

Downtown Area Advisory Committee (DAAC)
November 20, 2014
Basalt Council Chambers, 4:00 to 5:45 p.m.

The "There-there" as written and read aloud by Paul Andersen:

If the there-there isn't there, then what's the there that should be there? And if there is no there-there then it's up to you to find the there that could be there.

Agenda Item 1: Roll call

Present: Charlie Cole, Ted Guy, Gerry Terwilliger, Julie Kolar, Cathy Click, Tracy Bennett, Chris Touchette, Steve Chase

Staff present: Mike Scanlon, Susan Philp, Denise Tomaskovic

Moderator: Paul Andersen

A list of those signing in for the meeting is attached.

Agenda Item 2: Adopt November 13, 2014 Meeting Notes

M/S Click and Guy to approve the meeting notes of November 13, 2014 as read. The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 3: Presentations - Paul Andersen – Parks and Development in Buena Vista and Salida with Ted and Steve

Andersen said his slide presentation was the result of visits he made to South Main Street in Buena Vista, CO and Riverside Park in Salida this past autumn.

Guy presented slides from river parks in Gunnison and Durango.

Chase showed slides from Confluence Park in Denver where Cherry Creek flows into the Platte River.

Philp presented slides from DHM out of Carbondale whom the Town had hired to come up with some ideas for river parks in keeping with a more natural theme. DHM also did design work for the Community Development Corporation (CDC) in the Pan and Fork Park.

Agenda Item 4: Meet with Lowe Enterprises representatives

Jim DeFrancia and Skip Behrhorst of Lowe Enterprises were present.

DeFrancia said that their primary focus at this time is developing a basic concept plan for the Pan and Fork redevelopment parcel. They are including the Our Town Planning principles in their work and are framing the project within a destination/arrival context. Plan 2B seems to fit the best with what they're initially thinking. They plan to keep about 1/3 of property as open space while maintaining the view corridors to the river. The underlying thought is how to draw people to the downtown, balanced with open space and views, in order to restore vitality. Lowe doesn't plan to build commercial/retail space. As it stands right now, 14 companies/employers have relocated from downtown Basalt to elsewhere or gone out of business.

Low Enterprises' inclination is that a boutique hotel would be the type of use to help provide a sense of arrival. This would be a modest-sized hotel, nothing 'canned,' with its own distinct character that is responsive to the community. At this point they're thinking of having around 60 rooms in a facility that would offer a rating of 3 to 3.5 stars meaning there would be no room service, i.e. no chocolates on the pillows. However, they think it'd be prudent to include an outdoor swimming pool. Discussions with RMI have led them to believe that this type of hotel would be well-suited to RMI's clientele as well as the rest of the community. They will include a restaurant in the hotel that interfaces with the park. There's the possibility of having a limited amount of retail use associated with river activities (fishing, floating, etc).

The hotel would also include about 12 hotel residential units consisting of 2 to 3 bedrooms sold as fractional units with the ability to be rented out when the owners aren't present. The hotel would manage the rentals. Lowe is also considering something in the neighborhood of 46 to 54 residences that would be 1, 2 & 3 bedroom units (condominiumized), sold as permanent residences.

A preliminary total is about 150,000 square feet that would be broken into separate buildings to maintain view corridors/park access between the buildings. It's anticipated that the open space portion would be on south end [near Midland Avenue Bridge] so it could blend in with the Town park.

Andersen asked DeFrancia to explain, "Why Basalt and why now?" DeFrancia responded that the trend is for continued growth in the mid-valley and Basalt has a real sense of history with its historic downtown and ties to railroad and mining history. While being close to Aspen, this hotel would have the ability to offer a product that's about 1/3 less than what one could be expected to pay in Aspen. Also, this type of lodging product offers the opportunity for three generations to spend time together. And last but not least, having the river right there is the main attraction – frontage on water where it can be seen and heard is hard to come by and very popular.

