

Jacksonville BPAC Meeting Notes  
Hybrid Meeting  
October 5, 2023 @ 5:30 PM  
Ed Ball Building – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room  
214 N Hogan Street – Jacksonville FL

**Copies of presentation materials from the October 5, 2023 BPAC meeting may be viewed or downloaded from the COJ BPAC page on the City of Jacksonville website. A link to the COJ BPAC page is [HERE](#).**

**Meeting Attendees:**

***In-person:*** Peter Borenstein (Chair), Lauren Rushing (Secretary), Matt Fall (COJ Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinator), Len Burroughs (CPAC, NFBC), Lori Boyer (DIA), Robin Smith (COJ Public Works), Larry Roberts, Stephanie McCaffery, Daniel Ashworth (ETM), Monty Salem (Groundwork Jax) ***Virtual:*** Tyler Blair (EXP), Jonathan Cagel, Derek Dixon (FDOT)

Peter Borenstein chaired the meeting.

**I. Introduction & Adoption of Minutes**

Peter Borenstein moved for the adoption of the meeting minutes for the BPAC meeting that was held on September 14, 2023. Lauren Rushing seconded the motion. The vote to approve the meeting notes was unanimous.

**II. Presentation - Downtown Jacksonville Revitalization, Lori Boyer, CEO, Downtown Investment Authority (DIA)**

Lori Boyer is a former City councilmember and current Chief Executive Officer for the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA). Her many accomplishments during her years on Council still reverberate in Jacksonville's positive growth today; notably, the establishment of the bicycle and pedestrian coordinator position and the formation of the Context Sensitive Streets Standards Committee. As a councilmember, she was also an early supporter of the BPAC. In recognition of her work on behalf of bicyclists and pedestrians in Jacksonville, the American Planning Association, Florida Chapter, voted her as the "Legislator of the Year" in 2014.

Lori began by mentioning a knowledge test she administered at the Safe Streets Summit in Jacksonville regarding bicycle and pedestrian rights. She recalls a 30% success rate amongst planners and engineers at the summit. Lori offered to share the test for BPAC's use.

DIA exists to place a focused effort on downtown and is charged with implementing the Master Plan for downtown, which was updated in 2022. DIA is governed by a board of business leaders and is not just a direct City report. Downtown districts that fall under the jurisdiction of DIA include Brooklyn, Lavilla, City Center, North Core, Cathedral District, Sports & Entertainment District, Working Waterfront, and the Southbank. The Master Plan includes all modes of transportation and brings together all public capital projects from both the CRA, Mobility Plan, Capital Improvements Program (CIP), and an on/off-street parking strategy.

The Master Plan was adopted as a CRA plan and has the following key functions:

- Guidance for public infrastructure
- Regulatory framework for private development
- Incentives to encourage desired development

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Several goals in the plan are aimed at facilitating safety, walkability, and a bicycle-friendly environment. The plan supports a vision of the ongoing reduction of single occupancy vehicles, rideshare, emerging technology, and bike/ped improvements. DIA regulates the curb and pedestrian zone. The streets themselves are the jurisdiction of COJ Traffic Engineering and transit is planned by JTA. The three agencies work closely together.

Goals guide several objectives for actionable improvements such as tree plantings in the sidewalk amenity zone to improve walkability. One challenge is that underground utilities have not been confined to the right-of-way between curbs and often stretch beyond the curb into the pedestrian zone. JEA often approaches DIA with requests to use curb space because utilities don't fit in the roadway. There is also a lack of mapping and understanding where utilities have been placed. This impacts tree placement and makes it difficult to add amenities to sidewalks.

Lori emphasized several bike/ped improvements including adding Liberty Street to bike/ped network, which was recently funded for design, the expansion of the sidewalk on Monroe Street to a shared use path, and bicycle improvements on Beaver Street. The goal is to have a connected grid network of bicycle facilities at least every three blocks.

Historically, the City's approach to parking has had a big impact on the walkability and vibrancy of downtown. BPAC inquired to learn more about the DIA's current and future approach. The City has eliminated minimum parking requirements downtown and incentivizes development to provide less parking or utilize shared parking agreements, the latter of which has seen great success. Parking is required to be on-site. DIA has engaged in public private partnerships to ensure that when parking is provided, it is done in an efficient and appropriate manner for the urban core. For example, FIS wanted to develop in Brooklyn and wanted a parking garage. DIA worked with FIS to provide 150 daytime, public spaces for people using Riverwalk. The spaces are also free to public on weekends and holidays. Lori noted that wayfinding and communication could be improved to bring awareness to the availability of this parking. DIA has looked into the use of a phone application, but experienced difficulty in getting private garages to participate. DIA also implements adjusted rates for city garages and on-street spaces to ensure turnover and improve availability. Future parking improvements may include a downtown circulator or shuttle to connect to parking to destinations and ordinance code changes to convert to new technology such as kiosks and dynamic pricing. Parking meter revenue goes into the Parking Enterprise Fund and pays for staff, operation of equipment, and parking enforcement for ENTIRE city. There is usually a small surplus for parking improvements (\$200,00-\$900,000).

