



# CITY OF ELKO

## Planning Department

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### PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

The City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council will meet in a regular session on Thursday, July 26, 2018 in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 1751 College Avenue, Elko, Nevada, beginning at 4:00 P.M., P.D.S.T.

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

ELKO COUNTY COURTHOUSE– 571 Idaho Street, Street, Elko, NV 89801

Date/Time Posted: July 20, 2018 2:10 p.m.

ELKO COUNTY LIBRARY – 720 Court Street, Elko, NV 89801

Date/Time Posted: July 20, 2018 2:05 p.m.

ELKO POLICE DEPARTMENT– 1448 Silver Street, Elko NV 89801

Date/Time Posted: July 20, 2018 2:15 p.m.

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

Date/Time Posted: July 20, 2018 2:00 p.m.

Posted by: Shelby Archuleta, Planning Technician  
Name Title

Shelby Archuleta  
Signature

The public may contact Shelby Archuleta by phone at (775) 777-7160 or by email at [sarchuleta@elkocitynv.gov](mailto:sarchuleta@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.

Dated this 20<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2018.

### 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 H. Wilkinson  
Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager

**CITY OF ELKO**  
**REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**  
**4:00 P.M., P.D.S.T., THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2018**  
**ELKO CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS,**  
**1751 COLLEGE AVENUE, ELKO, NEVADA**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The agenda for this meeting of the City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council (RAC) 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**

April 26, 2018 – Regular Meeting **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

**I. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Review, consideration and possible action to elect officers. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Election of officers takes place every July for a 1 year term.

B. Review, consideration, and possible recommendation to the Redevelopment Agency regarding changes to the approved design of Centennial Park, and matters related thereto.  
**FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

**II. REPORTS**

A. Storefront Improvement Program

B. Budget – Cathy Laughlin

C. Other

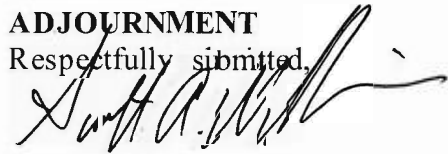
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**NOTE:** The Chairman or Vice Chairman reserves the right to change the order of the agenda and if the agenda is not completed, to recess the meeting and continue on another specified date and time. Additionally, the Redevelopment Advisory Council 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott A. Wilkinson", is written over the "Respectfully submitted," text.

Scott Wilkinson  
Assistant City Manager

**CITY OF ELKO**  
**REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**4:00 P.M., P.D.S.T., THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2018**  
**ELKO CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS,**  
**1751 COLLEGE AVENUE, ELKO, NEVADA**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Jon Karr, Chairman of the City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council (RAC), at 4:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Catherine Wines, ACAB  
Jeff Dalling  
Jon Karr  
Lina Blohm

**Absent:** Chris Johnson, RDA  
Don Newman ECVA  
John Kingwell, Elko Co.  
Sonja Sibert, GBC  
Steve Bowers, Elko Co. School Dist.

**City Staff:** Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager  
Shelby Archuleta, Planning Technician  
Cathy Laughlin, City Planner

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

January 25, 2018 – Regular Meeting **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

**\*\*\*A motion was made by Lina Blohm, seconded by Catherine Wines to approve the minutes as presented.**

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

**I. NEW BUSINESS**



A. Review, consideration, and possible recommendation to the Redevelopment Agency, 2018 Storefront Improvement Grant Recipients and amounts allocated, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

2018 Storefront Improvement Grant applications were accepted from January 1, 2018 to March 30, 2018. RDA, at their February 27, 2018 meeting, increased the amount allocated to the 2018 Storefront Grant Program from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Cathy Laughlin, City Planner, disclosed that she was a trustee of the Pat Laughlin Family Trust, and excused herself from the meeting, because they were an applicant for the Storefront Grant Program.

Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager, explained that applications were accepted from January 1 to March 30 for the 2018 Storefront Improvement Program. There wasn't a lot of participation. There were three applications accepted with a total request of \$55,105. Two of the applications were for the full amount that is possible for reimbursement, which is \$25,000. The first application was from The Pat Laughlin Family Living Trust for a project at 927 Idaho Street. The funding requested was \$5,105. The application is complete. The second application received was for Patray Assets, LLP for a project at 524 Commercial Street, and the total funding requested was \$25,000. The third application was for OC Restaurants, LLC for a project at 345 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The total funding requested for that project was \$25,000. Mr. Wilkinson said he would go through each of the applications. A Review Committee Rating Sheet was included in everyone's packet for each project. There are applications requested for funding substantially less than the total amount available, it had been increased to \$100,000. All three applications were deemed complete and could be considered by the RAC for recommendation to the RDA. The first application for the Pat Laughlin Family Living Trust was a façade improvement at 927 Idaho Street. It is an exterior remodel. In the packet is a photo and a project description. He then went over the project description. He wanted to give the committee time to consider the project. He suggested taking action on each of the applications with a recommendation to the RDA.

Lina Blohm suggested that they get a review of all of three projects before voting.

Chairman Jon Karr said he didn't go through near as extensive, because they were way under budget and they all fit the requirements. He was ready to approve all of them. He just had a few questions about the Commercial.

Ms. Blohm wanted to extend it more than what Mr. Karr was explaining.

Catherine Wines said she was fine either way and disclosed that she was the Design Professional on the Patray Building and the Old Chicago.

Chairman Karr said he was ready to approve the first application and didn't have any questions. He asked what Mr. Dalling's thoughts were.

Jeff Dalling said he didn't have any questions and he would approve it. He said he didn't have any problems with any of the projects.

Ms. Blohm asked if they were going to use the rating sheet, or if they were going to carte blanche. She saw that some projects were worthy of extensive renovations and would make a huge impact and others would not make such an impact. They do have extra monies available and they should discuss the use of those monies.

Mr. Dalling said they couldn't give everything to just the Commercial.

Ms. Blohm thought each project deserved a lot of discussion.

Mr. Wilkinson explained that under the Storefront Program the RDA could choose to extend the program if all of the funding is not allocated, or we don't receive enough applications for the total amount. At the next RDA meeting they will have the option to consider funding the applications per the request, which is at \$55,000, and continue to have the City accept additional applications through the remainder of the year. Or you can make a recommendation to allocate more than \$25,000 to a particular project.

Ms. Blohm suggested they give those who were in the audience an opportunity to speak to their projects.

Chairman Karr asked if there were any questions on the first application.

Ms. Wines thought it was a good project. It was right on Idaho Street so it would make a big impact. She recommended full funding for what they requested.

Ms. Blohm said it appeared to her that this was primarily a painting project. She asked Mr. Laughlin to explain the project in more detail.

Pat Laughlin, 1243 Rockland Drive, explained that the soffit, fascia, and some other things would have to be done before painting. He explained that it was an outside façade remodel and that they were trying to make the building look better.

Ms. Blohm said it was more than just the paint, it was the trim and changing the porch and façade.

Mr. Laughlin said they were going to put some stone work on the porch area.

Ms. Wines pointed out that the plan called for new window trim.

Mr. Laughlin said he bought the building 20 years ago and completely gutted it down to the frame and did a whole new interior. It's there to stay. They are trying to take advantage of a little bit of the money they pay into the downtown. He wished more people would do it.

**\*\*\* A motion was made by Catherine Wines, seconded by Jeff Dailing to recommend full funding of The Pat Laughlin Living Family Trust project.**

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

Mr. Wilkinson explained that Patray Asset, LLP had a request for a reimbursement of \$25,000 for this project. They submitted four bids ranging from \$78,845 to \$85,798. The bids are in the packet. They are proposing a face lift on the building. We have the opportunity to have the Design Professional help explain the project. It is an exterior façade renovation. There are quite a few photographs contained in the application, along with historical photos, and renderings showing the proposed project. He then explained the project from the plans included in the packet.

Ms. Wines said this was a great example of how investment triggers investment, because last fall when she was working on the Cowboys Arts and Gear Museum, LeRay Reece came to her and asked her to make his building look good too. He liked the fact that the upper story windows were popping out, so the two upper story windows would stand off the façade. She said they were taking out the air conditioners off the front of the building and also a false ceiling from the inside was being removed, but that wasn't part of the funding request. They will put some clear story windows up above the door. She mentioned that the color wasn't set in stone yet.

Ms. Blohm thought it was a worthwhile project. She loved seeing all the investment going into that block. She hoped it would become contagious.

Chairman Karr was surprised that this building, with a fairly new front, was getting done. He thought it fit the requirements and stated he didn't have any issues approving the project.

**\*\*\* A motion was made by Lina Blohm, seconded by Jeff Dailing to approve the request from Patray Asset, LLP for \$25,000.**

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

Mr. Wilkinson said the third application received was OC Restaurants, LLC, that's Old Chicago proposed at the Commercial Hotel Building at 345 4<sup>th</sup> Street. They requested the maximum reimbursable amount of \$25,000. They submitted four bids with the low bid at \$439,241.53 and a high bid of \$641,567. He thought the reason for the range was that there was a lot of uncertainty associated with what was on the building. They are proposing exterior façade improvements, with a goal of restoring the look of the historical building. He thought it looked like a pretty good project for consideration. It fit within the Storefront Improvement Program. In addition to façade improvements they are looking at putting in a patio area for outdoor dining. He then went through the plans included in the packet.

Dave Zorins, CEO for Northern Star Casinos, said he runs the casino part of the business. This would not be his project. He wanted to give some information about the owner. The owner is in Colorado, he owns 150 Wendy's Restaurants, and he bought the license for eight Old Chicago's. They are getting ready to open one in Haines, Kansas right now. He wants to put at least five in Phoenix. They are looking for the best thing to do at the Commercial. The owner is prepared to do this at the Commercial, if they can get it in at a budget that makes sense. Right now at the \$439,000 it probably won't happen. It just doesn't make sense with all the other changes they have to make. He was charged with what to do with the property. Having a casino and competing with themselves downtown was tough. He gets worried about what's going to happen with this property if they don't go forward with the project. He would have liked to put in another application for \$25,000 if this project didn't happen, so they would still have some money to fix up the outside of the building. He has to cut at least \$100,000 off the project before it can happen.

Ms. Wines explained that she had a phone conference with the guys in Colorado yesterday. They have gotten some money out of the patio and they are planning to meet with the two lowest bid contractors. They were going to meet with them and try to do some value engineering. One of the contractors is really interested in the building and they had a list of stuff to get the cost down.

Mr. Zorins would like to see the project. At first he wasn't behind it. There are a lot of pizza parlors in town. This is an upscale bar, not as much of a pizza parlor and they do have other things on the menu. It would be a chain where they would have to follow certain rules. It would be a substantial investment in the town. He thought it would lead the owner to do other things down the road. This project would only take care of 2/3 of the building on the outside. There would still be other parts of the building that would need to be addressed, and there wouldn't be the money immediately to address them.

Ms. Blohm said as far as following the Redevelopment criteria, this was the Star Project, if you compare it to the rest of the projects. It eliminates blight, provides economic revitalization, enhancing the City's historic preservation efforts, and it is consistent with the City's Master Plan. This is the Star Project Ms. Blohm felt Redevelopment was all about. She would love to have the opportunity for the member, who bought up all the Old Chicago franchises, to come sit down with them to find out what kind of a partnership they could help him with. This is the perfect example of where a partnership would work.

Mr. Zorins said he thought Mr. Holland would be interested in coming to town for something like this. He thought he was very interested in doing something with the building.

Ms. Wines agreed with Mr. Zorins. She wanted to let everyone know what a significant investment Northern Star Casino had already made in the downtown through Stockmen's. She thought it was a significant building to the history of Elko. Big name entertainment in the Casino industry in Nevada started in this building.

Ms. Blohm thought it was a gateway to downtown Elko. She suggested that they allocate \$70,000, or the remaining, to the project, because it is a huge scale and it warrants that. It would show the partner that they are serious.

Mr. Dalling said he wouldn't support that. He would be more than happy to give them the full budget of \$25,000, but he thought Ms. Blohm was opening can of worms. They have the regulations in place. He asked why they had regulations in place if they weren't going to follow them.

Ms. Blohm answered because this is what Redevelopment is all about, energizing old buildings.

Mr. Dalling said he was over a million into his building and he accepted the \$25,000 he was given. He wanted to see the Commercial restored. He thought the budget was way too low. This was a huge investment and a great property. He thought they could use another high end bar in downtown. He also thought it was a great use of the space. He just didn't think it was fair to dump more money into it than others.

Mr. Zorins wanted to ask if they would have to wait until next year to ask for \$25,000, if it's just to fix up the building.

Mr. Wilkinson wanted to back up a little bit. Last year, because they had applications above the \$50,000, they chose to allocate more funding to cover all the applications. If the RAC were to make a recommendation to go above \$25,000, Mr. Wilkinson said he would need to research and see if they could legally have that recommendation, or that the RDA could accept that recommendation. There are some possibilities to approve the \$25,000 that is requested, have the RDA consider if they could allocate more, but if they don't Mr. Wilkinson would prefer that they continue accepting applications up to the full \$100,000. That would provide opportunities for additional applications. They might want to look at them on a first come first serve basis, so they could keep people moving.

Ms. Blohm asked if they have submitted this application, if they could submit the same packet with the same bids the second time.

Mr. Wilkinson didn't think that would work.

Ms. Wines agreed with Mr. Dalling that it would open a can of worms. She thought there was an opportunity with demolition, to help out Northern Star more, but not to break the rules for the application that they already have.

Mr. Wilkinson explained that the Demolition Program was for removal and reconstruction. The way that's adopted by the RDA, he didn't see it providing an opportunity for demolition of a façade.

Ms. Wines said if they were going to bend the rules, that's where she wanted to ask the RDA to bend on that one, rather than the Storefront.

Mr. Wilkinson said they could make a recommendation for the RDA to look and see if they could approve an amount over \$25,000. He wasn't saying that the board was going to approve that. If they don't and there is money remaining, it is in the Storefront Improvement Program to



continue accepting applications until the funding is consumed. That would open up the opportunity for additional applications. Then the RDA would need to decide if they wanted to evaluate them on a first come, first serve basis, which Mr. Wilkinson thought they should. Because they didn't receive applications by the deadline, so if there is any interest going forward they should evaluate the applications as they come in and make recommendations back up to the RDA. We want to put the money to work in the community earlier, rather than later.

Ms. Wines wanted to give more information on the light pole. Right now there is a light pole that is right in the middle of where the patio is. The pole is owned by NV Energy, billed to the City of Elko, but it's on Northern Star property. She has requested to be on the next RDA agenda to ask for funds to move that light pole, because it would make sense for it to be on Railroad Street. There are other partnerships, and opportunities, to help out with this project.

Ms. Blohm said they wanted to see energy within the building. She then asked if there was an opportunity to meet with the gentleman the next time he came to town.

Mr. Zorins said he would be interested.

Chairman Karr agreed that the request was for \$25,000. It sounds vague on how this project might happen. He didn't see how it would fit in if the project didn't go forward. He said he would almost deny the application to get better clarification on what's possible and see what they are looking at to see if there are other avenues. He said he was going to agree to it today, but it sounded vague on how the project was going because there was so much involved.

Ms. Wines said the \$25,000 wouldn't be given to them until it was done.

Mr. Wilkinson explained that the funds would be obligated for a period of time to see them execute.

Mr. Zorins explained that if the project happened, it would get the go ahead with in the next 30 days.

Ms. Blohm asked if this incentive would help the owner make his decision and asked if it was important to him.

Mr. Zorins said it was important to him and the cost of the outside was the key thing in going forward.

Chairman Karr thought it was a good project, but he thought the numbers were low for the cost.

Ms. Wines explained that the bids were only for the outside. The whole project would be over \$1 Million.

Chairman Karr said he was for the project and didn't have any problems at all approving \$25,000.

Ms. Blohm said as businesses grow in the downtown and the needs for monies grow, \$25,000 is a mom and pop estimate that they started with because they were new at this and they weren't sure what the public would take into account. She asked if there was any way to get more flexibility in the numbers.

Chairman Karr said they could bring the Program back and recommend a floating scale.

Ms. Blohm suggested going off the rating sheets.

Chairman Karr didn't think they could do it retroactively, but maybe at another meeting.

Mr. Wilkinson said they would have to take a look at the projected revenues over the life of the RDA, to make sure it could be funded. Then you could propose a revision to the Storefront Improvement Program that the RDA could consider, and possibly approve.

Ms. Blohm said looking at the minutes of the last meeting brought something to bear for her. Some people on the board wanted an ending balance so the entire corridor could be maintained with a new surface. In her estimation that was not the value of Redevelopment, it's getting rid of blight and providing renovation and revitalization to business. She would much rather see them allowing businesses to flourish in the downtown to create more business coming downtown. Let's put money where it's going to allow a return.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the RDA had taken a slew of actions to address vacant buildings. There is an RDA Plan that says were going to do X, Y, and Z. We've taken action and said we're going to phase things, we allow for Storefront. If the revenues keep coming in like they are, and we can afford to do more, we should do it. We should take all of that and commit it over a period of time and spend it all. That is what RDA's do.

**\*\*\*A motion was made by Jeff Dalling, seconded by Lina Blohm to fully fund the Old Chicago project at \$25,000.**

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

## **II. REPORTS**

### **A. Storefront Improvement Program**

*Ms. Laughlin reported that JM Capriolas was 100% complete and 100% funded, Western Folklife Center is 100% complete and 100% funded, Hesson Hardware is 100% complete and the application for reimbursement was received this and in review process, and the Gerber Law Office is 100% complete and the funding request hasn't been received. After all applicants have been reimbursed the 2017 Storefront Grant Programs will be completed and funded.*

*Ms. Blohm asked what the total amount of money they spent was.*

*Ms. Laughlin said it was around \$62,000.*

**B. Budget – Cathy Laughlin**

*Ms. Blohm said in the budget line item for the Storefront there was \$100,000 allocated and a \$26,000 debit against it.*

*Ms. Laughlin said that was from the 2017 Storefront Program. She said she would change the budget to reflect the two different years.*

*Mr. Dalling asked if the \$75,000 for Public-Private Partnerships would go back into the account, since no one applied for the Demolition Program.*

*Ms. Laughlin said when RDA and City Council review the budget for the upcoming budget cycle, that's what it is shown at again.*

*Ms. Wines asked what the \$50,000 transfer from General Fund was.*

*Ms. Laughlin explained that was the \$50,000 that City Council had dedicated to the tower. The entire Tower Project was paid out of the RDA funds and there were two transfers into the RDA, one for \$50,000 from City Council and one for \$85,020 from the DBA and private donations.*

*Ms. Wines asked if the Alley Project was fully funded.*

*Ms. Laughlin said it was. It included all the paving.*

**C. Other**

*Ms. Blohm asked about Project 3 and at point would they start the discussion about moving forward to the block ends.*

*Ms. Laughlin explained that they didn't have the funding for it right now. They are waiting for the rest of this year's tax increment in, they have an allocation for \$250,000 for the park expansion, which is out to bid. They need to see what the bids come in at, start that project, and then move into Project 3. There are funds, but it wouldn't leave a cushion for any of the things that have already been allocated.*

*Mr. Wilkinson said based on budget, they would be looking at an ending fund balance of \$460,000.*

*Ms. Wines asked what each block end was going to cost.*

*Ms. Laughlin said it was \$189,000 for each.*



*Ms. Wines asked if it would be next year's construction season. (Yes)*

*Ms. Blohm said it was estimated as \$415,000 for three block ends.*

*Ms. Laughlin said that didn't include the west end of 4<sup>th</sup> Street or the east end of 6<sup>th</sup> Street. We will revisit that as soon as we get through Project No. 2.*

*There was further discussion regarding the Park Expansion Project.*

*Ms. Blohm thought at some point they needed to talk about grants. The entire Peace Park was built with grant money.*

*Ms. Wines asked if Ms. Blohm was referring to grants they would award, or grants they would apply for.*

*Ms. Blohm said that they would apply for.*

*Mr. Karr asked what the discussion was.*

*Ms. Blohm said the discussion was why they don't apply for them. At some point have an agenda item to discuss other ways to build the coffers. She felt that a lot of the Centennial Park could have been paid for through a grant process.*

*Mr. Wilkinson explained that they had looked at some of the opportunities. The Peace Park was a one time, one off event, where they had some opportunity for some money. That program was no longer available.*

*There was further discussion regarding grants.*

#### **COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

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

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.*

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Jon Karr, Chairman

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Lina Blohm, Secretary

City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council  
Agenda Action Sheet

