

**Economic Development Retail Sales Tax Board**  
**Minutes**  
**June 18, 2019**  
**6:00 p.m.**

The Economic Development Retail Sales Tax Board (EDRSTB) held a at the Heman Park Community Center (HPCC), located at 975 Pennsylvania Ave, University City, Missouri on April 16, 2019. The meeting commenced at 6:07 pm.

**Voting Members Present**

Brendan O'Brien  
Traci Moore  
Kathleen Sorkin  
Robyn Williams  
Bob Kuhlman  
Byron Price

**Voting Members Absent**

Kristine Hendrix  
Matthew Erker  
George Lenard

**Council Liaison**

Mayor Terry Crow

**Non-Voting Members Present**

Joe Edwards, Ex-Officio Member, Loop Special Business District

**Staff Present**

Gregory Rose, City Manager  
Libbey Tucker, Director of Economic Development  
Adam Brown, Planner

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Moore moved to approve minutes from April 16, 2019. Mr. O'Brien seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**New Business**

Ms. Tucker gave a brief update of the process for selecting a consultant for the Economic Development Strategic Plan. She informed the Board that staff had received 9 proposals, and were in the process of rating and review those to present to Mr. Rose and subsequently to the Board for consideration.

Applicant Presentations: The applicants for this funding cycle made presentations about their projects. Presentations were limited to 10 minutes per project.

-iNeighborhoods/Smart Cities/STEAM: David Sandel was the lead presenter. The group proposes to install high speed internet capability in the Delmar Loop that would be available to about 8,000 people. The connection would be installed above ground in the area of Melville and Delmar, and would not require any street work. Mike Cooper of Elite Fiber spoke about the installation of these access points. Pat McKeehan, an Economic Development Professional working with the team, described the broad economic analysis he would complete as part of the project, identifying opportunities for the Loop area. Chris Mertons, founder of Blossom, spoke about “geofencing”, a service that would allow certain apps and internet features to be used exclusively in the Loop. Mr. Sandel described the STEAM component which would be student expeditions that would make use of the Loop Trolley and the iNeighborhood technology for K-12 learning. He also described how the founder of the Skandalaris Center would analyze ways to connect the Loop with Cortex, TRex, and other regional centers of innovation. He believes the project would bring additional business and visitors to the Loop and make it a “top-ten internet street”.

-LED Craft/Loop Lighting: Chris and AJ from LED Craft (Maryland Heights) described remote-controlled lighting strips which could be installed on light poles in the Loop which could change colors for different events.

-Loop Special Business District: Joe Edwards presented the various projects for the Loop Special Business District.

-Loop Special Events: Mr. Edwards explained that special events are an important way to attract visitors to the Loop. For example, the Ice Carnival has become a regionally known, family-friendly event. This year the LSBSD expects 14,000 people to attend.

-Loop Brochures and Illuminated Directories: Mr. Edwards described these as important resources for tourists looking for a destination, and noted that the brochures contain maps including the addresses of the Walk of Fame stars, which is helpful to both visitors, press, and others in locating a place of interest.

-St. Louis Visitors Guide: Mr. Edwards said this is an important marketing tool, as the guide is available in hotels throughout the city, and brings people from all over the region and beyond to the Loop. He showed the 3-page section that lists all Loop businesses.

-Painting Electric/Traffic Boxes: Mr. Edwards requested funding to have the utility boxes on the Loop painted by local artists, as they have been in other areas including Olive Blvd. He said the LSBSD would work with the Arts and Letters Commission to find artists.

-Welcome to the Loop Sign: Mr. Edwards described the sign, which would span Delmar and include 4 digital message boards to advertise upcoming events. He noted that an estimated 35,000 people per day drive through the Loop, and they would all see the sign. The funding for this project was requested from the EDRST reserve funds.

-Loop Lighting: Mr. Edwards said that Randy Burkett, who lit the Arch, was working with the LSBSD to design a lighting plan which would increase the ambiance and the perceived safety in the Loop. He noted that the conversion of streetlights to LED lighting had cut down on ambient light. The request would be to implement lighting recommendations based on the lighting study by Mr. Burkett. This was also requested from reserve funds.

