

Implementation Retreat

Schedule and Overview

November 3 & 4, 2022



Project Team leading Implementation Retreat

- Erik Bredfeldt, Economic Development Director
- Sarit Sela, City Architect
- Darren Meyer, MKSK
- Luis Calvo, MKSK

Implementation Retreat Schedule

Building on the ideas and momentum from the Downtown Gainesville Strategic Plan, the MKSK team facilitated an implementation retreat with City Staff and community leaders on November 3-4, 2022. This retreat focused on providing targeted next steps toward making the plan's visions for the Streatery, Sweetwater Park, and a downtown management organization a reality.

Day 1: Thursday, November 3, 2022

Leadership Team Kick-off and Brainstorming Session
(9:00 AM-10:30 AM)

Streatery/Sweetwater Park: Stakeholder Listening Session
(10:30 AM-12:00 PM)

Streatery/Sweetwater Park Walking Tour
(1:30 PM-3:30 PM)

Day 2: Friday, November 4, 2022

Leadership Team Intro Session: Downtown Management Organization
(9:30 AM-10:00 AM)

Jacksonville Downtown Vision Conversation
(10:00 AM-10:30 AM)

Miami Downtown Development Authority Conversation
(10:30 AM-11:00 PM)

Columbus Special Improvement District Conversation
(11:30 PM-12:00 PM)

Louisville Downtown Partnership Conversation
(12:00 PM-12:30 PM)

Wrap-up Session with Staff
(1:30 PM-2:30 PM)

This Deliverable Includes

- » **Meeting notes and key takeaways** from leadership sessions, stakeholder session, and peer downtown management organizations



Implementation Retreat

Leadership Team Kick-off and Brainstorming Session

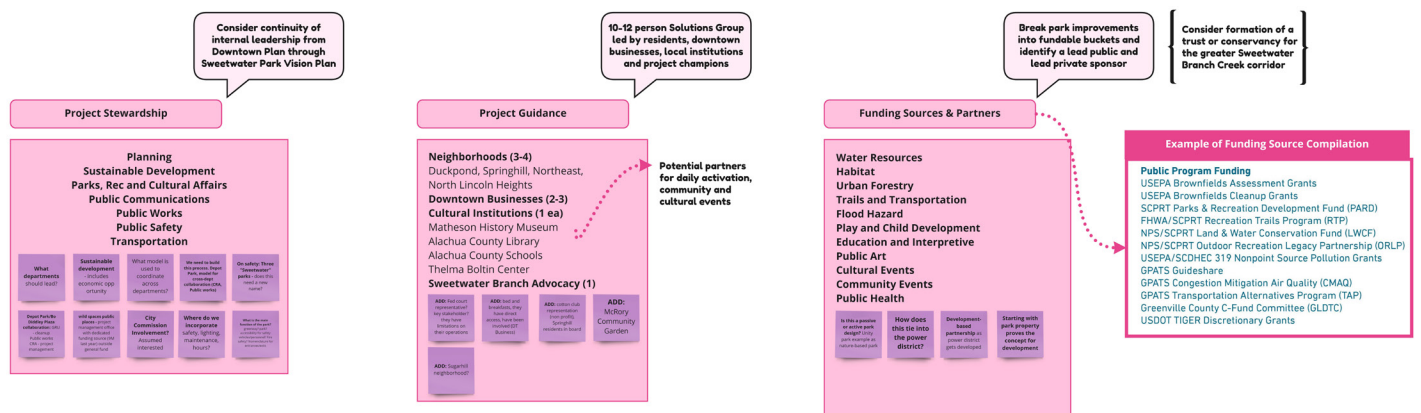
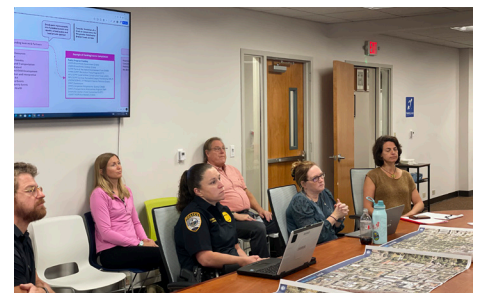
Thursday, November 3, 2022 | 9:00 AM-10:30 AM