1. Title: **Review, consideration and possible action to elect officers, FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**
2. Meeting Date: **July 26, 2018**
3. Agenda Category: **NEW BUSINESS**
4. Time Required: **15 minutes**
5. Background Information: **Election of officers takes place every July for a 1 year term.**
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: **By-laws**
9. Recommended Motion: **Pleasure of the Advisory Council**
10. Prepared By: **Cathy Laughlin, City Planner**
11. Committee/Other Agency Review:
12. Agency Action:
13. Agenda Distribution:

**City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council (RAC)  
Bylaws  
(First Amended and Restated)**

**ARTICLE I ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE; RECITALS**

- Section 1 The City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council (RAC) was established by the City of Elko Redevelopment Agency (RDA) on December 11, 2012.
- Section 2 Whereas, on or about February 12, 2013, the RDA adopted the first set of Bylaws for the RAC; and
- Whereas, the RDA has determined to amend and restate the Bylaws; and
- Whereas the redevelopment and revitalization of the City's downtown is an integral component of the Redevelopment Plan; and
- Whereas the RDA is committed to promoting the downtown area as a principal focal point for Elko community life, and making it an attractive, safe and economically sound city center with shopping, entertainment, cultural and recreational opportunities; and
- Whereas the RDA recognizes and values community collaboration while maintaining the distinctive character of Elko as a pioneering and enterprising city; and
- Whereas the RDA wishes to seek advice from a diverse yet representative advisory committee to advise it with respect to implementing the RDA Plan or any plans subsequently adopted for the implementation of the RDA Plan, to propose Plan amendments, to assist with marketing and economics as requested by the Redevelopment Agency, to suggest projects and priorities for possible expenditures during the budget process, to explore grants or other external funding sources, to develop Design Guidelines for possible use by the Redevelopment Agency, and to advise the Redevelopment Agency about ways to attract new business.
- Based upon the foregoing recitals, the RDA hereby finds and directs that the RAC shall be subject to the following bylaws commencing on the date of adoption by the RDA:

**ARTICLE II MEMBERSHIP, APPOINTMENT TERMS**

- Section1 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. In the event that one of these members is not able to maintain his or her position, the RDA may select other representatives to serve. Membership shall also include four (4) ex-officio nonvoting members, being representatives of the Elko County School District, Great Basin College, Elko County, and the Elko Convention and Visitors Authority.
- Section 2 The members of the RAC shall be appointed by the RDA annually in July; *provided*, in the event of a vacancy, the RDA may appoint an interim member for a term up to and including the next July 31. There shall be no limit on the number of reappointments of the members.
- Section 3 Minimum Qualifications for appointment to the RAC include:

- a. Interest in the City of Elko community.
- b. Ability to work cooperatively with individuals, groups, community agencies and organizations.
- c. Willingness to meet and conduct business under the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

Section 4 Any RAC board member (excluding ex officio members) who accrues more than three (3) consecutive unexcused absences, or fails to attend more than seventy-five percent (75%) of the regularly scheduled meetings within a calendar year, shall be considered to have resigned and that person's membership shall thereupon automatically terminate. The foregoing sentence shall not apply to excused absences. Excused absences are defined as absences due to illness of a member or a person in a member's family, employment-related activities, or other instances as approved by the Chairperson on a case-by-case basis. Notification of absences is to be made to the Secretary of the RAC.

Section 5 Any board member may be removed or suspended by the RDA for good cause, as determined by the RDA.

### **ARTICLE III OFFICES, DUTIES AND APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS**

Section 1 The RAC shall elect a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and a secretary from its members in January of each year. There is no minimum or maximum on the number of times a member may serve in one of the elected offices. In the event of a vacancy in an elected office, a special election may be held at any time during the year to fill the vacancy.

Section 2 The offices and duties of the officers shall be as follows:

- a. Chairperson: To preside over meetings of the RAC and to ensure that actions are properly taken, to sign official documents and correspondence on behalf of the RAC, to assist City Staff in preparing agendas, and to represent the RAC at City Council and RDA meetings, and other official functions.
- b. Vice-Chairperson: To assume the duties of the Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson, and to assist with publicity efforts as needed.
- c. Secretary: To sign or attest official documents of the RAC, to keep minutes of the meetings, and to review any record-keeping functions of the RAC.

### **ARTICLE IV RESPONSIBILITIES, POWERS, AND DUTIES**

Section 1 The responsibilities, powers and duties of the RAC shall include, but not-be-limited to, the following:

- a. Hold meetings in accordance with the Open Meeting Law (Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Chapter 241) to promote the exchange of information and otherwise fulfill the purposes stated in these Bylaws.
- b. Obtain public input.
- c. Assist in the development of Design Guidelines and any restrictions or controls upon the request of and subject to the approval by the Elko Redevelopment Agency.
- d. Recommend proposed amendments to the City of Elko Redevelopment Plan.
- e. Advise the RDA on implementation of the RDA Master Plan and any implementation documents.
- f. Monitor and evaluate progress in carrying out the vision for the purpose of advising the RDA.
- g. To the extent delegated by the RDA, oversee and coordinate among other advisory bodies, estimate the overall needs for resources to accomplish the various projects, and provide direction in the allocation of resources among these projects.



- h. Sort among competing priorities and conflicting activities within the scope of RAC's area of responsibility.
- i. Communicate the information regarding implementation of the Redevelopment Plan and implementation documents to the community, stakeholders, and interested organizations.
- j. Give recognition to people and groups as they accomplish action items and project implementation activities.
- k. As requested by the RDA, help with the identification, and recruitment, of Project Champions, as that term is defined in the Redevelopment Plan or associated implementation documents.

Pursuant to NRS Chapter 279, the RDA is responsible for overseeing, managing, and coordinating redevelopment and revitalization projects within the redevelopment area pursuant to the Redevelopment Plan. The RDA will, in its discretion and within the scope of its statutory authority (1) be the authority for implementation of the RDA Plan, (2) approve project budgets, (3) resolve conflicting priorities, (4) secure funding for specific projects, and (5) resolve project challenges presented by the City of Elko's regulatory structure. These duties and all other duties given to the RDA by statute may not be delegated to the RAC.

#### **ARTICLE V MEETINGS, RECORDS, QUORUMS, AND VOTING**

Section 1 The RAC shall meet quarterly or as needed as determined by the Chairperson of the RAC.

Section 2 Special meetings of the RAC may be called as directed by:

- a. By the Chairperson of the RAC;
- b. By a majority vote of a quorum at a meeting of the RAC;
- c. By request of a majority of the members of the RAC;
- d. By the RDA; or
- d. By the City Planner or his/her designee.

Section 3 All meetings shall be properly noticed, posted and conducted according to the Open Meeting Law, NRS Chapter 241.

Section 4 Three (3) members of the RAC shall constitute a quorum. No action may be taken without at least a quorum. The quorum shall not be reduced by abstentions or recusals. A majority vote of the members of the RAC who are in attendance and able to vote shall be necessary for official action.

Section 5 The RAC shall comply with these Bylaws for all business of the RAC.

Section 6 The RAC shall keep a written record of all meetings.

Section 7 Only such business specified in the published agenda for the meeting shall be transacted at a meeting of the RAC.

#### **ARTICLE VI FILING WITH THE CITY CLERK**

Section 1 The executed original of these Bylaws must be filed with the City Clerk within ten (10) days of adoption by the RDA.

Section 2 Originals of the agenda, agenda backup items, and certificate of posting are to be filed with the office of the City Clerk at the time of the posting of the agenda.

Section 3        The executed original of the meeting minutes is to be filed with the office of the Elko City Clerk within ten (10) calendar days of approval.

**ARTICLE VII    ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT**

Section 1        These Bylaws shall become effective upon adoption by the RDA.

Section 2        An amendment to these Bylaws may be introduced and initiated by a majority vote of either the RAC or the RDA. The proposed amendment shall be acted upon at the next regular meeting of the RDA.

Section 3        The RAC is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Open Meeting Law. Pursuant to Nevada Revised Statutes Chapter 241, the RAC must prepare, publish and follow an agenda. Any action items must be submitted to the City Planner or his/her designee at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the official meeting date. Appropriate back up material must be submitted with the item.

Section 4        Notwithstanding any other provision contained herein, the RDA may, in its discretion, dissolve and terminate the RAC, or restrict or amend these Bylaws and the duties and responsibilities of the RAC to the extent permitted by the Redevelopment Plan and the Nevada Revised Statutes.

**ELKO REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Its: \_\_\_\_\_

DATED: \_\_\_\_\_, 2016.

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_

City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council  
Agenda Action Sheet

1. Title: **Review, consideration, and possible recommendation to the Redevelopment Agency regarding changes to the approved design of Centennial Park, and matters related thereto. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**
2. Meeting Date: **July 26, 2018**
3. Agenda Category: **NEW BUSINESS**
4. Time Required: **10 minutes**
5. Background Information
6. Budget Information:  
    Appropriation Required: **N/A**  
    Budget amount available: **N/A**  
    Fund name: **N/A**
7. Business Impact Statement: **Required / Not Required**
8. Supplemental Agenda Information **Park design**
9. Recommended Motion: **Pleasure of the RAC**
10. Prepared By: **Cathy Laughlin, City Planner**
11. Committee/Other Agency Review:
12. Agency Action:
13. Agenda Distribution:









## Redevelopment Agency 2017/2018 Budget

July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

Revenues		
	Approved Budget	As of 6/30/2018
Beginning Fund Balance	<b>\$837,089</b>	
Budget to beginning fund balance dif.	<b>\$94,225</b>	
Property Tax Revenues (anticipated)	\$277,650	\$288,929
Interest Revenues (anticipated)	\$4,000	\$8,072
Transfer in from General Fund		\$50,000
Contributions from Public and DBA		\$85,020
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$1,212,964</b>	<b>\$432,020</b>

Balance to date	<b>\$857,682</b>
-----------------	------------------

Expenditures		
	Approved Budget	As of 6/30/2018
Legal	\$25,000	\$3,630
Public Improvements		
Centennial Tower (pledged)	\$50,000	\$185,731
Misc. items	\$1,000	\$303
Storefront Program (pledged 2017/18)	\$66,176	\$41,176
Storefront Program (pledged 2018/19)	\$100,000	
Alley work	\$40,000	\$30,860
Public-Private Partnerships	\$75,000	
7th St. Relocation of utilities+ C.O.	\$211,518	\$209,583
Expn. of Centennial Park 7th Street	\$250,000	\$34,369
Balance towards savings	\$394,170	
Revolving Fund	\$100	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,212,964</b>	<b>\$505,652</b>

## Redevelopment Agency 2018/2019 Budget

July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

Revenues		
	Approved Budget	As of 7/1/2018
Beginning Fund Balance	<b>\$803,514</b>	
Budget to beginning fund balance dif.		
Property Tax Revenues (anticipated)	\$338,608	
Interest Revenues (anticipated)	\$4,750	
Transfer in from General Fund		
Total Revenues	<b>\$1,146,872</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Balance to date	<b>\$803,514</b>
-----------------	------------------

Expenditures		
	Approved Budget	As of 7/1/2018
Legal	\$20,000	
Public Improvements		
Misc. items	\$1,000	
Storefront Program (pledged 2017/18)	\$25,000	
Storefront Program (pledged 2018/19)	\$55,105	
Public-Private Partnerships	\$75,000	
Expn. of Centennial Park 7th Street	\$215,631	
Balance towards savings	\$755,036	
Revolving Fund	\$100	
Total Expenses	<b>\$1,146,872</b>	<b>\$0</b>



# Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

Vol. 65, No. 4  
April 2018

## Inside this issue

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[@DowntownDevelopment.com](https://twitter.com/DowntownDevelopment.com)

**First Time Event  
Planning Guide**

**Uptown Works  
introductory video**

**Details on Las Vegas's  
Container Park**

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Strategic outreach paves way for new Economic Improvement District

The newly approved Economic Improvement District in Evansville, IN (est. pop. 117,429), will provide a more sustainable effort than was possible with past downtown organizations, says Joshua Armstrong, director of the Downtown Alliance.

“Our community has a history of putting together really well-intentioned downtown organizations that last about three years because there is no ongoing funding,” says Armstrong. “When I came on board

with the Downtown Alliance, managed through the Southwest Indiana Chamber of Commerce, one of my goals was to create an improvement district that had a long-term sustainable funding piece behind it. Then, as our downtown master planning process moved forward, it really rose to the top that this was critical for our community.”

In Indiana, the majority of property owners who represent the

*(Continued on page 8)*

## ATTRACTION

### Children's programming draws families downtown

Because little people usually require big people to drive them, supervise them, and pay their way, children's events are a great way to bring families downtown.

Cities nationwide are adding a wide array of children's programming to downtown calendars in an effort to attract those families. Some efforts include folding children's activities into existing events, while others are kids-only fun, and others still focus on particularly kid-friendly holidays with Easter Egg hunts,

costume parades, main street trick or treating, and early-evening fireworks on New Year's Eve.

Here are seven examples of programming that attracts families to enjoy all that downtown has to offer:

• **Schedule kid-centric downtown tours.** The Kids Downtown Makers Tour launched in York, PA (est. pop. 43,718), in 2016 proved so popular that the sold-out, one-off became a series of tours instead.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Grant funding and event planning guide foster inaugural events

The Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) has offered its Start-Up Grant program since 2013 to encourage first-time events in Rochester, MN (est. pop. 106,769). The grant funds, combined with a comprehensive event planning guide, have allowed the Alliance to bring a wide range of new events and activities to the downtown without taxing the group's resources.

Initially, the program offered up to \$1,000 to applicants hosting first-time events downtown. "Five years later, the RDA is now able to offer up to \$3,000 for approved events," says Karli McElroy, RDA's program manager. "The Start-Up Grant was created to help first-time event planners launch their ideas, while additionally creating unique, vibrant, and urban experiences downtown that enrich the community."

***"The Start-Up Grant allows us to activate various areas of downtown throughout the year without stretching the organization's staff capacity."***

The RDA is funded in part by a portion of property taxes paid by commercial property owners within the 44-block Downtown Special Service District, the city of Rochester, and Mayo Clinic. About 45 percent of the organization's budget is self-generated "through our core portfolio of annual events," says McElroy. "The RDA dedicates a portion of our funding annually to the Start-Up Grant program."

Initially, outreach for the grant program focused on arts organizations. Staff members promoted the program at monthly meetings hosted by a local artist's collective and via personalized emails to local arts organizations. That initial focus has shifted as the program has grown. "Over the years, we have leveraged partnerships with multiple community organizations to expand outreach with e-blasts to hundreds of nonprofits in southeastern Minnesota, with blog posts, and sharing content in diverse professional networking social media pages," McElroy says. "Additionally, this past year we spent \$35 through Facebook and Instagram posts promoting the Start-Up Grant and saw almost double the number of applications from previous years."

The number of applications has grown from six in 2013 to 14 for this year. "All of the Start-Up Grant applications we receive are juried by the RDA's volunteer Downtown Cultural Initiatives (DCI) committee, which is made up of artists, marketing and event professionals, and community leaders," says McElroy. Once the 30-day grant period closes, an RDA staff member compiles all of the application information into a PowerPoint presentation, which is provided to the DCI committee for scoring. "The applications are scored on location, community engagement, focus, marketing appeal, and alignment with our organization's mission," she says.

The grant program has evolved over the past five years based on feedback from the DCI committee, applicants, and observations of previous marketing strategies. Two of the biggest changes have been the increased grant amount, and a change to the program name. The grant amount increase, "allowed the RDA to support larger events that would provide the ability to have a greater impact in the downtown." And last year, the program name was changed from stART-up grant to the current Start-Up Grant program. "This most recent change was subtle, but one that may have contributed to receiving more applications with greater diversity, as some thought the previous stART-up grant was only open to artists," says McElroy. "Other smaller changes included an online application in addition to a paper application, and greater promotion of the grant on social media."

The RDA's mission is, "to be a unique, vibrant, urban experience — a central gathering place — for the community that is attractive, inviting, fun, and livable," McElroy says. "As a staff of five, we accomplish this mission through planning several large community events and programs within the downtown. The Start-Up Grant allows us to activate various areas of downtown throughout the year without stretching the organization's staff capacity."



DowntownDevelopment.com

To read the complete *First Time Event Planning Guide* and the Grant Guidelines document, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

To compliment the grant program and ensure high quality events, the Alliance last year published a comprehensive event planning guide. The guide includes information on event development, selection of third party vendors, finding sponsors, marketing the event, working with volunteers, event-day management, and post-event issues. Checklists and forms round out the basics for new event producers. Last year's events ranged from a jazz festival to a poetry slam.

"Both the grant funding and planning guide have helped creative individuals in our community hone their skills in event planning and lay out a framework for the creation of sustainable annual events for the community to enjoy," McElroy says.

When implementing a program similar to the Start-Up Grant, "it is easy to have the

expectation of receiving applications for events that are very detailed and well outlined. However, sometimes applications may outline a great idea, but fail to consider standard event planning or logistical components," McElroy cautions. "Because of this, it's helpful to create resources for applicants like a *First-time Event Planning Guide*, to guide individuals through areas of possible inexperience and to develop skills.

"Also, it's important to have a group or committee of individuals who understand event planning," she adds. "These individuals can provide thoughtful, constructive feedback to applicants about the overall program if you're not receiving the number and type of applications expected."

Contact: Karli McElroy, Rochester Downtown Alliance, (507) 216-9883, [kmcelroy@rdowntown-alliance.com](mailto:kmcelroy@rdowntown-alliance.com). **DIX**

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Study quantifies the value of downtown to the city and beyond

A study released in January suggests the lasting benefits of investment in downtowns and city centers. From driving tax revenue and business activity to spurring smart development and innovative workplaces, downtowns play a pivotal role in the long-term health of a region, says the International Downtown Association's report, *The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities*.

The report is the result of an eight-month study by IDA, in partnership with global firm Stantec's Urban Places team, and 13 downtown place management organizations from large cities across the nation. Goals of the report include creation of a replicable, accessible, and standard methodology to calculate the value of downtowns which can be used to assess progress and make peer comparisons.

The research clearly demonstrates the important impact that the 13 participating downtowns have on their city and region, says IDA.

Among the report's key findings are:

- Downtowns average just three percent of city-wide land, but account for anywhere from 13 percent to 64 percent of the citywide tax revenue.

- Despite the uncertain future of retail, downtown retail is still a significant presence, averaging 16 percent of citywide retail sales.

- Downtowns continue to serve as major employment centers, accounting for 30 percent of citywide jobs and 40 percent of citywide office space. They are also adapting to workplace trends, containing 60 percent of citywide coworking space, 39 percent of citywide creative jobs, and 31 percent of citywide knowledge jobs.

- Residents aren't just moving to cities — they are moving to downtowns. Downtown residential is increasing much faster than the rest of the city (38 percent compared to five percent). Downtowns also saw a 27-percent increase in residential housing units from 2010-2015, compared to the city's average of six percent.

- Downtowns are multi-modal hubs. Downtowns consistently had higher Walk Scores, Bike Scores, and Transit Scores than their greater cities, and had higher rates of non-single-occupancy vehicle commuters (43 percent compared to citywide 28 percent).

For more information, visit IDA at [www.ida-downtown.org/web/dynamicpage.aspx?webcode=VODT17](http://www.ida-downtown.org/web/dynamicpage.aspx?webcode=VODT17).



# Children's programming draws families downtown — Continued from page 1

The tours aim to fill a gap in children's programming downtown while also showcasing businesses that cater to kids.

To launch its inaugural event, Downtown, Inc. approached some of its downtown businesses that already had kid-friendly products to be tour sites. Businesses that offer hands-on children's activities, host summer camps, or serve as birthday party venues, are the focus. The hope is that if parents enjoy stops along the tour, they may patronize the businesses in the future, says Downtown, Inc.

The first tour targeted children ages four to nine. The child's ticket cost \$20, with parents attending for free. At each stop, participants learned details about the business owner and/or the business, and had opportunities to become "makers" via on-site activities.

Kids got to make pretzels at the York City Pretzel Company, bath fizzies at the Sunrise Soap Company, personal pizzas at YorKitchen, and crafts at Creative York.

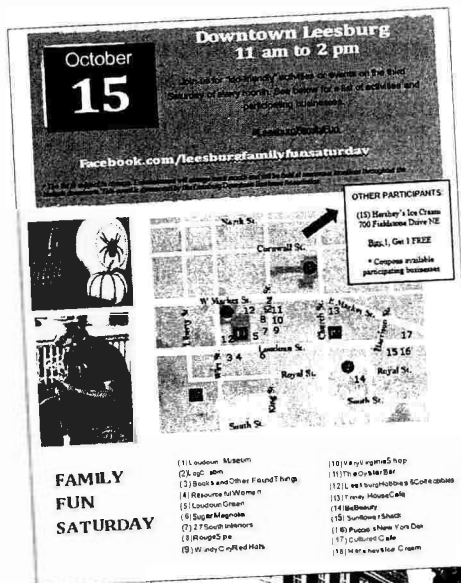
The tour was promoted inexpensively via social media, e-newsletters, press releases, and on

partnering businesses' advertising channels, but because kids having fun are always a good photo opp, the event also generated several feature stories in local media outlets.

