Call to Order: meeting called to order at 7:37am.

Approval of Minutes moved to next meeting.

Review and Recommendation of the Second Amendment to the Merle Hay Commercial Urban Renewal Plan and the Financial Assistance for Merle Hay Mall Phase 3 (3800 Merle Hay Road)

Naomi Hamlett gave a brief history of the urban renewal plan, noted existing businesses in the plan area, explained the purpose of the second amendment and the financial condition report.

In response to a question from the Board Erin Olson-Douglas shared that one thing done with Southridge is to commit some of the future valuation to projects going in around the mall area. Valuation has been committed to the medical clinic, senior housing, and TWG projects. Agreements were made with the mall owner for future projects brought into the larger area would receive some amount of TIF assistance. Southridge is a much bigger area at approximately 900 acres; Merle Hay Mall is about 75 acres. The owner of Merle Hay mall does not control development in the perimeter. These developments have not sought TIF assistance but did receive tax abatement that has now rolled off in the past couple years.

Ms. Olson-Douglas feels that the trajectory in the Merle Hay area is strong. The investment has happened at the perimeter of the mall with the different owners. New growth has occurred through new investment and increased the value of areas that haven’t seen investment due to the reinvestment of others.

City staff from Des Moines and Urbandale have been active in joint conversations about the preferred future is for the entire area. There are differences in strategy and philosophy about how you create urban renewal districts. Urbandale’s district is relatively small, therefore there isn’t growth beyond supporting the investment in streetscape further west along Douglas Avenue. From an urban renewal capacity there isn’t much valuation for them to work with in this project.

Ms. Hamlett explained the proposed development agreement and development requirements to provide financial assistance to Merle Hay Mall and previously approved projects within the urban renewal district. The rehabilitation of the interior of the existing mall and redevelopment of Sears were described.

It was noted that the Urbandale City Council denied a request for housing near IHOP along Douglas Avenue. They would prefer housing to be farther north.

Ms. Hamlett shared that when the preliminary agreement went to the Des Moines City Council, the significance of the mall was discussed and they want to make sure it remains successful. The Council is confident in the mall ownership.

Ms. Hamlett stated that staff appreciates the input from the Board on things to include in a master plan. It is very helpful. Staff shares the thought that this area needs to be something different than it has been.

The development agreement will require DART service to move back to Merle Hay Mall. DART service is currently at Hay Market Mall.

Ms. Olson-Douglas noted the Merle Hay neighborhood is active in dialogue about their beliefs of what should happen
in the area. The neighborhood plan includes corridor improvements. There is a stark difference in the sense of arrival to the north of 80/35 as compared to south of 80/35 to Merle Hay Mall. The reason for the investment is not just for the mall but for the PlanDSM comp plan. Feel that the mall area should be strengthened so that other areas in close proximity can redevelop successfully. Putting together the need for a sense of arrival and the corridor improvements could help the redevelopment prospects in the area even beyond the urban renewal boundaries for the mall site.

The mall is at a critical juncture with two anchors closing within 45 days of each other. Making these moves now give some opportunity further out.

In answer to a question from the Board, Jim Sutphen stated that it is very common in any mall environment to have restrictive covenants. These restrictive covenants are all negotiated. Those tenants that the mall ownership is speaking with understand what is going on in the industry. As long as something cohesive that does not have direct impact on them is proposed they are far more flexible today than they ever have been.

