

Medical SSMID Commission Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2023, 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m., PCI Medical Pavilion 1

Present: Eric Dalton, Gordon Epping, Pauline Herb, Suzy McGrane-Hop, Russ Nieland, Michelle Niermann, Okpara Rice, Michelle Stramel

Absent: Eric Griggs, Michelle Jensen, Julie Sterling, Nathan Van Genderen

Guests: Scott Freres, The Lakota Group; Jennifer Pratt, City of Cedar Rapids

Staff: Peggy Degnan, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta, Nikki Willcox

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

Rice called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Passing of the Gavel

Wasta presented Rice with a gift of appreciation for serving as Chair. McGrane-Hop is now Chair and Niermann is incoming Vice Chair.

Consent Agenda

Rice moved to approve the agenda with Dalton seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Announcement regarding Niermann & UnityPoint

Niermann announced UnityPoint is organizing hospitals into West and East Divisions. Cedar Rapids will be in the East Division. Niermann shared she has accepted the Chief Operating Officer position for the East Division. More to come about how her new role may impact her position on this commission.

Medical SSMID Commission Reappointments

Reappointments of Griggs, Jensen and McGrane-Hop have been approved by the Mayor and Council. Thus, this board is whole until June of 2024.

Discuss/Approve FY'24

For FY'24, Wasta said three lines were modified as noted: The addition of Depreciation and reallocation of a portion of Maintenance & Beautification for the lease of the BigBelly units, and increased Parkway Improvements by \$50K for pedestrian crosswalk at 6th Avenue & 8th Street SE by Mercy. Epping motioned to approve with Nieland seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Presentation by The Lakota Group

Freres is in the process of updating the masterplan which is to be completed and voted on by end of the year. He has started their engagement process already by talking with key stakeholders. Lakota held eight different meetings while they were here June 28 and 29th prior to the Special Meeting with the Commission on 29th. Freres wants to have an open house in the future to show a snapshot of what they see as key themes and to continue outreach.

Stakeholder Conversations:

- Economic Alliance – 1000+ housing coming downtown, continued growth and reinvestment.
- Downtown District – Met with Jesse Thoeming. Downtown is still struggling with lack of workers back downtown during the day post-pandemic. Small businesses such as restaurants are struggling due to low lunch business. Evenings and weekends are busy.

- First Lutheran Church – Focused on role of religious institutions and health & wellness. They can be a vital link to health & wellness with support services by tapping into their knowledge and thought leadership. Speaks to how Med SSMID focuses their efforts.
- Craft'd Coffee – Small business owner who has opened second location in PCI. Would like to have a larger draw within the district. However, food & beverage is not supported by big institutions in MedQ as they have their own cafeterias with staff that do not have enough time to leave for lunch.
- The History Center – Talked with Jason who is a story-teller. Would like to integrate this institution and Jason's energy into the conversation of branding, art and programming.
- City of CR – Spoke with Jeff Pomeranz and Jennifer Pratt. Need to grow this relationship and cross synergies and integrate with each other. City sees a need for a hotel in this district and in downtown.
- 411 Medical Bldg – Talked to owner, Dr. Vander Zee. Is there opportunity to use his land for a public open green space or hotel? The excess parking on site can be of better use and this needs to be fostered. Dr. Vander Zee is engaged in this concept.
- Police Dept. – Talked with Lieutenant Welsch. He is concerned with security, safety, homelessness, mental health and gun violence on the edges of the district. They are experiencing ongoing workforce issues due to competition from other cities.

Key Themes:

Population Growth and Demographics – steady growth, cater to millennials supporting downtown, area challenges.

Economic Impact and Challenges – attract more businesses, diversify land use mix and economy beyond healthcare services.

District Branding and Identity – push initiatives of streetscapes and improvements. Define District boundaries and entry points. Add greenspace element/landmark.

Community Health and Wellness – foster holistic approach, add outdoor spaces and improve/develop walking opportunities.

District Expansion and Funding – define or expand boundaries? Include Coe? Conversations and open door to redistricting which needs a broader conversation. Leverage resources and expertise to enhance offerings, funding sources beyond traditional means.

Collaboration and Partnerships – build and integrate into neighborhoods like Wellington Heights and Oakhill, include religious institutions and The History Center to allow collective efforts. Be supportive to improved investments in these areas and foster partnerships. Still a demand for daycare. Need for quality-of-life things to have people want to be here.

Safety and Security – possibility for marketing/broadcasting throughout the district if something happens. Emergency call boxes not readily visible or in existence. Perhaps implement blue lights to make more visible. Having safety measures like enhanced lighting, safety plan, digital alerts would contribute to a secure and welcoming environment.

