CITY OF WIXOM
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2024

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority came to order at 7:30 a.m. with the following individuals in attendance:

DDA MEMBERS: Chairperson Jessica Buck; Carissa Osburn, Vice Chairperson; Board Members: Mark Garmo; Kaitie Guzowski; Darby Hoppenstadt; Russ Meredith; Leslie Payment; Patrick Beagle, Mayor

ABSENT: Excused: Vanessa Willett

STAFF: DDA Staff: Laura Cloutier, DDA Executive Director
City Staff: Steve Brown, City Manager
City Staff: Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager & Director of Economic Development
Mona Freiburger, Recording Secretary

Determination of Quorum:

Quorum was met.

Reading of Vision and Mission Statement:

Mission Statement: The Mission of the Wixom DDA is to coordinate the efforts of businesses and residents to promote the growth of the downtown area for the community's benefit.

Vision Statement: The Wixom Downtown Development Authority is to provide a friendly, welcoming downtown which will enhance and honor our history while promoting cultural, business and recreational opportunity that attract businesses and residents.

Approval of Agenda:

MOTION by Board Member Hoppenstadt and second by Board Member Meredith to approve the Meeting Agenda.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
None opposed.

Approved 1/28/2025

Public Comments:

None

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION by Mayor Beagle and second by Board Member Meredith to approve the October 22, 2024, DDA Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

Correspondence:

None

Executive Director's Report: November, 2024

Executive Director Cloutier highlighted her report which is included in the packet.

Executive Director Cloutier, Board Member Meredith and Vice Chairperson Osburn attended the Michigan Downtown Association Conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She indicated it was a great conference. There were great sessions; all the sessions were recorded and will be sent out to Board Members.

An award was won for the best promotional event (Block Party). Wixom Bar is part of the social district. Wixom Bar is all set and ready to go.

Executive Director Cloutier met with the owner of Eckert Greenhouse to discuss the hanging baskets, maintenance and pricing options. She will gather the information and will make a comparison to what we, currently, have and bring it back to the Board at the January meeting. Flowers will have to be ordered in early February. There were suggestions regarding downtown lamp post banners for winter and future seasonal rotations. A decision will be made at the January meeting and take to City Council at their first meeting in February.

Hawaii Fluid Art is open. There is a steady flow of customers, and they have been hosting painting parties. 11/11 did a grand re-opening on Veteran's Day. El Camino added live music. Drafting Table is televising the Lions game every week. Businesses are starting to be creative to attract customers.

There were two developer proposals for Renton Redevelopment. This will be discussed in New Business.

Approved 1/28/2025

The grant money for the West End Commons will be discussed at the Project Planning Session. Federal grant processes underway; and construction planned to begin in Spring, 2025.

Lamp Post Banners: Winter-themed banners to be installed before the Tree Lighting Festival. There are plans for seasonal banner rotation and expansion to new areas.

The Downtown Wixom website usership is up 80%. A lot of people are interested in the Junction. The social media post regarding Wixom Bar got a lot of traction; almost 5,000 interactions.

Ms. Christina Sheppard-Decius will be doing a presentation for the strategic plan.

Old Business:

1. Wixom DDA Strategic Plan Report Presentation by POW! Strategies

Christina Sheppard-Decius will present the preliminary Wixom DDA Strategic Plan from her findings based off the session held in October. This is a time to listen, ask questions, and give feedback for Ms. Sheppard-Decius to complete our plan and one that we can move forward to adopt.

A PowerPoint presentation was viewed from Ms. Sheppard-Decius along with her findings based off the session held in October focusing on mission, vision, and values. The full PowerPoint presentation is included in the packet.

Ms. Sheppard-Decius stated with the strategic plan, she wanted to make sure that everyone will know, understand and be able to communicate back to others.

Ms. Sheppard-Decius discussed key strategies such as recreational economy and outdoor experience enhancement; business recruitment and filling vacancies; community engagement and volunteer management.

Mission and Vision Updates. Ms. Shephard-Decius proposed refined mission which included highlighting pride, prosperity, and growth in downtown Wixom. Vision: “Downtown Wixom, a memorable, vibrant crossroads of diverse and outdoorsy experiences”. Core Values: Welcoming, growth, diversity and pride. Key Focus Areas: Enhance recreational economy and outdoor experiences; fill vacant properties with business-friendly strategies; increase inclusivity in partnerships and volunteer involvement.

