



Colorado Springs Downtown Development Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting  
8 a.m. August 13, 2024  
111 S Tejon St. Ste 703, Colorado Springs, CO

## Meeting minutes

**Board members present:** Jeff Finn, Troy Coats, Jeremy Shirley, Laura Neumann, Jim Smith, Jordan Empey, Michelle Talarico

**Board members absent:** Chris Lieber, Patrick Stephens, Amber Brannigan, Carrie Bartow

**Staff members present:** Susan Edmondson, Carrie Simison, Chelsea Gondeck, Ana Valdez, Jessica Vasquez

**Guests:** Ryan Tefertiller (City Planning), Gary Feffer (Fountain Colony), Johnathan Whitaker (YOW Architects), Sharon Mullally (Comfort & Joy Cat Café), Carol Guinta (Comfort & Joy Cat Café), Brooke McKenzie (Toodles Tearoom), Tam Walsky (resident)

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## Call to order

Jeff called the meeting to order and noted that without a quorum he would begin with discussion items.

## Welcome

Jeff welcomed new board member Jim Smith, and after introductions of board, staff, and guests, asked Jim to provide a bit of his background.

Susan then made the board aware of an issue in that due to staff error, the July agenda was not publicly notified, therefore some votes from the meeting must be reaffirmed at the August meeting.

## Financials

The board reviewed financials dated July 31, 2024. Susan stated that expenses were ordinary, and on the tracker, the board will see that TIF payments have been completed, and only general operating expenses are being paid out of the Mill Fund. The board had no questions.

## Budget

### 2025 draft budget

A draft 2025 budget was included in the board packet for review. Staff will not receive revenue projections from El Paso County until late August, which creates a tight turnaround for budget approval and submission each year. The board will be asked to approve the preliminary budget at the September 9 board meeting and Susan stressed that having a quorum is essential as it is a public hearing.

Of note is \$300,000 allocated for the consultant fees for the update to the Experience Downtown Master Plan, \$600,000 allocated for DDA's contribution to Busy Corner enhancements, and a modest 4 percent increase in the contract for service with Downtown Partnership. Susan also noted that Carrie has been able to leverage small dollar sponsorships which offset marketing costs for a handful of events.

Lastly, Susan made the board aware of two ballot issues that may trigger a special legislative session and could further delay the budget process or alter DDA's income altogether. Should a special legislative session occur, Susan assured the board that she would work with elected officials at the state level to ensure they understand the implications of these issues for special districts and TIF districts.

*Jordan Empey arrived at 8:24 a.m., Michelle Talarico arrived at 8:25 a.m., establishing a quorum.*

## **Minutes**

The board reviewed minutes from the May 14, 2024, and July 9, 2024, board meetings. On a motion by Jordan, seconded by Jeremy, the minutes from both meetings were unanimously approved.

## **Audit engagement**

Susan directed the board to the memo in their packet regarding DDA auditor. Susan stated that the Downtown family of organizations is served collectively by one firm for its audits and 990s and as the same firm has been retained for several years, it was time to review options with an RFP.

Only two firms submitted proposals. Proposals were reviewed and representatives of the firms were interviewed by Susan; Finance Officer Ana Valdez; Carrie Bartow, DDA treasurer; and David Dahlin, Downtown Partnership treasurer.

The team unanimously recommends engaging Biggs Kofford in a three-year agreement for audit services, citing strong local knowledge of both special districts as well as nonprofit bookkeeping.

Laura moved to engage Biggs Kofford in a three-year agreement for audit services. Jeremy seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

## **Grants**

### Building Enhancement Grant: 525 & 531 S Weber St.

Susan introduced Gary Feffer, who comes before the board seeking a Building Enhancement Grant for two separate, adjacent parcels owned by Chuck Murphy, Gary Feffer, and Joe Niebur (TJ & TC Three LLC) with Niebur Development as the developer.

The proposed project makes use of some of the existing structure currently on each parcel, but dramatically improves the use types and aesthetics of each, creating a new restaurant and retail destination on the southeast side of Downtown.

525 S. Weber St. will include a 2,500 SF unit facing Weber with an adjoining patio and access to the planned rooftop patio, with the remainder of the building providing kitchen space, common restrooms, and back of house access to the other units.

531 S. Weber St. will provide four commercial units ranging from about 1,700 SF to 2,900 SF, each with their own patio and the ability to flex as either restaurant or retail. Landscaping improvements will be made surrounding the building, and the existing parking lot and alley will be reconfigured to allow space for the patios and additional parking.

Gary shared the tentative name of "Moreno Ave" and a timeline of Winter 2025/Spring 2026 for construction, as they want to ensure quality tenants, especially amidst the recent closures in the hospitality sector. The board appreciated the attention to these blighted parcels.