Leadership team in attendance

- Cynthia W. Curry, City Manager
- Andrew Persons, Special Advisor to the City Manager
- Phil Mann, Special Advisor to the City Manager
- Peter Backhaus, Code Enforcement
- Betsy Waite, Wild Spaces & Public Places
- Leslie Ladendorf, Parks Recreation & Cultural Affairs
- Scott Wright, Public Works
- Joseph Hillhouse, Gainesville Fire Rescue
- Melanie Ling, Service Design Program Manager
- Sheyla Santana, Smart City Coordinator
- Laura Gratez, Human Resources
- Thomas Harrington
- Jesus Gomez, RTS Transit Director
- Corey Harris, Senior Housing Strategist
- Erik Bredfeldt, Economic Development Director
- Sarit Sela, City Architect
- Brian Singleton, Public Works
- Jamie Kurnick, GPD

Key takeaways from discussion

- What departments should lead the implementation of the downtown strategic plan and the vision for Sweetwater Park?
 - » The Department of Sustainable development is a natural fit.
 - » What model is used to coordinate across departments? The model used for Depot Park should be reviewed for inspiration.
 - » There is an opportunity to involve Wild Spaces & Public Places, since this is a project management office with a dedicated funding source outside the general fund.
- What does a future Sweetwater Park look like?
 - » What is the main function of the park? Is it a Greenway, an amenitized park with recreational, or a naturalized area? We need to consider accessibility for safety vehicles/personnel, Fire safety, and the nomenclature for entrances/exits.
 - » Is this a passive or active park design?
 - » Adding a park is more maintenance, we need to be good stewards.
- There is an opportunity for a Solutions Group led by residents, downtown businesses, local institutions and project champions.
 - » Potential partners can include: Neighborhoods (Duckpond, Springhill, Northeast, North Lincoln Heights, Sugarhill), Downtown Businesses (2-3, can include Bed and Breakfasts), Cultural Institutions (Matheson History Museum, Alachua County Library, Alachua County Schools, Thelma Boltin Center, Cotton Club), Federal Courthouse, McRory Community Garden, and Sweetwater Branch advocacy groups.
- Using Sweetwater Park as a catalyst for downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
 - » Best safety strategy is to get more people to use the park.
 - » Buy-in needed from library and partners to have properties upkeep. Impact of private investment on accountability.



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Streatery/Sweetwater Park: Stakeholder Listening Session

Thursday, November 3, 2022 | 10:30 AM-12:00 PM



Stakeholders in attendance (Note: Members from City staff also invited to attend)

- Dotty Faibisy
- Ron Cunningham
- Danny Hughes
- Linda Dixon,
- Rachel Mandell
- Aaron Bosshardt
- Autumn Doughton
- Melissa Redon
- Melanie Barr
- Jaclyn Stano
- Sara Puyana
- Matt Dibble
- Bryan Eastman
- Harley O'Neill