Ms. Sheppard-Decius reiterated the DDA’s role and talked about the responsibilities of the DDA, overall. The DDA is the fiduciary, but you want to get involved and have good attendance; you want to be the leaders of improvement and growth, promoting it, reinvesting responsibly as well as collaborating, not only amongst each other but with others, and bringing new partners to the table. Overall, the DDA represents the residents and businesses within the district, but in the

Approved 1/28/2025

forefront, you want to be knowledgeable, creative and open minded. When you lead with this, a pledge of commitment spells out your roles and responsibilities and emphasizes where you want Board leadership to be.

The SWOT (Strengths; Weaknesses; Opportunities; Threats) Analysis: Strengths include community growth; strong funding, vibrant atmosphere. Weaknesses include vacant properties, limited retail/entertainment diversity, and lack of volunteers. Opportunities: Leverage outdoor spaces, attract new businesses, promote collaboration. Threats: Reluctance to change, traffic congestion, and property owner challenges. The growth as a district represents your image and knowing that, how you can leverage that moving forward.

The key assets are the Air Line Trail, dining, concerts in the park and local population. Public restrooms are high on the top priorities; building out vacant land; wayfinding, and the West End Commons. Then, economically, more restaurants, more buildings, keeping pace with the growth of the population, overall. Continue to engage with the business community. Biggest key strategy is recreational and economy. Other key strategies blend in with that, areas where they work together as being able to match community growth with economic growth in the district as well as making sure that your engagement and collaborations are inclusive in building those partnerships. The connections and improvements to the Air Line Trail, completing the West End Commons, adding public restrooms, and outdoor amenities will help people continue to have a great outdoor experience and stay connected in the district. It is a reason to come into the district, stop at local restaurants and shops to patronage the district.

Ms. Shephard-Decius encouraged privately owned outdoor dining and gathering spaces; and encouraging those businesses who may have that opportunity to do a little more. Grow recreational tourism and marketing. Wayfinding will also help. Marketing collaboration with neighboring communities could be an opportunity; collaboration with Parks and Recreation. She suggested to continue to leverage Google to make sure the website is making connections to drive people to the website; get listed on different pages such as All Trails.

Ms. Shephard-Decius suggested to look at your events; your personal assessments of your events as a reminder. Enhance the existing events where you have opportunity and building the volunteer capacity. She suggested assessment steps in her presentation; assessing the viability and strength of events; adjust and improve the stats, overall. Strategy of matching the growth; increasing business traction and building connectivity and continuity with infill development. Business development; conduct a business mix analysis and develop a recruitment strategy; understand the businesses and to fill gaps in terms of vacancies. Identify key vacancies and underutilized properties, creating market profiles; market this information and have that information available on the website. Flexibility for long term growth; invest in private partnership, private/public partnerships. Building connectivity and continuity with infill development. She indicated the PNC, Little Caesar's corner is under developed, and great opportunity for redevelopment and repositioning. Strategy with inclusive engagement and involvement including increase volunteers, building partnerships, and growing business development. Engage

Approved 1/28/2025

businesses on social media and building relationships. Develop public/private partnerships; look at volunteer management planning, define goals and responsibilities for volunteers and develop an outreach plan. She indicated there are great resources in the Michigan Main Street solution centers.

Ms. Shephard-Decius stated she will take the strategic plan information and insert into a spread sheet to modify and use. She will be making any final tweaks or changes based upon conversation here and work with Executive Director Cloutier on filling out information.

2. 2025 DDA Board Meeting Dates

The DDA Board decided to table this item to the November meeting due to an interest in having a possible night meeting. The DDA Board meets once per month on the fourth Tuesday, except for July and December, or unless otherwise noted, per the DDA by-laws. The recommended dates for 2025 DDA Regular Monthly Board Meetings along with Special Meeting Dates are included in the packet. These dates reflect one Board Meeting in the evening to be held on Wednesday, April 22, 2025. It is recommended for approval of the 2025 DDA Regular Monthly Board Meeting Dates as proposed.

