

# DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

April 15, 2025

Hartley Vey Theatre – Shaw Center for the Arts, 100 Lafayette

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mr. Patrick Michaels - Chairman, Mr. Gary Jupiter- Vice Chairman, Mr. Philip Jordan – Treasurer, Ms. Suzanne Turner, and Mr. Joshua Hollins – Secretary (entered the meeting late)

**Absentees:** Mr. Eric Dexter

**Others in Attendance:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Casey Tate, Ibora Udoh, Schuyler Olson, Ute Cress, Torri Buckles, Glenn Frederiksen, Christopher Cooper, Jason Crain, Richard Cannon, Adrian Owen Jones, Scott Harris, Faith Miller, Brad Bates, Caroline Marse, Dr. Ashlyn Harrison, Judy Foust, Sarah Nichols, Amelia Gabor, Rannah Gray, Bart Sutton, Victoria Howard, Landon Hester, Sinella Aghasi, Mark Martin, Tim Boone, Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman, Lauren Thompkins, David Kors, Adrienne Kors Horn, Jordan Arceneaux, Jason Langlois, Amanda Lanata, Chuck Booksh, Reginal Brumfield, Laura Nguyen, Brian Goad, Charles Davis, Megan Dyson, Luke St. John McKnight, Darryl Gissel, Barry Gambold, Kendra Hendricks, Brianna Jeansonne, Elizabeth McKinley, Karen Soniat, Anne Mahoney, Paul Groves, Charles Daniel, Alysia Guin

Whitney Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone and thanked the Hartley Vey staff for hosting the DDD meeting today. Whitney also thanked our breakfast sponsor, Access Sciences, and invited them to speak.

Glenn Frederickson, Director of Records Management Operations, and Torri Buckles, Business Development Manager, addressed the Board. Mr. Frederickson stated that Access Sciences was founded in 1985 and has provided records and document management services for over 40 years. Headquartered in Houston, TX, the company opened a Baton Rouge office at 301 North Main Street in 2025. They have been serving Baton Rouge for over 20 years and provide support to four Louisiana State Agencies, as well as some private industry. They have experience in various industries, including chemical, energy, engineering and construction, power and utilities, and transportation. Access Sciences offers insightful information governance consultation services and employs skilled staff who deliver quality outcomes in information and records management projects and initiatives. For additional information, contact Torri Buckles at [tbuckles@accesssciences.com](mailto:tbuckles@accesssciences.com) or 713-664-4357.

Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced the Mayor's Chief Administrative Officer, Charlie Davis. He stated that the Mayor's office is excited to work with the DDD to help make downtown safer, cleaner, and more beautiful. They are eager to listen and partner with the DDD to explore ways to encourage families and college students to live downtown, attract more tourists, foster economic development, and create more jobs.

1. Patrick Michaels called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.
2. Patrick Michaels asked to amend the agenda to add the Pentagon Barracks as an item under Government Issues and moved to approve the agenda. Gary Jupiter made a motion to approve the agenda, Susan Turner seconded, and the motion was approved.
3. Gary Jupiter motioned to approve the minutes from the February 11 meeting, Philip Jordan seconded, and the motion was approved.

Whitney Hoffman Sayal announced that after the DDD Commission meeting today, there will be a tour of the Baton Rouge Cruises Riverboat, located at 900 South River Road.

#### 4. Governmental Issues:

- **Pentagon Barracks** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission. The Pentagon Barracks are located in the Capitol Area Complex at the corner of State Capitol Drive and River Road. They were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and were built between 1818 and 1822 to house United States troops. It served as a garrison from 1822 to 1877. The grounds were also the site of Louisiana State University before it moved to its current location off Highland Road in 1925. In 1965, renovations were made to the interiors of 11 apartments for various state officials. The Pentagon Barracks still houses the offices of the lieutenant governor and private apartments for state legislators. Recently, an RFP was issued through the state for architectural services to include new housing and renovations of the existing structures. The applications for the RFP for architectural services closed on March 5, and the DDD will stay updated on any developments regarding this very historical site. Board member Susan Turner noted that the Pentagon Barracks are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are likely among the most significant and historic landmarks in Baton Rouge. Numerous prominent public figures, including Abraham Lincoln, either served at or visited the site. With the buildings being over a century old, they require ongoing maintenance and repair. It's essential that we preserve and protect what remains.
- **River Center Steering Committee** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the River Center Steering Committee. The committee has met and issued an RFP for the owner's representative/advisor to represent the City-Parish in developing an RFP for a developer for the Baton Rouge Convention Center Expansion and Headquarters Hotel Development Project. The DDD will continue the Commission on new developments for this project.
- **State Workers**– Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission, stating that Governor Jeff Landry has mentioned his desire for state workers to return to work at state offices. The Louisiana Economic Development has announced that all employees will return to work by March 31, and the Department of Revenue has also agreed to bring state workers back 4 days a week by March 17, both dates have passed. The DDD is excited to have more workers back; the more workers returning to work downtown, the more business will be given to our local businesses and restaurants.
- **DDD Tax Renewal, October 11** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. The Metropolitan Council recently approved the DDD to move forward with the DDD tax renewal, which will be on the ballot on October 11, 2025. The taxes fund the DDD office and operations and generate approximately \$650 - \$700 thousand annually. The stakeholders who are registered voters within the downtown boundaries vote for the tax renewal.
- **Historic Preservation Commission** – Whitney Hoffman briefed the Commission. Several downtown properties went before the Historic Preservation Commission.
  - HPC 3-25 - 103 France Street, lean-to structure approved to be demolished
  - HPC 4-25 – 530 Lakeland Drive, approved to be demolished
  - HPC 5 -25 – 530 Lakeland Drive, approved for construction
  - HPC 6-25 – 764 Spanish Town Road, approved change in siding material
  - HPC 7-25 – 601-603 Spanish Town Road, approved installation of handrails