When the event sold out three weeks in advance, and parents began asking to sign up for a "next time," the organization realized it was onto something. Sticking with the same four-stop, hands-on format, the Kids Downtown Maker Tour began being offered every few months throughout the year. Tickets for upcoming tours were selling even before tour stops were announced, says Downtown, Inc.

• **Set aside one day each month for family fun.** The Family Fun Saturdays series was launched in Leesburg, VA (est. pop. 42,616), in 2016. The goal of the event, hosted by the Leesburg Historic Downtown Association, is to "have a lot of businesses open with a lot of kid-friendly events on the inside, so you can check out stores that you may not get to see any other time." Free Italian ice, free museum admission, and shopping and dining discounts are some of the enticements offered. Activities throughout the downtown include opportunities to visit with adoptable pets, live music, food trucks, and dance demonstrations, to name a few. Businesses need not be child-centered to participate, instead offering face painting, chalk art, and other family fun at their locations.

While Family Fun Saturdays is a Downtown Association program, attracting more customers is also a goal of the municipality, which set aside funds for marketing and events, and promotes the Saturday series via its networks and mayoral posts to the Family Fun Saturdays Facebook page. The family friendly event series is also promoted via press releases and through participating businesses' social media platforms. And a downloadable two-page event map and brochure is posted to Facebook prior to each Family Fun Saturday. On event days, posts encourage attendance and invite attendees to share comments and photos.



• **Family friendly farmers markets.**

To make the Bradenton Farmer's Market in downtown Bradenton, FL (est. pop. 50,193), more family friendly, organizers invited community groups to host free weekly children's activities. Children visit the Family Activities Booth to collect a free Family Activities Bag containing materials for the week's project. Each time a child participates, he or she earns credits toward "Market Bucks," spendable for healthy market foods. And every third Saturday, the nonprofit Mainly Art hosts dozens of additional artists and crafters, live music, and food on land adjacent to the farmers market, thus expanding the footprint of the event and reasons for families to come downtown.

• **Celebrate Children's Day on June 14.**

In Morgantown, WV (est. pop. 29,660), Main Street Morgantown hosts a special Kids Day each year.

Over 100 businesses and organizations transform the city center with more than 60 activities both in their business locations and lining the event area. For example, one local bank has a clown behind the teller's window handing out treats; the library offers an interactive butterfly tent; and one toy store gives kids temporary tattoos. Nearly a dozen restaurants offer food and drink specials. And a giant sandbox is constructed in the city center for the event, as well.

The vendors who participate range from retailers, to museums, to health care organizations. However, they share an interest in connecting with children and their parents in a fun and casual environment. There is no fee for vendor participation other than the table rental.

The event has been going strong for nearly three decades, yet has little negative impact on the Main Street Morgantown budget. Sponsorships, and a requirement that every vendor provide a children's activity, allow the organization to host this free, four-hour event that draws more than 4,000 people downtown.

• **Interactive public art for children.** In Greenville, SC (est. pop. 67,453), children get to seek out bronze mice on main street. The



Children search for the popular Mice on Main.

mice were inspired by the classic storybook *Goodnight Moon*, in which a mouse is hiding on each page. A sculpture of the book and one mouse is mounted on a fountain in front of a downtown hotel.

Eight other mice are installed throughout a nine-block section of the city center. Since its installation in 2000, Mice on Main has grown to have its own website ([miceonmain.com](http://miceonmain.com)), T-shirt, board game, Christmas play, and a storybook offering hints about the locations of the mice. A list of hints is also available on the website.

• **Bring summer fun to the city center.**

One way to beat the summer heat and draw families downtown is to install a giant slip and slide attraction. Turnkey event producer Slide the City brings 1,000-foot water slides, or even full block parties, to cities nationwide. The company handles logistics and marketing, and describes the event as, "a family friendly slip-and-slide water party," with live music, food, drinks, and "the biggest slip and slide ever to hit asphalt," and assures, "Don't worry, we've got it padded. This slide's got more cushion than your grandpa's orthopedic sneakers."

Families are encouraged to bring water buckets, floaties, and non-realistic water guns and to make a day of it splashing around in the city center. Visit [slidethecity.com](http://slidethecity.com) for details.



Giant slip and slide brings summer fun downtown.



- **Celebrate young local artists.** March is Youth Art Month, an annual event designed to draw attention to the value of art and art education for children. The Council for Art Education provides useful information at their website, [councilforarteducation.org](http://councilforarteducation.org), including a list of state art education associations and a list of state Youth Art Month coordinators. In addition, local school teachers are often involved in planning activities for the month.

The celebration in Westfield, NJ (est. pop. 30,316), is typical of many downtown

events. Paintings, drawings, and sculpture from 10 local public schools are displayed in the windows of 62 downtown businesses for the entire month.

In Ann Arbor, MI (est. pop. 113,934), in addition to downtown art installations, and a map to guide pedestrians to the displays, there's also a ceremony with local dignitaries, artists, and their friends and families.

And in Kent, WA (est. pop. 92,411), the event is further expanded to include make-and-take art projects for children at a half-dozen downtown stores. **DIX**

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

# Listening, encouraging, and creating connections helps launch more entrepreneurial projects

Meeting entrepreneurs at local haunts, knowledge of vacant spaces, and a keen knack for listening to and supporting new ideas are being credited for filling a key downtown building with a new and much-needed business in Somerset, PA (est. pop. 6,277). Uptown Works, a cowork space, will be located in the historic World's Attic building in the heart of downtown.

"It is a crucial building in our county seat," says Daniel Parisi, entrepreneurial and innovation coach with the Somerset County Economic Development Council.

To support the new venture, the Economic

Development Council helped put together the financing. "We have a revolving loan fund and can loan up to \$50,000 for a new business," says Parisi. The loan pool is built from a variety of funding sources including tourism dollars, local community foundation support, and various USDA programs. "We offer low-interest financing. However, there always needs to be another lender, which is usually a local bank, but could come from some other funding source. In this case, we lent \$50,000 and the bank covered the rest," he says.

First-time developer Emily Kornis is buying and renovating the World's Attic building in the heart of Somerset at a main intersection downtown. She is also meeting a growing need in this small borough.

"I was working remotely for a company based in the DC area and found myself in a constant search for flex office space," she says. "All I needed was a desk, an Internet connection, and my computer, but all of the spaces I was looking at in town, I had to furnish myself, and it was more than I wanted to spend. It didn't meet my needs as a remote worker."

At first, she tried to encourage other entrepreneurs that she met in local coffee shops to

## Regional approach strengthens all

To further strengthen the cowork startup Uptown Works, Daniel Parisi, entrepreneurial & innovation coach with the Somerset County Economic Development Council, is helping owner Emily Kornis make connections with coworking spaces in two nearby towns. "If we are all connected to create this regional ecosystem, it will help us all. It may go so far as a tele-conference setup. We are trying to build the biggest [cowork] community we possibly can in this rural area," he says.

launch a cowork space. Finally, with encouragement from Regina Coughenour, executive director of Somerset Inc., the borough's Main Street Program, Korns decided to create a cowork space herself.

### Entrepreneurs need varied levels of support

While the cowork concept is not new, it is new to this rural area and a close relationship with the Somerset County EDC and Somerset Inc. have helped move the project along. The two groups worked closely with Korns to refine her business plan, review marketing materials, and provide introductions throughout the county.

Before her purchase of the building was even finalized, Korns had already launched an Uptown Works website, complete with a survey for potential members, and a contest to incentivize providing her with contact information — in exchange for an email address, visitors were entered to win a one-year reserved desk membership to Uptown Works. The website also lists the benefits of coworking, the range of membership options, and it features a downloadable brochure.

Rather than write her own press releases, Korns leveraged the reach and relationships of the Main Street organization by having Somerset Inc. handle that aspect of the marketing. The organization has also alerted Korns to opportunities to attend downtown events at which she might meet prospective cowork members.

### Support should be ongoing

Both organizations have "committed to helping me continue to refine the business plan, help me with marketing, and they are constantly making referrals to my business," Korns says. "Dan, in particular, is doing a lot in terms of connecting me to legal help, tax help, the different professionals I need on my team to be successful. More than anything, they've been advocates and cheerleaders, which is what you need when you have a new idea. They understood and supported the concept in its infancy and helped me explain it to people, and encouraged me to move forward."

Somerset, Inc. has also helped Korns make connections within the homeowners associations of two nearby ski resorts where people are working remotely. And Parisi has begun working with 40 new entrepreneurs in recent months who are potential members for the cowork space.

Coworking for rural areas just makes sense, Coughenour says. "Every day I feel like I'm meeting someone who does something different remotely. I have a neighbor who does blogging for [a company] in California. Another guy does finances, and we have people who do coding out of their garage — it just goes on and on."

### Listen, ask, and engage

When it comes to encouraging startups, it is important to be able to connect with people who have ideas, Korns says. "I think Regina and Dan are excellent listeners and spent an awful lot of time in the places where I was hanging out, the coffee shops. I saw them a lot, we started talking a lot, they were listening a lot, and it's really the conversations with Regina that helped me move forward."

Listen for new ideas, and keep the conversation going, Coughenour advises. "If I hear something I think is really good, I try to share with as many people as possible," she says. "I realize our organization is limited, so the more I can share, the more chance there is of the idea becoming contagious and of someone picking it up and running with it. If you keep that conversation going, good things are bound to happen."

Downtown leaders need to be out talking to and listening to people in the community in order to find the potential entrepreneurs, Korns advises. "Pop in and ask, 'Hey, what are you working on? What are you thinking about?' That helped me get from thinking about something to doing something," she says.

*Contact: Regina Coughenour, Somerset Inc., (814) 443-1748, [info@somersetinc.org](mailto:info@somersetinc.org); Emily Korns, Uptown Works, (412) 600-6774, [Emily@uptownworks.co](mailto:Emily@uptownworks.co); Daniel Parisi, Somerset County Economic Development Council, (814) 445-9655, [dparisi@scedc.net](mailto:dparisi@scedc.net).* **DIX**



**DowntownDevelopment.com**

To view the Uptown Works Introduction video, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

# Strategic outreach paves way for new Economic Improvement District

—Continued from page 1

majority of property worth within a defined geographic area can petition their local government to form an improvement district.

"We're the fifth such improvement district in the state," Armstrong says. "And we are the largest in terms of size and assessments paid by property owners."

Winning over downtown residents was vital to the EIDs success. "We had a great deal of support from our largest eight or 10 property owners, and because of that, we knew hitting the assessed valuation needed wasn't going to be a problem. What was important for us was getting into the condominiums and meeting condo owners, because roughly one third of our parcels are residential condos. We realized right away that getting the support of the condo owners was going to be critical in hitting our threshold."

A series of meetings was held with individual property owners, with groups of condo

owners at their monthly meetings, and with the Downtown Neighborhood Association, which includes both tenants and homeowners. "And while all that was going on, we continued to build consensus with the city council members that would vote on formation of the district," says Armstrong. "We had one-on-one meetings with every city council member, discussing with them the benefits, and how this provides benefits in addition to what the city is already doing. We can't use an EID as a replacement of functions that city government is already providing, but we told the story about improving our central business district and our downtown and how a healthy community radiates outward from that. This is another tool to give us that 'umph' in our downtown," he says.

Petitions, a document on which individual supporters could request formation of the EID, were mailed out or hand-delivered, depend-

ing on the relationship the Downtown Alliance had with individual stakeholders. The process took about 90 days, followed by a hearing with the city council where "remonstrators were able to speak as to why they were opposed, and where an engineered and planned procession of property owners of all kinds who supported district formation had an opportunity to get up and speak about why it was important from their point of view."

The viewpoint of shopkeepers and restaurants was different than that of large property owners, banks, a local casino, and residents, says Armstrong, which is why it was important to have a wide array of opinions voiced. Stakeholder desires varied from clean and safe activities to talent attraction for large employers to, "nonprofits

## New Economic Improvement District looks to the future

The first assessments for the newly approved Economic Improvement District in Evansville, IN, will be paid in July. Joshua Armstrong, director of the Downtown Alliance, will transition from that role to executive director of the new EID.

"Our first 18 months is set up, with some planning pieces and more unsexy stuff," says Armstrong. "We need to develop a landscape plan and a beautification plan for the district, and a branding plan and logo. We need to decide what to call ourselves to the general public — I don't think Economic Improvement District is a sexy name, so we need to retain some guidance on that. We need to create a high-quality, interactive website, and fund some expenses incurred during the process of district formation."

Some first-year funding will also be earmarked for what Armstrong calls "quick wins," such as beautification and landscape enhancement and upgraded holiday décor. Marketing, business attraction and recruitment, clean and safe activities, are also goals.

The long-term goal is to be a transformational organization for the downtown and to be involved in the projects prioritized in the Downtown Master Plan, such as adding a park to the main street and building a neighborhood of creatives. In addition to "driving what this master plan wants us to do, we will look at other opportunities for the EID to grow a bit, such as a CDC [revolving loan fund] to assist in getting some buildings done in a way that a traditional for-profit might not be able to," Armstrong says.

speaking about how it impacts client, workforce, and donor experiences when coming into the downtown,” he says.

The city council unanimously approved the EID at the end of November. Two weeks later, an originating meeting with the new EID board was held and notices were sent out to property owners detailing their 2018 assessments.

### Dealing with the naysayers

“I think that there were some naysayers who we were able to get on board,” says Armstrong. “But, I also got some really good advice from Brad Segal at PUMA [Progressive Urban Management Associates]. He told me, ‘don’t waste your time on the hard-nosed. Focus first on where you think your yesses are.’ I got up to about 45 percent really fast, then came the conversions of the ‘not sures.’ Once we broke the threshold, we announced that and a flood of additional petitions came forward.”

The proposed EID footprint included 304 property owners representing 455 downtown parcels. Each property owner had to sign an individual petition. Tenant businesses could advocate for it through their owners.

While the Downtown Alliance delivered and collected many petitions in person, each

condo building also had one resident who acted as a building captain of sorts. And the organization’s board members were asked to handle approaches to any downtown stakeholders, and especially out-of-town property owners, with whom they had relationships. “We also reached out to the commercial real estate community so that brokers and agents knew what we were doing,” Armstrong says. “We had property sales and purchases taking place during the process and they were able to let folks know what was going on. There were a few cases where new property owners reached out to me.”

Another thing that contributed to the successful EID vote was minimizing input by individuals and entities not located in the downtown. “We held this really close to the vest,” says Armstrong. “We did not go out to the broader media to talk about this. The EID, at its core, is a relationship amongst the 304 property owners, so if people weren’t downtown stakeholders, we didn’t want to encourage them talking about it. We kept it a very tightly held process.”

Contact: Joshua Armstrong, Southwest Indiana Chamber, (812) 425-8147, ext. 22211, [jarmstrong@swinchamber.com](mailto:jarmstrong@swinchamber.com). **DIX**

***“This is another tool to give us that ‘umph’ in our downtown.”***

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Repurposed shipping containers offer flexible, affordable space downtown

Shipping containers are providing retail and residential space downtown and creating an attention-grabbing alternative to more traditional development. Container Park, in Las Vegas, NV (est. pop. 583,756), is perhaps one of the most ambitious projects based around repurposed shipping containers. The founders sought to create a community gathering place, affordable entrepreneur space, and a vibrant retail, arts, and entertainment scene. More than 35 repurposed containers were blended with locally produced “Xtreme Cubes” to create the park. When it opened in 2013, Container Park featured up to 44 flexible retail spaces, depend-

ing on how containers were configured, and also offered a playground and a wide array of programming to appeal to all ages.

“We envision the Downtown Container Park to feel much like a weekend backyard barbeque by the pool, where friends and family and kids all interact,” said Kim Schaefer, communications manager for the managing organization, Downtown Project, just prior to opening. “Imagine Downtown Container Park as a place where kids can play with other kids while adults can enjoy their wine and cheese on a lazy Sunday afternoon with a family-friendly live band playing in the background



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To learn more about Container Park, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

— a place for everyone in the community to come together — singles, couples, kids, and families.”

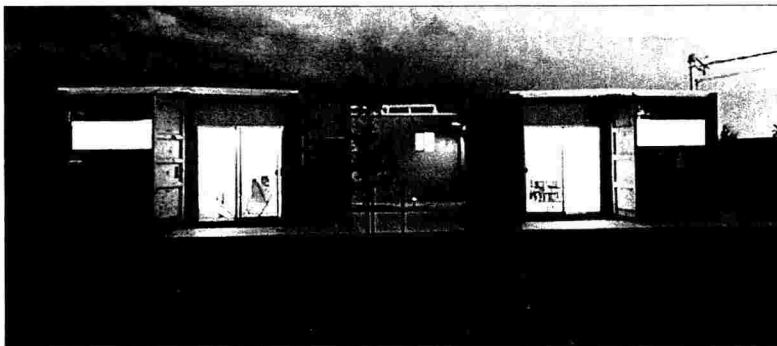
Today, Container Park is home to seven restaurants and bars with both indoor and outdoor seating, as well as a robust open-air shopping center, a popular playground, outdoor entertainment, and The Dome, a 360-degree visual entertainment venue featuring both educational and video gaming productions.

### Retail, restaurant, and office spaces in the works

In Oklahoma City, OK (est. pop. 579,999), developers are using 20 shipping containers to create two buildings adjacent to the downtown which will house a mix of retail, restaurants, offices, and a rooftop deck. The development will also offer 60 parking spaces, and a wall onto which movies will be projected for the public, according to *The Oklahoman*.

Construction is also underway on a downtown restaurant and shopping complex built out of shipping containers in Phoenix, AZ (est. pop. 1,445,632). The Churchill, scheduled to open this spring, will feature a bar, restaurant, and boutique among the 10 locations housed within 19 repurposed shipping containers with a shared courtyard.

Three tenants, including a bar, a pizza shop, and a boutique had already confirmed last fall, according to AZCentral.com. More tenants will be announced in the months leading up to opening day. Each tenant is required to contribute volunteer hours to the project, and is encouraged to host community events. Classes, activities, and fundraisers for local nonprofits will also enliven the space.



Shipping container rental units can fill gaps in downtown housing for tourists.

### Tiny housing and cowork spaces

Entrepreneurs will build their first Stackhouse development this year near downtown Tucson, AZ (est. pop. 520,116). The patent-pending Stackhouse is a steel structure with slots for shipping-container homes. Homebuyers can pick their container and then rent a lot in the Stackhouse, according to Tucson.com. The Stackhouse will hold two units per floor, with five to seven stories, and is expected to be about 50 feet high. Containers will be placed into their slots with a special crane.

The developers also plan to construct Stackhouses in California, Colorado, and Washington.

To pave the way for the tiny house movement, Arizona's Pima County waived some building codes, including minimum dwelling, room, and ceiling dimensions, and stairway requirements for loft areas.

The developers are working with manufacturers to keep the cost of container homes in the \$35,000 to \$40,000 range. Rent in the Stackhouse, which includes utilities, cable, and Internet, will start at \$500 per month for a ground slot and range up to \$1,000 for the top floor. Each slot will have a wraparound deck, and each Stackhouse will have a rooftop deck for residents to share.

Meanwhile, the new Cargo District in downtown Wilmington, NC (est. pop. 106,476), is the city's first pop-up container community. Being constructed in phases, the Cargo District will first see creation of live/work rental units. The project will eventually include coworking spaces, restaurants, retail, and a food truck park.

Amazon has also embraced prefabricated shipping containers, offering houses that need only a slab to sit on and attachment to sewer, water, and electrical service. Manufactured by MODS International, the \$23,000 homes cost \$4,400 to deliver and arrive fully furnished.

And finally, in Las Cruces, NM (est. pop. 97,618), two 40-foot shipping containers have been configured to add rental space for travelers to the downtown scene. The shipping container loft, offered via Airbnb, has a full kitchen and bath, a washing machine, a picture window overlooking the Organ Mountains, and is “adjacent to [the] bike path and downtown,” according to the listing. **DIX**



# Idea Exchange

## No drones allowed

Deadwood, SD, is known for its well-preserved Gold Rush-era architecture, but visitors to the picturesque downtown are no longer able to take some types of photos. In January, the city commission passed a bill restricting the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, over the downtown.