There was a discussion regarding meeting dates and an evening meeting date. There was a change/correction to a meeting to be held on March 25, 2025 at 7:30 a.m.; and an evening meeting to be held on April 23, 2025 at 6 p.m.

MOTION by Board Member Meredith and second by Mayor Beagle to approve the new/corrected 2025 DDA Board Meeting dates, as listed above.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

New Business:

1. Downtown Wixom Road Safety Audit Report

Report by Assistant City Manager Benson is included in the today's packet.

Assistant City Manager Benson stated in the packet was a copy of the road safety audit that was completed by C2G. The City received a grant from SEMCOG to fund the study, specifically, for the downtown area between Old Wixom Road and Union Street. The main point found is both pedestrian and vehicular safety. C2G noted, potentially, dangerous where it is rated either D's or C's. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated he summarized the higher-level points that they recommend being looked at in the coming physical years which includes planter boxes, some kind of installations on the north side of Pontiac Trail, west of Wixom Road; how to maintain the Hawk crossings and making sure they are visible to pedestrians and vehicles as well as education

Approved 1/28/2025

about the Hawk signals and the railroad. C2G noted that the railroad is the single dangerous aspect of the downtown area (vehicular and pedestrian). Reflective markings were also mentioned in the report along with additional traffic studies to address speeding and mid-block crossings.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the City's initial opinion is that we should install bollards so a car can't possibly get through; from a vehicular safety standpoint, that was not recommended because that makes vehicle crashes more dangerous. It is a delicate balance between vehicle safety and pedestrian safety. Planter boxes option or less permanent option such as plastic, reflective delineators were recommended so they can be seen but if a car hits them, it is not going to stop them. This would need to be investigated for the right solutions. Also recommended were mid-block crossings for Pontiac Trail from Gibson to the Air Line Trail at the western edge of downtown, and potentially, one on the eastern side of downtown at Union Street and across from the post office. The issue in the middle of downtown is there are too many curb cuts. Left turns must be allowed in either direction. If there were more consolidated curb cuts, it would be easier.

Board Member Meredith commented C2G recommended planter boxes, but the planter boxes would need to be relatively wide to stop vehicles. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated C2G did not design the boxes, but the point is, they are not recommending planter boxes that would be so thick/wide to impede pedestrian traffic. The main point recommendation is about the visual aspect. If the vehicle sees them, they might be less inclined to drive over the curb.

City Manager Brown commented it is a road safety audit. This is not a legal prescription. C2G suggested they don't like the idea but doesn't mean it can't be done. The City would have to decide the priorities.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the main point is to give the Board Members the report; the report will be given to City Council at their next meeting, as well. He encouraged the Board Members to take some time to read through it and think about the outcome. It is worthwhile to take the study and the information to try to incorporate into our plans moving forward.

Assistant City Manager Benson commented HRC did participate in this process. They have been involved in helping with the recommendations and will be involved, potentially, in helping to design and walk us through the process.

Assistant City Manager Benson gave an update from the engineering standpoint for the streetscape improvements from Chambers to Wixom Road which was authorized by the DDA. He stated they are waiting for DTE to give us their design for burying power lines, which is also referenced in improving sidewalk widths, and replacing sidewalk. If there are demonstrated safety concerns that come along with this, the report would be a useful tool if we apply for grants for projects such as demonstrated safety concerns.

2. Renton Redevelopment Site Update

Approved 1/28/2025

The City has been fortunate to receive two potential proposals for the Renton Redevelopment Site. These proposals have been reviewed and the development firms have been interviewed. Assistant City Manager Benson will provide an update on this agenda item.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated there are two proposals in hand, or letters of interest at this point. One, he feels strongly that they are a viable candidate; the other, he is less sure. In both cases, they need some work before they would be ready to be reviewed by the DDA, City Council, Planning Commission, etc. Hopefully, in early 2025, the proposals would be ready for prime time. One group, they understand our priorities and it is going to come down to what we need to do to fill the gap. There would be some things that the DDA would be asked to participate in to help move this forward.

Assistant City Manager Benson commented housing is a very strong demand but our concerns and shared in our concept planning is imagine walking within five feet of someone's front window. The vision is to have wide sidewalks, people walking, etc. When there are more businesses, it creates a sense of gravity towards existing businesses. The main thing is to help keep the rent prices that people can afford.

