



CITY OF ELKO

Planning Department

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

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

The City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council will meet in a regular session on Thursday, October 28, 2021 in the Council Chambers at Elko City Hall, 1751 College Avenue, Elko, Nevada, and 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 CITY HALL – 1751 College Avenue, Elko, NV 89801

Date/Time Posted: October 22, 2021 2:00 p.m.

Posted by: Shelby Knopp, Administrative Assistant
Name Title

Shelby Knopp
Signature

The public may contact Shelby Knopp by phone at (775) 777-7160 or by email at sknopp@elkocitynv.gov to request supporting material for the meeting described herein. The agenda and supporting material is also available at Elko City Hall, 1751 College Avenue, Elko, NV.

Dated this 22nd day of October, 2021.

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 A. Wilkinson
Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager

CITY OF ELKO
REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA
4:00 P.M., P.D.S.T., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2021
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

July 22, 2021 – Regular Meeting **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

I. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review, consideration and possible action to hold a special election to elect officers or maintain current positions until January 2022 election, **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

RAC Bylaws Article III, Section 1 states: 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. RAC did not meet in January 2021 due to Covid advisory meeting restrictions and therefore the election was not held. This is the final meeting in 2021 prior to the election of officers in January 2022.

II. REPORTS

- A. Budget
- B. Storefront Improvement Program
- C. Block End Project

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**

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,



Scott Wilkinson
Assistant City Manager

CITY OF ELKO
REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
4:00 P.M., P.D.S.T., THURSDAY, JULY 22, 2021
ELKO CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS,
1751 COLLEGE AVENUE, ELKO, NEVADA

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Present: Jeff Dalling
Lina Blohm
Catherine Wines, ACAB
Katie Neddenriep, ECVA

Absent: Jon Karr, DBA
Bill Hance, RDA
Corey Rice, Elko County
Sonja Sibert, GBC
Steve Bowers, Elko County School District.

City Staff Present: Cathy Laughlin, City Planner
Bob Thibault, Civil Engineer
Shelby Knopp, Planning Technician

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

There were no public comments made at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 23, 2020 – Regular Meeting **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

*****A motion was made by Lina Blohm, seconded by Jeff Dalling to approve the minutes from the January 23, 2020 regular meeting as presented.**

**Motion passed unanimously. (3-0)*

I. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review, consideration, and possible action regarding the continuation of the Redevelopment Recognition Program and possible modifications to the program, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

The RAC defined the details of the Recognition Program at their October 25, 2018 meeting. The RDA and RAC had a joint meeting May 21, 2019 to recognize the 2019 recipients of the Recognition Program. It was never determined if this program would be an annual or biennial program. The RAC at their January 23, 2020 meeting made a motion to bring back the recognition program for reconsideration and possible modifications and to have the program every five years.

Cathy Laughlin, City Planner, explained that at the last meeting on January 23, 2020 the RAC made a motion to bring back the Recognition Program for reconsideration and possible modifications to the program to change the program to every 5 years. Ms. Laughlin asked for any recommendations for future modifications to the program.

Catherine Wines asked if there was anything besides the sticker for the actual awards.

Ms. Laughlin explained that there was a plaque that Ms. Wines designed.

Ms. Wines asked if there was a sticker. (Yes) She didn't think that anyone got the connection that it was a google map pin.

Ms. Laughlin pointed out that she explained it to everyone that received an award.

Ms. Wines said she hadn't seen any, so she thought they should change that.

Ms. Laughlin said they spent a lot of money on the awards.

Jeff Dalling said he filed his away. He said he never saw the design. He added that he liked the ones they gave out the first year. It was more like a trophy. Mr. Dalling said he didn't mind doing it annually. He thought that might be an encouragement, or even every two years.

Ms. Wines asked if they were doing it every five years now.

Ms. Laughlin explained that was the recommendation that was made in the motion on January 23, 2020. She had brought the program to the RAC to see if they wanted to have the Recognition Program of 2020, because the last time it was done was in 2019. The RAC made a motion to do the program every 5 years.

Lina Blohm asked what year that would be effective for.

Ms. Laughlin said the next one would be in 2023, because the last one was in 2019.

Mr. Dalling felt like there were a lot more applicants for the Storefront Program now.

Ms. Laughlin said it wasn't all the Storefront Grant recipients that got the awards. There were quite a few that just did an investment in their own building and weren't part of the Storefront Program.

Ms. Blohm wanted to remind everyone that they spent a lot of money on that. There was a nice luncheon with food at the Western Folklife Center. She thought they needed to revisit this. Delmo put a lot of work in to putting it on.

Ms. Wines said they didn't do the luncheon in 2019.

Mr. Dalling said that one was in 2014 or 2015.

Ms. Blohm said that was the original program.

Ms. Wines said in 2019 they recognized anyone who did anything since 2014.

Mr. Dalling thought they should go back to every five years and do a nice presentation. They would have more recipients, as well.

Ms. Blohm felt they would, and she added that they could take the time and spend a little money to offer something substantial. She said she would like to know what the costs were for the first one.

Ms. Laughlin said she could try to find that information.

Ms. Blohm asked who would be responsible for pulling it together.

Ms. Laughlin said it would be her responsibility as the Redevelopment Manager.

There was further discussion regarding the specifics of the program and the modifications that the Board wanted to make.

*****A motion was made by Lina Blohm, seconded by Jeff Dalling to accept the RAC Recognition Program as presented, with the exception of the "WHEN" stipulating that the event will take place once every five years, the next event to take place in 2024, where the recipients will receive formal recognition; costs for Awards and Ceremony not to exceed \$5,000.**

****Motion passed unanimously. (3-0)***

- B.** Review, consideration, and possible recommendation to the Redevelopment Agency regarding the planter areas within the corridor from 3rd Street to 7th Street, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Approximately 1996-97, the downtown corridor planters were adopted by existing businesses or families in memory of loved ones. This was a project not associated with

the City of Elko. The adoption program was intended for the planters to be maintained by those individuals or businesses. Many of the businesses are no longer in business and many of the planters are in great disrepair. The DBA would like to partner with the Redevelopment Agency on the planter project.

Ms. Laughlin wanted to give some background information on the planter areas. In approximately 1996/1997 the downtown corridor planters were adopted by existing businesses, as well as in memory of several loved ones. The project, at that time, was not associated to the City of Elko, so we never had control over the project to make sure it was continuous and maintained. There have been several of the planters that have been maintained by individuals or businesses. Two, which were included in the agenda packet, are in front of Western Folklife Center. They are beautiful and well maintained. There are several planters right next to those that have nothing in them. Many of the business that adopted these planters are no longer in business. It is hard for the City to reach out to these businesses and tell them that they are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of a planter that they adopted in 1997. The Redevelopment Agency, several years ago, put funds towards a part time Parks and Rec employee to take care of the planters. We bought a whole bunch of new plants and bark, and they look like they do now. Ms. Laughlin mentioned that she had been speaking with the DBA in regards to this project. The DBA has a date in August, in which they are doing an event in the downtown. They thought that would be perfect opportunity to get volunteers there for the morning, and then feed them lunch as part of the afternoon event. She has also been in communication with several of the other businesses downtown. Dave Zornes, with Stockmen's, came to the City and said that the planters in front of their business looked really bad and stated that it gave a bad reflection on Stockmen's. He asked what they could do about it. She told them if they were willing to do the work that the City would greatly appreciate it. There are 7 job openings in Parks Department right now. They don't have the manpower to do anything in the downtown. Mr. Zornes had weed barrier and bark laid down in four of the five planters. They are currently waiting on the plants. It was a huge improvement. He stated that they were done for about \$150 for each planter, without adding any plants. The Parks Department is going to fix water system on the 5th planter, and then Stockmen's will do that planter as well. A proposal from the DBA was included in the packet. Ms. Laughlin stated that she disagreed with the amount that they requested. She could see if they had to hire an employee, which was her first suggestion. She suggested getting a temp from American Staffing and have them do all the work, and then the RDA would pay the wage and materials. If the full time positions aren't being filled in the Parks Department, a part time position won't be filled either. She thought their only option to get the planters looking better, was through a collaboration with the DBA and use their volunteers to get it done. It will take some funding from both the RDA and the DBA. If there are still businesses that are willing to adopt, or maintain the planters in front of their business, they are more than welcome to take that on and be a part of the project as well. In Ms. Laughlin's conversation with the DBA, she stated that she would reach out to businesses along the corridor and see if anyone would be willing to take on the planter in front of their business and help with this project, either with labor or financially. She said she would hate to see how nice the block ends look and have planters that need work. She thought it would help the entire area.

Ms. Wines stated that the issue with the planter in front of her building was there was no water. She thought they needed to do some maintenance before putting any money into them.

Ms. Laughlin said that the DBA had Lori Ayala on the Board, and Tino Ayala would probably have some assistance with the irrigation. The Parks Department is slammed with work. There is water, but sometimes the irrigation drips get plugged. It will just take a little bit of maintenance, but it will be a continuous maintenance. If we want things to grow we are going to have to have some of the businesses take pride in the planters downtown.

Ms. Wines said Autumn Johnson, who owns the building next to Ms. Wines', had plumbing to the front of her building. She was planning on putting in a hose bib. They were just going to go ahead and do the two planters in front of their businesses if they could get access to water. Right now they can't because there is no water. Ms. Wines thought there was work that needed to be done in order to get it going.

Bob Thibault, Civil Engineer, had a comment about the irrigation in the planters. The way those drip system work is that the hose that runs around has pin holes in. When planting things, you need to look for the wet spots and plant adjacent to the drip line.

Ms. Wines thought the bar crowd destroyed the lines in her planter.

Mr. Dalling pointed out that the lines in the 500 Block get trampled, because people just walk through them. This was a hard summer with doing the block ends and the replacement of the water line. Personally, Mr. Dalling couldn't believe that the DBA would ask for \$40,000. He mentioned that he helped Tammy Keener redo the planters one year and they just went and did them.

Ms. Laughlin thought they were just looking for money for the materials. She stated that she wrote an email to Garret after he sent the proposal and said it was way out of line, when Mr. Zornes was telling her it was \$150 per planter. She added that some of the planters didn't need it.

Mr. Dalling said he didn't want to do anything. He didn't want to give them a dollar. He thought if they wanted to go out, then they should be going out. If they are asking for donations, then why do they need the \$40,000 on top of the money they are going to get from the donations.

Ms. Blohm mentioned that she spent an hour on the phone with Garret regarding the proposal. She was concerned as well. Her concern was that a quick fix was always being done. There is no long term plan to continue the maintenance. She recalled that the City hired part time summer help, but there was no supervision. She didn't think the kids knew a flower from a weed. You didn't see a return on that investment. Ms. Blohm thought they needed to take a strong hard look at this, because the planters were in sad shape. Initially the problem was the water. There was no water. She thought that was a huge problem and brought that up with Garret. She mentioned that they had done several of these work days and a month later you couldn't tell that they did anything. Ms. Blohm stated that she wasn't in favor of a quick fix. She was in favor of determining how many planters were deficient in water and determining if the system needed to be revamped. Ms. Blohm said she was really in favor of looking at long term maintenance. It could be funded partially by DBA and partially by RDA. She realized that everyone had a work force situation going on this year. She said she couldn't go for \$40,000.

Ms. Wines said in an area like this, where the planters are not raised, it would be nice if they were raised. Then people wouldn't walk on them. But if the planters are not raised, something that people can't walk on needs to be planted there, like bushes or shrubs. The other thing about the planters is non-bearing fruit trees have a 30 to 40-year life span, and we are reaching the end of that. She agreed with Ms. Blohm that they needed to take a long term approach, because they needed to look at replacing some trees. They could put a new tree that is smaller next to the old one, because the one that is there is not going to last much longer. Ms. Wines could see spending \$1,000 on each bed if they were going to put in a new tree and some bushes, but \$1,000 for bark was crazy.

Ms. Laughlin said they could get 10 plants for \$10 apiece.

Ms. Wines said the plants that are there won't last. They needed to get something that was tough, and they needed to get some trees that would last longer than 30 to 40 years. Ms. Wines said she would love to see this item stay on an agenda and talk about a long term plan for the planters. They could get James Wiley to the meeting and talk about what they can do in the long term.

Mr. Thibault wanted to point out that the long term goal, in conjunction with the 30% design, would relocate most of the planters and change the number of drive isles. Right now it is very cramped and tight. The new design expands for more room in the drive isles and the parking stalls. Mr. Thibault didn't advise that they do too much. To beautify the planters with plants and stuff is fine, but to try to plant trees that would be expected to be there for more than 30 years, he thought they should do that when they get realigned. That is the long term goal that has already been approved for the corridor.

Mr. Dalling wanted to point out that he used to be a member of the DBA, but they were saying that if they had 700 people at their margarita walk, at \$25 per person, it would work out to \$17,500 per walk.

Ms. Blohm said that was an extreme. They probably had 200 people at the last walk, so 700 would not be a fair number.

Mr. Dalling said he was trying to say that they have money and they can do some things too. He felt this was more of a DBA project, and not really an RDA project. He was stuck on the \$40,000 request.

*****A motion was made by Jeff Dalling to recommend to the Redevelopment Agency to deny the proposal for \$40,000 for the planters within the corridor from 3rd to 7th Street.**

Ms. Laughlin clarified that she wasn't recommending that they approve the request. It was just the proposal from the DBA, so that they could start the conversation about how they could get this work program on August 21st going. Her recommendation was going to be about \$5,000.

Mr. Dalling said this was something they could handle by themselves, because last time it was done all the business owners pitched in.

