

Tuesday, February 8th, 2022, 7:30 – 8:30 am
Design & Placemaking Committee Meeting
Location: Partnership Office, 110 W. Main Street

Present:

Rhonda Becker
Erik Zuberbuhler
Hannah Mcwhirter
Devin Mielke
Cal Wescott
Rob Boyer
AmyJo Beightol
Katie Gentz

Andrea Schultz Winter

Absent:

Brooke Wagner
Steve Schlamp
Bruce Cubberley
Dennis Rinkenberger
Wayne Duckmann

MEETING SUMMARY:

- Committee reviewed **committee purpose statement** and approved as written:
 - *The purpose of the Design & Placemaking Committee is to lead projects and initiatives that will elevate the quality of public space throughout the communities of Stephenson County. The goal of the committee's effort is to 1) create inviting public spaces that are inclusive and attractive to all ages and abilities, 2) acknowledge and incorporate our shared history in placemaking and beautification efforts, 3) galvanize business, building owner and volunteer efforts to engage more locals, increase community pride, and maintain downtown assets.*
 - Suggestion: ask a County Board member(s) who represents Freeport if they would like to join the committee.
- **Committee reviewed roster.** Corrections were made, please see attached spreadsheet.
- **City Update** (Rob Boyer):
 - Last night, City approved the purchase of excavator which will help grind out stumps of tree wells in the downtown. Public works would do this as time allowed. Partnership staff and Hannah will work on locating mulch beds with tree stumps
 - The city will begin to solicit bids for the downtown ADA accessibility program. This program will utilize CDBG funds to add ADA compliant ramps where needed. This program will not eliminate other sidewalk tripping hazards. Tripping hazards will be identified and noted at a future downtown walk-around.
 - City will work Jane Addams Trail Commission to add/replace damage signage for/along the JA Trail. This work will occur through warm weather months when time allows.
 - Rob is working with Water & Sewer construction crew to get fire hydrants in the downtown repainted.
 - Rob is also working with ComEd on potential fixture replacements for the lower, pedestrian-scale lights that are currently on light poles in the downtown. More to come.
- Committee discussed updates to the following workplan initiatives.
 - **Historic tour research** – See attached summary from Erik and subcommittee. Thank you for the work done thus far.
 - **Please check out theclio.com.** This is a free on-line historic tour database that could be utilized by the group to house tour data.
 - **Historic Tour Subcommittee will meet again virtually, Tuesday, February 22nd at 7:30 am.** Please contact Erik or me if you would like to receive a meeting invitation.
 - **Seasonal planting prep.** Last year's cost was \$10,000 which was paid for by contributions from City of Freeport, Partnership, DFE, and numerous DT business/building owners.

Partnership staff will work on full cost estimate for 2022. Source of funds will be similar to last year. Once we have estimated the funding gap, we will contact to DT businesses for donations.

- **Mulch Beds, Goal for 2022:**
 - Remove as many tree stumps as possible from existing mulch beds, replace with soil. Add trellis structure (material TBD) and vining plants to one or two mulch beds and test how well the plant does. Depending on outcome we expand to future beds in following years.
 - Andrea will work with Hannah to locate all tree stumps that need to be removed.
 - Maintain weed-free and mulch in all DT beds.
- **Wayfinding signage** routes studied:
 - Andrea is working with Sally Peterson on identifying existing signage and determining if signs make a continuous route. Are there signs missing? Are all community attraction listed on signs?
 - Cal mentioned Connie Sorn would be a good contact if we have questions. Connie worked on this initial effort years ago.
- **Freeport Beautiful Campaign** – program will restart April/May. We will need the committee’s help to nominate property owners.
- **Banners: Replacement & New:** Katie is working on a cost estimate to replace the 27 banners that have been damaged.
 - A suggestion was made to add new banners that would incorporate ‘Freeport Identity’. Banner design would need to be compatible with existing banners. More to come.
- **First Clean-up Scheduled for April 10th – 17th.** Get your clean-up crew ready! Sign-up can found on our Facebook event:
https://www.facebook.com/events/1697570267112245/?acontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D%7D
 - Target area for clean-up: vegetated medians at Locust and Lincoln and Locust and Stephenson.
- **Downtown Speakers:** Still working towards a solution. Cal mentioned Larry Pittsley and/or Rob Boyer might be a resource.

Updates:

- Illinois Main Street Accreditation: we have received the application from Illinois Main Street. Application responses are being drafted.
 - I’d like to form an ad-hoc committee to give some input on DT building data. I will be looking for information like: ground floor square footage (vacant/leased); # of upper floor residential units (existing/future buildout). My intent is to gather this information and develop baseline data. This information will be continuously tracked with a goal of seeing less vacancies, and more upper floor residential units developed.
- Postponed Committee Appreciation event. Not future date set.

Next Meeting second Tuesday of every month, 7:30 am, Greater Freeport Partnership
Office: March 8th, 2022, 7:30 am.