

MINUTES OF GPA ANNUAL MEETING

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2022 at 4:00pm

In-person at the Charlotte Square at the East End Community Room.

Call to Order. 16 members signed in.

Richard Rosen introduced our Guest Speaker - Galin Brooks, President & CEO of the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC) and Executive Director of The Rochester Downtown Partnership.
galin@rddc.org

Galin moved to Rochester in June 2022 after working in Washington, DC in a similar role. Galin is here to explain why the County Legislature and the RDDC have proposed the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) for our downtown, and to listen to our questions and concerns.

A few definitions will be helpful here. From: <https://rochesterdowntown.com/about-rddc-rdp/>

RDDC = Rochester Downtown Development Corporation. *Established in 1977, RDDC is a 501(c)3 not-for profit organization whose mission is to drive economic vitality in Downtown Rochester. RDDC accelerates downtown development by positioning and marketing the assets that attract businesses and investment, and it catalyzes innovative ideas that make downtown a more vibrant and inclusive community. Beginning in 2022, RDDC will provide contracted services to the Rochester Downtown Partnership, which has no staff at this time. RDDC is serving as the pre-BID implementation entity, and also providing RDP with needed staff support and corporate management. Galin Brooks, RDDC's President & CEO serves as the Executive Director of RDP.*

RDP = The Rochester Downtown Partnership. *Established in 2021, The Rochester Downtown Partnership, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, is a public-private partnership between RDDC, Finger Lakes Empire State Development, City of Rochester, and ROC2025. This partnership is jumpstarting a new, collaborative way of managing downtown and ROC the Riverway sites. More than \$5 million over five years has been secured, providing interim funding to: (1) establish a new downtown and riverfront Business Improvement District (BID); and (2) begin activating the downtown street level and riverfront experience.*

The Leadership of these entities is listed at: <https://rochesterdowntown.com/leadership/>. The members are listed at: <https://rochesterdowntown.com/membership/>

BID = Business Improvement District.

Business improvements districts, known as BIDs, are public-private partnerships. Property owners in a defined area agree to pay additional taxes for services and quality-of-life improvements that the local government may be unable or unwilling to provide. These can be things like special events, lighting, sanitation, marketing, beautification, public art, hospitality, and security services.

New York State law governs BIDs and includes specific requirements, such as voting rules of city councils, petitioning of property owners (they must pay to fund the budget); management of a BID (board members are elected); owners, residents (tenants), businesses and publicly elected officials. *2006 New York Code - Laws: General Municipal: (980 - 980-q) Business Improvement Districts, Article 19-A - BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS.* https://law.justia.com/codes/new-york/2006/general-municipal/idx_gmu0a19-a.html

The City Council in mid-August approved the start of a two year process of community engagement in order to launch a Business Improvement District. The specific boundaries of the proposed BID have not been set. Main Street, and East Avenue to North Union Street have been proposed. That would include GPA territory.

Some purposes of the Rochester BID may include:

1. Augmenting services provided by the City with the ROC the Riverwalk project. See <https://cityofrochester.gov/roctheriverway/>
2. Supporting business attraction and growth
3. Proposing and funding the building of parks, and creating day services for homeless people, and other economic development activities
4. Creating groups of volunteer ambassadors to visit neighborhoods, learn what residents need, and create a community network.
5. Providing strategic visions to improve vacant office spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pre-COVID, about 48,000 workers came downtown to work. Post-pandemic, there are only about @20,000. The vacant office spaces here are smaller than in other cities, and could be converted into affordable or subsidized housing rather than tearing the buildings down.

Presently, Galin is working on community engagement activities, such as distributing a community survey and holding workshops so that residents can see the businesses within the proposed district.

Q & A

Q: Isn't a BID a continuing expense, including taxes? Why isn't the City doing what the BID proposes? People are concerned a BID may require them to pay twice – for City taxes and BID expenses.

BIDs do not replace City services. BID funding isn't based only on real property assessments. There will be other funding sources. A BID can be an advocate for residents, especially when the City doesn't enforce codes or pay attention to and solve other neighborhood issues (such as trash pickup and snow removal at properties of absentee owners).

Q: What percentage of the BID budget pays for its staff/advocacy work? Do they contract out certain work (example: Block by Block). What is the percentage of tax assessments compared to other funding sources?

Galín provided a Business Improvement District FAQ flyer that explains the BID but does not answer this question.

Q: What marketing efforts did Galin do in her Washington D.C. work? There's no awareness in the suburbs or beyond the East End regarding downtown assets and improvements.

Q: What is the life of a BID?

In Rochester it will be a one-year contract. In other regions it's 5 years.

Q: What is the catchment area for the BID?

BIDs have a very specific boundary. Change can be enacted by a City Council. First, what people mean by "downtown" must be defined.

Q: About the cost of parking downtown: 7 min per quarter on meters – that's ridiculous. Garage parking is very costly. This detracts people outside of downtown from coming here. Parking tickets are \$50. Park Avenue has no parking meters. Why must downtown have meters?

