MINUTES
DDA BOARD MEETING - SPECIAL MEETING
08:45 AM - Thursday, September 17, 2026
SPARK East - 215 W. Michigan, Ypsilanti MI 48197

1. CALL TO ORDER (8:46 am)

2. ROLL CALL

LIZ WARREN	**(A)**	ANDY FRENCH (C)	**(P)**
DIETER OTTO	**(P)**	PAUL AJLOUNY	**(A)**
VALORY BROWN	**(P)**	KRISTINE NASH-WONG	**(P)**
NICOLE BROWN	**(P)**	BRYAN FOLEY	**(A)**
BRIAN JONES-CHANCE (V)	**(P) (8:53 am)**	EMMY MAURER	**(P)**
MEGAN FOLDENAUER	**(A)**	COLLEEN KENNEDY	**(A)**
JULIUS BUZZARD	**(P)**		

Staff Present: DDA: Elize Jekabson and Danya Youssef-Agha

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

The agenda's address is correct, but the name of the location is incorrect.
Elize requested to change the title of the location in the agenda from the Freighthouse to SPARK East

Dieter Otto motioned to approve the agenda with recommended change of location from the Freighthouse to SPARK East. Emmy Maurer supported the motion. Motion passed - unanimous. Brian Jones-Chance absent for vote

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 18 2026 Meeting Minutes

Dieter Otto motioned to approve the 06-18-2026 minutes. Kristine Nash-Wong supported the motion. Motion passed - unanimous. Brian Jones-Chance absent for vote

5. PUBLIC COMMENT - (3 MINUTES/EACH SPEAKER)

KJ Petri commented on the activity downtown. KJ would like to see the DDA show up for solutions like a non police response group and other solutions. KJ thinks the activity will increase as the months continue. They mention that advocacy has happened to the DDA on the issues, and would like to see a solution. They would like to see the DDA be solution focused and be proactive.

6. FINANCIAL/STAFF REPORT

A. Financial and Staff Report

Elize went over the 2025/2026 fiscal year. The only things we are missing are the final invoice for construction of the Ballard Lot and Freighthouse. We are just waiting for some final details before that is closed out. Elize mentioned the expected numbers are close to what the actuals will be. Elize mentioned that MEDC has cut funding, and has killed the project for the upper level for WIlliam Sloan's building.

We attended the Placement Making Confrence , launched a social district in Depot Town, launched Locable, met with the Library to talk about activation of their plaza, medians for Michigan Ave. has been passed by council. Rice ST is still under construction, and staff has been working with Recast Leaders, and ExploreYpsi will launch today at the EMU Block Party. First Fridays is being built up again by hiring a graphic designer. Today is Park(ing) Day with an event happening at Maple Lot.

We received a CTAP grant, and we will be starting a mural project in Depot Town along Maiz's outside wall. We were on the front page of Groundcover with the SHINE crew.

B. SHINE Report

SHINE report is not in the packet, but ELize has sent out an update on what they have been doing.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. District Vitality Committee

District Vitality went over the market analysis report that Elize will be presenting today.

B. Marketing Committee

Kristine went over the last meeting, and how we finished some details for the workshops we will be doing.

C. Operations and Finance Committee

Emmy Maurer went over the last meeting. They spoke about the holiday lighting and bylaws update. Andy would like to see an update from each committee to track if we are on the right path for annual goals.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. DDA Market Analysis Draft Presentation Page 1 of 85

Katie Jones is here to present on the report alongside Elize. The presentation can be found in the packet. They started by going over the storefront vacancy analysis. We are currently at 17% vacancy with 70% of those buildings not being listed. A healthy benchmark for vacancies is 5-8%. Elize went over the second-floor utilization of buildings. Elize went over the opportunities and recommendations. Elize then went over the market gap analysis for each business sector and what is missing in each sector. Elize went over the areas of concern. Right now we have a saturation in hair salons. We are dependent on the food and beverage business and it creates reliance on one industry. We also have a weak daytime economy. Elize went over the immediate priorities, short-term priorities, and longer term priorities. Elize went over needs for each district as well and included how many vacancies we have in each core. Elize then went over the edgeblocks which are the spaces outside of the main business corridors. Strengthening these will increase our core districts.

Andy French mentioned talking to a commercial real estate agent to help us with insight of what trends they are seeing. Brian Jones-Chance mentioned working on getting the vacancies that are not listed would make a big difference to get them listed. Elize mentioned that a lot of the building owners (for vacant buildings that are not listed for sale) are not here in the area, and not active in the buildings they own. Katie Jones mentioned that holding onto buildings can sometimes be easier than rehabbing the building or bringing it up to code. Andy French would like to see those conversations in the action plan. Elize mentioned that there is a list of vacant buildings on page 47 and recommended use. Andy French mentioned how we lost a sporting goods store recently, and would like to reach out to Schultz Outfitters to see why they chose to leave. Andy French would like to see a plan for the immediate, short-term, and long-term priorities. Elize mentioned that the DIstrict Vitality Committee could put together an action plan. Brian Jones-Chance would like to see vacant buildings tracked through our new CRMs.