Behrhorst added that he has lived in the valley since 1966 and cares about what happens here. This is a unique piece of property that needs to be developed with care and sensitivity.

Discussion followed as to who would occupy residential units since there is an evident demand for primary housing. It was noted that it will be important to make sure that second-home owners don't buy the residential units. A comment was made that the parcel became available after mobile home park residents had to leave. It's a bit hard to comprehend the justice in that when we will most likely be seeing that space occupied by people from the upper end of the economic spectrum.

Cole said that a predominant theme heard at the chat sessions was that any potential hotel needs to be available to the local community to book for weddings, proms, etc. DeFrancia said that was his oversight in his opening remarks. They definitely plan to provide gathering spaces that are also available to the community.

Behrhorst said he had misspoken earlier – the 150,000 sq. ft. does not include parking and he reiterated that the parking is proposed to be located below-grade. The actual amount of habitable space is potentially in the 120,000 to 130,000 sq. ft. range.

Chase said he assumed there would be some amount of valet parking required by the hotel. Would Lowe require the Town to build a public parking structure to meet that demand? DeFrancia replied that they have not reached that level of detail yet.

Kolar asked if the public could also park in the hotel's parking garage. DeFrancia said they would not be opposed to that idea at all.

Chase asked how the hotel landscape would blend into the adjacent park landscape. Behrhorst replied that they aren't at that level of detail yet but he likes the idea of having steps leading down to the park, as shown in some of the slides earlier.

Cole asked why Lowe Enterprise is not planning to include significant retail in the mix. DeFrancia said that would be detrimental to existing retail on Midland Avenue and elsewhere downtown.

In response to a question from Click as to whether or not RMI would need all 60 rooms all the time, Behrhorst responded that according to Marty Pickett, RMI expects to host 40 to 50 people for three- to four-day conferences year-round, in addition to RMI board meetings. This will most likely result in spill-over for existing hotels.

Click then asked about the proposed level of sustainability for the hotel. DeFrancia replied that Lowe Enterprises will work with RMI to come up with a sustainable structure that is compatible with RMI's philosophy.

Chris Lane arrived.

Chase noted that he's been personally critical of the Element Hotel design for Willits Town Center. He, for one, would appreciate it if the Lowe hotel could blend with local character.

Behrhorst said Lowe Enterprises will tour the downtown area and conduct a design charrette.

Touchette said he thought that the success of any development will rest on its interface with the Town park. DeFrancia responded that there needs to be close communication and stringent collaboration with the Town to make this happen and Lowe Enterprises is prepared to do that.

The question was asked as to when the Town park will be completed. Philp said that dirt is still being moved around and the approved elevations won't be completed until next spring. Some vegetation will be planted next spring to help hold the soil in place. Also in the spring, the Town will decide what additional improvements can/should be made in light of anticipated construction activity on the Pan and Fork parcel.

Cole asked if Lowe Enterprises considered other areas downtown. DeFrancia replied that the proximity to river is the big draw and since that parcel is available they didn't consider anyplace else.

Kolar questioned whether or not Lowe Enterprises plans to have dialogue with the other downtown hospitality providers and property owners. DeFrancia said they are definitely open to dialogue. Kolar thought dialogue with those interested and experienced parties would be helpful in order to avoid redundancies or oversights that can occur when things happen too quickly.

Andersen asked if there is a schedule yet. DeFrancia said that they are working on refining their concepts in order to get a plan on paper sometime within the next couple of weeks.

Kolar asked if any economic feasibility studies have been performed. DeFrancia replied that they haven't done them yet but once a plan is identified they'll begin drilling down on construction costs. He added that work on the pro-formas has begun.

Andersen said that there will be plenty of opportunity for public comment on all of this in the future.

DeFrancia, in closing, said that he and Behrhorst will keep in close contact with the Town and that Lowe Enterprises wants to maintain open dialogue with all concerned and is willing to address any further questions.

