

**Community Development Authority
of the City of Onalaska**

Wednesday, November 14, 2018

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1 The meeting of the Community Development Authority of the City of Onalaska was called to
2 order at 3:35 p.m. on Wednesday, November 14, 2018. It was noted that the meeting had been
3 announced and a notice posted at City Hall.

4
5 Roll call was taken with the following members present: Ald. Jim Binash, Ald. Jim Olson, Ann
6 Brandau, Ron Johnson, John Lyche, Mike Gargaro. Joe Bucheger arrived with the meeting in
7 progress.

8
9 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Planner/Zoning Inspector Katie Aspenson,
10 Bryan Harjes of Hoisington Koegler Group, Inc., Dennis Aspenson of Traditional Trades

11
12 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meetings**

13
14 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Binash, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting
15 as printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

16
17 On voice vote, motion carried.

18
19 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes/individual)**

20
21 Mike Gargaro called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that
22 portion of the meeting.

23
24 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

25
26 **Item 4 – Review and Consideration of Onalaska Redevelopment Project:**

- 27
28 a. Review Feedback from Stakeholder Sessions:
29 i. State Road 16 Corridor
30 ii. Downtown Onalaska

31
32 Bryan said he will discuss both the State Road 16 corridor and downtown Onalaska and share
33 feedback from property owners and prospective developers. Bryan said HKGi had highlighted
34 some potential implementation components, and he said there are more components yet to come,
35 including a developers’ roundtable and a community meeting that would focus on downtown
36 Onalaska.

37
38 Bryan’s PowerPoint presentation included the following points:

- 39
40 • HKGi is currently between Phase II and Phase III. HKGi has examined concept
41 alternatives, ideas, and precedents, and it has held a second round of stakeholder

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42 meetings. HKGi will review those comments this afternoon, and the next step is to
43 preliminarily identify some dates in early December to conduct the open house and
44 workshop. From there, HKGi will work on pulling all the information into document
45 form that will serve as a living guide as to what might be seen going forward. The goal is
46 to have the final project for that piece in January.

- 47 • HKGi refined the overall list for the second round of stakeholder meetings, removing
48 some names based on discussions. The meetings included landowners within both
49 project areas. City of La Crosse and Wisconsin Department of Transportation,
50 representatives also participated. HKGi also spoke with Bruce Lundgren.

51

52 Bryan shared the following while discussing the State Road 16 corridor:

53

- 54 • Traffic concerns were discussed, including cut-through traffic, higher-speed traffic on
55 State Road 16, and congestion within the corridor. Bryan said everyone has an opinion
56 regarding the location of the pressure points. Some of the property owners were seeking
57 additional data and background information, particularly from the State of Wisconsin, to
58 back up their concerns.
- 59 • There are vehicular circulation challenges along the State Road 16/Theater
60 Road/Interstate 90 triangle, or the northern third of the project area. A suggestion was
61 made to perhaps convert the private section of Pralle Center Drive into a public road
62 right-of-way. Bryan said the connection between State Road 16, Theater Road, and
63 Interstate 90 provides limited internal access between the Pralle Center businesses, the
64 Marsh View Center, and the Farm & Fleet area.
- 65 • There are safety concerns related to Pralle Center Drive. Bryan said there is significant
66 cut-through traffic in this area, and cones have been placed in the area to deflect traffic
67 from moving through this area. Bryan asked how this relates in terms of priority for a
68 broader circulation if Pralle Center Drive became more of a public street. Bryan said
69 there had been a discussion regarding the north-south connection beneath I-90. This
70 connection would serve as another feeder to create a local traffic connection between
71 Wal-Mart and Target.
- 72 • Establishing a connection to the rear of Valley View Mall. Bryan said the area behind
73 Kwik Trip on the eastern side of State Road 16 is worth investigating as it connects
74 signal-to-signal even though there are questions regarding having sufficient dimension,
75 and there also are concerns pertaining to the slope and the soil.
- 76 • Regarding County Road PH, it could intersect with Theater Road south of Target. HKGi
77 also will examine whether the connection longer-term County Road PH to State Trunk
78 Highway 157 and eventually to County Road SS could be beneficial.
- 79 • Regarding access parking, there is a wish to examine the Zoning Code and reduce those
80 parking components. This would free up some early, near-term opportunities in the
81 service lots and allow for additional development.

82

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83 Mike asked Katie if some of the parking requirements have already been addressed.

84

85 Katie said HKGi also is assisting the city with rewriting its Zoning Ordinance, with the goal to
86 complete the rewrite in December 2019. Katie noted the bulk of the properties are located within
87 the Planned Commercial Industrial District, which the city treats as a Planned Unit Development.

88 Katie said the property owners located within the PCID could request to amend their respective
89 PCIDs. Businesses who do PCIDs have the ability to name their own rules, uses, and parking
90 requirements. Katie said businesses imposed upon themselves many of the actual parking
91 requirements businesses with which they are currently dealing. Katie said if the businesses
92 wanted to change them – the Plan Commission has been willing to listen to parking-related
93 requests if businessowners have sufficient data – they could request to reduce their parking
94 demands both to the Plan Commission and the Common Council and allow for more
95 development. Katie noted not every business has a PCID and cited Target as an example of a
96 business that does not have to wait for the code to change and could immediately ask to reduce
97 the parking requirement. Katie said, “That is a tool that the city has in its toolbox today. There
98 are questions if you open it up when you bring it up for public hearing you can talk about
99 everything again. I think that’s where the private developers may have a question on if they
100 really want to open up something that was approved 20 years ago, or if they want to keep going
101 down the road they’re at today.”