Additional information can be found at the Historic Preservation website.

## 5. Development Initiatives:

- **IDA Capitol Hill Fly-In** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated she attended the International Downtown Association Capitol Hill Fly-In last week. Downtown leaders from around the country come, along with colleagues from the Downtown Development District from New Orleans, to advocate for the Revitalizing Downtown Main Streets Act, HR2410. Louisiana has quite a bit of influence in the White House now, both DDD New Orleans and Baton Rouge representatives were able to have staff meetings with Rep. Cleo Fields, Rep. Mike Johnson, Rep. Steve Scalise, Sen John Kennedy, Rep. Troy Carter, and Sen. Bill Cassidy. They were all interested in learning about the bipartisan bill, which they have been advocating for about a year. The bill is in the first stage of the legislative process. It was introduced into Congress on March 27, 2025.
- **DDD Marketing Plan** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. Part of the DDD strategic plan was to create a marketing plan. The marketing plan reviewed all the ways we are currently marketing the DDD, distributing materials, the activities of the office, and the status of downtown. It also looked at all the different audiences that were participating in those materials, and the following recommendations were made by our consultant, Mukul Verma, with Thoroughline:
  - Rebranding the DDD – 2026
  - Events Website - 2027
  - Neighborhood Newsletter – 2025
  - Developer Materials – 2025
  - AI Integration – Ongoing

The Commission viewed a marketing video interviewing downtown residents about what they love about downtown. The video was released on Facebook and Instagram. The DDD has 8.3K followers on Facebook, 5.2K followers, and 3k subscribers to the DDD newsletter, The Drift. The DDD is using all the platforms to elevate the perception of downtown and showcase all the unique opportunities. The marketing campaign is being led by Schuyler Olson, Marketing & Design Coordinator, and she is doing a tremendous job.

- **Downtown Data Update- Placer AI:** Casey Tate updated the Commission on downtown event data obtained with Placer.ai, a program DDD has been using to determine how many people visit downtown during certain times. Casey explained Placer.ai has location intelligence and foot traffic data, which DDD uses with marketing efforts as well. Downtown had a big weekend on April 4-6 with the Blues Fest, Baton Rouge Zydeco Hockey, and the Bowling Conference. There were over 130K visits, and the peak visitation time was 6:00 pm. DDD has met with the BRPD 5<sup>th</sup> District, as this information is helpful for them in determining security needs. Knowing the peak times helps them to focus their efforts on where and when to have extra police duty. The information is also helpful for sponsors when the event coordinators are looking for more funding. If anyone is interested in pulling data for their business, such as traffic counts, foot traffic, and event attendance, contact the DDD office.
- **Baton Rouge Green: Downtown Tree Survey** – Christopher Cooper, Director of Operations with Baton Rouge Green, updated the Commission. Baton Rouge Green is an urban and community forestry non-profit that has been in business for 40 years. Mr. Cooper stated that trees are essential infrastructure and help reduce stormwater flooding, cool spaces, help to reduce carbon by sequestering carbon in new growth, and make cities better. Trees help us psychologically; they reduce crime and make communities calmer to interact with. Baton Rouge Green is conducting a tree survey downtown and is digitally cataloging public trees in the city in order to better quantify their environmental and economic benefits to our community, as well as assist city officials with maintenance and planning. There are about 5,000 trees in the downtown area. BR Green is working with the Department of Maintenance and has federal funding to help remove trees that have been affected by termites and replace the unhealthy trees. Recently, ball moss has been added as a health issue for trees. The percentage of ball moss in the canopy will determine which trees will be removed, and others will be treated.
- **EBR Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan Community Engagement** – Iboro Udoh briefed the Commission

on the public engagement event. Residents and stakeholders gathered at the Downtown Development District Conference Room on February 25 for the East Baton Rouge Bicycle and Pedestrian 2024 Master Plan Update Public Engagement Event. The open-house-style meeting allowed attendees to stop by to learn more about the plan, review maps of existing and proposed trails, and provide direct feedback on the updates.

