



Downtown Idea Exchange

Essential Information for Downtown Revitalization

Vol. 64, No. 1
January 2017

Inside this issue

Downtown organizations can help merchants remain competitive. Access and education around technology are key 2

Supporting business start-ups will take center stage. In many downtowns, small businesses provide the majority of jobs 4

Creative development model revives downtown neighborhood. Private corporation funding creates nonprofit revitalization entity 6

Directory connects businesses to resources. Helping small business owners navigate the maze of available assistance 7

Lighting up downtown assets. Iconic structures aren't necessary to feature creative lighting in city centers 10

Idea Exchange. Walk audit engages and informs, Food Halls come to America, City considers new downtown mobility options, and more 11

Trends Analysis & Commentary

Looking Ahead to 2017

Downtown Idea Exchange recently invited a group of downtown leaders to discuss the trends that they see presenting challenges or opportunities in the new year. The health of local independently owned businesses was on the minds of many. Other important issues include the shifting roles of downtown organizations, and the increasing emphasis on activating the city center through events, arts, and culture as a means to economic growth.

"One of the trends moving forward is the idea of downtown management organizations as part of the ecosystem of city building,"

says David Downey, president of the International Downtown Association. "They are maturing as urban revitalization agents."

Downtown organizations are seeing a continuing and evolving array of responsibilities, says Downey, including activating and managing public spaces, housing equity, sidewalk behaviors, and street/pedestrian improvements.

"When we talk about housing, as an example, that is not a core function of a downtown organization and yet, housing availability at all levels is essential for inclusive, successful

(Continued on page 3)

Economic Impact

Lighting projects enhance downtown economic development, revitalization, and tourism

Cities are making significant investments in lighting infrastructure and setting themselves apart as unique, creative, desirable destinations.

In Little Rock, AR (est. pop. 197,992), the River Lights in the Rock installation includes the permanent lighting of one vehicular bridge and two pedestrian bridges spanning the Arkansas River between the downtown areas of Little Rock and North Little Rock.

River Lights is visible to 1.2 million visitors annually from downtown hotels. The illumination display is a deciding factor for many of the conventions and events held downtown annually. The project has had such a positive economic impact that the city is exploring lighting for additional bridges.

River Lights, along with projects in San Francisco, CA; New

(Continued on page 8)

Downtown organizations can help merchants remain competitive

Local businesses must be ever more responsive to customers in order to survive. That's the message from the downtown and small business experts who served on the *Downtown Idea Exchange Looking Ahead* panel this month. That often involves embracing social technology. However, says Michael Stumph, principal of Place Dynamics, "It is very difficult for a local business to be able to develop these abilities."

"Part of the problem is where to get really good help," says David Feehan, president of Civitas Consultants. "To get companies to do this, you have to develop programs that many of these small businesses can avail themselves of. Oftentimes, it is too expensive for a small independent business to do a sophisticated social networking campaign. Downtown organizations can identify the common needs, identify who's really good at doing this, and then sit down with business owners to say, 'Here's a program we'd like you to take a look at, and we are able to negotiate with this company because we have so many clients and can get a better price.'"

Those social media campaigns are vital to building customer loyalty and repeat business, Feehan says. "Most downtowns are not Las Vegas; they don't have new people all the time," he says. "The key is repeat business." Urban centers need to offer memorable moments, meals, and entertainment, and find ways to encourage customers to share on social media.

"People are tweeting or turning to Facebook to share those moments visually or in words," says Feehan. "People love to take pictures of a great plate. Downtowns in most cities are not really serious retail centers. They are restaurant and entertainment centers. The success in most downtowns is based on those restaurants and entertainment venues, and the use of social media to convey, 'There are great things going on here. You ought to come.'"

Another need being driven by technology is that online and big box businesses now have the capacity to gather more data and conduct more targeted marketing. "I think the next step in that is, whether it's business owners or downtown program managers, beginning to understand the need for more data," Stumph says. "If you think about a mall or retail chain, [they are] collecting a tremendous amount data. They are able to profile a customer so they know what you want."

Mobile apps allow businesses to encourage customers to try new products based on previous purchases, Stumph adds. "That is their opportunity to get you to buy more. Our downtowns are not collecting that data, and our downtown businesses are largely not collecting that data."

For Becky McCray, author and founder of the Small Biz Survival network, the technology lesson is simple: small businesses need to reach out to customers in as many ways as possible and to be reachable in as many ways as possible. "You want customers to be able to text them, hit them up on Messenger, and tweet them, as well as email, and connect with businesses on their smartphone conversation interface (such as Siri)."