102

103 John asked if there are elements of what was approved 20 years ago in a PCID that would give
104 developers pause today.

105

106 Katie said that is not necessarily the case, noting that the city no longer has a PCID code. Katie
107 said staff sees all the PCIDs as Planned Unit Developments, and businesses still have the
108 opportunity to make any request it wants. Katie cited the example of Crossing Meadows, which
109 sought to amend its PCID so that Party City could be constructed at a location where there had
110 been parking. Crossing Meadows’ PCID was amended to allow for an outlot that would reduce
111 its parking. Katie said Crossing Meadows had reduced its parking ratio without specifically
112 asking to do so. Katie said outlots for future development could be created if the city was
113 willing to allow it to happen.

114

115 John asked if that is being discussed with property owners.

116

117 Katie said not at this time, and she told John she had spoken with an individual within the last
118 year about amending his PCID. However, the individual was not interested in doing so.

119

120 John asked if perhaps property owners should be informed that that is an option.

121

122 Katie said yes.

123

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124 John said he believes it would be logical to do so as perhaps the property owners might be more
125 willing to embrace the process.

126

127 Katie said staff is still in contact with the property owners as part of this project.

128

129 Bryan continued with the PowerPoint presentation:

130

- 131 • Regarding interest and skepticism with redevelopment, Bryan said the focus is on
132 creating infill on smaller sites, citing the activity by Gundersen Health System and at the
133 site on which Old Country Buffet was located. The larger retail buildings believe they
134 will stay a while longer before there is any major transition. Bryan said the eastern side
135 of East Towne Plaza had been studied, and that perhaps larger transportation
136 improvements could occur in this area.
- 137 • There are concerns for mixed-use or multifamily. Bryan said he believes this is more
138 related to the market, noting city staff and HKGi had spoken to primarily commercial
139 developers in this location. Bryan said, “We get a sense there is still strong potential for
140 this opportunity to occur out there. But it may have a cap, and that cap is driven by some
141 of the transportation issues that are out there today. The more people you put on those
142 roads, the more density and intensity could drive more congestion and more issues. But
143 it also may differentiate itself because they’re not always at peak commercial times
144 where they’re running into that. I think there’s a balance there to be understood, and we
145 think there are a couple of spots in particular where some of that mixed-use development
146 still makes sense. We’re not talking wholesale change of that throughout the area, but a
147 couple of strategic locations, more so near the existing residential where that makes
148 sense.”
- 149 • Regarding desirable area amenities, Bryan said it plays into the mixed-use aspect;
150 specifically, what will drive people to want to reside in that district while taking
151 amenities under consideration. Bryan said this district could be desirable in which to live
152 by having a mix of uses in one location where people may walk or bike to them. Perhaps
153 this district also could be transit-driven as a way to facilitate more circulation between the
154 broader commercial district.
- 155 • The green space, or park, tied to a mixed-use development has an organizing element for
156 people as a destination for retail, and also as an amenity for residential.
- 157 • Regarding connections to the natural areas located on the backside of Valley View Mall,
158 this element is in anticipation of longer-term transformation of that area.
- 159 • Developers are seeking more information about Valley View Mall. However, Bryan said
160 he does not believe the City of La Crosse has that information at this time. Bryan said he
161 believes that over time there might be more opportunities to learn what can be done in
162 that area. Bryan said La Crosse Area Development Corporation (LADCO) is interested
163 in Valley View Mall, and that LADCO would be interested in assisting with a joint
164 understanding of what goes into the mall area, and what goes into the City of Onalaska’s

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165 side. Bryan said the City of La Crosse also is interested in mixed-use components, and
166 he said a question to be answered is how to make connections over State Road 16.
167 • In summary, Bryan said there had been discussions regarding infill, focusing on the
168 active development sites, circulation and connectivity, activity that could be phased, and
169 working on transportation challenges along Theater Road. Bryan also said HKGi had
170 highlighted the areas of additional opportunities for commercial development.

171
172 Bryan said HKGi had compiled a list of some of the things the consultants believe should be
173 prioritized along State Road 16:

- 174
- 175 • Continue to focus on the active redevelopment sites in the smaller-scale transition areas.
 - 176 • The ongoing update of the Zoning Code, the parking requirements, the notion of mixed-
177 use development.
 - 178 • Focus on strategic infill in the overparked parking lot sites.
 - 179 • Consider a TIF District or another financial district in that area to allow for gap closure
180 on some of the redevelopment elements.
 - 181 • Perhaps conduct additional transportation analysis (Additional data from WisDOT?
182 Traffic study or engineering assessment of the entire network? Public streets?). Should
183 the overall functionality be taken under consideration in the next phase of planning?
 - 184 • Determination on the new public roadways and understanding the value of them (Pralle
185 Center Drive area, the north-south connection beneath I-90, State Road 16/Theater
186 Road/County Road PH intersection).
 - 187 • Continue to integrate planning with the City of La Crosse for the Valley View Mall site.
- 188

189 City Administrator Rindfleisch addressed the transportation analysis and said questions have
190 arisen as to why the city is putting a lot of focus on transportation frontage, backage and
191 circulation on State Road 16. City Administrator Rindfleisch said it is his understanding from
192 WisDOT that State Road 16's intention is to transport vehicles from I-90 away into the City of
193 La Crosse, and it is not designed to be a local road. City Administrator Rindfleisch said that
194 while traffic studies can be considered, it likely will not improve access across and amongst the
195 various parcels there. Therefore, the City of Onalaska always will seek its own solutions around
196 State Road 16.

197
198 Mike inquired about the Common Council's recent discussions regarding TIFs.

199
200 City Administrator Rindfleisch said it is his interpretation there is interest as long as the public
201 investment is offset by the public benefits, and that they are clear and definable.