Key takeaways from discussion

- Sweetwater Park presents a big recreation and open space opportunity for downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods
 - » There needs to be a connection to Depot Park - people need to feel safe walking in between these two destinations.
 - » People are not using the park now because there is a perceived lack of safety.
 - » Sweetwater Park feels secret and hidden. The park is named after a creek that is virtually invisible, which is hiding our best feature.
 - » A big challenge is the park's long and linear shape, which makes it harder to maintain for safety and visibility. The park could instead take on a trail focus rather than a community recreation focus like Depot Park.
 - » The library is a great source of programming that can bring people to the park, with a potential addition of an outdoor children area with playground/reading room.
 - » There is a desire and need for activities for teens/older kids, such as a butterfly garden and more green spaces.
 - » The park could benefit from a theme. Depot Park has a railroad theme, Sweetwater could incorporate an ecological education theme.
- The upcoming Loopfest will showcase Sweetwater Creek and the potential trail loop showcased in the Downtown Strategic Plan. The four-day event will integrate historic neighborhoods and have events throughout the proposed loop.
 - » There is an opportunity to increase visibility to both the park and the trail system through trail head maps, and educational stations.
- The Streatery provides a lively outdoor space in the heart of downtown, but could be more business-friendly by adding some flexibility to the street closure.
 - » The closure makes it challenging for some businesses to have deliveries, as trucks have to park in the middle of the road and can block traffic.
 - » There is a difference in the parking needs of daytime businesses versus the nighttime use of restaurants. Businesses like the real estate company are impacted by losing parking spaces. The Streatery is fairly desolate during the day, when it could be street that people could use to avoid University Avenue.
 - » The Streatery zone by Flaco's has support and is very successful for this business, though some Pleasant Street neighbors are concerned with the closure of a significant neighborhood entrance and would like to see this re-opened to traffic.
 - » Parking issues are not the same for all businesses - these vary by type of business and their times of operation. People will pay to park if its close to where they are going, but will look for free parking if its farther away.

Natural extension of Depot Park, most successful recreation in 30 years	Need connection to Depot Park - people need to feel safe walking in between	people are not using the park now because of lack of safety	Park feels secret, hidden
Challenge is shape - long and linear, harder to maintain for safety, visibility. Trail focus rather than depot and community focused	Depot is destination - food, soccer, play. Expand what makes it attractive. Sweetwater as greenspace with restaurant, performance space, reasons to go there!	More people = less pushback on the investment	Thriving Cities Initiative with neighborhoods in Sweetwater loop festival (February)
Connection to Depot Park. Sweetwater connection to neighborhoods, Sweetwater could be part of loop	Library: point of programming, bring people to the park, children area with playground/readin g room	activities for teens/older kids, with library, butterfly garden, green spaces	Loop would be popular with teens: bigger space to see downtown



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Streatery/Sweetwater Park Walking Tour

Thursday, November 3, 2022 | 1:30 PM-3:30 PM

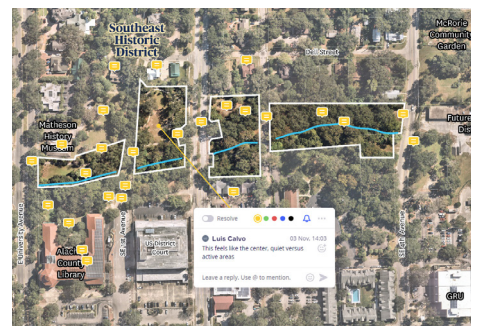


Project Team leading tour

- Sarit Sela (CoG)
- Darren Meyer (MKS)
- Luis Calvo (MKS)

Key takeaways from walking tour and discussion afterwards

- The planning team held a site tour of Sweetwater Park and the Streatery, and was joined by members of the City Leadership team to provide comments, insight, and highlight opportunities. Following this walk, the group held a conversation about their observations and impressions.
- The opportunity for Sweetwater Park could hinge at creating a destination that is connected to Depot Park, but provides a different experience. Unlike Depot Park, Sweetwater Park could focus on a quieter place for contemplation, meditation, and connecting with nature.
 - » Sweetwater Creek feels hidden and needs to be cleared of invasive plants.
 - » The library should be better integrated with the surrounding green space.
 - » The park's center of activity is between SW 2nd Avenue and SE 2nd Place. This is where the park is the flattest and widest. The playground in this area is outdated and underutilized, and feels hidden.
 - » Should the park's center of activity be closer to the Matheson/Library and University Avenue instead?
 - » There is an opportunity for programming for tweens and teens, like a small cafe by the library.
 - » The park's "theme" could inform its programming. If this park is intended as a quiet space for contemplation, activities like tai chi could be integrated.
 - » The park is frequented by homeless individuals, and feels isolated and desolate.
- The Streatery feels underutilized and under-programmed. There are not enough restaurants to activate the space during the daytime or nighttime.
 - » The Streatery could instead be flexible - like a multipurpose room.
 - » While some businesses have issues with deliveries, others describe a workable condition.
 - » There is an opportunity for safety enhancements along the crosswalks on W University Avenue and NW 2nd Street, to better connect the outdoor dining area by Flaco's to the rest of the Streatery.