Program & Recreational Opportunities – tailor to the specific needs and time constraints of medical staff. Need to create a vibe with food trucks, beer tastings and pop-up events. 5,000 work or visit. 4,000 don't leave the buildings as they only have a 20 minute break. Thus, lunch crowd is limited. Create vibrant atmosphere and people spaces. Need people to be seen and will build a vibe such as outdoor dining areas, healing gardens or sensory experiences. Find a niche and draw in some specialty that will support that idea. Young people are looking for quality of life.

Research and Talent Retention – Is there a place for life science energy? Collaborate research initiatives and foster supportive environment that emphasizes health and wellness that contributes to attracting and retaining top talent.

Next Steps: open house for community-wide engagement, MedQ vision, brainstorming session of initial strategies and plan making. Wasta feels late August/early September is a good timeframe to target for holding a public open house.

Freres requested a conversation about prioritization of the above themes. It was agreed for Freres to put the key themes into a survey format and send to the Commission for them to choose their top three priorities.

Nieland asked the Commission to think about what they would say if anyone asked what is our targeted impact in 3-5 years? He feels we should all agree on the three top priorities. Epping would like to see a collaboration with R&D now that University of Iowa has expanded its presence in Cedar Rapids. Niermann suggested that The Lakota Group have internal meetings with staff at Mercy, PCI, and St. Luke's to get their input as the Commission is not reflective of their opinions. Dalton suggested that Freres change the title of the Research and Talent Retention theme to Recruitment and Talent Retention due to the content.

When Rice inquired about next steps and priorities, Wasta requested the group consider district improvement under the District Branding & Identity theme. Wasta said the Master Parkway Plan which was adopted in 2018 has nine priorities, five of which will be completed by the end of this year and two of which are in the cue for 2024-2025. Wasta raised the question of whether we are looking at the plan as done, or do we want to reiterate that plan as something we want to continue to invest in? He stated significant investments in the Master Parkway Improvement Plan have already been made and posed that the Commission has the ability to increase revenues through the levy rate if additional investment is desired.

District Marketing Initiative Updates –

Wasta said Perks+ Summer Bash Program is carrying forward and that MedQ is hosting two booths on July 15th at the Downtown Farmer's Market to bring awareness and engage people to the Med District. One booth will be "Taste of the MedQ" and the second booth will be "Things To Do in the MedQ." The booths will be located at 3rd Avenue and 5th Street. Wasta also noted MedQ now has a new landing page that lists things to do in the MedQ.

Committee Updates

No discussion. Updates were included in the agenda packet.

Executive Director's Updates

Wasta's June report was included in the agenda packet. Wasta shared that Thoeming and the Downtown District have submitted a grant request to the Iowa DOT for the 8th Street/1380 gateway. The Medical SSMID has earmarked \$20,000-\$30,000 in the Maintenance & Beautification budget for the last two years for this project. The DOT has removed fencing and wild foliage. The plan submitted would add trees, bushes and grasses. The project would be in collaboration with EYE-380. The grant application is for \$130K and they should know the results by the end of July.

Other Business

Wasta said he had been contacted by Betsy Borchardt from Community Development regarding the Veo Micro Mobility program asking if the MedQ would support an on-street parking area for Veo scooters/bikes at the northeast corner of 4th Avenue and 7th Street (across from Midtown Reserve.) Wasta told her she would have the support of the MedQuarter.

Adjourn

Niermann moved to adjourn with Epping seconding. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

/pd



MedQUARTER
Regional Medical District
MASTER PLAN UPDATE



SSMID Committee Meeting | July 12

AGENDA

- Stakeholder Conversations
- Emerging Key Themes
- Open Discussion
- Next Steps

OUR CONVERSATIONS

1

Economic Alliance

“ Various cities, most notably within the Midwest, are seeing an increase in households as a result of millennials seeking places with a small-town feel.”

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2

Downtown District

“ Downtown Cedar Rapids is struggling with vacancies in office buildings resulting in less day-time population and business sales.”

”

3

First Lutheran Church

“ The idea of Faith & Medicine can bring another meaning to medicine and holisticness.”

”

4

Craft'd Coffee

“ Specialty stores catering to regular customers, like smoothie shops, have the potential to draw in a substantial clientele.”

”

OUR CONVERSATIONS

5

The History Center

“ Jason believes that the district is well branded and promoted well. Improvements can always be made but it's headed in the right direction.”

”

6

City of Cedar Rapids Leadership

“ City leadership sees great potential in a hotel establishment within the MedQuarter district.”

”

7

Owner of 411 Medical Building

“ Open to developing the site, potentially adding a hotel or a community open space. The excess parking on site can be of higher, better use.”

”

8

Police Department

“ As we consider community spaces in the MedQuarter district, it is important to factor in safety measures, including visibility, lighting, access, etc.”

