

DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

June 10, 2025

The Estuary at the Water Campus, 1110 River Road

Board Members in Attendance: Mr. Patrick Michaels - Chairman, Mr. Gary Jupiter- Vice Chairman, Mr. Joshua Hollins – Secretary, Mr. Eric Dexter, Ms. Suzanne Turner, and Mr. Gary Black

Absentees: Philip Jordan – Treasurer.

Others in Attendance: Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Casey Tate, Iboro Udoh, Schuyler Olson, Ute Cress, Fred Raiford, Mary Durusau, Amey Crousillac, Deane Bryson, Gabriella Mercurio, Mahalie Kyzar, Jennifer Winstead, Mark Martin, Amanda Lanata, Sarah Nichols, Chuck Booksh, Jasmine Thomas, Rannah Gray, Samantha Morgan, Mysti Byrnes, Anne Mahoney, Gail Gaiennie, Chris Spalatin, Katie Bernhardt, Morgan Udoh, Monique Appeaning, Lon Vicknair George Bell, Bridget Gaffney, Jordan Arceneaux, Alysia Guin, Jason Crain, Laticia King, T.C. Lam, Brian Blake, Matt Edwards, Judy Foust, Brain Goad, Anna Mayes, Caroline Marse, Luke Lognion, P.K. Richter, Joseph Guercio, Charles Daniel, Debra Hudson, Torri Buckles

Whitney Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone and thanked Jennifer Winstead, Vice President of Mission Advancement with the Water Institute, for hosting the DDD meeting today. Ms. Winstead greeted everyone and explained that the Water Institute conducts research, develops methods, and provides decision support for coastal communities, focusing on areas such as coastal restoration, hurricane protection, and sustainable water management, making us less vulnerable to the challenges that we face. That is the core of what they aim to do: to reduce the vulnerability of people, communities, ecosystems, and the economy as well. One of the projects the Water Institute is working on is land loss and the vanishing coastline. They are studying sand and sediment management, not only on the coast but also on the Mississippi River, and how it impacts the ships that are traveling on the river; another concern is the ecological impact on plants and animals. During the last five years, the Water Institute has almost doubled the number of employees and has more than doubled the number of projects, with over 150 active projects throughout Louisiana.

Whitney also thanked our breakfast sponsor, Gary Jupiter & Avery Williams, with Starbucks, Courtyard Marriott on the corner of 3rd Street & Florida. Avery Williams, the downtown Starbucks Manager, stated he was excited to learn of new projects and developments downtown. He asked if everyone could leave a business card or write down their information for a door prize drawing of a gift card or a Stanley mug.

1. Patrick Michaels called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.
2. Gary Jupiter made a motion to approve the agenda, Joshua Hollins seconded, and the motion was approved.
3. Gary Jupiter motioned to approve the minutes from the April 15, 2025, meeting. Eric Dexter seconded, and the motion was approved
4. **Board Action: LED Lighting Upgrades** - Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the status of the LED lighting upgrades by Entergy with the City of Baton Rouge and DDD. The LED lighting is being upgraded in the central business district. Phase 1 includes Government Street to North Street and River

Road to 1-110, and Phase II, Downtown East, I-110 to the RR tracks at 14 1nd 15 Streets to Choctaw and Myrtle. Whitney acknowledged the Mayor's Office and Lon Vicknair, Chief of Staff, for their support and work on this project, and introduced Fred Raiford, Director of Transportation and Drainage. Fred stated there are 1307 lights downtown to be upgraded, some of which are not working; Entergy will provide the service for the upgrades. There are two phases for the upgrades: Phase 1, which incorporates 1107 lights, and Phase II, 200 lights. The improved lighting will enhance safety for downtown visitors and residents at night. Whitney thanked Fred for the update and stated that lighting upgrades were one of the major priorities in the DDD's 5-year strategic plan. In a survey that was conducted, one of the survey responses was that a feeling of safety dropped dramatically, changing from daytime to nighttime. Additionally, the feeling of safety will improve with the color of the lighting changing from yellow to bright white. The cost for the upgrades is \$57,564.00 for Phase I and \$10,400 for Phase II for a total cost of \$67,964.00, and DDD will contribute \$33,920 with approval from the DDD Board and Metro Council. A motion was made by Joshua Hollins and seconded by Gary Jupiter to approve the funding for the lighting upgrade. There was no opposition, and the motion was approved. Whitney Hoffman Sayal noted that the city has upgraded the lighting on the Mississippi River Levee, Third Street, and Spanish Town Road to LED lighting.