Q: ADA issues are a real concern in downtown Rochester.

Business Meeting Agenda

Update re: The University of Rochester's Health and Wellness program at the former Carlson YMCA on Main St. Public information meetings are being scheduled. Richard asked for volunteers to be point persons. Details are in the March 20, 2022 General Meeting Minutes.

Update re: 141 Gibbs Street – one of the townhouse facing Gibbs St. is being foreclosed. The prior owner moved away and then died. The County is gaining possession so it can be auctioned. Nothing else has happened.

Mark Wilson presented some ideas he's interested in and asked for volunteers:

1. Carpenter Alley needs a redesign and clean up. The alley is parallel to Windsor and next to the parking lot at Main and Gibbs.
2. Business "Tesselation". Mark explained that this concept is to design businesses and residences to fit together.
3. Grove Place History – GPA has a Standing Historical Committee but it's not active. Our history should be improved and the website should be enhanced. We should consider providing docent tours of the Grove Place area (like the Landmark Society does) but free, not as a fundraising event.

Nance Goyette Duncan volunteered to update the Grove Place brochure. Nance owns her own design firm (Designersattheheart.com).

Reports of Committees

Rick McGrath, Report of the Treasurer: On 4/30/2021 we had 88 members. Now we have 52 individual members. The GPA fiscal year runs from May 1st to April 30th. The ending balance as of 9/15/22 is \$9,146.00. The Art fund has \$2,105 and the Legal Fund for the University Ave. litigation is \$1,190.

Christa Parcel at Charlotte St. and Union. Richard sent an email to Roseanne Khaleel, Secretary of the City of Rochester Planning Commission. *See copy of text below.* He expressed our individual interests in converting the Christa parcel at the corner of Charlotte St. and Union St. into a park/playground. The site originally was intended to be for a child care facility. The deed between the City and 270 on East Housing Development Fund Corp. -(a/k/a Christa) is a Reversion Deed, under which the parcel is mandated to revert back to the City by October 1, 2022 if Christa fails to have commenced construction. The Christa parcel is just 200' from the grass slope of the off-ramps of Inner Loop North, so funding for that project can/should be used for that parcel.

Richard recommended that while we await a reply from the City as to their plans, individuals and businesses write to Roseanne.Khaleel@cityofrochester.gov to express their views.

Traffic Study. We asked and the County agreed to do a traffic study at Charlotte and Union. This will take a lot of time. But it's not too soon to write to the City or call and discuss the importance of having a signal at this intersection. Children are playing in Charlotte Street and it is dangerous.

Book Club restarting. Barbara Wager is the organizer. bawager@rochester.rr.com. First meeting Tues. 9/27 at 4pm, when a book list will be created.

GPA Cookbook – published 11 years ago as a fundraiser. It includes the history of Grove Place next to recipes. It costs \$20. Checks are payable to Richard McGrath, Treasurer.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made and accepted at 5:00 pm.

Wine and Cheese social time was held after the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Loeb, Secretary

COPY of September 19, 2022 email

from Richard Rosen to Roseanne.Khaleel@cityofrochester.gov

Re: 125 Charlotte St. vacant 0.4 acre Parcel

I, and many other neighbors on Charlotte St. would like to again remind you of our interest in seeing this small parcel be made permanent open space, such as a small park with shade trees and with a playground element. Since the Reversion of the Deed issued to 270 on East Housing Development Fund Corp. is mandated to revert back to the City by Oct 1 for failure to have commenced construction, we believe this is the appropriate time to ask Commissioner Miller to ask his team to address this.

The highly successful completion of the ILE in-fill is only marred by the frequently heard comment that there is no open space relief along the unbroken long row of buildings. The park serving Union Street South is MLK Park, but that is quite distant from Union Street North. This site, originally proposed as a Child Care Center, could be an appropriate remedy to that criticism. Families with children live across the street in Charlotte Square on the Loop, and we observe that the little children, having nowhere else to play, dig in the tree lawn, and the older kids play in Charlotte Street, which is obviously dangerous.

In recognition of the fact that there are so many projects and programs competing for City funds, I bring to your attention that this parcel is just 200' from the grass slope of the off-ramps of ILN. As the community inputs to the planners for the in-fill of ILN indicated a high priority for parkland/greenspace, the possibility of this source of funding should be explored as a priority matter.

Many of us were troubled that prior to you assuming your present role, the Deed that was issued specified a "two-story commercial building with 9,000 sq. ft. and surface parking for 35 cars." During that entire period, and continuing at present, there is a substantial vacant two-story building with abundant parking just 200' South across Union Street. The use specified in the Deed should therefore no longer be a priority. There had been no opportunity for public input through the customary project review procedures, as this information could only be obtained through a FOIL request.

As President of the Grove Place Neighborhood Association, I look forward to hearing from you with some advice as to how nearby City residents and businesses with an interest in this matter, could best make our wishes known, so that the Association membership can be brought up to date.

Sincerely,

Richard Rosen

50 Charlotte Street, apt. 404

Rochester NY 14607