Ms. Wines liked the idea of a partnership, like a Public/Private Partnership with the City partnering with the DBA. She said she didn't know if she was going to get behind telling them to do it themselves. She thought it would be nice to encourage them to do something. Ms. Wines stated that she liked \$5,000 to say that they are behind this.

Katie Neddenriep pointed out that she was a non-voting member of the committee and that she had a couple of comments. \$40,000 could be high, but it lines out. It is going to be used to purchase material that is not covered otherwise, as well as if they have to contract out to finish it once it gets started. It's not cheap to rent construction equipment. She thought with some of what they were proposing that they were thinking a little bit longer term. She stated that she supported a partnership, because it is the right thing to do, and it is City property. The DBA could just say that they are out, and then it would just look bad. The community then goes after the City. The partnership is great. There has to be a collaboration between the two entities.

Ms. Blohm asked Ms. Neddenriep about the feedback she was getting in regards to the corridor and how dumpy it looked.

Ms. Neddenriep explained that they don't interact directly with the drive thru tourists. She thought the other thing that happened was when it looked like something was being taken care of people were less likely to destroy or damage it. If it looks like the downtown corridor is being maintained and taken care of it might deter some of the less desirable activity.

Ms. Blohm thought Ms. Neddenriep was right on regarding a collaboration.

Ms. Neddenriep said it was a starting point. They might even find that they don't need the money because they are able to find people that are willing to step up and make an investment.

Ms. Blohm said that would be the ultimate goal, but that hadn't happened yet. She thought they needed to fine tune the amount of money. Ms. Blohm wanted to discuss the bark. She said it warranted time to put a plan together for the ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation of the corridor. It is prime central area, a city owned property, so that has some limitations. Regarding the bark, she thought they were better off to use the rubber bark than the shavings, because of discoloration. In one year it is going to be a disaster. It just doesn't last. There is more money that is going to be spent there. She agreed that they shouldn't go to \$40,000. She didn't know what that number would be, because her number one concern was the lack of water to many of the planters.

Ms. Laughlin suggested that they could make a recommendation to the RDA to spend some funds up to \$5,000 to have a landscaping consultant determine why the irrigation is not working. The Parks Department doesn't have the time.

Ms. Blohm asked when this would go to the RDA for final approval.

Ms. Laughlin said it would be August 10th.

Ms. Blohm asked when the event was.

Ms. Laughlin said August 21st.

Mr. Dalling said he had made a motion if anyone wanted to vote on it, or second it.

Ms. Wines and Ms. Blohm both stated that they were not going to second the motion.

***With lack of a second the motion died.**

Mr. Dalling felt like they were getting the cart before the horse, because the water is still screwed up but they were going to spend money to fix.

Ms. Blohm said that was what they were trying to discuss and work thru. She liked the idea of asking RDA in the motion to address...

Mr. Dalling interrupted and asked why the DBA didn't have a member present to give a presentation.

Ms. Blohm continued, to address the water issue.

Ms. Wines told Mr. Dalling that they didn't have to give the DBA \$40,000 or nothing. They can come down from that.

Mr. Dalling said he wouldn't support any better offer than that.

*****A motion was made by Lina Blohm, seconded by Catherine Wines to move forward with a partnership that would be between the RDA and the DBA to try to facilitate an enhancement of the flowerbeds in the corridor; with a request that the RDA initially address the lack of water in most of the planter areas prior to trying to go forward.**

Before a second or a vote Ms. Blohm stated that she didn't know how to address a money amount.

Mr. Dalling said they couldn't really do anything without a dollar amount.

Ms. Blohm asked if she should include up to, or no more than, \$5,000 or \$7,000.

Ms. Wines was disappointed that the downtown was being treated different than a City Park.

Ms. Blohm suggested that they determine a money amount. She asked Mr. Thibault for his opinion.

Mr. Thibault said in his opinion he didn't know what a proper value would be either. Perhaps the RAC's recommendation to the RDA could be that they determine an appropriate dollar amount.

In the mean time staff can look in to into it and talk to the Parks Department and get a better assessment on what is down there.

There was further discussion and it was determined that the motion on the floor addressed everything.

***Catherine Wines seconded the motion.**

Jeff Dalling left the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

***Motion failed. (2-0, Mr. Dalling left the meeting without placing a vote)**

***With lack of a quorum the meeting was adjourned.**

- C. Review, consideration and possible action to hold a special election to elect officers or maintain current positions until January 2022 election, **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

RAC Bylaws Article III, Section 1 states: 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. RAC did not meet in January 2021 due to Covid advisory meeting restrictions and therefore the election was not held. There is one additional meeting in 2021 prior to the election of officers in January 2022.

II. REPORTS

- A. Budget
- B. Storefront Improvement Program
- C. Block End Project

COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

There were no public comments made at this time.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

DRAFT

City of Elko Redevelopment Advisory Council
Agenda Action Sheet

1. Title: **Review, consideration and possible action to hold a special election to elect officers or maintain current positions until January 2022 election, FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**
2. Meeting Date: **October 28, 2021**
3. Agenda Category: **NEW BUSINESS**
4. Time Required: **15 minutes**
5. Background Information: **RAC Bylaws Article III, Section 1 states: 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. RAC did not meet in January 2021 due to Covid advisory meeting restrictions and therefore the election was not held. This is the final meeting in 2021 prior to the election of officers in January 2022.**
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: **Maintain current elected officers and hold the election of officers in January 2022.**
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

Section 1 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 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:

Redevelopment Agency 2021/2022 Budget

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

Revenues		
	Approved Budget	As of 10/21/2021
Beginning Fund Balance	\$969,625	
Budget to beginning fund balance dif.		
Property Tax Revenues (anticipated)	\$310,000	\$156,109
Interest Revenues (anticipated)	\$6,000	\$261
Transfer in from General Fund		
Total Revenues	\$1,285,625	\$156,369

Balance to date	\$1,043,141
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Expenditures		
	Approved Budget	As of 10/21/2021
Legal	\$20,000	
Public Improvements		
Misc. items	\$1,000	\$247
Storefront Program (pledged 2018)	\$25,000	
Storefront Program (pledged 2020)	\$98,448	\$25,000
Storefront Program (pledged 2021)	\$100,000	
Storefront Program (pledged 2022)	\$50,000	
Public-Private Partnerships	\$75,000	
RAC Recognition Program	\$1,000	
400 Block Alley power project	?	
Block End Project	\$46,000	\$50,497
Stockmen's Parking lot	\$99,999	
Mural Donation		\$5,000
Planter Project	\$5,000	\$2,110
Balance towards savings	\$769,078	
Revolving Fund	\$100	
Total Expenses	\$1,290,625	\$82,853



Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

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The future of work after
COVID-19

ATTRACTION

With many office workers still staying home, downtowns try to woo them back

In Fort Lauderdale, FL (est. pop. 182,434), downtown leaders are organizing a “Get Back Downtown” event for September. The outdoor office party will urge office workers to return to their cubicles in the central business district’s office towers.

In Columbus, OH (est. pop. 902,073), a downtown group likewise is marketing the city center by sprucing up downtown and reviving outdoor concert and movie series.

And in Montreal, business leaders have embarked on a “charm offensive” aimed at luring hundreds

of thousands of office workers back downtown.

City centers everywhere face a conundrum: Office workers have yet to return en masse, even as vaccines are readily available, coronavirus infections have dwindled, and local authorities have lifted restrictions on public gatherings.

Many downtowns were booming before the pandemic hit in March 2020. Since then, office workers have realized they like the new normal.

They prefer not getting dressed up

(Continued on page 3)

PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

City uses pandemic pause to encourage bicycling

Fort Collins, CO (est. pop. 170,245), was a bike-friendly place going into the pandemic. Since 2018, it had been one of just four U.S. cities to earn a Platinum designation from the League of American Bicyclists.

During the depths of the pandemic, the city raised its cycling game even more by further investing in its infrastructure for bikes.

In June 2020, Fort Collins won a \$20,000 grant from the PeopleForBikes Foundation (peopleforbikes.org) to support programs designed to increase biking and walking as part of the community’s response to COVID-19. The goal was to use short-term pandemic relief efforts to create permanent changes in local transportation networks.

(Continued on page 7)

Cities sacrifice ownership of City Hall for downtown redevelopment

As part of a redevelopment of their downtowns, two mid-sized cities are making an unusual move: They're giving up the traditional model of a city-owned parcel housing City Hall.

Instead, the cities are spurring downtown redevelopment projects by partnering with private developers. In the process, they're moving city administrative offices into mixed-use developments.

The cities of Columbia Heights, MN (est. pop. 20,118), and Oakland Park, FL (est. pop. 44,699), both saw compelling reasons to make the change.

Oakland Park's plan to remake 6.6 acres of downtown includes moving city offices into a mixed-use development, where the city will be a tenant.

The idea of a city renting rather than owning is unusual, and the proposal met some initial resistance, City Manager David Hebert acknowledges.

But he successfully made the case that giving up a city-owned City Hall would make the downtown redevelopment project more attractive to developers.

The city will lease office space in a new mixed-use building downtown, providing an incentive to the new landlord.

"It is uncommon, but I had to figure out a way to free up the land," Hebert says. "There

was a little bit of pushback. Folks were a little bit quizzical about it."

In Columbia Heights, the city likewise is turning over a city-owned parcel to a developer.

Columbia Heights partnered with Minneapolis developer Alatus to demolish an old municipal building and put up a mixed-use project that includes 265 apartments, a cafe, and City Hall. The city will take space in the new six-story, \$60 million building.

"The council wanted to shoot for the moon," Aaron Chirpich, the city's community development director, told the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*. "There isn't a template for this. ... Any bold vision takes an element of risk."

Chirpich acknowledged that the arrangement required a "tangled web of contracts and agreements." The city will own the space for City Hall and share building and parking ramp maintenance costs with Alatus.

In Columbia Heights, sharing the costs of City Hall made sense. The city had long occupied a 1942 building that included asbestos and had not been retrofitted to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Replacing the obsolete structure with a new City Hall would have cost \$8 million to \$10 million, Chirpich said. The city's portion of the new mixed-use project — about 20,650 square feet — cost about \$5 million.

While most cities own their City Halls, Oakland Park's Hebert says there's no particular reason that cities must own rather than rent. And he's pitching the upside: Getting the land under City Hall into private hands means putting it on tax rolls.

Renee Miller, a consultant working with the city, says the out-of-the-box move is a savvy strategy.

"What city doesn't own their City Hall? The smart one," Miller says.

Addressing many woes

South Florida's development boom has mostly passed by Oakland Park, a suburb of

"What city doesn't own their City Hall? The smart one."



Courtesy of: City of Oakland Park

Fort Lauderdale. Downtown is dominated by a parking lot.

Hebert says he embarked on the downtown redevelopment with a quandary: “How the heck am I going to activate a downtown with vacant land the city owns itself?”

What’s more, much of the land was a brownfield that required remediation. On the bright side, Hebert reports, downtown was a blank slate.

City Hall is set to move into a development that includes two buildings of six stories each. Plans call for the project to include 140 residential units, 16,000 square feet of retail, the

city hall complex of 35,000 square feet, and 334 parking spaces.

The downtown redevelopment project also includes a woonerf and possibly a commuter station for Brightline, the private rail service.

For now, Oakland Park’s downtown is anchored by the Funky Buddha brewery, an early entrant to the craft brewing craze. The facility draws 175,000 visitors a year downtown, Hebert says. He calls the brewery “the best neighbors ever.”

Contact: David Hebert, City of Oakland Park, 954-630-4596. **DIX**

With many office workers still staying home, downtowns try to woo them back — Continued from page 1

for work and not dealing with stressful commutes. And employers have accepted that many workers are just as productive working from home as they were in the office.

“There’s a change that has now happened that will forever affect how people work,” says Jenni Morejon, president of the Fort Lauderdale Downtown Development Authority. “But it’s not going to be a complete void in downtowns like some fear.”

Ultimately, people crave the energy and collaboration that comes with working together, and she thinks they’ll return to workplaces.

But Morejon acknowledges it will be a slow process. While downtown workers stopped coming to offices suddenly, they’ve only trickled back in gradually. Fewer than half of downtown workers in Fort Lauderdale had come back as of July, a trend seen nationally.

Morejon likens the pattern to turning a light completely off, and then slowly moving the dimmer switch back on.

To woo workers back, Morejon is planning an outdoor office party similar to the

regular events the Fort Lauderdale DDA hosted before the pandemic. Meanwhile, the DDA has been renovating downtown parks, sidewalks, and streetscapes.

“Our agency is really focused on improving the experience downtown,” she says.

Downtowns face a crucial task — they must create a reason for

workers to come back. That imperative is especially

acute in the cities where office uses dominate downtown real estate. In Boston,

for instance, office space accounts for more than 80

percent of downtown real estate uses, according to a study by the New York Times and commercial real estate firm CoStar. Fewer people commuting downtown could create a drag on the downtown economy.

A McKinsey & Co. analysis prepared for the state of Massachusetts predicts that office demand could remain 20 percent below pre-pandemic levels for years, and that ridership on commuter trains could plunge.

“Changing ways of working — such

“Changing ways of working — such as hybrid and remote work — may shift the center of gravity away from the urban core.”

as hybrid and remote work — may shift the center of gravity away from the urban core,” says the McKinsey report.

Some brush off such predictions. Eddy Arriola is chairman of Apollo Bank, a financial institution based in downtown Miami that makes loans to owners of downtown office buildings. He expects office use to bounce back.