3. Downtown Lamp Post Banners Update

The City and DDA, along with Parks and Recreation, have moved forward to share the cost of new winter themed light post banners along Pontiac Trail. We consulted with Guide Studio for assistance with the design. These banners have been ordered and will be installed by DPW in time for the Tree Lighting Festival.

Currently, we are looking to expand the banners to other areas downtown, along with having four rotations of banners throughout the year. This topic was discussed at the last Design Committee meeting and the group is in favor of this approach. Assistant City Manager Benson and Executive Director Cloutier will provide an update on this agenda item.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated in rolling out the new brand, they have been working with Guide Studio to design new lamp post banners. The first one, winter banners, will be installed in time for the tree lighting. We are also working with them on new designs for all the other three seasons. The new banners will incorporate both the City logo and the Downtown logo; 15 of the 31 banners will be DDA, and 16 will be City, in terms of whose logo is on them. Those will alternate lamp posts.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated she will discuss the banner to the Design Committee. The Design Committee did meet last week, and she showed them the banners. The Design Committee loved them.

Approved 1/28/2025

Assistant City Manager Benson commented the cost of the banners were $36 per banner. The only downside to sponsors is that the banners would need to be printed more often. In January, there will be a formal proposal in allowing the DDA to be a bigger participant and split the cost with the City. They are trying to work through the Design Committee to what locations make sense, and if it would change where some flower baskets would be installed.

Information:

1) Committee Reports

A. Design Committee: Meets the 1st Tuesday of every month at Drafting Table Brewing Company, 5:00 p.m.

The design committee met on November 12th and discussed the desire to achieve smaller scale projects that may not cost a lot but will make a big impact in Downtown Wixom.

1. Alleyway (between the Klebba building and Wixom Bar): String café lights from building to building, clean up weeds, put a small mural on the side of the Wixom Bar, add a few small café tables and chairs;
2. Downtown Bikes and Art: Expand bikes around the Loop next to bench areas and work with artists to create seasonal art for bikes;
3. Seasonal Displays: Create and set up seasonal displays around downtown, i.e. Autumn – Hay bales, pumpkins, and mums.

Executive Director Cloutier commented the Design Committee met the prior Tuesday; they did not meet the first Tuesday because of the election. The Committee discussed the banners.

Assistant City Manager Cloutier indicated the Committee also discussed the smaller projects such as the alley between the Klebba Building and Wixom Bar; expanding the downtown bikes around the Loop; there are benches around the Loop and to install bikes next to those benches and expand art on those bikes. Then, being responsible for seasonal displays such as bales of hay, pumpkins, and mums in the fall; different displays for the winter.

Vice Chair Osborn commented regarding the SE corner of Wixom Road and Pontiac Trail, the Design Committee had been discussing some ideas about the landscaping and hiding the platform. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated they have a design and are trying to get better cost estimates, while also trying to figure out some logistics from a landscaping perspective on irrigation, and concerns about the maintenance. They are working with the City's existing landscaping contractor because it is not in the DDA's budget yet. The concept plans are in the digital link which was sent to the Board Members for feedback.

B. Economic Vitality Committee: Meets the 1st Monday of every month.

Approved 1/28/2025

1. The EV Committee has been meeting regularly and working on coming up with ideas that benefit the retention and recruitment of new businesses downtown. We met this month with Caleb Sheng, board member of the Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce. He has had some discussions with Drew Benson on how we can utilize the chamber members and their businesses in more of a mentor protégé relationship. The committee discussed updating our current business outreach/visits using committee members and Caleb to speak to the business owners and then match them with a current chamber member. The committee feels current business outreach has been unsuccessful and we are working to adapt the program to be more beneficial. Committee Chair Willett will be coordinating with Caleb/Drew/and committee members to initiate these meetings in the first quarter of 2025.

2. The group had also been drafting ideas for a business coaching/webinar program that would be free to business owners and offer access to helpful training on business operations, marketing and social media usage, and additional helpful tools for running a successful business. This program would replace some of the services previously offered by MSOC but based on the businesses specific to the downtown.

3. The committee has been drafting a mock program for gift cards and will be reaching out to the promotions committee to work in tandem on creating a cash card that businesses can turn into the city for reimbursement. The card would be eligible at any downtown business. This will take some additional outreach to the businesses and training on the card use and reimbursement. The Committee wants to develop some type of sustainable program that will boost traffic in our current businesses and promote new businesses as they open.