The event was hosted by the Complete Streets Advisory Committee, BREC, Planning Commission, and the DDD. Representatives engaged with attendees, answering questions and discussing how the proposed changes could enhance connectivity and accessibility throughout East Baton Rouge. Cyclists, cycling clubs, and community members were active participants, emphasizing the need for safer, more expansive bike and pedestrian infrastructure. The event highlighted a strong public interest in improving walkability and bike-friendly routes, reinforcing the community's desire for more sustainable and active transportation opportunities. The feedback gathered will play a key role in shaping the final Master Plan update, ensuring that Baton Rouge continues to move toward a more connected and pedestrian-friendly future.

- **Keep Louisiana Beautiful: Love the Boot** – Iboro Udoh briefed the Commission on the Love the Boot clean up. The DDD office and volunteers came together on Saturday morning, April 5, to enhance the beauty of Downtown Baton Rouge through activities such as litter cleanup and landscaping. This community-driven event was a great opportunity to show your pride for the city, connect with fellow residents, and contribute to creating a cleaner, more vibrant downtown area. There were a number of organizations that volunteered for the cleanup downtown.
  - **Downtown Neighborhood Social** – Iboro Udoh briefed the Commission on the 2<sup>nd</sup> DDD Downtown Neighborhood Social. The event took place on Thursday, February 13, at the Main Street Market from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., allowing downtown residents to meet, connect, and socialize with other residents of downtown Baton Rouge. There were fun games, arts and crafts, and food from Okkie Tokkie. Those who attended the event worked on Valentine banners and cards for the senior residents at the Catholic Presbyterian Apartments on Main Street. Downtown residents had a chance to share ideas and explore how the downtown neighborhoods can unite to build a stronger and more connected community.
- Iboro recognized the following downtown businesses that donated items for a raffle:

- House Brew
- Cecelia Creole Bistro
- Milford's Deli on Third
- 1717 at the Queen Casino
- Zydeco Hockey Tickets – Whitney Hoffman Sayal
- The Gregory at the Watermark

Iboro thanked BREDA for hosting at the Main Street Market. The next Neighborhood Social will be an ice cream social to be scheduled in June 2025. Please subscribe to the DDD Newsletter for further event details, such as the location and time.

Board member Joshua Hollins entered the meeting at this time.

- **Third Street Master Plan Update** - Brian Goad from McKnight Landscape Architects updated the Commission on the Third Street Master Plan. The project aims to create a Master Plan for

enhancements on Third Street, providing general recommendations for streetscape improvements from North Boulevard to North Street. Brian stated they have undergone a process of inventory and analysis, examined the history and underlying ecology of Third Street, and engaged the community through a survey. They reviewed Plan Baton Rouge II, which featured many great ideas and talented designers. Part of the proposal included connecting the Central Green through braided green spaces and a shopping and entertainment corridor. Another critical theme was the planting and maintenance of an urban forest; one goal is to re-establish the urban tree canopy and introduce several species that would thrive in downtown. One conceptual framework of Plan BR II was a braid that incorporates green spaces. They propose extending this braid, which represents circulation, vegetation, and urban life, from the central green spaces of Repentance Park and other connected green areas to attract people to Third Street. The streetscape improvements will cover five blocks and six intersections, from North Boulevard Town Square to North Street. Each block is being assessed individually, considering the inventory and analysis, while each intersection is viewed as a gateway, a place for rest, orientation, and interpretation. The loading zones and parklets along Third Street are envisioned as front porches that still allow for parking and loading. Third Street is envisioned to be infused with art, culture, and interpretation.