	the more positive activity you have in the area, the less negatives you have	connectivity to depot park. Streatery, sweetwater, allows to make a day of a downtown visit	what type of greenspace is this? disconnect? read a book?	programming - can be varied of different scales	Daytime - quieter, evening activities or later in the afternoon. Theater? adult or family themed?	opportunity for programming for tweens and teens, like small cafe by library	parking - convincing people to pay is a challenge	
	thinking of programming - incentivize something for people to meander (treasure hunt, partnerships), music festivals	Who are the current users of the park?	Seems like a silent space, free from noise	audubon society tours about birding would be nice	different character than depot - greener, quieter	hippodrome and downtown parking - would valet parking help?	trolley would also be helpful for artwalk - galleries spread out	
would this park have staff like Depot Park? Can Depot Park staff also take care of this?	mindfulness center - partnership opportunity with library?	"quieter" programming - art, nature-scape	trail system - thru-way versus meditative labyrinth to meander	Cofrin park - suicide memorial garden (trees with small wooden memories)	"guided" meditation tours, highlighting local artistry	opportunity for tai chi in the park, GNV massage therapy community partnership	will lack of parking near Sweetwater be a detractor? near parking areas	interim solution could be pedicabs

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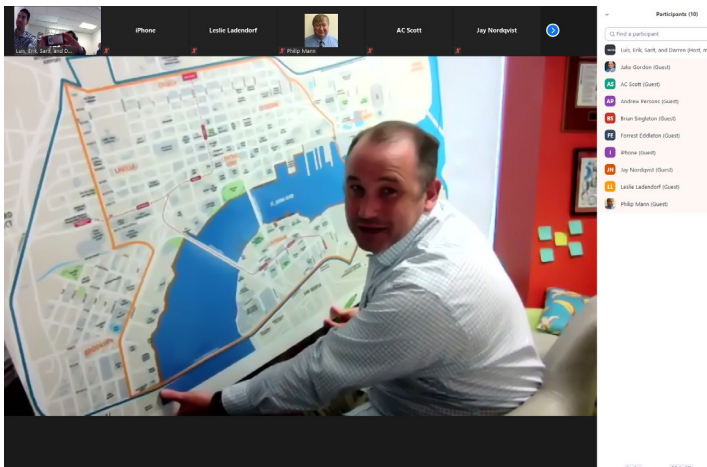
Jacksonville Downtown Vision Conversation

Friday, November 4, 2022 | 10:00 AM-10:30 AM



Members in attendance

- Jacob Gordon, Jacksonville Downtown Vision
- Erik Bredfeldt, Economic Development Director
- Sarit Sela, City Architect
- Darren Meyer, MKSK
- Luis Calvo, MKSK
- Lonnie Scott GPD
- Andrew Persons, Special Advisor to the City Manager
- Brian Singleton, Public Works
- Forrest Eddleton, Department of Sustainable Development
- Jay Nordqvist, Community Reinvestment Area Advisory Board
- Leslie Ladendorf, Parks Recreation & Cultural Affairs
- Phil Mann, Special Advisor to the City Manager



