

Organization



"Market Downtown to attract people from a regional area."

Summary	69
Challenges	72-73
Guiding Principles	74
Strategies and Implementation	75-82

Summary

This chapter of the plan focuses on strategies to organize promotion of downtown. The implementation of this Plan and the success of downtown can best be accomplished through a network of partners. This network can pool its resources and technical expertise to collectively achieve the vision of the Plan. Traditionally, the City has been viewed as the primary steward of downtown through its policy, incentives and investment in the public infrastructure. Volunteer groups such as the Downtown Champaign Council or the Champaign Downtown Association (CDA) have supplemented this effort. Other groups such as the Champaign Park District and the local Arts Council, 40 North 88 West, have also played key roles promoting downtown through beautification, cultural events, and entertainment opportunities. Perhaps the most critical partner in downtown is the private sector. Decisions by private property owners and business owners on whether or how to invest in their land/business have the biggest impact on whether downtown will continue to grow and be successful. This Plan proposes an organizational structure where the City helps facilitate a network of partners to maximize the impact of their expertise to achieve the vision of the plan.

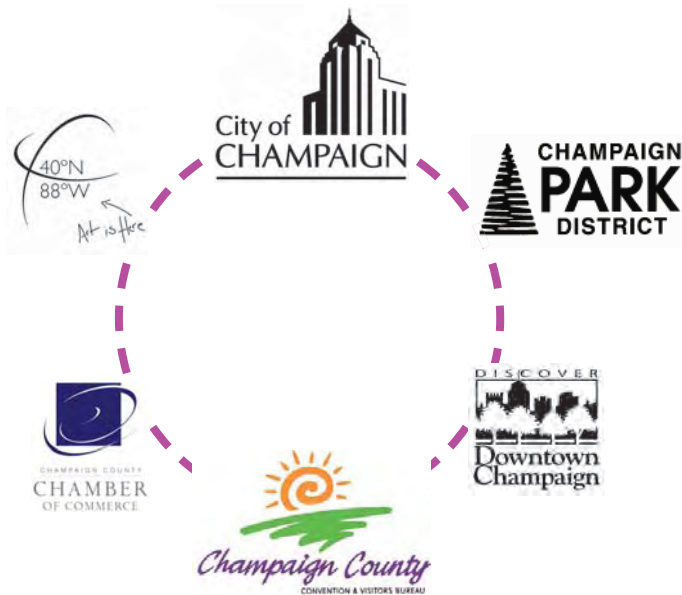
Downtown requires a higher level of public services than many other areas of the City. The area has some of the oldest infrastructure and highest levels of use. To continue to attract investment and people downtown, the streets, sidewalks and other public spaces should be clean, safe and attractive. The commitment of the City to provide this level of maintenance should be matched by the commitment of property owners to maintain their property as well. This chapter proposes strategies to improve the infrastructure and promote clean and safe public and private spaces.



Challenges

Coordination of events and activities

Over the past several years, there has been a high level of interest in festivals and activities downtown. For example, in 2005 the Downtown Festival of the Arts was expanded to include a streetfest which attracted thousands of people to downtown and West Side Park for music, food, arts and entertainment activities. Today, major events downtown include the Boneyard Arts Festival, Taste of Champaign, Artist Against Aids, Holiday Parade, Tree Lighting and Ebbertfest. The Champaign Park District has traditionally coordinated downtown events but as events become more popular the cost of running them and the need for coordination increases. Similarly, the CDA has traditionally coordinated other downtown activities through volunteer efforts but as activity increases, the need for volunteers and funding also rises.



Primary contact for downtown information

There is currently no single contact for information about downtown information. Inquires for data and information come from current business owners, potential investors and others desiring information about attractions, calendars of events, basic demographic data and investment opportunities. Although there are a number of resources that can be drawn upon, no single location is equipped to address all these kinds of requests.

Marketing Downtown

Downtown has seen many successes over the past several years with building renovations and new construction projects. However, downtown is still largely unmarketed as a major attraction for Champaign. There is also no common "branding" of downtown that is recognizable to residents and visitors. If downtown is to diversify its activities and attract different people at all time of the day and week, it should be branded and marketed.