Mr. Edwards noted that the Welcome to the Loop sign was the highest-rated project by staff the previous year, and also that the LSBDD had supported the quarter-cent sales tax increase when the proposal was originally made.

-U City Farmers Market: Deb Henderson presented a series of slides demonstrating the various kinds of events held at the Farmer's Market. She said it is a producers-only market that attracts an estimated 30,000 people during the season. She noted that estimates say for every dollar spent at the market, \$3-\$7 are spent in the region. They include events like a music series, educational events, culinary chef events, and the food is available for purchase using SNAP/EBT. The Market was also involved in the formation of the STL Farmers Market Alliance, which promotes regional markets collaboratively.

-U City School District: Susan Hill and Clay Ware presented via video conference on the School District's two requests:

-EMT Training: This proposal seeks funding to begin training high school students as EMTs to lead to jobs in the health care profession. Ms. Hill noted a shortage of about 248,000 health care workers nationwide, and the estimation that by 2030 no low-skilled jobs would remain in the broader economy. The project seeks to "skill-up" high school youth to give them better opportunities for careers once they graduate. The program would partner with the U City Fire Department, who have already dedicated a staff member for this purpose.

-U CAN Center: Ms. Hill and Mr. Ware described this as an economic hub for the community. The Center would include a student-run café in partnership with Starbucks, a student run gear shop, and classroom space for student and adult professional development. The funding would go towards rental/purchase of a space and renovation. Students would be involved in the planning and build out of the space. The space would be located on Olive Boulevard, and would be open to the broader community as well as being integrated with the school's curriculum. Mr. Kuhlman asked if the school district would own and maintain the building and Ms. Hill said it would.

-U City In Bloom: Jesse Gilbertson, Director of Horticulture for U City in Bloom, presented on the several projects for which they requested continued funding, including planters in the Loop and on Olive Blvd, and community gardens on Olive Boulevard. These projects all involve planting and maintenance of public gardens which beautify these commercial areas, increasing safety and a sense of well-being among visitors and workers. He noted that the organization, through volunteer work, contributes about \$18,000 worth of labor each year.

-Urban Sprouts Child Development Center: Ellicia Lanier presented on the project for Urban Sprouts. They are seeking funding to create an Early Childhood Resource Hub, which would be a space to further educate children, families, and child care professionals in University City. She noted that U City has 37 child care centers, of which only 2 are accredited, and that to be a child care professional required only that someone be 18 years old. The proposed Center would build upon the \$2.1 million investment Urban Sprouts has already made in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward to include workforce development as well as family services for the families of the children who attend the school. David Ramirez of IFF (a Certified Development Financial Institution-CDFI partnering with Urban Sprouts) spoke on behalf of

the Center, calling Urban Sprouts a national gem, and stressing the importance of early childcare centers both for the children and for the parents.

-City of University City Façade Improvement Program: Adam Brown, Planner, spoke about the proposed Façade Improvement Program, which would provide matching grants up to \$15,000 for exterior improvements to commercial or industrial spaces in University City. This request is based on the successful pilot program which was administered from 2014-2017. The pilot program received \$200,000 of EDRST funding. Staff is requesting \$150,000 annually and a three-year commitment to ensure continuity of the program to build momentum. There are currently 30 requests on a waiting list. Mayor Crow remarked that he was unsure the Board could commit to a 3-year request and that it would likely need to be an annual request.

-City of University City Street Tree Improvements: Libbey Tucker, Director of Economic Development, presented on this project which requests funding for the replacement of street trees along Delmar Boulevard in the Loop to enhance the physical environment of that commercial district.

-St. Louis Artworks and Yan Chen Restaurant did not make a presentation.

### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **Setting Future Meetings**

The Board agreed to set a separate meeting to discuss the proposals from consultants for the Economic Development Strategic Plan. The meeting was set for July 23, 2019. Mr. Kuhlman asked about the use of the EDRST reserve funds, and Ms. Sorkin said they would need to discuss this option.

Ms. Williams motioned to adjourn and Mr. O'Brien seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:48pm.