“People want to go back to work, and be in the workforce,” he says. “[The] office is not dead.”

Downtown leaders hope he’s right. Many urban cores have developed around commuting patterns that bring in workers, who then serve as a built-in clientele for restaurants, bars, gyms, dry cleaners, and other businesses.

Like other cities, Columbus and Fort Lauderdale are trying to position their downtowns for a return to work. They want to make sure workers — who have more power than ever to choose how often they come to the workplace — are eager to return to downtown offices.

“[The] office is not dead.”

In Columbus, a half-empty downtown

Columbus’ downtown leaders are promoting the area with a Welcome Back campaign. And they’ve revived events such as the Picnic with the Pops concert series featuring the Columbus Symphony, and a summer movie series.

Julie Wilkes, owner of a downtown yoga studio, calls such steps critical.

“People got into habits for a year being stuck inside their houses, and to drive them back downtown, that’s a new habit, that’s a big challenge to change,” she told the *Columbus Dispatch*. “Downtown has literally been closed for the last year. If the downtown is vibrant and offering a lot of stuff to do, I do think it would change the way people see it.”

Wilkes’ studio participated in the relaunch of a public yoga session at a downtown venue, an event that attracted about 150 people its first week.

She stresses the need for large employers and small businesses to work together. “We have to start figuring out who are the businesses trying to come back? How can we support each other?” she said.

But, Wilkes added, “it’s definitely challenging.”

Just as in Fort Lauderdale, Columbus saw commuter traffic come to a sudden halt in 2020. It’s only gradually picking up.

As of May, just 34 percent of office workers had returned, according to a survey by the downtown group Capital Crossroads Special Improvement District. Marc Conte, the organization’s acting executive director, told the *Columbus Dispatch* he expects about half of downtown’s 90,000 workers to return to offices this summer, while 68 percent are expected to be back by the end of the year.

“I thought the numbers for both the summer and fall would be higher,” Conte told the *Dispatch*.

Some major employers — including Nationwide Insurance, Huntington Bank and local governments — have been bringing workers back to downtown offices.

But downtown still isn’t back to full levels of activity. In another indicator of the slow return to downtown, ridership on local buses remains at a fraction of pre-pandemic levels.

A separate survey by the commercial real estate firm Colliers found that a quarter of Columbus office tenants remain undecided about their return-to-work policies.



“Downtown’s not going to be successful if there’s not people here,” Greg Davies, the CEO of the Columbus Downtown Development Corp., told the *Dispatch*.

Employers, meanwhile, face a balancing act. They want to get back to some semblance of normalcy, and to reap the rewards of their investments in downtown office space. But they also fret that forcing workers back into the office before they’re ready could backfire, by pushing workers to leave for other jobs.

“I think it’s going to be 18 months before we see what the equilibrium is moving forward and how many people will continue to work from home on a part-time basis,” Conte said. “Companies are still trying to determine vaccination policies, let alone back-to-work policies.”

The downtown’s challenges go beyond empty offices. The neighborhood’s recovery is also complicated by a perception that the area is unsafe. In May, one person died and several others were injured in a mass shooting at a downtown park.

Downtown leaders have bolstered security, and they’re considering distributing federal COVID-relief dollars to downtown businesses.

Street performers, art exhibits

Meanwhile, in Montreal, employers and government officials are courting the 310,000 office workers who are vital to the survival of downtown restaurants and shops. These efforts could include art exhibits in office buildings, along with food courts, outdoor work spaces, after-work events, and concierge services for workers.

The full-court press on Montreal office workers comes as many have embraced remote work. In an April survey, 76 percent said they want to continue to spend at least half their workweek at home, Bloomberg reports.

The Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal received \$7 million from the Quebec government to coordinate an “I love working downtown” push.

“This really is a major charm offensive,” Chamber President Michel Leblanc told Bloomberg. “The goal is to get people to say ‘I want to go downtown, I’m going to work and discover all that’s going on, all that’s new.’”

A recent study of the state of downtown Montreal said the rate of commercial inactivity — both temporary closures and vacancies — rose to 34 percent inside malls and 24 percent on the commercial corridor of Sainte-Catherine during the first quarter of 2021.

Traffic at downtown metro stations was down 81 percent from a year earlier, and some office tenants are shopping unused space for sublease. At major financial firms including Desjardins Group and Fiera Capital Corp., most workers have yet to return to the office.


The city and the province are putting a combined \$25 million into plans to revive the district, including support for restaurants and small companies that need to redesign office space to scale down, Bloomberg reported.

The city has launched a summer program for the downtown area. It includes pedestrian zones, or “oases,” areas to socialize, eat, and relax. There are also street performances by circus, theater, and music acts.

“Of course you need a safe workplace,” economic development official Luc Rabouin says. “But the downtown atmosphere is a factor of attractiveness. If there are no restaurants, no patios, no cultural events, there’s no interest in coming back.”

Leblanc notes that it’s not just downtown leaders who are responsible for the vibe downtown. Employers also play an important role, and many have begun hosting after-work drinks, a bit of social planning previously left to employees.

“I think companies are now going to try to create these pleasurable moments themselves,” Leblanc says.

*Contacts: Jenni Morejon, **Fort Lauderdale Downtown Development Authority**, 954-463-6574; Marc Conte, **Capital Crossroads Special Improvement District**, 614-228-5718. *



DowntownDevelopment.com

To see **McKinsey & Co.’s report on the future of office work**, go to DowntownDevelopment.com and click on “**Web Extras**.”

Downtown merchants ask for surveillance cameras, but some worry about privacy issues

In Moline, IL (est. pop. 41,920), the city council this spring approved spending \$214,000 on a system of video surveillance cameras for 16 locations downtown.

Downtown merchants welcomed the new security measure, Geoff Manis, manager of Moline Centre Main Street, told KWQC television.

“There’s been a big uptick in car thefts and individuals breaking into cars,” Manis says. “If that were to happen in our Fifth Avenue corridor or any other corners of our downtown, these cameras will catch it.”

Moline bought the system from Avigilon, a Canadian maker of security hardware. Two council members opposed the purchase, wondering if the additional safety was worth the tradeoff in privacy concerns.

“It seems like a little Big Brother here,” Alderman Pat O’Brien said during a council meeting. “I know they’re for security, but has there been an uptick in crime down here? Are we having problems with security in the downtown?”

Moline’s police chief countered that video evidence is an efficient way to boost public safety, including in parks, which can be difficult to monitor 24 hours a day.

The cameras will be aimed at outdoor streets, parking lots, and other public places, the Quad City Times reported. Local law enforcement will be able to tap into the system’s search function when looking for suspects, Moline police said.

The surveillance system will not capture images from inside residential homes or businesses, police said. The technology does not have facial recognition capability or license plate reader technology.

In other words, the surveillance cameras are barely brushing the technical capabilities of a new generation of policing technology.

Among the new types of technology that security companies are marketing, and police are buying:

Automatic license plate readers. These devices can be mounted atop police cruisers or tow trucks, or planted in one location, usually along a busy road. The devices record license plate data, entering the time and location into a database. Sure, a police officer could write down every plate he sees, but he’d quickly tire of the task. The readers automate and amplify a mundane chore.

Gun shot detection technology. Sensors placed atop light poles alert police to loud noises that sound like gunshots. The devices have been installed in Newark, NJ, Omaha, NE, and other cities.

One company, ShotSpotter, charges police departments an annual fee of \$65,000 to \$90,000 per square mile, writes Jon Fasman in *We See It All*, a recent book about the increasing sophistication of surveillance tools. The return on that investment is unclear, he reports.

Drones. These flying spies act as a “time machine,” Fasman writes. When a crime occurs, the drones’ private operator can go back to the moment of the crime and reconstruct the scene. Who were the shooters? Where did they come from? Where did they go?

Drones pose uncomfortable questions about surveillance in the name of safety. The vast majority of people being recorded by drone cameras have committed no crime.

Facial recognition. Biometric systems are common in China, where there’s no pretense of privacy. In the US, facial recognition is especially fraught. When the cameras are stationed on public streets, Fasman argues, facial recognition software essentially treats everyone as a suspect.

Overall, Fasman concludes, the Moline alderman who worried about Big Brother was wise to have some misgivings.

“Technologically, we have the capacity to create the perfect surveillance state — not in some distant, dystopic future, but now, today,” Fasman writes. **DIX**

City uses pandemic pause to encourage bicycling

— Continued from page 1

“We decided pretty early on that closing streets the way we were seeing in Denver and with other Slow Streets concepts was not going to fly in Fort Collins,” says Nick Heimann, an active modes specialist for the City of Fort Collins. “Instead, we looked at the robust system that we were already encouraging people to use for walking, bicycling, and scooting on a regular basis, and decided to augment what was already there.”

In many cities, building protected bike lanes and other pathways is the first order of business. But Fort Collins already had built a robust trail system, so the city focused much of its effort on its Shift Your Ride campaign, an initiative encouraging residents to skip single-occupancy vehicle rides as often as possible.

The city had launched that program in 2019, and it intensified its efforts during the pandemic. Heimann says the campaign urges residents to engage in physical activity in a safe way.

In the most intense phase of the campaign, Fort Collins designated September as Shift Your Ride month. Fort Collins coordinated a marketing campaign, including a website (fcgov.com/bicycling/shiftyourridemonth), pandemic-safe events like “Bikeway Bingo,” and the dissemination of regular “Shift Tips” — short, shareable videos recorded by community members.

The city developed a pledge that called for the public to use a mode of transportation other than a car for one extra trip a week. Hundreds of people signed.

The public-health initiative was just part of Fort Collins’ bike-friendly push. The city also added wayfinding signs and pavement markings.

About \$14,000 of the grant was devoted to signs, while the rest went to stenciling on bike paths and marketing, Heimann says. One hundred twenty six permanent bicycle wayfinding signs were installed, as well as

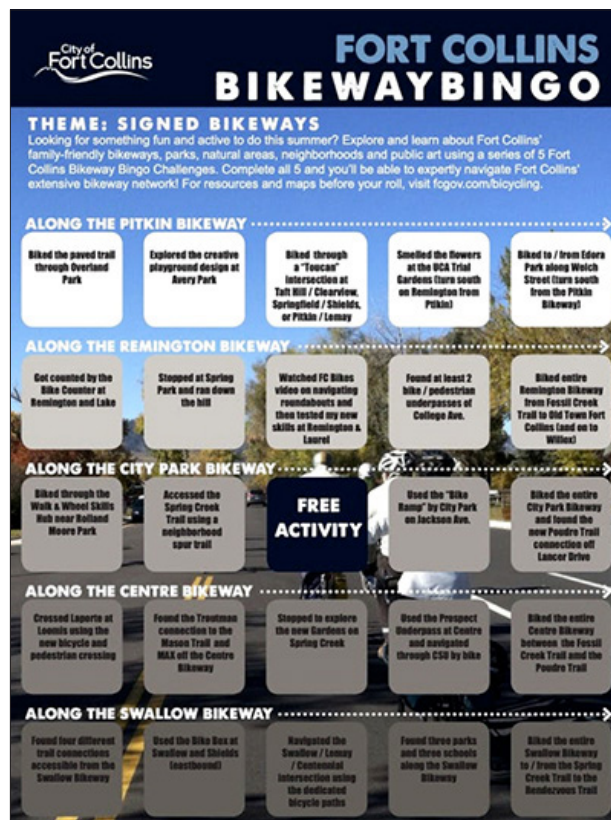
temporary pavement stencils to fill in gaps across the city’s bike network.

Using the grant funding, Fort Collins was also able to provide permanent, dual-language wayfinding signs to improve access for the city’s Spanish speakers.

“Before, our signs were definitely spaced too far apart for it to really seem like a truly cohesive network,” Heimann says. “The stencils were a low-cost, innovative solution that allowed us to pilot something with the intention of possibly scaling it up in the future.”

Not only did the low price tag of water-based paint allow the city to gauge the public response before committing to permanent changes, but the bright neon green color helped generate awareness for the existing network among bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers.

Contact: Nick Heimann, City of Fort Collins, 970-416-2628. **DIX**



Three ways to offer more shade downtown

The summer kicked off with triple-digit temperatures in the Pacific Northwest. It was a record heat wave in an area not accustomed to high mercury readings.

John Pattison, a content manager with Strong Towns saw the intense heat as a reminder of an unfortunate reality: There's just not enough shade in many cities, and certainly not in the poorest parts of cities.

His conclusion is backed by a new analysis that quantifies how unequal tree cover is in the U.S.: Neighborhoods where most residents are people of color have, on average, 33 percent less tree canopy than majority-white communities, according to data from the Tree Equity Score map (treeequityscore.org), a project of the conservation nonprofit American Forests.

The poorest neighborhoods, where 90 percent of residents live in poverty, have 41 percent less foliage than the wealthiest ones, the study finds.

Pattison offers three steps to making downtowns more livable during extreme weather:

1. Plant more street trees. The benefits of trees planted along streetscapes are obvious. They cool buildings, sidewalks, and roads. They boost property values, improve public health, and slow vehicle traffic.

2. Change how we build cities. Planting more trees sounds like a simple solution, and Los Angeles has stated a goal of planting 90,000 trees. However, the feel-good plan quickly runs afoul of city rules. For example, Los Angeles doesn't allow trees to be planted within 45 feet of driveways — making the 90,000 tree goal hard to achieve.

“So not only do we need more trees for our streets, we need better streets for our trees,” Pattison writes in Strong Towns.