202
203 Ald. Binash asked City Administrator Rindfleisch if the city was conducting a study about the
204 feasibility of a TIF.

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206 Katie said it is the review and analysis of Marvin Wanders' TIF, and she said she believes the
207 question is if there is interest by the Common Council to do additional TIF-related projects,
208 perhaps in the State Road 16 area and not necessarily in downtown Onalaska.
209

210 Ald. Binash said the Great River Landing area might be a good project, but what is currently
211 being discussed has not been brought forth to the Common Council. Ald. Binash said, "If you
212 were to bring something, it would be a little premature because I can pretty much guarantee the
213 question will be, 'If you don't know what's going on, why do you want a TIF?' I think once this
214 is done and then presented, [the Council would] consider a TIF District. That would be my
215 belief that is the direction it would go. Once this is completed and we have a plan and a vision,
216 let's look at a possible TIF, if necessary."
217

218 John asked if the Council believes the city could handle another large-scale project in addition to
219 Marvin Wanders' proposed project to construct a multifamily residential development (98 units
220 within three structures) and a commercial/mixed development that would be located on Court
221 Street and Court Street South.
222

223 Ald. Binash referred to the recently completed 2019 Executive Budget process – the budget was
224 passed November 13 – and said, "It's difficult to say right now whether there are those who want
225 the city to expand and do things, or if they are comfortable with the way things are. My
226 impression of the general public is that as long as this helps the city, it helps the city grow, it
227 helps our tax base and it's good for the city, then we should proceed. But there may be some
228 who are saying government is too big and there is too much going on. That kind of came out in
229 this budget process. My general feeling is I can see this is why we're doing this: for the growth
230 of the city, and for our citizens. But it all depends on how our next election goes."
231

232 Ald. Olson suggested it might be a good project after April.
233

234 Ald. Binash said he believes the willingness is there.
235

236 Ann acknowledged that the working relationship between the City of La Crosse and the City of
237 Onalaska has not always been strong, and she asked if anyone had the feeling the two
238 municipalities could collaborate.
239

240 Bryan told Ann he is of the understanding the City of La Crosse is willing to collaborate with the
241 City of Onalaska, adding he believes La Crosse representatives understand the challenges
242 associated with Valley View Mall, which currently is "fairly dark." Bryan said the City of La
243 Crosse wants to have Valley View Mall "as vibrant as they can have it." Bryan also said the City
244 of La Crosse recognizes the synergy between itself and the City of Onalaska along the State
245 Road 16 corridor. Bryan admitted there are limitations regarding access and access controls
246 along State Road 16, and he said, "Both communities have to work on either side and make sure

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247 that that functions well for both communities.”

248

249 Ann referred to a past traffic study either conducted by La Crosse County or the City of La
250 Crosse regarding the top 10 intersections between La Crosse and Onalaska where a majority of
251 traffic accidents occur. Ann noted that the intersection by Kwik Trip and TGI Fridays either had
252 the highest or second-highest number of accidents, and she said she believes there is information
253 available regarding the number at that intersection as well as other intersections along the State
254 Road 16 corridor.

255

256 John asked if Gundersen Health System supports the redevelopment concept.

257

258 Katie said there had been a meeting with Gundersen Health System officials, who expressed
259 concern about their employees and their inability to travel far during their 30-minute lunch
260 breaks. Katie said staff and HKGi’s conversation with Gundersen prompted the backage road
261 discussion of getting closer to Valley View Mall. Katie noted Fauver Hill School has been
262 razed, and she said there are questions regarding what will be constructed on that site. Katie also
263 said the city has not yet seen any plans for the site.

264

265 John asked if Gundersen officials had made specific comments about the rest of the project.

266

267 Katie said no, but she also noted they had mentioned the cut-through on Pralle Drive and a desire
268 to have expanded access as well as more dining and retail opportunities.

269

270 Ald. Binash mentioned Dr. Leo Bronston expanding his property located at 1202 County Road
271 PH, which includes his chiropractic practice, Caribou Coffee, and Johnson Dental. Ald. Binash
272 said the citizens who reside in this area are not pleased about seeing more traffic there.

273

274 John asked if anyone had embraced the concept of mixed-use for the outlots.

275

276 Bryan said a couple of individuals favored the residential component, provided that “the right-
277 sized project could be there.” Bryan said he believes the primary focus property owners saw was
278 without major transformation occurring, adding, “It felt like a lot of opportunity for infill [was]
279 smaller-scale commercial, the retrofit of existing boxes, and understanding and a reorganization
280 of circulation.”

281

282 John asked if there had been any discussions regarding outdoor malls and outdoor walkways.

283

284 Bryan said yes, but he also said, “The logistics of the shapes of those parcels make it difficult.
285 And the characteristics of the uses that are on those parcels don’t necessarily correlate to that
286 same kind of environment for a retailing component.”

287

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288 John said his concern is that while the CDA may dream about what it wants to see along the
289 State Road 16 corridor, those dreams will not come to fruition unless there are developers who
290 share the vision.

291
292 Bryan said he believes there is a strong desire for “the bigger regional commercial retailers in
293 that area.” Bryan acknowledged they “take up a lot of space, and they demand a certain
294 dimension. ... To reorganize things into a successful development that is a little different is
295 going to take a bigger move to make that happen. Again, these are the commercial developers
296 sort of being more knee-jerk [and saying], ‘OK, if that’s the direction we want to go.’ There’s
297 some bigger change that may need to happen. It can’t just be a one-property project. It may take
298 more than that, and assembly is an issue to make that happen.”

299
300 John asked if the city is prepared to cast a vision for developers, and he said he hoped this project
301 would be able to be that vision.

