



# CITY OF ELKO

## Planning Department

Website: [www.elkocitynv.gov](http://www.elkocitynv.gov)  
Email: [planning@elkocitynv.gov](mailto:planning@elkocitynv.gov)

1751 College Avenue • Elko, Nevada 89801 • (775) 777-7160 • Fax (775) 777-7219

### PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

The City of Elko Redevelopment Agency will meet in a regular session on Tuesday, January 11, 2022 at 3:30 P.M., P.S.T. at Elko City Hall, Council Chambers, 1751 College Avenue, Elko, Nevada, and by utilizing **GoToMeeting.com**.

The public can view or participate in the virtual meeting on a computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone at: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/788517357>. You can also dial in using your phone at **+1 (646) 749-3122**. The **Access Code** for this meeting is **788-517-357**. Comments can also be emailed to [planning@elkocitynv.gov](mailto:planning@elkocitynv.gov).

Attached with this notice is the agenda for said meeting of the Redevelopment Agency. In accordance with NRS 241.020, the public notice and agenda were posted on the City of Elko Website at <http://www.elkocity.com>, the State of Nevada's Public Notice Website at <https://notice.nv.gov>, and in the following locations:

ELKO CITY HALL – 1751 College Avenue, Elko, NV 89801

Date/Time Posted: January 4, 2022 2:00 p.m.

Posted by: Shelby Knopp, Administrative Assistant  
Name Title

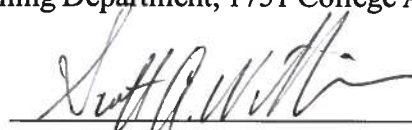
  
Signature

The public may contact Shelby Knopp by phone at (775) 777-7160 or by email at [sknopp@elkocitynv.gov](mailto:sknopp@elkocitynv.gov) to request supporting material for the meeting described herein. The agenda and supporting material is also available at Elko City Hall, 1751 College Avenue, Elko, NV, or on the City website at <http://www.elkocity.com>.

Dated this 4<sup>th</sup> day of January 2022.

### NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Members of the public who are disabled and require special accommodations or assistance at the meeting are requested to notify the City of Elko Planning Department, 1751 College Avenue, Elko, Nevada, 89801 or by calling (775) 777-7160.

  
Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager

**CITY OF ELKO**  
**REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
**REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**  
**3:30 P.M., P.S.T., TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2022**  
**ELKO CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**1751 COLLEGE AVENUE, ELKO, NEVADA**  
**[HTTPS://GLOBAL.GOTOMEETING.COM/JOIN/788517357](https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/788517357)**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The agenda for this meeting of the City of Elko Redevelopment Agency (RDA) has been properly posted for this date and time in accordance with NRS requirements.

**ROLL CALL**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

Pursuant to N.R.S. 241, this time is devoted to comments by the public, if any, and discussion of those comments. No action may be taken upon a matter raised under this item on the agenda until the matter itself has been specifically included on a successive agenda and identified as an item for possible action. **ACTION WILL NOT BE TAKEN**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

August 10, 2021 – Regular Meeting **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

**I. NEW BUSINESS**

- A.** Review, consideration and possible acceptance of the Block End Project and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

At the February 23, 2021 Elko Redevelopment Agency meeting, the RDA awarded a contract to MKD Construction for the Block End Project. The project has been completed and staff recommends final acceptance of the project.

- B.** Review, consideration, and possible ratification for a funding request from Elko Park Foundation to participate in the Elko Mural Expo 2021 in the amount of \$5,000.00. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

City of Elko Arts and Culture Advisory Board hosted the Elko Mural Expo 2021 and a donation in the amount of \$5,000.00 was made on behalf of the RDA. CL

- C.** Review, consideration, and possible action to accept the 2021 Redevelopment Agency Annual Report, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Pursuant to the provisions of NRS 279.586, the agency shall submit to the

Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, for transmittal to the Legislature, and to the legislative body an annual report on a form prescribed by the Committee on Local Government Finance. CL

## **II. REPORTS**

**A. Budget**

**B. Block Ends**

**C. Storefront Program**

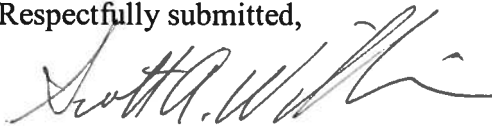
## **COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

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**NOTE:** The Chairman or Vice Chairman reserves the right to change the order of the agenda and if the agenda is not completed, to recess the meeting and continue on another specified date and time. Additionally, the Redevelopment Agency reserves the right to combine two or more agenda items, and/or remove an item from the agenda, or delay discussion relating to an item on the agenda at any time.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted,



Scott Wilkinson  
Assistant City Manager

**CITY OF ELKO**  
**REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**3:00 P.M., P.D.S.T., TUESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2021**  
**ELKO CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**1751 COLLEGE AVENUE, ELKO, NEVADA**  
**<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/650416829>**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Reece Keener, Chairman of the City of Elko Redevelopment Agency (RDA).

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Mayor Reece Keener  
Councilwoman Mandy Simons  
Councilman Chip Stone  
Councilman Clair Morris

**Excused:** Vacant

**City Staff Present:** Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager  
Cathy Laughlin, City Planner  
Bob Thibault, Civil Engineer  
DJ Smith, Computer Information Systems Coordinator  
Shelby Knopp, Planning Technician

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

*There were no public comments made at this time.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

April 27, 2021 – Regular Meeting **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

*The minutes were approved by general consent.*

**I. NEW BUSINESS**

- A.** Review, consideration, and possible action to re-appoint the five members of the Redevelopment Advisory Council, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Per the Redevelopment Advisory Council Bylaws adopted February 14, 2017, the members of the RAC shall be appointed by the RDA annually in July. The RDA shall

appoint five (5) members to the RAC board. The RAC board members shall satisfy the following criteria or have the following affiliations or associations, and shall serve without compensation: (1) a member of the RDA, (2) the president or designee of the Downtown Business Association, (3) the chairman or designee of the Arts and Culture Advisory Board, (4) one member who resides within the City of Elko incorporated boundary, and (5) one stakeholder from the redevelopment area. Lina Blohm, Jon Karr, Catherine Wines and Jeff Dalling have indicated an interest in continuing on the board. The RDA can then appoint their representative after filling the vacancy on the City Council.

Cathy Laughlin, City Planner, explained that emails from all of the current RAC Members were included in the agenda packet. They all state that they would like to be reappointed. When the vacancy is filled on the City Council you can then fill the 5<sup>th</sup> position on the RAC.

Mayor Reece Keener asked if Ms. Laughlin had any comments.

Ms. Laughlin said she didn't. She added that she would usually reach out to the DBA, but she had been having communication with Garret regarding another agenda item. He didn't indicate that anyone else would be taking Mr. Karr's position.

Mayor Keener wanted to extend his thanks to each board member. They have experience on the Board, and they know the history and mechanics of how the RDA works. Mayor Keener stated that he was delighted that they continued to serve.

**\*\*\*A motion was made by Councilman Clair Morris, seconded by Councilwoman Mandy Simons to reappoint the five members of the Redevelopment Advisory Council, Lina Blohm, Jon Karr, Catherine Wines, and Jeff Dalling, and the RDA Member to be designated at a later date.**

***\*Motion passed unanimously. (4-0)***

- B.** Review, consideration, and possible approval of an agreement for the installation of artwork between the City of Elko and potential artists for display the of their artwork within the downtown corridor block ends of 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, and matters related thereto.
- FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

At the RDA meeting on April 27, 2021, the Redevelopment Agency made a motion to continue the Block Ends Project as is, with the caveat that when it is finished instruct staff to move on with looking at the other options of the raised pedestals. This agreement is the starting point in getting the artwork and the raised pedestals to complete the block end project.

Ms. Laughlin explained that this was the first step in getting the art pedestals completed. Staff modified an agreement from the City of Sparks for their artists and traveling artwork and worked with Dave Stanton on the agreement. Staff felt that it was a good agreement that put a lot of the responsibility on the artist and not on the City. The artists are responsible for transporting, installation, removal, and then paid accordingly. Once the agreement is in place, there is a service agreement out with Catherine Wines to get the pedestals designed. Once the design is

complete it will go out to bid and get built. Then staff will be able to negotiate with some artists and get the artwork installed.

Mayor Keener said hopefully the concrete pour was thick enough to support the weight of the pedestals. He asked if that needed to be engineered.

Ms. Laughlin explained that it was currently being engineered.

Mayor Keener said that the concrete might have to be torn out.

Councilwoman Mandy Simons said the block ends looked great. She liked that the light would hang over the art work.

Mayor Keener said he was excited about it and hoped it was enough to get it done in terms of the art work. He asked if each artist would receive up to \$10,000.

Ms. Laughlin explained that was just the recommendation. The agreement would give Ms. Laughlin the authority to work directly with the artists to try to come up with an agreement up to the \$10,000 threshold. It might be a two or three-year agreement. As the agreement states, the artists don't get all of the money up front. They will get the remainder of the money once the artwork is removed. This will give staff some leeway to reach out to some of the artists and negotiate. They really didn't know if \$10,000 would be enough or not. It might be that staff would have to reach out to some local artists as well as Burning Man Art.

Councilwoman Simons asked if the agreement would work for anyone. (Yes)

Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager, thought it was important to consider giving staff that authority, because he wanted to have staff reach out to determine if any artists are interested in coming to Elko and find out what the cost was going to be. We want these to be multiyear contracts. At the same time, we can be working on finalizing the pedestal design. He didn't want to build pedestals if they didn't have artists that were interested in coming to Elko.

Mayor Keener said he supported that.

Councilman Morris hoped they could find some local artists that would be interested in showing their work down there.

Mayor Keener said if they couldn't find any one local there might be a possibility for some recycled art that had been at a different location.

**\*\*\* A motion was made by Councilwoman Mandy Simons, seconded by Councilman Chip Stone to accept the Agreement for the Installation of Artwork and grant staff the authority to negotiate with each artist up to \$10,000.00 for potential multi-year display of their artwork in the downtown corridor block ends.**

*\*Motion passed unanimously. (4-0)*

- C. Review, consideration, and possible approval of a partnership with the Downtown Business Association for a rehabilitation project of the planter areas within the corridor from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Approximately 1996-97, the downtown corridor planters were adopted by existing businesses or families in memory of loved ones. This was a project not associated with the City of Elko. The adoption program was intended for the planters to be maintained by those individuals or businesses. Many of the businesses are no longer in business and many of the planters are in great disrepair. The DBA would like to partner with the Redevelopment Agency on the planter project for a workday of August 21, 2021. Redevelopment Advisory Council reviewed this item at their July 22, 2021 meeting but couldn't get a successful vote on the matter.

Ms. Laughlin said it was sad to have these beautiful block ends and some of the planters in great disrepair. She was approached by several different businesses, one being Stockmen's. They asked if they could rehab the planters that are directly in front of their business. They stated that the planters reflect on Stockmen's and the Ramada, as the guests think that they own the parking lot. The water wasn't working in a portion of the planters. They took out a lot of the dirt, put down weed barrier, and put down bark. They haven't planted any plant material, because we wanted to make sure the water system was working well before they planted anything. Some of the planters look fabulous. There are a couple in front of the Western Folklife Center that look great. Jacques Errecart takes care of the one in front of his business, and Nevada State Bank used to take care of the one in front of their business. Some of them look really good, some need some weeds pulled, and there are others that need more work. Ms. Laughlin reached out to the DBA, because she went through and marked down who had adopted all the planters. She wanted to find out who was still in business and who could still be contacted. The project was great idea, but they never maintained it. Here we are a few years later. We have had a few projects in the past where the RDA has paid funding towards a seasonal laborer to go down and pull weeds and maintain the planters. What happens is the water system isn't kept up and then the plants die. We want to make sure that we are going forward with this as a long term project, but make sure that they all look good not just a few here and there. Ms. Laughlin stated that as the Redevelopment Manager she had a certain spending authority without bringing it to the Agency. She had a project with Acha to fix all the water lines for no more than \$5,000. They have fixed all the water lines in the planters from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Laughlin didn't want to enter into this DBA project partnership without having water to all the planters. She asked Dave Zornes how much he spent on the materials for each of the planters they did. He stated that they spent about \$150 per planter to put down weed barrier and bark. There are 40 planters in the four blocks, but not all of them need all the work. Ms. Laughlin stated that she was requesting a \$5,000 expenditure towards the DBA's work program day. The DBA has requested \$7,500. She thought either way, they would see a difference.

Mayor Keener said it was a great project. He stated that Tammy Keener went around about 10 years ago to all the businesses and got donations for bark and the City crews helped. Mayor Keener said he was in favor of the project and he really wanted it to be done right. He recommended going up to \$7,500 to make sure there was enough funding to get everything done properly.

Councilwoman Simons liked that idea. She added that they could keep it on their radar every year, and put in a little every year so that they wouldn't have to drop \$7,500 for a long time.

Ms. Laughlin said that seemed to be the problem. Tammy put in a lot of effort, the planters looked beautiful, but it wasn't a long term solution because they weren't maintained after that. The Parks Department just doesn't have the manpower to do it.

Mayor Keener thought they could consider hiring a temp one day every other week, or one day a week, during the season to go through and do the maintenance.

Ms. Laughlin explained that there is a seasonal employee that is in charge of all the landscaping from NDOT and in the corridor. Their job is to pull the weeds and pick up trash, not looking to see if the water lines are working. In order to get that type of trained, skilled employee it is more difficult. We want to make sure that the water is always working so the plants continue to grow and look nice. We do have to replace the bark every once in a while.

There was further discussion on the planters and all the Councilmembers were in agreement that the funds were needed to get the planters looking good again.