These types of interactions are quite possible, says McCray. "All you need is to teach people how to put their email and address into a smartphone in the right way, and then how to be able to answer customer requests [electronically]."

Retailers also need to reach customers via more channels and to offer more options, such as automatic reordering and subscription boxes. "I really feel that downtown businesses have a huge opportunity in the subscription box area," McCray says. "They already have an established customer base, suppliers, and they know what is hot and in demand. They also know each individual customer in a way that the big boxes struggle with. Any store that sells to people could be doing a monthly subscription model targeting customers with a box of surprise and delight. Remind them every month

Small businesses need to reach out to customers in as many ways as possible.

that you have cool and interesting stuff that they want to have.”

Another trend McCray has observed is that specialty shops are diversifying products to draw in new customers. “When I went around to local stores last holiday season, every single store was carrying some line I didn’t know they had. The technology store had barbecue spices; a kitchen shop had kid’s books. I have seen this in every small town I’ve been in. Downtown merchants are doing lots of experiments with new lines, rather than sticking to one central line of merchandise,” she says.

“It calls for a lot of experimentation to make this work, and that is where downtown

organizations come into play,” says McCray. Downtown leaders can help stores see potential new product matches that make sense, and coordinate efforts between merchants. “When the furniture store also sells women’s clothing, the women’s clothing store may get upset. Downtown organizations can help people understand critical mass and referrals and coordination, and that, while they will always be in competition, not all competition is bad.”

*Contacts: David Feehan, Civitas Consultants, (202) 288-0528, civitas.dave@me.com; Becky McCray, Small Biz Survival, becky@smallbizsurvival.com; Michael Stumph, Place Dynamics, (262) 510-2131, michael.stumph@placedynamics.com. **DIX***

Looking Ahead to 2017 — Continued from page 1

cities, so organizations are trying to understand how best to fit into that process and dialog and area within the city,” says Downey. “Likewise, when we think of street order, whether that be people affected by homelessness or encampments, or recent reactions to the election, organizations are looking to create clean, inviting, and safe environments. So, while not direct service providers for mental health or homeless service agencies, downtown organizations have to consider their role in these areas when looking at what they include as city building.”

Just as the lines are becoming less distinct in defining areas of responsibility, the footprint of service areas is also becoming more fluid, Downey says. “I would say it was not infrequent this past year and going forward, to hear about instances where member organizations found themselves providing services or addressing areas just outside their own boundaries, because of the understanding that those areas have an impact,” says Downey. He cites the Downtown Dallas (TX) Safety Patrol members being deployed outside of the downtown district as an example. Downtown Dallas works with the city police, transportation authority police, and the Downtown Security Directors Association to boost public safety, “so they can

secure and continue to provide support to other areas within the city, because it all ties back to a successful downtown where people feel safe and secure to walk around enjoying restaurants and amenities,” Downey says.

“Similarly, it’s not uncommon to hear of a downtown organization hosting a movie night in a vacant lot or an under-performing public space immediately outside of their district, because this has an impact on their district, as well,” says Downey.

More pressure to program city centers

For many downtowns, revitalization efforts are shifting from an emphasis on physical improvements to activating public spaces. Early on, suggests Michael Stumph, principal of Place Dynamics, the focus of revitalization was squarely on physical improvements. Now, the challenge has shifted to activating the downtown area.

Downtown is, “the stage on which we celebrate our community,” adds David Feehan, president of Civitas Consultants. “I think a lot of organizations look at downtown as a stage, a place to invite, inform, and entertain people. And every day is a new production. The notion is that what we’re seeking to create

in downtown is memorable, magical experiences. We do that by being producers, directors, and actors on this stage. It's a different way of looking at our downtown plazas and public spaces, by creating ways to bring people together, whether for music, dance, Shakespeare, or whatever. The responsibility that downtown organizations have to program that stage is becoming much more of a trend."

Along with the focus on more active public spaces, safety presents new challenges. With growing homeless and panhandler populations in many areas, and recent outbreaks of violence during public gatherings, urban management organizations will be increasingly challenged to manage both public safety, and the perceptions around that issue.

Urban management organizations will be challenged to manage public safety, and perceptions around that issue.

Noting media coverage of peaceful protests that turned violent, or during which law enforcement came under fire, Downey says, "We have the challenge of maintaining public space as a secure, safe, and inviting atmosphere, but the immediate issue is trying to reinforce downtown as a great place to be."