302
303 Bryan reminded John that that had been the reaction from the individual landowners and
304 stakeholders in that area. Bryan said the CDA can help augment and decide how that vision
305 provides itself to the community and to the development world. Bryan noted this area had been
306 mentioned as a “potential transformation site,” and he said, “I’m just giving you the reaction we
307 heard.”

308
309 John said he had hoped one of the landowners would have been excited about the opportunity
310 and offered to make it come to fruition if he/she received financial assistance.

311
312 Bryan said the CDA should discuss that in terms of the next steps with the developers’
313 roundtable or the community input.

314
315 Joe asked for specifics regarding the developers’ roundtable.

316
317 Bryan said a list of developers will be compiled, with the intent being to talk to regional
318 developers who don’t have a specific interest in the properties along the State Road 16 corridor
319 and allow them to give an outside perspective.

320
321 Bryan shifted the discussion to Downtown Onalaska and shared the following points:

322
323 • The downtown stakeholders, one in particular, better understand what the city wants
324 downtown to become. There has been significant transformation in the downtown
325 district (Great River Landing, Dash-Park, David Reay’s). There also is Marvin Wanders’
326 potential project. Bryan said he would like CDA members articulate what they would
327 like to see occur downtown, and he also would like to obtain feedback from the
328 community.

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- 329
- 330 • Stakeholders want to focus energy and momentum in the Great River Landing, Dash-
331 Park, and the “five-block area” around the nucleus of the downtown. Momentum is
332 crucial for attracting new interest downtown and ongoing interest for the private sector.
333 Bryan said the Railroad Quiet Zone Study, Marvin Wanders’ proposed project, and the
334 transient boat dock, Irvin Street, and the alleyway between 2nd and 3rd Avenues also are
335 important components. Bryan said HKGi has been talking to City Engineer Jarrod Holter
336 about improving the pavement and additional parking in this area, as well as relocating
337 the substation.
 - 338 • Regarding downtown access and parking, the goal is to develop a near-term strategy for
339 on and off-street parking for Main Street businesses, and the area in and around Dash-
340 Park, as well as identifying locations for potential future parking structures. There also is
341 a focus on Irvin Street and the alleyway transition to a paseo that would create a
342 pedestrian-friendly area and additional parking that would be in close proximity to
343 downtown businesses and parks. Bryan noted he had spoken to property owners in the
344 area who have control of the land and said there might be an opportunity to look at near-
345 term surface parking to allow for additional parking in and near Dash-Park. It would
346 serve as a placeholder for a larger development that could be created in the future.
 - 347 • Regarding the commercial aspect, there is a desire to continue building on the character
348 rather than block buildings that are traditional retail strip centers. There also is a desire
349 for small office uses that would diversify the downtown district. There is a wish to
350 understand the challenge of commercial mixed-use buildings, requiring rents that might
351 be too high for some local businesses. Higher-end boutique shops might address the
352 retail gap.
 - 353 • Look at art space as a driver for a potential project.
 - 354 • HKGi has attempted to identify potential redevelopment sites, and will continue to
355 highlight the ones that are logical within the downtown core. Next-step projects also
356 should be strategically identified.
 - 357 • Marvin Wanders’ proposed project would occur on City of Onalaska-owned land. Bryan
358 asked how the city can overcome a challenge such as this to look at property assembly to
359 create development projects. Perhaps TIF Districts or strategic areas can be considered to
360 attract redevelopment. The scale of projects also should be taken under consideration.
 - 361 • The area is suitable for an affordable workforce and a new rental component that will
362 keep people in the downtown district to frequent businesses.
 - 363 • In summary, Bryan said the pertinent points related to the downtown district include
364 challenges related to property assembly, other financial components, the scale of
365 redevelopment, establishing a vision, discussing short-term projects, addressing parking
366 concerns, creating project capital improvements on Irvin Street and the paseo between 2nd
367 and 3rd Avenues that will assist in the evolution of downtown Onalaska.

368 Ann said she believes this is consistent with many of the things the CDA has discussed over the
369 years, adding that none of the challenges surprise her.

Reviewed 11/21/18 by Katie Aspenson

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370

371 Ron said he believes the substation still is a significant issue.

372

373 Ann said she believes the changes that have occurred in the downtown district have garnered a
374 positive response from the public, and in turn it helps them envision future changes.

375

376 Bryan said the boundaries are often defined because of the grid, whereas the State Road 16 is
377 more challenging because the scale is larger and the ownership is not organized.

378

379 John said there are things that can be done to make the citizens buy into the core concept. John
380 cited the example of Fremont Street in Las Vegas, where the lights go across the top of the street,
381 and said the City of Onalaska could do something similar with walking corridors, sound pods, or
382 a nightly light show on the side of a building. John said the city needs to do things that are
383 affordable – he estimated it would take a six-figure sum to accomplish everything – and will tie
384 into Dash-Park and the Great River State Trail. John said, “I think our challenge comes from,
385 it’s tough to envision this if you’ve always lived here. It’s tough to see in changing unless
386 somebody does a Dave Skogen trick and assembles a property on their own and says, ‘I don’t
387 care what you all think. I’m going to make this a park.’ I don’t think any of us here have the
388 kind of courage, if you will, to buy all these properties and say, ‘I’m going to change it,’ so we
389 have to do those things that are affordable. ... I think that’s easily done.”

390

391 Bryan said the Great River State Trail and Dash-Park have been “a great investment in the area,”
392 which is why HKGi has focused on the core as there is a backbone of the commercial district on
393 Main Street. Bryan said it will continue to evolve, and also that there are supporting edges that
394 can help emphasize the park and be transformative projects that serve as connection pieces.