**\*\*\*A motion was made by Councilman Chip Stone, seconded by Councilwoman Mandy Simons to approve the partnership with the Downtown Business Association for the project August 21, 2021 to rework and redo the planters with the cap up to \$7,500.00.**

***\*Motion Passed Unanimously. (4-0)***

- D.** Review, consideration, and possible approval to solicit bids for the NV Energy Underground Management Plan Cost Sharing Project, undergrounding utilities in the 400 Block Alley between Silver Street and Commercial Street, and matters related thereto.
- FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

The RDA authorized staff to apply for the NV Energy Underground Management Plan Grant at their November 12, 2019 meeting. The grant program has been developed to assist in undergrounding power lines within Redevelopment Areas. With a full complement of underground management projects statewide, the City of Elko could expect an annual cost sharing cap of \$19,258.36 but due to the lack of other applicants within the State of Nevada for the 2021 grant cycle, the proposed contribution from NV Energy will be approximately \$58,348.00 of a total estimate of \$126,368.00. The City will have additional cost of contracting the electrical for individual service reconnection as well as the applicable tax on the project. The project cost for the City of Elko's share is expected to be under \$100,000 and therefore staff will solicit bids from three reputable companies.

Ms. Laughlin explained that staff had been working on this project for many years. She started this conversation with NV Energy in early 2019, when the City was in conversation with Stockmen's on a partnership with the Redevelopment Agency for redoing that parking lot. At that time staff thought it would be nice if all the utilities could be undergrounded, so that it wouldn't hinder the ingress and egress into the alley from the parking lot. It would help with the design of the parking lot, and possibly add some more landscaping. Staff started the conversation

with NV Energy at that time, hoping that they would just say they would do it. They came back about a month later with this Grant Program for redevelopment agencies. They thought it would be perfect for this project. NV Energy thought that the City of Elko would be the first applicant and maybe the only recipient. The City applied for the grant in November 2019. NV Energy never gave us a grant approval notification, they just verbally told us that we would be receiving grant funding. They were waiting to see how many other grant applications they could get. Had everyone in the state applied for the grant, the maximum amount we would have received would have been \$19,258. There were only three applicants in the state, so we were allocated \$58,348. This is a great project, because we probably won't see this type of cost share contribution from NV Energy again. It took them a long time. Ms. Laughlin said she was sending weekly and monthly emails asking for the agreement, contract, and design. The Redevelopment Agency paid \$1,000 towards the initial design agreement and didn't hear anything for a while. We finally received this project cost summary, and it could change once the project goes out to bid. They are pretty conservative, and felt it would be close to actual cost. It is difficult to understand, so staff had to get NV Energy to explain it line by line, which is how Ms. Laughlin got the numbers in the background information. There is a 15.4% tax that the City has to pay. The costs will be split equally, but on top of the City's 50% there will be that 15.4% tax. It is a good deal. Ms. Laughlin thought they should go out and get estimates, see where they come in at, and see if they could get this project completed this fall.

Mayor Keener thought it was a fantastic idea and plan to underground the power. He was astonished at the price when the undergrounding was done at the Centennial Tower.

Ms. Laughlin said the undergrounding utility portion of the project came in at around \$176,000.

Mayor Keener thought it was wonderful to have the cost share opportunity. Since that is such a focal area, we don't want to have the power lines in there. It would improve the ingress and egress for the parking lot, and also provide for more parking and landscaping areas as well. Is it expensive? Yes, but Mayor Keener thought it was an investment in the downtown and worth the expenditure.

Ms. Laughlin said to keep in mind that the NRS definition of blight included overhead utility lines, so when you eliminate the overhead utility lines you are eliminating blight.

**\*\*\*A motion was by Councilwoman Mandy Simons, seconded by Councilman Clair Morris to authorize staff to solicit bids for the NV Energy underground project on the 400 Block alley between Silver and Commercial Streets.**

***\*Motion passed unanimously. (4-0)***

## **II. REPORTS**

### **A. Budget**

*Ms. Laughlin reported on the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 budgets, which are included as Exhibit A.*

*Mayor Keener said it appeared that there was a short fall in anticipated revenues from the 2020/2021 cycle. He asked if that was right.*

*Ms. Laughlin explained that it wasn't a short fall. What happened was there was an error in the budget process. Jan was new to the City of Elko and we were starting the budget and we were going off of some data from the County that shouldn't have been used as the projected revenues. We actually brought in more in the 20/21 cycle than in the 19/20 cycle. Staff just budgeted too much.*

*There was further discussion regarding the process of getting the projected revenue information from the County and the growth of the projected revenue.*

*Councilman Stone asked if the Stockmen's parking lot project was still a possibility.*

*Ms. Laughlin explained that it remains in the budget because the RDA took action on it and allocated the \$99,999. Mr. Zornes is still working with the owners to get it to happen. She thought it would help the owner see that the City is still full speed ahead by undergrounding the power lines. It shows that we are committed to it and we really want to see the parking lot developed. If they aren't going to do it, they should sell it, or convey it, to the City. She thought that Mr. Zornes was concerned about the additional users and that they should be contributing to get it done.*

*There was further discussion regarding the Stockmen's parking lot project.*

## **B. Block Ends**

*Mr. Thibault wanted to give an update on the Block Ends Project. The project is substantially complete. There are just a couple of electrical connections to be made with some of the irrigation controls and some asphalt patching that needed to be completed. Otherwise that project is done. Mr. Thibault was pleased with the results. At the next meeting the RDA will be able to issue final acceptance for the project.*

## **C. Storefront Program**

*Ms. Laughlin reported that there were still some outstanding grants from 2018. We are slowly getting the applicants to come in and request reimbursement. They are either not doing the project, or partially doing the project and not asking for full reimbursement. Ms. Laughlin spoke to another applicant today from 2020 that has been completed for quite some time. She gave them all the forms and told them to submit for funding. She didn't see any of the applicants from 2021 being permitted yet, with the exception of Lostra.*

## **COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

*There were no public comments made at this time.*

**NOTE:** The Chairman or Vice Chairman reserves the right to change the order of the agenda and if the agenda is not completed, to recess the meeting and continue on another

specified date and time. Additionally, the Redevelopment Agency reserves the right to combine two or more agenda items, and/or remove an item from the agenda, or delay discussion relating to an item on the agenda at any time.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Mayor Reece Keener, Chairman  
Redevelopment Agency

DRAFT

**Elko Redevelopment Agency  
Agenda Action Sheet**

1. Title: **Review, consideration and possible acceptance of the Block End Project and matters related thereto. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**
2. Meeting Date: **January 11, 2022**
3. Agenda Category: **APPROPRIATIONS**
4. Time Required: **10 Minutes**
5. Background Information: **At the February 23, 2021 Elko Redevelopment Agency meeting, the RDA awarded a contract to MKD Construction for the Block End Project. The project has been completed and staff recommends final acceptance of the project.**
6. Budget Information:  
    Appropriation Required: **\$595,828.27**  
    Budget amount available: **\$675,000.00**  
    Fund name: **Redevelopment Agency**
7. Business Impact Statement:
8. Supplemental Agenda Information:
9. Recommended Motion: **Final Acceptance of the Block End Project**
10. Prepared By: **Cathy Laughlin, City Planner/Redevelopment Manager**
11. Committee/Other Agency Review:
12. Council Action:
13. Agenda Distribution:

Agenda Item # I.B.

**City of Elko Redevelopment Agency**  
Agenda Action Sheet

1. Title: **Review, consideration, and possible ratification for a funding request from Elko Park Foundation to participate in the Elko Mural Expo 2021 in the amount of \$5,000.00, FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**
2. Meeting Date: **January 11, 2022**
3. Agenda Category: **APPROPRIATION**
4. Time Required: **10 minutes**
5. Background Information: **City of Elko Arts and Culture Advisory Board hosted the Elko Mural Expo 2021 and a donation in the amount of \$5,000.00 was made on behalf of the RDA. CL**
6. Budget Information:  

Appropriation Required: **\$5,000.00**  
Budget amount available: **\$5,000.00**  
Fund name: **Redevelopment Agency**
7. Business Impact Statement: **Not Required**
8. Supplemental Agenda Information:
9. Recommended Motion: **Approve the ratification of the \$5,000.00 expenditure from the RDA fund to Elko Mural Expo 2021**
10. Prepared By: **Cathy Laughlin, City Planner/Redevelopment Manager**
11. Committee/Other Agency Review:
12. Agency Action:
13. Agenda Distribution:

Agenda Item # I.C.

**City of Elko Redevelopment Agency  
Agenda Action Sheet**

1. Title: **Review, consideration, and possible action to accept the 2021 Redevelopment Agency Annual Report, and matters related thereto. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**
2. Meeting Date: **January 11, 2022**
3. Agenda Category: **NEW BUSINESS**
4. Time Required: **10 minutes**
5. Background Information: **Pursuant to the provisions of NRS 279.586, the agency shall submit to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, for transmittal to the Legislature, and to the legislative body an annual report on a form prescribed by the Committee on Local Government Finance. CL**
6. Budget Information:  
    Appropriation Required: **N/A**  
    Budget amount available: **N/A**  
    Fund name: **N/A**
7. Business Impact Statement: **Not Required**
8. Supplemental Agenda Information: **2021 Redevelopment Agency Annual Report**
9. Recommended Motion: **Accept the 2021 Redevelopment Agency Annual Report**
10. Prepared By: **Cathy Laughlin, City Planner**
11. Committee/Other Agency Review:
12. Agency Action:
13. Agenda Distribution:



City of Elko  
1751 College Avenue  
Elko, NV 89801  
(775) 777-7100 (775) 777-7106 Fax

**January 11, 2022**

**Ms. Brenda Erdoes, Director  
Legislative Counsel Bureau  
401 South Carson Street  
Carson City, NV 89701-4747**

**RE: Redevelopment Agency Annual Report per NRS 279-6025**

**Dear Ms. Erdoes;**

**Pursuant to NRS 279-6025, the City of Elko Redevelopment Agency “shall submit to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, for transmittal to the Legislature, and to the legislative body a report on a form prescribed by the Committee on Local Government Finance that includes, without limitation, the following information for the redevelopment area for the previous fiscal year”.**

**Please find enclosed the City of Elko Redevelopment Agency Annual Report for 2021.**

**If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Cathy Laughlin, City Planner, at (775)777-7160.**

**Sincerely,**

**Reece Keener, Chairman  
City of Elko Redevelopment Agency**

# Redevelopment Agency Annual Report

For Redevelopment Areas Established Before 7/1/2011

PURSUANT TO NRS 279.6025

Agency Name: City of Elko Redevelopment Agency

Project Area Name: Redevelopment Area

Tax District Number(s) 11.5

Please Provide the Following Information:

Fiscal Year covered by this report: 2021

1. Property tax revenue received from any tax increment area, as defined in NRS 278C.130: \$355,148.68 <sup>a</sup>

2. Combined overlapping tax rate of the redevelopment area: 3.4823 <sup>b</sup>

3. Effective property tax rate of the redevelopment area: 2.7168 <sup>c</sup> (overlapping rate minus carve-out rate)

4. Total sum of the assessed value of the taxable property in the redevelopment area: 52,390,130 <sup>d</sup>

5. Is the amount in #4 (above) less than the total sum of the assessed value of the taxable property in the redevelopment area for any other previous fiscal year?

☐ Yes

☒ No

If Yes, please explain the reason for the difference (attach additional pages if necessary): <sup>e</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Attach a copy of any memoranda of understanding (MOU) into which the agency enters.

Detailed MOU attached:

☐ Yes

☒ No

7. Attach a detailed amortization schedule for any debt incurred for the redevelopment area and the reason for incurring the debt.

Detailed amortization schedule attached:

☐ Yes

☒ No

8. Has there been any change to the boundary of the redevelopment area?

☐ Yes

☒ No

If Yes, please explain the reason for the change (attach additional pages if necessary): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This report prepared by:

Catalina Laughlin

Name (please print)

City Planner/Redevelopment Mgr.

Title

1/11/2022

Date

  
Signature

a Source:

b Source:

c Source:

d Source:

e Source:



# Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

Vol. 68, No. 11  
November 2021

## Inside this issue

**Two ways to enhance  
downtown's tree canopy... 2**

**Coping with the downsides  
of electric scooters..... 4**

**Incentives bring 17 new  
businesses downtown... 5**

**Downtown invests in  
post-modern bathroom... 6**

**Shuttle service sponsored  
by DDA..... 8**

**Stimulus money to be used  
for homeless outreach... 9**

**7 ways to make cities less  
stressful ..... 10**

**Pandemic parking, Support-  
ing local businesses, "Win  
the Window," and more .. 11**

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West Avenue Social  
District Maintenance and  
Operations Plan

Communities continue  
to seek public restroom  
solutions, Archive article

New logo boosts city identity  
and locally made products,  
Archive article

## ATTRACTION

### How one downtown is balancing outdoor drinking with family friendliness

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper recently signed a new law allowing cities to establish "social districts" that permit outdoor consumption of alcohol.

Downtown leaders quickly embraced the change, part of the COVID-19 loosening of alcohol rules around the nation. The thinking is that Americans might want to go back downtown, but that they aren't keen on sharing indoor space in a pandemic.

The North Carolina Retail Merchants Association pushed for the

state's relaxation of alcohol laws, and cities jumped on board. Kannapolis has already approved a downtown social district. Wilmington and Charlotte are considering it.

"I don't think anyone is envisioning us trying to be Bourbon Street. But we can be more modern and innovative with laws surrounding our entertainment and tourism and our food and drink culture," Charlotte City Councilman Larken Egleston tells Axios Charlotte.

In Kannapolis (est. pop. 48,630),  
*(Continued on page 3)*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### After five years, locally made branding campaign still hanging on

Back in 2016, New Haven, CT (est. pop. 130,257), launched a campaign to market locally produced goods by giving products a distinctive logo and promoting them under the Made in New Haven brand.

As of mid-2021, the program is still going — although it has lost much of its momentum, one city official says.

On the positive side of the ledger, some 75 products — craft brews and

clothes, barbecue and board games, pasta sauce, even boats that compete in rowing races — sport the Made in New Haven mark.

"It was wonderfully exciting to see the Made in New Haven label show up in stores on regular shelves," says Elinor Slomba, who managed the initial branding campaign and remains a consultant to the city initiative.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Two ways to enhance downtown's tree canopy

Ben Shardlow, director of urban design at the Mpls Downtown Improvement District, acknowledges that he's a bit jealous of other downtowns, at least when it comes to their lush tree canopies.