The ban is the result of safety concerns, Police Chief Kelly Fuller tells the Courthouse News Service, "We'd had some close calls," Fuller says, recalling a drone flying over a packed city concert two years ago. "So we want to be on the safe side."

## Active Frontages encourage lively streets

The Town of Milton, ON, Canada, is taking steps to create a more bustling, pedestrian-oriented experience downtown. Recent amendments to the town's strategic plan include the creation of an Active Frontages designation. The designation is intended to, "reinforce the character of these frontages as lively, pedestrian-oriented, and interactive street fronts. Generally buildings along Active Frontages will be located at the street edge to help frame and animate the street."

Specific requirements for the Active Frontages include:

- provide pedestrian-traffic-generating activities at street level, particularly retail and service uses, including retail offices (such as banks and realtors) that directly provide an on-demand, over-the-

counter service to visiting members of the public;

- incorporate transparent display windows for a majority of the street-facing, ground-floor wall with at least one main entry leading directly from the sidewalk, which is universally accessible to the public; and,

- have a ground-floor level at sidewalk-grade elevation and ground-floor heights of at least 4.5m measured floor to floor.



For the full text of this and other amendments, visit [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on Web Extras.

## Reconfigured department store remains downtown

A creative financing and redevelopment plan will retain a large department store downtown and make room for new uses. The Boston Store in downtown Milwaukee will be cut in half, reports [UrbanMilwaukee.com](http://UrbanMilwaukee.com). The store will be reduced from 123,000 square feet to approximately 33,000 square feet and will make way for new office space.

The changes will also enhance the walkability of the neighborhood, notes Dan Casanova, a senior economic development specialist for the city. Creation of a new street-level lobby for the office space and the discovery of street-level windows will help.

"A number of large window bays the city believes have been bricked shut for nearly a century will be opened up with large windows," says Casanova.

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# Idea Exchange

## Making it easier to stay longer

Creating public bathrooms is on a list of items being considered by the city council in Burlington, VT. The measures are largely aimed at helping the homeless, but the addition of public bathrooms also has support from the business community, according to WCAX.com. Currently, the only public bathrooms are located in the downtown City Market, a community-owned grocery store.

On the other side of the country, the city of Santa Cruz, CA, offers several locations with public restrooms. These are in downtown garages, the city hall, and the public library. Restrooms are typically available during regular business hours. In an effort to expand availability, the city's economic development department operates a Visitor Restroom Program. At its website the city explains:

"The Visitor Restroom Program provides restroom facilities for visitors in downtown businesses through an agreement between the city and the business owner. The city gives the business a Visitor Restroom sign which is displayed outside the business, and pays a monthly stipend to cover additional maintenance costs. The business makes their restrooms available to visitors and maintains the restrooms during their regular business hours."

## Share the love and successes

For the fourth consecutive year, the Center for Community Progress, a nationwide nonprofit working to transform vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties into community assets, has celebrated Valentine's Day with the #LoveThatLot campaign.

The campaign encourages people to show their love for revitalized spaces via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as through in-person celebrations. The Center notes that people have shared their love for, "vacant lots transformed into farms, gas stations transformed into buildings with small businesses, and demolition sites turned into children's learning gardens."



Binghamton, NY's, Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments celebrates the potential vacant lots have for communities.

To learn more, visit [www.communityprogress.net/blog/lovethatlot](http://www.communityprogress.net/blog/lovethatlot).

## Gee wiz parking technology

The Century City commercial district in Los Angeles, is home to the 1.3 million-square-foot Westfield Century City outdoor shopping mall. But what really stands out is the mall's parking system, which may point the direction for downtown parking facilities in humbler locations. What sets the system apart is the parking reservations component.

*Parking Today* magazine explains, "For the first time, parkers can reserve a particular space close to their ultimate destination, in advance, and have that space saved for them until they arrive." The pre-book spaces at Westfield have LED signs above them that display the name of the person who reserved that space.



To read the full article visit [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on Web Extras.

**DIX**



# Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

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## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### To remain competitive, communities build their own Internet networks

Internet connectivity is vital for businesses of every size, and for downtowns that want to attract residents, visitors, and employers. When private investment in broadband/fiber Internet infrastructure proves difficult to attract, some municipalities are building their own.

According to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, there are now at least 750 community-owned Internet systems in the United States.

Chattanooga, TN (est. pop. 167,674), was the first in North

America to build its own citywide gigabit-per-second fiber Internet network, says Jeremy Henderson, creative project manager for the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce.

"It was a pretty huge deal at the time," says Henderson. "One of the effects of that was a boom in our startup community. We started having very innovative small companies and a handful of incubators in town." Now the city is seeing such

*(Continued on page 2)*

## ATTRACTION

### Retail and restaurant survey provides data for targeted business recruitment

Since 2011, the town of Flower Mound, TX (est. pop. 64,669), has conducted a Retail & Restaurant Survey every other year. The results are used to ensure that residents have input into the type of downtown they want, recruit new businesses, explore consumer leakage, and educate the public about why certain retail and restaurant desires are not realistic. The most recent survey was conducted in 2017.

"It has evolved over time, but we've tried really hard to keep it consistent so we can benchmark the

data against each report," says Alora Wachholz, the town's economic development manager.

The town has many advantages, including relatively high household incomes, a well-educated populace, and its location just three miles from an international airport. "It's a great opportunity, when it comes to recruitment efforts, but Flower Mound also has a long history of wanting to preserve its land from urban sprawl," explains Wachholz.

*(Continued on page 8)*



# To remain competitive, communities build their own Internet networks —Continued from page 1

an increased demand for new employees that an ambitious video marketing campaign has been launched to attract residents.

The economic benefits for the city have been roughly \$1 billion over the course of the last five years. And the network can be directly tied to the creation of between 2,800 and 5,200 new jobs, according to a report from the University of Tennessee.

“Many communities have realized that if they do not invest in themselves, they will be left behind in the digital economy,” Christopher Mitchell, director of community broadband networks for the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, tells *StateTech* magazine. “Local governments are watching as other communities that have affordable, citywide, high-quality Internet access are thriving.”

Chattanooga’s upgrade came about in 2010 when the city’s Electric Power Board modernized the power grid by laying a fiber network throughout its 600-square-mile service area. The EPB first rolled out a one-

gigabit-per-second municipal network, and more recently, 10Gbps service, says *StateTech* magazine.

## High-speed connectivity is key to business retention

Hudson, OH (est. pop. 22,262), has also invested in its own high-speed Internet service. Velocity Broadband “is the fastest and most reliable Internet in Hudson,” says the city. The gigabit speeds are available because of the city’s new all-fiber network.

The city invested more than \$2.3 million into creating the company, according to the *Akron Beacon Journal*. City spokeswoman Jody Roberts told the newspaper that the new service was about 100 times faster than any other broadband available in Northeast Ohio at launch time.

The project came about after the city’s economic development department heard complaints from multiple businesses about low and inconsistent Internet service. “Some were saying they had employees working out of their houses because of computer issues at work,” City Manager Jane Howington told the newspaper. The problems were confirmed via a survey of local businesses and residents.

The city first considered running the high-speed lines and asking a private broadband company to take them over, but could not find a willing service provider. “So that left us with deciding whether to leave things as they were, knowing we might lose businesses, or do it ourselves,” Howington said.

Velocity first became operational for city offices and private businesses in a local business park in September, 2015. By the following summer, First & Main, a new mixed-use retail development in the center of the city, and the downtown were connected. The mayor then declared October to be Gigabit City Month, with local merchants joining the celebration by offering special promotions



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To read the report, *The realized value of fiber infrastructure in Hamilton County Tennessee*, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

## Surveys reveal Internet service gaps that turn away new businesses

Last fall, Radius Global Market Research and WiredScore released findings of their study, *The Value of Connectivity: What’s the Cost of Poor Digital Connectivity for Commercial Real Estate*. The study reveals that more than 80 percent of participating businesses experience regular Internet connectivity problems. A random sampling of 150 leasing decision makers from 10 of the nation’s largest cities were polled, and the quality of a building’s Internet connection was cited as a factor in evaluating future office space – surpassing both location and price as the important factors when searching for workspace in the coming decade.

The WiredScore report is available for download at [info.wiredscore.com/value-connectivity-commercial-real-estate](http://info.wiredscore.com/value-connectivity-commercial-real-estate). (Registration is required.)

and local restaurants offering menu items such as Giga-bite sliders, Broadband BBQ, and Giga milkshakes.

About 50 businesses signed up immediately, and the city hoped to add another 50 businesses in the coming months, says the *Beacon Journal*. Companies that do not need a gigabit can opt for a less costly 25 megabit service. And to meet the residential demand demonstrated by survey results, municipal officials applied for a \$50,000 Ohio Development Services Agency grant to study the feasibility of covering the entire city so that residents could opt in, as well.

Howington told the *Beacon Journal* that there wasn't too much risk to the endeavor because the city already had its own power company and could install the lines where customers were already interested, then grow as the cash flow began. Only one city employee was added, with other existing staff being reassigned or taking on new duties. Other operations, such as sales and interior wire installation, were outsourced to local companies.

### **Even tiny, rural communities can embrace DIY broadband**

Many towns and cities in Maine are grappling with the need for dependable, high-speed Internet service. The Maine Fiber Company Conference last year highlighted success stories, including that of the Island of Islesboro, ME (est. pop. 566). A sustained five-year effort there was responsible for a program that will provide 100-percent fiber coverage for homes and businesses.

"With no cable TV incumbent on the Island, there were fewer competitive threats to a municipally built fiber network, and a lower general cost for attaching to the utility poles," says the Maine Fiber Company. "A small group of local residents took the 'long view,' educated themselves and other islanders, and relentlessly pursued the funding and approvals needed to turn this idea into a reality."

A well-informed and persistent local advocacy group is critical for any successful community broadband initiative, as is public funding of some type and magnitude, says the company. **DIX**

## **ATTRACTION**

### **Housing program draws and retains employees**

The Live it Up Wausau program in Wausau, WI (est. pop. 39,106), seeks to attract employees to the area and give them reasons to stay.

"This fits under a broad heading of employee-assisted housing or economic development homesteading," says Christian Schock, the city's director of planning, community, and economic development. "These are programs that help employees become more rooted in the community. The basic premise is that an employee who is connected to the city or neighborhood is much more inclined to stay than one who isn't."

Within the field of economic development, workforce attraction is a high priority,

says Schock. "This type of program is a pragmatic way that a community can tackle that."

Schock notes that employee-attraction programs are structured in many different ways nationwide, including grants, programs that pay back student loans, and employers that offer residential down payment assistance. These programs are also used for stabilization in targeted neighborhoods in some cities, or to target employees of particular industries.

The Live it Up Wausau program offers interest-free loans of up to \$10,000 to employees of partner businesses for use toward down payments on local homes. "This



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To view Live it Up Wausau guidelines, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

compliments whatever traditional financing they have, and makes home buying more affordable, while rooting them better into the neighborhood,” says Schock.

To offset potentially higher renovation costs for older city center homes, employees can borrow up to \$15,000, interest free, for historic properties 50 years and older. “And we also forgive the final year of payment if they have made, and documented, physical improvements to the property,” Schock says.

Businesses must make a donation to the program’s loan pool in order for their employees to qualify. The city contributes to the fund, as do several charitable foundations.

“Initially, it was important for the city to have leadership over the program so we started with \$100,000 [in city funds], then went to the businesses and said, ‘we want you to partner on this for your employees.’ We didn’t have a minimum donation amount because we wanted to engage as many businesses as possible, from single proprietors to small, family businesses to big manufacturers and banks. It’s good to see a diversity of folks getting involved. We were telling them, ‘Hey, you should be cognizant of where your employees are living and how connected they are to the community.’”

“We had heard anecdotally of law firm employees coming to town, living in a couple of apartment complexes, staying three to five years, and then leaving. And from other employees, we heard how hard it was for them to find housing, and choices that really fit different levels, so the city developed on the supply side, as well, by offering construction loans, workforce housing incentives, tax credits, those kinds of things. We are helping property owners renovate the floors over storefronts, almost every possible second floor where you could put residential. That’s been very positive.”

### **Model is adaptable for targeted residential development**

While Live it Up Wausau is not exclusively focused on downtown, it is a model of homesteading that would be “great for a downtown to think about,” says Schock. “One

of the keys to a successful downtown is 24/7 vibrancy, a good balance of workers and people living in and shopping in the downtown.”

In Wausau, no particular neighborhoods were targeted. “It was discussed and considered, but I think the extra kicker for historic homes does help target certain neighborhoods,” Schock says. “It helps people buy anywhere in the area, but I could see a community creating homesteading just for a certain neighborhood or area. It’s something of an emerging field, and I really think it’s one of the best ways a community can focus on revitalization. Work on homesteading people into that area.”

Schock says the more inclusive nature of Live it Up Wausau works well for his city. “One thing we’ve been pleased with is that it’s been a fairly broad-based approach with a variety of different geographies and types of homes. Like many cities, we’ve had down payment assistance programs funded primarily through a block grant, which is tied to need-based requests from folks who couldn’t buy a home otherwise.”

This program instead “looks at it from the demand perspective and makes sure employees buy homes in the city and become more inclined to stay,” says Schock. “There’s an economic development reason here, not just affordable housing or neighborhood development. We value skilled workers and we want them to buy properties in the city.”

The program has been used for all types of housing with mortgages ranging from \$40,000 to \$500,000. “The employees are loving the incentive, rather than needing it, and employers are able to add it to the list of employee benefits,” Schock says. “If a potential employee is coming from outside the region, it’s a great way to say our community values you and will help you buy a home.”

The program also helps attract investment. “Developers might say, ‘I don’t know who is going to buy this house.’ If you work with the employers, you can work that connection and create and show strong demand,” says Schock. “It helps prove that market as you move forward.”

## Promoting the program builds partnerships and participation

The city promotes Live it Up Wausau, but finds that mortgage lenders and realtors are also valuable promotional partners. “We’ve got those partnerships, and the businesses, and the city all out there working to tell that story,” Schock says. “It’s helped us continue to gain traction.”

The city has done a lot to promote the program with the media, as well, including hosting media events on the lawns of homes to celebrate closings. “The state also focused on our program and highlighted it in one of their marketing pieces,” says Schock. “It’s just another angle of telling that story, which says that the Wausau community cares about employees and ensuring that people have access and interest in buying homes.”

Other Wisconsin communities now look to Wausau as a model, Schock says. “I don’t think ours is necessarily the best. We have one version, while another version works for another community. It’s just a great emerging field where we would love to see more collaboration among communities focused on homesteading, and creating demand-driven functions for home ownership,” he says.

“A lot of communities already have down payment assistance so sometimes they just need to re-imagine it from need-based to an economic development perspective,” Schock says. “I would encourage communities to talk with regional entities and other communities to see what are the things they are doing that are focused on housing to attract and retain workers.”

Contact: Christian Schock, City of Wausau, (715) 261-6683, [Christian.schock@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Christian.schock@ci.wausau.wi.us). **DIX**

## ACCESS AND MOBILITY

### Microtransit pilot seeks to reduce single-occupancy travel

A new program in Arlington, TX (est. pop. 365,438), seeks to reduce traffic downtown while providing greater public transit coverage at lower cost to the city.

Until a few years ago, Arlington was the largest city in the nation with no mass transit. More recently, its bus line, Max, has seen lackluster ridership along its fixed route between a local university and a commuter rail station near the Dallas-Fort Worth airport. Now a new six-seater, on-demand shuttle service is taking a test run.

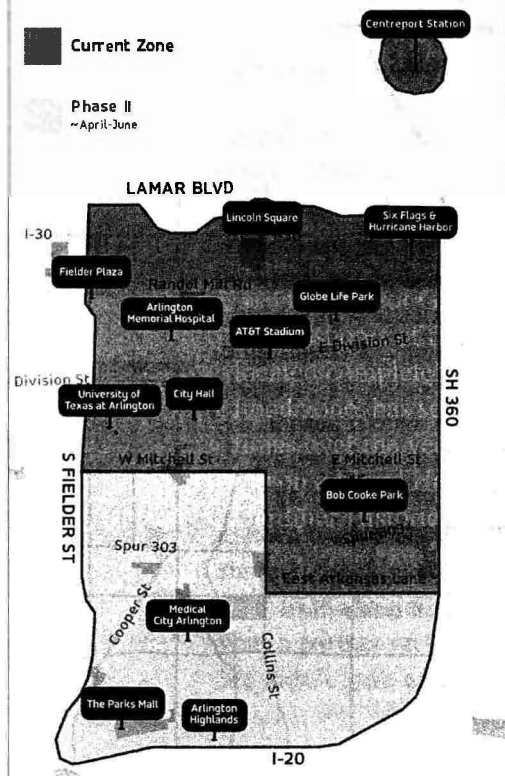
Last fall, the city announced a partnership with New York-based startup, Via, which already offers on-demand minibus service in New York City, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. Rides can be booked on the Via smartphone app. Users receive an estimated pickup time and can also track their vehicle on the app. The average wait time is 10-12 minutes, says Via.

Passengers lacking smartphones or the app can order rides on the Via shuttles, branded locally as Arlington On-Demand, by calling the company, says the city’s ride-share web page. Unlike the fixed-route bus, passengers can now be picked up at or near their doorstep and delivered at or near their destinations, all for \$3 per ride. The signature Mercedes vans are marked with both Arlington On-Demand and Via logos for easy identification.

The rideshare service currently offers rides in the areas around downtown, the University of Texas at Arlington, the Texas Health Arlington Memorial Hospital area, and the Entertainment District, as well as providing a connection to the commuter rail station near the airport. Arlington On-Demand operates from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays, and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday, but extended hours will be offered

***“Via will get people to places Max was too limited to get close to.”***

## Arlington On-Demand coverage areas



On-demand, six-seat shuttles provide a broader coverage area and increased convenience for users during this pilot program.

during special events in the Entertainment District.

Payments can be made by credit card or prepaid card.

In addition to a fleet of 10 passenger vans, Via will also be operating a limited number of wheelchair accessible vehicles during the pilot program, and these will provide door-to-door service.

Future phases will see service expanded to two major shopping areas and the neighborhoods around them. "Service areas may shift over time as information is gathered about demand for service," says the

city. Up-to-date service area maps and operating hours are available on the app and at the Via and city websites. Residents living outside the current service area have been encouraged to provide feedback to the company which will inform future expansion decisions.

Via's service in Arlington will be subsidi-

dized by public tax dollars, including one of the first federal grants to fund microtransit in the country, according to a recent *CityLab* article.

"Not only will [the pilot] cover the area we're already serving, Via will get people to places Max was too limited to get close to," Alicia Winkelblech, assistant director of strategic planning for the city, tells *CityLab*.

The main criteria for judging the success of the one-year pilot program will be whether Via reduces single-occupancy vehicle trips, which the city plans to measure based on data collected and shared by Via. Winkelblech is optimistic that it can carve into the market for private or even pooled Uber and Lyft trips. "A trip that might cost \$12 on a ride-hailing service will now cost \$3. We anticipate quite a lot of interest in this," she tells *CityLab*.

A successful expansion of microtransit may very well build demand for fixed-route services in the future as well, notes the article. Via may also help unlock answers to questions asked by transit agencies nationwide, because one advantage of on-demand mobility apps is that all the data on where passengers want to go is captured.

"There isn't a transit agency in the U.S. that has any valuable data on the demand they don't/can't serve," transportation consultant Jon McBride tells *CityLab*. "They have no real idea what service people are looking for — perhaps this contributes to the declining ridership most of them are seeing." **DIX**

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Downtown seeks flood mitigation to support merchants

The city of Gardiner, ME (est. pop. 5,800), on the shores of the Kennebec River and located completely within the mapped FEMA flood zone, has seen downtown flooding many times over the years. Now officials are working on a Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan for the Gardiner Historic District.

"The purpose is to establish where on the buildings the 100-year flood mark is," says Patrick Wright, executive director of Gardiner Main Street. Knowing that high-water mark allows building owners to make informed decisions about where to locate mechanical systems and other at-risk items. It may also



help property owners qualify for lower flood insurance rates. "If you flood-proof to one foot above that mark, insurance rates can be substantially lower, and the building is a lot happier if it does flood," he says.

The first step is to obtain Flood Elevation Certificates, says Wright. Recently, the city received a \$7,500 grant from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission toward the \$17,520 project, which will survey the elevations of buildings within the district. Survey data will be entered by a college intern into a GIS system in order to catalog information about properties in the floodplain. Participation by property owners is voluntary, with the grant covering half the cost for each survey and certificate for up to 48 buildings.