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THEMES

Population Growth & Demographics

Economic Impact & Challenges

District Branding & Identity

Community Health & Wellness

District Expansion & Funding

Collaboration & Partnerships

Safety & Security

Program & Recreational Opportunities

Research & Talent Retention

Population Growth & Demographics

- Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is experiencing **steady population growth**, offering opportunities for development and expansion.
- The city's growing population attracts **potential patients, healthcare professionals, and support staff** for medical institutions.
- Understanding the demographics, including the early retirement trend among seniors, can help **tailor services** and leverage their knowledge and experience, while catering to millennials for **community engagement and future growth**.



Economic Impact & Challenges

- The **economic impact of the pandemic** has affected Cedar Rapids, particularly the downtown area and the MedQuarter.
- Small businesses in the district have faced obstacles, resulting in a **lower occupancy rate and challenges in business recovery.**
- Supporting small businesses through **resources, mentorship, and incentives is crucial** for revitalization.
- Strategic planning and collaboration are needed to **diversify the land use mix and district economy** beyond healthcare services.



| District Branding & Identity

- Continuing to advance the MedQuarter brand and identity is crucial for **recognition and cohesiveness**.
- **Defining District boundaries and entry points.**
- District-wide branding initiatives, including consistent signage and wayfinding and streetscape improvements, have been implemented to **improve visual continuity**.
- **Clear signage and a central node or green space landmark** can continue to enhance navigation, identity, and establish the MedQuarter as a renowned medical hub.



Community Health & Wellness

- Prioritizing community health and wellness allows the MedQuarter district to **foster a holistic approach to healthcare** and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.
- Consider open spaces, greenways, linear parks, and healing gardens, as focal points for physical activity, relaxation, and healing as **features that enhance the patient and visitor experience.**



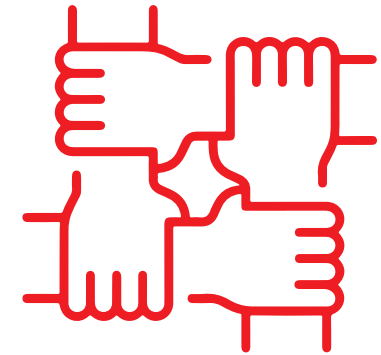
District Expansion & Funding

- The **potential expansion** of the MedQuarter Regional Medical District's boundaries presents exciting growth opportunities.
- Including newly built medical facilities and educational institutions can **leverage additional resources and expertise** to enhance the district's offerings.
- Exploring **funding sources beyond traditional means**, supports infrastructure improvements and community programs, ensuring sustainable growth and meeting the needs of the population.



Collaboration & Partnerships

- **Building strong partnerships** with local organizations, including religious institutions, the History Center, and community development entities allows for **collective efforts in improving the district and addressing community needs.**
- Nurturing these collaborations **fosters community engagement, cultural initiatives, and fundraising endeavors**, leveraging the strengths and expertise of different stakeholders to enhance the overall impact of programs and initiatives that define the district's quality of life.



Safety & Security

- **Safety and security are top priorities** in the MedQuarter district and the city of Cedar Rapids.
- Addressing **safety concerns in community open spaces** is crucial, particularly regarding homelessness / gun control / and mental health, and ensuring the well-being of employees and visitors.
- **Implementing safety measures** in open spaces like improved visibility, enhanced lighting, increased access points, technological advancements, and a district-wide safety plan with digital alert systems contribute to **a secure and welcoming environment for all stakeholders.**



Programming & Recreational Opportunities

- Programming in the MedQuarter district should be **tailored to the specific needs and limited availability** of medical staff.
- **Quick initiatives such as food trucks and pop-up events** are preferred by district stakeholders, providing convenient options and creating a **vibrant atmosphere**.
- Aim to **balance active and passive spaces**, incorporating sensory experiences, healing gardens, and outdoor dining areas to enhance well-being, enjoyment, and work-life balance for healthcare professionals and visitors.



Research & Talent Retention

- To address limited funding and **diversify the district's capital budget**, partnerships with research institutions can be explored to foster **collaborative research initiatives** and attract research-focused organizations.
- Providing **additional incentives and opportunities**, including housing, can help retain talented healthcare professionals within the district. Fostering a **supportive environment** that **emphasizes health and wellbeing** contributes to attracting and retaining top talent, ensuring the district's long-term success.



PRIORITIZE

Population Growth & Demographics

Economic Impact & Challenges

District Branding & Identity

Community Health & Wellness

District Expansion & Funding

Collaboration & Partnerships

Safety & Security

Program & Recreational Opportunities

Research & Talent Retention

Top 3



WHAT DID WE MISS?



NEXT STEPS

- Community-wide Engagement
- MedQuarter Vision
- Initial Strategies Brainstorming
- Plan Making