Funding Infrastructure Improvements

The Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) has been the primary funding mechanism for downtown infrastructure improvements for the past twenty years. Although the TIF has recently been extended for an additional 12 years, funding for capital improvements will need to be prioritized with other improvements citywide.



Maintaining Infrastructure

Some public infrastructure in downtown represents the oldest infrastructure in the city. The infrastructure downtown also experiences some of the highest use citywide. Because a positive pedestrian experience promotes downtown success, streets, sidewalks, streetlights, and other appurtenances in downtown need to be not only functional but also attractive and distinctive. Further, streets and sidewalks need to be clean and safe. Keeping infrastructure maintained requires significant coordination and budgeting.

Keeping downtown as the center for community services

Downtown has traditionally been a center for community services, including city government, the federal post office, and various social service agencies. Centrally located and served well by public transportation, downtown offers convenience to residents seeking these services. As the role of downtown changes and as the needs for these agencies also change, it is important to try to keep these functions in the heart of the city.



Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles shall guide decisions and policies related to organizational issues in the downtown.

Organization

To achieve success in downtown, a network of partners should be established to advance the principles and goals of the plan.

Outside entities and organizations should play key roles in running events, providing beautification and supporting businesses

Data and information on the downtown should be readily available in order to help potential investors understand downtown's market potential.

Efforts to continue the revitalization of downtown should include aggressively seeking funding opportunities and technical assistance for projects and programs.

Downtown will benefit from the creation of an identity for downtown that is recognizable to residents and visitors.

Business recruitment and retention is important for the long term success in downtown.

Public Service

Downtown has a high level of activity and contains a significant amount of public space. Therefore adequate resources for the maintenance and upkeep of downtown are a high priority.

The public infrastructure in downtown requires maintenance at a higher level than other areas of the city.

Downtown public safety is a high priority

Strategies

The following strategies are action steps that would implement the organizational goals of the Plan.

Organization

- Establish a stable funding sources (e.g. a food and beverage tax increase or creation of a Special Service Area) to support downtown organizations as well as continued support of downtown cultural events.
- Coordinate with other entities on annual events and programs and identify funding needed to successfully run these events.
- Designate a City Staff position that would have primary responsibility for implementation of the strategies of the plan and fostering effective downtown networks.
- Establish a system to develop and maintain updated demographic information about downtown that can be easily shared with potential investors.
- Work with the Champaign Downtown Association to create marketing materials that can be distributed to visitors, potential investors, and other interested individuals.
- Identify a brand for downtown to use in marketing its activities.
- Establish a continuing dialogue between the City and existing downtown community service agencies to better understand their continuing role in downtown in the future.

Public Service

- Determine a priority list of needed streetscape upgrades that are not likely to be completed in conjunction with a development project, and identify an appropriate funding source.
- Program and budget for the systematic maintenance of downtown from routine cleaning to minor infrastructure improvements.
- Annually evaluate public safety data including crime and traffic accident reports to determine where increased efforts need to be made to ensure that downtown continues to be viewed as “safe” for all users of downtown.

Strategy 1 - Organizational Funding Sources

Establish a stable funding sources (e.g. a food and beverage tax increase or creation of a Special Service Area) to support downtown organizations as well as continued support of downtown cultural events.

Commentary

As downtown continues to revitalize, the expense to maintain the area and provide necessary improvements has increased. Implementation of the Downtown Plan will also create new cost for downtown The Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District has long been the mechanism for funding public improvements and incentivizing further private investment in downtown. However, the TIF District will end in 2017. For this reason it is important to consider establishing another potential source of revenue that can help implement the strategies of the plan. Two possible sources include the Food and Beverage Tax and Special Service Areas.