3. Unleash the innovation of residents. “Trees take years if not decades to develop mature, shade-giving canopies,” Pattison writes. “Similarly, the process of incrementally transforming streets and neighborhoods will (and often should) take time. But people shouldn't have to suffer needlessly in the meanwhile.”

While we wait for trees to mature and new rules about tree-planting to be put in place, downtowns should allow for quicker solutions that make urban environments more livable during heat waves.

“From tarps and shade sails to makeshift bus shelters and plazas, creative, bottom-up interventions like these will be the key to surviving and even thriving in all kinds of weather,” he argues. **DIX**

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Housing shortage spurs conversion of downtown buildings to residential

The post-pandemic real estate market has seen many changes, three major trends among them: Demand for retail space has softened. Employers are wavering in their commitment to office space. And housing demand is on fire.

Those shifts explain why many downtowns are seeing developers repurpose commercial buildings for residential uses.

In Manchester, NH (est. pop. 112,658), several projects are in the works.

Red Oak Apartment Homes has turned

the Citizens Bank building into a residential development, and it bought another commercial building and plans to add dozens more apartments downtown, the *New Hampshire Union Leader* reports.

Other developers are tackling smaller sites downtown that will add dozens of residential units across three projects.

Mike Skelton, president and CEO of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, said there is a critical need for more housing options.

Units marketed to young professionals will add foot traffic downtown, “at a time when I think that is really important when our restaurants, entertainment businesses, and retail businesses are trying to bounce back,” he told the paper.

In Chicago, a historic office tower in the financial district has been converted to 214 apartments. Rents range from \$1,310 to \$4,916.

The property’s evolution illustrates that converting commercial uses to residential takes time. The developer announced the

plans in 2015 and bought the property in 2016. Leasing began this summer.

And in Allentown, PA (est. pop. 121,441), downtown’s largest developer is moving forward with more apartment projects. The developer, City Center, has developed 14 apartment projects totaling more than 1,500 units.

“As fast as we’re building them, we’re leasing them,” City Center President J.B. Reilly told the Allentown Morning Call.

The strong demand for apartments has been a bright spot for a downtown that sees most office employees working from home.

Downtown leaders can expect to see more development of apartments, given an acute shortfall of housing units nationwide.

“The U.S. housing shortage is ... the result of more than a decade of severe underbuilding and underinvestment,” National Association of Realtors President Charlie Oppler said during a July event focusing on the housing shortage. “Reaching the necessary volume will require a major, long-term national commitment. **DIX**

ACCESS AND MOBILITY

Three strategies for helping micromobility programs achieve their promise

As electric scooters proliferate in downtowns throughout the nation, proponents see the vehicles as an important ingredient in any solution to gridlock and pollution. When paired with trains, buses, and trolleys, shared scooters offer a quick, convenient, eco-friendly way for commuters to travel the “last mile” to their destinations.

“These are transportation devices,” says Dominick Trybone, general manager of bikes and scooters at ride-sharing giant Lyft. “People are using scooters to complement public transit.”

Detractors, on the other hand, can’t quite get past the obvious downsides. As scooters show up on streets and sidewalks worldwide, it’s hard not to notice some issues.

The vehicles are favored by bar-hopping revelers and joy-riding teens. The scooters often are left in a heap on the sidewalk. And in cities that lack protected bike lanes — a description that applies to most downtowns — pedestrians complain about the threat posed by speeding scooters.

Safety has also been a hot topic. After three people died in Atlanta while riding

scooters after dark, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms issued an executive order banning scooter use between 9 p.m. and 4 a.m.

The growing pains have been evident as scooter programs have proceeded in fits and starts. After ramping up aggressively, Lime and Lyft pulled back by ceasing operations in some cities. Miami has shut down scooters three times — once after unregulated scooters flooded downtown streets, again during the coronavirus pandemic, and most recently in late 2020 and early 2021, amid complaints about underage riders, sloppy storage, and sidewalk riding.

“Scooters are controversial in every city where they launch,” says Leo Vera, co-founder and chief financial officer of Swiftmile, a provider of scooter-charging stations. “Half the people love ‘em, half the people hate ‘em.”

Transportation consultancy Kittelson & Associates offers some best practices for downtown leaders as they seek to build successful regulatory regimes for scooters:

Carefully weigh the launch. In Fort Lauderdale, FL, for instance, the city skipped a pilot program and went straight to a permanent regulatory scheme, Kittelson notes.

The upside? A permanent program appeals to operators, which invest hundreds of thou-

sands or even millions to bring scooters to a new market.

The downside? It’s not as easy to be nimble with a permanent program, or to adjust.

Miami learned one lesson from its pilot program: Too many operators can prove chaotic. While most cities launch by licensing just a handful of scooter companies, Miami allows an unlimited number of vendors. The city is in the process of paring back the number of scooter companies.

Be prepared for constant change.

Micromobility is such a new concept that the business is changing constantly. Just a couple years ago, dockless micromobility referred to bikes. Now, scooters have taken over as the more popular type of vehicle.

State laws also are in flux. In Pennsylvania, state law has banned electric scooters altogether.

Stress safety. Scooters can be hazardous both for riders and for pedestrians. That’s why downtown leaders must keep safety at the forefront of their discussions.

In Miami, funds from the scooter program are being used to create protected bike lanes that can be used by scooter riders. The idea is to move scooters off sidewalks by helping riders feel safe on the road. **DIX**

Matching funds boost downtown businesses

In California’s Stanislaus County, the Relief Across Downtown (RAD) gift card program is working to put more money in consumers’ hands and help local businesses get back on their feet.

The RAD Card is a digital gift card which may be used at participating downtown businesses. And it offers a real incentive to spend money locally. When consumers load their cards with \$50, \$75, or \$100, the amount is automatically doubled thanks to \$1,000,000 in funding from the county. The RAD Card

is available as an app in the App Store and Google Play.

The program was developed by the Downtown Modesto Partnership. It has expanded to 18 cities in two California counties. The RAD Card website notes that “businesses participating report that revenue is up to 80 percent attributable to RAD Card sales, a powerful revenue engine that benefits both consumers and businesses during these challenging times for our economy and public health.”

To learn more visit theradcard.com. **DIX**

Idea Exchange

Here's how Raleigh will spend some of its ARP money

The City of Raleigh, NC, anticipates receiving \$73.3 million in American Rescue Plan funds. A range of projects in the city center are expected to benefit from the windfall. These include:

- \$400,000 for improvements to downtown's City Plaza. This would include lighting and sound upgrades and added shade.
- \$250,000 for a downtown ice rink.
- \$250,000 for a downtown economic development study in partnership with the Downtown Raleigh Alliance.
- \$200,000 to support cultural events and activities downtown.

The *News & Observer* reports that the mayor also asked for funds for the Downtown Raleigh Alliance to provide additional downtown events and an additional social worker.

County takes lead in downtown revitalization

Pennsylvania's Perry County Economic Development Authority is working to revitalize the nine downtown areas within its borders. "As the economic development authority, we thought we could collaborate with these boroughs and bring resources to them that they otherwise would not have to get this accomplished," Michelle Jones,

program director for the EDA told ABC 27 News.

The EDA brought in planning firm Arnett Muldrow & Associates to assist in developing plans for each community. In many cases, the consultants said that there are simple solutions to restore pride in the community and improve the downtowns for the future. This includes such things as shade tree planting and restoration along downtown streets and in parks, public art projects such as murals, improved wayfinding and signage, and the use of flower planters to create unique downtown spaces. They also urged the communities to work with local businesses and residents to coordinate efforts.

With the plans in place, the EDA is working to secure grant funding to move projects forward.

Holiday event relocates, supports downtown

A decades old holiday event is moving to downtown Springfield, IL. The Memorial Medical Center Foundation's annual Festival of Trees will move from the Illinois State Fairgrounds to multiple locations downtown this winter. The medical center says that the goal is to "make the event more accessible to the public and support small local businesses that are still recovering from the pandemic."

The nine day event brings together local designers to decorate hundreds of trees, wreaths, and other displays including a gingerbread village. There are also rides

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Improving Tax Increment
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Urban Place Management

PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Food cart support, asphalt art among models of post-pandemic recovery efforts

In Madison, WI (est. pop. 259,673), a new program will provide a financial safety net for food cart operators doing business in public parks. In Fort Collins, CO (est. pop. 170,245), an initiative will sponsor asphalt art in neglected neighborhoods.

The two programs are among the winners of the latest round of pandemic-recovery grants from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO). The yearly awards provide short-term funding and technical assistance to

cities seeking to adapt streets in ways that help communities hit hard by COVID-19.

The program focuses on low-cost, quick-build design strategies, including bike lanes, bus lanes, slow streets, and outdoor dining areas.

In Madison, the number of licensed food carts downtown dropped to 57 this year from 67 last year. For 2020 and 2021, the city waived licensing fees, but vendors still must pay health department fees for the season that started April 15.

(Continued on page 3)

ATTRACTION

Five strategies downtowns are using to come back from the pandemic

In Greensboro, NC (est. pop. 296,725), shoppers who spent \$25 downtown this summer were eligible to win \$500 through a raffle. In Baltimore, downtown leaders developed a grant program to support black-owned businesses.

While such efforts were born in part of pandemic desperation, the wave of downtown initiatives reinforces the resilience of downtowns,

not to mention the crucial importance of city centers in communities everywhere.

Downtowns are still struggling to regain their pre-pandemic momentum. But the most dire predictions about downtowns have faded.

“The future for downtowns is bright,” says Jonathan Tinney principal at Stantec, a Toronto-based

(Continued on page 8)

TIF remains popular, but beware the pitfalls

In Fort Myers, FL (est. pop. 87,111), the city council recently voted to grant \$11 million in tax-increment financing (TIF) to the developer of a downtown project with 274 apartment units and 467 parking spaces.

In Kalispell, MT (est. pop. 23,241), the city is considering TIF money for a proposed downtown hotel with 79 rooms and 165 parking spaces.

In Portland, ME (est. pop. 66,218), TIF is being contemplated to fund affordable housing and climate resilience.

As these projects show, TIF is a common tool for cities to fund economic development. Many argue that improvements made under the program “pay for themselves.” That is, city leaders assume that TIF will spur new development, increase property values, and create new tax revenue that would not have existed otherwise. The incremental tax revenue can be used for public infrastructure or to compensate private developers for their investments.

To many local officials, TIFs seem like “free money,” says David Merriman, an economist at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a leading expert on TIF.

“It’s a less painful way of subsidizing economic development than straight-out providing cash to the developer,” Merriman said on a podcast hosted by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. However he notes, “TIF is a tool, and it can be used appropriately, or misused.”

Some pitfalls to consider when proposing a TIF project for your downtown:

TIF might hamper your city’s budget flexibility. TIF can make cities’ financial decisions less transparent by separating them from the normal budget process. In Chicago, some \$660 million — nearly

a third of the city’s property taxes — is directed to TIF districts. That makes public scrutiny of these funds more difficult, and it prevents elected officials from re-prioritizing spending.


TIF districts can redirect money away from schools. Parents and teachers aren’t always keen on new property value being shielded from taxes. Chicago has addressed this issue with a new breed of “transportation TIF” designed just for areas within a quarter mile of public transit train stations. “It doesn’t take money from schools, and it’s used exclusively to shore up the transportation system,” Merriman says.

TIF has fallen short of its goal of fixing blight. TIF is often proposed as a tactic to turn around derelict areas, says Merriman. However, the most economically neglected areas tend to be the least attractive to private developers. And in many cases where developers are drawn to struggling neighborhoods, TIF intensifies gentrification.

The reality is that addressing blight requires a wide array of policies. “Very often, TIF alone won’t do it,” Merriman says.

TIF doesn’t work economic miracles. TIF can attract investment to neglected areas. But beware predictions that TIF will single-handedly reshape your downtown economy.

“They generally haven’t performed really well,” Merriman says. “There could be a place for these, but fundamentally what best helps economic development is to have a well-functioning property tax system, a well-functioning system of public services, and to really have a viable plan for how your economy is going to go forward.”

Contact: David Merriman, University of Illinois at Chicago, 312-413-3375. 

“TIF is a tool, and it can be used appropriately, or misused.”



DowntownDevelopment.com

For more from David Merriman on **Tax Increment Financing**, go to DowntownDevelopment.com and click on **“Web Extras.”**

Food cart support, asphalt art among models of post-pandemic recovery efforts — *Continued from page 1*

The NACTO grant aims to keep food carts afloat. The vendors include purveyors of pasta, empanadas, tacos, Indonesian barbecue, and Peruvian fare.

While most food carts do business in downtown areas such as State Street Mall and Capitol Square, the new program aims to include city parks.

During the pandemic, diners and entrepreneurs grew more interested in eating outdoors instead of dining inside.

“Food carts are a natural alternative,” says Meghan Blake-Horst, the city of Madison’s street vending coordinator. “People who might have been looking for a business were thinking about food carts, or restaurants were thinking of food carts.”

As part of the Carts in Parks program, vendors will be assigned to specific locations at 20 parks throughout the city.

In one generous subsidy, Madison’s program includes a “guaranteed sales program.” City officials and vendors will establish a break-even figure. If the food cart fails to generate enough revenue to break even, the city will help cover its operating costs.

As of mid-August, the city had yet to reimburse food cart operators for shortfalls. But Blake-Horst fully expects some operators to be in the red.

“We will be issuing some checks, I’m sure,” Blake-Horst says.

Food carts were already allowed to do business at city parks, but the pilot program aims to make the process easier and more predictable, while also waiving the \$275 daily fees for operating in parks.

“If you compound \$275 a day, that could get very cost-prohibitive,” Blake-Horst says.

