



41 Perimeter Center East, Suite 250
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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Warren Hutmacher, City Manager
Date: March 10, 2014
Subject: **Arts Festival Update – City Council Meeting (March 2014)**

I have met with the organizers of the Dunwoody Arts Festival and the Dunwoody Chamber of Commerce on two occasions in the past few months.

This memo contains a summary of the highlights from the two meetings and a report from the Dunwoody Chamber of Commerce. The memo also contains a letter from the Festival organizers to Business Owners in the Village area that are impacted by the Festival.

The highlights from the meetings are as follows:

1. Michael Smith updated the group regarding the construction schedule for the streetscape work on Dunwoody Village Parkway that is currently under construction. He reported that access to all streets and driveways will be maintained throughout the construction process, that there will be no work being performed during the festivals and that every effort by the City will be given to open as much of the parkway roadway as possible during the festivals.
3. Signage will be needed to assist vendors and participants for the Arts festival to navigate the changing conditions of Dunwoody Village Parkway.
4. Flexibility will be needed for determining the exact placement of signage (for permitting purposes) on Dunwoody Village Parkway due to the construction.
5. The participants discussed relocating the Dunwoody Arts Festival to an alternate location due to the impacts it has on existing businesses and as a result of the construction process on Dunwoody Village Parkway. Staff suggested consideration of alternate sites such as Perimeter Center Place (abuts Target and the Terraces) and Brook Run Park. Perimeter Center Place was suggested due to



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its road width, Perimeter Center location, its proximity to vacant office parking and plethora of ingress/egress options for the businesses impacted by the festival. Brook Run Park was suggested due to its size and park setting.

The organizers of the Dunwoody Arts Festival expressed concern regarding moving the festival to a different location. Specifically, they felt that the festival was successful in its current location with artists and visitors due to its high visibility location on Chamblee Dunwoody Road in Dunwoody Village. They felt that the Perimeter Center location was too “hidden” from traffic and that the location was “out of the way”. In summary, the organizers felt that the location at Perimeter Center Place would negatively impact the success of the festival. The group didn’t discuss Brook Run in much detail, but a few objections were mentioned including the general feel of a street festival vs. a park festival and the availability of onsite parking and the negative feedback expected from the artisans.

6. The participants discussed the main objection to the festival, which is the negative feedback received by the City and the Dunwoody Chamber regarding the festivals impact on local businesses. Specifically, the 2-day nature of the event and the fact that it is held on Mothers Day weekend were discussed. The festival significantly impacts restaurants that depend on Mothers Day business. The festival also impacts other businesses that require vehicular visibility.

The City is concerned about the negative impact the festival has on area businesses. The overall question asked was whether the benefits of 60,000 – 70,000 people exposed to Dunwoody Village for the two day festival outweighs the deleterious impact the festival has on some businesses. The participants held a lengthy discussion on this topic. The consensus reached was that the festival is a huge benefit to the City, but that there is more that can be done to limit the negative impact of the festival. It was pointed out by the Chamber and the festival organizers that although they have received negative feedback from some businesses that they have also received positive feedback from other businesses.

7. The Chamber has offered to work extensively with the Arts festival organizers to conduct business outreach efforts. The consensus of the group was that there are opportunities for the businesses impacted by the festival to turn a negative



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consequence into a business opportunity.

8. The Chamber has surveyed businesses in the Village and are working with them to craft ideas and strategies to overcome the challenges the festival provides them. This is a good opportunity for the Chamber to live its mission of providing support to local businesses. The festival organizers have also agreed to double their efforts with local businesses and they will find a way to incorporate any local Village area business with interest in participating with booth space, signage and other reasonable support. Although the festival organizers typically generate revenue from doling out booth space, it was understood that the businesses located in the festival area may need special assistance to benefit from the festival and that special considerations may need to be made to help those who are directly impacted by the festival.

The point was also made that the festival being in Dunwoody Village was a positive for the City's efforts to create a downtown atmosphere in the Village area.

Summary - This is a tricky situation with no clear right answer. Our internal surveys show how popular the festival is with citizens and the attendance figures show it is popular with citizens and visitors. However, we all care about the success of existing businesses. There truly needs to be a balancing act when shutting down roads and hampering the local businesses with a festival of this magnitude for this extended length of time. I'm not sure we have achieved the right balance and I'm not certain at this time if we may be capable of satisfying all of the businesses. The decision on what that right balance should be is a difficult policy decision for the governing authority.

I came away from the meetings with the impression that the group wants to try to improve the festival by creating opportunities for success for the local businesses instead of trying to relocate the festival at this time.