Food and Beverage Tax generates revenue from a tax collected on food and beverage sales at restaurants citywide. In 2006 the approved tax rate was one-half cent per dollar of purchase. For a twenty dollar purchase the tax is ten cents. Unlike funds generated in TIF, Food and Beverage revenues collected are essentially unrestricted and can be used for a variety of programs and improvements. Currently, anticipated revenues are programmed through 2008 for capital improvements in the Campustown Area. An increase of the Food and Beverage Tax could help fund many of the strategies in this plan including capital improvements , funding for arts and cultural programs and funding for organizational goals such as a part time Downtown Administrator position. However, since Food and Beverage Tax is generated from restaurants and bars citywide, it is important to consider improvements needed in other areas that significantly contribute to the revenue (such as North Prospect, Campustown, etc.) and develop a program that equally distributes the benefits.

Guest Check		
TABLE	GUESTS	SERVER
4	2	AK
		4160-48
1	Burger/Fries	5.99
1	Iced Tea	1.49
1	Chicken Sand.	5.99
	Fries	
1	Pepsi	1.49
1	Appetizer	4.99
SUBTOTAL		19.95
7 3/4%	SALES TAX	1.54
1%	FOOD & BEV. TAX	.20
TOTAL		\$21.69

GUEST RECEIPT		
TABLE	GUESTS	SERVER
		4160-48

SA540 Receipt for Income Tax or Expense Account Record

Special Service Areas (SSA) are used to provide a specified improvement to a defined area. Revenue is generated from a special annual tax that is applied to those property owners that benefit from the improvement. SSA's are typically used to fund infrastructure improvement projects. For example, property owners that are adjacent to an unimproved alley could agree to equally contribute to the paving of the alley when the improvement is not scheduled as part of the City's Capital Improvements Program. SSA's have also been used to generate funds for ongoing maintenance or safety programs. This could include the hiring of a crew to clean sidewalks, plant flowers, or provide extra security presence.

Any proposals to increase the Food and Beverage Tax or implement Special Service Areas should include an identification of what the money is to be generated for and how it would improve the downtown area and implement the goals of this plan. City Council approval would be needed to implement both of these actions.

Key Players:

- City Managers Office
- Planning Department
- Public Works Department
- Restaurant and Bar Owners
- Business Owners
- Property Owners
- Champaign Downtown Association



Strategy 2 - Event Coordination

Coordinate with other entities on annual events and programs and identify funding needed to successfully run these events.

Commentary

The popularity of downtown for events, festivals and cultural programs has been increasing in recent years. Events such as Ebertfest, Downtown Festival of the Arts, Boneyard Arts Festival, and the Christmas Parade have attracted thousands of people to downtown. As a result many people have experienced everything else that downtown has to offer. Currently, events are sponsored by different entities such as the Champaign Park District, the Champaign Downtown Association and 40 North 88 West. The City often assists with these events in different ways with either personnel services or financial contributions. As these events continue to grow in popularity, the cost to produce them rises too. The need to annually plan and budget for events becomes critical. Also, to keep these events popular, an annual program should be published and marketed.

Key Players:

- City Managers Office
- Planning Department
- Champaign Downtown Association



Strategy 3 - Downtown Coordinator

Designate a City Staff position that would have primary responsibility for implementation of the strategies of the plan and fostering effective downtown networks.

Commentary

Having a designated person responsible for coordinating downtown networks and implementing the strategies of the plan is important to downtowns continued success. This person would be the primary contact for business owners, residents, potential investors and others needing information about downtown. A Downtown Coordinator would take the initiative to monitor the implementation of the goals of the plan and take responsibility for facilitating the right network of partners to keep downtown moving forward. This position could be a responsibility of a staff position within the Planning Department.

Key Players:

- City Managers Office
- Planning Department



Strategy 4 - Information Repository

Establish a system to develop and maintain updated demographic information about downtown that can be easily shared with potential investors.

Commentary

Although downtown has been experiencing a revitalization, it is in many ways still an untested market for many potential investors. The availability of accurate, up to date data and information on downtown can make all the difference in a decision to open a new business or invest in an older building. Information that should regularly be updated and available included basic demographic information such as population, numbers of employees, and number of visitor to downtown. Information that is also typically requested includes average sale/rent prices of property, parking data, available site information and data and information on incentive programs and active downtown organizations.