- **Beauregard Town Civil Rights Trail** – Dr. Ashlyn Harrison, Executive Director of the Walls Project, addressed the Commission. Dr. Harrison stated that Morgan Udoh will head up the Walls Project, which will design and install Civil Rights Trail wrap art around utility boxes along the Downtown Greenway, specifically T.J. Jemison, East Blvd, North Boulevard and South Boulevard. The artistic concepts will be based on highlighting and honoring key Baton Rouge Civil Rights leaders and activities, including but not limited to Reverend T.J. Jemison. Public meetings will begin soon, followed by an RFQ to select an artist, and the project will have community involvement to feature unsung heroes who need to be highlighted. This is not just highlighting the unsung heroes, but the historical aspects that Baton Rouge played in the Civil Rights movement. Dr. Harrison stated that the bus boycott started here in Baton Rouge, so it's important to acknowledge those people who played a role in the Civil Rights movement. They will be accepting public comments through online & paper surveys as well as community meetings. Casey Tate showed the Commission a map of where in the Beauregard Town area the utility boxes will be wrapped with artwork to help tell the story of the Civil Rights Activists. The first public meeting will take place on May 6 at the DDD Office from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm.
- **ADA Transition Update** - Jason Crain, MOVEBR Deputy Program Manager for the downtown enhancement projects, updated the Commission on the status of the six downtown ADA transition projects to fix the non-compliant issues.
  - Florida Street - ADA improvements were completed at the end of 2023.
  - Main Street – The notice to proceed was issued yesterday, April 14, beginning around the Main Street garage. Work will require the temporary closure of on-street parking. Work includes the installation of audible pedestrian signal pushbuttons and crosswalk restriping. The work is expected to be complete by September.
  - East Boulevard - work has been completed.
  - North Boulevard - Under construction. Most of the work is complete, however, there is still some pavement striping at the crosswalks and pedestrian push-button work to be completed.
  - Laurel/Lafayette Street – The construction will begin in May. Work includes the installation of audible pedestrian signal pushbuttons and crosswalk restriping.

- South Boulevard - The South Boulevard Trailhead Connection connects the existing South Boulevard sidewalks over the railroad tracks to the levee trailhead and provides wayfinding signage. This project will increase the safe mobility of pedestrians/bikers and provide connectivity to existing trails and paths. It will also provide better connectivity from the existing paths to the levee trail, ultimately connecting the downtown area to LSU. The consultant is working on the plans and is about 60% complete.

Another project downtown is the Bus Rapid Transit project, currently under construction. This connects North Baton Rouge to downtown and LSU with a new bus route, new improved bus stations, consolidating some of the existing bus stations to new improved stations with shelter. The path will go through downtown, and there will be some new stations along Florida Street, Fourth Street, and St. Ferdinand.

Rannah Gray, MOVEBR communications, updated the Commission. The Bus Rapid Transit project has a website, [batonrougebrt.com](http://batonrougebrt.com), where you can link to the MOVEBR page for construction updates and link to CATS from there for route changes due to construction. You can get updates on the downtown projects by going to the MOVEBR website, in addition to the MOVEBR social media posts. For any downtown resident or business having construction-related problems that require urgent attention, call 225-389-3123.

- **Riverboat Tours** – Scott Harris, with Baton Rouge Cruises, briefed the Commission on riverboat tours. Baton Rouge Cruises has a paddle boat sightseeing river cruise on the Mississippi River named the Jacqueline Queen. There are three daily harbor cruises, 11:00 am, 2:00 pm, and 5:00 pm, Wednesday – Sunday. On Saturdays, there is a cocktail and appetizer cruise at 5:00 pm, and on Sunday mornings, there is a brunch/mimosa cruise at 11:00 am. Events can be scheduled for cruises, such as birthdays, business events, and wedding receptions, and anything else you can think of. After the DDD meeting, a tour of the boat is available. The website is [batonrougecruise.com](http://batonrougecruise.com)
- **Bally's Casino/Hotel Update** – Daniel Hutchinson, Bally's Director of Hotel Operations, updated the Commission and presented slides of the renovated hotel. The name of the hotel has been officially approved, but the casino's name change from the Belle to Bally's has not yet been approved. Construction of the 10-story hotel was completed last month, with the hotel officially opening on March 31. The casino is currently under construction as part of the transformation of the Belle of Baton Rouge riverboat casino into a land-based facility. The hotel features a total of 242 guest rooms, including 63 signature suites and two supreme suites. Mr. Hutchinson stated that 25,000 square feet of gaming, a sports lounge, and dining options will be available in the fourth quarter of this year. As construction continues on the casino, the Belle of Baton Rouge Casino's temporary space is open at 103 France Street. This site offers nearly 10,000 square feet of Vegas-style gaming space with over 240 slot machines and three table games. The total cost of the casino project is estimated at \$141 million.  
There is an Open House media event being held on April 23, from 11:00 am - 1:00 pm.
- **New Businesses:**
  - Spanish Town Market & Cofe, 701 Spanish Town Road, new ownership.
  - Bayes Oyster Bar (formerly Jolie Oyster Bar) is opening soon at 315 North Boulevard.
  - Studio Cowork, 440 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Ste 201-A
  - Fresh Cravings, 326 3<sup>rd</sup> Street inside Squeaky Pete's, seating available for lunch