**Board comments**

- Want to ensure we are headed in the right direction and not just making subsidies to one project.
- The discussion of where housing should be points toward the need for a master plan.
- Encourage diversification of uses as is happening at Southridge. These should be hubs of activity and not just retail but housing choices, etc.
- Appreciate the listing of the master planning components. Suggest considering: The pieces are so large and it is hard to think of them as anything other than the mall. Possibly strip all the existing buildings off, are there four neighborhoods here? The classic new urbanist 1,000-foot walking distance. Start to think of it as a series of neighborhoods, with the remnant mall as the core, that wrap around and leverage the value of the existing structure.
- What would be key destinations other than the food court; that give the satellite neighborhoods a sense of place and belonging.
- Suggest a density diagram with only surface parking and cap it with a maximum number of space and then with a parking structure.
- Is this enough to fill the space out? Are we putting enough in to encourage the kind of retailers we want in order for it to be the designation location? Are there any ideas that haven’t been thought of to make it that destination?
- Want to be sure that the property owners give it a vision. Don’t think of it as “How do I repair a mall?” but “How do I develop a prime piece of property as a destination?”
- Possible to have other retail models, not putting the same things back in the same slots and think that it is going to fix it.
- Feel that either too much money is being put into the project to try to create something that we’ve been trying to create for several years. Retail is changing so dramatically. The concept of a mall is different and will continue to change. Other cities around the country, that have had city partnerships, have done really cool things to boxy areas. So maybe this is not enough. Are we in a spot where we are creating something that is going to prevent this area from moving forward because this is not enough investment? Or is there too much being given to something that needs to naturally let the market figure this out.
- Is there the ability for the City to create incentives for the developer to work with national retail experts that also understand multi-use models that really give it a vision? This could be an exciting opportunity.
- Do not feel that this mall has the same sense of arrival that some other retail developments have. The diagonal off of Sears could be a cool architectural feature.
- Concerned that the incentives are for the rehabilitation of interior improvements. Sears may have a new configuration that will require new entrances that seem related to future pedestrian components and needs, as well as master plan decisions. Feel that the mall ownership should be required to be in communication with staff on these types of changes.

**Motion:** recommend approval of the second amendment to the urban renewal plan

**By:** Heiman-Godar
**Second:** Weisenbach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Wilke-Shapiro**
Motion: **recommend approval of the financial assistance package**

By: **Heiman-Godar**
Second: **Weisenbach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allen</th>
<th>Barnum</th>
<th>Heiman-Godar</th>
<th>Hielskema</th>
<th>MacRae</th>
<th>C Nagle</th>
<th>Reynolds</th>
<th>Rypma</th>
<th>Weisenbach</th>
<th>Wilke-Shapiro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Review and Recommendation of Preliminary Design of Lauridsen Skate Park (901 2nd Avenue)**

Ryan Moffatt gave a brief history of and introduced the proposed project that has been in the works since 2004. Details on site furnishing, lighting plan, and landscaping will be included when the project comes back for final review.

Tim West stated that Polk County Public Works is administering the design and construction for the project and the City of Des Moines will be taking over the maintenance, programming, etc. associated with the completed project.

A visual presentation was given showing an updated switchback sidewalk from 2nd Avenue off to the north with two overlooks allow for passive interaction to the skatepark. Based on comments received from the Access Advisory Board, work is being done to expand the overlook area off of the main sidewalk from 2nd Avenue to the skate park. This design allows for some event space and viewing areas along the hillside west of the skate park to build in stadium seating that could connect to the north portion of the skatepark.

Some landscaping, including native grasses, has been concentrated between the skate promenade and skate park proper. Debris from trees can affect the ‘skatability’ of the park so they have been located to the east of the skate promenade. A filtration strip across the entire length of the promenade has been added to capture and clean stormwater runoff before it gets to the river.

Skateboard-themed donation signs are currently being developed. Several skatable elements have been claimed by donors with naming rights. The “WOW” steel sign will be 12’ high and implements a skatable design.

Mr. West noted that the Tony Hawk Foundation has picked up on the project and is communicating the scope of the project on social media. Typically, when substantial national promotion happens within the skateboard community, publicity spreads far beyond Central Iowa.

The restrooms are designed to be a prototype that is being used elsewhere around parks in the community.

