

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting – June 13, 2019

The Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Aledo met in Open Session in the Council Chambers of the City Hall building on June 13, 2019. Chairman KATE DANNER called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. The roll was called, whereupon the following commission members answered present:

Commission Members GERROD ANDRESEN, Members SONJIA FELL and MARY RILLIE were absent. Liaison TARA SIPES was excused.

Also present were JOHN HOSCHEIDT and DANA MURPHY, Economic Development Advisory Committee, and JAROD DALE, City Clerk.

Economic Development Advisory Committee was also scheduled to be present with no quorum present for EDAC.

Minutes: No Minutes for Approval.

Old Business: *No Report.*

New Business: *A presentation by 353 Court, LLC regarding Aledo, Illinois Downtown Report – Strategies for a Revitalized Business District:*

Erik Reader, Todd Thompson & Michael Thompson were present to review the Aledo Downtown Report. 353 Court provided a brief overview of their background. It was reported, city staff engaged conversations with 353 in fall, 2018 to better understand their downtown building inventory and to survey business owners as a way to gain knowledge of how to serve their merchants more effectively while cultivating a wave of new redevelopment activity. The City Council entered into an agreement to formulate and implement a downtown revitalization strategy beginning in February, 2019.

Objective: to provide the City with an outside analysis of observations as it relates to the building conditions, business mix, and brand essence within the historic downtown business district. It also aims to provide City staff and community stakeholders with viable recommendations for stabilization and growth in the short term by determining what is missing, preparation that is needed to take place and how to achieve the desired level of success.

Boundaries: were selected as a way to concentrate future strategic activities. Due to the limitations of this report, observations made outside of the boundaries and pertaining to the nearby neighborhoods, and greater region are limited in scope. The central study was bordered on the north by NE 2nd St, the east by SE 3rd Ave, the south by SE 3rd St, and to the west by SW 3rd Ave.

Observations: despite challenging economic times nation ally and locally for small business over the recent decade, the vested stakeholders in the historic business district are very resilient and optimistic about remaining downtown. During more than

30 property owner and business operator interviews, the team met with startups, long-standing businesses as well as key business stakeholders from outside the district.

Aging exteriors – visible blight exists in many forms. The out-of-date exterior façade of numerous buildings sends signals of an area in distress.

Unmarked structures - a significant amount of the properties found within the study are unmarked or otherwise unknown to general public as the purpose of the buildings.

Signage – very few businesses have utilized a formalized branding and signage of their storefronts. For those that do, a blade sign draws in visitors and passerby alike.

Residential Treatments – the hallmark of historic business districts are their rich architectural heritage. Many residential construction treatments such as shingle roofing, vinyl siding, windows and doors take away from the character of a commercial downtown.

Empty seats – while parks, parklets, and pocket parks are designed to offer greenspace in an otherwise grey area, they are challenging to activate on a frequent enough basis that they add to a street-level vibrancy.

Gateways – a good first impression is important. To signify that you have arrived in a special “place”, gateways are used to connect a brand with a geographic area. In its current state, downtown is missing the feeling that you made it to a destination.

Sense of place – memorable downtown districts are acknowledged for having a ‘sense of place’ which have a strong identity or character felt by local residents and visitors. This is an attracting force that pulls people to a designated area by using deliberate attempts to trigger sensory perceptions.

These can be things like a certain aesthetic of how the building look, a feel or texture of the streets, a smell of diverse restaurants, or a set of unforgettable sounds from events taking place within the downtown setting.

SWOT Analysis was next reviewed. Review of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Whats missing? During the discovery phase of this study, the team concluded that although downtown Aledo is attracting new and returning economic activity, there is still a need for more attractions and amenities to distinguish it as a competitive regional destination.

There are a few suspects of what is currently missing and suggested additions to enhance the vibrancy and promote a greater sense of place. Examples include: Third places – coffee shop, art lounge and food market. Entertainment – movie theater, pool hall, comedy club and live music venue. Interactive spaces – markerspace, media lab,

collaborative working space and a dedicated art studio. Placemaking – art installations, bike facilities, way finding signage, sustainable building elements.

Recommendations by 353 Court, LLC:

building – 75% funding level - \$450,000

businesses – 17% - funding level - \$100,000

branding – 8% - funding level - \$50,000

next process, to take the “Downtown Report” to the Aledo City Council to be held on June 17th.

Next Meeting: August 20th at 6:30 o’clock p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Adjournment:

Motion made by RONN DILLAVOU and seconded by GERROD ANDRESEN to adjourn the Historic Preservation Commission Meeting. Unanimous voice vote followed in agreement. Meeting was adjourned at 7:38 P.M.