GRAND JUNCTION DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
GRAND JUNCTION DOWNTOWN BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS RETREAT SUMMARY
THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2025
750 MAIN GROWL CONFERENCE ROOM
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Board Members present: Libby Olson (Chair), Garrett Portra (Vice-Chair), Dustin Anzures, Steven Boyd, Cole Hanson, Karli Hyland, Afton Neal, Faith Rodriguez, City Council Representative Ben Van Dyke

Downtown Grand Junction staff present: Brandon Stam, Vonda Bauer

Other: Northland Securities, Inc Financial Advisor Troy Bernberg (representing the DDA)

City of Grand Junction staff present: City Attorney John Shaver, Assistant City Attorney Jeremiah Boies

AGNDA

- Welcome & Opening Remarks
- Overview of Business Improvement District (BID) and Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
- Understanding Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Downtown Plan of Development (POD) Priorities
- Wrap-Up & Next Steps

Brandon provided a Power Point presentation for the 2025 Board Retreat.

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

- City Attorney John Shaver Introduced Assistant City Attorney Jeremiah Boies.
- Board Chair Libby Olson welcomed attendees, thanked board members for their service and dedication, and emphasized the opportunity to strengthen the shared vision, identify opportunities for growth, and continue shaping downtown as a prosperous, welcoming and future-focused community.
- Brandon outlined the meeting goals and objectives, including reviewing the BID and DDA by laws, history, and purpose, clarifying board roles and responsibilities, reviewing financial tools for both districts, and reviewing past and current projects. He noted the focus will include identifying the Main Street improvement priority list, implementation plans, and potential additional areas of focus.

OVERVIEW OF BID/DDA

What is a BID and DDA?

Brandon and John provided an overview of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and Business Improvement District (BID).

BID:

The BID was established in 2005 after merchants petitioned City Council to replace the former merchant association. It was structured with its own funding mechanism: a special assessment based on commercial square footage, rather than a mill levy like the DDA. Revenue is generated from assessments, sponsorships, and vendor fees. The BID focuses primarily on events, marketing, advertising, and business improvements. The BID boundaries include only commercial properties, covers Las Colonias and Dos Rios, and serves as the central commercial district, while the DDA has a broader scope. Properties may petition for inclusion in the districts, subject to DDA/BID Board and City Council approval.

DDA:

The DDA, established in 1977, supports downtown economic development by reinvesting Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenue to address slum and blight, fund infrastructure, provide grants and capital improvements. TIF revenue is generated from property value increases above the base tax rate and must be reinvested within district boundaries, in coordination with the City, which approves development plans, budgets, and debt. The current boundaries extend from Dos Rios (west) to 9th Street (east), Ouray Avenue (north) to South Street (south), including 7th Street to Las Colonias and along the Colorado River. Funding sources include a capped 5-mill levy for operations and TIF, the primary source for capital projects with restricted use.

In 2018, Downtown Grand Junction became a Creative District, a state designation recognizing downtown as an arts and cultural hub. While not a legal entity or operating district, it is funded by the DDA, eligible for grants, and is supported by an advisory committee rather than a formal board.

Relationship

The relationship between the DDA the BID and the City has been healthy, and the Downtown has flourished

- The BID emphasis is on Downtown events and marketing.
- The DDA as a matter of law emphasizes capital investment.
- The DDA receives 5 mills of property tax but does not have independent power to tax.
- The DDA has no eminent domain power.
- The DDA may no issue bonds; but the City may issue bonds on its behalf.
- The DDA Plan of Development and Budget are approved by the City Council.

BID/DDA Board of Directors Roles & Responsibilities

Due to the community's size, the BID and DDA are governed by the same Board of Directors who are appointed by the Grand Junction City Council. Although legally separate, the BID and DDA hold consecutive meetings, with the BID meeting convened and adjourned before the DDA meeting. Beginning with the next twenty-year extension (2033), the board will expand from nine to eleven members with the addition of one member representing the Mesa County Board of Commissioners and one member of the Mesa County Valley School District.

Libby reviewed the board's fundamental role of setting policy and direction versus implementation, focusing on the "what" and "why" while staff manages the "how". She emphasized the board's additional responsibility as advocates—sharing downtown's story, building support among business owners, partners, customers, and amplifying the DDA's vision. Board members are encouraged to act as communicators and storytellers, championing Downtown's future in their interactions and bringing community feedback back to the board.

City Attorney John Shaver explained that board members are not responsible for directly fixing individual problems raised by constituents. Instead, their role is to connect people with the appropriate staff or direct issues to the BID/DDA board. He emphasized maintaining a collaborative relationship with the community while avoiding creating unrealistic expectations, and keeping focus on the board's broader, strategic responsibilities.

UNDERSTANDING TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

Troy Bernberg, Northland Securities, Inc Financial Advisor outlined his role as the board's financial advisor, emphasizing his fiduciary duty to serve the organization's interests. He supports TIF reimbursement agreements, financial analysis, ROI evaluations, and investment strategies, drawing on experience with six other DDAs.

