

Draft Minutes from the East Town Business Partnership Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, October 7, 2021, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Hybrid: Sawatdee Thai Restaurant and via Zoom

Present: Jacquie Berglund, Charlie Boeckenheuer, Cassie Garner, Vanessa Haight, Brent Hanson, Cyndy Harrison, Tom Jollie, Richard Kiemen, Julia Lauwagie, Rinal Ray, Reid Struck, Carletta Sweet, Kirsten Walstein, Wendy Underwood
Staff: Dan Collison, Christie Rock Hantge
Absent: Lynn Burn, Amy Carlson, James Farstad, Brian Maupin, Eric Merriman, Michael Noble, Aimee Robertson

I. Call to Order and Host Update

President Julia Lauwagie called the meeting to order at 11:33 a.m., and thanked Cyndy Harrison for hosting at her restaurant.

Cyndy then introduced their new server assistant/food runner robot they named “DeeDee” (<https://easttownmpls.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Microsoft-Word-Press-Release-Sawatdee-Robot-9.2021.doc.pdf>) by Bear Robotics (<https://www.bearrobotics.ai/>). Food from the kitchen is placed on DeeDee which takes it to the table via a mapping technology. The server meets DeeDee at the table and removes the plates, and then DeeDee goes back to the kitchen to grab the next set of food; it goes where it’s directed. Sawatdee is the first place in Minnesota to have this robot.

II. Consideration of Agenda

After adding Band Box Diner under presentations, the agenda was approved as amended (CG/RK).

III. Consideration of Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was approved as submitted which included minutes from the September 2, 2021 Board meeting; Treasurer’s report for September which included the F2021 Budget vs. Actual as of August 31, 2021 and Wells Fargo bank statement for September; Director of Downtown Partnerships for Minneapolis Downtown Council/Downtown Improvement District and Executive Director for East Town Business Partnership and NūLoop Partners’ report for August 29-October 2, 2021; and Executive Coordinator’s report for the period 9/1/2021 to 9/3/2021 (BH/KW).

IV. Presentations

A. Band Box Diner Update. Cassie Garner advised she and Vanessa Haight have partnered to create a GoFundMe fundraising site (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/bring-back-the-band-box>) for the most iconic establishment in the neighborhood (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Band_Box_Diner). Eighteen months ago, like many other small businesses, BBD had to close but unlike many other small businesses, owners Brad Ptacek and his wife Heather also had to deal with Heather’s breast cancer which was diagnosed at the beginning of the pandemic, so Cassie and Vanessa reached out to them to figure out how they could help.

The GFM site went live last Tuesday with an original goal of \$15,000, and within 6 days that amount was surpassed. Cassie connected with her friend Gia Vang at KARE11 and they did a Sunrise story on Monday morning (<https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/kare11-sunrise/band-box-diner-minneapolis-brad-ptacek/89-1173f1d0-9bc2-4785-bbd0-d889821788d6>); last Friday, FOX 9 came and did a story (<https://www.fox9.com/news/neighborhood-rallies-to-reopen-band-box-diner-first-opened-in-1939>); and a Star Tribune article will be coming out (<https://www.startribune.com/fans-are-rallying-to-save-minneapolis-oldest-diner-the-band-box/600104768/>). It’s heartwarming to see all these people coming together to support one another. With this funding, they’ll be able to address the vandalism suffered these past 18 months, install new plumbing, repair the fenestration, and install a security system. They’ll also invest in new furniture and expand the patio seating for better ambiance, so hopefully come this spring they’ll be able to help celebrate their favorite tiny diner in the neighborhood.