The design team is working on how the skate park will interface with the future white recreation trail and adventure recreation amenities, and how to improve access to connections to the Rotary Park. There may be an additional trail that will be established along the east side of the skate promenade. The skate promenade can then be dedicated to just skating elements if necessary.

There are no parking stalls proposed, but the former West River Drive turnaround south of the I-235 overpass will be utilized, which is just north of the skate park. There has been discussion to minimize parking in the area and encourage the use of meters and Iowa Events Center parking to maintain pedestrian access to the Principal Riverwalk.

Jenny Richmond expressed appreciation of the Boards comments in helping refine the project.

Ms. Richmond noted that all constraints on the site come to bear on how people gain access from Crocker Street and down to the skatepark proper and promenade. The previous version presents big challenges, including the need for several retaining walls and utilization of Iowa DOT property. The switchback helps by giving overlook points and will provide access to bleacher structures set up on the hillside for large competitions. Also, the walls and slopes of the previous walkway design created challenges to maintaining the turf. This could lead to possible erosion onto the skate surface making it unsafe.

Mr. West stated that changes in the grade overlooks are important and will take the Board’s comments as the work
Christine Hensley shared that questions about public transportation has been encountered during the fundraising process. In discussions with skateboarders they stated that they would use the DART bus stop at 2nd and Grand Avenues and skateboard to the skatepark.

Polk County has arranged a formal agreement with the Iowa Event Center that parking will be available for free to anyone wanting to utilize the Riverwalk and/or the skatepark unless there is an event.

MUSCO Lighting is currently reviewing newer lighting technology to illuminate the park for nighttime use and competitions. There will be directed overhead lighting that will create longer operation hours for the skatepark, which will be brought back before the Board for future review.

Construction is planned to begin May 1st with completion in October 2019. The goal is to have the skatepark available for pretrial Olympic activity that is coming in 2020.

**Board comments**
- The Des Moines skate community is very excited about the selection of California Skateparks as the designer.
- Feel a more regional trail should have prominence with pedestrian, skate, and bike integration and be a continuation of the current trail north from Rotary Park.
- There needs to be strategic thought on how River Drive works with the skatepark.
- Encourage the use of radii for all the transition areas instead of zigzag switchback-type edges. This seems appropriate and playful, and in the spirit of skateboarding.
- Previous path design seemed to work better for future programming.
- Do not feel that there is enough emphasis on the pedestrian path access on the west side. It does not seem to be a welcoming, generous entrance to the skatepark.
- Encourage finding ways to celebrate the walkway more; make it more playful, more integrated and less engineered, and look at how it lands at the restroom.
- Break up the geometry of the switchback to make it more of an interesting experience.
- Request a closer look at the 2nd Avenue experience. Managing many people along the street during regional events will necessitate more thought into the path down 2nd Avenue to funnel them through the switchback. Also, a secondary straight path through like that of the State Capital grounds.
- Believe it is important to place a priority on bus connections if transit is not directly tied to the skatepark.
- Feel it would be great if 2nd Avenue could lose a lane of traffic for parallel parking to be added.
- Would like to see more bike rack integration into the major part of the skatepark not just by restrooms.
- Consider simplifying the signage, make it more abstract and provide lighting.
- Include clarity on the design of the restrooms and how they will be managed. Concerned about the metal downspout as you come into the building; possibly a stronger material is needed.
- At final review would like to see more detail on the lighting. i.e.: LED lighting, balancing lighting pollution with safety and energy efficiency.
- Encourage MUSCO to look at sports lighting.
- Interested in the site furnishing package that may be used intentionally by skaters.
- Everyone is excited and has high expectations.

A consensus of the members present recommend approval of the preliminary design.

**Other Business – Upcoming Meetings**
Erin Olson-Douglas reported that staff and some members discussed the agenda for the Board retreat on March 6th.

It is likely that there will be a need for an additional meeting on March 12th. Staff will notify the Board of any schedule changes as soon as they are confirmed.

**Adjournment**
Meeting adjourned at 9:19am.