"You go to some cities, and it seems like the trees just leap out of the ground," Shardlow says.

That's not the case in Minneapolis (est. pop. 429,605). The city's notoriously bleak winters are tough on street trees in an unexpected way:

public works officials use salt to melt ice and snow on sidewalks and streets, and the salt creates harsh soil conditions for trees.

In another manmade challenge, much of downtown Minneapolis' rainwater drains straight to the Mississippi River, with little left for downtown trees, Shardlow says.

But in recent years, Minneapolis has placed a new emphasis on caring for the trees in its city center. The result is a healthier population of trees and a higher survival rate for new plantings.

The International Downtown Association recognized the Mpls Downtown Improvement District with the Downtown Achievement Award of Excellence for its work and initiatives related to Greening Lab, the title of its tree-friendly efforts. IDA honored the group in the category of Public Space Management and Operations.

Minneapolis might seem an unlikely locale for a greening effort. The city's latitude means that shade isn't a public health priority to the same extent that it is in Sun Belt cities.

But Shardlow says even a city known for cold winters needs trees.

"We have severe heat island effects," he says. "In the summer, downtown can be inhospitable."

Trees also can mitigate air pollution. What's more, trees simply make a downtown more beautiful and inviting.

### Getting trees to grow

Greening Lab is an overarching initiative to grow street trees in downtown Minneapolis. While the city boasts a nation-leading park

system and leafy neighborhoods, the downtown has been a gap in the city's tree canopy for generations.

Greening Lab's most basic role is a common-sense one: The city now makes sure to water every street tree every week until it reaches maturity. While some trees are covered by a downtown-managed irrigation system, most are not. Many young trees had to live or die on rainwater.

That fundamental bit of maintenance had long been overlooked in a city that's otherwise friendly to trees.

"Everybody loves to come out to tree plantings," Shardlow says. "The challenge in Minneapolis isn't getting trees into the ground. It's getting them to grow."

Greening Minneapolis arranged for a watering truck to visit every young tree in the city every week. The watering happens overnight, so that city workers encounter less traffic and fewer cars parked in front of the trees that need water.

That effort costs about \$30,000 a year, Shardlow says.

Watering is just one part of Greening Lab. Other features of the initiative are:

**Tree tags.** Minneapolis labels trees with tags to draw attention to new trees. The tags educate residents and visitors about the individual tree and the benefits it generates, as well as how to report maintenance concerns.



*"The challenge in Minneapolis isn't getting trees into the ground. It's getting them to grow."*

**Scavenger hunt.** The city hosts a family-friendly scavenger hunt downtown. This annual event guides visitors to 10 trees. Each of the tree tags prompts visitors to send a text message to learn about the tree at that site and provides clues to the location of the next tree.

**Tree census.** Minneapolis now measures, tracks, and records detailed information about the performance of all 6,400 trees downtown.

**Soil standards.** The city pays close attention to the soil surrounding each new tree. Minneapolis uses soil sensors to learn more about nutrients, water levels, and salinity conditions.

**“Adopt a tree” program.** Greening Lab is soliciting financial support, with the goal of expanding its reforestation efforts to more of downtown’s neighborhoods.

Minneapolis hopes the success of Greening Lab can build momentum for more investment in trees.

### Getting trees in the ground

Philadelphia is also striving to enhance its urban tree canopy. The city lost 6 percent of its street trees in a decade, according to a 2018 report commissioned by the city. Tree loss has been concentrated in low-income areas.

“We have been looking at the tree canopy as really critical public health infrastructure,” Alexa Bosse, a founding principal at Hinge Collective, a public-interest design firm and subcontractor for the Philadelphia’s Urban Forest Strategic plan, tells NextCity.

By some measures, Philadelphia’s low-income areas with no trees can be as much as 20 degrees hotter than leafy neighborhoods during the heat of summer.

“People have a really strong emotional connection to trees. But this disparity between where there are trees and where there are not trees feels very personal to a lot of people,” says Bosse.

In September, the city announced that its Tree-Philly program would give away 1,000 trees to Philadelphia residents. Trees may be planted in private yards or on city streets.

Street trees must be planted at the property owners expense and must be done by a certified arborist with a permit from Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. Volunteers are also available to plant street trees twice a year at no cost to property owners.

“I’m excited about the ability of this plan to start to make small changes that will grow into larger changes,” Bosse says.

*Contacts: Ben Shardlow, Mpls Downtown Improvement District, 612-338-3807; Alexa Bosse, Hinge Collective, 267-579-2782. TreePhilly, [treephilly.org](http://treephilly.org). **DIX***



## How one downtown is balancing outdoor drinking with family friendliness — Continued from page 1

the city council approved creation of a social district called the West Avenue District. Patrons of downtown establishments with state alcoholic beverage permits are allowed to drink alcohol on sidewalks and public areas in the social district.

The social district includes portions of West Avenue, Main Street, and other downtown streets. Customers who buy an alcoholic drink at Chophouse 101, Latin eatery Sabor, or Old Armor Beer Company will be allowed to take the beverage outside of the restaurant and

drink it on the sidewalks or public areas inside of the social district.

***"I don't think anyone is envisioning us trying to be Bourbon Street."***

"The West Avenue District lends itself to this type of social district," says City Manager Mike Legg. "We specially created areas where people could dine outdoors, and this legislation allows people to buy an alcoholic beverage and food at our new restaurants and brewery and sit outdoors and enjoy their meal."

### **Keeping downtown family friendly**

Wary of the Bourbon Street brand, Kannapolis includes a number of restrictions to ensure the downtown remains family-friendly.

- Bars must ensure they meet all legal requirements for carding and limiting consumption of alcoholic beverages. The establishment can serve only two beers, two wines, or one liquor drink to one patron at a time.
- Drinks must be purchased and consumed within the boundaries of the West Avenue District.

- Anyone with a drink in the designated West Avenue District must throw away the drink before leaving the district.

- Drinks must be in specially labeled cups which are sold by establishments in the West Avenue District. They must be less than 16 ounces.

- Drinks are allowed in the district from 10 a.m. to midnight Monday through Saturday and noon to midnight on Sundays.

- Once the patron leaves the establishment with the drink container, the patron cannot enter any other building in the downtown or a vehicle without discarding the drink.

- Kannapolis police will enforce the restrictions of the West Avenue District.

The 4,900-seat Atrium Health Ballpark, the downtown home of a Class A affiliate of the Chicago White Sox, is adjacent to but not part of the district. Fans must discard their ballpark beers before they leave the premises. And no alcoholic beverages purchased from other establishments are allowed inside the ballpark.

Contact: Mike Legg, City of Kannapolis,  
704-920-4309. **DIX**



[DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com)

To see the **West Avenue Social District Maintenance and Operations Plan**, go to [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on **"Web Extras."**

## **ACCESS AND MOBILITY**

### **Coping with the downsides of electric scooters**

By one measure, electric scooters have been a clear hit in Pittsburgh, PA (est. pop. 300,281). In the two months after the city launched service in July 2021, scooter operator Spin sold more than 150,000 rides.

However, Pittsburgh's program also brought complaints familiar to every city that has tried to embrace a new era of micro-mobility. City officials and residents noted that riders left scooters strewn on sidewalks, blocking bike lanes, and dumped in parking spots, including handicapped spaces.

Residents took to Twitter and other social media sites to post photos of poor behavior by scooter users.

While those complaints are common across downtowns that have allowed scooters, Pittsburgh had one quirk: Some daredevils rode Spin scooters in the Liberty Tunnels, a pair of mile-long roads beneath Mount Washington.

Pittsburgh's transportation czars admit they were surprised that riders would be so bold as to take scooters with a 15 mph maximum speed into a long tunnel with a 40 mph speed limit and no bike lane or shoulder.

"You cannot ride them through the Liberty Tunnels. You can't go across the Liberty Bridge with them," Councilman Bruce Kraus said, according to the Post-Gazette. "You have to use common sense, for God's sake, please."

City officials responded with new rules — including making the Liberty Tunnels off-limits to scooters.

Spin is able to control where the scooters can and can't operate by shutting power when the vehicles travel outside of safe zones.

The city council also passed a new ordinance mandating that users are at least 18 years old, travel no faster than 15 mph, ride only on streets with a maximum posted speed of 25 mph, and ride in designated bike and pedestrian lanes when possible.

Despite the complaints, city officials see scooters as an important mobility option for downtown and neighborhoods near downtown. An estimated 20 percent of Pittsburgh residents don't own vehicles, so the scooters offer a practical alternative.

Spin has addressed clutter by deploying a fleet of vans staffed by workers who clean up illegally parked scooters.

Meanwhile, riders must pass a short quiz about scooter rules before using the vehicles for the first time. Spin says it's fining scoff-laws, and the city has been taking pains to communicate the rules around the new type of vehicle.

In Ann Arbor, MI (est. pop. 119,976), city officials are also restricting scooter speeds downtown.

E-scooters first arrived in Ann Arbor three years ago when Bird brought its fleet to the city. The city now has an arrangement with Spin scooters.

Raymond Hess, the city's transportation manager, said Spin's scooters are capable of speeds up to 15 mph, but the city has asked that they be limited to 10 mph within a geo-fenced area around the downtown core, according to MLive.

People who own their own e-scooters still can go about 20 mph in many cases. **DIX**

## ATTRACTION

# Incentives bring 17 new businesses downtown

For many downtown leaders, the pandemic playbook included such moves as encouraging outdoor dining, creating pick-up zones, loosening rules around public consumption of alcohol, and otherwise supporting merchants through a tough time.

In South Florida, the Miami Downtown Development Authority struck a more aggressive tone. In October 2020, the DDA launched its Follow the Sun economic development campaign. The city offered employers up to \$150,000 over three years in exchange for relocating or expanding to downtown Miami and creating high-wage jobs.

A year later, the Miami DDA reports big results from its effort:

- Follow the Sun brought 17 new-to-market firms to downtown Miami. They moved from New York, London, California, Canada, and Germany.

- These companies have committed to occupying 250,000 square feet of office space in downtown over the next three years.

- The new employers will create 1,835 new jobs over the next three years, with average salaries of \$128,000 (plus benefits).

- The new arrivals will invest \$42 million in capital improvements in downtown Miami.

The Miami DDA's board of directors approved up to \$940,000 in funding to facilitate the arrival and expansion of these firms.

The Follow the Sun program is an extension of the Miami DDA's ongoing campaign to recruit finance firms, startups, and tech and innovation companies.

"Miami has always been a business-friendly city, and the Miami DDA's Follow the Sun campaign is raising the stakes by sending a message that this is a community

that takes economic development seriously, both in terms of the jobs it creates and the support it brings to existing businesses,” says Manolo Reyes, city of Miami commissioner and chairman of the Miami DDA.

Among the companies recruited by the program are a hedge fund, a health care technology company, and a cryptocurrency company.

Economic developers in Florida long have positioned the state as a locale with low taxes and warm weather. However, one part of the pitch — cheap real estate — has grown less compelling. While offices and homes remain less expensive in Miami than in major financial centers, they’re no longer quite so cheap.

Instead, Miami boosters are promoting the city as a destination with less red tape than other large cities.

“Miami has positioned itself as a business-friendly community where companies from outside the region can nurture talent, collaborate with other likeminded firms, and afford their team members a desirable quality of life,” says Miami DDA Executive Director Christina Crespi.

Crespi says the program includes not just cash subsidies but also assistance with office relocation plans, making connections with local universities, and fostering collaboration with existing businesses downtown.

Contact: Christina Crespi, Miami Downtown Development Authority, 305-579-6675. **DIX**



[DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com)

To read an **archive article on public restroom solutions**, go to [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on **“Web Extras.”**

## CLEAN AND SAFE

# Downtown invests in ultramodern bathroom

Public restrooms pose a conundrum in downtowns everywhere. If you want to welcome visitors, you need clean commodes. But many a public washroom has been commandeered for uses that may make visitors uncomfortable.

Athens, GA (est. pop. 126,718), is addressing the dilemma by adding a pricey potty known as the Portland Loo to its downtown. The steel structure’s brand name is a nod to Portland, OR, where the public restrooms debuted as an easy-to-clean, graffiti-resistant alternative to standard lavatories.

The latest models include an exterior hand-washing station, solar lights, a faucet for filling water bottles, and a baby-changing table. See-through grates at the top and bottom allow police to make sure only one person is in the unit at a time.

The Portland Loo isn’t cheap. Athens will spend \$314,000 to build a concrete pad and to install the unit, and the city is budgeting \$33,000 a year for maintenance — nearly \$1.2 million over 20 years. The cost was a point of contention among commissioners, with some saying it was too expensive.

“I go to the question here of spending \$314,000 on one public seat, one public toilet,” Commissioner Mike Hamby said,



according to the Athens Star-Banner.

Local officials approved the investment over his objections.

Athens isn't the only place where Portland Loos have sported eye-popping price tags. In Vancouver, BC, the park board spent \$645,000 on a single Portland Loo. "Flush with cash," the Vancouver Sun cracked.

The prefabricated toilet itself cost \$150,000. The rest of the money will pay for sewer and water connections into the park, a structural pad, and landscaping.

Ironically, the Portland Loo was designed as a solution to the problem of super-expensive

public toilets. The idea was spurred after the city of Seattle invested \$5 million in five self-cleaning public toilets, only to dismantle them and sell them on eBay in 2008. The price? Just \$12,549.

"The commodes became filthy hide-outs for drug use and prostitution," The Seattle Times reported at the time.

Portland Loo says its commodes have been installed in 20 cities in North America. The company says the stain-less steel structure ages well — units that are a decade old look nearly new, Portland Loo claims. **DIX**

***"I go to the question here of spending \$314,000 on one public seat, one public toilet."***

## After five years, locally made branding campaign still hanging on — Continued from page 1

On the not-so-bright side, however, the program hasn't added new makers in recent years because of a lack of funding.

"It's still there. It's just not very active because we don't have the resources to commit to it," says Steve Fontana, New Haven's deputy director of economic development. "It was a fantastic idea. But it just requires sustained effort."

