

Downtown Akron Special Improvement District Services Plan 2015-2019

As the revitalization of Downtown evolves, so does the role of Downtown Akron Partnership. New urbanism demands an urban core that plays a vital role to the city as an economic indicator, a measure of regional and national competitiveness and a diverse, eclectic social space that is attractive and compelling for talent attraction and retention. The 2015-2019 SID Services Plan will focus on ensuring Downtown Akron is active and vibrant by implementing strategies that strengthen our presence as a competitive business center, a transit hub, a unique and engaging urban neighborhood and a destination for excellent arts, culture, sports, recreation and entertainment offerings.

Currently, Downtown Akron Partnership is contracted by the Downtown Akron Special Improvement District, Inc. (SID) to manage and implement the services plan for those property owners within the boundaries of this Special Improvement District. Upon renewal, the manager of the services contract will be selected by a bid process.

The 2015-2019 Services Plan has been formulated with input from continuing comprehensive surveys and interviews

with Downtown property owners, business owners, executives and employees in combination with research and observations of trends and needs in the community. This five year plan establishes guiding principles for a clean, safe and vibrant Downtown neighborhood that is beneficial to property owners, businesses, residents and visitors. The plan focuses on three key areas to maintain and expand:

- 1. Clean, safe and vibrant** – Making Downtown cleaner, safer and more vibrant enhances our strengths of being walkable, livable and sustainable; a place for business, recreation, entertainment and living.
- 2. Marketing and Promotion** – Effectively communicating Downtown through multiple platforms including diversified media outlets and community-building events.
- 3. Stakeholder Services** – Advocacy and action to directly benefit property owners and stakeholders, making Downtown a great location to live, work, learn and play.



Clean, Safe & Vibrant

Objective: Maintain and enhance our essential service of providing a clean, safe, vibrant and welcoming Downtown Akron, showcasing a Downtown neighborhood with a sense of place that serves as a catalyst to the long-term vitality and improvement of the community.

Strategy	Activity	Key Measures
<p>Maintain a clean district</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance highly visible, uniformed DAP Cleaning Ambassador presence to provide Downtown services seven days a week. • Coordinate with the City to ensure quality public cleaning, sanitation and maintenance services. • Improve existing and develop new quality, user-friendly and beautiful public spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services delivered • Litter index • Perception surveys
<p>Support and promote a safe district</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance highly visible, uniformed DAP Safety Ambassador presence to provide Downtown patrols seven days a week. • Engage nightlife business owners in an ongoing way to promote safety measures in the Downtown district. • Engage Akron Police Department and The University of Akron in communication and implementation of safety initiatives to strengthen the corridor. • Partner with the City, County, and The University of Akron to advise on the Downtown emergency preparedness plan. • Advocate for improvements to the physical environment including walkways, lighting, cameras and signals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services delivered • Crime statistics • Contacts and Partnerships • Number of stakeholders engaged • Track physical environment improvements • Perception surveys
<p>Improve the perception of the Downtown neighborhood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Social Services agencies, Akron Police Department and the City to help control panhandling, vagrancy, etc. • Maintain and enhance the Downtown beautification and streetscape program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception Surveys • Partner interviews • Number of participating stakeholders • Number of planters, planter boxes, hanging baskets, in-ground displays, etc. • Audit of newspaper corrals, kiosks, ash urns and trash cans
<p>Support and promote Downtown place-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the City and other potential funders to create and implement a signage program for the district. • Facilitate partnerships between arts organizations, retailers, restaurateurs and property owners to enhance storefronts, windows and facades. • Improve connection between Downtown business and the arts districts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception surveys • Number of participating stakeholders • Survey of arts district
<p>Support and enhance vibrancy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the City, METRO, AMATS and others to diversify transportation options in the Downtown district. • Encourage a pedestrian-friendly Downtown. • Enhance the Downtown connection to and use of the Towpath Trail. • Coordinate recycling initiatives through the City of Akron. • Coordinate with the City and ABM Parking Services to improve the efficiency and hospitality of Downtown’s parking system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception surveys • Number of participants in recycling program • Track parking complaints and improvements

Marketing & Promotion

Objective: Maintain and enhance the image, awareness and usage of Downtown as a vibrant hub of activity where people live, learn, work, dine, shop and play. Utilize our commercial, cultural, recreational and governmental strength in the region to create a strong and positive image of Downtown.

Strategy	Action	Key Measures
<p>Market Downtown as a destination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an effective integrated marketing campaign including public relations, cross promotions, social media, media relations, marketing and other tools that enhance the image and increase the knowledge of Downtown and the Partnership, communicating the business, cultural, recreational, residential and entertainment opportunities and other benefits of Downtown Akron. • Partner with Akron/Summit Convention & Visitors Bureau and area hotel concierges to provide relevant and timely updated information regarding Downtown. • Maintain a comprehensive website that brands Downtown as a destination. Explore the potential of partnering to create an all Akron events calendar with Downtown events as its core. • Produce diverse marketing publications that promote Downtown Akron as a great place to live, work, learn and play. • Maintain one major event per year that brings visitors into multiple spaces within the SID footprint • Increase the dining, arts, cultural, nightlife, recreation and retail activity in Downtown through joint promotions, events and marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website analytics • Social Media analytics • Number of partnerships and outcomes • Media presence • Event evaluations • Event attendance • Perception surveys
<p>Market Downtown as a business community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the City of Akron and Greater Akron Chamber to promote the health of the business district in Downtown. • Create and distribute development and attraction collateral packets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses • Track outreach efforts and collateral distribution
<p>Advance programs that support economic vitality and improve the Downtown experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost day and night economies with events and initiatives unique to the urban environment. • Implement sustainable retail incentives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track retail incentive use



Business, Parking & Stakeholder Services

Objective: Serve as a collective voice for Downtown, advocate for the interests of property owners and bring stakeholders together to address challenges and opportunities in the district.

Strategy	Action	Key Measures
<p>Provide support for current and potential business in the Downtown corridor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address concerns and advocate for businesses currently in the district. • Support City, County, Chamber and property owners in their efforts to market Downtown to existing and potential businesses. • Collect and maintain relevant data on Downtown amenities and competitive advantages. • Collaborate with civic partners and business support agencies to identify growth and location opportunities in the district. • Serve as resource for information pertaining to Downtown for current and perspective business owners, property owners, residents and other stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacancy rates • Number of contacts • Outreach visits • New businesses • Stakeholder surveys • Use of data
<p>Establish an approach to retail recruitment in Downtown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop retail attraction collateral. • Train a staff member in retail recruitment for the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business contacts • New businesses • Collateral distribution
<p>Support talent attraction and retention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an engaged committee of young professionals to create and enhance programming for their demographic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception surveys
<p>Support Downtown learning environments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with The University of Akron, Akron Public Schools and others to ensure the mutual respect of Downtown and the student experience. • Provide outreach to educational institutions. • Create opportunities to integrate Downtown as a learning environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of institutions
<p>Market Downtown as a unique urban neighborhood for living</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with residential property managers and The University of Akron to welcome new residents to Downtown and market Downtown as an urban living neighborhood. • Raise awareness and interest in Downtown living through relevant publications. • Assist residents, residential developers, prospects and others to facilitate Downtown residential diversification and balanced growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupancy • Outreach efforts and collateral distribution
<p>Communication with members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure ongoing communication with members to assess the needs of the SID to include casual and formal interviews and surveys. • Provide updates to members on projects and developments in Downtown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute quarterly SID member updates • Email newsletter