Madison’s Latino Chamber of Commerce is part of the initiative. The pilot program launched in late July and was scheduled to continue through fall or winter, depending on the program’s success.

Other winners of NACTO grants are:

Lake-to-Lake Public Space, Baltimore.

This project is run by the Baltimore Department of Transportation in partnership with Black People Ride Bikes, Bikemore, and Graham Projects. The effort addresses unsafe conditions for cyclists and pedestrians on major arterial roads in Black communities.

The department of transportation will implement traffic calming measures and right-of-way art improvements at the main bicycle and pedestrian access points.

With traffic calming in place, the partners will host events to celebrate the improvements, and to kick off engagement about right-of-way art and longer-term plans.

Jazz Alley: Recovery & Celebration in the Historic Five Points Neighborhood, Denver.

Denver’s Five Points community was the city’s first mostly African-American neighborhood, and one that played an important role in the history of jazz. But during the pandemic, decades of redlining and disinvestment translated to disproportionate COVID-19 infection rates and significant drops in sales by local businesses.

Supported by the Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, the newly founded Five Points Business Improvement District will take the lead in converting one neighborhood street into a Temporary Outdoor Expansion area where local minority and immigrant-owned businesses can create patio spaces to accelerate their economic recovery. In another use of the freshly available street space, Denver Health will establish a mobile coronavirus vaccination site.

The Paint Pot, Fort Collins. The City of Fort Collins is developing a community-driven asphalt art program that lets local creators propose designs and locations for installation.

The NACTO grant will be used to establish a “Paint Pot” to pay for materials and labor associated with designing, installing, and maintaining asphalt art projects in low-

income neighborhoods. The project also includes a contract with Bike Fort Collins to support cycling in historically marginalized and underrepresented communities.

Safe Routes to School Streets, Los Angeles. As students returned to classrooms in August, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) focused on providing safe bicycle and pedestrian access to schools in two communities hit hard by the pandemic. In partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles Walks, LADOT's Safe Routes to School team worked to create temporary zones for pedestrians and bicycles during drop-off and pick-up times at the main entrances of schools.

Little Earth Engagement and Demonstration Project, Minneapolis. In 2020, the Little Earth neighborhood experienced increases in crime, speeding, and civil unrest following the death of George Floyd. To deter speeding, community members from the Little Earth of United Tribes, a Native American housing community, implemented their own traffic calming measures.

The City of Minneapolis, in partnership with the Little Earth Residents Association, will use the NACTO grant to develop a transportation study and engagement plan for permanent changes. The team will work together to test temporary demonstration projects, such as street art reflective of indigenous culture.

Parking Spaces to People Places, Portland, OR. In East Portland, infrastructure challenges have translated to high-traffic, high-fatality streets. A study yielded recommendations for increased community involvement in city planning and permitting processes, and an opportunity to activate and repurpose parking lot spaces.

With the NACTO grant, the Portland Bureau of Transportation and the Rosewood Initiative will convert a parking lot into a summer food market for the Black Food Sov-

ereignty Coalition. The groups will lead the project and encourage local businesses and vendors to participate.

Safe Passage Park, San Francisco. San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, where people of color and immigrants make up more than two-thirds of the population, was hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and saw a sharp increase in the number of homeless people setting up tents along already-crowded sidewalks.

To allow space for social distancing, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency expanded pedestrian space into the parking lane along Turk Street. Now, the city and the Tenderloin Community Benefit District will enhance the Safe Passage Park Project to provide community programming and resources to people living in the area. The effort also will expand the sidewalk to improve pedestrian safety.

Reimagining Little Brook Stay Healthy Street, Seattle. Responding to community requests, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and the Lake City Collective created a Stay Healthy Street in densely populated Lake City in 2020. Residents of the nearby Little Brook neighborhood reported that they'd prefer to have more open space in their own community so they could avoid crossing major streets to access open space.

Based on this feedback, SDOT will use the NACTO funding to extend the pilot and to add more space for outdoor recreation. This will include play equipment, a community-designed and painted street mural, and programming for students outside of school hours.

A Civic Plaza for All, Washington, DC. The Columbia Heights Civic Plaza has been a critical gathering place for the homeless during the pandemic. Partnering with community development nonprofit District Bridges, the District Department of Transportation will revitalize the plaza.

Plans include a shared outdoor dining area, open space for free outdoor events, and a bike maintenance program at the plaza. The goal is to transform the plaza into a vibrant

central meeting place for residents and an expansion location for restaurants.

Contact: Meghan Blake-Horst, City of Madison, 608-261-9171. **DIX**

ECONOMIC GROWTH

City encourages home-based businesses in downtown neighborhood

New zoning rules in Lincoln, NE (est. pop. 289,096), aim to encourage home-based businesses in the South of Downtown neighborhood.

Shawn Ryba, executive director of the South of Downtown Community Development Organization, says the changes are designed to throw an economic lifeline to a low-income neighborhood where 94 percent of residents are renters rather than homeowners.

He's unsure exactly what types of businesses might pop up, but he says restaurants and hair salons are obvious possibilities.

"It's an experiment," Ryba says.

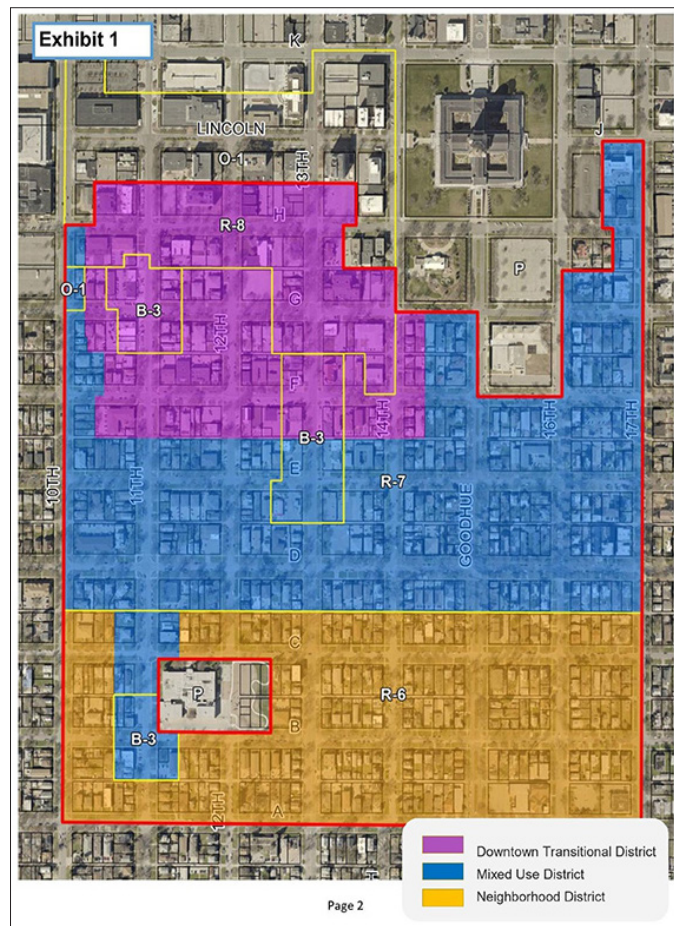
The changes are part of a South of Downtown Redevelopment and Strategic Plan approved by the council earlier this year, the culmination of a process that began three years ago and sought input from residents about what they wanted to see in their neighborhood.

The new rules are part of a planned unit development. The new designation keeps the underlying zoning districts in place while allowing flexibility for what could be new and creative ways to use property in the area, the *Lincoln Journal-Star* reports.

The most popular uses identified by neighborhood residents included urban gardens, restaurants, cafes and coffee shops, food trucks, small shops and boutique retail, art galleries and studios, and neighborhood support services.

In one early result from the zoning change, Ryba says, a small nonprofit doing social work outreach rented a basement apartment.

The planned unit development delineates three zones where there would be different development goals.



- A downtown transition area would allow more intense commercial uses such as restaurants, retail stores, banks, and community theaters or event centers.

- A mixed-use area would prioritize less-intense commercial uses such as offices or personal service providers and promote in-home businesses.

- A neighborhood area would be almost exclusively residential, with some home occupation businesses allowed along with

community gardens.

The plan prohibits certain types of businesses, such as tobacco specialty stores, advance paycheck businesses, and pawn shops. Car repair stores and convenience stores with gas stations are also out — although if they are already operating, those types of businesses can remain in the neighborhood.

Contact: Shawn Ryba, South of Downtown Community Development Organization, 402-416-8686. **DIX**

ATTRACTION

Want to pitch your downtown to visitors? Tap into the wisdom of locals

Post-pandemic travel has come roaring back, and that means downtowns again have an opportunity to pitch themselves as a destination to visitors.

Roger Brooks, head of the Destination Development Association, offers a simple way to market your downtown: Rely on local knowledge to create itineraries that will appeal to out-of-towners.

Brooks suggests polling residents to get insider insights into your downtown. One quick way to gather results: Visit a regular meeting of the chamber of commerce, Rotary Club, or Kiwanis.

No need to build a fancy online polling tool: old-fashioned paper works fine. Provide local residents with a blank sheet of paper and ask them to answer seven questions about your city center:

1. Where can my significant other and I find the most enjoyable dining experience? Name the place AND the dish.
2. Where should we go for some nightlife?

3. Where can we get gourmet items for a picnic?
4. What is the one thing we MUST do while we are here?
5. Where can I get the best dessert? Name the place AND the dish.
6. Where can I take an iconic picture that conveys that I was really there?
7. Where can I get something locally made, such as a gift or souvenir?

Then ask the participants to number them in order of which activity to do first, second, and third. You can even ask for volunteers to share their ordered list during your public gathering.

Collect the submissions and pick the best ones. You now have great itineraries, based on recommendations from local residents, to help others explore your destination.

This activity generates meaningful content for your website, social media, and other destination marketing materials.

Contact: Roger Brooks, Destination Development Association, 206-241-4770. **DIX**

Hefty parking tickets? The higher, the better, some say

The cost of overstaying a meter is on the rise. In Chicago, a parking ticket costs \$60. In Los Angeles, it's \$73. San Francisco exacts a fee of \$83. And in Phoenix — an otherwise car-friendly city that charges some of the steepest rates — overstaying a meter will set you back \$84.

Motorists and merchants hate aggressive enforcement of meters and steep tickets. But transportation planners argue that hefty fines issued by an army of eagle-eyed workers are the best thing for downtowns.

After all, curbs are a scarce commodity. If a few people take up prime spots all day, fewer spaces are available for customers.

The goal of parking enforcement should be to encourage turnover, says Chrissy Mancini Nichols, national director of curb management at Walker Consultants.

"A city can create turnover through time limits, pricing, or both, but without enforcement, it is unlikely either will work," Mancini Nichols writes in *Planning magazine*. "Enforcement is less about revenue and more about efficiently allocating a scarce resource."

The most efficient parking programs employ an assertive staff who take the task seriously.

"Fines should be set at an amount that encourages compliance," Mancini Nichols says.

She points to fines for parking at an expired parking meter in various cities: Annapolis, MD, charges \$40, Honolulu collects \$50, and Trenton, NJ, charges \$70. (Fees can range much higher for infractions such as parking in spots reserved for the handicapped or blocking loading zones.)

In all of those examples, the fines are steep enough that motorists won't take a chance on overstaying the meter.

Walker Consultants says there's a science behind setting fees. The company

recommends a penalty equal to at least 1.5 times the rate for the daily maximum price. For example, using an on-street rate of \$2 per hour with 10 hours of operation, the amount of the parking fine would be \$30.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) has a similar explanation of its \$83 fines for motorists who leave their cars in street-sweeping zones outside of permitted hours. SFMTA Chief Spokesperson Erica Kato tells the *San Francisco Chronicle* that the city's parking tickets are steep because they reflect the region's eye-watering cost of living.

And if parking tickets weren't expensive, they wouldn't disincentivize driving culture and bad road behavior, she says.

"The purpose of parking citations are to discourage behaviors and actions that interfere with the goals of the SFMTA, such

"Fines should be set at an amount that encourages compliance."

Downtowns try warnings, free parking

During the first wave of the pandemic, many downtowns offered free parking or stopped enforcing fines. In Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, downtown visitors got a one-time break on a parking ticket this summer. Instead of a fine, they were issued a warning.

Similarly, in the City of Auburn, NY, a new parking initiative includes two hours of free on-street parking and a courtesy ticket program. Parking enforcement will issue a courtesy ticket rather than a parking ticket if the motorist has not received a parking meter violation ticket in the past six months. The program runs through the end of the year.

In Greensboro, NC, limited free parking is also in effect through the end of the year. More than 20 downtown businesses are offering free two-hour parking passes thanks to a new program from the city's transportation department. The parking passes are good from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays at any of the city's five downtown parking decks.

as reducing congestion, increasing pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and cleaning streets,” Kato says. “Because San Francisco is a Transit-First city, and to encourage non-vehicle modes, the SFMTA set its vehicle fines higher than other cities that depend on cars as the primary form of transportation.”

San Francisco offers a workaround for motorists who can’t afford to pay. The city’s community service option lets motorists work off their fines.

For every hour of community service completed, a driver is credited \$17 toward a citation. Drivers can work off a maximum of \$1,000 in fines each year.

In San Diego and Los Angeles, the cities offer similar programs, primarily aimed at

giving a break to homeless people who live in their vehicles.

San Francisco says parking violations generate about \$90 million a year in revenue.