Made in New Haven needs about \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year for events, marketing, and recruiting new makers, Fontana says. But he doesn't see money in the city budget for that type of outlay.

New Haven is on the small side for a locally made campaign. Such initiatives largely have been the purview of states and large cities such as San Francisco and Brooklyn.

"Large cities or states have enough of a population of businesses to distribute the costs across a broader base," Fontana says.

For mid-sized cities with a base of small manufacturers and artisans, a locally made brand is an exciting concept. Downtown businesses gain additional marketing muscle, and local residents feel a stronger sense of place.

"Real estate on labels is really dear, so

making room for Shop Local is a tough sell in the beginning," Slomba says. "But it is important. Consumers, now more than ever, are willing to pay to support their values. People want to see their city thrive."

The launch budget for Made in New Haven was \$20,000, Slomba says. Early expenses included hiring an intellectual property lawyer to register the mark and a graphic designer to create a logo.

A 2016 launch event featured catered food and goodie bags with samples for people to take home. Slomba says the project's lasting power has been impressive.

"People are jaded about launches," she says. "That's why the one-year anniversary, to me, was more significant. Made In New Haven has had a long tail of interest."

The project persevered despite an early hit to its funding. A state budget impasse in 2017 resulted in less money flowing to the city to promote Made in New Haven.

The vagaries of public funding lead Slomba to offer this advice to downtowns launching their own locally made initiatives: Find a way to collect a nominal fee from the makers benefiting from the brand.



[DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com)

To read an [\*\*archive article on the launch of the Made in New Haven program\*\*](#), go to [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on [\*\*"Web Extras."\*\*](#)



“I might build in some kind of a business model where there’s a licensing fee,” she says. “Then you start to support the project from its own funds. That revenue stream would be important for maybe doing something on Shop Local Saturday on Thanksgiving weekend.”

When it launched half a decade ago, Made in New Haven opted not to collect a fee from local manufacturers, reasoning that downtown producers might not be keen to pay for an unproven concept.

***“Consumers, now more than ever, are willing to pay to support their values. People want to see their city thrive.”***

“It was kind of an unknown,” Slomba says.

However, Fontana wonders if New Haven businesses really would be willing to pay for the program.

An annual fee of \$500 per business would bring in \$37,500 in funding for marketing efforts, but he suspects few manufacturers would be willing to pay that much.

In addition to the city, other partners in the branding effort include the Town Green Special Services District, the Ninth Square Historic District, and the New Haven Manufacturers Association.

The Made in New Haven certification was made available to three types of businesses: manufacturers that make products in or in honor of New Haven, retail companies that sell those products, and web-based businesses that promote the city.

Among the participants: Skappo, an Italian restaurant that distributes sauces in stores; Neville Wisdom’s Fashion Design Studio; craft beer maker Rhythm Brewing Co.; and Elm City Games, a maker of board games.

Vespoli Racing Shells, a manufacturer of high-end racing boats used by rowing crews, sits atop the Made in New Haven price range. Its boats can sell for more than \$30,000.

The reality of global manufacturing means that sourcing products with entirely local ingredients and labor is difficult. So the city’s licensing process focuses on such things as the location of the headquarters and the work force, and how the company manages its supply chain.

Slomba says the bar for Made in New Haven products is based on this question: “On balance, are you putting some conscientious effort into sourcing locally and having a local presence?”

Contact: Steve Fontana, City of New Haven, 203-946-2867; Elinor Slomba, Arts Interstices, 203-812-9093. **DIX**

## ACCESS AND MOBILITY

### Shuttle service sponsored by DDA

In mid-October, the Downtown Development Authority in West Palm Beach, FL (est. pop. 111,952), launched a three-month pilot project to sponsor the downtown’s on-demand electric shuttle.

The service, provided by an operator known as Circuit, offers rides throughout downtown and the town of Palm Beach.

“We’re constantly looking for opportunities to reduce congestion and get people out of their cars,” says DDA Executive Director Raphael Clemente. “Through both the Circuit shuttle and Downtown Trolley, we’re giving residents and visitors multiple options to make it easier to enjoy what downtown has to offer.”

Circuit currently operates in larger cities in eight states. The company seeks out partnerships which allow it to expand into new markets, often with funding provided by brand sponsorships.

In 2016 San Diego, CA, began offering a free shuttle service from Circuit. “Free Ride Everywhere Downtown,” or “FRED,” was launched via a partnership between the city, Civic San Diego, and the Downtown San Diego Partnership. Initial funding of \$500,000 came from downtown parking meter revenue managed by Civic San Diego, says radio station KPBS.

The Circuit vehicle’s design and exterior advertising increase visibility for the shuttles, and for sponsors. “Cars operate in fixed coverage areas, maximizing exposure to highly trafficked areas,” says the company. Sponsoring brands can also be featured in the app, and within outbound notifications.

The DDA is just the latest sponsor to support West Palm Beach’s downtown shuttle service. Circuit has been operating in the area since 2014. The free service was underwritten by sponsorships until last spring, when the company began charging \$3 per ride. With the DDA’s support the shuttles will again be free.

Three of Circuit’s six vehicles will sport the DDA’s logo during the sponsorship program. After that, the DDA will decide whether to pursue a longer relationship.

“By working with DDA, not only are we making it free, we are also increasing our hours so we can open as early as 7:30 in the morning,” Circuit CEO Alexander Esposito told the Palm Beach Daily News.

Riders can schedule lifts through the Circuit smartphone app. Rides are available between any two designated pick-up/drop-off locations within the Circuit zone.

Downtown West Palm Beach has experienced a development boom in recent years, and the growing population density underscores the importance of alternative modes of transportation.

“The more convenient we can make it for people to get out and move around without their private vehicles, the better off we are,” Clemente told the Daily News.

Contact: Raphael Clemente, West Palm Beach Downtown Development Authority, 561-833-8873. **DIX**

***“The more convenient we can make it for people to get out and move around without their private vehicles, the better off we are.”***

## CLEAN AND SAFE

# Downtown directs stimulus money to homeless outreach

Duluth, MN (est. pop. 85,617), will invest \$300,000 in social services outreach to address its downtown homeless population.

The City Council in September approved directing the money to the city’s Greater Downtown Council.

The \$300,000 comes from American Rescue Plan money and will cover three years of services.

The Greater Downtown Council will contract with Block by Block, a company that provides clean and safe services to a variety of

downtowns throughout the country.

Kristi Stokes, head of the Greater Downtown Council, says the money means that a full-time social worker will devote 40 hours a week to working with the city’s homeless population.

“This isn’t the silver bullet that’s going to solve all of our issues,” she told KBJR. “This is just one tool in the toolbox.”

On its website, Block by Block says its social workers are experts who have received training in providing outreach services to vul-

nerable members of communities. Its social service coordinators attempt to direct homeless people to community service providers.

The investment in clean and safe services

came over the objections of some council members and the local NAACP, which asked for the American Rescue Plan money to be spent citywide, rather than just downtown. **DIX**

## PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

# 7 ways to make cities less stressful

As the COVID-19 pandemic created a mental health crisis, urban planners Jenny Roe and Layla McCay formulated a new way of thinking about the role of urban design in fostering healthy environments.

Their new book, *Restorative Cities: Urban Design for Mental Health and Wellbeing*, outlines seven concepts that are fundamental to this emerging topic of study. Roe is director of the Center for Design & Health at the University of Virginia's School of Architecture. McCay founded the Centre for Urban Design and Mental Health, a London think tank.

"Restorative urbanism is a new concept that places mental health, wellness, and quality of life at the forefront of city planning and urban design," they write.

They formulated seven design concepts that can make a downtown feel restorative rather than stressful. Some, such as the importance of green space and water views, are obvious. Others are less apparent.

- **The green city.** Downtown leaders everywhere accept the importance of parks and greenery. "Natural settings are believed to promote restoration by creating a sense of being away," Roe and McCay write. "Nature can create a feeling of psychological and/or geographical distance from our everyday demands." Integrating nature into downtowns can alleviate depression and stress, while also boosting brain function and sleep quality. The quality of the green space also matters. An expanse of grass is good, but not as good as the same area with a variety of green features.

- **The blue city.** Whether the water feature is natural or man-made, water creates feelings

of calm. Cities that aren't on rivers or lakes can use canals, fountains, and other water features to create respites.

- **The sensory city.** Downtowns can create an assault on the senses. Carving out quiet places — "sonic refuges," McCay calls them — can help. So can building visual variety by requiring buildings to evoke curiosity, rather than simply looming as large masses.

- **The neighborly city.** Loneliness became a pandemic of its own during the era of lockdowns. Cities should design parks that facilitate social interactions, such as with chess boards and dog walking areas, or boost the odds of interactions by positioning a mini-park next to a market or church.

- **The active city.** This concept revolves around integrating walking, cycling, and other physical activity into residents' daily routines.

- **The playable city.** "Play fosters resilience and harnesses people's curiosity," McCay tells CityLab. "It's very important that opportunities for play are not just for children." As an example, the authors point to Chicago's Cloud Gate sculpture, the reflective installation that spurs many a photo opportunity, and Detroit's Heidelberg Project, an outdoor art installation.

- **The inclusive city.** This is the idea that downtowns are designed to welcome everyone. "The theoretical default of who cities are designed for tends to be able-bodied working men, and that means that others who don't fit into that default are having to shape themselves to the city rather than having the city shape to their needs," McCay says. **DIX**

# Idea Exchange

## Billboard welcomes workers downtown

When Promedica, a nonprofit healthcare system, moved its corporate office to downtown Toledo, OH, in 2017 the management team wanted to be sure that everyone felt welcome in the new location. One part of the welcome campaign came in the form of a strategically placed digital billboard. The words, "Promedica Welcomes You!" and a rotating list of all 900 new downtown employees greeted staff on the way to work. "The feedback I've had from my team, they just can't say enough," said Director Julie Cook.



Attendees receive a Healdsburg business directory, map, current events calendar, and various goodies that are distributed along the tour route. The tour lasts roughly an hour and a half. The cost is \$15 for chamber members and \$20 for non-members.

## Pandemic parking changes to continue

The city council in Delaware, OH, has approved an ordinance to make its "grab and go" parking a permanent fixture downtown. According to *The Columbus Dispatch*, the city created 37 "grab and go" spaces in the spring of 2020. The ordinance calls for that number to be reduced to 23 permanent 15-minute spaces. City Economic Development Director Sean Hughes said after the city council meeting that Main Street Delaware Inc. helped the city make the decision by collecting input from downtown businesses.

"Pretty much all businesses downtown wanted to see some sort of 'grab and go' parking spaces. They just wanted to make sure they were able to be used by patrons of both food services and retail businesses," Hughes said.

## Helping visitors and locals find what they want

In the heart of Sonoma wine country, the City of Healdsburg boasts a charming town plaza lined with shops, restaurants, tasting rooms, galleries, and bars. With all of that on offer, it's hard for local business owners and their employees to know about everything the downtown has available. The solution is the Downtown Healdsburg Familiarization Tour. The tour is a collaborative effort between the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce and Wine Country Walking Tours. Each tour covers the history of the city, current information about the city, and introductions to several local business owners.

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\* US \$246, Canada \$251, Elsewhere \$267.

# Idea Exchange

## Supporting local businesses and schools

Now in its 13th year, the Shop for Schools program in Roscoe Village, OH, continues to encourage people to shop locally and support their schools. The mechanics are simple: for two days in early October, participating businesses agree to donate 20 percent of their sales revenue to local schools. When shoppers make a purchase, they specify which school should receive the money. The six schools to receive the most money also receive a \$1,000 donation from the chamber of commerce, which sponsors the event.

## Downtown district's emergency response plan

Wildfires, severe storms, and flash floods are plaguing a growing number of communities across North America. From tiny towns to major cities virtually every community is vulnerable. In Houston, TX, the Downtown Management District prepares for these types of situations with a comprehensive emergency response plan. The plan details the role of the district within the larger framework of the city, state, and region. In addition to natural disasters, the plan covers chemical/biological hazards, terrorist attacks, and power grid disruptions.

According to the plan, the district's goal is to inform and assist stakeholders before, during,

## Shoppers can "Win the Window" downtown

Shoppers in downtown Greenville, OH, can shop local and "Win the Window" this holiday season. Participating businesses provide merchandise and gift certificates which are attractively displayed in a storefront window.

Shoppers receive a ticket for every \$5 they spend at participating downtown businesses between November 23 and December 8. The businesses distribute tickets and have glass jars available to collect them for the prize drawing.

In prior years, a single winner received all of the gifts in the window. Due to the overwhelming support of businesses this year, Main Street Greenville created four themed prizes: shopping, dining, entertainment, and services. Each prize is valued at over \$450.



and after an emergency in order to return the public realm to normal as quickly as possible. The district's emergency response plan is available online at [www.downtowndistrict.org/emergency-planning](http://www.downtowndistrict.org/emergency-planning).

## Zoning for growth

In an effort to spur growth and redevelopment in the city's historic business district, the Washington,

MO, city council recently voted to create a new downtown zoning district. The changes will address many of the issues that hindered redevelopment. The changes will "allow for zero lot lines, mixed use with retail on the lower floor and residential on the second or third floors," says Community and Economic Development Director Sal Maniaci. The changes will also eliminate off-street parking requirements for businesses in the district. **DIX**



# Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

Vol. 68, No. 12  
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## Inside this issue

**Lynn Lights wins praise for community involvement. . . 2**

**Free parking remains, but downtown makes other changes for walkability . . . 4**

**How one downtown cleaned up a park on a shoestring budget. . . . . 5**

**With housing in short supply, office conversion fills the need . . . . . 6**

**Aging bridge converted to pedestrian-only traffic . . . 9**

**TIF district yields success — but with some setbacks along the way. . . . . 10**

**Walking clubs, Geocaching, removing chewing gum, and more. . . . . 11**

**@DowntownDevelopment.com**

Beyond Walls mural festival,  
Archive article

Gateways Initiative,  
implementation guide  
and photographs

## ATTRACTION

### Gateway project creates strong sense of place

The Colorado Springs Gateways Initiative was a clear win for the city's downtown. The new landmark signs at the entrance to downtown are eye-catching, and the project was honored with an award from the International Downtown Association.