395

396 John said he believes the public will be more receptive to the vision for the downtown district if
397 Marvin Wanders’ project proceeds.

398

399 Ald. Olson said the city must first solve its parking-related challenges, adding, “Once that’s
400 done, I think the rest of it will fall in. I think you can do anything you want to do.”

401

402 John said he agrees with Ald. Olson, adding people will not be concerned about coming to
403 downtown Onalaska to shop if there is sufficient parking.

404

405 Ann said the idea behind older-style Main Streets is that consumers go from establishment to
406 establishment and they are not driving to get to their destinations.

407

408 John said parking lots do not have to be adjacent to the downtown core. Rather, they can be four
409 blocks away and consumers could utilize a trolley to arrive at their destination. John cited the
410 example of Sydney, Australia, which eliminated its trolley system in the early 1990s because it

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411 had become antiquated. However, Sydney has begun reinstalling it because the parking
412 problems overshadowed everything else. Moreover, people were asking for the trolley system.

413
414 Ann said Breckenridge, Colorado has a trolley system, and people typically do not have to wait
415 more than 10 minutes for it to return as it is in a small space. Ann said that perhaps the City of
416 Onalaska possibly could have a parking ramp and utilize a couple of trolleys.

417
418 John said the trolley that runs along the 16th Street Mall in Denver only operates on that street.

- 419
420 b. Discuss Developer Roundtable Approach (December 3rd, 4th, or 5th)
421 c. Discuss Public Meeting Approach (December 3rd, 4th, or 5th from 5:30-7 p.m.)

422
423 Bryan said he envisions a 90-minute meeting, likely with local developers – both commercial
424 and residential – who do not have a vested interest in the properties. HKGi and city staff will
425 give a brief overview (approximately 30 minutes) as to why they are looking at both the State
426 Road 16 corridor and downtown Onalaska, site conditions and market analysis, and then walk
427 the developers through some of the same concepts previously discussed so they may provide
428 feedback. A question-and-answer period will follow, and the discussion will include issues to
429 overcome, opportunity locations, projects and types, the viability of the concepts that have been
430 shown, implementation strategies and tools, and how to address some of the obstacles.

431
432 Joe asked Bryan if he believes 90 minutes will be sufficient.

433
434 Bryan said perhaps two hours would be more sufficient, but he also said it depends on who
435 attends the meeting. Bryan said the thought was to invite either four or five developers so there
436 is an opportunity to get a breadth of reach in what the projects would be.

437
438 City Administrator Rindfleisch said that while the developers currently do not have a vested
439 interest in any of the projects, the intent behind this meeting is to obtain their insight. City
440 Administrator Rindfleisch said the intent is not to seek feedback from national or regional
441 developers.

442
443 John asked if Northside Development Group is on the list of developers to contact.

444
445 Katie said no, not yet.

446
447 John noted Marvin Wanders, Paul Borsheim, and Mike Keil all have a connection to Northside
448 Development Group. John noted that Mike Keil had been instrumental in the redevelopment of
449 downtown La Crosse, and he said Mike, Marvin, and Paul could come as a group. John added
450 there is a similar group in Winona, Minnesota, that banded together to create a downtown
451 revitalization. John and Mike also mentioned Commonweal Development, which is based in

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452 Eau Claire.

453
454 Bryan said a possible strategy would be to meet with local developers and make a scripted call to
455 other developers as a GoToMeeting piece.

456
457 John said Commonweal Development was a willing participant in the past.

458
459 Katie said Commonweal has recently doing some work in Tomah.

460
461 John said Commonweal had spent a significant amount of time in Onalaska “with no gain.” John
462 also said part of Commonweal’s complaint – to be specific, it was difficult to help the city
463 achieve its desired goal – has been addressed. John said the city now has a larger scope and
464 vision.

465
466 John also suggested contacting Jeff Wieser of Wieser Brothers General Contractor, who he said
467 has contacts with other developers.

468
469 Mike asked Bryan if HKGi will prelist the issues that have been uncovered to date.

470
471 Bryan said his goal is to try to frame the situation of what HKGi has seen in terms of market
472 components, present the feedback provided by stakeholders, and gauge the developers’ reaction.

473
474 Mike asked if the slide showing what the city is lacking – for example, car dealerships – will be
475 part of the presentation.

476
477 Bryan said yes, telling Mike he will seek feedback regarding what retail aspects the city is
478 missing, and if more residential opportunities could be strengthened. Bryan said he will be
479 seeking a communitywide perspective of what the developers see.

480
481 John said it would be helpful if the developers looked at some of the previous precedents the city
482 has gone through “so they don’t think too small.”

483
484 Mike noted that Bryan has worked with other areas in Minnesota, and he said Bryan must know
485 individuals who could provide feedback.

486
487 Bryan said some Twin Cities-based developers are working in Minnesota cities such as
488 Rochester. Bryan said HKGi can look at some of the contacts it has in the Twin Cities metro
489 area to see what types of tools or strategies are available to help the city arrive at the bigger-
490 picture vision ideas rather than the city pre-limiting itself.

491
492 Joe asked if the visional properties that have been constructed within the last decade in the Twin

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493 Cities and Rochester are thriving.

494
495 Bryan said all of them are different fiscally regarding their construction. Bryan referred to The
496 Village at Mendota Heights and told Joe it has been very successful as a mid-tier development
497 project that hones in on creating a place with a diversifying mix. Bryan said, “We want to be
498 aspirational enough to achieve what you are looking for, and to make it a useful conversation
499 about, ‘Yes, I think that could make sense,’ or, ‘What are the three things we need to do in order
500 to get there to make that project come to life?’ Those are the conversations we want to have with
501 that group.”