"This is Phase I of our community's flood resiliency plan. For us, the floods are a concern, but the bigger concern right now is what is happening to flood insurance rates," Wright says, noting that a flood comes along only occasionally, but high rates must be paid every day. With the U.S. Congress contemplating the removal of flood insurance subsidies, and building owners with mortgages required to carry the insurance, concerns are on the rise, he says.

"One interesting thing we are watching — and I met with Senator Susan Collins a month ago to brief her on this issue — is a bill going through the senate right now that would slow the increase of insurance premiums to 10 percent [annually] and buy us some time for mitigation," Wright says. "It also includes some flood hazard mitigation funds for communities. Our hope is to position ourselves to get some support from the federal government to make our buildings more flood resilient."

Once the Flood Elevation Certificates project is complete, "the next part would be to then come up with strategies for mitigating against floods," says Wright. "In the case of Gardiner, we think that it's going to be more effective to go building by building in order to mitigate against damage. We don't think it's a case where a levy or some other structural approach would be cost effective or [flood-prevention] effective. We are also working with the Army Corps of Engineers. Their Silver Jackets program is using buildings that Gardiner Main

## Senate considers bill to ease national flood insurance woes

Downtown leaders in flood-prone states are keeping a close eye on the Sustainable, Affordable, Fair, and Efficient (SAFE) National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2017 as it winds its way through the U. S. Senate review process. The bill seeks to fix problems exposed during the response to Hurricane Sandy, say proponents, noting that among other things, the bill will:

- Provide long-term certainty by reauthorizing the National Flood Insurance Program for six years.
- Prevent exorbitant rate hikes by capping annual increases at 10 percent. "Currently, premiums increase by up to 25 percent every year, depressing property values, creating affordability challenges, and discouraging participation in the program," say the bill's sponsors.
- Cut waste by freezing interest payments and establishing new controls for private insurance company compensation in order to reinvest in proactive mitigation efforts and affordability measures, including low-interest loans for homeowners' mitigation projects and affordability vouchers.
- Provide strong investment in mitigation, with robust funding levels for large-scale, communitywide mitigation efforts and mitigation assistance programs, which, proponents say, have a 4:1 return on investment and are the most effective way to reduce flood risk.
- Provide better training and certification of agents and adjusters "to reduce mistakes and improve the customer experience."

Street owns as a test case for designing strategies for our buildings to achieve safety and get lower rates."

There are Silver Jackets teams in states nationwide, though some go by other names. These teams bring together multiple federal, state, tribal, and local agencies to learn from one another in reducing flood risk and other natural disasters. Federal team members typically include FEMA, and possibly the National Weather Service and U.S. Geological Survey, in addition to the Army Corps of Engineers.

Contact: Patrick Wright, Gardiner Main Street, (207) 582-3100, [info@gardinermainstreet.org](mailto:info@gardinermainstreet.org). **DIX**

## Retail and restaurant survey provides data for targeted business attraction —Continued from page 1

“We have some interesting zoning and planning in place, and a Smart Growth policy that requires a big section to remain residential to keep that ‘city meets country’ feel. While that’s good for the community in the long run, it also means that we are working with limited commercial space. We tend to be a little picky about who and how we recruit.”

Additions to the downtown business mix are viewed as amenities for residents, she says. The best way to ensure that residents are happy with that mix is to, “ask them what they are lacking and what would make their quality of life better,” Wachholz says.

### Conducting the survey

The two-person economic development department saves money and staff hours by using the online tool, Survey Monkey. “By making the survey available online, we are able to harness a large percentage of our population,” says Wachholz. “And I always encourage residents who are uncomfortable with taking the survey online to call and I will

send a written survey and include [return] postage.”

Surveys are offered in the fall when most people are back from summer travels. Participation is encouraged via the city and partner

organization social media platforms, at town council meetings, in monthly newsletters, and on the town website. While residents are the target audience, business partners who may live elsewhere but have a stake in the downtown, and other interested nonresidents may participate.

The format includes about 10 questions, the last of which is open-ended and elicits some interesting and informative responses. Participants, who remain anonymous, are asked where they usually shop, and when shopping outside of the community, what things they travel to purchase. They are asked where they like to dine, for which meals, and how often. “And we have started asking

what percentage of their annual shopping is done online,” says Wachholz. Finally, respondents are given the opportunity to make comments.

“We get amazing feedback from that,” she says. “This year, a [self-identified] high school student wrote probably one of the most convincing essays on why we need a Whataburger. There’s one in a neighboring community, but he wrote that after football games, everyone goes to that other town, and sees each other in line, and that he realized all this money was just leaving [our town],” says Wachholz. “That is something we would include in a recruitment packet to Whataburger.”

### Putting the data to use

Survey results go out in recruitment packets to the top 10 requested retailers and the top 10 requested restaurants in each survey cycle, along with the town’s eight-page economic development profile, an aerial map of the commercial corridor, and letters from downtown leaders “that introduce them to the community and let them know we are a community that wants them, that we are open for business and interested in talking, and that we have space available,” Wachholz says. The more desired a business, the more materials and follow-up contact will be provided.

While survey data is broken down by the top 10 requests in each category, Wachholz also crunches the numbers by business type. Perhaps there’s no way to recruit the cute little family diner a respondent patronized in a far-flung city, but if enough people request some form of family dining, those numbers are used to persuade family friendly restaurants that a market exists for their menu items. Or everyone may not request the same sporting goods store, but if the numbers demonstrate the need for this type of business, that can be a compelling recruitment tool, she says. Final survey results in all categories are displayed as a two-page infographic,

***“We have started asking what percentage of their annual shopping is done online.”***

with additional pages containing respondent's open-ended comments.

The survey also lets the city know "what not to do," says Wachholz. "People might say no more nail salons, no more donut shops, or no more banks. And we use the survey to clarify what our role is when it comes to local economic development. There are comments on what areas of town people would like to see developed. This goes to the town council. You get a lot more out of the survey than simply that everyone would like a Trader Joe's."

The surveys also provide opportunities for public education. "We get a lot of pie-in-the-sky responses, and our department feels strongly that part of our job is to educate and communicate to our residents and our businesses," Wachholz says. "In those situations where requests aren't feasible, we still find invaluable information because we can share why we're not going to be able to have an Apple Store here in town because we are not on a major highway and are not going to bring in the numbers."

Her department does reach out to the big brands through meetings at trade shows and expos, "to double check and verify the best possible explanation to bring back as to why they are perhaps not interested in our market, and I think there is a lot of benefit in that," Wachholz says.

"We also use the data for general market indicators," she says. For example, one surprise is that people now spend more going out to eat than in grocery shopping. There can be surprises on the retail front, as well. "People were requesting very high-end retailers, but now they are wanting to save money in that part of their spending. We had a discount grocery store looking at our market. There's very little about the demographic in Flower Mound to tell you a discount grocer would be successful here, but when you look at what our residents are actually saying, it's not that they can't afford things, but shopping is not where they want to invest their money. Because of that, we can say there is a market and help move that dialog forward."

For the first time this year, the town plans to share its survey results with neighboring

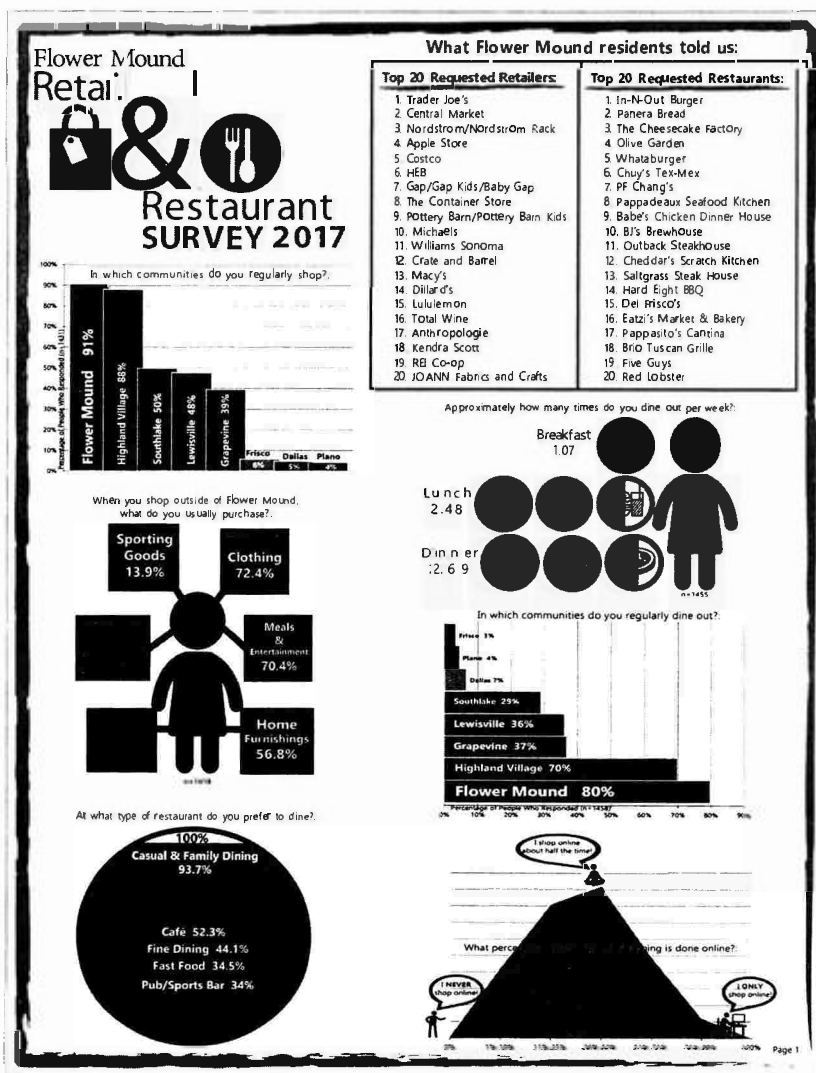
communities in which respondents indicated they like to shop and dine. "It's just to let them know the kinds of leakages we are facing but that they are gaining from," says Wachholz. "We are a bunch of communities all squished up together, competitive, but very supportive. If that [data] does them any good, or helps them with any economic development or lets them know they did a good job, we are happy to do that. We are also happy to speak with any community [thinking about designing a survey]. It can seem a lot more daunting than it really is. I think that if other small communities knew this was achievable and how, it could save them a lot of money and get them started," she says.

Contact: Alora Wachholz, Town of Flower Mound, (972) 874-6044, [econdev@flower-mound.com](mailto:econdev@flower-mound.com). **DIX**



**DowntownDevelopment.com**

To read the Flower Mound Retail & Restaurant Survey 2017, and resident comments, visit our website and click on Web Extras.



Survey results are presented in an easy-to-read infographic format.

## ATTRACTION

# Sip and stroll events make shopping more social

Sip and stroll events are a popular activity for drawing visitors not just downtown, but directly into downtown shops and other businesses. While each event has a unique local flavor, most rely on merchants to serve snacks and beverages while shoppers move from location to location in a fun and low-pressure environment. Add to that in-store specials, live music, buskers, and passport-style promotions, and the stage is set for a successful event.

The 2017 holiday season saw its share of sip & stroll events with at least one taking advantage of open container laws. That was

the case in Clermont, FL (est. pop. 28,742), where attendees of the two-day 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Light Up Clermont event are encouraged to shop, sip, and stroll along the city's Hometown Holiday Parade route. "Spend a few hours or an entire day," urges the city's economic development department. "The downtown area is blossoming on all fronts, with an assortment of new shops and eateries to enjoy!"

The city has an open container ordinance, which allows for an open container of wine or beer, purchased from approved retailers along the parade route, which falls within the Entertainment District downtown, says Shannon Schmidt, the city's economic development director.

Meanwhile, a 45-minute drive away in Winter Park, FL (est. pop. 27,852), Sip, Shop & Stroll events are offered several times a year and are viewed as an opportunity to lure customers into business locations.

"Spend the evening visiting your favorite Park Avenue area shops and restaurants," said the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce of its event in December. "Discover new merchants, check out the latest fashions, gift ideas, and seasonal menu items, and enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres along the way."

In Snohomish, WA (est. pop. 9,098), the Sippin' & Shoppin' Christmas Shopping Evening and Wine Stroll sold out in a single day last year. Held from 4 to 8 p.m. on the first Saturday of December, this event incorporates a wine tasting into the festivities. The marketing focus was on fun, with holiday sales treated as incidental.

A different winery was featured at each participating shop. Guests received eight samples, plus a \$10 voucher toward the purchase of a bottle of wine from the event's Bottle Shop.

And finally, the Greater Pickens Chamber of Commerce in Pickens, SC (est. pop. 3,190), doesn't wait for the holiday season, instead highlighting all that downtown has to offer a few weeks earlier. Their Sip, Shop & Stroll, on the first Saturday in November, invites participants to, "Join us as we Stroll (walk/bike/drive) around historical downtown Pickens and highlight some of the great things our business community has to offer ... and sample some tasty treats!" Wristbands for the event are \$10 in advance, \$15 on event day. The event also features prize drawings based on the number of participating businesses guests visit during the Stroll. **DIX**



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Creating open container zones and in-store sipping stations makes shopping more social and boosts foot traffic.



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# Idea Exchange

## Reducing operating expenses downtown

A Wisconsin developer is upgrading an outdated building near downtown Milwaukee with an energy-efficient furnace and water heater, upgraded windows, LED lighting, and more. It's just one example of a property owner using Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing, which provides funding for energy efficiency, water conservation, and renewable energy projects in commercial and residential properties.

Started in 2008, PACE programs are typically established by local governments, which tie the privately financed loans to the property and allow them to be repaid as line items on property tax bills. PACE-enabling legislation is active in 33 states plus D.C., and PACE programs are now active (launched and operating) in 20 states plus D.C.

To learn more visit [www.pacenation.us](http://www.pacenation.us).

## Minimizing delivery congestion

A report from the University of Washington's Urban Freight Lab looks at reducing city center congestion by making truck parking spaces more productive and reducing the growth of truck traffic.

The authors note that Seattle, WA, was a perfect test case for the work. "If online shopping continues to grow at its current rate, there may be twice as many trucks delivering packages in Seattle's city

center within five years," the report says, "and double the number of trucks looking for a parking space."

By mapping privately owned delivery infrastructure, a team of researchers and students found that 87 percent of all the buildings in downtown Seattle, Uptown, and South Lake Union rely on the city's curb and alley space to receive deliveries. Only 13 percent of buildings have loading bays or docks that allow trucks to park on private property.

The research team found that reducing the number of failed delivery attempts as well as the amount of time a delivery truck is parked in a loading space could offer significant benefits.

"These two actions alone could reduce congestion and free up curb space for cars, buses, bicycles, and other people who need to use that shared public space," says Barbara Ivanov, director of the Urban Freight Lab.



To read the full report, *The Final 50 Feet Urban Goods Delivery System*, visit [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on Web Extras.

## Making the best use of available parking

The city of Fayetteville, NC, is moving forward with the first phase of a comprehensive master plan addressing parking on and near the Dickson Street entertainment area and downtown square.

An initial parking study found that the downtown doesn't suffer

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# Idea Exchange

from a lack of parking. Instead, it needs to let people know where the spaces are and make them more publicly available. To do this, the study provides short- and long-term recommendations to increase the publicly accessible parking supply. These include:

## *Short-Term*

- Pursue lease agreements/partnerships with underutilized private parking lots.
- Consider permit system for those that are nervous about full public sharing.
- Provide signage for shared lots.
- Add on-street parking where it could help with high demand.
- Establish a district threshold that triggers a shared garage.

## *Long-term*

- Work toward a goal of making 80 percent of total parking supply within the study area open and available to the public through valet/shared parking agreements (up from roughly 35 percent).

## **Tax "moratorium" aims to encourage property upgrades**

Unlike many programs which provide direct financial support to encourage renovation of commercial properties, the tax moratorium in Paducah, KY, requires no outlay on the part of the city.

The Downtown & Market House District Assessment and Reassessment Tax Moratorium encourages the repair, rehabilita-

tion, or stabilization of properties in the district that are at least 50 years old by providing a program in which the property tax paid to the city is frozen at the pre-renovation assessment for five years.

For a property to be eligible, it must receive more than \$75,000 worth of improvements. An application must be filed with the planning department prior to the renovations. After the application is submitted, the Property Valuation Administration assesses the property. Then, the property owner has two years to complete the renovations. Once the renovations are complete and reviewed by the planning department, a moratorium certificate is issued granting five years of city

property taxes at the pre-renovation assessment.

## **Train horns disrupt workers and residents**

The city of Waco, TX, is considering a quiet zone which would prevent trains from sounding their horns along a stretch of track in the downtown.

The local ABC affiliate notes that new safety features, including gates, would be added along the railroad track to let drivers know the train is passing through.

City Traffic Engineer Eric Gault tells ABC news that the quiet zone will go a long way toward encouraging development in the downtown corridor. **DIX**

## **Planners ponder underground space**

When cities and their downtowns can no longer move up or spread out, one option is to move underground. The February meeting of the World Urban Forum included a side-event on underground spaces for cities of the future. The event aimed at showing not only the contribution of underground space to the New Urban Agenda and the sustainable development goals, but also the practical tools that the International Tunneling and Underground Space Association has developed.

At the event, Shipra Narang Suri of UN-Habitat stressed the importance of underground space which can help cities remain compact, be energy efficient, and find the space needed to include new functions in the existing city landscape.



To read the association's report, *Think Deep: Planning, development and use of underground space in cities*, visit [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on Web Extras. And to learn more about the association, visit [www.ita-aies.org](http://www.ita-aies.org).



# Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

Vol. 65, No. 6  
June 2018

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**Demonstration Project timeline, Master Plan, and more**

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## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Strong city investment attracts development projects

The demise of the textile industry left the city of Kannapolis, NC (est. pop. 42,625), with about 5,000 fewer jobs, a huge, vacant industrial campus, and a lackluster downtown. Thanks to heavy investment by both the industrial site owner and the city, the future is looking bright. Before a single city-sponsored project was completed, significant additional private development was approved for the downtown.

The owner of the former textile campus, determined to turn things

around for the community, worked to attract eight universities to form the North Carolina Research Center. "This is a one-of-a-kind project, with all of these universities working together on health and nutrition, studying exercise and people. They have a huge clinical trial underway," says Annette Privette Keller, the city's communications director. While that is a step in the right direction, the research center cannot replace 5,000 jobs.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## ATTRACTION

### Art program activates vacant storefront windows, helps lease space

What began as a grassroots initiative pairing vacant storefronts with public art in one Minneapolis, MN (est. pop. 382,578), neighborhood has grown into an "urban walking gallery" enlivening key commercial corridors in the city center and beyond, and incorporating live performances, artists markets, and pop-up galleries. The Made Here program aims to highlight local artists, give residents and visitors more reasons to stroll the West Downtown

Minneapolis Cultural District, and to attract tenants to vacant storefronts. It is billed by organizers as the largest project of its kind in the nation.

Joan Vorderbruggen, now the director of public art and placemaking for the Hennepin Theatre Trust, initially put her experience as a storefront designer and her contacts with artists to use in her own neighborhood, pairing vacant storefronts with art in need of display space.

*(Continued on page 7)*



DowntownDevelopment.com

To view videos promoting the Downtown Living Tour, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

## ATTRACTION

# Tour highlights the benefits of downtown living

The inaugural Downtown Living Tour in El Paso, TX (est. pop. 649,121), in 2017, was so successful that it has become an annual event.

"Last year's event surpassed our expectations and we hope to build on that success," says Joe Gudenrath, executive director of the El Paso Downtown Management District. "Modern residential living in Downtown El Paso is a relatively new option. Our goals for this event are to build awareness of what we have to offer, build excitement around the idea of downtown living and the overall success of our revitalization efforts, and to help our property owners highlight their developments and secure future tenants."

Because residential development is relatively new in the city center, finding participant sites for the tour is not a problem. "We've been able to invite all who would like to participate," Gudenrath says. "They have to be within or adjacent to our district, pay a participation fee, and provide people to show off the develop-

ment. Almost all of the developers see the big picture of what we are trying to accomplish, and have been willing participants."

To attract the public, the tour is pushed out via paid social media, paid radio advertising, e-newsletters, and "any earned media we can generate," says Gudenrath. "We charge \$15 per person for this exclusive opportunity. For many, there is a lot of curiosity and excitement around our downtown revitalization and they want to see what all the talk is about. And to make it more alluring, we mix in food samples and great prizes."

