

MEETING MINUTES
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA) MEETING

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

7:30 – 9:00 AM

Fremont City Hall
Council Chambers

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 AM.

Members Present:	Lon Vredeveld	DDA Chair
	Marianne Boerigter	Director, Newaygo County Council for the Arts
	Kim Deur	Downtown Business Owner (Arrived at 8:00 a.m.)
	James M. Rynberg	Fremont Mayor
	Ron Vliem	Executive Director, Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce
	Rob Zeldenrust	Main Street Business Operator

Members Absent:	Kevin Conley	Downtown Business Owner
	Lee Ann Glaser	Head - Fremont Retailers Association
	Ryan McNally	Downtown Attorney
	Kristie Van Simaey	Downtown Business Owner
	Ric Zahrt	Fremont Business Owner

Staff Present:	Michele Ribant	Fremont Neighborhood & Economic Development Director
	Chris Yonker	Fremont City Manager

Others Present:	Kay Cummings	Farmers Market Committee Member
	Kathy Huschke	Farmers Market Committee Member
	Bob Rottman	Farmers Market Committee member
	Brain Karsten	Downtown Business Owner
	Mary Robart	Downtown Fremont Restaurant Owner
	Leo Verkerk	Downtown Fremont Restaurant Owner

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

II. Approval of Minutes

Jim Rynberg moved to approve the DDA minutes as presented from the November 30, 2005 meeting; seconded by Marianne Boerigter and carried.

III. Meeting of the Fremont Restaurant Owners

Chair Vredeveld reported that he met with a group of Fremont restaurant owners on December 7, 2005 at 10:00 am at the Fremont City Hall. He indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to establish a group in the Fremont restaurant community that would work together on business promotions and building relationships. He indicated that he values the ideas and comments that come from the meetings.

IV. Discussion of the Downtown Fremont Enhancement Project

Farmers Market Pavilion

Harry Wierenga welcomed the Fremont Farmers Market Committee and the downtown business owners to the DDA meeting. Following introductions, Mr. Wierenga gave the group an overview of the matters discussed at the previous DDA meeting. He indicated that much of the focus was on the location and design of the Farmers Market pavilion. He outlined that the DDA considered the following sites for the Market:

- Directly north of The ArtsPlace
- Easterly most portion in the same parking lot as The ArtsPlace (across Merchant Avenue from City Hall)
- Parking lot directly east of Veterans Memorial Park (North of Fifth/Third Bank) (acquisition of Property would be required)
- In the middle of the block located between Sheridan Avenue and Maple Street, directly east of Division (acquisition of property would be required.)

He noted that the DDA's top two choices for the pavilion location were:

- Directly north of The ArtsPlace
- Parking lot directly east of Veterans Memorial Park (north of Fifth/Third Bank.)

Ms. Ribant indicated that in order for the group to consider locating the pavilion in the parking lot directly east of Veterans Memorial Park, the City would need to acquire the land. She reported that she had investigated the availability of the lot and found that Fifth/Third Bank had previously submitted to the City Planning Commission draft plans to build a new drive-thru facility for the bank in that location. The bank has not yet reached a decision on the project and has not returned to the Planning Commission for Site Plan review or approval.

Rob Zeldenrust felt that if the City could not purchase the bank parking lot, the appeal of locating the Farmers Market further east in that block is not as great. He stated that having the Market visible from Main Street and across from the Park had many advantages; others agreed.

Those in attendance then discussed locating the Market directly behind The ArtsPlace. Mr. Wierenga stated that there would be pros and cons to any site that is selected. Rick Stout showed the group the conceptual sketch of the pavilion that F&V had drawn for the 11/30/05 meeting; he then displayed a newer sketch taking into account the comments from the November meeting.

The attendees made the following comments regarding building the Farmers Market pavilion behind The ArtsPlace:

- Numerous parking spaces would be lost if the pavilion were to be built in this location. However, there may be other ways to resolve the parking need issues. The City could try to negotiate a parking arrangement with the church located directly north of the site and across Dayton Street in an effort to create more parking opportunities downtown. The comment was made that up until several years ago, the former Crandell Funeral Home occupied the majority of the proposed location. Thus, the use of the unimproved lot for parking has not been a long one. However, the Downtown Parking Plan had originally identified the entire north half of the block for public parking lots.
- Having a great demand for parking is a good thing because we want a vibrant downtown. It was also suggested that the east end of downtown could use the boost in business that the Market should create.
- The more multiplicity of uses for the Market pavilion, the greater value to the community. Having the Market located behind The ArtsPlace would make it convenient if we wanted to include an artisans' market as a use for the pavilion. It was also suggested that we could host events (e.g., ice sculpture contest) at the pavilion during the Polarfest event. However, it was also suggested that while we want to have many uses for the pavilion, we need to keep in mind the importance of this pavilion to the farmers it is supposed to accommodate, especially as it relates to design considerations.

Kay Cummings asked whether the group was married to the size of the pavilion, which could be as big as 60' x 120'. She also asked whether the orientation of the structure had to be north-south. The response was that the pavilion can be any size and have any orientation the

community desires as long as whatever structure is created satisfies the needs of the users from a physical perspective. Mr. Wierenga felt that we want to create a pavilion that will fit the current reality, but at the same time, be large enough to accommodate the future needs.

Kathy Huschke inquired about the cost of building such a pavilion. Mr. Stout stated that there is a wide range in terms of the type of structure that can be designed and the amount of money it would take to build it. He estimated that a simple structure could cost approximately \$40,000 - \$50,000 while a more elaborate structure, such as the ones he has sketched could range from \$250,000 - \$375,000. He indicated that Fleis & Vandenbrink will prepare some cost estimates for a range of possible pavilions designs.

Ms. Cummings asked whether the Farmers Market would be able to locate in this new location for the 2006 market season. Mr. Wierenga felt it may be a good idea to relocate the market to the new location, even if the pavilion is not yet fully constructed. It was suggested that a tent could be put up in the new location to help create excitement for the coming of the new pavilion and that a sketch of the pavilion could be displayed near the tent.

At the conclusion of the discussion on the Farmers Market pavilion, it was the consensus of the group that the new location for the pavilion should be behind or slightly east of The ArtsPlace.

Public Art

Mr. Wierenga felt that there are many opportunities for the placement of public art in Fremont and that the art could be quite diverse in form, content and location. He explained that the art could take the form of a mural, sculpture, bike rack art, signage, etc. Art could be placed at the gateways to the City, which could be very aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Stout showed the group a layout that illustrated possible locations for public art in Fremont. The layout also depicted numerous examples of various types of artwork that could be placed in town. It was suggested that some or most of the artwork be rotated so that it is not always in a fixed location. It was also suggested that student art be used in some locations, particularly in the plaza in front of the proposed expanded High School. Mr. Wierenga encouraged the group to explore different communities to look at different types of public art.

V. New Business

Chair Vredeveld asked that each DDA Member come prepared to the next meeting to share their thoughts on parking considerations for the downtown. Some things to consider include:

- How should we handle employee parking?
- How do we ensure that our patrons & customers have access to “choice” parking locations?
- How do we accommodate the parking needs of new & projected downtown residents?
- How should we implement and fund a parking program?

He also asked the DDA Members to make a concerted effort to look at other communities during their travels over the holidays to view elements they like about those communities’ streetscapes, especially as it relates to public art.

VI. Next Meeting

Chair Vredeveld announced that the next meeting of the Downtown Development Authority would be held on Wednesday, January 4, 2006 from 7:30 – 9:00 AM at the Fremont City Hall.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 AM.