B. ETBP Vision Statement Overview. For the Board to ground itself in the learning environment created years ago around brand and place, Executive Director Dan Collison explained in 2015 the former East Downtown Council Board of Directors had the privilege of working with Padilla to explore how it could be a collaborator, connector, and bridging organization. The challenges it faced at the time were (1) there was two very different neighborhoods, i.e., Downtown East and Elliot Park; (2) the new center of these neighborhoods was being reinvented with all that was happening surrounding U.S. Bank Stadium; and (3) there was the need to sort out how could a business organization be of greatest help to the neighborhoods. Dan then thanked Tom Jollie and his PadillaCRT team for being the leader from the corporate side who stepped up and led the visioning process that explored a holistic approach to the organization and neighborhoods to overcome these challenges. The actual participant organizations and leaders were most important. Using PadillaCRT’s *Brand Framework* document, he

summarized the process from the listening sessions in May and June 2015, brand workshop in July 2015, community input on the three naming options in April 2016, and final recommendation in May 2016 (reference May 2016 EDC Board minutes, https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/blog/real_estate/2016/02/padillact-lists-options-to-rebrand-neighborhood.html and <https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2016/04/26/downtown-east-loop-town-village-minneapolis-name.html>). East was a must have, must work well with the Commons, strong desire for simplicity, low appetite for unusual names, and in the end they landed on East Town Minneapolis and then came up with some vision pillars.

Tom said the process was super exhaustive because the whole idea of this being a neighborhood or district wasn't even on the map, we had lots of different organizations, and we needed to find a collective voice, so we started with the Board, created a task force of community leaders, and looked at what other organizations of neighborhoods were doing especially ones that were surrounded by or outside of a major sports facility. At the time the stadium was under construction/coming online, and there were different points of view, i.e., some were excited that this would be the catalyst for rejuvenating the east side of downtown, others were concerned the stadium's presence would take over and become something they didn't want the community to be, so through the task force they decided they had to have an exhaustive community engagement program and the ideas of collaborator, connecting and bridging community came out of it. We're kind of this mixed-use area where there's pockets of residential, pockets of high levels of activity, and how do we combine all of that into a sense of community. We have sports, healthcare, businesses, many nonprofits, emerging developments like Portland Avenue and housing that wasn't there in 2015 and is now there and continues to grow, Thrivent moving more into the area, and things like that, so they tried to define the place that we could hold and out of that came the massive pillars that Dan will go through.

Dan explained it's important for everyone to understand the various overlays that fill the greater downtown which is comprised of many neighborhoods. East Town which is comprised of Elliot Park, Downtown East, and a slice of Downtown West, from a legislative level has two State House Representatives (District 59B and 61A), and three Council Members (Wards 3, 6, 7).

Demographically, there is great diversity. As the riverfront redeveloped, the housing and amenities were high end, in fact the most expensive cost per square foot home in the entire state is a condo the Pohlada family owns in Downtown East, and with the Eleven on the River (<https://elevenontheriver.com/>) coming online in the Mill District it's going to push it even further. A number of years ago when the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) did this study, Elliot Park had an average income of \$23,000-\$25,000 which was a huge gap, and the ETBP's role has always been about bridging gaps. So, when we talk about such terms as vibrancy – this is an incredibly creative and informative time, we're in a moment of reset – as a Board we want to ensure we're thoughtful about how we understand these neighborhoods and overlays and are helpful leaders bridging between business and neighborhoods and influencing a vibrant and unique space for visitors. We're a hospitality district beyond our residents and businesses; we host millions of people when everything – i.e., the large stadium, multiple event venues, a park, hotels to support them – opens us.

Then in response to Dan's request for the Elliot Park's perspective of how it fits into the East Town brand, Vanessa, beginning with the caveat that all the work done was before her time, stated they see the East Town name being used specifically by developers and property managers in marketing in a way that wasn't intended, so it often refers to a portion of Elliot Park where incomes are higher and where they've seen a lot of change, and it also is used to get across the idea that this area is new, e.g., language like "pioneers of the neighborhood" which is insulting to the community and folks who have lived here a long time. They haven't done a lot of work around that other than when we see it being used that way to send a quick email message to remind folks. There is a lot of potential for the district to be a play space, a recognized space. She's not sure if that's happening but there's a lot of potential.

Dan applauded how their conversations over the years have always been with the desire to see the ETBP be more effective in understanding the residential voice and stakeholders and it's been hard.