502
503 John said he believes it would be worthwhile to address the city’s parking challenges as it could
504 be part of any concept that comes together. John said he believes the parking challenges should
505 be addressed up-front, adding, “It seems to me that we have to be prepared to at least be a willing
506 participant to solve the problem, if we don’t solve it completely.”

507
508 Mike noted the developer is assuming some of the risk and said they might find things the city
509 does not uncover.

510
511 Bryan said the right level of information to share with the developers must be determined – do
512 you give them the background and the overarching analysis? For example, does the city share
513 more of the downtown district diagram that talks about the ideas and shows the imagery of what
514 the city is anticipating it wants to see without being overly specific about a particular site or
515 project?

516
517 Bryan addressed the community meeting, which would focus primarily on the downtown zone
518 and the immediate homeowners and businessowners within that zone. Bryan said the entire
519 community will be invited and asked what they would like to see. There also would be
520 information pertaining to the State Road 16 corridor. Bryan said it would be a traditional open
521 house, with boards on the walls. Bryan said he and Jeff Miller would facilitate the meeting, with
522 Katie in attendance, and those in attendance could provide feedback and ask questions. Bryan
523 said, “We’d like to collect feedback related to these topic areas. What are the issues and the
524 opportunities downtown? What’s not working well? What is working well? [We would like to]
525 be able to leverage that information, get their reaction to the market findings about potential for
526 additional shops and restaurants in the downtown, and the potential for housing in the downtown.
527 [We want to] show them the framework concepts and the downtown visioning that came with the
528 imagery. ...Then we show them, ‘How about this idea to solve parking problems in the
529 downtown?’ You could do ground-level, commercial-net parking above that that fits the scale
530 that feels like it could be in downtown Onalaska. We want to show them the right type of
531 precedent projects to make that happen. [We want to] show them ideas about the paseo and what
532 that could mean for the downtown. ... For State Road 16, maybe it is about some of the issues
533 we see out there with some of the intersection improvements. Or maybe there are highlighted

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534 zones where maybe we see some near-term opportunity. ... I think it's enough [information to
535 share] to get [the public] thinking about what that place really wants to be. It can add to vision
536 discussion, and we can start to pull all this information together from this group, from the
537 stakeholders, and from the community. That starts to lead into that vision conversation.”

538

539 John inquired about the date of the developers' roundtable.

540

541 Bryan said HKGi was targeting the afternoon of Tuesday, December 4, or perhaps the morning
542 of Wednesday, December 5.

543

544 Ann asked Bryan if he wants to have the public meeting before the developers' roundtable.

545

546 Bryan said the thought is to hold the developers' roundtable in the afternoon and the public
547 meeting at night, or hold the developers' roundtable the morning after the public meeting.

548

549 **Item 5 – Review and Consideration of Contract Amendment for Public Participation**
550 **activities**

551

552 Katie told CDA members the developers' roundtable is part of the initial contract for services
553 with HKGi. Katie said city staff knew the developers' roundtable would be part of the contract
554 for services, and this is why the dates for the roundtable and the public meeting are the same.
555 Katie noted she had distributed to CDA members a copy of what would be a contract amendment
556 to allow for the community meeting. Katie said she believes city staff is “pretty pro-community
557 meeting,” and everyone within the properties within the bold diagrams would be directly
558 contacted and informed that not only has progress been made, but more is expected. Katie noted
559 the amended contract with HKGi has been included in CDA members' packets, and she said it
560 states that the contract amendment is in addition to the already-agreed upon contract, and also the
561 associated fees that would be required for it. Katie said she is seeking a motion from the CDA to
562 approve the contract amendment, and then staff will work on selecting the meeting. Katie said
563 that as of now she believes December 3, 4 and 5 are all available, and the number-one location to
564 hold the meeting is Irving Pertzsch Elementary School, with City Hall being the second choice.

565

566 Mike asked CDA members if they wish to offer any additional input regarding meeting dates and
567 times.

568

569 John said he believes it is logical to have both the developers' roundtable and the community
570 meeting. However, John added he believes the timing is critical on the community meeting and
571 said, “I realize where the city staff wants to get everyone involved early on. I think that right
572 now we have a huge project in front of the Council right now with Marvin Wanders' TIF. It
573 seems to me the purpose behind doing all this is to make it all make sense to everybody. I think
574 the community meeting is way too soon. I realize there is a cost savings associated with doing it

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575 all in a very efficient way. I am confident as we go forward we're going to be successful in
576 what's happening here, and there will be other reasons for you to come to town that aren't in
577 December. I would rather have a much better-baked project before we start talking to the
578 community. Why? Because I know these Councilmembers are going to get all sorts of
579 harassment, or at least comments ..."

580

581 Ann interjected, "And questions they won't be able to answer."

582

583 John continued, "Because we're too early in the game. I'm not a politician, so I don't worry
584 about this personally, but they are in a political environment. It seems to me we should have a
585 better-baked plan, meaning that we've talked to developers and the professionals [have told us],
586 'That's feasible and that's not.' Then we go to the community, if you will. I may be on an
587 island with that opinion, but I am always concerned about creating expectations that we can't
588 fulfill and then people say you're spending all this money to meet with us and show us stuff.
589 We're paying for another study; in effect, that's what we're doing. I think there's an appropriate
590 time and place for all of that."