But Mancini Nichols stresses that aggressive enforcement of parking meter violations is about more than collecting revenue via parking tickets. The ultimate goal, she argues, is to properly value curbs. In the post-pandemic era, they’re not just an afterthought but a place in demand by everyone from delivery drivers and ride-share operators to restaurant patrons and museum goers.

Contact: Chrissy Mancini Nichols, Walker Consultants, 800-860-1579. **DIX**

Five strategies downtowns are using to come back from the pandemic — Continued from page 1

design firm. “In some ways, the pandemic highlighted things downtowns can offer — public spaces, unique retail, and a place to gather.”

Tinney is one of the authors of a new study from the International Downtown Association (IDA) that reports on how cities are recovering from the pandemic. The places experiencing the strongest comebacks are pursuing strategies aimed at making downtowns relevant today and in the future.

Strategy 1: Embrace open spaces and outdoor gatherings. From outdoor dining to outdoor movies and concerts, many downtowns adapted to a new reality.

“Obviously, COVID drove us outside, and our downtowns responded and were able to create these really vibrant outdoor spaces that were able to bring people together,” Tinney says.

During the pandemic, downtowns made physical improvements to ensure better access for pick up and drop off, to more safely separate dining areas from passing vehicles, and to encourage long-term use of public transportation given reduced on-street parking. On the regulatory side, many localities made it easier to apply for permits to repurpose sidewalks or parking spaces.

In another shift, many states and cities also lifted alcohol restrictions to allow for carryout cocktails, and to legalize consumption of alcohol in public spaces. As of May, 11 states had passed permanent legislation for selling drinks to go, and more are considering permanent legislation, IDA says.

Strategy 2: Close streets to cars, open them to pedestrians. The Open Streets Project (openstreetsproject.org) closes streets to cars so the spaces can be devoted to walking, dining, and other uses. Before the pandemic, these programs typically

happened in cities once a year along one or two select routes. Now, the popularity of open streets programs has expanded widely. The concept encompasses expanded access for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as new seating areas and support for retailers and restaurants that can use the expanded space for their businesses.

Of course, closing streets and eliminating parking spaces isn't an easy sell to downtown merchants. But Tinney says open streets should become a permanent feature of downtowns.

"Businesses feel very strongly that a significant portion of their business comes from drive-up traffic," Tinney says. "What has come out of the pandemic is that a number of businesses get a significant amount of walk-up and bike-up traffic."

Strategy 3: Think local, shop local, visit local. Many of the places that have had success have focused on regional tourism and shop-local campaigns, Tinney says.

One popular — and effective — tactic was using gift cards accompanied by bonus dollars or other enticements to draw people downtown, spur buying, and support the local economy.

Gift cards aren't the only gambit, of course. In North Carolina, Downtown Greensboro promoted a Downtown Summer Passport program in 2021. Shoppers who showed a receipt for purchases of \$25 or more at any downtown business were entered into a weekly raffle to win \$500.

The Montclair Center BID in Montclair, NJ (est. pop. 38,427), sponsors Fresh Air Montclair, which features local artists who create exhibitions that support positive messages.

And in downtown Tempe, AZ (est. pop. 195,816), home to the hiking trail on "A" Mountain, the Downtown Tempe Association hosted the "A" Mountain Challenge, which encouraged residents to climb "A" Mountain multiple times, record and share their progress, and win prizes from downtown Tempe businesses.

Strategy 4: Encourage workers and employers to return to offices. Many downtown office buildings remain nearly empty, and that poses a serious challenge to such local merchants as restaurants serving downtown workers, bars hosting happy hours, and dry cleaners and others serving commuters.

"Certainly during the pandemic, we did see a decline in the number of people downtown, driven primarily by the closure of offices," Tinney says.

Urging workers to return is a bit tricky. After all, many white-collar workers learned that they can be just as productive from home as from the office. And downtowns have limited leverage on this front.

"There's no direct control there," Tinney says. "There's really a series of incentives."

In one example of incentives, the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal launched a multi-pronged "I love working downtown" campaign. The initiative was bankrolled by C\$8.5 million (U.S.\$7 million) from the Quebec government.

The campaign is focused on bringing workers back downtown via creative solutions for hybrid and physically distanced workspaces, deploying efforts to attract workers and visitors, and strengthening the business sector downtown, including support for retail and restaurants.

In another example, Denver's Ready campaign was organized by the Downtown Denver Partnership, city and county authorities, and COVIDCheck Colorado. The program includes materials for business leaders such as tips for communicating with employees, sample workplace protocols, and a model plan for returning to the office.

And in Indianapolis, Downtown Indy distributed "Welcome Back to Work Kits" filled with gifts from local businesses.

One outside-the-box approach came from the Rosslyn Business Improvement District in Arlington, VA (est. pop. 236,842). Downtown leaders there set up an outdoor office area. Desk space was free, but workers had to reserve a spot in advance.



DowntownDevelopment.com

To see a [video promoting Rosslyn's outdoor office](#), go to DowntownDevelopment.com and click on ["Web Extras."](#)



DowntownDevelopment.com

To see **Building on Recovery for Urban Place Management** from the International Downtown Association and Stantec, go to DowntownDevelopment.com and click on **"Web Extras."**

Strategy 5: Promote equity. During 2020, the number of new business startups in the U.S. rose 24 percent compared to 2019. Researchers found that the ZIP codes with the greatest increase in business registrations were areas where black residents make up more than half of the population.

Pre-COVID data showed that the U.S. counted just three black-owned businesses per 1,000 black residents, compared to 20 white-owned businesses per 1,000 white residents.

To help address this inequity — and to fill vacant storefronts — downtown organizations are developing programs that focus specifically on providing support for black-owned and other minority-owned small businesses.

The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore's BOOST (Black-Owned and Operated Storefront Tenancy) program will support five black-owned businesses with up to \$50,000 in grants for build-out and operations, affordable leases at downtown storefronts, and additional technical assistance.

Baltimore's program is supported by a wide-ranging partnership, including the software company Fearless, Baltimore Gas & Electric, M&T Bank, the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development, Baltimore Development Corp., and downtown property owners.

Contact: Jonathan Tinney, Stantec, 437-242-8396. **DIX**

CLEAN AND SAFE

City makes investment in homeless shelter

City officials in Oxnard, CA (est. pop. 208,875), searched extensively for a site to build the city's second homeless shelter.

The city examined 21 possible sites, but every one of those properties met with resistance from local residents. Eventually, the city approved construction of a five-story, \$34 million facility on a city-owned lot across the street from City Hall and the main library.

"I'm still not fully convinced this is the best location," Councilman Bryan MacDonald said before the vote, according to the *Ventura County Star*, "but it's something we need to get done."

The new downtown center will have 110 overnight shelter beds and provide more permanent housing with 56 apartments for those ready to transition to a more stable life, the city says.

Social and healthcare services will also be provided. Those staying overnight in the ground-floor shelter will have access to help with medical and behavioral problems. Apartment residents upstairs will have additional educational and job training resources, city officials said.

The development will be built on 22,000 square feet of city property, replacing an old unoccupied city office building and parking lot.

Shelter supporter Tom Cady, director of the Oxnard Chamber of Commerce board, pointed to the project's proximity to public transportation and said the city will need additional similar facilities.

"After you finish with this one, the need to deal with an additional 400 homeless or more in our community is still going to be there," Cady said.

The project's developer, Community Development Partners Developers, LLC, has applied for government and private grants to help finance the construction.

The city's contribution includes \$1.5 million in low-income housing funds and the city's property, appraised at \$840,000, which will be donated to a trust fund. Private, state, and federal sources will provide the balance. Oxnard will maintain the right to regain its donated property if the trust dissolves, officials said. **DIX**

Idea Exchange

City considers congestion pricing downtown

The San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) is exploring congestion pricing for parts of downtown in an effort to ease traffic flow.

The authority is considering cordon pricing, which charges drivers a flat rate every time they enter or exit a certain zone of the city. Cordon pricing has been shown to reduce the number of vehicles driving into a zone as well as through traffic.

The SFCTA is eyeing two possible zones for congestion pricing during morning and evening rush hours. The proposal also includes an exemption for the lowest-income drivers, and possible exemptions for people with disabilities and those who live inside the zones.

To learn more about downtown congestion pricing in San Francisco, visit sfcta.org/downtown.

Re-imagining holiday events

This December, the traditional holiday parade in downtown West Chester, PA, will be replaced with a new tradition: a month-long celebration on the streets of the city center.

The change was made in part due to the year-long timeline required to plan the parade. With uncertainty related to the pandemic, the chamber had to be nimble this year. The result is a new, more flexible event designed to attract visitors from around the region and to support local businesses.

Each weekend will feature new outdoor holiday activities, along with

live music, shopping, Santa's arrival on a fire truck, dining, and more.

American Rescue Plan fills vacant storefronts

A new statewide program aims to support Wisconsin cities by providing grants of \$10,000 to businesses moving into vacant commercial spaces.

The new Wisconsin Tomorrow — Main Street Bounceback Grant program is funded with monies received through the American Rescue Plan.

Nine regional economic development organizations are administering the funds. They will oversee two rounds of funding, each offering a total of \$4 million to eligible applicants, according to *The Cap Times*.

City and downtown leaders across the state are welcoming the support. Tiffany Kenney, executive director for Madison's Central Business Improvement District, hopes the grants will help fill the "unfortunate 46 vacancies" in her district. Put another way, she said, "it's 46 opportunities."

Movies under the stars

In August, the NoMa Business Improvement District in Washington D.C. brought back its free outdoor movie series. The mid-week event called CiNoMatic runs from August 25 through October 27.

The theme for this year's series is "Reignite Your Wanderlust." It

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was selected to allow audiences to experience the world through film after the lockdown imposed by the pandemic.

Movies begin at sunset. People are encouraged to arrive early with picnic dinners or to purchase food and drinks from on-site food trucks.

Citizens participate in street project design

The City of Kalamazoo, MI, is launching a project to calm traffic downtown and in two adjoining neighborhoods.

The goal is to “implement short-term, immediate improvements to reduce speeding, create streets that allow all users to travel safely and comfortably, support economic vitality by removing transportation challenges, and align streets with the character of the neighborhood,” according to a news release from the city.

Residents were encouraged to share their input at a series of in-person events throughout August, or to participate online. Participants were asked to prioritize intersections for pedestrian improvements and to share their thoughts on adding bike lanes and on-street parking.

The in-person events all included mapping activities and a survey along with one-of-a-kind activities such as neighborhood walking tours and a video storytelling booth. The video entries will be compiled into a short film to tell the story of resident’s experiences traveling on local streets.

City monitors waste, installs receptacles

The Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District, marked a new phase of its placemaking and beautification action plan with the installation of dog waste stations and cigarette disposal receptacles. The initiative seeks to keep streets and sidewalks clean while bringing attention to important quality of life issues in the Massachusetts city.

Data drove the decision to install the receptacles. Downtown ambassadors documented the types of waste found during cleaning operations, the areas most affected, and how often these issues needed to be addressed. The data showed that cigarette butts and dog waste were at the top of the list.

“It is often these small but important elements that are key to creating a safe and clean downtown neighborhood for all to enjoy,” says Evelyn Darling, executive director of the Downtown Worcester BID. “It is our hope that the installation of these receptacles will provide a convenience to those who live, work, and visit here while encouraging people to partake in a simple, neighborly act that will help all of us maintain the cleanliness of our streets and make great strides in improving the quality of life for all.”



Halloween event bounces back

After sponsors canceled the event in 2020, the Chillicothe, OH, Halloween Festival is back for three days in downtown’s Yoctangee Park.

The Ohio festival features merchandise vendors, food and drink, live entertainment, a costume contest, and family-friendly entertainment. There is also a popular

ghost walk with volunteer guides directing tours through haunted properties in the city center. But the highlight is clearly the Coffin Race. Local businesses, organizations, and other groups build and race coffins through the park as they vie for cash prizes, trophies, and bragging rights.

Coffin Race rules are at the event website chillicothehalloweenfestival.com DIX



Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

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ATTRACTION

Small downtown's dramatic turnaround illustrates power of authenticity

Back in the 2000s, there was little reason to visit downtown Sisters, OR (est. pop. 2,643). The main thoroughfare was a high-speed freight route, and there were few reasons for traffic to slow, or for visitors to stop.

The sidewalks were narrow and poorly maintained. And the mix of businesses was uninviting.

But Sisters has gone through a dramatic turnaround. Now, its charming little Western-themed city center wins accolades for its pedestrian-scale and quaint atmosphere.

The city is so charming that Roger Brooks, head of Destination Development International, says Sisters is one of the 10 best downtowns in the U.S.

"It's just a fairytale town," he says.

Even before the turnaround, Sisters had some natural advantages. First, it's in Central Oregon, a recreational hub that draws golfers, cyclists, and horseback riders for much of the year. During

(Continued on page 4)

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Downtown groups support tax break to convert old office buildings into housing

In an effort to breathe new life into downtown districts nationwide, two U.S. Senators and three Representatives introduced the Revitalizing Downtowns Act.

The bill — which is supported by the International Downtown Association and by three dozen smaller downtown organizations — was sponsored by Sens. Debbie Stabenow (D—MI) and Gary Peters (D—MI) and Reps. Jimmy Gomez (D—CA),

Dan Kildee (D—MI), and John Larson (D—CT). Proponents say the tax break would "replace vacancy with vibrancy."

The measure would create a federal tax credit to support the conversion of obsolete and excess office spaces into residential or mixed-use properties. Downtowns everywhere are suffering from the effects of remote work. With fewer Americans

(Continued on page 8)

Insights into successful pedestrian malls

Most cities that built pedestrian malls in the 1960s and 1970s quickly abandoned the experiments. Galveston, TX, Ashtabula, OH, and Fayetteville, NC, removed their failing pedestrian malls soon after installing them.