Key Takeaways from conversation with Jacob Gordon, Jacksonville Downtown Vision

- General: Think organizations like ours are a best practice
- Jake is on the Board of the International Downtown Association (IDA); recently created an organization called Florida Downtowns that are resource for Downtown management organizations that have different names; some have merged BID and Development Authority.
- The role of Downtown Vision is similar to an overlay with roles of city services; these are complementary, almost an extension of City services to the downtown.
 - » Clean and safe is common through IDA members.
 - » Public safety: liaison directly and regularly with zone 1 commanders and Mayor, and also communicate and educate property owners about role of public safety.
 - » Extends role of Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) authority while addressing quality of life issues – homeless sleeping, finding keys down a storm drain, etc. Ex: homeless camp – JSO requests people to leave, Downtown Vision cleans up afterwards.
 - » Other roles include stakeholder support (employees focused on public realm), marketing (social media), and data collection and research (state of downtown report).
 - » Downtown Vision is focused mostly on place-making and events – to create a strong, active public realm.
- Downtown Vision is funded through an assessment district. The key factor is in aggregate of many properties. Downtown Vision has 2,200 properties in its boundary and just expanded this district via City Council approval. Millage is going right back to things that property owners care about.
- Governance: Downtown Vision has a city council member on Board and a city liaison. Property owners get to vote for Board, with their vote weighed by the relative assessed value of their property.
- Advice to a newly formed organization: Downtown Vision is not forced on property owners, it is desired. Be realistic about expectations; start with a small menu of fundamental elements, such as ambassadors (clean and safe), marketing and events. These three services might be good areas that would appeal to a range of property owners. Community outreach is key – be upfront at the start-up and regularly as a practice.

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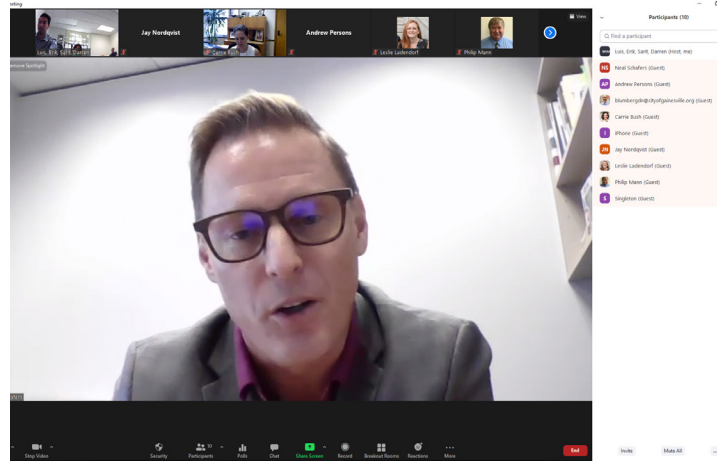
Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Conversation

Friday, November 4, 2022 | 10:30 AM-11:00 PM



Members in attendance

- Neal Schafers, Miami DDA
- Cynthia W. Curry, City Manager
- Erik Bredfeldt, Economic Development Director
- Sarit Sela, City Architect
- Darren Meyer, MKSK
- Luis Calvo, MKSK
- Andrew Persons, Special Advisor to the City Manager
- Brian Singleton, Public Works
- Jay Nordqvist, Community Reinvestment Area Advisory Board
- Leslie Ladendorf, Parks Recreation & Cultural Affairs
- Daniel Blumberg, Gainesville CRA