591

592 Bryan said there typically is a community component when HKGi does projects like this one,
593 and he said that component is integrating and creating part of the vision for the process. Bryan
594 said he does not fully know the timing of the TIF component with Marvin Wanders' project and
595 how it lays out. Bryan said, "But I think the level of information that we show is at a much
596 higher level than even where we're at today. We put some pen-to-paper on footprints to
597 understand sites and capacity and what potential could happen for some of those areas. But is
598 there a way we articulate this to get the right kind of vision established through the community
599 feedback? And does that play into a better benefit for the project as a whole moving forward?"

600

601 Joe inquired about the method by which to alert the community about the public meeting.

602

603 Katie said the city would do a press release and notify the local newspaper, and also the local
604 radio and television stations. Katie said there also is an intent to do a direct mailing specific to
605 each one of the individual property owners and tenants and invite them to the meeting. Katie
606 said staff also intends to do a follow-up postcard. Katie said, "My concern is that if we don't
607 include the public and we don't notify them and we move forward into January and February and
608 the CDA approves the plan and the Common Council approves the plan ..." Katie said,
609 "Marvin, at best, is not necessarily looking to start developing his project until next spring. In
610 that case, we'll already have had the plan done and approved, and now we're just sitting on it and
611 waiting for that to happen. And if construction goes accordingly, that's a whole year beyond that
612 when the project is finished for all the buildings to go up. Then it's been a year and a half and
613 we were just sitting on the plan or we're showing it to different developers. At what point do
614 you bring the community in? When do they get a chance to say, 'I think that's terrible?' If they
615 think it's terrible, then they go to the Council and the Council already approved the plan, and

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16

616 they didn't have a chance to provide feedback. That's why as staff we were looking at doing it
617 early where they have the chance to buy into the plan before the plan is formalized. Then they
618 have the chance to say something, so that's why the date proposal is there. If it doesn't make
619 sense, I'm just concerned about when would be the appropriate time after we approve the plan."
620

621 City Administrator Rindfleisch said there are two groups: the residents of Onalaska, and the
622 immediate neighbors to the area. City Administrator Rindfleisch addressed the experience city
623 staff had had with a plan to raze a home on 3rd Avenue South and construct a bar and a residence,
624 stating it likely was not a well-thought out plan, and also that several neighbors had gone before
625 the Common Council and stated they had just found out about the plan and were vehemently
626 opposed to constructing a bar in their neighborhood. City Administrator Rindfleisch said staff
627 wants the public to have the opportunity to state if they approve or disapprove of the
628 neighborhood. City Administrator Rindfleisch predicted that parking will be a primary topic,
629 and he said, "Now we have the statements that, yes, we're solving a broader picture. It's not just
630 for developers or putting parking in there. It's also for the resident parking. That's just one
631 example."
632

633 City Administrator Rindfleisch asked Bryan to display the bubble map of downtown Onalaska
634 and said the previous versions of the map showed development opportunities located on
635 properties. City Administrator Rindfleisch said staff is concerned that a homeowner would see
636 that a 12-unit apartment complex was slated for construction on his/her property. City
637 Administrator Rindfleisch said HKGi has attempted to be more specific about what could
638 happen. City Administrator Rindfleisch said, "I think it's fitting at this point to have some input
639 to say, 'What do you think about ... if your neighbor would sell out and a townhome was put
640 there?' We've started this transition of a neighborhood versus later on when we want to get
641 developers excited and we want to have more specific projects in mind and highlight, 'Here are
642 some more development opportunities.' That may include my neighbor if I'm a resident there or
643 my own property, because now I've had the input to say, 'Yes, I can see some of that going on
644 here.'"
645

646 Mike inquired about the possibility of proceeding as is with the developers' roundtable in
647 December, obtaining the results, and holding the community meeting in January.
648

649 Ann said it is her understanding that by holding the developers' roundtable and public meeting
650 close together, the public will be told there is a vision to change downtown Onalaska over a
651 period of time and asked if they can envision the downtown corridor changing, and also if they
652 find the proposed changes to be acceptable. Ann said, "I'd be afraid of putting it off expecting to
653 give them too much detail, because if I see it from that perspective, if I don't like it you go back
654 to the drawing board, whereas if you give them the big picture, then they might have some input
655 before we drill it down farther. That would be the approach I would expect you to be taking."
656

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17

657 Ald. Binash said he is of the opinion this simply is to gather information, and he would ask
658 himself what he would want or need if he were a resident in that area. Ald. Binash said, “I
659 would prefer to know what the public thinks now versus later on. Again, it’s just informational
660 gathering. We’re not actually saying what’s going to be built here just yet. I think at the
661 beginning of Marvin Wanders’ project over here, it’s certainly going to open up a lot of
662 possibilities. I would prefer to know at least what the public thinks. ... I would like to get an
663 idea from the public what they think in this particular area what’s going to be a benefit to them
664 and how it’s going to benefit the city.”

665
666 City Administrator Rindfleisch said he believes the final product should have more specifics as
667 the goal is to highlight opportunities for developers, both locally and nationally.
668

669 Bryan said, “These are just sort of the tests to understand potential capacity on these sites. It’s
670 really dependent on individual property owners and what they want to do with their land. How
671 do those ideas fit to a framework like this that is a bigger idea for the downtown that shows how
672 we focus energy on the core and leverage the open-space park amenities and create additional
673 housing opportunities?”

674
675 Bryan addressed an exercise where those who attend the public meeting will be able to place a
676 dot on what they want to see in the downtown corridor, calling it “a visual preference.” Bryan
677 described it as a board with several images, and it is organized by land use or development types.
678 Bryan said, “We show them those different images. It’s just an idea, a way to get more of a
679 dynamic response at the meeting for people to engage on the vision and what does that look like.
680 Then we leverage that to help tell the story about the precedents and the future potential for the
681 downtown.”