5. Governmental Issues:

- **Welcome DDD Commissioner, Gary Black** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced Gary Black, Leasing and Property Manager with Wampold Companies, as the newest DDD Commissioner, replacing Prescott Bailey.
- **Ball Moss Committee:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. The Metro Council approved the formation of a Ball Moss Abatement Committee at the last council meeting on May 28th. The committee's first meeting will be held on June 16. There is a DDD representative on the committee. Ball moss is an air plant that only requires sunlight and trace amounts of water before it can go from barely noticeable to overgrowing on trees, potentially damaging them. Ball moss is becoming an issue on trees in the downtown area, and can be seen on trees on Nicholson Drive and some of the trees in the LSU area.
- **River Center Project Owner's Representative** - Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. Tomorrow night, June 11, the Metro Council will have a public hearing regarding the selection of the owner's representative for the River Center project.
- **Historic Preservation Commission:** Whitney Hoffman briefed the Commission, stating the June meeting was cancelled. Several downtown properties went before the Historic Preservation Commission in May:
 - HPC 7-25 - 601-603 Spanish Town Road, approved to install iron handrails
 - HPC 9--25 – 729 North 9th Street, approved railings to be added to the first porch area
 - HPC 10 -25 – 427 France Street, approved demolition of the building

Additional information can be found at the Historic Preservation website.

6 Development Initiatives:

- **Plan Baton Rouge III Community Meeting Recap** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the Plan BRIII community meeting. Over 200 attended the Plan BRIII open house community event on April 30, 2025. The consultant team from Sasaki, selected to lead Plan Baton Rouge III, has started to dive deep, looking into downtown and the different areas. The timeline for the project has two other

community events scheduled in July and October for public input. The first step in the analysis of the area, before getting feedback from the stakeholders, looked at 6 different components:

- History
- People
- Market
- Land
- Links
- Character

If you are interested in learning about their initial analysis and research of these 6 components, you can go to www.planbatonrouge.com. Whitney recommends being engaged through the website because it has all the presentations, videos, up-to-date information and surveys; she encourages everyone to be involved, take the surveys and attend one of the next two community events.

- **The Grove Recovery Center** – Trevor Thompson with the Grove Recovery Center addressed the Commission. Mr. Thompson stated there is a homelessness issue in Baton Rouge and all over the country. The Mayor's office has formed the Community Outreach Partners Committee, a proactive initiative dedicated to addressing homelessness. The committee will meet to develop and determine the most effective pathways to housing, support services, and essential resources that empower individuals to regain stability and independence. The Grove and the Mayor's Homelessness Committee are working together to combat homelessness. Whenever the Mayor's office calls about someone wanting help, the Grove will respond within an hour; time is of the essence.

The Grove team brings a wealth of professional and personal experience to deliver industry-leading care. The Grove offers an array of programs and services, including:

- Detox and Residential Care
- Medication-Assisted Treatment
- Intensive Outpatient Services
- Dual Diagnosis Program
- Transitional Living
- Outpatient Aftercare
- Peer Support

Mr. Thompson said he will be available to meet after the meeting to discuss problems and solutions. there is a solution to the problem, and it starts with us.

- **Commerce Building Penthouse** – Deane Bryson with Bearing Point Properties briefed the Commission and showed slides, via PowerPoint, of the Commerce Building Penthouse. Bearing Point Properties assumed management of the Commerce Building about 3 years ago. At the time, it had 94 residential units and two retail spaces on the bottom floor. The Vintage is one of the retail spaces, and the other space is vacant, previously the Salad Station. The vacant space is back on the market for retail or restaurant space. Unfortunately, the space is not fitted with a hood; in spite of that, they are willing to do what it takes to make an investment for restaurant use. There was a space on the top floor that was originally built out to house a restaurant in 2015; however, it sat vacant due to logistics. Bearing Point Properties decided to repurpose it for residential. They converted the space into two penthouse units with 2 bedrooms and 2 baths, and also did some amenity upgrades to the building and expanded the gym; the two penthouse units were immediately leased. The Commission viewed a film of the completed renovations.

Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated that the fact that the two penthouse units were leased so quickly, rings

true with the occupancy rate downtown. The numbers will be updated again in our Toolkit, which will be released in a couple of months. A year ago, we were at a 90% residential occupancy rate in the central business district. The Rivermark wasn't full at that time, but it is now, which reflects the strong desire and interest people have in residing downtown. We need more people downtown to drive the retail environment. The DDD is looking forward to working with Bearing Point Properties to help fill the retail spaces on the bottom floor.