Brian Jones Chance moved to approve the DDA Market Analysis and Julius Buzzard supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Holiday Lighting Plan 2026

Elize went over quotes from Begonia Brothers and Leclerc. Elize went over some of the changes like the Depot Town clock tower being decorated with artificial garland. Elize went over some of the optional additions that we did not do last year with additional poles on intersections. Elize is recommending the more expensive option because of how the decorations will fit the poles better. There is a map of what poles would be decorated. The operations finance committee asked for a quote for all parking lots in downtown and it is about 5,000. Elize is waiting on a quote for the freighthouse plaza. Total quotes for each district for all holiday lighting is $3,420 for West Cross, $4,973 for Depot Town, and $30,000 for Downtown (including the additional poles and all lots we did not do last year). Emmy Maurer thinks additional lighting in the parking lots is a good idea. Andy French is interested in finding out the cost of lighting up the Freighthouse Plaza. Andy French is also interested in talking to the city about their

arborist cleaning up the trees before we decorate them. Andy French mentioned the banner cord that is in Depot Town, and the possibility of getting a grant to get that up to date and add additional decorations/banners on the cord. W. Cross is difficult for holiday lighting because there are no outlets on the poles, so we will be using more reflective decorations.

Emmy Maurer motioned to approve the lighting plan by LeClerc Display Co. And Begonia Bros for up to $30,000, including the N. Adams, N. Huron, and S. Huron Parking lots. Valory Brown supported the motion.
Friendly amendment by Brian Jones-Chance to authorize the Director to approve the Freighthouse Plaza lighting should the estimate be within budget and under $5,000. Motion passed unanimously

C. Maple Lot Parking Lot - Proposed Hours

Elize mentioned that there have been some issues with how the Maple Lot sign is advertised. We currently have no restrictions, but it has caused some issues. The sign we have on the lot is not enforceable. The language proposed for the sign came from Chief Anderson. Language includes a 3-hour parking time limit from 8am to 6pm Monday through Friday, and prohibiting parking between 3am and 7am daily. The City of Ypsilanti will provide enforcement of the lot M-F, and Wall Street Towing will continue monitoring the lot overnight and on weekends.

Brian Jones Chance motioned to approve the proposed hours and update signage, Emmy Maurer supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Drinking Fountain License Agreement with Growing Hope

Elize is looking for approval of the board to give Elize the authority to sign paperwork regarding the Drinking Fountain installation. We will be responsible for the maintenance of the drinking fountain. We will also be installing a water meter. Andy French asked whose responsibility it will be to winterize it. Elize responded that it is the DDAs responsibility, but it is affordable.

Brian Jones-Chance motioned to approve the drinking fountain agreement and give Elize the signing privilege for the agreement. Kristine Nash-Wong seconded, Motion passed - Julius abstained

E. N. Huron Lot Reconstruction

Elize went over the N. Huron Lot reconstruction and went over the geotechnical report we have paid for. The report is in the package. The report states that the N. Huron lot is not in good condition. Estimates from OHM - total cost is about $433,700. This would be for a full reconstruction. The city is already planning on redoing signage and repainting the lot, which would be covered by the city in the quote. Kristine Nash-Wong asked if this would become a paid lot, and that is a potential. The city owns the lot,

but currently the DDA maintains the lot. Kristine Nash-Wong would like to see this stay as a free parking lot. Elize discussed the possibility of doing free parking for a few hours to keep cars moving.

Kristine Nash-Wong asked if doing this project would limit us on other projects with our budget. Elize mentioned that we will have $570,000 coming from our TIF at the end of the year. We will be using a significant amount of the budget with this project, but the tif will renew in July. Elize mentioned that doing both N. Huron and the median repairs would drain our fun balance, but that will renew.

F. Downtown Median Planter Replacement Discussion

Elize went over the planters on the median of Michigan Ave. DJs gave us a quote a year ago for some options. The price may have increased from last year. The quote does not include removal and disposal of the old planters. The most expensive option comes in at $95,113 and the least expensive comes in at $79,410. This amount triggers an RFQ. Operations and Finance mentioned this the time we could really look at the medians as a whole. Kristine Nash-Wong mentioned MIHQs revision of the medians and bringing Mark Smith into the conversation. Elize needs to have a conversation with MDOT as well, but they are difficult to get in touch with. The board would like to see more conversations happen with Mark Smith and MDOT. Elize mentioned this is the time to look at the planters as we are going to be getting fall foliage in. We will table this conversation for now, until we do more due diligence.

Kristine Nash-Wong motioned to approve moving forward with the N. Huron lot and continuing conversation with the city and agreement on parking enforcement, Brian Jones-Chance supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

G. Locable CRM Demo

Elize went over our new CRM, Localable, and what features it has. Elize went over the business pages, events, and job openings page.

9. PROPOSED BUSINESS10. PUBLIC COMMENT - (3 MINUTES/EACH SPEAKER)

KJ Petri made a comment on criminalizing long-term parking at the Maple St Lot. KJ spoke about their own experience with homelessness and how increasing restrictions on the parking lot will further increase the stress our homeless community faces. KJ appreciated the market analysis report and thought it was well done. They want us to be thoughtful when considering what businesses and developments would go into these vacancies.

Andrew Hellinga brought up the Cross St bridge closure. He would like this body to think about the signage needed for the district and the business so the city can include it in the RFQ.

11. ADJOURNMENT - (10:31 am)