The goal is to attract 300-plus people to the tours. However, Gudenrath notes, "We also try not to be the all-encompassing event. We want these people to use our event to gain a greater familiarity of our downtown, tour the developments, and still have time to have lunch, dinner, a few drinks, or do some shopping afterwards."

Lessons learned from the 2017 tour have led to some changes this year. "As we do with all of our events, we sent a follow-up survey to the participants and gained great insight into what worked and what didn't.

We recognized some areas for improvement, but the survey allowed us to identify other areas, as well," says Gudenrath. "We learned that while people could start their tour at any location at any time, most of the people showed up right at the start and at locations closest to parking lots. People also really appreciated our efforts to highlight local restaurants, as well as apartments."

Participants expressed the most frustration over the lack of availability of units at some developments, the necessity of using stairs at some tour sites, and that event shuttles were sometimes overwhelmed. "Other than the availability of units, we've taken steps to improve everything," Gudenrath says.

Property owners were pleased with the event. "They now know that they

## Open house succeeds with realtor participation

The annual Downtown Lifestyle Tour in Wilmington, NC (est. pop. 106,476), has been offered for several years. The goal is to, "introduce people to the unique housing options that downtown offers and to promote how great it can be to live here," says Wilmington Downtown, Inc.

The tour is one effort within the larger long-term economic development strategy to increase the number of downtown residents who will patronize city center shops, restaurants, and attractions.

The tour features a range of housing options including condos, apartments over storefronts, and new construction. But the group was finding it increasingly difficult to recruit people willing to show their homes.

Instead, says Ed Wolverton, president and CEO of Wilmington Downtown, the organization partnered with the Regional Association of Realtors. Participation jumped, says Wolverton. Having broker-led open houses worked out very well from a volunteer-management standpoint. "They would staff it themselves, which helped expand the base of people involved, and lessened our need for volunteer recruitment."

will have hundreds of people touring their development,” says Gudenrath, who has some advice for other downtown leaders wanting to launch a similar event. “Put together a good plan and create a great experience for the participant. Find developers and sponsors that understand what you are trying to

accomplish. And look at this event as a service to property owners and a marketing tool in addition to trying to raise a little bit of money,” he says.

Contact: Joe Gudenrath, El Paso Downtown Management District, (915) 400-2294, ext. 101, [jgudenrath@elpasodmd.org](mailto:jgudenrath@elpasodmd.org). **DIX**

## Strong city investment attracts development projects — Continued from page 1

### Spending money to attract money

Business recruitment efforts indicated that the condition of the downtown area was a stumbling block for the city as a whole.

“We had done some economic development studies, and firsthand interviews with people who are going out and trying to recruit businesses and researchers, and what we heard was, ‘You don’t have a vibrant downtown,’” says Privette Keller.

In 2015, the city bought 80 buildings and 50 acres of the downtown, “basically the entire commercial district,” says Privette Keller. Municipal leaders knew that infrastructure upgrades would be necessary, “if we were ever going to be able to sustain our residential, as well as increase our retail and restaurants, so we had been setting aside funding for that piece,” she says.

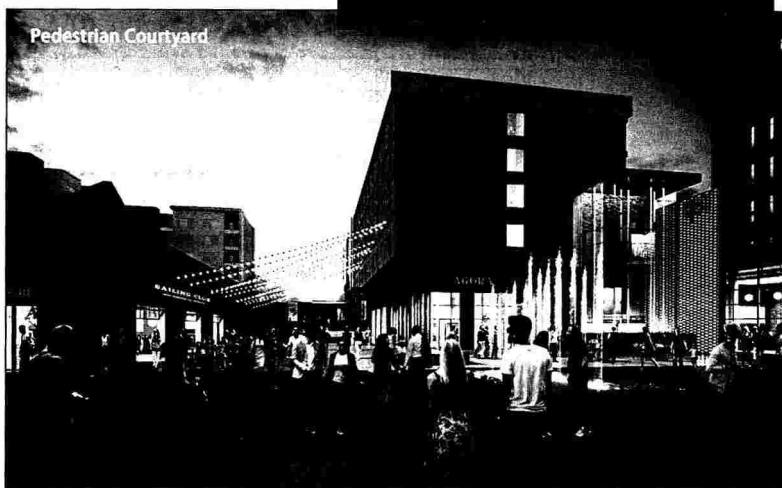
Water, sewer, gas lines, and other utilities are being moved underground. “And above ground we will have all new streetscape, with trees and plantings and a linear park,” Privette Keller says. Water features, public restrooms, and distinct public spaces being called “rooms” will also be part of the new streetscape. The rooms are being located in front of occupied and future storefronts. Some will be programmed with yoga lessons and other activities, while others will be near food and beverage service and others still will be quiet places to sit and enjoy the outdoors or read.

In addition to these improvements, the city hired consultants who said that a “game changer” was needed for the downtown core,

something that would make people come downtown over and over again. “We looked at [several options] but the data showed that a sports and entertainment venue is a top game changer,” Privette Keller says. “We knew at some point we would have to make a decision about our baseball stadium, which is over 20 years old and has seen no renovation, so [the city decided to] move it downtown and build a new one.” City-funded construction on that project begins later this year.

### Demonstration project moves redevelopment forward

With plans for the streetscape and sports and entertainment center in place, the next step



Municipal investment in a Demonstration Project will transform much of downtown and is already attracting private development projects.



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

To see the project timelines, Master Plan, renderings, and more, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

was a formal agreement with the Lansing Melbourne Group on a downtown Demonstration Project. The mixed-use, multi-story residential, retail, and parking project is intended to generate forward momentum and additional development downtown.

LMG is purchasing 3.81 acres for the appraised value of \$1,640,000 and will spend about \$60 million to construct residential units, a hotel, and retail space. That investment will result in a projected \$378,000 in annual property taxes to the city, and another \$420,000 to the county. Phase I will include 275 residential units, 19,000 square feet of new retail space, and 34,000 square feet of renovated retail space. Phase II will include either a 106-room hotel or additional residential, based on market demands.

And to further support this project, the city will invest \$12 million for a parking deck, which LMG will construct. The developer will lease 275 of the parking spaces from the city for \$50 a month per space for its tenants. The city will issue bonds to pay for the parking deck.

Even before the streetscape is finished or construction has begun on the other projects,

the city's strategy is paying off. In January, the city council approved an agreement that could see an additional \$300 million worth of residential, retail, and restaurant development in the downtown.

"From what [the developers] told us, it's because of our Demonstration Project, and our putting our money where our mouth was in regards to streetscape and infrastructure," Privette Keller says.

Corporate Realty, Inc., plans to develop first the area in front of the new sports and entertainment venue. "They want to incorporate that and work out a deal with us where the ticket office, fan shop, and administrative offices for the venue would be part of their project, because that needs to be built and ready when the stadium opens in 2020," she says. "We have signed an agreement that they can have first dibs, but we are waiting for them to come up with a master plan. All of these projects are interdependent on each other, depending on collaborations. It's really exciting and there is a lot going on," Privette Keller says.

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## ECONOMIC GROWTH

# Feasibility study a first step in attracting city center hotels

The addition of a hotel, and the extra foot traffic that lodging enables, can be a boon to the downtown economy. However, it can be difficult for cities to attract hotel development without first quantifying the need. The city of Pine City, MN (est. pop. 3,127), had to demonstrate downtown's capacity for hotel rooms in order to be proactive when an existing downtown hotel announced that it was closing. The city commissioned Growth Services Group to conduct a Hotel Feasibility Study, which showed a downtown capacity for a 42-room hotel with a pool and meeting space.

Results were "consistent with what we expected," says Ken Camilleri, city manager. With data in-hand, Camilleri says he's been able to make a case to developers. "We certainly have been able to attract the attention of developers. We weren't able to truly get their attention until we had this study," he says.

A downtown hotel is vital to the local economy, says Camilleri, "bringing in tourism, keeping people here who would otherwise leave the community and instead stay here and spend their money."



The city of Bethany, MO (est. pop. 3,292), has also commissioned GSG to conduct a Hotel Feasibility Study for its community. The market study will provide both a demographic and economic overview of the area to determine the feasibility of a new greenfield hotel development in the city center. The study also seeks to demonstrate demand and financial performance of a new hotel.

"It is important for our community to identify the needs of our local businesses to ensure we are providing the necessary accommodations to support their efforts," says Jonne Slemons, city administrator. "Our employers require sleeping accommodations to host out-of-town recreationists, health-related visitors, employees, vendors, and customers. There is also a need for additional space for meetings, training, community events, etcetera. There is both an ongoing and seasonal demand in our area and it is important that our hotel provide safe and clean accommodations that include the necessary technology to meet these needs. If not, the community and the local merchants

will lose hotel stays and subsequent guest spending to other communities."

The city has also commissioned GSG to conduct a Retail Market Study, and hopes to leverage the two documents to attract new investments.

The city of Raleigh, NC (est. pop. 403,892), where a 2015 hotel study indicated that the downtown district would need at least 400 more full-service rooms after 2017 — and that city leaders might want to incentivize hotel development to attract the right project — has seen increased investment.

The study was commissioned by the Raleigh CVB, the city, the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Raleigh Alliance.

Last July, the 10-story Residence Inn Raleigh Downtown opened its doors. The 175-suite, \$30-million hotel is the first to open downtown since 2012, reports the *Triangle Business Journal*. The property is adjacent to a city-owned parking garage and across the street from the convention center. **DIX**

*"We certainly have been able to attract the attention of developers."*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# Under-utilized upper stories provide opportunities for downtown growth

In some cities, if the downtown wants to grow, it has to go up rather than out. Redeveloping unused or under-used upper-stories can provide room for growth and a host of other benefits for downtowns. Successful upper-story residential units can help offset the costs of operating street-level businesses, provide a more steady revenue stream during seasonal retail fluctuations, and put more feet on the street that create a sense of vibrancy and safety, in addition to providing needed variety in a city's housing market.

• **Incentives and one-stop permit processing.** The Longmont Downtown Development Authority in Longmont, CO (est. pop.

86,270), offers several incentives aimed at encouraging business and property owners to maintain and improve historic downtown buildings, as well as encouraging redevelopment of upper stories for residential use.

In addition to grant programs for façade improvement, conversion of spaces to retail, signage grants, and the state-funded Enterprise Zone grants to promote a business-friendly environment in economically distressed areas, the city also offers the Downtown Residential Grant, designed to fund façade improvements and bring interiors up to code. The grant is available for upper-story residential conversions only. Grants of up to 25 percent of the



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

To view Clinton, NC's Mixed-Use and Second-Story Residential Development Incentive Program guidelines, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

total project cost are available, though the cap limit "may be lifted for projects that fulfill the LDDA's downtown vision."

Prior to beginning these programs, applicants must meet with the LDDA staff and submit completed applications for review. Applicants may also have to meet with the board of directors before receiving final approval of grant requests. Applicants are required to demonstrate how their project aligns with the Downtown Longmont Master Plan of Development and/or the Downtown Longmont Creative District Goals and Strategies in order to be considered for funding. Additionally, grants are awarded on a reimbursement basis only after completed projects pass LDDA inspection.

To better coordinate and streamline redevelopment efforts, the city also created its new Development Center and One-Stop Permit Processing system so that customers can get all their information, plan reviews, and building permits at one location rather than having to travel between remote city facilities. The Development Center houses several city departments, including Planning, Economic Development, Development Services, Public Works Engineering, Building Inspection, and Parks and Open Space Administration. Additionally, Longmont Power and Communication, Public Works & Natural Resources, and the fire department maintain satellite offices at the Development Center.

• **Tapping into multiple funding sources.**

There are roughly 60 commercial buildings in the historic downtown core of Xenia, OH (est. pop. 25,719). Most storefronts are occupied, but the city has long considered the vacant upper floors an economic development priority. Last year, thanks to a combination of \$183,715 in historic tax credits, a \$500,000 Main Street grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, city funds, and building owner match, work began to renovate the long-vacant upper stories of the 141-year-old Litt Brothers building into five downtown apartments.

"These are great old apartments and having them full will just feel better," building owner Tim Sontag tells the *Dayton Daily News*. The

ground floor of the building is occupied by Sontag's shoe repair shop.

The city's economic development officials are hoping the project will be the first of many aimed at activating vacant upper-story spaces. "We're just trying to get more people to make investments downtown and to live downtown and work downtown," Mary Crockett, the city's community development coordinator, tells the *Daily News*. Local and state officials hope the rehab project will encourage more property owners to explore historic tax credits and inspire additional investment downtown.

"I think as much as getting dollars for this specific project, this is also about showing that these credits are accessible for smaller cities," Crockett says. According to Crockett, the project was the only one in the nation last year to utilize both the HUD Main Street grant and national historic tax credits for upper-story rehab.

The city is hoping that more residents will also attract more businesses. "When you get more people living downtown, other things follow suit," Crockett tells the *Daily News*.

• **Second-story development becomes a planning priority.** The Clinton 2035 Comprehensive Plan in Clinton, NC (est. pop. 8,639), identifies second-story residential development downtown as one of the top priorities for the future. As a result, city staff and the Clinton Main Street Program have developed the Second-Story Residential Development Incentive Program. This program aims to encourage and incentivize upper-story residential development in the Downtown Clinton Commercial Historic District.

"The development of these types of units will increase property values, increase patronage of downtown businesses, and increase the profile and density of downtown Clinton," says Clinton Main Street. "The National Main Street Center cites second-story residential development in historic commercial districts as being the single most important element of successful and prosperous downtowns."

To drive upper-story development, the city will waive water, sewer, and fire line

connection fees associated with the creation of second-story residential units within the downtown up to \$5,000. Fees above that cap are the responsibility of the property owner and/or developer.

To qualify, new residential units must be in upper floors of existing commercial buildings. The first floor must be either occupied by, available for lease, or under construction for a commercial use. Applications, available in print or online, are submitted to the city's planning department. Site plans are reviewed by the Clinton-Sampson Technical Review Committee for compliance with all relevant land use and building regulations. The size and quan-

tity of water, sewer, and fire line taps must be approved by the city's public works director. If everything is in order, applications are approved by the city's planning director.

Additionally, developers must receive a Certificate of Occupancy from the Sampson County building inspector within 180 days of the water, sewer, and fire line tap fee waiver, or risk being billed for the full amount. The new units must be used for residential purposes for at least three years. However, a vacant unit being used for storage is not considered "another use" as long as the property is available and "appropriately advertised as available for rent." **DIX**

## Art program activates vacant storefront windows, helps lease space —Continued from page 1

"Then I was recruited by the Hennepin Theatre Trust, which is one of the largest nonprofit arts organizations in the state," says Vorderbruggen. The Trust, which owns the historic Orpheum, State, and Pantages theatres, is dedicated to arts-inspired community cultural development. "The organization had won a grant to do a cultural district plan, which was an 18-month comprehensive planning process. One goal of that plan was a no-vacancy project. People had reported walking along Hennepin Avenue and it being an uneven experience, with some vibrant areas, and some dark and scary areas."

The city had what Vorderbruggen deems a "failed investment" in the development of Block E, which had been meant to grow into an anchoring retail and entertainment destination for the downtown. "In the course of the three years after it opened, it had a 70-percent vacancy and every [attraction effort] had failed, so I activated 40 vacant windows with 27 art installations," she says. The Trust also held a poetry contest on the marquee of the vacant theater, and piped a local music series through the building's speaker system.

"That was in September, 2013, and Made Here was born," Vorderbruggen says. The public was encouraged to come view the art independently, and guided tours were also provided. "After that, we brought on [Minnesota-based] Andersen Windows as our presenting sponsor," says Vorderbruggen.

The Trust engaged legal counsel to create "a very simplified and efficient lease agreement that was very nimble," she says. "We asked for 30 days' notice to vacate, and we have done so in 10. Our artists are aware of that, as well."

To attract artists during the early years of the program, "we hosted open calls and issued press releases, and I had a large network of local artists. Everyone had this feeling that we were helping each other. I was helping artists, and they also felt that they were helping me move forward on something that was important in helping our city."

To make participation accessible for emerging artists, a resume is not required. "We simply ask for their ideas, and how they plan to execute them," Vorderbruggen says. "Minneapolis

***"We've seen increased investment by property owners in their own properties."***

olis has one of the greatest racial equity gaps in the country. But 40 percent of our participants are artists of color, and gender balanced. We have children and students, seniors, and people living with disabilities.”

A 20-member Made Here Arts Advisory Panel comprised of multi-faceted artists and arts professionals sort through the biannual submissions each summer and winter. Entries are scored based on quality, relevance, viability, and whether the work is compelling to a diverse audience. The panel meets quarterly, and also develops themes and curates the exhibits.

Last December’s theme was *Energy: Made Here*, featuring the works of more than 30 Minnesota artists exploring the theme of energy through 20 window displays and two large-scale photography exhibits. The launch event included a walking tour, live music, performance artists, refreshments, and more.

Artists accepted into the Made Here program are provided with a clean, secure commercial storefront space in which to create a visual display of their work, and a \$500 stipend. The program also provides professional installation assistance, electricity, minimal carpentry, and basic lighting materials when necessary. All showcase windows are clearly branded, professionally photographed, and then extensively marketed via a dedicated web page, social media, launch parties, and other community events. Additionally, maps of the urban walking gallery are printed and displayed in

hotel brochure racks, and poster-sized maps are displayed outside of exhibition areas.

### Public art installations offer many benefits

The Made Here program is helping to fill vacancies. “We position this as a win-win for everyone,” says Vorderbruggen. “I think that 13 properties with a combined vacancy of more than 50 years have acquired tenants or new owners within 12 months of participation, so it really does create a positive forward motion for vacant spaces.”

There have also been public safety benefits, “that we didn’t understand until we had implemented a few times,” Vorderbruggen says. “People have a change in their perception of safety. This has also increased entrepreneurship in smaller vacant spaces, and we’ve seen increased investment by property owners in their own properties.

Because the program is so accessible, this is often an artists’ first foray into public art, so we’ve seen our artists really develop their public-art muscles, win awards, and go on to exhibit nationally,” she says. “This is very much an incubator for artists’ careers.”

Downtown has also seen an increase in residency. “People tell me that they know about Made Here, and that it does make a big impression,” says Vorderbruggen. “People get really excited and anticipate the change. We put up ‘coming soon’ posters, and the community gets excited to see the unveiling of new windows.”

Retail may have moved from brick and mortar to “click and order,” she says, “but one of the things that can combat this is to have creative experiences that you can’t have on your laptop, that you have to go downtown and see. Artists are capable of bringing those experiences in ways that corporate America can’t.”

Over time, the program has also evolved as a social justice platform. “At first, we could only do pretty things, but over time, once we won the trust of some building and property owners, artists began focusing on issues that they wanted people to connect with,” says Vorderbruggen.

In addition to the volunteer advisory panel, Made Here has a paid staff of two: one serves



The Made Here program fills vacant storefronts with locally produced art, and hopefully, with new tenants.

as a “stage manager” while the other is the “talent wrangler,” Vorderbruggen says, noting that the program is labor intensive, and that “knowing how to talk about art installations is challenging” when dealing with business and property owners who may not have a background in the arts.

Made Here is supported through the Hennepin Theatre Trust’s operating budget, as well as sponsorships, grants from local foundations, and even fees from buildings that want to stay on the tour map as exhibit sites. In addition, hotels provide in-kind support by offering event space to the Trust in return for Made Here installations.

“We have never paid rent on any space,” says Vorderbruggen,” but we do invest money in beautifying spaces, and we provide insurance.”

Traditionally, Made Here exhibits have rotated twice annually, “but this summer we’re going to increase that, and we are now actually occupying building sites with large-scale photography, so the program is expanding to include more than just vacancies,” explains Vorderbruggen. “We are looking toward becoming a museum turned inside-out with temporary public art along these downtown blocks.”

Contact: Joan Vorderbruggen, Hennepin Theatre Trust, (612) 205-8516, [joan.vorderbruggen@hennepintheatrettrust.org](mailto:joan.vorderbruggen@hennepintheatrettrust.org). **DIX**

## PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

# Satellite police locations, activation work together to reduce crime

Adding a police presence and more activity to an area can change perceptions, attract new users, and discourage criminals. In downtown San Jose, CA (est. pop. 945,942), Fountain Alley is being activated with those goals in mind. A number of community groups have joined business and property owners in a series of projects aimed at positioning Fountain Alley “as a social center linking the National Register Historic District with a burgeoning maker district,” says the San Jose Downtown Association.

A flurry of activities launched last spring had a positive impact, as did the opening of a police services office in a building at the alley’s center. The San Jose Police Foundation is paying the rent, but the shared space is used by the city police department, the Santa Clara Sheriff’s deputies, San Jose State University police, and the BIDs clean and safe team. While the entrance is low key and lacks signage, foot patrols come and go on a regular basis.