Even peaceful gatherings present issues. "The protest in Chicago [after the presidential election] was peaceful, but it still shut down a major avenue and all of the businesses around it," says Downey. "We need to support peaceful public discourse and protest as part of our society, but it comes with challenges to ensure peaceful gatherings, as well as continued access to both public and private resources."

Supporting business startups will take center stage

Downtowns have been hoping to attract, "the stores people are leaving town to shop at," says Stumph. "But my sense is that there is often a lot of disappointment when downtowns try retail recruitment campaigns."

Instead, Stumph is seeing an increasing interest in programs to assist startups, provide business training, and, "just generally provide more activities aimed at building up stronger businesses than we've seen in the past."

Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison suggests that small business startups

in rural communities are more important in creating new jobs than most larger existing businesses, adds Bill Ryan, community development specialist with University of Wisconsin-Extension. "The paradigm for small cities throughout the country for job recruitment used to be attracting a big company from the next town over, or the next state," says Ryan. "Small cities should look closely at startups as opposed to trying to bring in a chain store. As we enter 2017, rural communities should take advantage of this trend by creating downtown space for startups."

One interesting trend revealed in the research is that, other than in larger cities, it is baby boomers, rather than millennials, who are launching startups. As this demographic retires, and then decides to launch the shop they've always dreamed of, or to put their skills back to work, the number of older startup owners will grow, Ryan says. "Downtowns in rural areas should pay attention to these entrepreneurs as they may be a better target for new business development. Research also points out that the new business startups in rural communities are often by people with a Bachelor's Degree, or with specific skills. In 2017, rural downtowns should increase efforts to reach these people, including those who grew up in the community, but moved away to build their careers."

"One more thing I think we are going to be watching is the continuing return to small-scale production in manufacturing," says Patrice Frey, president and CEO of the National Main Street Center. "We may see that intensify over the coming year. It really is well-suited to the kind of building stock we tend to see in downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. There's a whole maker boom that we're seeing, with independent coffee shops and microbreweries, but also with folks who are producing clothing downtown. The exciting thing about these types of businesses is that these can be higher paying jobs, and their economic impact is significant." In fact, Frey says, there is a dollar for dollar return on investment for communities where small manufacturing businesses thrive when the multiplier effect is taken in to account. "That's a nice return, in terms of investment," she says.

Retaining existing businesses still essential

As downtown leaders realize that the odds of attracting a desirable retail chain, “are slim,” Stumph says, “they are starting to focus on what they can do for the businesses that are already there to help them be more competitive and capture a greater share of the market.”

One trend that is impacting, “all kinds of Main Street communities and neighborhood commercial districts” is that of baby boomers retiring, says Frey. “We will be seeing nearly 10,000 boomers retiring every day between now and 2019, when the Pew Research Center found that 52 percent of existing business owners will need to transition. Thirty percent will transition in the next five years or before then.”

About one third of aging owners plan to transfer their businesses to the next generation, says Frey. Another third is hoping to sell to a third party. “And one third will simply close their doors. The challenge for downtown district leaders is to get out in front of that, to work with business owners to help them craft a strategy which allows them to transition these businesses,” she says. “This is going to be an increased focus for us at the Center.

“I think this needs to be a dialog with each and every business owner potentially of an age to be thinking of transitioning,” says Frey. Downtown organizations need to be getting a sense of what business owner’s plans are. “And if it turns out that the owner plans on shuttering, it becomes the focus of the local downtown district manager to work with the city, and other community partners such as the chamber of commerce, to identify others who might be interested in taking over for that business owner.”

Stumph adds, “I am seeing some impacts of that in the smaller communities we work with. They are losing businesses that have been around for five, 10, or 15 years that were started by somebody in their 50s that is starting to think about retiring. When they do, that business is often lost rather than passed on to a second owner. That’s definitely an issue a lot of communities will have to deal with.”

Stumph points to efforts like the Kansas University School of Business RedTire program as one possible solution. The initiative connects business owners who want to retire but have no one to take over with younger professionals who want to be their own bosses. The program, launched in 2012, was believed to be the only one of its kind. Three years in, RedTire had closed seven sales, with others pending, and more than 85 jobs had been saved. “I think it is a model people could start building on,” he says.

Downtown leaders also need to look at the continuing expansion of technology and how it’s affecting businesses, says Stumph. Encouraging small businesses to win on the customer-service front, while also incorporating technology, is essential for 2017 and beyond.

