

PROCEEDINGS OF THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TAKEN AT A MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2025, AT 7:30 AM, AT THE LAFAYETTE PARISH ASSESSOR OFFICE, 213 VERMILION STREET

Present: Jaci Russo, Rex Moroux, Kim Ledet, Emily Hamner, Denice Skinner, and Melinda Taylor.
Absent: None [one vacant board appointment]

Jaci Russo called the meeting to order. Russo announced that public comment cards were available and that comments would be taken at the end of the meeting and prior to any action items.

Administrative Approvals/Reports

Motion by Skinner to approve minutes from the November 19, 2025 Board Meeting and to acknowledge receipt and review of 2025 year-to-date budget-to-actual report through October. Second by Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

CEO Blanchard noted that year-end financials are delayed due to LCG's fiscal year closeout process (LCG's fiscal year begins November 1st). The DDA's auditor, Brian Joubert with Cole Schwaben, will be engaged proactively this year to avoid delays experienced in prior years.

CEO Update

CEO Kevin Blanchard provided updates on ongoing operations and projects:

Holiday Party. Board members were reminded of the DDA/DLU holiday party scheduled for 5:00 PM that evening at Johnson's Buccaneer, hosted by Greg Wall with food provided by Blu.

Ambassador Program. Block by Block leadership visited Lafayette for a program review. After seven months of operation, the program is performing well from both the company's and DDA's perspective. The Ambassador team had a busy November, managing new plant watering responsibilities following the Jefferson Street planting day (with approximately 90 volunteers participating), addressing fall debris using newly acquired vacuum equipment, and assisting with Christmas decorations. Blanchard shared widespread positive public feedback, including social media comments praising the Ambassador team's work. Discussions are ongoing regarding potential program expansion.

City Council Budget Approval. The City Council approved the DDA's 2026 budget at their December 16, 2025 meeting with no comments.

CivicCon Event. One Acadiana's CivicCon event held two weeks prior drew record attendance (over 120 people in person, plus 20 online). The event featured a panel of seven community leaders discussing collaboration across Lafayette's urban core, emphasizing alignment among organizations including DDA, UL, LEDA, LCG, and others. The event recording is available online through One Acadiana.

Redevelopment Plan Funding. The DDA continues to work with the Downtown EDD and LPTFA to secure remaining public funding for the 2026 redevelopment planning work. UL's Blanco Public Policy Center is preparing a public benefits analysis for the project. A regular EDD meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2026, and the DDA hopes to have the UL analysis completed in time to present the funding request at that meeting.

New Office Lease. Lease negotiations for 205 W. Vermilion Street are in final stages, with legal review nearly complete. The target move-in date is March 1, 2026, with flexibility through Festival International. The Ambassador team may be able to access rear storage space earlier than March. The landlord is providing a build-to-suit renovation customized to DDA specifications.

Joint Planning Session. A joint DDA/DLU board planning session is scheduled for January 23, 2026 (location TBD). Staff will distribute surveys in advance to both boards and select stakeholders to gather feedback on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and priorities. The four-hour session will include separate DDA time, DLU time, and joint sessions to address strategic planning, bylaw review, the MOU between the organizations, and long-term priorities.

LCG Administrative Services Agreement. The DDA is working with auditor Brian Joubert and City Council leadership to amend the Administrative Services Agreement between the DDA and LCG, originally drafted in 1992. The agreement currently provides for LCG to handle DDA accounting, purchasing, payroll, human resources, and risk management. However, LCG systems designed for a 2,000-person organization create operational inefficiencies for a three-person DDA staff (such as delayed financial reporting and cumbersome virtual workarounds for routine transactions). The proposed amendment would right-size the arrangement while maintaining the DDA-LCG partnership. The goal is to complete this work by summer 2026 to align with both entities' fiscal year calendars.

DLU Report

Jessica Hauerwas provided an update on DLU programming and activities:

DLU's final event of 2025 was the holiday party that evening, with programming for 2026 officially underway. Staff will distribute feedback surveys to stakeholders and members to assess how businesses are performing, which programming works best, and what nights are most successful, complementing the foot traffic data from Placer AI.

Paige Miller has been conducting research through the National Recreation and Parks Association to develop innovative programming ideas. Joelle is participating in the Strong Towns cohort and conducting a deep dive on downtown parking, including signage, perception, language, messaging, and wayfinding improvements.

The previous weekend's events (Christmas concert on Friday and Art Walk on Saturday) drew over 20,000 people, with Art Walk alone attracting approximately 15,000 attendees. Businesses reported strong activity and many hosted successful individual events.

DLU distributed a survey regarding Mardi Gras that provided valuable feedback on how DLU can better support the event through foot traffic generation, signage, messaging, and promotions in future years.

Partner Announcements

City Council. Councilman Kenneth Boudreaux provided an update on City Council activities and the Mardi Gras route discussion. The City Council approved the DDA's 2026 budget at its final meeting of 2025 on December 16. Boudreaux highlighted several 2025 budget accomplishments benefiting downtown: Vermilion Garage restroom improvements, comprehensive plan funding, creation of reserve funds, and funding for the Plaza Greenhouse Art Studio project on Jefferson Street to complement the underpass improvements. The Council is working with LPTFA on the Coburn's property acquisition, with planned state legislation by Senator Gerald Boudreaux and supporting council resolutions. The Council consolidated three different references to "Jefferson

Street," "Jefferson Boulevard," and "Jefferson" in the budget to streamline how improvement funds can be allocated along the corridor from Pontiac Point to Pinhook.

Regarding Mardi Gras, Boudreaux clarified that his primary concern was protecting downtown businesses and ensuring proper process was followed in any route change decisions. He noted that many downtown stakeholders, businesses, and churches privately expressed concerns but were unable to speak publicly, leading them to contact their council representative. Boudreaux emphasized that the route itself was less important than ensuring that: (1) proper processes were followed, (2) the majority of affected downtown businesses supported any changes, (3) infrastructure protection measures were addressed, and (4) all stakeholders were consulted. He expressed concern about comments made at recent meetings that minimized downtown's importance and noted this could affect future funding efforts for downtown initiatives. Boudreaux reaffirmed his commitment to representing downtown with the same vigor he has represented other communities in his district, emphasizing that collaboration between the DDA, DLU, City Council, and EDD remains strong and productive.

Boudreaux also noted ongoing collaboration on drainage issues, potential expansion of the Ambassador Program to University Avenue and areas around St. John and Catholic Charities, and opportunities for state capital outlay funding. Joseph Gordon-Wiltz, LPTFA Board member and City Council Clerk, reported that the council staff is working with the Mayor-President's office to fill a board vacancy from One Acadiana's nomination list.

One Acadiana. The CivicCon event drew record attendance with over 120 in-person attendees and 20 online. The event and previous CivicCon sessions are available online. One Acadiana has officially launched registration for the 2026 Leadership Exchange to Chattanooga, Tennessee, scheduled for September 16-19, 2026.

LEDA/Opportunity Machine. No report.

Lafayette Police Department. No report.

Acadiana Center for the Arts. Sam Oliver reported that the Louisiana Music Museum project has completed construction documents and is ready to go to bid. ACA is currently in the capital campaign phase. If funding goals are met in the first quarter of 2026, a general contractor will be selected and construction will begin in the second quarter of 2026.

Public Comment. Public comment was invited; there was no public comment.

Adjournment. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.