He explained that DDAs are formed through their sponsoring municipality, subject to TABOR, and cannot issue debt independently, requiring City approval for budgets and debt structures. TIF is a flexible financing tool, allowing for reimbursement agreements tied to performance, property acquisition/disposal at fair value, and pledging TIF to projects such as Dos Rios or Las Colonias.

Troy noted that DDAs typically avoid long-term bonding, instead focusing on strategic, flexible investments that protect dollars and fill funding gaps when needed. He emphasized the value of a TIF investment policy to guide current and future boards in aligning spending with the Plan of Development.

He praised Grand Junction's DDA as one of the oldest and most respected in the state, highlighting its strong partnership with the city, alignment with economic development goals, and ability to leverage TIF for redevelopment, infrastructure, and community projects.

John stated that State legislation now allows DDA renewals in 20-year cycles. Grand Junction's TIF, currently on its third renewal, will expire in 2032. At renewal, TIF includes a "share back" requirement, where taxing entities retain 50% of the increment unless they voluntarily contribute more. Other taxing districts within DDA boundaries (e.g., county, library, mosquito district) may also opt to participate. City Council has already authorized extending the DDA beyond 2032, providing long-term stability for planning future large-scale capital projects.

A chart was provided that displayed projected base & Increment assessed values from 2025 to 2056.

DOWNTOWN PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT (POD) PRIORITIES
Brandon noted the Downtown Plan of Development was updated in 2019 as the board's roadmap, replacing the 1981 plan.

Key focus areas included policy, infrastructure, property acquisition/development, space enhancement, events, marketing, connectivity, specific programs and grants.

Some of the DDA supported projects included:

- Riverfront Revitalization with Amphitheater, Las Colonias Park, the Eddy, and Dos Rios
- New Downtown Housing Developments: The Junction, Grand River Lofts, The Eddy Project
- Grand Junction Convention Center renovation in partnership with the City of Grand Junction
- 734 Main development and 750 Main redevelopment
- The Tru Hotel
- The Terminal Project-ongoing – secured $17 million in funding towards the project
- Façade Grants – awarded approximately $93k in 2024
- Restaurant Conversion Grants – awarded approximately $200k with four restaurants (Pour Fellows, Cruise Control, Bin 707, Moody's)
- New self-cleaning public restroom
- Fiber installation on 7th Street

Downtown Trends
Top 10 Global trends were provided from Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.).

Feasibility/Impact Matrix
A Feasibility/Impact Matrix for Main Street Improvements was reviewed, outlining concept ideas in four categories. The board discussed each category and identified the bolded concepts as higher priorities.

- HIGH FEASIBILITY/HIGH IMPACT (Short-term priorities)
    - Remove fixed benches from pedestrian alleyways
    - Add light pole banners for seasons/special events
    - Add art + planter pots in alleyways
    - **Flexible seating, picnic tables, umbrellas**
    - Game tables and ground-based games

    - **Water bottle filling stations**
    - **Shade improvements for gorilla play area (400 block)**
    - **Event coordination with removable bollards**

- HIGH FEASIBILITY/LOW IMPACT
    - **Striping/loading zone clarifications**
    - **Removal of small shade pavilions at mid-block crossings**
    - Minor plaza adjustments (small furnishings, art relocations)

- LOW FEASIBIITY/HIGH IMPACT (Long-term transformation)
    - **Gateway Identifiers (Welcome to Downtown signs)**
    - Comprehensive wayfinding/signage improvements
    - **Full lighting upgrades (fixtures, alleyway coverage)**
    - **Upgrade power distribution for events**
    - Parking shifts to reclaim pavement in active streetscape

- LOW FEASIBILITY/LOW IMPACT
    - Small infrastructure retrofits that duplicate other goals
    - Incremental upgrades not tied to broader placemaking vision

The board discussed potential downtown improvements, prioritizing lighting and power for safety and events, additional seating and gathering areas, infrastructure such as removable bollards and water bottle filling stations to better support events, art activation at crosswalks, make improvements to Colorado Avenue, 2nd Street at Colorado Avenue to South Avenue. Board members favored clear gateway signage over digital kiosks for wayfinding, while also considering amenities like pet relief areas and water features as longer-term options. Discussion also covered curb bump-outs, with differing views on whether the reclaimed space would add value compared to the current convenience of existing layouts. Overall, the board emphasized the need for a comprehensive plan, block-by-block implementation, a phased implementation timeline, cost estimates, and effective communication with downtown businesses.

WRAP-UP & NEXT STEPS

Cole suggested adding a standing agenda item for brief board member updates. Discussion also covered ways to improve communication through newsletters, social media, reminders, and potential toolkits, as well as the importance of a TIF Investment Policy. Brandon emphasized covering organizational basics, noting additional time could be scheduled if needed. Next steps include updating the feasibility/impact matrix with the new concepts. Board members expressed appreciation for staff efforts, highlighted Troy's expertise and John's support. The meeting concluded with thanking the board for their volunteer service and commitment to downtown.