Downtown leaders in Colorado Springs, CO (est. pop. 478,215), began planning the project in 2016, and physical installations took place from 2017 through 2020. That extended timeline led to inevitable confusion about who had agreed to take on which tasks.

Susan Edmondson, president and CEO of the Downtown Partnership of Colorado Springs, says her main takeaway from the project was surprisingly mundane: "Take notes on everything."

Executing the Gateways Initiative required the cooperation of the state Department of Transportation and numerous city departments, along with outside engineering, architecture, and design firms. In instances of staff turnover, a new employee might have no recollection of prior agreements.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### To fight blight, agency buys downtown's tallest building

The 37-story office building at 100 N. Main St. in Memphis, TN (est. pop. 651,088), is a reminder of both downtown's promise and its challenges.

The tower is the tallest structure in the downtown skyline. Yet it has sat empty since 2014. Thieves have harvested the copper wiring. And vandals have knocked books from the shelves of dusty law libraries left behind by attorneys who once rented office space there.

"There was a lot of deferred maintenance and expense," says Brett Roler, the Downtown Memphis Commission's vice president of planning and development. "Vacant buildings don't get better on their own. They often get worse."

Many downtowns cope with blighted properties, but usually on a small scale — in the form of a vacant lot, perhaps, or a neglected old building. In Memphis' case, the

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Lynn Lights wins praise for community involvement



DowntownDevelopment.com

To learn more about the **Beyond Walls mural festival**, go to [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on **"Web Extras."**

A series of public art projects — including an innovative lighting installation in a formerly dreary underpasses — has helped Lynn, MA (est. pop. 94,300), shake off its malaise.

The initiative, known as Lynn Lights, garnered media attention and won praise from groups such as the Center for Community Progress.

Lynn was once known as the world's shoe-making capital. These days, shoes are made outside of the U.S., and the former industrial hub just north of Boston suffers from economic challenges. Per capita income in Lynn is barely half that of the broader Boston area.

In 2014, as part of a project to turn things around, the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency named the city as part of its Transformative Development Initiative.

The state agency hosted a series of community meetings to better understand the city's challenges and identify areas of opportunity. In those meetings, community members shared concerns about the underpasses on Market Street, Washington Street, and Central Square.

"These underpasses were more than just uninviting," the Center for Community Progress says. "Over the years several people had been struck and killed by cars while walking there. Residents saw those underpasses as part of the reason why Lynn as a whole was struggling."

The feedback in those community meetings inspired a group of community members to form Beyond Walls in 2017.

Beyond Walls' first project was a 10-day international mural festival held in July 2017. That event attracted more than 5,000 people, and Beyond Walls hosted a second annual mural festival in 2018.

But perhaps the most eye-catching move came when Beyond Walls created a public exhibition of vintage neon art pieces and a large-scale dynamic LED lighting project to activate an underpass in downtown Lynn.

The first step in the lighting project was funding it. The team focused on fundraising as well as gathering in-kind support and pro-bono work from architects, designers, and tradespeople. Joining Beyond Walls were the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 103, and others. MassDevelopment offered Beyond Walls a \$50,000 grant — but only if the upstart organization could raise the same amount in donations within 60 days. The nonprofit reached its goal in just 14 days, partly by winning support from the business community and partly by convincing architectural firm Payette to take a role in the project.

In 18 months Lynn Lights illuminated 16,000 square feet of underpasses. Workers drilled 530 holes to support more than 600 feet of underpass lighting. And some 500 people turned out for the kick-off celebration.

The public art installations have proven that murals and lights can help reshape a downtown, says Al Wilson, chief executive officer of Beyond Walls.

"We activate spaces to strengthen communities," Wilson tells the *Boston Globe*. "Much of the artwork is on private buildings, but it changes what happens in the public realm."

Contact: Al Wilson, Beyond Walls, 781-309-7551. **DIX**



# Gateway project creates strong sense of place — Continued from page 1

“There’s so many different partners and players in this,” Edmondson says. “Corralling everybody in alignment was, understandably, very difficult. We learned the value of excellent note-taking in a meeting.”

Without a paper trail, small but crucial commitments can get lost in the shuffle. Edmondson says keeping copious notes allowed the Downtown Partnership to turn to its files when necessary: “Our minutes from last year show that your agency committed to this.”

“Securing some of these permissions and commitments can take months and months and months,” Edmondson says.

But if those agreements aren’t memorialized in writing, they can be forgotten.

## Creating a sense of arrival

As for the project itself, the idea of the Gateways Initiative was to solidify the identity of downtown and make entryways more welcoming.

“For us, it was about creating a sense of place and recognition in the historic city center,” Edmondson says. “Creating that sense of arrival was really important to us. This is not just a signage project. This is not just a landscaping project.”

The Gateways Initiative aimed to enhance nine entry points into the heart of Colorado Springs, which attracts more than 6 million visits annually. The project endeavored to build visible boundaries around downtown, and to stimulate new business and commercial interest in the outer edges of downtown.

The project included electrified signage, landscaping, hardscaping, public art, wayfinding signage, and lighting treatments.

While some of the nine downtown gateways are interstate exits, others are in historic neighborhoods of single-family homes. Colorado Springs customized its signs by location. It installed 30-foot pylon signs at commercial city entryways and more modest monument-



style signs in areas with lower density and single-family homes nearby.

While all signs shared common themes, designers varied the materials depending on the context of each installation. At most entry points, the Gateways Initiative used rust-brown steel signs to match the natural features and the red brick of older buildings.

At locations with a more contemporary look and feel, signs were made of blackened and stainless steel to coordinate with nearby buildings of steel and glass.

Landscaping featured xeric plants and grasses native to the area — an improvement on the water-intensive bluegrass that had previously dominated the plantings at those locations.

The \$1.3 million cost of the project was funded through a 5-mill property tax levy. Downtown leaders took pains to get early buy-in from the taxpayers footing the bill.

“By involving our property owners early in the conversation, that created a sense of pride and commitment,” Edmondson says.

While the major work is completed, Edmondson says she expects to continue making improvements — such as new crosswalks, new art installations — and handling routine maintenance for years to come.

“Projects like this never really end,” she says. “It’s something that you don’t just walk away from.”

Contact: Susan Edmondson, *Downtown Partnership of Colorado Springs*, 719-886-0088. **DIX**



[DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com)

To see an **implementation guide** and **photos of Colorado Springs' Gateways Initiative**, go to [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on **“Web Extras.”**

## Free parking remains, but downtown makes other changes for walkability

Free parking is the downtown amenity that urban purists love to hate. On the other hand, paid parking is the toll that downtown merchants despise.

Alex MacLachlan of the Escondido Downtown Business Association is in the latter group. When the city council in Escondido, CA (est. pop. 151,619), proposed charging for parking at the city's free downtown lots way back in 2014, MacLachlan was one of the merchants who opposed the move.

*Saying no to something is always easy."*

"Lots of business owners showed up with pitchforks and torchlights and said, 'Heck no,'" MacLachlan says. "But that was the easy part. Saying no to something is always easy."

The business owners prevailed in objecting to paid parking. But they also started a collaboration with the city that should culminate in a post-pandemic makeover of downtown Escondido. The new project will cost \$15 million.

The city had removed its parking meters years earlier. Coming out of the Great Recession, MacLachlan argued, bringing back paid parking would be a risk. His feelings remain similar after the COVID-19 downturn.

He worries that paid parking kills impulse stops at takeout restaurants. He also says potential patrons of the shoe repair place or the antique shop will be thwarted if the only free parking is on the periphery of downtown.

"If they have to walk a block, maybe that transaction won't happen," MacLachlan says.

Of course, those arguments run counter to the case that urbanists make against free parking. By not charging for parking, they argue, cities devalue their curbside space. And in a mild climate like Southern California's, who would object to walking a block?

But MacLachlan says paid parking makes visitors feel unwelcome.

"I think cities should benefit on the back end," he says. "If the city is out front with their hand out when the consumer first arrives, that slows down buying behavior."

In his seminal book *The High Cost of Free Parking*, another Southern Californian — Donald Shoup, a professor at UCLA's Department of Urban Planning — argued against free parking. Free parking promotes sprawl, discourages walking, and discriminates against those who can't afford cars, he contends.

The long-fought debate over paid parking will continue, but Escondido won't charge for parking after it renovates Grand Avenue, the San Diego suburb's main downtown drag.

But big changes are coming — and MacLachlan is fully on board.

In one significant change, the city's overhaul will narrow Grand Avenue from four lanes down to two. MacLachlan has no complaints about that shift.

"We never thought Grand Avenue needed four lanes," MacLachlan says. "It's not a thoroughfare; it's a shopping district."

The permanent change mirrors temporary moves the city enacted early in the pandemic. Escondido transformed parallel parking areas into dining areas and narrowed Grand Avenue to two lanes of traffic from four.

"The pandemic actually allowed us to create a pilot project on outdoor dining," MacLachlan says.

After that experiment proved the viability of outdoor dining, the city is incorporating



that trend in its permanent overhaul of Grand Avenue. The work, funded in part by the city's proceeds from the federal American Rescue Plan, includes widening a sidewalk, building diagonal parking to create a net total of 45 additional parking spaces, installing new light fixtures and overhead string lighting, and building fences around outdoor dining spaces.

A landscaped median strip in the center of Grand Avenue will be removed, as will temporary barriers that were installed during the pandemic to create space for outdoor dining.

Future phases of the project call for additional widening of sidewalks, three more traffic roundabouts, gateways, kiosks, and public art.

And while merchants don't always see eye to eye with downtown leaders about parking, they can agree on the appeal of quaint city centers.

"People like hanging around historic downtowns," MacLachlan says.

Contact: Alex MacLachlan, *Escondido Downtown Business Association*, 760-207-6321. **DIX**

## CLEAN AND SAFE

# How one downtown cleaned up a park on a shoestring budget

In downtown Anchorage, AK (est. pop. 288,000), Town Square Park was once a hub of antisocial activities. Through sustained efforts, the Anchorage Downtown Partnership turned the public space into a hub for community activities.

The success story shows downtown leaders can make a difference without a big budget. In Anchorage, Town Square Park was transformed with attention rather than a major financial commitment.

"In downtown Anchorage, we're looking for underused or problem spaces that have fallen by the wayside — places where people may not feel comfortable going — and we're taking these spaces back," Rosie Frankowski, placemaking coordinator for the Anchorage Downtown Partnership, tells Alaska Business magazine.

Anchorage Downtown Partnership launched its cleanup efforts with Town Square Park.

"People didn't hang out in the park unless there was an event happening, and there

were problems with drug use, homelessness, and crime," Frankowski says. "You can try to mitigate these issues, but to make a park viable, the community needs to use it. Otherwise, it becomes a place for negative activity."

Anchorage leaders sought improvement through positive activities, programming, and beautification.

"You want to make it a place where people want to hang out," Frankowski says.

To achieve that goal, the downtown organization took over the space by hosting daily activities. In the summer of 2017, the group hosted more than 140 activities in the park.

"It worked amazingly well," Frankowski says. "We had yard games, small concerts, and buskers performing, as well as a weekly Live after Five program."

Spurred on by that early success, the Anchorage Downtown Partnership expanded its activities. The park added a community piano, and the Anchorage Downtown Partnership worked with the Anchorage Library to bring in a book cart with rotating titles. During the

summer, there are also free dance and fitness classes.

Merchants have taken note. An ice cream shop leans on buskers to entertain customers while they wait in line.

***“To make a park viable, the community needs to use it. Otherwise, it becomes a place for negative activity.”***

“People come for music, ice cream, and just to hang out,” Frankowski tells *Alaska Business*. “It’s a positive, low-cost event that has a big impact.”

That sort of cross-promotion is a hallmark of Anchorage’s place-making program. By hosting free events, downtown attracts visitors who spend money with downtown merchants. Merchants, in turn, provide instructors for downtown classes.

At first, the Anchorage Downtown Partnership had no budget for placemak-

ing activities. So downtown leaders looked for inexpensive ways to host events and to partner with other organizations, such as Anchorage Parks & Recreation.

In its early days, the downtown group did receive a \$10,000 community grant to launch a Movies in the Park series. And the momentum has grown over the years.

“The first year, there were maybe 10 to 30 people at events; at Anchorage Yoga last June, 200 people showed up, which we didn’t expect,” says Frankowski. “Live after Five draws a huge crowd, and the Summer Solstice Festival attracts between 10,000 and 20,000 people. Now we have to prepare for crowds.”

Contact: Rosie Frankowski, ***Anchorage Downtown Partnership***, 907-279-5650. **DIX**

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### With housing in short supply, office conversion fills the need

The coronavirus pandemic has upended downtown real estate markets. Many city centers suddenly have too much office space and not enough housing, a shift that has caught the attention of housing economists and developers.

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) recently published an overview of downtown office buildings that have been converted to housing in recent years. NAR points to one project, in downtown Silver Spring, MD (est. pop. 63,195), that serves as an interesting model.

Repurposed from an office building built in 1964, Octave 1320 is an 8-story apartment condominium. It features efficiency units intended to attract first-time buyers looking for affordable and walkable properties.

The conversion started in August 2014 and was completed in May 2016. The building is an 8-minute walk from the Silver Spring transit stop and the Silver Spring Commuter Rail. In 2017, Octave 1320 earned the Excellence in Adaptive Reuse award from the Urban Land Institute Washington.

The conversion of the office building into a mid-rise condominium was undertaken by the developer Promark Real Estate Services LLC and designed by the BKV Group.

When the project kicked off, Silver Spring’s office vacancy rate was 12.8 percent while the apartment vacancy rate was just 6.2 percent. That spread has since widened.

According to Montgomery County’s planning department, the developer was able to offer affordable units because parking is not

required, unit size is small, and condo designs are streamlined.

Octave 1320's units are small. There are 102 units that average just 590 square feet.

But BKV Group added touches that make the small units look and feel larger. There are nine-foot-high ceilings, sliding bedroom doors, and energy-efficient floor-to-ceiling windows.