“The scruffy guys who used to hang out there just aren’t around anymore,” said Association President Stan Vuckovich last

spring. “In just a few weeks, businesses and residents have noticed changes.”

The project was funded in part by the Sharks Foundation (the charitable arm of the San Jose Sharks hockey team). The foundation donated \$20,000 toward a beautification project and ongoing crime prevention efforts. The first phase of work focused on low-cost physical improvements to the space. Volunteers stenciled sharks onto freshly repainted and replanted pots, streamed lights and flags in the team’s colors overhead in the alley, and picked up litter.

Other nearby formerly neglected spaces have been activated recently, adding to “the positive energy around Fountain Alley,” says the Association.

With the success of the first round of improvements, the Association is working with local university students on a second round of more costly physical improvements as well as programing the space with activities.

Industrial design students at San Jose State University, supported by the Association’s Street Life Manger, Jason Su, are designing and producing temporary full-size prototypes that show how Fountain Alley can be improved and



activated. They focused on seating, stages, mobile solar hubs and lighting, and gardens.

The public was invited to attend co-designing workshops this winter “where ideas are created in real time.” Those ideas will be designed and rolled out this spring at a “summer picnic” event.

One project which will improve the physical space and bring activity to the alley calls for 100 artists to create 100 mini-murals in a mosaic pattern on the alley. “With momentum building, the vision for Fountain Alley is starting to form around creating a central meeting space for the maker community,” says the Association.

“In Silicon Valley, the best private spaces for employees on tech campuses gain the competitive advantage,” says Nate Echeverria, SJDA director of policy and operations. “We’re going to do the same thing here, but in a public way. We won’t stop until we create the best space for our community, a place where ideas can meet.”

### **Satellite police office improves perceptions**

Fresno, CA (est. pop. 494,665), is also increasing the visibility of police officers by opening a “report-writing office” of the Fresno Police Department in the Tower District. The

Tower Satellite Office opened last June, marking a return of the department to the district six years after budget constraints forced the department to close its former police station in the area, says *The Fresno Bee*.

“In the intervening years, business owners and residents have lamented the loss of a permanent police presence in the area,” reports *The Bee*. Feedback during community meetings reinforced the need for a police presence.

“We have a lot of people who come from outside and visit from outside (the area), and we want to make sure it’s a safe place not only for the people who live in the neighborhood, but also for the people that want to visit our businesses and spend a little bit of their money in the area,” said City Councilwoman Esmeralda Soria.

The area has seen an increase in vehicle and residential burglaries since the police station closure in 2011.

“Having police officers in this area is naturally going to deter those types of crimes from occurring, and when they do occur, we’ll be able to respond more quickly,” added Captain Phil Cooley. “Being here we couldn’t dissuade people from being involved in certain criminal activity. But I can tell you that by our presence back here in the Tower, we will deter criminal activity.”

While the office won’t be staffed full-time, Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer said patrol officers and community service officers will be coming in and out of the satellite office to write reports and take breaks.

A new bicycle patrol team assigned to the district will also be based in the office. “Eventually we do want to staff this full-time, or at least as much as we can, so we can accept walk-in traffic, people who want to report issues to the police department,” he says. “We are well on our way towards that.” **DIX**

## **Playgrounds, food truck parking, and more create a sense of safety**

Even for cities that lack opportunities to open satellite police stations, activation can play an important role in deterring crime. That is, in part, the theory behind the new Pine Street Plaza unveiled in Seattle, WA, in January. The city’s Department of Transportation and the Downtown Seattle Association transformed several parking spaces into a brightly painted blue and yellow mosaic complete with bistro seating, food trucks, games, daily staffing, and public art. To attract users, a free grand opening was held, featuring refreshments and live music.

The plaza, located across from the Westlake Tunnel Station, is meant to extend positive changes brought about by the introduction of a playground and picnic tables in nearby Westlake Park, according to a report by KIRO 7 News.

“If you’re doing illegal activity, you don’t really want an audience,” one long-time downtown employee told KIRO 7. “There’s a lot more people in the park year-round, playing games, doing stuff.”

# Idea Exchange

## Measuring festival impact

A comprehensive study shows that a long-running downtown festival makes a significant economic impact, and uncovers opportunities for improvement.

The study, conducted by Associate Professor Bob Lee of Bowling Green State University, found that upwards of 20,000 attendees were at the 36th annual Main Street Port Clinton Walleye Festival in Port Clinton, OH. "The total economic impact to Ottawa County was 67 jobs, \$1.8 million added in labor income, and a total economic output of \$3.8 million annually," according to the study.

"We always knew it made a difference, but until we saw the numbers, I don't think we really understood how big of an impact it was," says Nikki Adams, president of the Port Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to looking at economic impact, the researchers conducted surveys at the festival. Suggestions for improvement ranged from more parking to more shaded areas to educational displays on the history of the festival and ecology of Lake Erie.

## Downtown tests pick-up and drop off zones

Boise, ID, has an active weekend nightlife. Streets can be congested around downtown bars and restaurants, especially when Uber, Lyft, and taxi drivers are looking for a spot to pick-up and drop-off passengers.

The city has embarked on a

one-month pilot program that designates the curbside along one city block exclusively for pick-up and drop-off. The zone will be in effect from 8 p.m. until 5 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Downtown visitors are asked to park in other designated areas throughout the city during these hours. And vehicles parked in the pick-up and drop-off zone will be towed, says the city.

## Main street retail in the age of Amazon

The wishes of the elusive downtown shopper come into focus in research from brand strategist WD Partners. Speaking at the National Retail Federation, EVP Lee Peterson reported on the top concepts that will shape retail in the months ahead.

Two concepts are of particular interest to downtown retailers:

**Experiential retail.** WD's study found that half of surveyed consumers are interested in experiential retail events. In one example, Outdoor Voices took selling fitness apparel a step further by offering exercise classes at its brick-and-mortar stores.

**On-site food service.** For young people, shopping and eating go together. According to WD's study, 63 percent of Millennials and Generation Z consumers were interested in eating while shopping at their favorite stores. Restoration Hardware decided to cater to these consumers by opening its 3 Arts Club Café inside its flagship Chicago store.

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# Idea Exchange

## New city hall to spur redevelopment

In early spring, the city council in Elroy, AZ, approved contracts to begin construction of a new city hall building. The move retains city hall, its staff, and functions downtown, and is a potential catalyst for redevelopment.

"The overall goals of the city hall are to create a new, centralized building that fosters enhanced services to customers, promotes efficiency of staff, and demonstrates a continued commitment to downtown," says Community Development Director Jon Vlaming.

## Funding opportunity for arts-based placemaking

The National Endowment for the Arts has announced grant guidelines and deadlines for the 2019 Our Town program.

The program supports projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes.

Projects may include activities such as: Artist residency, arts festivals, community creation of art, performances, public art, cultural planning, creative asset mapping, design of cultural facilities, and creative business development among others.

A recent grant to Art Spaces, Inc. supports the design of an area reconnecting the City of Terre Haute to the Wabash River. Building off previous planning work, the City will use its grant for design development

## Commission needed to draw attention to public art

Elmhurst, IL, Alderman Marti Deuter hopes that a proposed public arts commission will draw people to the city center to experience the art that is currently on display and to bring in new art and related events.

The proposal calls for the commission to have two to four community members who are art supporters. It also would include representatives from the city, art museum, college, library, Elmhurst City Centre, and the Elmhurst Artists Guild.

Initially, the commission would work to raise awareness about existing art and then move on to add new pieces to the city's collection.



and schematic designs for the area of downtown adjacent to the river.

The application deadline is August 9, 2018. For complete information including the program description and objectives, award information, and how to prepare and submit an application visit [www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town/introduction](http://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town/introduction).

## First Mile Last Mile program makes travel easier

Getting downtown without a car has gotten a bit easier in Phoenix, AZ, thanks to the city's First Mile Last Mile pilot program. The goal is to ease travel to and from fixed transit stops in the city center. The program (which began in mid-October 2017) allows riders in some areas to use Lyft at a reduced rate for rides to and from one of more than 500 city bus stops.

## Mixed incentives aim to attract new restaurants

To bring more full-service restaurants to Rolling Meadows, IL, the city is taking steps to offer a new incentive program. The targeted plan calls for offering any individual, group, or small business that purchases or rents space for a new full-service restaurant the following incentives:

- A food and beverage tax-sharing agreement where the city rebates 40 percent of taxes for the first year and 20 percent for the second year.
- A reduction in the cost of city permit fees of up to \$5,000 (or for renters, up to three months rent, whichever is lower).

The city would also require a business and marketing plan and that the business remain open for a full year from the purchase or lease date. **DIX**



# Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

Vol. 65, No. 7  
July 2018

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Grow St. Charles  
Monday Minutes

Safety improvement videos

Vacant Building  
Registry Ordinance

## ACCESS AND MOBILITY

### Demonstration project educates and engages the public

The Las Olas Boulevard Six-Month Safety Improvements Demonstration Project in Fort Lauderdale, FL (est. pop. 178,752), is part of an overall Community Investment Plan that includes safety and traffic calming improvements that will create a safer connection between the central business district, the busy boulevard, and local beaches. Temporary installations aim to increase safety for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians while also balancing the needs of residents, business owners, and visitors.

The temporary installations allowed the city to test ideas quickly and inexpensively. "The project was installed in four weeks compared to a full reconstruction project, which would take approximately 12 to 18 months," says the city. "The cost to install the demonstration project was two to five percent compared to a complete roadway reconstruction project."

The city provides information about the project on its website, social media platforms, through press  
*(Continued on page 3)*

## ATTRACTION

### Exploring ways to expand the holiday season downtown

From Small Business Saturday through Christmas, city centers are finding creative ways to attract more foot traffic and capture more holiday spending each year. Shop local programs, community tree lightings, unique celebrations and more provide holiday magic that entices more customers into downtown's shops and restaurants.

It's never too soon to begin planning for the holidays. In Chillicothe, MO (est. pop. 9,714), Main Street

Chillicothe spent one summer polling merchants to discover what worked and what did not in the city's holiday event calendar. This early input allowed the organization to keep the best aspects of its holiday promotion while tweaking others to better meet the needs of downtown merchants.

Surveys were emailed to downtown businesses asking whether events should be held in November or December, whether one large

*(Continued on page 8)*

## ATTRACTION

# Weekly, one-minute videos keep city center top of mind

The new Grow St. Charles Monday Minute video series is allowing the Economic Development Department in St. Charles, MO (est. pop. 69,293), to highlight everything from retention and recruitment efforts to its thriving defense, aerospace, and healthcare industries.

The series, which launched in March, is part of the city's overall marketing strategy to establish "a pattern of awareness," says David Leezer, director of economic development. "What we are talking about is the goal that we somehow, some way, touch our sphere of influence, our outside influencers, our community, through Facebook, Twitter, print and electronic newsletters — something that keeps us front and center, top of mind."

The videos "have subtle context, but are a consistent way to be in front of the people we need to be in front of," Leezer says. Pressure was on for the department to do a blog, but there is a proliferation of blogs, "and I also felt that fewer and fewer people are actually reading them. It's hard to get through that jungle of blogs, so we had to do something different. We are calling this our vlog. We are trying to separate ourselves out from everyone else. In economic development, you have to differentiate yourself."

Because the city has its own media department, there are no production costs associated with the Monday Minute series. Leezer writes the scripts, and is always jotting down notes about timely topics and upcoming calendar events. "I always have in the hopper 10 to 15 stories that we are going to be talking about," he says. Leezer also "stars" in the videos, but notes that St. Charles is the true star of the show. He takes pains to film in the city council chambers so that the city logo is prominently featured in each video.

"I shoot five or six at a time," he says. "I'm probably more blessed than some because we have a media department, but I think if somebody else wanted to do this, and they don't have somebody to do it internally, they could

develop a relationship with a community college or high school. Even a high school kid with a camera could do this without a hitch. I'm sure there is somebody out there that would do it for no cost or a very low cost."

Topics have included an explanation of the rigorous process his department underwent to be recognized by the International Economic Development Council as an Accredited Economic Development Organization; an explanation of ways that a university's presence and investment add to the area's quality of life, a showcase of local Small Business Week award winners, and more.

One upcoming Monday Minute will attempt to put a positive spin on road construction. "Everyone hates road construction, but I love road construction," Leezer says. "I love what it means, which is that we have growth and investment. If you don't have road construction, it means you don't have anything going on!"

As the series expands, guest hosts will also be featured. "We don't want to turn it into a commercial for another company, so you've got to be very careful with that, but for example, in one upcoming show, I have an intern from the Center for Advanced Professional Studies who attends the high school program here," explains Leezer. "I will introduce him, and then he will sit where I was and take over, talking about what he does. And I've got a guy who works for me — we do 1,000 business retention visits a year. I'm going to have him talk about our retention program."

The primary target audience is site locators, developers, and brokers, but also key contacts within the greater St. Charles area, members of the local business community, and "key thought leaders," Leezer says. "We want to reach not just the city council, but people who have lived in the area for their entire lives and only see the community in one way. I want them to see St. Charles in a favorable, but different, light. In one recent video, I talked about our historic Main Street. One of St. Charles's claims to



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To view an assortment of Grow St. Charles Monday Minutes, visit our website and click on Web Extras.



fame is that we were the start and end point of the Lewis and Clark expedition. We are very proud of that ... [but] we've got a digital business incubator on Main Street that people don't know about. So I want people to know that Main Street is not just about history, but better yet, making our own history."

Leezer does not believe the videos alone will inspire a company to locate in St. Charles, but rather that, "it keeps us top of mind and lets people know how good things are here. Also, there are 16 [cities named] St. Charles in the United States. I've got to make sure when you say St. Charles to a [major site selection company] they think St. Charles, Missouri rather than another St. Charles in another state."

Grow St. Charles Monday Minutes are pushed out via the economic development department's social media accounts, Leezer's LinkedIn account, and through several other city department's social media connections. The videos are featured on the [growstcharles.com](http://growstcharles.com) website and also drive viewers to that website.

Leezer did caution that, "as a public entity, when you post something on social media, you can't stop public comments. Like anything else, there have been a couple of people who didn't like what we said or didn't agree, but 99 percent have been very complimentary. The response has been very good, and people are sharing it, which is what I wanted to see."

Contact: David Leezer, City of St. Charles, (636) 949-3231, [david.leezer@stcharlescitemo.gov](mailto:david.leezer@stcharlescitemo.gov).

**DIX**

## Demonstration project educates and engages the public —Continued from page 1

releases, educational brochures, and via a video explaining the responsibilities of each type of traveler within the color-coded demonstration area, and another explaining new rideshare zones. Blue sections of the roadway indicate the pedestrian travel lane and areas where landscaping may be installed. While green indicates bicycle travel lanes, where drivers must yield to peddlers when turning.

In addition to the painted lanes, there's a green "bike box" at a traffic light, indicating that bicyclists should stop in the box when the light is red, and that vehicles must stop behind the green area. Sections of the bike lane are also buffered by plastic delineators and rubber curbs. And along areas of the boulevard where bicyclists may use the entire roadway, green painted sharrow markings alert both peddlers and drivers to the shared space.

The Demonstration Project also includes designated rideshare zones along the boulevard for drivers to pull in and drop off passengers. The zones provide a safe area on the sidewalk for those waiting for Uber, Lyft, and

other rideshare cars. And there are designated loading/unloading areas on side streets off the boulevard.

The city took pains to spell out how the project benefits each type of traveler, as well as business owners:



Temporary, color-coded lanes indicate dedicated pedestrian and bicycle lanes during the Las Olas Boulevard Six-Month Safety Improvements Demonstration Project.

## Small-scale demonstration moves project forward

The tiny town of Bennett, NB (est. pop. 814), created a temporary improvement at the Bennet Village Park before investing in a permanent installation. A splash pad was created by drilling holes in PVC pipe. Volunteers added signage and spray painted walkways leading to the demonstration site. The splash pad was a “rousing success and offered visitors a chance to imagine what their park could look like in the future,” says the Citizens’ Institute on Rural Design. The day-long event, which also included community art projects and a free movie in the park, cost about \$1,766, and was successful in attracting plenty of feedback from residents of all ages.

- For those who drive, slower travel speeds reduce the chances of severe crashes, and, “the demonstration project also allows people driving to move efficiently by allocating different areas for all the users that previously shared the asphalt space, like people making deliveries, people dropping off or picking up passengers or goods, and people that bike at slower speeds.”

- The reduced travel speed also decreases the odds of pedestrian- or bicycle-car collisions. The project includes a reduced crossing distance at one crosswalk along with an advance stop bar on both sides of the intersection to provide greater pedestrian visibility to drivers. And the designated bike lane increases the comfort level for people who “are interested in biking but are concerned with biking with moving vehicles,” says the

city. The bike box also “gives people riding bikes a safe and visible way to get ahead of vehicles at the intersection during the red light phase.”

- Designated rideshare zones “discourage unsafe practices such as double parking or stopping in the travel lane to pick up or drop off passengers,” says the city.

- And for business owners, the city notes that, “biking infrastructure increases the number of people biking, which increases retail sales.”

In March, the city began offering an evaluation survey on its website. Once the comment period ends, the project will be evaluated based on a number of criteria, including:

- statistics on crashes and injuries for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists;
- the number of people driving and biking;
- user satisfaction;
- and input from business owners, residents, and the city’s first responders.

Evaluation of the rideshare and loading zone initiatives will include input from delivery service and rideshare providers, as well as business owners along the corridor.

An evaluation report, along with recommendations for next steps, will be presented to the city commission later this summer for consideration. Recommendations could include any required city ordinance changes and a mitigation plan for any parking revenue impacts. **DIX**



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

To view videos educating the public about safety improvements and new bike lanes and rideshare zones, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

### PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

## Blending old and new in a successful alley redesign

In her annual State of the City presentation, Nancy Harris, mayor of Duluth, GA (est. pop. 29,331), highlighted the continued buildout of downtown’s Parsons Alley as an important accomplishment for the city. The mixed-use development welcomed several new restaurants and a retail shop last year.

The project saw a historic alley in the city center reimagined as a 30,000-square-foot restaurant and retail hub. The alley now boasts a large plaza to serve the downtown area and adjacent restaurants with seating, a bocce ball court, performance stage, public art, outdoor signage, outdoor lighting, and redesigned sur-

face parking. Renovated historic buildings and new construction host a wide range of dining and shopping.

Eric Bethany, a project manager with design firm Kronberg Wall, says that several important design elements come together in the alley and contribute to its success as a “vibrant public gathering spot and a destination.”

Bethany explains the core design principles and details that were essential to the Parsons Alley redevelopment:

**Storefronts you can touch.** Aluminum storefront is affordable and efficient, says Bethany, but it’s not nice to touch or look at and it is difficult to incorporate into a design with traditional references. Instead, the design team opted for fiberglass frames for most of the retail storefronts, because these are closer to the wood storefronts you would see in a traditional commercial building.

**It’s all about the glass.** Retailers and pedestrians alike love huge panes of glass at eye level. Expansive clear glass at the pedestrian level allows for inviting window displays, while divided transom windows bathe the interior spaces with a softer light.

**Perimeter parking.** Pushing parking to the perimeter of the site places the emphasis on

the pedestrian within the shopping district, says Bethany, while still accommodating transportation by car.

**Great public space.** Parsons Alley is ideally located at the end of Duluth’s Town Green. In designing the public space, project partner TSW used the community-focused plaza to extend that civic space into Parsons Alley and create a natural community gathering space and showcase for public art.

**Familiar materials.** One of the challenges of the project was making sure that the two adaptive-reuse buildings and four new-construction buildings spoke the same visual language, says Bethany. The form and scale of the new buildings were designed with that in mind, as well as the selection of familiar materials such as wood, brick, and clear glass.

**Attention to detail.** A lot of the detailing of the brickwork, storefronts, roofs, and cornices was inspired by traditional retail buildings that you might find in a historic commercial district.

**Variety.** One great way to kill walkability, says Bethany, is to design boring buildings and public space. Variety of form, color, and material keeps pedestrians at Parsons Alley engaged. **DIX**

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

# Community Revitalization Ownership Project supports new developers and entrepreneurs

In Milwaukee, WI (est. pop. 595,047), the city is looking to its underused assets for opportunities to increase entrepreneurship and provide needed businesses in underserved communities.

The city owns a significant inventory of tax-foreclosed commercial buildings in low-income neighborhoods that lack access to many necessary goods and services, says Ken Little, commercial corridor manager. “These vacant buildings are highly visible symbols of distress; targets for vandalism and criminal

activity that threaten the value and image of nearby properties.

