



Downtown Development Authority of Augusta
Board Meeting Minutes
September 18, 2025, at 1:00 pm
1101 Greene Street

The Downtown Development Authority of Augusta held its monthly meeting on September 18, 2025, at 1:00 pm at 1101 Greene Street.

DDA Board members in attendance included Chairman Jack Evans, Secretary-Treasurer Stephen King, Commissioner Jordan Johnson, Judge Ashanti L. Pounds, and Phuong Nguyen. Also in attendance were Margaret Woodard, Executive Director of the DDA, Jeb Murray, legal counsel, and Director of Community Development, Tara Wood. Guests in attendance were Pablo Stanley and Corrine Stanley of Bright 10 Renewable Energy.

Chairman Evans called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm and asked Mr. King to present the Consent agenda and financial reports. The Consent agenda, which included the August 2025 Board meeting minutes and financial report, was introduced. Mr. King then mentioned that he, Ms. Woodard, and Mrs. Wood met with City Administrator Tameka Allen and her staff, along with members of the city's Finance Department, for the annual budget review meeting to advocate for increased DDA budget funding for 2026. Mr. Evans thanked him for the update. There were no additional questions or comments. Mr. Evans made a motion to approve the financials. Commissioner Jordan Johnson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mrs. Woodard then presented the Director's report, highlighting the following:

Ramada Hotel Project: Construction is set to start in January 2026, with a fast-track schedule aiming to finish the project within a year. Matt Brendle continues to visit Augusta every week, and the DDA has been assisting by making introductions. Ms. Woodard met with Matt Brendle's team from Atlanta and Washington, D.C., and Augusta-Richmond County, including Chief Eric Woods, to address any potential issues. She said the meeting was very successful, and Mr. Brendle's team was very excited about investing in downtown Augusta.

Embassy Suites Project: The property owners are scheduled to appear before the HPC on September 25 to request that all three buildings be demolished. The property owner is willing to pay for the demolition and allow the city to use the cleared space to accommodate 200 additional parking spaces during the TIA streetscape project.

Georgia Bank and Trust Building: The building is currently under contract. Dr. Troy Akers, owner of Dink'd indoor pickleball courts, plans to open his local office there. We met with Dr. Akers last week to discuss next steps and how DDA might be able to assist.

Tiffani Bleu Bridal Boutique: Brandy Jones has bought two buildings on Fifth Street and plans to renovate and move her business from its current location on Broad Street to one of the new buildings.

Accelerate Augusta: The final permanent, lit signs are now installed, and we continue to plan the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting scheduled for October 10, 2025. Mr. David Nuckolls, Executive Director of the Georgia Center of Innovation at the Georgia Department of Economic Development, will be the special guest speaker. The website is almost complete.

Outdoor Adventure Center: We are currently waiting on review and approval from the Corps of Engineers. Construction will begin once approval is obtained, with completion expected in the Spring of 2026.

TIA Streetscape Project: John Ussery from the Traffic and Engineering department provided an update to the Commission last week. The current plan is to reduce Reynolds to two lanes and convert Ellis Street into a one-way street for deliveries to businesses and restaurants on Broad Street. These measures are expected to increase the total number of parking spaces in downtown areas by 400. A small number of businesses remain unhappy about the new bike lanes, but no changes can be made to the plans mandated by the state of Georgia. Pacquin, a PR firm, has been hired to assist Traffic and Engineering with messaging and communication with downtown businesses and property owners.

Soofa Kiosks: There has been recurrent vandalism damage to the screen and wrap on the Augusta Common kiosk. We just paid \$3,500 to replace the screen and re-wrap that kiosk, which is sponsored by Security Federal. We have been permitted to move that sign to the sidewalk in front of Hyatt House on Upper Broad.

Union Lofts: The bus stop in front of Union Lofts on Telfair Street has been relocated. A new pad was poured, and it is now across the street and a block down from Union Lofts, in the city right-of-way.

Mothballing Initiative: Several chronically vacant buildings remain improperly mothballed by property owners, resulting in repeated breaches. The Lamar building now has FLOCK cameras installed, but by the time RCSO learns of activity inside, suspects have already fled before police arrive. We plan to collaborate with Shawn Rhodes from RCSO to draft language similar to an ordinance the city has, so that if property owners fail to properly mothball all their buildings after receiving notice, DDA will secure them correctly and bill the property owner for the cost, which will be added to their annual property tax bill. We have an allocated budget for this project and plan to meet with City Attorney John Manton to have him draft the ordinance, which will then be presented to the full Board. We continue to work on establishing a vacant building registry and revolving loan fund.

CDS Grant Application: We had lunch with Maria Cook, the Southeast Regional Representative for Senator Raphael Warnock. She has been updating us on any news regarding the FY26 CDS grant we applied for through Senator Warnock's office. The request is for \$750,000 to purchase and renovate a blighted building in the downtown corridor, which will serve as the site for Phase II of Accelerate Augusta.

Mr. Evans asked if anyone had questions or comments about the Director's Report. When there were none, he thanked Ms. Woodard for her efforts.

Facade Grant Application: Mr. Evans then proceeded to the next item on the agenda, which was the approval of a facade grant application for the renovation of the Sherman and Hemstreet real estate office at 640 Ellis Street. They submitted photos and receipts for new scuppers on the exterior facade and a skylight remodel inside the building. They are requesting a \$5,000 facade grant. Mr. Evans made a motion to approve, and Judge Ashanti Pounds seconded the motion; the grant was approved.

The guests exited the conference room, and Mr. Evans requested a motion to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. King making the motion, Mr. Nguyen seconding it, and the Board then proceeding into Executive Session.

Upon the conclusion of the Executive Session, Mr. Evans requested a motion to approve a resolution and inducement agreement. Commissioner Johnson made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Nguyen. The motion passed.

Mr. Evans thanked everyone for their participation and attendance and made a motion to adjourn; the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephen King

Secretary-Treasurer