market Committee member  
Mary Robart Downtown Fremont Restaurant Owner

**Staff Present:** Richard Rought Fremont Zoning Administrator  
Michele Ribant Fremont Neighborhood & Economic Development Director  
Chris Yonker Fremont City Manager

**Consultants Present:** Harry Wierenga Fleis & Vandenbrink  
Rick Stout Fleis & Vandenbrink

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Rob Zeldenrust made a motion to approve the DDA minutes as presented from the December 14, 2005 meeting; motion was seconded by Mayor Rynberg, and carried.

**III. Discussion on the Downtown Fremont Enhancement Plan**

Rick Stout indicated that to-date much of the focus of the group has been on the farmers market pavilion and on improvements to the block in which the market would be located. He said the group needs to think about design considerations for the other core commercial blocks, even though he acknowledged that it has made sense to focus our attention on the market and its proposed site (parking lot slightly east of The ArtsPlace.) This is because the market pavilion appears to be our signature or specialty component in the design plan and the site has some significant engineering and design issues (e.g., grading).

Mr. Stout provided the group with a handout that outlined guidelines on landscaping, walls and fences, site furnishings and lighting. He indicated that we will have to start focusing on how all these elements should impact the entire downtown.

Harry Wierenga said we need to consider the following as we design for the downtown commercial core:

1. Functional elements (e.g., consolidating dumpsters)
2. Aesthetic elements (e.g., art placement)
3. Specialty elements (e.g., farmers market pavilion – what makes our community unique)

Fleis and Vandenbrink desired a sense of which elements of the plan were most important to the group. Mr. Wierenga asked the group whether entry points, alleyways or parking areas were most important. Those in attendance expressed the following thoughts and ideas:

- Fremont is a destination location; you do not happen to arrive in Fremont by mistake. Thus, entry signage is not as important as other considerations. Once you are in the City, the way the town is situated and the way the City is lit at night already creates a visually pleasing place.
- There were mixed views on whether entry signage into the City needed to be an area of great focus. A few people felt that entryways into the City were important and that signage and artwork (e.g., sculpture) must be provided that is not only aesthetically pleasing but that also makes a statement of what Fremont is all about. It was suggested that our streetlight logo could be used in signage. However, it appeared that most people felt that there should be some type of entryway signage but that the focus of the plan should be on other elements.
- There needs to be some kind of way-finding signage; however, we must be careful not to put too much information on the signs because it could be more distractive to a driver than helpful. The signage needs to be aesthetically pleasing and the placement of it coordinated. We should provide a way-finding signage system at appropriate scales for both vehicular and pedestrian users.
- There were mixed views on whether the sidewalk trees should be retained. Some felt we should retain all of the trees; others felt we don't need as many and that they should be kept trimmed back.
- Many people expressed that they would like to focus on developing the alleyways to make them more attractive, functional and pedestrian friendly. It was expressed that there are challenges in creating more pleasing alleyways, so we must get the private property/business owners to work in partnership with the City if we are to create the desired type of atmosphere in the alleyways.
- It was expressed that there is a lot of vehicular traffic in the City and downtown, but very little pedestrian traffic on the front sidewalks. The point was made that we need to concentrate on making downtown a more walkable community where people want to stay and shop – not just a destination (e.g., post office.) This would include reducing truck volumes, traffic noise and improving air quality in the downtown.
- It was expressed that while we need to plan for our downtown parking needs and the use of both public and private parking lots, we don't want to create too much parking in the rear of downtown because we want people parking on Main Street as well.

Harry Wierenga indicated that it appears the group does not want to re-make the City and its downtown, but rather the group desires to enhance it.

### Farmers Market Pavilion

Rick Stout reported that pricing information for the various types of farmers market structures will be provided at the next meeting. Mr. Wierenga outlined that the market could be developed at three different levels as follows:

1. Basic Farmers Market pavilion
2. Farmers Market/Community event pavilion
3. Market pavilion to include special uses (e.g., skating rink)

There was an overwhelming consensus that the Farmers Market pavilion be designed to accommodate the farmers market and other community events (#2), but not to concentrate on any special uses such as a skating rink.

#### **IV. Next Meeting**

It was agreed that for the next meeting we need to discuss the following:

- Alley treatments: Do we want to include decorative bollards, planters, etc. It was pointed out that we need to get the downtown property owners involved in the creation of the plan, especially in terms of the alleys.
- Lighting: There is a hierarchy of lighting; some that is pedestrian-oriented and some that is vehicular-oriented. We need to discuss what we want to accomplish with lighting because it is an important consideration and one that has a very high price tag.
- Public Art: Art and its placement can have a positive impact on the City. We need to discuss whether the art will be permanent or rotating or both. It was suggested that murals can help transform space, especially in alleyways and along lengthy blank walls.
- Farmers Market structure: We need to decide the specific uses for the market so we can determine what type of structure to create. Will it just be a farmers market or will it have a multiplicity of uses? Fleis & Vandenbrink will provide cost estimates for various market designs. Staff will compile a list of possible uses.

Chair Vredeveld asked the Committee to come to the next meeting prepared to share with the group which area City and its downtown each person is most impressed with and why.

Chair Vredeveld announced that the next meeting of the Downtown Development Authority will be held on Wednesday, January 18, 2006 from 7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. at the Fremont City Hall. He also indicated that the DDA will invite the downtown merchants to the first meeting in February, so we can keep them abreast of the progress on the Downtown Fremont Enhancement Plan and can obtain their input on issues related to the plan.

#### **V. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:31 AM.