Key Players:

- Planning Department
- Champaign Downtown Association

Strategy 5 - Downtown Marketing

Work with the Champaign Downtown Association to create marketing materials that can be distributed to visitors, potential investors, and other interested individuals.

Commentary

Downtown events, activities and general information should be marketed through a variety of mediums and coordinated among the different network partners. This marketing could be organized under a common theme or design. The Downtown Coordinator should work to promote and distribute marketing materials in a number of different ways depending on the information. This may include promoting downtown events regionally through the Champaign County Convention and Visitors Bureau, promoting the opportunities for investment downtown at the community, regional and statewide levels, and organizing creative ways to promote existing businesses and attractions.

Key Players:

- Planning Department
- City Manager's Office
- Champaign Downtown Association





Strategy 6 - Branding

Identify a brand for downtown to use in marketing its activities.

Commentary

Consistent with the goals of marketing downtown, a common “brand” should be developed. The concept of branding promotes creating an identifiable image that people associate with downtown when they see it. It can be used on everything from entryway signs to promotional print materials and web sites. In any event, the brand should strive to capture the spirit of downtown Champaign and not simply be a stock logo. Consideration should be given to a design competition to create this image.

Key Players:

- City Managers Office
- Planning Department
- Champaign Downtown Association
- Champaign Park District
- Champaign County Convention and Visitors Bureau

Strategy 7 - Dialogue with Community Service Agencies

Establish a continuing dialogue between the City and existing downtown community service agencies to better understand their continuing role in downtown in the future.

Commentary

Downtown serves as an important hub for many community service agencies in Champaign. The accessibility of downtown from all parts of the community makes this a natural fit. As downtown changes this could have an impact on these agencies and the populations they serve. A dialogue where the city and agencies can better understand trends and needs can assist in planning and policy decisions.

Key Players:

- City Managers Office
- Planning Department
- Downtown Community Service Agencies



Strategy 8- Streetscape Maintenance

Determine a priority listing for needed streetscape upgrades that are not likely to be completed in conjunction with a development project. Consider Special Service Areas (SSA) for those projects that are considered high priority and offer a high benefit for private property owners.

Commentary

The TIF allows money to be used for streetscape improvements anywhere in the district. Typically, these improvements are coordinated with new development projects and offered as a financial incentive to the project while providing a public benefit. However, there are many areas of downtown that need improvements to older streetscape where no new construction projects are planned or anticipated. In these cases, a priority listing of projects along with identified funding sources would be beneficial to ensure that improvements are coordinated consistently with the goals of the plan.

Key Players:

- Planning Department
- Public Works Department
- Engineering Division

Strategy 9 - Keep Downtown Clean Program

Program and budget for the systematic maintenance of downtown from routine cleaning to minor infrastructure improvements.

Commentary

Basic maintenance and cleaning of streets, sidewalk and other public spaces is a very important part of keeping downtown beautiful and attractive for investors, shoppers and employees of downtown. Although many property owners take initiative to clean the public areas in front of their property, a coordinated effort to keep all of downtown clean and in good repair is important. This is typically achieved through a Special Service Area program where property owners and the city are able to pool their resources and create an economy of scale by executing a program the encompasses all of downtown.

Key Players:

- Planning Department
- Public Works Department
- Downtown Property Owners



Strategy 10 - Downtown Safety Program

Annually evaluate public safety data including crime and traffic accident reports to determine where increased efforts need to be made to ensure that downtown continues to be viewed as “safe” for all users of downtown.

Commentary

To continue to attract people to downtown, it needs to be safe both in reality and perception. Regular monitoring of basic safety data such as traffic accidents and crimes can help the city and business owners understand what safety related areas need to be addressed. Through regular contact and discussion, appropriate actions can be implemented early on before a problem grows too large.

Key Players:

- Champaign Police Department
- Downtown Property Owners
- Downtown Business Owners
- Residents