*Contacts: David Downey, International Downtown Association, (202) 798-5922, david@downtown.org; David Feehan, Civitas Consultants, (202) 288-0528, civitas.dave@me.com; Patrice Frey, National Main Street Center, (202) 701-4963, pfrey@savingplaces.org; Bill Ryan, University of Wisconsin-Extension, (608) 263-4994, bill.ryan@uwex.edu; Michael Stumph, Place Dynamics, (262) 510-2131, michael.stumph@placedynamics.com. **DIX***



DowntownDevelopment.com

To view Main Street Wisconsin’s information sheet, *Business Transition Planning 101*, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

Revitalization Projects

Creative development model revives downtown neighborhood

Neighborhoods adjacent to downtown have significant impacts on the city center. Investments in these areas can yield a huge return on investment for the downtown, and provide successful models, as well. That’s been the case

in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood (est. pop. 6,064), just north of and adjacent to downtown Cincinnati, OH (est. pop. 296,943).

In 2003, this area had 500 vacant buildings and 700 vacant lots. Business leaders realized

that without discipline, dedicated funds, and a long-term focus and investment, the neighborhood would not recover.

Private corporations committed the funding and leadership necessary to create the Cincinnati Central City Development Corporation (3CDC), a private, nonprofit entity charged with strengthening the core assets of downtown by revitalizing and connecting the Fountain Square District, the central business district, and the Over-the Rhine neighborhood.

A recent Urban Land Institute report, *Reaching for the Future: Creative Finance for Smaller Communities*, explores the turnaround of Over-the-Rhine. Since the creation of

3CDC, “the change in downtown and Over-the-Rhine is nothing short of spectacular,” say authors Tom Murphy, Maureen McAvey, and Bridget Lane. “A total of

\$842 million of new money has been invested in downtown and Over-the-Rhine, and over 2,500 jobs and 1,100 housing units have been created as a result. As part of the city’s return, the downtown and nearby neighborhoods are now generating substantially higher annual tax revenues.”

A replicable model of success

Over-the-Rhine’s transformation “is a remarkable model for other communities in two respects,” say the authors. First, because of the civic leadership demonstrated by the creation of 3CDC, and second, because of the array of creative financing and public/private partnerships, “which were rapidly put together to accomplish the dramatic series of developments. 3CDC brought to Cincinnati what every community needs for its future: money, land control, and sophisticated deal-making capacity.”

Having dedicated staff to work with the private business community, neighborhood leaders, and government entities was key to successful revitalization. “Those public/private practitioners bring a unique skill set and can be critical to success,” note the authors. And having multiyear funding allowed for real strategic planning and implementation.

Creation of a \$50 million Cincinnati New Markets Fund allowed 3CDC to purchase

property within a defined area. “By aggressively acquiring over 1,000 parcels, 3CDC reached a threshold of development that gave people reason to believe the neighborhood was improving,” says the report. “The early restoration and enhancements in Washington Park and Fountain Square, highly visible public spaces, declared that downtown and Over-the-Rhine were coming back.”

Any community can create a similar organization, say the authors. “Every community has successful businesses and wealth from prior successes. Although the initial funding may be more modest, every community has the resources to create a private, nonprofit development corporation to invest in its future.”

Thirty corporate leaders make up the 3CDC board of directors; no public officials are members. Initially, the organization’s operations were funded entirely by annual corporate contributions. While annual corporate support continues, two-thirds of the \$6 million annual operating budget is generated through development fees and operating assets.

The organization’s objectives are clearly defined:

- create great civic spaces;
- create high-density, mixed-use developments;
- preserve historic structures and improve streetscapes;
- and create diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods supported by local businesses.

Taking a broad investment approach pays off

Initially, 3CDC invested \$27 million in private funds to purchase 200 buildings and 170 vacant parcels centered on Washington Park. Purchases included, “several notorious bars and carryout liquor stores that were centers of crime and drug dealing,” says the ULI report. Later that same year, the organization leased and assumed management of the city-owned Fountain Square parking garage, which was deteriorating and losing money. Restorations then began at the garage, plaza, and fountain.

A community-wide approach recognized the many dimensions of the neighborhood, from various housing needs to arts and cultural amenities. “By investing across the neighbor-

Neighborhoods adjacent to downtown have significant impacts on the city center.

hood — from homeless shelters to historic cultural amenities, as well as new housing, hotels and offices — Over-the-Rhine became a national model of public/private leadership,” say the authors.

3CDC’s founding corporations also invested in the \$50 million New Markets revolving loan fund. In 2013, the board created a second fund of \$41 million, capitalized largely by reinvestment of loans paid back from the first fund. Patient loans provided seed capital to continue revitalization of Fountain Square and Over-the-Rhine.