Staff recommends a total of \$100,000 to be granted to TJ & TC Three LLC for the proposed improvements to 525 & 531 S. Weber St., citing a thorough application and detailed budget, comprehensive renderings, and a significant location that will be beneficial to the hundreds of new residents on the southern side of Downtown.

Laura moved to award a \$100,000 Building Enhancement Grant to TJ & TC Three LLC for 525 & 531 S Weber St. Jeremy seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Troy Coats and Jordan Empey abstained from voting.

#### Retail Incentive Grant: Soiree Bridal

At the July board meeting, the board agreed to transfer the already-approved Retail Incentive Grant from 123 E Bijou St. to 106 Pueblo Ave. Due to the error in agenda posting, a vote is sought to reaffirm the July vote.

On a motion by Jordan, seconded by Jeremy, the board voted unanimously to transfer the Soiree Bridal Retail Incentive Grant to 106 Pueblo Ave.

#### Retail Incentive Grant: Comfort & Joy Cat Café

Austin introduced Sharon Mullally and Carol Guinta, co-owners of Comfort & Joy Cat Café, who the board will recall hearing from at the July meeting.

The board had requested additional information from the applicants prior to voting, and Mullally and Guinta have submitted additional documentation, including a more conservative business plan, to staff. They also heeded the advice of the board and have been in contact with the Institute for Social Impact, the Small Business Development Center, and have gotten advice from other cat café owners across the country.

The board thanked them for their diligence in gathering more information and seeking guidance.

Staff recommends a grant of up to \$5,000 for Comfort & Joy Cat Café. Laura moved to award the \$5,000 grant. Jordan seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Carol and Sharon thanked the board and departed at 8:58 a.m.

#### Retail Incentive Grant: Toodles Tearoom

Susan introduced Brooke McKenzie of Toodles Tearoom, who is opening a tearoom at 110 E Boulder St (former Brooklyn's on Boulder space). Sahe comes before the board seeking a Retail Incentive Grant.

Toodles Tearoom intends to target a younger demographic by bringing a trendy, modern aesthetic to a traditional English tearoom experience. The tearoom will offer curated loose-leaf teas, scones, savory finger sandwiches, and desserts – plus a liquor license to serve alcoholic beverages as well. Some retail products, like packaged tea, gifts, and merchandise will also be sold.

Susan shared that Brooke has experience in small business operations as she is a partner in the local Sasquatch Cookies. The board agreed that Boulder Street already has good activation, and a pleasant option for a nonalcoholic outing would be a welcome addition to that block.

Brooke added that they have signed a three-year lease with the option to renew, and that the landlord has contributed \$10,000 to needed renovations.

Staff recommends a Retail Incentive Grant of \$7,500, citing a thorough business plan and an on-trend concept not currently found Downtown.

Jim moved to award a \$7,500 Retail Incentive Grant. Laura seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Brooke thanked the board and departed at 9:08 a.m.

#### **Old business**

##### Environmental Sustainability Plan

Susan thanked the board members who provided input after reviewing the plan and noted that any changes made since the draft was presented to them in July were more structural rather than content (i.e. reincorporating strategies back into the content rather than listing separately).

Some questioned the lack of specific tactics spelled out in the plan, with broad strategies making up the bulk of the document. Chelsea and Susan explained that the plan is meant to be a guiding document with broad strategies to capture a variety of KPIs, and that tactics will emerge in various ways, either through direct opportunity for the DDA to act, as a document to reference when evaluating development, and oftentimes both. Chelsea also noted that that some examples of specific tactics will be included at the design phase.

Discussion ensued regarding the purpose of the plan, how and when tactics could take a clearer shape, and how this plan fits into the broader Experience Downtown Master Plan. Ultimately, the board requested that language be added to the plan that clearly states its purpose and intent of use.

On a motion by Jeremy, seconded by Laura, the board voted unanimously to adopt the Environmental Sustainability Plan with the addition of introductory language regarding purpose/intent of use.

#### Experience Downtown Plan

Susan expects the RFP to be ready this week, which will be publicized in e-newsletters, posted on DowntownCS.com, and personally sent to firms inviting them to submit. She intends to cast a wide net to capture many qualified options. She reminded the board that there are two parts to the Experience Downtown Master Plan (part one is the Plan of Development, and part two is more about land use). She also noted that while public engagement is always essential, a robust and cohesive plan is even more important with this update. Jeff requested an update of the Drake site as part of the revamp.

#### Tejon Reconfiguration Project

Chelsea provided a very brief update on the Tejon Reconfiguration project: the contractor will be selected in the coming weeks, and construction is expected to begin in early October. As the DDA is funding the enhancements to Busy Corner, they can expect a memorandum of understanding between the chosen contractor and DDA.

#### Final remarks

Susan reminded the board of the off-cycle September board meeting on Monday, September 9, and reiterated that a quorum is necessary as this meeting is also a budget hearing.

The board meeting was adjourned at 9:58 a.m.