Christie stated from the DMNA perspective, similar to what Vanessa said, we see developers who are new to the community using the East Town name, but it's not something our residents have grabbed onto. Downtown East residents seem attached to the Mill District name primarily because most of the new housing development is along the riverfront in the Mill District. We have a challenging time explaining the name of the neighborhood is Downtown East and that the Mill District is a small subset of the neighborhood as a whole. Some of you may have noticed in the last few weeks, the DMNA just had a significant number of new metal boundary signs installed identifying the Downtown East and Downtown West neighborhoods and has installed banner signs on light poles that highlight the Mill District in Downtown East and the Gateway District which is an

emerging district that bridges Downtown West and North Loop. So, the DMNA is taking the initiative to start branding more or making its name more visible in the downtown community. She doesn't know how it fits into the East Town brand; it's complicated.

Dan explained early in the process of renaming the organization that got into brand, we began to be sensitive to those type of issues, and it's also a little bit self-defining to who we are as a partnership. Some of the ideation was let's super brand this, e.g., let get bumper stickers, T-shirts, pencils. Ultimately, it felt more like a bridging mode, so it's been more subtle and had to work hard at these types of conversations to understand each other.

For those wondering why there two are neighborhoods, downtown has an overlap identifying north, center, and east. The west side of downtown is technically Loring Park and we're bound by all these highway superstructures, trenches that were built, so it's been a combination of historic development and where the density has come from, e.g., 30 years ago the North Loop only had about 400 residents and now has become one of the fastest growing and more wealthy neighborhoods in the city in terms of retail, restaurants, housing, and commercial, so its dynamic and changing. Forty years ago, we began as the Elliot Park Business and Professional Association, then it became the East Downtown Council when the riverfront was development and our boundary has always been across those two neighborhoods.

Christie added that 25 years ago the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Program (<http://www.nrp.org/>) is probably what started neighborhoods being more parochial or individual in nature because funding was set up so that allocations were received on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis, not on a business district basis. In fact, the North Loop was originally part of the DMNA, and broke off when it was prepared to submit its own NRP Plan. With the new Neighborhoods 2020 (<https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/ncr/neighborhood-programs/neighborhoods-2020/>) funding that will come into place in 2022, will require neighborhoods to be a little less parochial in nature and there may be an opportunity for the ETBP to help bridge the two neighborhoods on the east side of downtown.

Dan noted that's an incredibly important point because the model of funding is drastically changing, and 2-3 years from now the resources will largely have been spent through all neighborhood organizations, and the ETBP's role is going to need to change with it. We're coming to the end of our 5-Year Strategic Plan in 2022 and we'll need to infuse a sense of deep engagement with the Board as it exists now and collectively think about how to move forward.

Tom noted another important aspect is what lens are you looking at this organization through. Through our own lens we're a business community association for an area. Through a city planner's lens, we're a bunch of neighborhoods. Through an average citizen's lens, you're probably confused, i.e., what's a district, what's a neighborhood, what does it matter to me. There are so many different lenses and not everyone is looking through the same lens.

Cassie echoed his sentiment, it is a total lens perspective and perhaps as a business community district board a good focus would be how to bridge the gap between those lenses.

Dan said his takeaway from Tom's comment is anything we decide or language we use has to recognize our individual/institutional lens, and ensure we put everyone at the table who has a stake in what might happen in our future.

Next, Kirsten read the "vibrant" brand pillar, which was followed by Board feedback:

"We've had a different roller coaster when we felt more vibrant, so the challenge now is to embrace where we're at but that's what we want of this organization."

"Coming from a company that does development in the area, there's the historical perspective of East Town and how do we maintain that while continuing to create vibrancy as development in the area grows."

"My only suggestion is to change the first sentence by removing "not" and start with a positive message and not defining the community by what it is not."