682
683 Ald. Binash asked, “Are we working towards the local community and what the needs in this
684 general regional area want? Or are we looking to bring in tourists who stop by and spend
685 dollars? I think that’s also a component of what we need to look at. What do we want? Do we
686 want tourism money? Or do you want the regional area to come to this area in the community of
687 Onalaska, Holmen, La Crosse, West Salem, La Crescent – wherever they’re coming from – to
688 come here to spend money? I think that’s also an aspect of what we should be thinking about.”

689
690 John told CDA members he had been involved with the Weber Center, and that the information
691 “got out too soon. Pretty soon, we had everybody up in arms, and we did more backtracking to
692 try to put it all together with information getting out too soon. Our local media was part of that.
693 I’ve just become paranoid about the general public getting information that they don’t know how
694 to handle at the right time. Now, you all have to live it and I don’t. Jim, if you’re suggesting
695 you’d like this better, I am all for it.”

696
697 Ald. Binash said the only difference was the Weber Center was going to be constructed, and the

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18

698 city does not have anything built at the present time. Ald. Binash said, "It's a wide-open scale."

699

700 John told Ald. Binash he agrees that the Weber Center was ultimately constructed. However,
701 John also said, "We were talking about it so early on that it backfired." John added he will
702 support the CDA if its members are in favor of holding the public meeting in December.

703

704 Ann said a vision is being created for people to contemplate, and that, "I don't want them to walk
705 out of that [public meeting] thinking, 'How long did it take them to do the Great River Landing?'
706 Was it 25 years that we sat and talked about it before anything happened? I don't know if you're
707 going to get some feedback that way as well."

708

709 Bryan said it is possible there will be citizens advocating change, and citizens who will resist
710 change.

711

712 Ron said he believes a majority of the citizens will see the negative aspect.

713

714 Ald. Binash reiterated he wants to know what the public is thinking because the city will still
715 have a plan if the public disapproves of what is being proposed. Ald. Binash said, "I'd rather
716 have the plan and an idea of what thinks than ... Look how long it took to get the Great River
717 Landing together. Here we have a plan. Give it to the public, and I would rather deal with the
718 public than to wait until later on and find out we have too many negatives rather than positives."

719

720 Ron said, "I believe we need to get the public from the community and not just from the area
721 there."

722

723 Ann said it is a given there will be negative feedback from nearby residents.

724

725 John asked if notices could be inserted in utility bills.

726

727 Katie said utility bills are mailed quarterly.

728

729 Katie encouraged CDA members to help promote the public meeting by inviting individuals who
730 attend the same events they do. Katie said, "Word of mouth is often far stronger than anything."

731

732 Mike suggested inserting a notice in the property tax bills, which are sent in December.

733

734 Katie asked CDA members when they would like the community meeting to be held. Katie also
735 said she is not opposed moving it from December to January in an attempt to boost attendance.
736 However, Katie added, "My concern is that the CDA and the Council adopt [the plan] before the
737 public has a chance to say something."

738

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19

739 Bryan suggested using the December 12 CDA meeting as a preview of the information to be
740 shared for a part of that community meeting. Bryan said HKGi often pairs the community
741 meeting with a follow-up online Survey Monkey tool that allows participants to do the same
742 exercise with the boards digitally. This method would allow the broader spectrum of the
743 community to be captured.

744

745 Ald. Binash inquired about the cost of the online survey.

746

747 Bryan said the cost is nominal as it would just be creating the survey.

748

749 Ald. Binash inquired about the cost if it were done in January.

750

751 Bryan said the cost would be the same, depending on whether or not the online tool is included.

752

753 Mike asked Bryan if pushing back the community meeting by one month will hamper his
754 timeline.

755

756 Bryan said no and stated, "I would rather have confidence in this group that the messaging is
757 appropriate than knowing that we're getting out what we want to get out. If we push it one more
758 month to a February close, that may give everybody more time to provide the content, and to
759 distill it and understand it. There might be one more meeting to come through and present the
760 final document. That might be it."

761

762 John asked if anything would change if the CDA examined the plan on December 12 and held
763 the public meeting a few days later.

764

765 Bryan said HKGi always finds more success with open houses in mid-January than in mid-
766 December.

767

768 Ald. Binash noted the developers will already have commented, and their comments and ideas
769 can be shared with the citizens if they were to ask questions.

770

771 Bryan said he might want to think about strategizing the timing of the developers' roundtable,
772 perhaps moving it to December 11 or December 12. The information shared at that meeting can
773 be distilled for the CDA, and then the CDA can begin thinking about a strategy for the January
774 public meeting.

775

776 Katie said delaying the public meeting also will allow more time for publicity.

777

778 Mike asked Katie if she will look into having a notice inserted with the property taxes or the
779 utility bills.

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20

780
781 Katie said staff can look into additional publicity matters.

782
783 Motion by Ann, second by Joe, to approve a Contract Amendment for Public Participation
784 activities with Hoisington Koegler Group, Inc.

785
786 On voice vote, motion carried.

787
788 **Item 6 – Review and Consideration of Onalaska Redevelopment Planning Invoices 018-**
789 **036-3 & 018-03604 (HKgi)**

790
791 Motion by Joe, second by Ann, to approve Onalaska Redevelopment Planning Invoices 018-036-
792 3 & 018-03604 (HKgi) in the amounts of \$14,991.50 and \$19,492.36, respectively.

793
794 On voice vote, motion carried.

795
796 John asked that the December 12 CDA meeting begin at 3:30 p.m.

797
798 **Adjournment**

799
800 Motion by Ald. Binash, second by Joe, to adjourn at 5:23 p.m.

801
802 On voice vote, motion carried.

803
804
805 Recorded by:

806
807 Kirk Bey