

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)
FAÇADE / HISTORIC PRESERVATION SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, February 15, 2007
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Fremont City Hall
Council Chambers**

Call to Order

The Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

Members Present:	Marianne Boerigter	Director, Newaygo County Council for the Arts
	Peter Lance	Community Member
	Gerry Rich	Downtown Property/Business Owner
	Mary Robart	Downtown Property/Business Owner
	James Rynberg	Fremont City Mayor
	Ron Vliem	Executive Director, Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce
Staff Present:	Chris Yonker	Fremont City Manager
	Michele Ribant	Fremont Neighborhood & Economic Development Director

Welcoming Remarks

Michele Ribant asked the Subcommittee to let her know if anyone was interested in chairing the Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee. Marianne Boerigter volunteered, and it was the consensus of the Subcommittee to appoint her to the chair position. She indicated that if any matter came before the Subcommittee that could possibly be a conflict of interest, she would recuse herself from voting on the matter. Michele Ribant indicated she would inform the DDA chair, Lon Vredevelde.

Update on the Fremont Façade Improvement Program

Feedback on the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Design Guidelines

Michele Ribant indicated that she acknowledged that the following changes were necessary to the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Design Guidelines:

- Needs Introduction and Conclusion
- Some facts need to be corrected (e.g. not a State of Michigan grant but a grant initiated by the City)
- Formatting changes
- Consistency with proposed new Zoning Ordinance

Michele Ribant asked whether there were any substantive changes. The Subcommittee felt the following should be addressed:

- It was noted that there are many overhangs that are part of a downtown building's structure and yet on the presentation boards those overhangs are not part of the proposed new façade. The guidelines should address overhangs.

- It was pointed out that rear facades were not addressed in the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Design Guidelines, and it would be helpful to have some general guidelines outlined dealing with them.
- The Guidelines should specify that the proposed façade designs as outlined on the presentation boards give property owners ideas as to how their building could look but that the changes are not mandatory. The Subcommittee wanted to make sure that the property owners know that they can work with the Program architect to come up with a façade improvement that is in keeping with the guidelines and that is appealing and acceptable to the property owner, yet may not be how the façade specifically looks on the presentation boards.
- It was suggested that the Program architect and an applicant be given both the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Design Guidelines and the Zoning Ordinance so that any proposal in terms of façade improvements is in keeping with both the guidelines and the regulations.
- It was suggested that the pictures of signage in the Design Guidelines be changed to reflect signage that is more in keeping with the historic character of Downtown Fremont; the examples were modern in appearance.

It was the consensus of the Subcommittee to have the Downtown Façade Improvement Design Guidelines updated and then presented to the full DDA for approval. The Subcommittee also decided that when the Program is ready to be launched, notice will be provided to both business and property owners in the Program's target area, even though the property owners are the ones that must apply. There will be a due date established for applications for the first round.

Role of the Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee

Michele Ribant stressed that the Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee will be playing an important role in that the Subcommittee will be reviewing applications and plans submitted by the property owners for façade improvements. She indicated that some proposed façade improvements may be more in depth and some may be as simple as requesting funding for a new awning. She said that there may be times when moving quickly to get approval will be necessary to assist with the plans of a business. Therefore, it was suggested that the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Program Guidelines be amended to allow the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee to make final decisions on applications for funding requests rather than requiring the sign-off of the full DDA. After some discussion, it was recommended that the Subcommittee be allowed to approve funding requests up to a certain amount without the full DDA approval.

After some more discussion, a motion was made by Marianne Boerigter, seconded by Gerry Rich, and carried to recommend to the DDA and the Fremont City Council amending the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Program Guidelines to allow the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee to approve applications for funding requests for façade improvements up to \$3,000.00 without the approval of the full DDA.

The Subcommittee felt that this would allow a property owner who had a façade improvement project which would cost up to \$6,000.00 to obtain approval quickly. The goal is to be customer service oriented on smaller projects, such as putting up a new awning.

Discussion on Organizing to Nominate Downtown Fremont as a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places

Michele Ribant reported that the nomination process will move faster if more people are involved. She indicated that it makes sense to have one person write the nomination for consistency reasons, but the more people who are involved in the research, the quicker we can nominate Downtown Fremont on the National Register of Historic Places. Marianne Boerigter suggested that a form be created listing all the

information needed about each building and then property owners can be asked to furnish the information. The other following sources were suggested as possible places to obtain relevant information for the project:

- Title office in White Cloud: This source may have dates as to when the structure was built and who the owners have been.
- Fremont Area District Library: It was suggested that we could partner with the “Friends of the Library” in terms of conducting the research.
- Sense of Place: Chris Yonker provided the Subcommittee with historic data that was on the Sense of Place Program; he suggested that this Program is a good source for historic information.

Michele Ribant thanked the Subcommittee for the suggestions.

Discussion on Acquiring Ensley Tower and the First School House in Fremont – Located at Windmill Gardens

Michele Ribant opened the discussion by saying that there has been some interest in acquiring Ensley Tower and relocating it to a site within the City limits, so the community may enjoy it. She explained that the Tower is currently located in Windmill Gardens, which is located east of town off of Luce Avenue and that the Tower is on the State Historic Register. She indicated that Jan Burton, the owner’s daughter, said her family would be interested in allowing the City to acquire it. Ms. Ribant reported that Jan Burton said her family would donate to the City what she believes is the first school house in Fremont.

The Subcommittee indicated that it would be nice to have the school house on the same site as the Tower but that we first need to determine where the Tower could be re-located. The Subcommittee asked if there was documentation that confirmed that the school house is actually the first one in Fremont. Ms. Ribant indicated that Jan Burton said she believes she has documentation in her father’s records but that she would have to dig it out. The Subcommittee asked Michele Ribant to keep the lines of communication open with the owners of Windmill Gardens so that when the City came up with a site for the Tower and the school house, the Subcommittee could try to work something out to acquire the Ensley Tower.

Next Meeting

Michele Ribant indicated the next meeting of the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee meeting will be scheduled on an as-needed basis.

Adjournment

There being no further business of the Subcommittee, the meeting adjourned at 5:04 PM.