"As I think about hotel guests and people visiting our neighborhoods, how do we give them the ability to see and explore all areas of history throughout the entire East Town area? Frankly, I was unaware that Band Box was an historic landmark (<https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/resident-services/property-housing/property-info/landmarks/alphabetical/band->

[box-diner/](#)), and I'm meeting with Dianne Walsh (from the DMNA who is leading its Historic Signage Project, (<https://www.thedmna.org/historic-signage/>) regarding getting a plaque on the J. I. Case building (<https://jicasebuildingmpls.com/> and https://mn.gov/admin/assets/II%20Base%20Bldg%20photos_tcm36-469033.pdf) from the history standpoint. I know there are many different walks already out there but is there something we can further explore to provide easy access? The signs that were put up are a great idea but how do we provide people with that flow through the entire area?"

"We get stuck on discussions with EPNI as well, are we focusing on the place or on our role in making the place vibrant? For me that's been a struggle with ETBP, what is the work we're doing, what is the role that work in creating a vibrant community and I know this is just a piece of all of our documents, but I think sometimes especially in the Elliot Park neighborhood we get so focused on the place and physical infrastructure and how it feels rather than the focus of our organization and the work we're doing to ensure that our vision comes true. I feel like I'm having a bit of a gap with ETBP; I think we have a clear vision of what we want it to be, but what's our organization's role and work to make that happen, I feel we've been less clear on that aspect."

"I have a major red flag with the word 'urban', that is usually not used in a very good context especially of late, so I think the small addition of changing urban to metropolitan community could be a benefit. Also, on the last line it says East Town is the dynamic new place for downtown growth, I think 'new' no longer relates to the context in which it was in 2018, I think it's more prominent to be *East Town is the dynamic place for downtown growth.*"

The outcomes we have are: (1) reformulate the tagline, i.e., *Serving the Downtown East and Elliot Park (DEEP) business community since 1979*, to something that has meaning and can lean into the value proposition for re-engaging potential new members and keeping current members engaged; and (2) create two brief companion video products, one about the ETBP and bring vision and inspiration through that lens, and the other one about the ETBP area focusing on neighborhood voices and organizations to a meaningful level. Those are the three pieces of outcomes that at some point he and Cassie will come and ask us to speak.

They are intentionally trying to land on this topic because we're in a time of re-grounding as a Board.

V. Action Items

None

VI. Updates

A. Executive Director's Monthly Overview. In deference time, Dan postponed his report.

B. Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association. Carletta encouraged everyone to read her update on the Board Members Only page to learn about the projects the Land Use Committee has been reviewing since the last ETBP Board meeting.

C. Elliot Park Neighborhood Association. Executive Director Vanessa Haight placed in chat to check out the EPNI E-News for their latest happenings (https://www.elliottpark.org/october2021_e_news), and the Downtown East Litter Clean-Up on Saturday, October 9th (https://www.elliottpark.org/2021_cleanup).

Cassie placed in chat *Balancing Act* exhibit by Barret Lee (<http://www.gamutgallerympls.com/2021/09/25/balancing-act-by-barret-lee/>).

Rinal placed in chat People Serving People's annual Gala on October 16th (<https://www.peopleservingpeople.org/events/annual-gala/>).

D. Membership and Communication. Christie had nothing new to add to her report but thanked all Board members that have renewed and paid. We're currently 11 memberships short of where we were last year and over the next month, they'll continue to work on wrangling those in.

VII. Committee and Task Force Reports

A. Executive. No report was given.

B. Board Development. No report was given.

C. Business Forum Development. Dan thanked Rich for hosting Tuesday's forum at the Canopy Hotel (<https://easttownmpls.org/event/etbp-business-forum-on-october-12/>). Tune in if you can't attend in person. Phil Trier, Regional President at U.S. Bank (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/philliptrier/>) will discuss The Triple Bottom Line of Business and Corporations, but to put a personal touch on who are the leaders and how they, Dan will engage in a dialogue of questions.

Out of all the developers probably in the state, Sherman Associates is the most active in our area and continues to be a serious reinvestment firm, so Chris Sherman will provide an update on all the projects they have going.

D. Restaurant, Bar & Hotel Engagement and Advocacy. No report was given.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:31 p.m. (RK/CS).