Key Takeaways from conversation with Neal Schafers, Miami DDA

- Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA) acts as a conduit between private and public sector, and plays a key role in downtown's public realm planning and implementation.
 - » Roles: Leadership, Advocacy and Operations; Marketing, Events, and Communications; Planning, Resilience and Transportation; Enhanced Services (maybe most applicable to Gainesville)
 - » Funding: An assessment district
 - » Budget: \$10 Million budget and 2 square miles, currently up to \$18 Million (pre to post pandemic)
 - » Governance: 15 member Board – one state, city and county representative; city commissioners decide who chairs (chaired by commission) and balance of Board is private sector (often developers, finance, construction, who's who of downtown stakeholders). There are pros and cons to this mix of public officials and private stakeholders, which may make the board subject to political structure of city, but allows the private community to lobby behind initiatives.
 - » Team: +/-30 employees + 12-20 ambassadors + 30-36 enhancement (30 in office, 50-55 in field)
- All downtown businesses know the Miami DDA, especially for its enhanced services. These include ambassadors (which coordinate w with City and County police), neat streets (overlap with County neat streets program – landscape, medians, gateways) and downtown enhancement (trash removal, graffiti removal), as well as partnerships between two homeless facilities and the county.
- Business Development and Business Recruiting is heart and soul of DDA, for both attracting large (Amazon HQ2 bid) and small businesses (through grant programs).
- Advice to a newly formed organization: Being an independent agency allows the Miami DDA to be nimble and responsive (compared to a local city department), while still being well-connected to the City and County.

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Columbus Special Improvement District (SID) Conversation

Friday, November 4, 2022 | 11:30 PM-12:00 PM



Members in attendance

- Marc Conte, Columbus SID
- Erik Bredfeldt, Economic Development Director
- Sarit Sela, City Architect
- Darren Meyer, MKSK
- Luis Calvo, MKSK
- Andrew Persons, Special Advisor to the City Manager
- Brian Singleton, Public Works
- Jay Nordqvist, Community Reinvestment Area Advisory Board
- Leslie Ladendorf, Parks Recreation & Cultural Affairs
- Daniel Blumberg, Gainesville CRA



Key Takeaways from conversation with Marc Conte, Columbus SID

- Columbus operates two SIDs, this conversation will focus on Capital Crossroads (larger). This SID was founded in 2001, largely because downtown businesses were being out-competed by suburban businesses. The SID started with clean and safe services through an ambassador program.
 - » Direction: The SID has a focused vision with a specific geography.
 - » Funding: Primarily property assessments (churches and government buildings are exempt). For government buildings, city opted-in, but county and state have not opted-in. Some state and county agencies have contracted with them. Have a 501c3 that involves grant-writing.
 - » Governance: 16member Board, which includes City-required representative, representatives by property-owner size, and also includes residents.
 - » Establishing SID: State-enabling law that allowed assessment, with 75% of property owners within the land area required for authorization.
 - » Team: 7 total full time office staff, with backgrounds in social work, public administration, marketing, and planning. When hiring, they focus on good writers and good thinkers.
- Property owners have longer-term vision than ground-floor businesses. It is good to have decision-making in property owner role.
- The SIDs role evolved over time from clean and safe to placemaking, focusing on public art and downtown wayfinding.
- Owners agreed to increase assessment to provide free transit pass, which doubled transit use and helped reduced parking challenges.
- Have historically built strong relationships with city staff and city departments, but requires on-going relationship-building.
- Place management organizations are on the forefront of policing – not leading with enforcement, but instead through crisis-intervention and homeless outreach.

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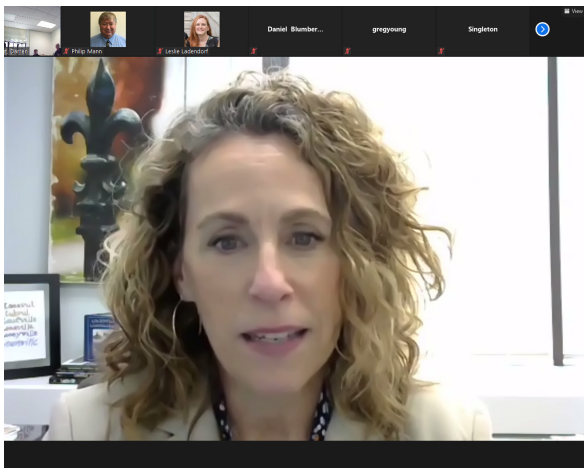
Louisville Downtown Partnership (LDP) Conversation