The developer converted a former boiler room at the top of the building into a "sky lounge," a main attraction for prospective buyers and a gathering place for residents.

Other community amenities include a fitness center, a common-area lounge with

fireplace, and secure bike parking in the building's basement.

Octave 1320 is located within the Silver Spring Parking District so the building did not need to provide onsite parking. Residents can park in the nearby county-owned garage. Many residents don't own cars and rely on ride-sharing apps and bikes.

Montgomery County invested \$4.1 million in the project and Truist Financial provided debt financing. According to Promark, about 80 percent of the new condo owners are first-time homebuyers, many of them millennials. **DIX**

## To fight blight, agency buys downtown's tallest building — *Continued from page 1*

most visible building downtown is deteriorating. The tower stands just two blocks from the Renasant Convention Center, Memphis' freshly renovated conference venue.

"Every single person who visits that convention center is going to walk past this," Roler says. "Imagine what it means to somebody's memory of the city to see the tallest building vacant and blighted. This property is damaging our image as a place to live, work, and invest."

To stop the decay of a downtown landmark, the Downtown Memphis Commission this spring deployed a creative — and risky — strategy. It paid \$10.75 million for the entire block that's home to 100 N. Main.

The two-acre property includes not just a skyscraper but also an eight-story parking deck. To close on the deal, financed by the PILOT, or payment in lieu of taxes, fund, the Downtown Memphis Commission needed approval from both city and county commissioners.

Roler says elected officials from both bodies understood the importance of 100 N. Main to the health of downtown.

"This building was on a path to nowhere," Roler says. "We decided enough was enough. It was important for us to catch a falling knife and stop this building's deterioration."

### A long decline

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Memphis experienced an economic boom. The city was a hub for the cotton and lumber trades,





DowntownDevelopment.com

To see a **video tour** of 100 N. Main St., go to [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on **"Web Extras."**

and home to a burgeoning music scene. When 100 N. Main was proposed in 1962, the developer expected to build a 22-story tower.

But demand for downtown office space was so robust that the plans grew to 32 floors, then 37. The building opened in 1965.

Alas, downtown Memphis' boom days ended shortly after 100 N. Main hit the skyline. Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed downtown in 1968, and Memphis endured an urban exodus throughout the 1970s.

The city continues to struggle economically. It has a poverty rate of 21.7 percent, well above the statewide rate of 13.9 percent, and incomes are below state and national norms, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

"We're a resource-poor community," Roler says.

He's not the first to envision a redevelopment of 100 N. Main. New York-based Townhouse Management Co. was the previous owner of the tower. The developer announced various plans for the building's redevelopment, including a mixed-use project with 200 residential units and 550 hotel rooms.

The hotel was to be branded as a Loew's property in anticipation of the \$200 million renovation of the Renasant Convention Center. However, Loew's in early 2019 backed out of 100 N. Main's redevelopment.

Townhouse Management Co. sued Loew's but couldn't compel the company to stick with the 100 N. Main project. As the COVID-19 pandemic emptied downtown of tourists and office workers, the building fell into further disrepair.

In March 2021, the Downtown Mobility Authority, an affiliate of the Downtown Memphis Commission, closed on the property.

### A breathtaking climb

Roler says the potential of 100 N. Main is impossible to miss. It's a 579,000-square-foot tower that's within a five-minute walk of some 700 hotel rooms, more than 1,000 residents, and more than 10,000 jobs.

Even so, Roler acknowledges he was concerned that the Downtown Memphis Commission was taking a risk that might not pay off.

"It's a big number. This is the most ambitious thing we've tackled," he says. "My concern was were we going to be left with the building and no exit strategy."

As landlord of a large building, the business improvement district is responsible for insurance costs, for example. Roler checks on the exterior of the building daily and ventures inside regularly.

In hopes of getting out of the ownership business as quickly as possible, Roler launched an aggressive marketing campaign. He created an ad that promised, "Free Sky-scraper!"

"What we were trying to communicate with that ad was a sense of humor and a willingness to be a good partner," Roler says. "Our market is still a soft market in a lot of ways. We have to be willing to meet developers where they're at."

He reached out to 375 developers and conducted 29 tours. The building has no electricity, and the elevators haven't operated for years, so touring the tower meant hiking up 37 flights of stairs.

## Downtown pursues smaller projects, too

While the Memphis Downtown Commission is playing a key role in the redevelopment of a landmark building, not all of its economic initiatives are so splashy. Some of the smaller-scale policies of the business improvement district are:

- **A development loan program.** Memphis has made 20 loans since 2015 through this program, which is aimed at Black and female developers. The loans are for up to \$200,000, at an interest rate of just 1 percent. The loan spurred the development of Malone Park Commons, an example of a "missing middle" residential project.

- **Pre-development grants.** These awards of up to \$5,000 help new developers explore reuse and redevelopment projects, with an emphasis on women and people of color. "We're trying to grow the ecosystem of developers," says Brett Roler of the Downtown Memphis Commission.

- **Sidewalk grants.** This new program pays for private property owners to repair public sidewalks.

Because there was no air conditioning, Roler scheduled these climbs for the crack of dawn, before Memphis' mercury had climbed.

Roler would stop every five or 10 stories and stroll one of the floors so developers could get a feel for the layout — and catch their breath. At the rooftop, visitors were rewarded with a sweeping view of the Mississippi River and the city.

"Developers aren't scared of cobwebs," Roler says. "Developers, when they get in this building, see that it can be brought back to life."

In the end, 11 developers responded to the Downtown Memphis Commission's request for proposals, and the field has been winnowed to six finalists. Roler hopes that the winner will include about 400 residential units in the project, and that the existing tower will be redeveloped rather than demolished.

However, he says he's willing to be flexible if necessary. And in spite of Roler's promise of a "free" building, he acknowl-

edges the city's private partner will have to come up with a big chunk of change.

"This is a \$200 million project," Roler says. "You still have to come up with a significant amount of capital."


The city of Memphis is further sweetening the pot with the promise of \$10 million in additional incentives, along with a lease of 60,000 square feet of office space at the building.

Memphis developer Chance Carlisle was one of the developers to submit a proposal for 100 N. Main.

"It's an iconic eyesore," he told Memphis's *The Commercial Appeal*.

After a tour, Carlisle said he decided the building could be renovated rather than demolished.

The Downtown Memphis Commission hopes to pick a developer by the end of this year and begin construction next year.

Contact: Brett Roler, [Downtown Memphis Commission](#), 901-575-0574. 

***"Developers, when they get in this building, see that it can be brought back to life."***

## PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

# Aging bridge converted to pedestrian-only traffic

The Fifth Street bridge in Augusta, GA, was built in 1932. By 2020, it was showing its age. A treacherous bump in the roadway forced motorists to slow down and the railing on the sidewalk was too low to be considered safe by modern standards.

So in 2020, the city and the Georgia Department of Transportation agreed to close the bridge to vehicles. Rather than remove the structure altogether, they embarked on repurposing the bridge as a pedestrian thoroughfare linking downtown and North Augusta across the Savannah River.

The bridge is scheduled to open to foot traffic in 2022 with new park-like features, including a shade plaza and a history walk.

Lampposts will run down the center of the path and enough space will allow emergency vehicles to use the bridge. Other features include a water fountain, a kid zone with playground equipment, sidewalk chalk pavers, a maze and musical instruments, shaded benches, device chargers, planters, and landscaping.

Lights will be installed under the bridge to increase illumination. Their colors can be changed to reflect the seasons and local events.

Augusta Tomorrow, which assisted with the master plan, said the bridge would be a destination attraction and part of what could be called the “Westobou Crossing” market creation project.

“By tying the North Augusta and Augusta communities together with new development that literally spans the Savannah River, a destination attraction for both cities could be created,” the group says on its website. **DIX**

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

# TIF district yields success — but with some setbacks along the way

In St. Albans, VT (est. pop. 6,804), a tax-increment financing district launched in 2012 has produced some noteworthy successes. But the TIF also led to a withering report from the state auditor, which said the city hadn’t complied with rules around TIFs.

On the plus side, St. Albans achieved its first success with the construction of an Ace Hardware store in the heart of downtown on an underutilized brownfield site.

The city bought the property, demolished the existing buildings, cleaned up contamination, then sold the property to the store’s owner, *Vermont Business* magazine reports. That project created a template for other TIF-driven investments downtown.

For its second TIF project, St. Albans aimed for a new state office building, a new hotel, and a new parking garage. Once again, the city stepped in to buy the land, clear it of pollutants, and then sell it to developers.

When the city’s Design Advisory Board balked at the design of the hotel, feeling it wasn’t quite right for downtown, the city invested \$1 million from the sale of the land for the new state office building into the hotel, becoming an equity partner. That investment enabled the construction of a building which better fit the community’s vision.

Three additional structures have also been built downtown, including one

with 60 new apartments and another that houses space for the Community College of Vermont.

Along with these developments, streetscape projects made St. Albans’ downtown more walkable and attractive, while addressing traffic and stormwater issues.

St. Albans is expanding its TIF-driven investments outside of downtown, with additional brownfield projects. TIF is a popular financing mechanism that lets municipalities borrow to fund infrastructure projects, and earmark a portion of new state and municipal property tax revenues to repay the debt.

“The tool that makes this all possible is TIF,” City Manager Dominic Cloud tells *Vermont Business*. “Everything that’s occurred in the last seven years has been talked about for the last 30.”

However, the sailing hasn’t been entirely smooth. In 2019, Vermont’s state auditor released a report saying St. Albans had run afoul of many TIF rules. For instance, the city used TIF district debt proceeds to pay the debt service on its TIF debt, which isn’t allowed. It also treated the parking garage as tax-exempt when it should have been taxable, the state auditor said.

The unfavorable findings led to a follow-up report issued this year, and continued state scrutiny of St. Albans’ TIF program. **DIX**

# Idea Exchange

## Walkers explore cities, downtowns

The Newark Downtown District puts feet on the street with the NDD Walking Club. The club is temporarily suspended due to the pandemic, but at its height, the club attracted residents, workers, and students to the free mid-day walks. The club typically runs from May through October and offers walkers three different routes every day between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Members can often be spotted with their NDD Walking Club gear, such as water bottles, backpacks, and T-shirts. Each Walking Club season ends with prizes for healthy accomplishments, such as the most walks attended, most steps taken, most weight lost, etc.

The Walking Group in Troy, NY, is also getting fit and exploring city neighborhoods. The group meets at 5 p.m. every Thursday evening for a one to three mile walk. The village website includes a monthly list of walks, details on conditions and length of the walk, and a sign-up form.

## The return of geocaching

Downtown treasure hunts can draw people into the city center, introduce them to downtown highlights, and boost foot traffic at downtown businesses. Clues can lead participants to historic sites, interesting businesses, or other downtown gems.



During the pandemic geocaching saw a resurgence as people sought outdoor activities for the whole family. Geocaching is a high-tech cousin of the traditional scavenger hunt. Participants use GPS coordinates to find hidden boxes, which typically contain trinkets and a log book. For each trinket taken, one is left behind for the next geocacher to find.

Downtown organizations have been using geocaching to bring visitors to the city center since the early 2000s. For example, three large geocache treasure boxes were hidden at various locations in downtown Eureka Springs, AK.

The GPS coordinates of each cache were available on the website geocaching.com and in a brochure titled, "Discover the Secrets of Downtown Eureka Springs." The brochure was available online and at many downtown businesses.

Today, there's a geocaching app and a new generation ready to explore downtown. Learn more at geocaching.com.

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## Downtown Idea Exchange

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# Idea Exchange

## Downtown expands shop local message

When the community of Chillicothe, MO, transformed a “downtown eyesore” into an attractive, well-used public space, local contractors and materials were used throughout. The Silver Moon Plaza is an open-air, multi-use space that features fountains, benches, and room for concerts, entertainment, and cultural events.

One of the goals for the project was to source as many materials as possible locally.

Crystal Narr, former director of Main Street Chillicothe, explains: “We tried to keep everything as local as possible, and were able to for the most part. The fencing sections at the front and west side of the plaza were taken from a historic girls school turned correctional facility. They were sandblasted, repainted and are now a fabulous addition to the plaza.”

Work generated by Silver Moon Plaza buoyed local contractors and other businesses. “The economic impact of the project not only helped our local contracting company but many others as well,” Narr says.

## Food for fines

With the winter holidays fast approaching, many downtowns will be offering free and reduced price parking to encourage shoppers to come downtown and linger longer. Many communities also participate in Food for Fines programs. In

## Chewing gum bane or boon

In an effort to improve aesthetics and the visitor experience, the City of McAllen, TX, embarked on an effort to remove gum from downtown sidewalks this summer.

City crews used a combination of power washing equipment and a gum removal steamer to tackle the mess. Reactions to the clean up effort were largely positive notes the local ABC affiliate. Mario Delgado, the city's director of transit and downtown services took advantage of the opportunity to remind downtowners to do their part in keeping the streets clean, “We request that you take care of our sidewalks and our streets and use the trash,” Delgado said.

Halfway across the country, used chewing gum has become a tourist attraction. The iconic Pike Place Market in downtown Seattle, WA, is home to the Market Theater Gum Wall. The site is literally a brick wall covered in brightly colored pieces of used chewing gum.

According to the Winnipeg Free Press, the attraction was born of necessity, “In the early 1990s, the theatre's staff got tired of picking and scraping off all the gum that patrons would stick under their seats so they started making announcements asking them to stop.” Instead, theatergoers deposited their gum on an ally wall outside of the theater. And the tradition grew. The ally is periodically cleaned, but the gum returns year after year.

Angela Shen, founder of Savor Seattle Food Tours, tells the Free Press that one enterprising merchant even installed a gum ball machine to keep the tradition going.



