



February 20, 2009

TO: CID Steering Committee

FROM: Brad Segal & Jamie Licko

RE: **CID Impressions, Suggested Adjustments and Next Steps**

Over the past two days, we have held a series of open invitation Town Hall and leadership meetings (i.e. SBD, CCA, CID Steering Committee) to gauge stakeholder reaction to and support for the second draft of the Downtown CID Management Plan. About 50 stakeholders attended at least one of the three forums and we received substantive and candid input into the evolving CID Plan. This memo provides a summary of our general impressions, suggested adjustments to the plan and recommended next steps for the CID formation effort.

General Impressions

Three general impressions emerged from this site visit and series of meetings:

- **CID Proponents are Well Organized and Highly Motivated:** Compared to other communities that we work in, Columbia has a strong core group of well organized and highly motivated CID supporters. There appears to be breadth and depth among the leadership of the SBD and CCA boards, and within the CID Committee. Proponents will need to maintain this initial high level of organization and enthusiasm throughout the lengthy and often cumbersome legal process needed to form the CID.
- **Economic Concerns are Not Paralyzing Local Decision-Making:** Downtown stakeholders appear to be concerned but not unduly stressed by the national economic recession. Columbia, and other college towns in general, are resilient and optimistic. Stakeholders did not view the economic climate as an impediment to moving forward with the CID, and many thought the timing could be opportunistic to advance downtown's long-term fortunes.
- **There Will be Some Opposition to the CID:** Like CID formation elsewhere, there will likely be some opposition to the concept in Columbia; however, the opposition is currently limited and not particularly focused on the core elements of the CID concept. While proponents should avoid becoming distracted or preoccupied with potential opposition, there should be acknowledgement that there might be some bumps in the road on the way to forming a CID.

Adjustments to the CID Management Plan

Based upon stakeholder reaction to the second draft CID Plan at the Town Hall presentations, we are recommending that the CID Committee consider three changes to the Plan:

- **Shift Plan Emphasis to Clean, Safe and Attractive:** There appears to be support among many stakeholders to place a greater emphasis in the CID program and budget framework to invest more in clean, safe and streetscape improvements, as opposed to business development and marketing. The general sense is that these types of improvements are more visible and tangible, and could create more ratepayer satisfaction in the CID during a shorter start-up period. There is also some concern that the proposed economic development program structure, which would add two full time employees, creates too much "bureaucracy". This sentiment was stronger among stakeholders that represented themselves as "cautiously supportive of the CID" and the reallocation of effort to clean, safe and streetscape would help them gain more comfort with the package. The CID Board will have the eventual discretion in setting budgets, and could further adjust resources in the future.
- **Finalize a CID Boundary:** While there is clearly support for the CID within the existing SBD, support becomes sketchy in proposed expansion areas. We are particularly concerned about moving aggressively west of Providence as local champions for the concept have not emerged. Our suggestion is to explore the feasibility of an expansion limited to properties fronting the west side of Providence to support the creation of an attractive downtown gateway and to create stronger pedestrian connections across Providence.

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- **Consider a Longer Term for the CID:** Many stakeholders voiced a preference for a term longer than the ten years suggested in the draft CID Plan. Rationale for a longer term included providing a reasonable time to demonstrate the value of CID improvements and a preference to avoid the cost and time-intensive process to re-form it. Plus, many stakeholders were satisfied with the statutory option for dissolving a CID. We are suggesting that the Plan be amended to allow for a 20 year term with 5-year re-evaluations, which would include an assessment of the downtown market, structured stakeholder outreach and a re-evaluation of program responses. Any significant changes to programming could be considered during the 5-year evaluations, but stakeholders would not be required to go through the legal steps to reestablish it.

Recommended Next Steps

P.U.M.A. will produce a final draft CID Management Plan for consideration by the CID Committee. The final draft Management Plan will respond to the preceding issues, plus we will provide a detailed budget break-out of administrative costs for the proposed CID.

Before making a final recommendation to proceed with the petition and legal process to form the CID, we recommend that the CID Committee consider making the preceding adjustments to the draft Management Plan, and that the Committee focus on gauging support for the concept among CID property owners. We estimate that there are about 200 property owners within the core CID study area. The Committee should evaluate the support inclinations for each property, categorizing owners as either "supportive", "leaning support", "undecided", "unknown", "leaning opposed" or "opposed". To initiate the petition drive, we recommend that at least 40% of the 50% per capita threshold be identified as "supportive" or "leaning support" and that an additional 20% be identified as potential supportive prospects.

Finally, if the concept moves to petition, it is important to emphasize that the petition campaign, City Council hearings and sales tax election will need to be managed primarily by property and business owner champions of the concept. Staff can provide logistical support and coordination, but our experience finds that CID formation efforts are successful when the primary advocates are the stakeholders most directly affected.

If sufficient support can be identified, and the proponents are fully committed to the process, then downtown Columbia is well positioned to advance this concept.