However, in some cities decades-old pedestrian malls continue to thrive. Downtowns in Boulder, CO, Charlottesville, VA, and New Orleans boast bustling pedestrian malls.

“Local officials can learn from an earlier generation of urban planners who faced a different sort of crisis.”

With “slow streets” and “open streets” drawing interest during the pandemic, the uneven performance of an earlier generation of pedestrian malls raises

an obvious question: Why do some pedestrian malls thrive while others struggle?

Three researchers from Cornell University tackled that topic in a study published in *The Journal of Urbanism*. Stephan Schmidt, an associate professor at Cornell’s College of Art, Architecture, and Planning, and Cornell graduate students Samantha Matuke and Wenzheng Li examined 125 pedestrian malls constructed after World War II.

Their post-mortem found that most pedestrian malls failed. Just 43 were still in place.

The pedestrian mall trend peaked in the 1960s and 1970s. During the building boom, more than 200 American cities closed streets to cars, Schmidt writes on Bloomberg CityLab.

“The trend was inspired by predecessors in European cities, but unlike their counterparts in Germany and Denmark, the American-style versions were seen as a means of revitalizing downtowns,” Schmidt writes. “The idea was to leverage the popularity of the suburban shopping mall by mimicking its layout and design; most offered ample parking, attractive features such as fountains, and a defined sense of enclosure.”

Government support for pedestrian malls took the form of tax incentives, zoning ordinances, and federal urban renewal funding. Washington pulled the plug on funding in 1974, and a long decline followed.

Pedestrian malls are more than just a footnote in the history of urban planning. The COVID-19 pandemic spurred a new boom in cities closing streets to vehicles to make room for outdoor dining and recreation.

Some cities plan to keep their newly created pedestrian malls in place; others expect to reopen streets to vehicles as the pandemic eases.

“Advocates for shared streets can point to the many benefits for small businesses, social interaction and individual well-being,” Schmidt writes. “However, commuters may balk at detours as traffic picks back up. Local officials can learn from an earlier generation of urban planners who faced a different sort of crisis.”

The Cornell researchers found four factors that are correlated with the success of a pedestrian mall.

1. A college campus helps. The researchers found that an increase in the median age of the city’s population by a year increased the risk of a pedestrian mall closure by about



Church Street Marketplace. Burlington, VT.

8 percent. Some of the surviving pedestrian malls are close to a college, which provides a constant stream of highly mobile residents. Examples include Boulder (home to the University of Colorado), Burlington (University of Vermont), Charlottesville (University of Virginia), and Ithaca, NY (Cornell University and Ithaca College).

2. Foot traffic is crucial. A college campus is just one source of pedestrian traffic. A beach or another destination can also make the difference. A pedestrian mall close to a beach was 77 percent more likely to still be open than one not near a beach. Two examples are the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, CA, and Lincoln Road in Miami Beach, FL. No beach nearby? Any major tourist destination can help. Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston and Jackson Square in New Orleans support pedestrian malls. A tourist attraction boosts a pedestrian mall's success rate by 5 percent.



Lincoln Road Mall. Miami Beach, FL.

3. Sprawl kills. Successful pedestrian malls depend on local population density. By contrast, low-density cities struggle to support pedestrian malls in particular and downtown districts in general. In Galveston and Yuma, AZ, pedestrian malls failed after they were unable to withstand suburban competition. The

researchers found that higher population density was correlated with surviving pedestrian malls.

4. Shorter pedestrian malls perform better than longer ones. The poster child for this phenomenon is the State Street Mall in Chicago. At 4,000 feet long, and built at a cost of \$17 million, this pedestrian mall felt desolate. The city finally reopened State Street to traffic in the mid-1990s. The researchers found that longer malls had a higher risk of closure than shorter malls. "Research has shown that people are more likely to walk shorter, more variegated distances," Schmidt writes. "Long, monotonous streets are not conducive to encouraging foot traffic."

Schmidt has also identified several common design elements among successful pedestrian malls. These include:

- *A sense of containment.* Buildings that are too tall or too short will undermine the feel of a pedestrian block. Ideally, the buildings at the entrance and exit of the mall will be three to four stories, creating a feeling of enclosure.

- *Ground-floor transparency.* Successful pedestrian malls have plenty of windows at street level. "As pedestrians walk the mall, their sense of depth is increased, their eye is drawn along the mall by window displays, and seasonal changes in these displays create an evolving experience of the mall," Schmidt writes.

- *Shade and shelter.* Protection from the elements, in the form awnings or tree cover, improves the appeal of a mall.

- *Seating and streetscapes.* Bustling pedestrian areas have a variety of seating options. Planters, vegetation, and cobblestone pavers can add visual interest and make the mall feel more welcoming.

- *Safety features.* Thriving malls have plenty of lighting, along with sturdy bollards at entry and exit points.

Contact: Stephan Schmidt, Cornell University College of Architecture, Art, and Planning, 607-254-4846. **DIX**

Small downtown's dramatic turnaround illustrates power of authenticity — Continued from page 1

the winter, the region's skiing and other snow sports also draw visitors.

Even if its streetscape was in disrepair, Sisters had good bones. Its downtown layout was pedestrian-friendly, and the scale of its existing buildings — some of them dating to the 1880s

— was perfect, says Brooks.

"It was just a hodgepodge mix of businesses."

Still, city leaders acknowledged that its main thoroughfare, Cascade Avenue, needed a redesign. Sidewalks were narrow and pitted. Crosswalks were worn. Stormwater drainage didn't drain. The pavement and curbs were falling apart.

SERA Architects worked with the city, the state, local residents, and merchants to redesign a six-block section of the avenue. Sisters adopted its new streetscape plan in 2011.

The redesign highlights the downtown's Western roots by using natural soft woods and forged metal. Landscaping includes white-bark trees and wildflowers.

The city installed new concrete paver sidewalks, ADA-accessible curb ramps, curb extensions, bio-retention stormwater facilities, pedestrian-scale street lighting, street trees, benches, drinking fountains, bicycle parking, and wayfinding signs.

Sidewalks that had been just four to six feet wide were expanded to eight feet.

The streetscape project, completed in 2012, cost \$4.5 million. Funding came from state and federal grants to develop alternative cityscapes. The six-block section of Cascade Avenue was completely reconstructed and open to traffic within two and a half months to minimize the impact on businesses.

In addition to the physical improvements, Sisters needed to reimagine the makeup of downtown tenants.

"It was just a hodgepodge mix of businesses," Brooks says. The downtown had grown organically, but with a new vision, businesses were recruited and facades were updated to fit the Western theme.

Bronco Billy's Ranch Grill & Saloon, in an old brick building, is emblematic of the new theme. Sisters Saloon is another example.

Merchants have embraced the new focus of downtown, Brooks says.

Contact: Roger Brooks, Destination Development Association, 206-241-4770. **DIX**



Annual event on the streets of downtown

Each year, the Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show descends on downtown Sisters, OR. The quaint western-themed town is the backdrop to more than 1,300 handmade quilts from fiber artists around the world. Billed as the largest outdoor quilt show in the world, more than 10,000 visitors view the exhibits, attend classes, and shop the downtown in just one day.

When the first event was held 45 years ago, there was a single quilt shop in Sisters. Today, Central Oregon boasts a half-dozen related businesses and a dozen active quilt guilds. The Oregon Arts Commission estimates the annual economic impact from the event at \$1.7 million, the equivalent of 26 jobs in the Sisters area.

Pedestrianism, charm among the common themes in Top 10 downtown destinations

Roger Brooks, head of the Destination Development Association, has visited thousands of downtowns and worked with many to improve their appeal to visitors.

He's an inveterate cheerleader for quaint downtowns, and Brooks has chosen his 10 favorite destinations. Sisters, OR, takes the top spot with the caveat that Brooks groups it in with the Central Oregon destinations of Bend and Sunriver.

Other top choices include Nantucket, MA (est. pop. 7,984), with its cobblestone streets; Shipshewana, IN (est. pop. 946), an Amish and Mennonite enclave; Cannon Beach, OR (est. pop.

1,491); and Blowing Rock, NC (est. pop. 1,136). Savannah, GA (est. pop. 144,457), is the rare outlier on his list.

None of Brooks' picks are large cities, and all share common themes and replicable traits. First, all of Brooks' Top 10 pay close attention to streetscaping, facades, and other visual elements in the public realm. Public restrooms and public seating areas are also common.

"Benches are incredibly important," he says.

In another unifying thread, all of his favorite places offer a sense of intimacy, and an ambience dominated by pedestrians rather than vehicles.

"We want cities that are about people and not cars," Brooks says.

And all have a mix of businesses — shops, restaurants, wineries, and microbreweries, along with art galleries or museums to create what Brooks calls "cultural depth."

Many of Brooks' favorite downtowns also happen to be near stunning beaches or beautiful mountains, but Brooks says you shouldn't let your geographic limits deter you from thinking big.

"A picturesque setting does not have to be in the mountains or on the coast or on a lake or a river," Brooks says. "You can be out in the plains and create a great setting."

TRENDS

U.S. population grows more dense

For many downtowns, feet on the street are a crucial factor, a variable that determines the viability of everything from stores and restaurants to cultural attractions to public transit.

There's good news on that front, according to newly released data from the 2020 census. U.S. population density increased in the past decade after falling in the previous two decades, a sign of rapid growth in the most heavily populated parts of large counties, says Jed Kolko, chief economist at Indeed, the jobs site.

While the nation's fastest-growing areas were suburbs of such cities as Houston and Raleigh, NC, "many downtowns and central districts grew rapidly, too, like Atlanta's Midtown and the neighborhoods near the Amazon headquarters in Seattle," Kolko writes in the *New York Times*. "Americans were more likely to live in the highest-density urban neighborhoods in 2020 than in 1990, 2000, or 2010."

The densest metros include big cities with large numbers of high-rises, such as Honolulu, San Francisco, Chicago, and New

York. Manhattan was home to nearly 72,000 people per square mile, according to the 2019 American Community Survey.

“But some car-dependent metros are surprisingly dense, too,” Kolko writes. “Miami, San Jose, CA, and Las Vegas are among the Top 15. Very few people in those metros live in low-density neighborhoods.”

Kolko cautions against expecting the density trend to continue in the 2020s.

San Francisco and New York grew less dense in 2020, a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

And the rise of remote work could reverse the past decades trend toward denser living near downtowns.

“The pandemic and subsequent increase in remote work make it less likely that the 2020s will experience a rise in density similar to the 2010s,” Kolko writes. **DIX**

ACCESS AND MOBILITY

City's big bet on roundabouts pays off with fewer accidents

Hoping to reduce severe accidents involving pedestrians and cyclists, many downtowns have tested traffic roundabouts as an alternative to intersections with traffic signals.

One city isn't experimenting — it's going all in. During the past two decades, Carmel,

IN (est. pop. 101,918), has invested heavily in a plan to replace traffic lights with roundabouts. After years of work, the Indianapolis suburb boasts 140 roundabouts and just 15 stoplights, a city spokesman says.

Carmel's longtime mayor, Jim Brainard, has been a vocal proponent of traffic roundabouts. The roadway features allow traffic to move more fluidly and safely than they would through standard signalized intersections, he says.

“We have built more roundabouts than any other city in the United States or North America and perhaps the world,” Brainard tells Freakonomics Radio.

Of course, few cities have proven so willing to ditch traffic lights for roundabouts. Perhaps a rethinking is in order, according to a new analysis of Carmel's experiment.

For a recently released study, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety analyzed Carmel's roundabouts and determined the traffic circles do indeed work.

“Overall, Carmel's roundabouts have improved safety by reducing injury crashes by 47 percent,” the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reports. “The results are consistent with the findings of past research

Roundabouts as public art hubs

For Carmel, IN, roundabouts aren't just utilitarian features. They're also an opportunity to beautify the city.

One roundabout near Main Street includes a fountain and manicured hedges. In 2016, the UK Roundabout Appreciation Society named that traffic circle the most beautiful in the world.

“Roundabouts are not only functional for moving traffic and keeping motorists safe,” Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard said at the time. “They are also opportunities to enhance the beauty of our daily drives, lift the spirits of our residents, and hopefully inspire all of us to pay attention to elements of design and architecture no matter what we create.”

Keeping with that theme, Carmel has invested a sizable sum in public art in its roundabouts. *The Indianapolis Star* reports that since 2011, Carmel has spent \$2.4 million on 12 sculptures installed at roundabouts.

in the United States and internationally that roundabouts are successful in reducing injury crashes.”

The researchers found differences for single-lane and multilane roundabouts. Carmel’s single-lane roundabouts experienced decreases of 51 percent in total crashes and 50 percent in property-damage-only crashes, and a decrease of 50 percent each in injury crashes.

Multilane roundabout conversions were associated with increases in total crashes but decreases in injury crashes, none of which were statistically significant.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety’s findings echo other observations about multilane roundabouts. There’s just more going on in these more complicated roundabouts, and therefore more opportunity for motorists to get confused and pull into the path of another vehicle.

The findings underscore other research supporting roundabouts. The Federal Highway Administration recommends them as an “evidence-based safety countermeasure.”

“Roundabouts provide substantial safety and operational benefits compared to other intersection types, most notably a reduction in severe crashes,” the agency says on its website.

Brainard, Carmel’s mayor, points to other signs of success. For instance, he says his city has a traffic fatality rate of just two people per 100,000 people, compared to a national average of 12 traffic deaths per 100,000 people.