Chairperson Buck commented Board Member Willett did a great job with the updates which are listed above. Board Member Willett was not present at today'smeeting.

C. Promotions Committee – Meets every other Thursday at Backyard Coney, 8 a.m.

1. We held a very successful Spooktacular on October 19th. We received a lot of positive feedback and will put a survey out to the 25 participating businesses to obtain feedback. We know we had at least 1,500 visitors downtown.

2. Our next event is Candy Cane Lane on December 11th. We are working on ordering the candy canes, securing a Santa Claus and getting businesses to sign up and residents to know about it. We also have been discussing an adult holiday crawl for next year and have begun planning and obtaining ideas.

Chairperson Buck indicated Spooktacular was successfully hosted with 1,500 attendees. A survey will be sent out to the businesses that participated to get feedback and to help make these events bigger and better.

Approved 1/28/2025

The next event is Candy Cane Lane which will be held on December 11th. This is an event that has been around for a while and runs very smoothly. The Promotions Committee is meeting on Thursday to finalize the plans. The candy canes were ordered, etc. It is a fun event for the kids to go downtown.

D. Organization Committee – Meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at Wixom Station, 6:30 p.m.

1. Volunteer Appreciation Event was held on October 24th at Drafting Table Brewing Company. We had a total of 15 people attend. It was a very nice evening to say thank you to our volunteers. All volunteers who attended received a new Downtown Wixom logo T-shirt.

Board Member Hoppenstadt indicated there was a meeting tonight. She thanked those who could join the volunteer appreciation event. The event was great with approximately 15 attendees.

2) Downtown Business News/Events

- 2024: December 6th: Tree Lighting Festival – 5:00 to 10:00 p.m.
- 2024: December 11th: Candy Cane Lane – 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
- 2025: January 8th – February 26th – Wednesdays in Wixom
- 2025: February: Food Fight on Main Burger Battle
- 2025: May 3rd: Derby Day Races

Executive Director Cloutier stated the poster design for the Food Fight on Main Burger Battle is being finalized. They will be seeking restaurants who want to participate in the Burger Battle. The Burger Battle will take place the entire month of February. This is a contest between downtown Wixom, downtown Highland, downtown New Hudson and downtown South Lyon. These communities are encouraging everyone to go to the restaurants. There will be a QR code available at all locations linked to the voting platform.

Public Comments:

None

Executive Director's Comments:

Executive Director Cloutier gave an update on the West End Commons. She indicated they are moving forward with the steps to receive the federal monies. The RFP should be out after the first of the year/early February, 2025. The decision should be made in early Spring. Then as the weather breaks, construction will start.

Approved 1/28/2025

Assistant City Manager Benson commented from a design approval standpoint, they are waiting on HRC to finalize the design based on feedback from the surveys, which leads into the cost estimate piece. The intent is to go to the DDA and City Council to approve, and make sure it is the vision and what works. The federal grant process cannot be finished until this information is received. There has been expressed urgency to HRC from a timing perspective.

City Manager Brown indicated the Loop was mentioned in the Strategic Planning presentation. It is still in the back of his mind in doing some sort of lighting project, which would make a huge difference in terms of attracting people and coordinating with the banner program. The City has put in CBGD funding for a project to extend the Loop. City Manager Brown indicated if the Board is a fan of this project, do not hesitate to mention it to others.

City Manager Brown commented 11/11 is working with the Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, and there is an event today from 11:30 to 1:00 p.m. If interested, check out the Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce to see how they operate, and extend some collaborative thoughts. He also mentioned the broken street light at the corner of Joann Ware and Chambers, which he mentioned to the DPW. There has been an increase in complaint activity related to the yard waste composting operation, SPURT. City Manager Brown stated to call the City Manager's office, if there is anything in their neighborhood and downtown to be addressed.

Board Members' Comments:

The next DDA meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 7:30 a.m.

Vice Chairperson Osburn commented the MDA Conference is always so valuable with a lot of good ideas, and exciting to hear what others are doing in their communities.

Adjournment:

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority was motioned and adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Mona Freiburger
Recording Secretary

Approved 1/28/2025