- **Capitol Area United Way (CAUW) Building Restoration** – George Bell, CAUW President & CEO, briefed the Commission. The Capitol Area United Way will be celebrating 100 years this September. CAUW is one of 10 United Ways in the state and one of 1400 nationwide. The beauty of United Way is that they are locally governed, and the money that is raised here stays here. Mr. Bell stated he has been with CAUW for 9 years, and their focus has been on 4 key areas: health, education, income stability, and basic needs. When an individual or family earns above the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to afford the necessities in their specific location, they fall into a group known as ALICE. Alice stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. These households often struggle to make ends meet and face difficult choices about how to allocate their limited resources, which represent 50% of our population in EBR & statewide. This work has guided us and allowed us to make investments in the community. CAUW operates a 24/7 211 call number that connects people who have social services needs to the resources offered in our local community.

Last July, CAUW launched a major renovation to its building located at 700 Laurel & 7th Street, which was the original main library built in 1939. The building has never had a major upgrade, and began having issues in 2016. The City of Baton Rouge owns the building and funded the renovations. The renovations are expected to be completed by December 24, 2025.

Mr. Bell introduced Amey Crousillac, Executive Vice-President, who will brief the Commission on the history of the building. Ms. Crousillac has to work endlessly to get the building placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1978, the Goodwood Library was built, and the decision was made to close the Laurel Street location since there was so much work to be done on the building. It remained vacant for several years until CAUW occupied the building in 1984. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2024, which allowed it to receive grant funding. One of the grants received was the American Rescue Act for funding the renovation. A series of open houses will begin in September that commemorate the 100th anniversary. Ms. Crousillac offered the building for future DDD Commission meetings as the building was designed to accommodate community meetings. Also, in times of disasters, a space downstairs is available for other non-profits to work closely with their 211 to make sure the community has resources.

- **Retail Study & Workshop** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the retail study. The DDD has entered into an agreement with Throughline, Mukul Verma, to conduct some surveys, interviews, and eventually a workshop with realtors, property owners, existing retailers, and prospective businesses to talk about how to cultivate a retail environment that everyone wants to have. If you fall into one of these groups and you are contacted by Mukul, please take the survey or the interview. Please reach out to Casey Tate or me if you would like to participate, and we'll get you connected with Mukul.
- **Third Street Masterplan 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. They reviewed Plan Baton Rouge II. Part of the proposal

included connecting the Central Green through braided 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. Each block on Third Street is being assessed individually, while each intersection is viewed as a gateway, a place for rest, orientation, and interpretation. Third Street is the only street downtown that is curved, which creates loading zones on each block. The loading zones and parklets along Third Street are envisioned as front porches that still allow for parking and loading. During the 70's when the first renovation was done, it was meant to be a pedestrian mall. McKnight is borrowing that idea and proposing the use of removable bollards, where it could be a pedestrian mall during large events. Every cove and corner has also been identified as an opportunity for art to be incorporated throughout Third Street to make it a unique place and destination for visitors. There are boards in the back of the room that show these concepts. The public was invited to view them and provide suggestions, the DDD will have them at their office after the meeting as well

- **ADA Transition Update & BRT 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.
 - East Boulevard – Work is complete.
 - Main Street – Under construction, most of the work is complete as far as the concrete removal and placement and striping of the crosswalks. All that remains is minor grinding of sidewalks for joint offsets, and also changing out the pedestrian push buttons for audible push buttons.
 - North Boulevard - Under construction, everything is complete except for the pedestrian push buttons.
 - Laurel/Lafayette Street – The notice to proceed was issued June 2. The contractor will mobilize next week to begin. Work includes the installation of audible pedestrian signal pushbuttons and crosswalk restriping.
 - The South Boulevard Trailhead Connection connects the existing South Boulevard sidewalks over the railroad tracks to the levee trailhead and provides wayfinding signage. They are connecting gaps in the sidewalks along South Boulevard to get from St. Philips to the Levy trail. During an inspection, they noticed the railroad has done some improvements that affect the design. They are coordinating with the railroad and Traffic Engineering, updating the plans. The consultant is approximately 60% complete with the plans for this projectBusinesses and residents are being notified of the work being done in the area and how it will affect them. There are geofenced social media posts linked to a landing page with maps and project updates. Additionally, updates on the downtown projects can be viewed at the MOVEBR website at movebr.brla.gov/downtownADA, in addition to the MOVEBR social media posts.

The Bus Rapid Transit project will be constructing several bus stations that will include bus shelters and benches. There are four along Florida Street and two along 4th Street and St. Ferdinand. The contractor is currently working along Plank Road, and a subcontractor is working on Florida Street, making its way into downtown.