Gum Wall, Downtown Seattle is licensed under CC-BY 2.0

Hanford, CA, anyone with a City of Hanford parking ticket that donates approximately half the ticket's cost in canned food will have their ticket dismissed. In Lexington, KY, customers who bring in 10 cans of

food receive \$15 off any LEX PARK or Lexington Police issued parking citation. Customers with multiple citations may bring in as many cans as they wish and receive \$15 credit for every set of 10 cans. **DIX**



# Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

Vol. 69, No. 1  
January 2022

## Inside this issue

**Downtown district plays  
hardball with sidewalk  
permits for eateries . . . . . 2**

**Downtown marketplace  
supports local retail . . . . . 5**

**Political protesters provide  
unexpected boost to  
downtown businesses . . . . 6**

**Activating downtown alley-  
ways brings new life . . . . . 7**

**New mayor vows to  
address foul smells,  
sights . . . . . 9**

**Downtowns look to  
electric vehicle chargers  
as redevelopment tool. . . 10**

**Loud music ban, Grocery  
co-ops, Holiday scavenger  
hunts, and more . . . . . 11**

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Neighbors, Together  
final report

Promotional video for  
San Francisco light show

## ACCESS AND MOBILITY

### Facing years of construction, residents, leaders join forces

Long before anyone had heard of COVID-19, Middlebury, VT (est. pop. 6,966), faced an existential threat of a different type. An infrastructure project was set to tear up roads and disrupt the downtown for six years.

Back in 2015, the Vermont Agency of Transportation embarked on the Bridge & Rail Project, a public works investment scheduled to disrupt downtown Middlebury all the way through 2021.

In September 2015, leaders of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, which

occupies a historic building downtown, invited representatives of the Downtown Improvement District, Middlebury College, and other stakeholders to a meeting.

The gathering easily could have turned into a gripe session. After all, merchants and local leaders feared the long disruptions would drive away visitors and decimate downtown.

Instead, Middlebury's leaders decided to make the best of a tough situation. They formed a group,

*(Continued on page 3)*

## ATTRACTION

### New downtown group works to broaden office district's appeal

The outside world sees San Francisco (est. pop. 881,549) as an economic boomtown, a place defined by splashy tech companies, sky-high wages, and eye-watering real estate values.

That image is accurate as far as it goes. But even if the broader city is wildly successful, San Francisco's downtown has room to improve. Perhaps the biggest issue faced by the city's freshly formed Downtown

Community Benefit District is that the 43-block area is dominated by offices.

That wasn't such a bad thing in January 2020, when Downtown SF launched. But starting in March 2020, an abundance of office space became a liability.

With white-collar workers staying home rather than going to their offices, pedestrian traffic plummeted

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Downtown district plays hardball with sidewalk permits for eateries

For years, Miami Beach, FL (est. pop. 88,885), routinely approved sidewalk dining permits for any Lincoln Road restaurant that asked for one.

No longer. Even as the coronavirus pandemic has compelled many downtowns to ease rules around outdoor dining, Miami Beach has begun to crack down on sidewalk permits issued along the beachfront city's popular pedestrian mall and other areas in its historic district.

New rules target establishments that exceed noise limits, leave trash strewn about, violate curfews, or engage in "hawking" — aggressive marketing aimed at passers-by. After the city rejected sidewalk dining permits for more than a dozen eateries it describes as scofflaws, two sued.

The battle follows Miami Beach's decades-long growth from a sleepy city into an international hub. Officials say the city's party vibe has gotten out of control. Mayor Dan Gelber in 2020 likened public behavior in the Art Deco district to "a beachfront Bourbon Street with all-night hard drinking and too much misbehavior."

For years, Miami Beach had granted sidewalk dining permits to virtually any

restaurant in the Lincoln Road Business Improvement District that applied for one. But in March, the city commission approved a stricter permitting process that gave the city authority to deny permit applications to restaurants that broke its rules.

In a lawsuit, attorneys for two restaurants labeled the new permit review process "overly vague" and said that it gave the city "unbridled discretion" to deny permit applications based on such arbitrary factors as unfavorable online reviews. The restaurants said they would be forced to lay off scores of employees after the city rejection.

Miami Beach Chief Deputy City Attorney Robert Rosenwald said the 13 restaurants denied their permit renewals "were not advancing the mission of the city's sidewalk café program," the *Miami Herald* reported.

"We are cleaning up our city," Rosenwald wrote in a statement. "A new annual sidewalk café permit is a privilege that the city gives to its best operators, and the city code invests the city with the discretion to decide which operators are meeting the city's goals for the sidewalk café program."

As part of Miami Beach's new regulatory regime, the city reviews violations from the preceding 12-month period, assigns points to each violation, and then considers factors like bad online reviews or whether the corporate owner of the business has a history of violations. **DIX**



# Facing years of construction, residents, leaders join forces — Continued from page 1

named it Neighbors, Together, and began searching for ways to adapt.

In the group's first move, Neighbors, Together raised \$10,000 in the spring of 2016. The fledgling organization used the money to hire a professional facilitator to lead four community forums.

Those meetings resulted in more than 700 ideas — strategies and tactics that could help downtown survive the construction project. Middlebury didn't enact all of the ideas. Neighbors, Together considered but ultimately rejected such suggestions as installing free WiFi downtown and enacting a sales-tax holiday.

But Neighbors, Together embraced many other brand-building and place-making efforts. The town created a website to market itself, and it doubled down on its local currency known as Middlebury Money.

Another effort was Bundle, a pop-up event space in downtown. Bundle turned an empty storefront into a shop where artisans and craftspeople displayed their work for sale.

Now that construction has wound down, local leaders laud Middlebury's ability to come together through a tough stretch. The group considers its work over the past six years a testament to the power of community engagement.

"At the [2015 kickoff], there was significant public controversy surrounding the project and things had taken on a decidedly negative tone," Neighbors, Together writes in its final report. "While we cite a number of data-driven accomplishments during this time, we believe the greatest accomplishment has been our ability to change the tone of the project within the community from controversial and negative to one of acceptance and celebration of our community's perseverance and strength."

That overarching lesson can be embraced by any downtown facing challenges, Neighbors, Together says.

## Marketing Middlebury Money

After Neighbors, Together showed it was serious about tackling the business interruptions that loomed, the group won \$303,000 in grants from the Vermont Agency of Transportation, money intended to help the community through the drawn-out construction project.

In one effort, Neighbors, Together worked with the Better Middlebury Partnership and the National Bank of Middlebury to bolster Middlebury Money, a local currency program already in existence. The group worked to increase the number of businesses in Middlebury that accepted the "checks," raising the total from 60 percent of merchants to nearly all of them.



Neighbors, Together promoted Middlebury Money to locals as a way to keep their dollars circulating in their own community. The group also updated the look of the checks and printed additional checks to keep up with increased demand.

Boosters promoted Middlebury Money to three distinct audiences. Businesses were instructed about how to accept the alternative currency. Consumers learned about using the currency or gifting it. And employers were encouraged to use Middlebury Money for employee bonuses and holiday gifts.

Those efforts led to a surge in Middlebury Money spending. Since early 2019, Neighbors, Together says, more than \$98,000

was invested in the program, and the checks were used at 120 local businesses.

Not every initiative around the alternate currency was successful. In 2018, Neighbors, Together launched a shopping incentive called Midd Money Match. This promotion featured a punch card for shoppers to present when making purchases at local merchants. After filling up the card, the customer could earn \$10 in Middlebury Money to use in future local transactions.

The program “proved challenging and confusing,” Neighbors, Together says, and Midd Money Match was canceled.

Downtown leaders did market Middlebury Money in other ways, such as offering it as raffle prizes during Small Business Saturday, Midd Night Stroll evenings, block parties and Mother’s Day activities.

### More marketing muscle

Downtown leaders embraced other promotional efforts, too. Early in the construction project, the town of Middlebury secured a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development grant to help create the ExperienceMiddlebury.com website.

The site includes a listing of all retail, restaurant, and hospitality businesses in Middlebury, along with visitor information

and a master events calendar for the town. The site has become an oft-used resource for locals and visitors.

Traffic started at 1,285 impressions per month, surging to an average of 2,787 per month through 2020 and 3,170 monthly impressions in 2021.

Neighbors, Together produced a corresponding brochure with business listings as well as wayfinding information and area attractions. Many communities have a similar brochure and website but charge businesses for a listing; Middlebury businesses have received these listings at no cost as a result of the USDA grant.

Middlebury also began promoting itself as a conference destination, but those efforts were hobbled by the pandemic. The Vermont Bike Summit had booked meeting space for 2020, but organizers were forced to cancel.

In another promotional push, Middlebury hosted summertime block parties. In 2018 and 2019, part of Main Street was converted to a “park” and covered with sod as part of the Green Street Challenge by community partner Come Alive Outside. The space was filled with toys, games, and activities for kids and adults alike. Community volunteers handed out free popcorn, hot dogs, cotton candy, and shaved ice.

A local band played music on a stage set up in the center of the street. Businesses participated in raffles and giveaways, and community partners brought in additional entertainment including a dunk tank for local leaders.

The annual block party peaked in 2019 at 2,500 visitors and \$25,000 in local spending. A small army of volunteers turned out to make the block parties happen.

However, the pandemic sapped some of the momentum. The block party was canceled in 2020, and the 2021 version drew just 800 people.

In another innovation, volunteers worked to beautify downtown during construction. In 2018 and 2019, dozens of volunteers donated 150 hours to plant



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For a full **overview of Middlebury's efforts**, go to [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on **“Web Extras.”**



flower boxes which were placed in strategic areas of downtown near construction.

Volunteer community groups also installed public art on the fences surrounding the central area of the construction.

Overall, the comprehensive program and community partnerships are credited with ensuring that Middlebury not only survived but thrived during the lengthy construction project. **DIX**

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

# Downtown marketplace supports local retail

In Redding, CA (est. pop. 92,958), a new venture has brought together 18 small shops in one location. Called Gather Downtown, it's not quite a business incubator, not quite an antiques mart or a food hall.

Instead, it's a middle ground, an initiative that both fills vacant space and nurtures entrepreneurs.

"We wanted to put something here in downtown that would celebrate our community," Carissa Gregory, the owner of Gather Downtown, tells Action News Now.

Gather Downtown opened in the summer of 2021, and Gregory says the early signs are promising. Curious passers-by accounted for about a third of the foot traffic at Gather Downtown.

Among the tenants is Amani Hanson, an artist whose paintings, prints, and other works are priced at \$175 to \$1,500.

Before taking a space inside Gather Downtown, she sold her artwork through social media. Hanson hopes a physical presence will attract more customers.

"Every time I've been here, I've had the opportunity to talk with customers in the store more about what I do and the opportunity for commission work," Hanson tells Action News Now.

Other tenants include jewelers and woodworkers. There's a bakery, a home décor store, a clothing consignment boutique, a tea shop, and a seller of essential oils.

## A supportive environment

Gather Downtown aims to make locating and operating in the space seamless for merchants. Most spaces include power and are freshly remodeled. Some merchants qualify for build-out assistance.

Merchants can also use Gather Downtown's fully featured point of sale and e-commerce software, which promises easy set-up, instant updates to inventory in-store and online, and cloud-based, real-time inventory tracking.

Leases cover utilities and other overhead. Merchants also have access to common areas, such as inventory storage, curbside pickup spaces, bathrooms, workroom, classroom and event space, and indoor and outdoor seating.

The Redding Chamber of Commerce calls the shared space a plus for downtown.

"People walking along on the sidewalks will venture into places like this," says Jake Mangas, the Redding Chamber of Commerce President & CEO. "It keeps them in downtown and thinking about spending money and that's really a good thing. Just more to see and do really invites people to come to check it out."

Contact: Carissa Gregory, Gather Downtown, 530-215-1117. **DIX**

*"People walking along on the sidewalks will venture into places like this."*

## Political protesters provide unexpected boost to downtown businesses

At the height of racial justice demonstrations in the summer of 2020, Washington, DC, officials expressed fears of vandalism and looting after protesters damaged storefronts and frightened off less boisterous visitors.

However, as the pandemic has dragged on, DC officials have taken a dramatically different view of demonstrations. In 2021, protests have shifted from headache to economic lifeline.

With downtown offices still mostly empty and travel continuing to lag pre-pandemic levels, one source of visitors remains constant: Protesters continue to flock to the nation's capitol.

In the first half of 2021, the National Park Service issued nearly 250 permits for protests addressing such topics as racial justice, climate change, and abortion, the *Washington Post* reports.

The steady stream of activism brings financial activity to an area that's suffering sharp declines in visits from office workers and out-of-town travelers.

City officials have looked to protest tourism as an opportunity — after all, the out-of-town demonstrators need a place to stay, and they spend money at local restaurants.

Destination DC, the city's marketing arm, has begun positioning the district as a place to get a front-row seat to social change. BigBus, the largest tour bus provider in the city, has updated its script to inform tourists about the

insurrection at the Capitol in January and the creation of Black Lives Matter Plaza, the *Post* reports.

DC Mayor Muriel Bowser has embraced the theme. In October, she announced \$3 million in improvements to Black Lives Matter Plaza. Originally created in 2020 as a temporary tribute to George Floyd, Black Lives Matter Plaza has turned into both a permanent fixture and a tourist destination.

In July 2021, the city announced a \$4.8 million investment that brought pavers, a mural, lighted bollards, and other upgrades to the plaza. In October, the city said it would spend an additional \$3 million on sidewalks, benches, signage, and trees.

"If business was happening as usual, this would be icing on the cake," Elliott Ferguson, president and CEO of Destination DC, told the *Post*. "But when you don't have business at all, it's basically a Hail Mary."

When Destination DC in early 2021 requested proposals from ad agencies to design a \$400,000 marketing campaign aimed at bringing visitors back to the city, the organization noted the city's "unique ability to host peaceful First Amendment demonstrations."

"You're really looking at opportunities for people to come into a city and experience what they saw on television for months," Ferguson said of promoting Black Lives Matter Plaza. "We're hoping that they'll come for a variety of reasons, inclusive of protest tourism." **DIX**



# Activating downtown alleyways brings new life

In Denver's Lower Downtown (LoDo) neighborhood, downtown leaders have activated streets and alleyways over the past five years, an initiative that has contributed to the neighborhood's revitalization and strong sense of place.

The effort links Dairy Block, Market Station, and McGregor Square, creating what LaDonna Baertlein, director of business development at design firm DigStudio, calls "a near continuous connective thread of activated alleys."