Agenda Item 5: Meet with Clark's Market area property owners

Referring to the revised map, Philp noted that the Prinster cabins have been included in the white area and those cabin owners are very interested in this process. The property owners have been notified about the Committee's wish to expand the white area and they were all invited to attend this meeting.

Frank Taverna [Clark's Market building owner] was present but had no comments.

Agenda Item 6: Status of Survey results

Philp said that 2014 Our Town Planning Survey results were not finalized yet. She said to keep in mind that this isn't an actual vote; the survey company is looking for a representative sample of residents. Presently, Staff is conducting a cross-check with the survey company to determine the extent of inclusion. When the survey results are made available they will first be sent to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Basalt Town Council, and after that to DAAC.

Chase thought that the survey asked some loaded questions, specifically about wanting a 'hotel of any size.' This weakened the survey.

Guy expressed his significant dissatisfaction with the survey. It's been proven that people can't make a good decision if there are too many choices. He figured that there were 86 possible answers in this survey and that's absurd. Personally, he doesn't give it much credence.

Andersen asked if DAAC wants to include commentary on the survey in its report. Bennett said she's very curious to see the results first, before deciding that. Kolar added that there were no options for mixed use or combinations of things and thought the survey was missing collaborative opportunities, which could be considered limiting.

Touchette said that he, too, is curious to see how it turns out. He thought it would be important to give it the time of day.

Click said it'd be wrong to dismiss the survey results. Also, like having too many choices, dragging out this Committee's process beyond December wouldn't be helpful.

Guy agreed that the survey results should be included in the Committee's report.

Agenda Item 7: Determine report content and procedure for joint meeting with BTC/P&Z applying Julie's proposed deliverables:

- a. map overlay depicting building envelopes**
- b. programming outline to correspond to the building envelopes**
- c. vision boards depicting exemplary structures, streetscapes, amenities, and interaction**

A comment was made that the next meeting needs to be devoted completely to developing the report. Discussion amongst the Committee members led to the conclusion that the Committee will develop the nuts

and bolts of the report on December 4th and then meet with P&Z/BTC jointly before the end of December to present its recommendations.

Guy suggested using the five Our Town Planning (OTP) principles as the outline for the report.

Touchette added that the group also needs to provide a list of possible activities for various locations.

When asked, Staff agreed to email results of the survey when they become available.

Committee members were asked to highlight their key ideas and email them to Staff for assembly into a document for the group's review. It was agreed that the Committee members will use the OTP guidelines and create their personal bullet-point list under each category. Other deliverables should include proposed building locations and vision boards that support the written portion of report.

Lane asked how specific the bullet-point list should be. The reply was that it should be very specific and succinct.

Committee members were urged to be careful with their image selections and to concentrate on what is desirable. We don't want a list of 'do-nots.'

A Committee member asked about the future underlying zoning for the Pan and Fork parcel. Staff replied that this has not been decided yet. Guy thought that along with that determination there probably needs to be a discussion about the application process. It was confirmed that the report could include a recommendation from DAAC to establish a form-based code or a scoring system.

Touchette thought the Planning and Zoning Commission could follow up on incorporating zoning regulations into the Town Code.

Philp said that there is a Community Serving Commercial (CSC) zone district which could be tweaked to incorporate goals developed by DAAC. Staff will email a copy of the CSC documentation to DAAC.

Kolar said that the Mayor's Cabinet met last week and George Trantow suggested that existing irrigation ditches and waterways (which are often covered over) could be integrated into the downtown landscape to create a visual connection to the river. She thought this was an interesting and exciting idea for consideration.

Agenda Item 8: Are we ready for 12/4/2014 BTC/P&Z Meeting?

It was determined that this had been addressed in the previous discussion.

Public Comment

Taverna offered his congratulations to Lowe Enterprises for bringing such an exciting concept to the table.

The Committee adjourned at 6:33 p.m.