Mr. Crain encourages attendees to contact their councilperson if they have an idea for a project, for

improvements that promote pedestrian and bike mobility, or ADA improvements. Any downtown resident or business having construction-related problems that require urgent attention, call 225-389-3123.

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 that Placer.ai provides location intelligence and foot traffic data, which DDD utilizes in conjunction with its marketing efforts.

Night Market is an event celebrating Asian American Heritage Month, featuring local vendors, live music, and performances. They held their second event downtown on May 10, 2025, from 3 pm to 9 pm, in front of the State Capitol near Capitol Park Museum.

- Attendance 12,300, increased by 2,000 from 2024
- Heavy visitation from Lafayette and New Orleans
- Data show visitation from Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, and even New York

Casey showed a “heat map” that shows the areas where people are coming from to attend this event.

The 2025 Spring Live After Five Season had its largest attended concert with the Michael Foster Project, with 6,200 attendees on May 14, 2025.

Other tools the DDD utilizes from Placer AI are monthly reports with a snapshot of downtown showing workforce data.

- 208,800 workers in April – A return to work Executive Order was issued in April
- Monthly workers increased by 9% since January 2025

If anyone is interested in pulling data for their business, such as traffic counts, foot traffic, and event attendance, contact the DDD office.

- **CBD Historic District Survey Update** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated the Planning Commission & DDD were awarded a Historic Preservation Fund Grant, the grant will fund an update to the Central Business District Historic Building Survey. Buildings that are 50 years old are eligible for the Historic Tax. The original survey was done in 1984 and updated in 2004. James Rolf, Historic Preservation Consultant with Southkick Rolf Preservation Works, updated the Commission on the survey. The goal of the survey is to fully document all standing structures, not just historic and gain an understanding of modifications to the buildings and any historic significance of the buildings. One of the products of the survey includes a Louisiana Historic Resource Inventory (LHRI) form; they surveyed 240 structures. Every single building, historic or not, will receive a full description of the building, the modifications, age, two photos, and a resource identification number. These forms will be tied to GPS coordinates mapped to the state’s cultural resource web GIS page. They enter all the information into a spreadsheet along with a report with survey methods, results, a summary of the building forms, styles of architecture, and construction period, and submit it to the State Historic Preservation Office, DDD, and the Planning Commission. The benefits are that the DDD and Planning Commission will have more data to help with their planning initiatives. Surveys can help promote preservation. Preservation has been statistically proven to increase density, foot traffic, and small business development. Additional funding sources often rely on surveys and LHRI forms, including elevation grants, National Register listings, state and federal historic tax credit applications, and Main Street grants.

- **Wayfinding Signage Restoration** – Iboro Udoh updated the Commission. The DDD was awarded \$50,000.00 in funds from the previous administration allocated by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to contribute towards updating the wayfinding signage. The original plan, by Sasaki Landscape Architects in 2008, also needs to be updated in content. Phase I includes the restoration of 10 vehicular wayfinding and 4 historical wayfinding signage in the Beauregard and Spanish Town neighborhoods. All Star has removed stickers on signage in front of the Old State Capitol and other signage downtown. In addition, the budget supplement funds for phase II will restore and update the pedestrian wayfinding signage.
- **Neighborhood Nights, June 26** – Iboro Udoh briefed the Commission on the next Neighborhood Nights get-together, which will be held on Thursday, June 26. DDD will send out updates on the time and location. Our next event will more than likely be an ice cream social with games. If you are a downtown resident and have not been receiving the neighborhood emails, contact the DDD office to be placed on the email list.
- **Beauregard Town Civil Rights Trail** – Morgan Udoh, Director of Public Arts with the Walls Project updated the Commission on the Civil Rights Trail along the Greenway and Beauregard Town. The Walls project is installing Civil Rights Trail vinyl wrap art on approximately 13 utility boxes along the Downtown Greenway, T.J. Jemison, South Boulevard, and East Boulevard. The artistic concepts are based on highlighting and honoring key Baton Rouge Civil Rights leaders and activities. There have been five community engagement meetings to provide information on the project and get feedback from the community.