“We wanted to design a project that would make these buildings into opportunities to increase property ownership and build wealth among people who care about the health of low-income neighborhoods,” says Little. “We believe that, once renovated, these modest buildings can provide low-cost commercial space in underserved markets. Many are located in neighborhoods adjacent to Milwaukee’s current downtown revitalization boom.”

The project moved forward with support from the National League of Cities Equitable Economic Development (EED) Fellowship. The fellowship provides one year of technical assistance to a class of six cities annually to help them pursue more equitable and inclusive economic development policies and programs in traditionally underserved communities.

Working with the Fellowship team, the city developed the Community Revitalization Ownership Project (CRDP) which seeks to spur neighborhood revitalization by providing space for entrepreneurs and emerging new uses such as maker spaces. The CROP project has four goals:

- Increase the sale and redevelopment of tax-foreclosed commercial buildings owned by the city.
- Provide opportunities for minority and immigrant developers to obtain development experience by purchasing and renovating small, tax-foreclosed buildings.
- Attract entrepreneurs to occupy vacant, renovated properties.
- Return jobs and business activity to distressed commercial districts.

Key strategies for the project include targeting minority residents interested in commercial development, creating partnerships to develop a pipeline to entrepreneur tenants,

identifying renovation financing, and identifying technical assistance resources to support entrepreneurs.

One component of the project is a nine-month commercial real estate training program for minority participants. During the 2016/2017 program, students developed revitalization and re-use concepts for city-owned foreclosed commercial properties as part of their course work.

"We are continuing to work with several of the students to determine whether they can actually pursue purchase and development of the properties on which they focused during their classwork," says Matt Haessley, the city's real estate specialist. "We have identified city funds that could provide gap financing for several CROP development projects."

The EED team also created an advisory committee which includes representatives of lending institutions, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and Wisconsin's largest micro-lender. The committee provided advice about financing opportunities and undertook a space needs survey among local start-up businesses.

*Little and Haessley shared details on Milwaukee's experience participating in the EED Fellowship program during a Cities Speak interview. The EED Fellowship program is ongoing, accepting six new cities annually. For details, visit [nlc.org](http://nlc.org) and enter "EED Fellowship" in the search bar.* **DIX**

## PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

# Placemaking projects activate areas around city halls

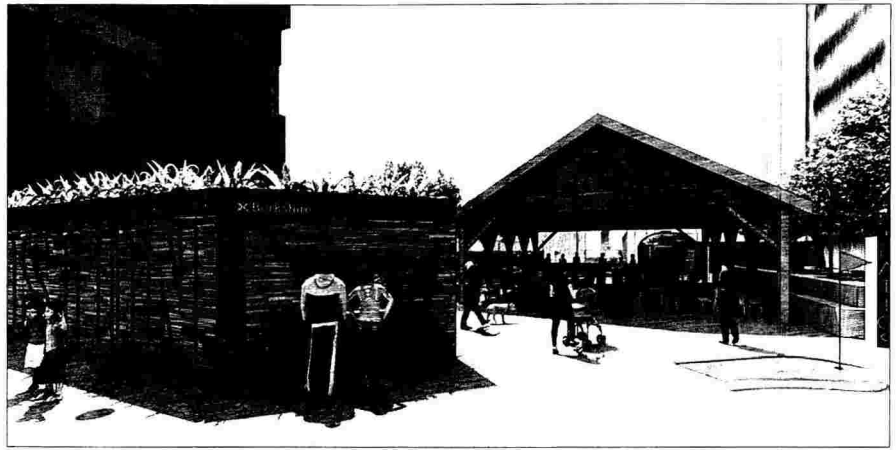
A trip to city hall in Boston, MA (est. pop. 673,184), might also now include beer, ice cream, and mini golf, at The Patios, a placemaking initiative launched this May at City Hall Plaza. The Patios joins several projects nationwide that are activating the once-staid plazas and gardens surrounding governmental buildings in city centers.

The city has entered into a three-year contract with Boston Garden Development Corporation to revitalize the drab and underused plaza with seasonal programming and amenities, including:

- the Wachusett Brew Yard, which is host to several local breweries;
- ice cream from a local creamery;

- the Boston Public Library's Bibliocycle, a mobile library which offers pop-up storytimes, book checkouts, and card sign ups;
- and numerous events, including visits with adoptable puppies.

The Patios is the city's first summertime offering. Cold weather activation brought a skating rink, après ski lounge, and gift chalets to city hall plaza over the winter.



The Plazas design incorporates a blend of reclaimed wood and greenery.

## Civic space upgrades around the country

Boston is not the only city hoping to make its municipal public spaces more attractive. Last summer, the city of Philadelphia, PA (est. pop. 1,526,006), used a placemaking grant from Southwest Airlines to enliven its city hall courtyard with a pop-up beer garden. While one municipal plaza in front of Philadelphia City Hall was refurbished four years ago and is managed by the Center City District, the city's courtyard, portal walkways, and sidewalks are "in tatters," according to *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Renovating those outdoor areas would cost millions, so in the meantime, the pop-up beer garden aims to lure the public to the area. The grant paid for seating, umbrellas, a performance stage, and "an ambitious schedule of events being curated by the city's culture staff," says the *Inquirer*.

This spring, city leaders in San Francisco, CA (est. pop. 805,235) were considering the "Civic Center Commons" as the rebrand for public space around city hall, and exploring the option of management by an "outside organization," says the *San Francisco Examiner*. The long-term strategy for the space may include new amenities such as a café.

The café initiative is being explored by the city's Recreation and Park Department, which recently broke ground on two replacement Civic Center playgrounds using a \$10 million grant from a local foundation. The

gift of the playgrounds has spurred interest in further Civic Center improvements.

While the department has been offering food carts daily, and a weekly food truck event, there still seems to be a desire from the community for a fixed food and drink amenity, Recreation and Park spokesperson Connie Chan tells the *Examiner*.

Small cities are also looking to activate their city hall parks and plazas. Colleyville, TX (est. pop. 22,807), gathered public input this spring for the design of a new Plaza at City Hall. Three designs are under consideration. Each takes a different approach to traffic flow in the area.

One option calls for keeping the lane between the plaza and city hall open to traffic and retaining about 16 parallel parking spaces. Another option calls for temporary closure of the lane with bollards so that food trucks and maintenance vehicles could still access the plaza, but there would be no regular traffic flow. A third option would require complete closure of the lane to traffic. Eliminating vehicular traffic, parking, and sidewalks would increase the plaza size by 50 percent and strengthen the connection between the public space and the municipal complex, designers say.

Other elements of the plan that can be altered to fit the budget are the size and interactivity of a water feature, the type of shade structures offered, and the inclusion of string lighting over the lane and seating areas. **DIX**



# Exploring ways to expand the holiday season downtown —Continued from page 1



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To view the Main Street Chillicothe merchant survey, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

event or a series of smaller events was preferred, which day of the week was best, and how late businesses wished to remain open. Business owners were also asked to rank event options, and were given write-in opportunities to suggest new events and new ways to promote events. Write-in suggestions included that, in the days leading up to an event, merchants receive mini candy canes with labels on them containing event information to insert into bags along with customer purchases, and to have someone with a great “Santa voice” do all of the seasonal radio ads and be the one inviting people to come downtown.

## Campaigns battle big-box and online shopping

From Black Friday to Cyber Monday and beyond, downtown organizations work diligently on campaigns to help small, independent business owners attract and retain holiday shopping dollars.

- Asheville, NC, ran a “Taking Back Black Friday” campaign. “Instead of waking up at 4 a.m., waiting in long lines, bumper-to-bumper traffic, the frenetic madness of sales and crowds, we invite you to slow down and enjoy the day after Thanksgiving,” read PR for the event. “Asheville has 250 independent restaurants, a dozen shopping districts filled with local entrepreneurs catering to unique tastes, hundreds of artists who open their

studios to the public, and galleries that showcase them.”

- Local First Indiana created a Think Local First Holiday Guide filled with gift ideas from local, independent businesses in Bloomington, IN. The guide included gift ideas to suit various budgets and recipients, a list of gift cards and gift certificates available from local merchants, and a list of events happening during its Plaid Friday promotion and throughout the holiday season.

- To leverage national marketing efforts surrounding Small Business Saturday, the Downtown Schenectady (NY) Improvement Corporation launched its annual Holiday Shopping Pass promotion the first Saturday after Thanksgiving. Downtown customers could pick up passes at nearly 30 participating business locations. Merchants stamped the passes in \$5 and \$10 increments. Once cards were filled with \$150 in purchases, customers dropped them off at any participating location to be entered to win prizes, including a \$250 downtown shopping spree and tickets to holiday events.

To create a festive downtown vibe, the Improvement Corporation also sponsored a Holiday Window Contest for downtown businesses so that retailers would look their best for all the extra customers brought in by the shopping pass promotion. A panel of judges selected winning windows. Downtown visitors also got to vote, and everyone who voted was entered into prize drawings. Winning businesses received a congratulatory ad in the local daily newspaper.

- To encourage more holiday shopping in their district, the Flatiron 23rd Street Partnership in New York City hosts a gift wrapping station, complete with seasonal refreshments, entertainment, and prize drawings, in a public plaza each Friday during December.

Customers need only bring their gifts and the receipt showing proof of purchase for \$25 or more from the month of December to the gift wrapping station. A list of qualifying stores is provided to consumers via an annual shopping guide and on the partnership’s website.

- The Downtown Albany BID created its Jingle Elf Quest to draw more customers downtown. Pictures of jingle elves were hidden “in plain sight” inside businesses throughout downtown. Customers located elves, snapped a photo of themselves with the elves, and shared the images on the BID’s Facebook page, Instagram account, Twitter account, or by email to the BID. Each photo with an elf at a different

location was worth one elf point. The “jingle elf quester” to earn the most elf points was awarded the grand prize. Posters marketing the promotion and depicting the elves helped consumers know what to look for, as did the list of participating businesses available on the BID website.

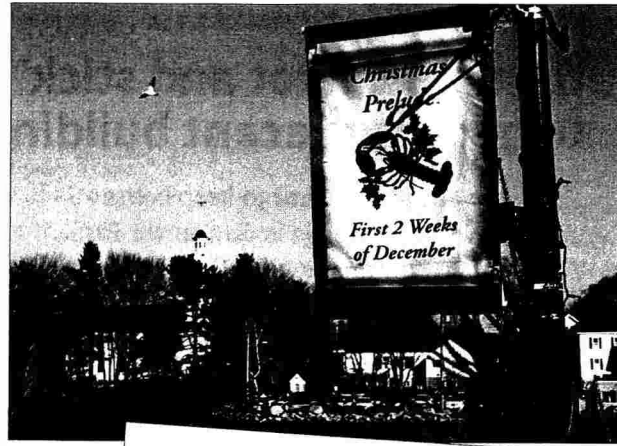
### Special events draw visitors for timeless activities and new traditions

Citycenters offer extra glitter and excitement with holiday lighting and special events for every taste and every age.

- The Christmas on the Square Holiday Light up in Sir Winston Churchill Square, Edmonton, AB, Canada, takes place from afternoon through dusk. Attendees at this Downtown Business Association event can get a jump on holiday shopping at Christmas Market vendors while listening to choirs sing. Santa Claus makes an appearance to light the 70-foot-tall white spruce bedecked with hundreds of LED lights, and there’s a sound, light, and fireworks show at dusk.

- The Lighting of Atlantic Station sees an eight-block area of Atlanta, GA’s Midtown district ablaze with more than 250,000 holiday lights. Events begin at noon when St. Nick arrives. There are kids’ activities all afternoon, including make-and-take crafts. There’s also a holiday fashion show, live music and entertainment, and, to add that extra bit of holiday magic, realistic “snow” falls over the area.

- Thanks to its two-week-long Christmas Prelude celebration, Kennebunkport, ME, has been named the Number Two Christmas Town in the nation by HGTV. The celebration features art shows, fish chowder dinners, trolley tours, and more, but one of the most unique offerings is the annual Hat Parade on the first Saturday of the celebration. A Prelude Hat-Making Workshop is offered earlier in the afternoon for those who want to don DIY headgear, but participants of all ages wearing handmade or purchased holiday hats are welcome to march through town behind the Patriot Fife and Drum Duo. The parade ends at the sponsoring business location,



Custom pole banners announce the dates of Christmas Prelude in Kennebunkport, ME, where the Hat Parade is a popular event.



where prizes are awarded in various creative cap categories.

- By mayoral declaration, Manchester, NH, celebrates an official Ugly Christmas Sweater Day. The announcement, and awards for Ugliest Individual Sweater, Ugliest Team Sweater, and Worst Holiday Outfit, take place at a downtown plaza that is also home to Intown Manchester’s Holiday Market. Attendees are urged via traditional and social media, and the organization’s website, to shop at the market for baked goods, stocking stuffers, hostess gifts, children’s gifts, and more following the ugly festivities.

- In Waukesha, WI, the annual Santa Run is just one part of a month-long Silver Bells campaign that keeps the downtown programmed and populated with potential customers throughout the holiday season. The walk/run is a fundraiser for the local Salvation Army chapter, and it drives the downtown economy by bringing participants to the city center. The day before the race, participants may pre-register and pick up their T-shirts. This typically brings an additional 250 people downtown. Then on race day, almost 900 participants and spectators fill the streets. **DIX**

## Using a "carrot and stick" approach to address vacant buildings

A new ordinance aims to keep better track of vacant buildings in downtown Paris, TX (est. pop. 25,005), while also incentivizing improvements and penalizing owners that allow properties to remain empty and/or unkempt. The ordinance requires owners of vacant buildings to provide their name, property address, floor plan, contact information, and other data for a new registry.

Proof of insurance will also be required when the ordinance goes into effect this month, as will payment of a \$500 fee. The fee will go up by \$50 for each year that the building sits empty and undeveloped.

Unanimous passage of the ordinance by the city council in April represents a marked turnaround from the unanimous defeat the measure faced when first proposed in 2017.

It has been a process to reach this success, says John Godwin, city manager. "We started working on this in 2016 and brought it before the city council in 2017, where it was turned down in a seven to zero vote," he says. Concerns expressed were that the measure "might make it too difficult for people to invest in the downtown, which made no sense; that this was a private property issue and we couldn't go telling people how to take care of their buildings; that there were already codes in place and we just needed to enforce those; and, that people who owned the buildings were very upset and complained to the council members."

To turn things around, Godwin says, the issue was raised on a regular basis before the council to provide more education about the benefits. A retreat in December provided more time to delve into the issue than at regular monthly meetings, as well. In addition, some aspects of the ordinance considered "nitpicky," such as penalizing the aesthetic aspects of a building, were eliminated from the language of the ordinance, which now deals strictly with structural issues.

"And we put a new section in talking about financial assistance, sort of a carrot and stick approach," says Godwin. "These are all grant programs and low interest loans that were already available, but we reference them in the ordinance so they know that if they are in a bind because the city is making them fix a property, the city will also help them fix it. That makes it a lot more palatable," he says. And the \$500 fees collected on vacant properties, "all stay in the downtown and will be spent to make the downtown better."

Prior to the new ordinance, the city had only basic fire and building code ordinance. Now, every empty building, regardless of condition, will be assessed an annual fee just for being vacant, separate from the building being in disrepair — which could lead to fines for code violations. "This ratchets up the costs for people holding vacant buildings because it's cheaper to do so," Godwin says. "The notion is that it will motivate people to think they might as well fix the buildings, rent them, or sell them."

There are about 40 vacant buildings downtown at this time. Letters notifying owners of the new ordinance, insurance requirement, and fee went out in May, giving recipients 90 days after the ordinance takes effect to comply. The new requirements will be enforced via the city's building inspector, fire marshal, and code enforcement officer.

"Ultimately, how we sold it was by convincing them that we were in it for the right reason — because it was a good thing for our downtown," Godwin says. While owners of vacant properties may still complain to city council members, he says, it is important to remember that, "our real customers are their neighbors. We want to reward the people who have invested in downtown already, not those who are doing nothing."

Contact: John Godwin, City of Paris, (903) 784-9202, [jgodwin@paristexas.gov](mailto:jgodwin@paristexas.gov). **DIX**



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To read the Vacant Building Registry ordinance, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

# Idea Exchange

## TIGER becomes BUILD

Since 2009, cities have used TIGER funds (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) for downtown projects ranging from pedestrian and bicycle improvements to multi-modal transportation hubs, and regional corridor improvements. In April, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that it has renamed TIGER as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program.

The Transportation for America blog notes that this is more than simply a name change. "The criteria for funding under BUILD and TIGER are essentially the same — with one big caveat. Under BUILD, the USDOT is putting a new emphasis on securing and committing new, non-federal revenue for projects requesting funding."

To learn more about BUILD grants visit [www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants](http://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants).

## City uses soft touch to improve parking

A new parking app in Portland, OR, is gaining acceptance with its practical parking tools and cuddly branding. *Parking Today* notes that parking in the state's largest city can be difficult. "Cars often circle looking for space downtown and homeowners in historic neighborhoods decry the



presence of strangers' cars parked in front of their homes," they say.

The app, called Parking Kitty, allows users to pay for parking with a debit/credit card and to monitor and "feed the meter" remotely.

Parking Kitty's feline logo, purring reminders, and a music video are all part of the app's success. Leah Treat, director of the Portland Bureau of Transportation, says that the take away for others implementing parking apps, or other parking programs, is to make it fun and unique. "You have to be authentic to your own city," she says.

## Study reveals 25 actions to boost downtown

A detailed report from the UK-based Institute of Place Management aims to identify factors which lead to sustainable high streets, or downtowns.

Writing in *The Conversation*, three of the study's authors point to the need for all stakeholders to work and act together if a downtown is to thrive. They also suggest the following:

**1. Get the timing right.** Ensure that downtown business hours reflect shoppers' needs. "Many shops and services are stuck in a nine-to-five trading pattern, which doesn't reflect the time people want to use them — especially in places with many commuters," say the authors.

**2. Mix it up.** Ensure a healthy mix of retail and other services to promote multi-destination visits. "If visitors

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# Idea Exchange

cannot satisfy their needs, all in one place, then they are motivated to find a new location," the authors say.

### 3. Spruce up the street.

Appearance matters, say the authors, and while façade and streetscape improvements are important, they also advise focusing on basic cleanliness.

**4. Have a plan.** "There needs to be a cohesive vision and strategy for the location," say the authors, and it must be shared by as many people as possible.

**5. Service with a smile.** The authors point to the importance of providing welcoming experiences throughout the downtown and note that a simple review of the comments on TripAdvisor, or other online customer review sites, can help identify problem areas.



To read the full report, visit [DowntownDevelopment.com](http://DowntownDevelopment.com) and click on Web Extras.

## A sober, safe alternative to standard New Year's Eve celebrations

First Night is a nonalcoholic, family-oriented festival of the performing arts that has steadily grown in popularity as an alternative for many downtowns to the traditional revelry associated with New Year's Eve.

Founded in downtown Boston in 1976, First Night was started by a group of artists who performed in churches, community halls, and outdoors in the Boston Common.

## Spring construction season gets a little more colorful

Two blocks in downtown Iowa City, IA, are under construction this spring and summer as the city works to upgrade underground utilities; increase the width of sidewalks; distribute parking on both sides of the street; enhance accessibility; create healthier planting areas; and modernize lighting, seating, and other amenities.

To reassure shoppers that the area is open for business, the Iowa City Downtown District is organizing interactive public art and hosting special events.

While the district is coordinating these activities, the city is providing financial support, as well as discounted parking and transit fares. Geoff Fruin, Iowa City's interim city manager, explains the strategy to *The Gazette*. "The businesses know the best ways to market to the community so we are helping provide resources and physical space and letting them go to work on their plan," says Fruin.

The public art project encourages passersby to select a brightly colored vinyl ribbon from a bucket and tie it to the chain link fence surrounding a portion of the project area.

Betsy Potter, operations director at the Iowa City Downtown District, tells *The Daily Iowan* that the project has already proven a success. "The Downtown District has heard a lot of positive feedback about how many people are engaging with the project and how 'fun and simple' it is," she says, adding that, "many businesses around the area like how community members stop by and participate in the project."



Photo courtesy of Courtney Hawkins.

Through performances and exhibitions of music, comedy, theater, dance, visual arts, puppetry, storytelling, and illusions, First Night can serve as a showcase for the area's cultural and artistic communities as well as the downtown itself.

Boston's First Night serves as a model for hundreds of similar celebrations worldwide and has grown to a two-day celebration now called First Night First Day. The 2018 event schedule is online at [firstnightboston.org](http://firstnightboston.org). **DIX**