I look forward to Council's feedback as we continue to try to find the appropriate balance to the competing interests present here



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REPORT FROM THE DUNWOODY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

On Wednesday January 22nd Warren invited the Dunwoody Chamber of Commerce director to a meeting regarding the Dunwoody Village Parkway. At this meeting were representatives from the 4th of July Parade and the Arts Festival. The meeting was to discuss the impact of these events while construction was going on. Warren mentioned that there were some concerns regarding some of the local businesses and the Arts Festival. He asked if the Chamber was willing to help work out a compromise with Arts Festival organizer Frances Schube.

This matter was brought before the Government affairs committee (Bill Grant, Heyward Wescott, Brent Morris, MJ Thomas & Paula Owens) of the Chamber. The committee acknowledged that this is a beloved event by the community and was the number one event on the city's survey. The committee agreed that we needed to gather information from the businesses in order to have a better understanding of the problem at hand. It was determined that a survey of the businesses in the affected area was the best way to move forward. The questions that were presented by the Chamber were:

1. Historically how has the Art Festival Impacted your business?
2. In past years were your business activities normal for the festival weekend, higher or lower?
3. What suggestions would you make to the organizers of changes that would help you, your business or the community?
4. Would you prefer the event be moved to another weekend away from Mother's day? Why?

We reached out to about 30 businesses in the affected area. Out of the 30 businesses we were able to get back 23 responses. 17 of the 23 responses show a negative impact on to their business with two businesses closing due to the event. 8 of the businesses serve food with 6 having pouring licenses and 1 is a grocery store.



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On February 21st we met with Splash Festivals and the City Manager to discuss our findings. It was determined at that time that the Arts Festivals was well under way and making drastic changes at this point would be harmful to the event organizer and its exhibitors. The Chamber requested that Splash Festival reach out to the affected businesses to offer complimentary booth space for 2014 and do what it can to help their exposure.

The Chamber plans to work with the event organizer to try to find ways to mitigate impacts on the affected business for 2014. This will give us time to make adjustments to the event while keeping it in the community with less impact on the businesses in the affected area.

Dunwoody Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to the success of businesses in the Dunwoody area by promoting economic development, education, leadership and advocacy.



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LETTER FROM FESTIVAL ORGANIZERS TO VILLAGE AREA BUSINESSES

Dear Business Owner,

Thank you for your input on the Art Festival. The Chamber and Splash Festivals (the organizer of the Dunwoody Art Festival) are committed to making the festival a positive promotional effort for all the businesses in the Village as well as a major event for the community. Given the immediacy of this year's festival we are a bit limited in what we can do but we can make some significant steps forward:

- This year's Festival will have a pedestrian opening and better signage at the main entrance into the Shops of Dunwoody with easier access to the businesses and restaurants in that center.
- Spaces (along the Burger King side) will be available for the exclusive use of businesses located in the Shops of Dunwoody, free of charge, as a means to draw shoppers into the center. A refundable deposit will be required to ensure the booth is staffed for both days so that the area will remain vibrant. Some businesses may choose to share a booth to ease the difficulty of staffing on Mother's Day weekend. To sign up for this opportunity please complete the attached form and send it so that we will receive it no later than April 4. Spaces will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Splash Festivals will be purchasing fourteen restaurant gift certificates from restaurants in the Village with a \$25 value each to award in the weekly drawing for volunteers during the period of March 26 through May 7. Weekly emails are sent to 350 potential volunteers during the recruitment process and will include the names of the participating restaurants. This email can also include a link to the websites of the restaurants. Winning volunteers will pick up their gift certificates the weekend of the Festival. At their choice, restaurants may want to limit the period of use to be after the Festival weekend, or may include the weekend. Gift certificates will be purchased prior to March 14, and should have a "valid" date to begin no sooner than May 10, 2014.
- Splash Festivals will also include coupons, menus and other marketing information about the businesses in the Exhibitor packets they will receive upon check-in Saturday morning. Each business will need to provide to Splash Festivals 210 copies of their piece, not to exceed one 8 ½ x 11" page no later than April 11.
- Restaurants may also choose to offer lunch delivery to the exhibitors, who for many do not have an opportunity to get away from their booths to grab something to eat.
- Additional signage will be created and placed at strategic locations to direct your customers through Dunwoody Village Parkway to your business during the weekend.

Next year (2015) we have more flexibility and will be making further changes in the layout and content of the festival to further enhance the positive impact on your business. As those changes are finalized we will keep you updated.

Do understand – both the Chamber and Splash have the goal of making the festival an important event in Dunwoody that has a positive impact on the growth and prosperity of your business.