Project Timeline: Civil Rights Trail

- The project is currently in the initial engagement phase, which includes research through digital state archives and one-on-one oral history collection with seniors and descendants.
- A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) has been released to artists that is open nationally.
- In August, a Community Design Selection Committee will convene of stakeholders who have been recommended to serve to help design 13 boxes and select the artist. The community will be able to vote on the designs.
- Design and installation will be done in August
- Unveiling & Celebration will be done in September
- Ongoing community updates through DDD social media, Facebook, and email.
- **DDD Marketing Update** – Schuyler Olson briefed the Commission on DDD’s social media and marketing, setting a goal to do more organic social media content. DDD collaborated with Better in BTR and participated in 225 day. An Instagram video was made of the DDD staff out and about and walking around downtown, and the engagement was great. Another social media content was “What Does the DDD Do?” where the staff talked about what they do for DDD. DDD collaborated with Baton Rouge Cruises and showcased them. A video was also made about where and how to park downtown. The video can be viewed on DDD’s Instagram account.
- **New Businesses:**
 - Ooh Law-La’s Pizza-Spanish Town Market, 701 Spanish Town Rd, open 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
 - Bayes Oyster Bar (formerly Jolie Oyster Bar) is opening June 16 at 315 North Boulevard. Monday – Thursday 3:00 pm – 10 pm/Friday & Saturday 3:00 pm – midnight/closed Sunday

7. Events - Schuyler Olson updated the Commission:

- WBRZ Fireworks on the Mississippi River – July 4, 9:00 pm
- Rocking on the River – July 4, 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm

- Fourth of July Rooftop Celebration – The Shaw Center for the Arts, 6th Floor Terrace 7:00 – 10:00
- USSSA Opening Ceremonies, Wednesday, July 9th
- Manship Theatre – Movies, Music & more
 - That '70s Band
 - Eagles vs Fleetwood Mac
 - Baton Rouge Irish Film Fest
 - Rhythm and Blues Review
 - The Phoenician Scheme
 - Spoof Night! with Shrek (2001)
- 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 – Flag Day Celebration, Saturday, June 14 at 10:00 am
- Capitol Park Museum –
 - Billy Cannon Exhibit through January 10, 2026
 - Lunchtime Lagniappe – Anna Chennault, June 11, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
 - Juneteenth Discover Day, June 21, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
- Raising Canes River Center & Theatre –
 - USBC (Bowling Tournament) – Through July
 - Baton Rouge Pride, June 28
 - Summertime Skating concludes June 11
 - Bella Noche – The Reunion, June 21
 - All White Affair R & B, August 30
 - Broadway in Baton Rouge 2025-2026 Season
- LASM – Shows and Events
 - Yoga Under the Stars, every Sunday in June @ Noon
 - Dino Day, Saturday, June 28, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
- USS Kidd – Veterans Museum Open Daily from 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM
 - Strong and Calm Warrior Yoga, Saturday, July 5 & August 2 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

8. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- Whitney Hoffman Sayal thanked Lon Vicknair and Monique Appeaning from the Mayor's office for attending.
- Eric Dexter updated the status of Plan Baton Rouge III (PBR III). A community kickoff event was held on April 30 at the Louisiana Arts and Science Museum and was well attended. The next event will be held the week of July 14; the location, date, and time are yet to be determined. An announcement will be made when it will be held, and the DDD will publicize it through their website, email, and social media. Thank you to everyone who took the first survey; there were close to 1100 surveys completed. The surveys are extremely important to this process, as public input will help shape the master plan for the future of what downtown will look like in the next 10-15 years. Additional information and the surveys can be found at <https://planbatonrouge.com>
- Laticia King, Innovation and Partnerships Catalyst with MetroMorphosis briefed the Commission. In 2022, MetroMorphosis began working with Kimble Properties, doing development through South Baton Rouge, working with the residents. First Little Rock Baptist Church and the community wanted to

provide fresh food for the community and developed property behind the church for a community garden. In January, thanks to the mayor's office, they were awarded the MLK grant, which helped establish and install the gardens. Planting was done in March, and last week they found their first cucumber! Next up is the Uptown Summer Series, listening to the residents' needs for youth engagement over the summer, particularly with a focus on work. They are trying to identify new ways this generation of young people can be engaged and connected to the next generation of industry. Another part of the Uptown Series is a whole community focus where they began a walking club beginning at 6:00 am on Wednesdays at Legacy on 14th Street. The Uptown Community Convening is being held tomorrow evening, June 11, at 6:30 pm at 1116 St. 14th Street. A video was shown from the last Uptown Community Convening.

9. Public Comment:

- Mysti Byrnes with BREADA, Red Stick Farmers Market is highlighting fresh produce every Saturday. The most produce you'll ever see at the market is during the month of June. An Impact brochure was recently mailed, and copies are being left on the table in the back. BREADA is working with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) on an economic study.
- George Bell announced the CAUW Jambalaya Jam is being held on October 23 downtown, with over 60 teams.

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