## 6. Events - Schuyler Olson updated the Commission:

- Live After Five -April 25, May 2, 9, and 16. 5:00-8:00, Rhorer Plaza
- Live Fest Prayer Revival – April 19, Rhorer Plaza, Worship event with live music, food & games
- Easter Sunrise Service – First United Methodist Church, April 20 @ 6:30 am, Galvez Plaza
- Earth Day – Sunday, April 27, 911:00 am – 4:00 pm, Rhorer Plaza
- Crawfish King Cookoff – Friday, May 2, 4:00 pm -8:00 pm, Rhorer Plaza
- Night Market BTR – Saturday, May 10, 3:00 pm – 9:00 pm, 4<sup>th</sup> Street & Spanish Town Road
- Art Pop-Up – May 23, 7:00 pm (exhibit) & May 24, 8:00 pm (artist talk)
- Baton Rouge Spring Jazz & Blue Festival – Friday, May 23, 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm, Downtown Lawn
- Manship Theatre – Movies, Music & more
  - Love Acting Showcase 2025
  - Titanic Movie
  - Hook Movie
  - Rise of the Swamp Rats, LA Film
  - The Neil Diamond Experience
  - R & B Revue
  - Tim Meadows
- LSU MOA – Current Exhibits
  - Golden Legacy: Original Art from 80 Years of Golden Books, February 27 – May 25
  - In Focus – April 24 – August 3, Artwork by LSU Faculty
  - Carved & Crafted: The Art of Letterpress, June 12 – Sept 21
- Old State Capitol – Thrift Style – An Exhibition of Feed Sack Upcycling, March 29- May 10
- Capitol Park Museum –
  - Billy Cannon Exhibit through January 10, 2026
  - Grounds for Greatness: Louisiana and the Nation
  - Louisiana Shakespeare Festival, Saturday, May 10, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
- Raising Canes River Center & Theatre –
  - USBC (Bowling Tournament) – Through July
  - Disney on Ice - May
  - Rob Schneider – May
  - Lainey Wilson - September
  - Leanne Morgan – October
- LASM – Shows and Events
  - Country Hits – A tribute to country music legends, April 23 & 24, 7:30 pm
  - BASF's Kids' Lab Workshops, April 12 & 13
- USS Kidd – Veterans Museum Open Daily from 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM
  - Strong and Calm Warrior Yoga, Saturday, May 3 & June 7 from 8:00 am – 9:30 am
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – First Saturday of the month, from 8:00 am – 12:00 pm
- Red Stick Farmer's Market – Every Saturday 8:00 am – 12:00 pm

## 7. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- Whitney Hoffman Sayal announced a public meeting for Plan Baton Rouge III on April 30, at 5:00 pm at the Louisiana Arts and Science Museum, 100 South River Road. Many successful projects were implemented as part of Plan Baton Rouge I and II. The Main Street Market, parking garages, and state consolidation were the results of Plan BR I. In the early 2000s, there were no hotels in the core of the Central Business District until the Hilton opened in 2005. The Arts and Entertainment District, the River Center expansion, and the Shaw Center for Performing Arts were also part of Plan BR I. Plan BR II was also successful, with \$23 million invested in the Downtown Greenway and Central Green alone, in addition to the riverfront connections with the Florida Riverfront Access, Rotary Sculpture, and Repentance Park extension. The

success of Plan Baton Rouge I and II can be attributed to a key factor: they were community-driven master plans. Public input is critical to a plan's success. Please spread the word to your family, friends, and coworkers to encourage them to attend and share their thoughts on what they envision as the core of their community. It's time to get excited and dream about what Downtown Baton Rouge can become, not just for ourselves but for future generations.

**8. Public Comment:**

- Paul Groves, with Opera Louisiane, announced two performances: Friday, May 16th - 7:30 pm and Sunday, May 18th - 3:00 pm at the Manship Theatre.
- Laura Nguyen, founder of Night Market, announced the next Night Market BTR will be held on Saturday, May 10, from 3:00 pm – 9:00 pm on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in front of the State Capitol. Night Market BTR is a vibrant, open-air market celebrating the city's rich Asian culture and community spirit. Featuring local vendors, it offers a diverse array of handmade goods, unique crafts, live music, art, and specialty foods

**9. Meeting adjourned** – Joshua Hollins moved to adjourn the meeting, Gary Jupiter seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.