A great challenge in implementing parking reform is that lenders often demand an adequate provision of parking. However, the Barnett development and one other smaller project have no parking and are leased with 90% occupancy. The developer needs to be able to prove to the lender that parking isn't needed.

Most downtown incentives are funded by new development through REV grants (city rebates a portion of new taxes paid for by development) and don't dip into general fund. Another incentive is the donation of undeveloped land. This works well for redevelopment and will generate tax revenue in the

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future. ROI analysis only looks at taxes that are generated and come into the city, but don't look at larger economic benefits. To receive incentives DIA has several eligibility requirements including riverwalk or creekfront trail easements, view and access corridors, multifamily housing, etc.

Additional challenges mentioned to implementing improvements in downtown include:

- Delays in procurement
- Codes are not enforced for dead spaces
- Coordination and shared vision with other agencies
- Local demand for free parking

Key successes highlighted include:

- Acceptance of shared use parking
- Two-way restoration starting soon
- New development and generation of tax revenue to fund CRA projects

Lori offered BPAC several points of advice for how to support the DIA's efforts and promote walk/bikeability downtown including:

- Advocating for projects to be put in the CIP
- Finding a council champion
- Participating in outreach meetings (current participation is lackluster)
- Participate in the opportunity given by the Council once every 4 years to pick a topic and educate council
- Signing up to be on the DIA mailing list
- Attending Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) meetings
  - DDRB replaced the Planning Commission for the downtown area and reviews every project and holds two meetings for each project. This provides a good opportunity to screen urban design, streetscape, etc.

Peter Borenstein asks if DIA has considered planting trees in the road. Lori stated that the DIA is looking at using planters, platforms, and curb bump outs, however the Tree Fund won't currently fund the trees this way. While there are local cases where planters are used (near BOA building, Winter Park, FL), this circles back to the utilities issue. The Overlay Zoning District allows for shade alternatives such as balconies, awnings, shade sails, and shade structures. Lori would ultimately like to have system that could force utilities back into the corridor. This can happen during construction projects, but even Bay Street with its width currently can't have trees.

Peter Borenstein asks about the use of leans against properties as a challenge for downtown. Lori stated she would have no problem using them on surface parking lots, but they are not as good for historic buildings that are deteriorating. This makes it more expensive for the next person who wants to come along and redevelop.

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**II. Presentation – Park Street Road Diet Update, Robin G. Smith, P.E., City Engineer/Chief of Engineering & Construction, City of Jacksonville (COJ)**

Robin Smith is the current chief of engineering and construction management for the city. The projects he and his team lead cover the full spectrum of infrastructure, from bridges and roads to skate parks and trails – AND everything in-between. Before coming to the City of Jacksonville, he worked at the City of Jacksonville Beach, as well as in the private sector.

Park Street is expected to be a main boulevard for developments in the area. The project is guided by the goals to slow vehicles and provide pedestrian amenities (including shade trees). Developers have even donated ROW to make sure pedestrian frontage will be wider because they recognize the benefit this has provided to other developments in the area. The project will take half of the Park Street Bridge and convert the two lanes on west side into a segment of the Emerald Trail. The projects design includes mini roundabouts (traffic circles) at each intersection, closures for some existing driveways, on-street parking, and landscaping.

One notable challenge of the project was the desire to have two, 10 foot travel lanes in each direction. The street is a regional bus route and while the City coordinated with JTA, ultimately their concerns about the size of regional buses being too large led to a compromise of 10.5 foot lanes.

Another challenge can be found in the procurement process. The City solicited bids for construction in 2021, but the bids came in higher than the budget (\$1.8 million short). Public Works approached Council and was able to obtain more money, however with inflation the budget was again short. The City is now looking at a phased approach to get the first phase started, while determining how to fund later phases. The intent is to have the first phase under construction in the next few months. The entire project could be completed in one year. The issue is that projects that cost \$5-10 million project are in a middle zone where it is hard to find bidders – too big for the smaller contractors, but too small for the larger.

**IV. Wrap-up / Announcements / Next Meeting Info**

- Call for Volunteers, Mobility Day in JWJ Park, Oct 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>
- Smart Growth America is accepting applications for their technical assistance program for local champions.
- Next BPAC meeting will be held on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- FDOT public comment period on carbon reduction strategy open from October 3<sup>rd</sup> to October 13<sup>th</sup>

**V. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.