While multilane traffic circles can result in an increase in minor crashes, the slow speeds required by roundabouts mean accidents are likely to be fender benders rather than serious collisions.

“We can move 50 percent more cars per hour through a roundabout than you can a stoplight,” Brainard tells Freakonomics Radio.

Stoplights, on the other hand, encourage motorists to speed up so that they can avoid a long wait at the intersection.

Contacts: Jim Brainard, Carmel, IN, 317-571-2401; Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 703-247-1500.

DIX



DowntownDevelopment.com

To see the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety study on Carmel's roundabouts](#), go to DowntownDevelopment.com and click on ["Web Extras."](#)

Downtown groups support tax break to convert old office buildings into housing — *Continued from page 1*

commuting to downtown offices, restaurants, bars, dry cleaners, and gyms are struggling to cope with less traffic.

“As our workplaces change because of the COVID-19 crisis, we will see more unused buildings in our downtowns,” Stabenow says. “Converting these buildings to residential and mixed-use properties will benefit families and our cities.”

Modeled after the Historic Tax Credit, the Revitalizing Downtowns Act would provide a credit equal to 20 percent of Qualified Conversion Expenses a developer incurs when converting obsolete office buildings into residential, institutional, hotel, or mixed-use properties. The bill defines an obsolete

office structure as one that is at least 25 years old. The measure would require that 20 percent of the units in a residential conversion are dedicated to affordable housing.

“Converting obsolete office buildings into residential or mixed-use developments represents a critical opportunity to bolster the economic promise of American cities while expanding affordable housing opportunities, supporting small businesses, and creating more resilient city centers,” says David Downey, president and chief executive officer of the International Downtown Association. “While the economics of conversions is challenging and requires significant private investment, supportive

tax policy can create incentives and make it financially feasible.”

Among the groups that have endorsed the bill are the California Downtown Association, Downtown Dallas Inc., the Central Loop Alliance in Chicago, the Minneapolis Downtown Council, the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, the Center City Cincinnati Development Corp., and the Newark Downtown Alliance.

Brett Forman is an executive at commercial real estate lender Trez Capital, which is financing the conversion of an empty office building in Cincinnati to residential units. He says tax incentives will encourage developers

to address the nationwide shortage of housing.

“You need to make it enticing to the developer to want to do that,” Forman says. “When you think about it, an empty office building isn’t producing any tax revenue for the municipality.”

Downtown Idea Exchange has chronicled both the challenges facing downtown business districts and a new trend toward converting downtown office space to homes. As COVID-19 cases surged over the summer, a hoped-for return to normal was delayed — and office occupancy remains low.

Contact: David Downey, International Downtown Association, 202-393-6801. **DIX**

ATTRACTION

Small arts hub seeks new residents, remote workers

Paducah, KY (est. pop. 24,894), is offering incentives to lure remote workers to town. Paducah, a folk arts hub and a UNESCO Creative City, joins other small and mid-sized cities in wooing white-collar workers by offering cash stipends and other bounties.

Paducah’s program includes cash reimbursements for relocation costs and Internet services, as well as a one year waiver of the city’s 2 percent income tax.

Paducah officials examined incentives offered by a number of cities, including Baltimore, Hamilton, OH, Tulsa, OK, Topeka, KS, and Chattanooga, TN before crafting their own package.

The city opened applications in August and says it will limit awards to 25 people. For a worker making \$100,000 a year, the incentives would be worth about \$6,500. Paducah budgeted \$100,000 for the project, indicating it expects recipients to get an average of \$4,000 apiece.

“The intent of this is to attract remote workers who wouldn’t necessarily consider Paducah,” says Assistant City Manager Michelle Smolen. The city is saying, “Come

look at our high quality of life, and here are some additional incentives.”

The city is offering four types of incentives:

- **Relocation reimbursement.** Grant winners will receive up to \$2,500 for expenses associated with moving to Paducah, including a renter’s deposit, down payment on a home, rental of moving trucks or trailers, hiring of professional movers, and purchasing packing materials.

- **Internet allowance.** Remote workers will receive up to \$70 a month reimbursement for 12 months of internet service at a residence located in Paducah.

- **Income tax waiver.** The city will waive its 2 percent income tax for 12 months. The waiver is worth \$2,000 for a remote worker making \$100,000. City officials hope the tax break will help Paducah pull workers from such low-tax states as Tennessee and Texas.

- **Cultural and educational vouchers.** Paducah offers a perks package of passes to a variety of Paducah’s cultural and educational institutions, including Paducah Symphony Orchestra, Maiden Alley Cinema, Paducah

Area Chamber of Commerce, Murray State University, and Market House Theatre.

“Many professionals working within the creative industries are working remotely and looking for a creative community that can help inspire them,” says Mary Hammond, executive director of the Paducah Convention & Visitors Bureau. “We hope these professionals will be among those who take advantage of this program and see that our creative culture is the lifeblood of our economy.”

To qualify for the program, applicants must be 21 or older. Individuals must be U.S. citizens and live at least 100 miles outside Paducah city limits at the time of application. Applicants should work full-time for a company that doesn’t have an office closer than 100 miles to the city limits and must be able to perform most of their work remotely from a home office or co-working space in the city.

Winners also must declare Paducah as their primary residence. And they must agree in writing to remain residents of Paducah for at least a year after the one-year incentive program expires.

“A lot of people are able to work from home, have been able to work from home,” says Paducah Mayor George Bray. “There’s probably more relocation going on around the United States than we’ve seen in a long, long time.”

Contact: Michelle Smolen, City of Paducah, 270-538-9827. 



PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Lessons from a Healthy Streets pilot program

In Ann Arbor, MI (est. pop. 119,976), the Healthy Streets program returned for a second year this spring. The program, which launched in 2020 in response to the pandemic, aims to provide additional space for socially-distanced walking and bike riding.

The 2021 activities saw changes to many streets such as reducing a stretch of Main Street to one lane in each direction instead of two lanes. With the change, the city added a center turn lane and construction barricades to buffer bicycle lanes.

Reactions included complaints from motorists concerned about slowing automobile traffic and accolades from cyclists who appreciated the accommodations, MLive.com reports.

In addition to street reconfigurations, dozens of neighborhood streets throughout the city were treated to “soft closures.” This low-cost program

was accomplished with barricades, bicycle/pedestrian warning signs, and signs indicating that no through traffic was allowed.

Citizens were involved in recommending streets for soft closure and in opting out of the program. An online mapping tool was launched to allow residents to make suggestions on where to locate Healthy Streets. Neighborhoods could also choose to opt out of the program. If 20 percent of the people living along a street indicated they were not interested in the soft closure the street remained open.

First year data drives second year of program

Survey data, physical observations, and traffic operations data were gathered during the first year of the program and informed the second year’s operations.



An online survey sought feedback on which pilot projects respondents used for walking and/or biking, whether they improved their experience biking downtown, which projects best helped to meet user needs, and whether they improved

respondents sense of safety, comfort, and physical distancing.

Three important lessons from year one were reported in the city's summary of findings:

Education and outreach. Public education should be done well in advance to ensure that

people are aware of the project's purpose and to encourage use of the Healthy Streets.

Design. Keep the designs simple and intuitive and select materials carefully. The report notes that some materials looked messy and were prone to being moved around.

Implementation. Implement with care and adjust as needed. The report notes that "City staff, contractors, and consultants collaborated to make field adjustments and changes to improve the operations and safety of the pilot projects throughout their deployment."

Safety. Measures should be taken to ensure undesirable or unsafe behaviors are discouraged. Illegal parking and loading in the bicycle lanes were the most common issues seen in Ann Arbor. DIX

ATTRACTION

Downtown updates traditional marketing, encourages repeat visits

Olympia, WA (est. pop. 51,534), has launched a downtown loyalty program inspired by traditional retail marketing techniques and updated with Pokemon Go technology.

The program launched this summer as part of the Olympia Downtown Alliance's Why I Go Downtown initiative to encourage patronage of local shopping, dining, and entertainment.

The program brings classic punch card programs and word of mouth advertising to smart phones. The app uses game-based techniques similar to Pokemon Go to encourage downtown shoppers to check-in at local businesses and to share lists of their favorite downtown spots.

The alliance partnered with SnowShoe, a developer of mobile-based loyalty programs. Olympia's version of the app encourages multi-store shopping trips by nudging users to create "shopping loops" and to share favorite routes with friends.

Merchants participating in the program

can also recommend other businesses, building loyalty across downtown businesses.

The familiar punch-card program is updated with a Smart Tap device. The device is placed next to cash registers and customers simply hold a smart phone to the device for a virtual punch.

Olympia Mayor Cheryl Selby expects consumers to embrace the program.

"Olympia residents and visitors alike are enthusiastic supporters of local business," says Selby. "SnowShoe's new program adds a fun gamification experience to buying local, and it offers us a way to thank people for coming downtown and encourage them to come again."

"I'm excited to see people returning to our downtown," says Kae Stair of Compass Rose, a downtown gift shop. "Our staff is asked all the time for recommendations of where to shop or eat. The Go Downtown app gives us a fun way to share our recommendations with people and for customers to become advocates for their favorite places." DIX

Idea Exchange

Inching toward holiday decorations

For many years, the Downtown Lincoln (NB) Association displayed its 12 Days of Christmas lights. The iconic partridge in a pear tree, two turtle doves, three French hens, and more were placed throughout the downtown and promoted as the perfect photo op.

But the display wasn't always perfect.

The association began purchasing the large light displays in 2008, but it could not afford all 12. Instead two or three new "numbers" were added each year until 2011 when all 12 days first graced the streets of downtown.

Vaccination appreciation promotions

As the pandemic continued to spread this spring and summer, inducements to encourage vaccination were everywhere. Free sports tickets, free beer, free doughnuts, and million dollar lotteries were offered by state governments and large companies. Many downtown groups also encouraged vaccination while drawing new patrons downtown.

In Somerville, NJ, 12 restaurants and retailers offered discounts to vaccinated customers. The campaign was a partnership between the Downtown Somerville Alliance and nearby Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital.

Anyone who presented their COVID-19 vaccination card at participating businesses on Wednesdays received the discount. Discounts and special offers were determined by individual businesses.

The campaign collateral included posters for store windows and videos in English and Spanish, which were posted and shared on social and local media.



To see the **Somerville vaccine discount video**, go to DowntownDevelopment.com and click on "**Web Extras.**"

Downtown hosts its first Car Bazaar

Four Saturdays in April saw the Sixth and Penn Parking Garage in downtown Pittsburgh, PA, converted to a parking garage flea market. The event, dubbed Car Bazaar, took over multiple floors of the garage for socially-distanced shopping. Vendors offered art plus, vintage, second-hand, and recycled items from the trunks of their cars. In addition, live music, hot food, and craft cocktails were available from downtown restaurants. The vendor fee included a space for vehicle parking and an adjacent space for vending.



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Downtown infrastructure gets a boost

Simpsonville, SC, is on track to receive \$12.5 million in American Rescue Plan funds. The city has proposed spending the stimulus to fund capital projects including revitalizing its downtown and constructing a new town hall, police station, and fire department headquarters.

More than half of the city's funds — about \$6.5 million — will be used on landscape improvements in downtown and City Park. That includes adding to the tree canopy and other "green infrastructure" in Simpsonville's city center and natural storm water management features in the park.

Return to school, return to downtown

It's back to campus for thousands of college and university students after nearly 17 months of remote learning. San Jose State University (SJSU) welcomed students with a variety of activities including the SJSU Loves SJ initiative, a partnership between San Jose State, Visit San Jose, the downtown association, Japantown Business Association, and San Jose City Hall. The goal was to increase students' connection with the local community.

The campaign includes a student welcome event, lighting the city hall tower in SJSU blue and gold, and an interactive Google Map which highlights places to grab coffee, catch a show, taste delicious food, discover which places have student discounts,

Events spread out, take over streets

Downtown event planners took a number of steps to ensure that summer and fall events were appropriately sized and not overly crowded. Among the strategies: Events are being scaled back and spread out across city streets and over multiple days.

- The annual A Taste of Colorado food festival marks the end of summer in downtown Denver. The event was canceled in 2020, but it returned in 2021 in a slightly different format. Rather than hosting the event in the city's Civic Center Park, the event was spread over several blocks of downtown. The end of summer celebration includes multiple outdoor performance stages, food vendors, an arts and crafts marketplace, and a kids' zone with family-friendly activities.

- Arts in the Heart of Augusta was scaled down in 2021 to allow six to 10 feet of space between vendors. The number of artists displaying their work was reduced from 100 to 85 while the number of food vendors was cut from 20 to 10. Even the number of performance stages was reduced from five to just two.

- The annual Westobou Festival was canceled entirely. The five-day celebration of dance, film, music, spoken work, and visual arts has been a fixture in the heart of Augusta, for 12 years, but it will not return after cancellation in 2020. Instead the festival has been converted into a series of smaller events to be held throughout the year. These include a Halloween-themed event called Westoboo.



and enjoy local landmarks. See the [interactive map](#).

Funding restrooms

Portland Downtown is hoping to use American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to increase the number of public toilets in the city center. The local *Press Herald* reports that the need for public restrooms has

increased with the pandemic as restaurants and other businesses closed their restrooms to the public. ARP funds may be used for public health measures and Cary Tyson, executive director of Portland Downtown, tells the *Herald* that this is clearly an appropriate use of funds. "It's a public health response and is certainly a public health issue," Tyson said. "Everyone has that human need." **DIX**