Friday, November 4, 2022 | 12:00 PM-12:30 PM



Members in attendance

- Rebecca Fleischaker, Louisville Downtown Partnership
- Erik Bredfeldt, Economic Development Director
- Sarit Sela, City Architect
- Darren Meyer, MKSK
- Luis Calvo, MKSK
- Andrew Persons, Special Advisor to the City Manager
- Brian Singleton, Public Works
- Jay Nordqvist, Community Reinvestment Area Advisory Board
- Leslie Ladendorf, Parks Recreation & Cultural Affairs
- Daniel Blumberg, Gainesville CRA
- Tony Jones, GPD
- Greg Young, Matheson Museum



Key Takeaways from conversation with Rebecca Fleischaker, Louisville Downtown Partnership

- The Louisville Downtown Partnership includes two organizations that merged in 2014:
 - » A Business Improvement District (BID) dating back to 1991 and the Louisville Downtown Development Corporation (LDDC) that looks at higher-level issues related to economic development, housing, and parking policies.
 - » Governance: Two boards, one for each entity, since by statute, the BID board cannot be merged. The boards currently have representatives from hotels, the parking operator, businesses, office towers, and residents. They still need to think about by-laws and the current representation on Board (i.e. tourism/convention). They also have an advisory council that focuses on safety and cleanliness. Ex Officio members include Mayor, Downtown Council representative, and the President of Louisville Metro Council.
 - » Services: Supplemental to what the City does, going above and beyond to create a separate and distinct area.
- Covering 91 square blocks, the ambassador program has 12-13 ambassadors on the street at any one time, though this is still not enough for the size of the district. Their presence and work are a sign of care and attention for downtown.
- Marketing and Communications: Getting ahead of the narrative is key, so LDP brought in an in-house staff for this to work full time. Everything LDP does should be a marketing tool, so in their mind they can't possibly do enough communication and promotion. It is important to note that many property owners (and those assessed) aren't downtown or even in Louisville, and don't see downtown. They depend on this marketing and outreach to see the value of LDP's work.
- Advice to a newly formed organization: You need critical mass of support and maybe an economic impact study to make the case to property owners and the community of the value of downtown to the city and region. We need to tell the story of Downtown, and why it is important.

Implementation Retreat

Wrap-up Session with Staff

Friday, November 4, 2022 | 1:30 PM-2:30 PM



Members in attendance

- Cynthia W. Curry, City Manager
- Andrew Persons, Special Advisor to the City Manager
- Phil Mann, Special Advisor to the City Manager
- Tony Jones, GPD
- Erik Bredfeldt, Economic Development Director
- Sarit Sela, City Architect
- Darren Meyer, MKSK

Key Takeaways

- A downtown management organization needs to be nimble and responsive
 - » This organization offers a premium service – over and above what the City provides.
 - » Issues it needs to address include aggressive panhandling and homeless, but it needs to do so by pivoting from the approach of starting with enforcement.
 - » We need an independent organization, we need a funding source, and a clear mission/purpose.
- How do we make the numbers work without office towers or major employers downtown?
 - » We can't do better downtown without money. A 4-person detail will help, but won't solve issue.
 - » Downtown has to be programmed and activated, and that takes marketing and money.
 - » The services offered have to start with clean and safe as a baseline.
 - » An option is looking at the legacy Downtown TIF, which could seed the effort and re-prioritize GCRA projects.
 - » Good representative governance is key for accountability on how the funds are used.
 - » A potential board makeup includes downtown property owners, tenants, GNV Chamber, Bed and Breakfast Community, restaurant/hospitality, neighborhoods, government (City, County), educational institutions, and arts and culture organizations.
- MKSK to follow up with a proposal for role through end of fiscal year (Oct 1 – Sep 30th) and February Festival Loop.