Each of the activated alleyways in LoDo has a unique underlying theme that reflects its urban context and target demographic, Baertlein writes on the Urban Land Institute's website.

"By far, the most important decision in developing a project around an activated alley is theming, branding, and activation," she says. "Without trying to be all things to all people, mixed-use alley activated projects must appeal to broad and diverse audiences, while also establishing their own unique identity within the mix of other entertainment options in the area."

In one of the LoDo projects, the Downtown Denver Partnership launched an art alleys initiative. In an effort to boost safety and build downtown's brand, the Partnership installed art in eight alleys along the city's Sixteenth Street Mall.

The project increased foot traffic, and it also created a perfect backdrop for Instagram photos — visitors often post pictures of themselves on social media.

"Activating alleyways offers the potential for stronger connections, safer, more exciting pedestrian experiences, new opportunities for economic development, and ultimately a more vibrant urban core," Baertlein says.

She points to lessons from the alleyway activations in Denver and elsewhere:

**Lesson 1: Make it exciting.** "Establishing a 'wow' factor is key — we're talking about

enticing people into a space typically avoided in most urban environments," Baertlein says.

**Lesson 2: Get creative.** Alleys weren't designed to be well-lit, pedestrian-friendly thoroughfares. In Seattle's Railspur project, for instance, an entire city block of 150-year-old buildings was tweaked to include alleys. After the upgrade, the alley included new entrances to a hotel, a multi-family community, and an office building.

**Lesson 3: Move the trash.** When the alley becomes another front door, traditional back-of-house services must move somewhere else. For instance, trash bins might have to move underground, or to another location.

**Lesson 4: Roll with the evolution of retail.**

Introducing retail can help activate an alley, but finding the right mix of retailers is never easy, Baertlein writes. "Businesses are changing all the time and developers and property management teams must roll with the changes and anticipate shifts in trends." In Denver, that means there's just not enough downtown business to support some types of retailers, such as apparel. But service providers, florists, and jewelers can thrive. At Denver's Market Station, retail was curated to appeal to Denver's outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

Contact: LaDonna Baertlein, DigStudio, 720-328-1986. **DIX**



# New downtown group works to broaden office district's appeal — Continued from page 1



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To see the **promotional video** for San Francisco's public art show, go to [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on **"Web Extras."**

in the Financial District. And fewer people meant less business for the restaurants and bars in the district.

"The pandemic deeply impacted the downtown's 9-5 workforce population," says Robbie Silver, executive director of the Downtown Community Benefit District. "The inherent lesson is that we can no longer be just a financial district. Downtown San Francisco needs to pivot and pivot quickly to attract a more diverse range of people, businesses, and uses."

As the group prepares for post-pandemic reality, it's taking a hard look at how it can adapt. The district recently hired an urban design firm and hosted a public art show that used four downtown towers as canvases for an art form known as projection mapping.

San Francisco isn't the only city struggling with empty business districts. In Washington, DC, the DowntownDC Business Improvement District says fewer than a quarter of employees had returned to their downtown buildings by mid-September.

"Going forward, downtown will be different," Gerry Widicombe, director of economic development for the DowntownDC Business Improvement District, told the *Washington Post*. "And offices are highly likely to be less prevalent."

## Time for a new focus

Downtown SF is a special assessment district that provides cleaning, security, marketing services, and placemaking. The new district's first priority was addressing clean and safe issues such as removing graffiti from sidewalks and buildings.

Only by cleaning up could the district project the message that it was a safe and welcoming place, Silver says. "We had to get the district to a basic level of cleanliness."

The payoff from power washing and

steam cleaning came quickly. "A little goes a long way," Silver says.

Next on the agenda: Preparing for a future in which office workers no longer stream into the district from 9 to 5 every weekday. Silver doesn't think Downtown San Francisco's office towers will stay empty forever.

"People are slowly coming back to work," Silver says. "The sweatpants-work-from-home lifestyle isn't sustainable. People need to work with people. People need to be with people. We can't just be shut in our homes all day long and communicate by Zoom."

At the same time, he acknowledges, office occupancies are unlikely to achieve the levels last seen in early 2020. Some of the city's workers have moved to cheaper areas of the country and will work remotely. Others might resume commuting into the office, but perhaps only two or three days a week.

"People are going to come back to work, but it's not going to be in the same numbers as pre-pandemic," Silver says.

Many of San Francisco's most prominent employers — including Twitter, Facebook, Google, and Dropbox — have embraced work-from-home policies. Salesforce, which has 9,000 employees, is requiring workers to come in to the office just one to three days a week.

That raises an obvious question: What becomes of an office district with fewer office workers to support restaurants, bars, dry cleaners, and convenience stores?

To answer that question, Downtown SF hired a consultant to envision a new future for the neighborhood. Downtown SF is paying SITELAB urban studio \$165,000 for work that includes tactical urbanism and community engagement.

While the details are a work in progress, the Downtown San Francisco Public Realm Action Plan recommendations will include

***"People are going to come back to work, but it's not going to be in the same numbers as pre-pandemic."***

a new vision for activating vacant ground floor retail spaces, investing in public art, increasing accessibility, and adding flexible seating.

SITELAB also will explore micro-mobility solutions, and Silver expects it to propose such interventions as car-free streets, parklets, plazas, and temporary street closures for events.

SITELAB is soliciting feedback from local residents and workers. The final plan is scheduled to be unveiled in late spring 2022.

In the meantime, Downtown SF is already moving forward on some pedestrian projects. On a section of Battery Street that's closed to cars, Downtown SF is working with an artist to create a 1,900 square foot asphalt art mural. The goal is to add seating and draw pedestrians.

Silver says some of the vacant office space ultimately could be converted to residential space. The city has long faced an acute shortage of housing.

### A holiday light show

In an especially splashy event, Downtown SF hosted Let's Glow SF, a 10-day art show that projected artwork onto four downtown buildings. The exhibits — known as projection mapping — project five-minute



long shows onto buildings that include the Pacific Stock Exchange and the Hyatt Regency.

The five-minute shows repeat every five minutes. Each building's projection was designed specifically for the location by local and international artists.

Downtown SF spent \$500,000 on the art project. Spectators will see projections of galloping ice horses, flying winter hawks and snowy owls, flowering poinsettias, polar bears, and ice castles.

Contact: Robbie Silver, Downtown Community Benefit District, 415-829-3878. **DIX**

## CLEAN AND SAFE

### New mayor vows to address foul smells, sights

Pittsburgh's newly elected mayor says his top priority for downtown will be cleaning up the city center.

During a recent meeting with downtown stakeholders, the mayor-elect said he had been walking down Smithfield Street with a state representative when the pair encountered "feces right on the street."

"Downtown is not as clean or as healthy as it should be," Mayor Ed Gainey told the group, according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

The overpowering odor in the Fifth and Forbes corridor, the heart of downtown, he said, "will make you want to leave."

***"The city can't clean up downtown by itself."***



“So if the smell makes those that live here and invest here and play here want to leave, how much more do we need to clean it up if we’re going to be attractive to others?” he said. “Downtown needs to be cleaned up. It should never look like this.”

Such challenges vex many downtowns. Some downtown leaders have added public bathrooms. Others have tried new approaches to dealing with homelessness.

Still others have launched clean and safe initiatives and clean teams.

In Pittsburgh, Gainey ousted the incumbent mayor in November’s election and takes office in January. He emphasized that downtown stakeholders must join forces to address the issue.

“The city can’t clean up downtown by itself,” he said. “We don’t have enough resources to do it. We’re going to need you. Our downtown, without question, should be the safest place in America. And we can make it that way if we work together.”

Another priority for Gainey: increasing the downtown housing stock, particularly affordable units. There may be an opportunity to do so, Gainey said, given vacancies in many office buildings because of the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“If we’re going to make downtown successful, it’s because we improve our housing stock to the point where we have enough units where now downtown is a neighborhood that is centrally located where people not only live but they play downtown as well,” he said. **DIX**

## ACCESS AND MOBILITY

# Downtowns look to electric vehicle chargers as redevelopment tool

In an effort to bring new technology to historic downtowns, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul launched DRive EV Downtown. The program brings fast-charging stations for electric vehicles to downtowns in New York that are revitalizing and developing.

The first stations will be installed in Amsterdam, NY (est. pop. 17,836). Next up are downtowns in Utica, Oswego, Geneva, and Middletown.

“Everyone benefits from getting more zero-emission vehicles on the roads alongside investment and development in our

downtowns,” Hochul said in a statement.

“This will make our communities healthier both environmentally and economically.”

The New York Power Authority and the Department of State collaborated on the project. The statewide network had nearly 40 charging units as of late November. A total of 100 were slated to be installed by the end of 2021.

The fast chargers are free and can be used by any make or model of electric vehicle. They recharge a battery in as little as 20 minutes. **DIX**

# Idea Exchange

## City bans loud music, dancing downtown

The Mayor of St. Charles, MO, has taken steps to rein in violence in the city's downtown. The so called "Mayor Footloose" banned amplified music and dancing in a three block area in early 2021.

Mayor Borgmeyer and Police Chief Ray Juegnst said at a press conference announcing the ban that most of the incidents downtown happened around closing time for bars and nightclubs.

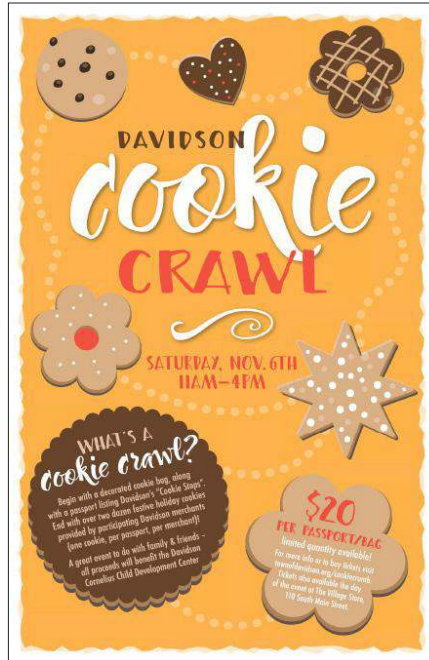
"We are asking for our businesses' cooperation in this matter for the safety of our residents and visitors," Borgmeyer said. "We do not want to have to mandate early closing times or other measures to further control the situation."

The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* notes that a similar ban was enacted earlier on North Main Street. The mayor said at the time that the "softer" Coronavirus restrictions in St. Charles were drawing many people from out of town.

## Ho, ho, holiday crawls

SantaCon returned to many cities in December. The annual Santa-themed bar crawl has sparked some controversy in cities such as San Francisco and New York where revelers dressed as Santa Clause and other Christmas characters have a reputation for getting a little bit rowdy. Despite the reputation, many downtown groups in cities of all sizes enjoy this annual event.

For a tamer activity, there's always the popular cookie crawl. In



November, the Town of Davidson, NC, hosted its fourth annual Cookie Crawl. Over 20 businesses handed out freshly baked, pre-packaged cookies to passport holders. Tickets for the event were \$20 which included a commemorative bag for holding the cookies. All proceeds support the Davidson-Cornelius Child Development Center.

## Grocery co-op opens in downtown food desert

The northside of downtown Wilmington, DE, has been without a grocery store for more than 30 years. Now the city council has approved a plan to provide \$125,000 to help bring a grocery store to the neighborhood and to expand the reach of a mobile farmer's market. The funding will come from the \$26 million the city received from the American Rescue Plan Act.

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## Downtown Idea Exchange

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# Idea Exchange

## Pedestrian safety grant

Pedestrians in downtown Fond du Lac, WI, are tired of dodging bicycles, scooters, and skateboards on city streets, so the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership is taking action. The partnership will launch a community education program featuring sidewalk decals.

Amy Hansen, executive director of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership explained the rationale to the *FDL Reporter*: “We have signs posted at intersections, but they are not capturing people’s attention,” Hansen said. “We believe sidewalk decals will be more noticeable by being colorful and directly over their path of travel.”

The cost of the decals will be funded, in part, through a \$1,000 award from AARP’s Wisconsin Small Dollar, Big Impact grant program.

Funds were also awarded in 2021 for an outdoor ice lounge in downtown Darlington, dog waste stations in Janesville, and electrification of an empty lot in Eagle River, which will allow the space to be used for events and winter light displays.

## Downtown addresses noise pollution

The City of Knoxville, TN, is using technology to reduce noise pollution in the city center. Much of the unwanted noise is the result of vehicles with modified mufflers, according to the city. Speaking to News 10, the local NBC affiliate,

## Holiday deal and scavenger hunts

The Downtown Holiday Deal Hunt got shoppers in Reno, NV, to explore new businesses and shop locally. The key to the program is that anyone who shops, eats, or plays at participating businesses has a chance to win prizes ranging from a 10 percent discount to \$100 gift cards to one of five grand prizes, including staycations at downtown hotels and private chef dinners.

The Downtown Reno Partnership explains exactly how the program works:

“To play, spend \$20 at a participating business and ask for a Downtown Holiday Deal Hunt Peel Off card. The location on the back of the card will direct you to the next participating business. Scratch off the foil to reveal what you won!

“If you spend \$20 at that next business, you get another card and keep playing at the next businesses and so on. The more cards you redeem, the better your chance for one of five grand prizes.”

The contest runs from Black Friday through January 31, 2021.

A different type of holiday hunt was happening at the same time in Sacramento, CA. As part of a continuing focus on re-imagining the holidays, a new storefront holiday window display contest and an interactive app-based scavenger hunt were produced by the Downtown Sacramento Partnership. The two events aim to provide more physically distanced outdoor activities while supporting local businesses. The hunt includes a variety of photo, trivia, and location challenges. Whoever has the most points on December 31 wins a one night stay at a downtown hotel and a variety of gift cards.



the city’s downtown coordinator said that this is not your typical city noise. “Cities are always noisy, always have been. But this is different. This is deliberate.”

The city is considering noise cameras. The cameras work much like a normal speed camera but

instead of calculating speed, they use a microphone to measure the amount of noise coming from a vehicle. If a car is too loud, it will trigger the camera to take a photo. Noise cameras are in use elsewhere in the world, such as in Taiwan and in London. **DIX**