

City of Merrill  
Redevelopment Authority (RDA)

Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 6:00 P.M.  
City Hall Council Chambers

RDA Present: Bill Bialecki, Wally Smith, Karen Karow, Amanda Kostman,  
and Ryan Schwartzman

RDA Absent: Jill Laufenberg and Tony Kusserow

Others: Alderpersons Dave Sukow and Tim Meehean, City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Ken Maule from Lincoln County Economic Development Corp., Kristen Fish, Mike Morrissey and Mary Rajek from Redevelopment Resources, Dewey Pfister, Bea Lebel, Beth Humphrey, David Nelson, and about ten other interested property, business, or homeowners

**Call to Order:** Chair Bialecki called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Westside Renewal Plan Presentation and Discussion:**

Bialecki turned the meeting over to Kristen Fish of Redevelopment Resources. Fish reported that the initial renewal planning effort began in 2011 with the Mayoral Westside Taskforce, bus tour, and 406 West Main Street façade project.

The Redevelopment Resources presentation highlighted the following:

- Property tax base of area is over \$3 million with about 73 jobs generating over \$1.3 million in wages.
- There are 33 buildings in the plan area with 16 with building code/exterior property maintenance notices.
- There is vacancy rate of about 38% from Prospect St. to Ohio St.
- There appears to be need for more parking.
- A block by block building audit and retail consultant follow-up with Redevelopment Resource strategic partner Lyn Falk is recommended.
- There is tremendous traffic flow – especially at the Highway 64/South State Street intersection.

Previous and pending redevelopment projects were noted including: 406 W. Main St. (Center for Creative Wellness), Ballyhoo's, 1892 Building, and former technical college. The Merrill Housing Authority is likely to resubmit WHEDA tax credit application related to Park Place and parking lot east of the former bank drive-thru.

Potential transformative level investments were emphasized by Mike Morrissey including: demolition of former Wire Products building on N. Genesee St.; acquisition and demolition of former Lincoln County Bank/St. Vincent white bubble-wrap building; potential 1892 Building façade improvements; and current 419 W. Main St. reconstruction project.

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Beth Humphrey asked about timing of Wire Products demolition? Property acquisition should occur shortly with environmental and demolition work beginning by year-end. Future site redevelopment plan is commercial building fronting on West Main Street. Humphrey expressed support for more off-street parking.

The availability of City façade TIF grants and loans were noted. It is possible that revolving loan funds could be used for interior improvements including HVAC and restrooms.

David Nelson from Nelson Powerhouse expressed disappointment that his business and three jobs were not included in the plan area even though just one block off the commercial district. He would like to expand his business and would like to know about potential City financial assistance.

Nelson also asked about 200,000 visitor estimates to Council Grounds State Park? Fish advised that the estimate came from Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce based upon traffic counter at the State Park entrance.

Unertl reported that RDA Commissioner Jill Laufenberg had sent an e-mail since unable to attend the meeting. A resident of the area would like to see consideration of potential community garden area on the west side.

Representatives of St. Vincent asked about their white bubble-wrap building which is recommended for acquisition, demolition, and identified as potential site for retail/residential infill redevelopment. There continue to be some individuals working in the building and clients coming in for services. Morrissey commented that potential historical rehabilitation had been investigated with Stacy Ness from Key Studios; however, most historical features no longer are there. Unertl also reported that the any asbestos in the building is a liability for any developer considering rehabilitation.

**Adjournment:** Meeting informally adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Minutes prepared by RDA Secretary Kathy Unertl