“Corporate leaders anticipated that the funds would be invested and leveraged in such a way that returns would be a possibility,” says the report. The success of the first fund, and the

need to reuse and roll over funds, encouraged the second fund’s investors.

“With an entrepreneurial spirit and a commitment to effective public/private partnerships, 3CDC has, to date, brought together 17 sources for financing its developments,” according to ULI. As the area improved, perceptions began to change. And with 3CDC managing both Fountain Square and Washington Park, frequent programming was offered, including music, food, and festivals. “Thousands of people who might have avoided the area are now discovering an interesting transformation. Over-the-Rhine and the central business district have become the places to go in the region for interesting dining.” **DIX**



DowntownDevelopment.com

To read the Urban Land Institute’s *Reaching for the Future: Creative Finance for Smaller Communities* in its entirety, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

Business Recruitment & Retention

Directory connects businesses to resources

In Detroit, MI (est. pop. 713,777), the BizGrid online directory, print infographic, *BizGrid Buzz* newsletter, and a BizGrid Live event this fall are making support services more accessible for entrepreneurs and small business owners.

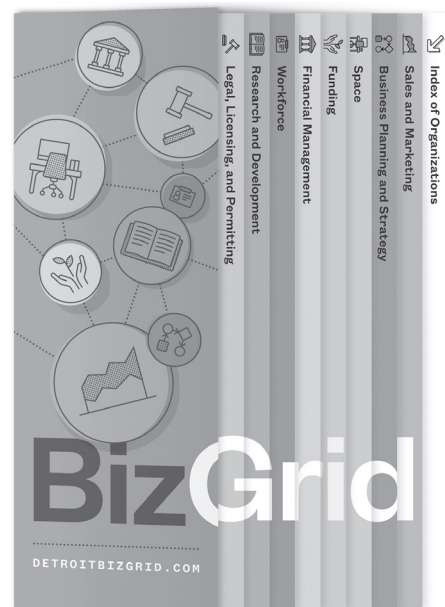
A committee of the Detroit Business Support Network, which includes the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC), directs BizGrid’s design, content development, and production, with the support of the New Economy Initiative of Southeast Michigan.

Over the past year, “we’ve been working on redesign, updating, and re-launching BizGrid,” says Cydney Camp, DEGC’s associate small business development manager. To update the inaugural BizGrid created in 2011, the committee first reached out to the small business community to find out what information would be helpful, and then worked closely with designers to ensure a more user-friendly product.

“We conducted a lot of community feedback sessions to help with the design, which is

currently a booklet format,” Camp says. “The original had about 50 service providers. This one has 84, so we’ve added a few.” Organizations listed in BizGrid provide support services in eight areas: legal, licensing, and permitting; research and development; workforce; financial management; funding; space; business planning and strategy; and sales and marketing.

In addition to the booklet, a BizGrid website provides information, and allows for updates in between print runs. “We already have a handful [of service providers] on there that are not in the printed document,” says Camp. The website is a work in progress. “We’d really



A compact, booklet-sized print resource guide, supported with a website, social media, and a newsletter, is connecting small businesses to support organizations.

love to do a map of some sort, or some extra features on the website to help people orient themselves to what services are located where.”

A live event compliments the booklet and website. “BizGrid Live! was a casual service provider fair,” says Camp. “We had everyone listed in BizGrid there representing their organizations. Each received a table, but was encouraged to bring only a couple of brochures, and no big posters or large amount of collateral. The idea was to get all of the service providers in one room with the people looking for help, to mingle and have an intimate conversation and interaction, as opposed to a traditional service provider fair where they pass out a lot of flyers from behind a high table. There was also a pitch competition, and some educational panels, discussions, and workshops.” The event also featured food trucks and a cash bar.

The committee is working on getting a copy of the booklet into the hands of every business owner. “We have a team out delivering BizGrid,” says Camp. “We had them available at the BizGrid provider fair in November. Each service provider got at least 50 copies, and they can reach out to us to replenish that. BizGrid also has a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. There’s also *BizGrid Buzz* [an e-newsletter] that comes out bimonthly. We just re-launched that in September. Things had kind of fizzled out. Now we’re bringing that back and making it a more regular newsletter and incorporating our redesign.”

Working with a designer willing to create

mockups and responsive to feedback is key to creating a more user-friendly booklet, Camp says. Also key is creating a strong network of service providers. “Our network of service providers is very involved. They care a lot about the city and the businesses they serve. They wanted to work together toward the common goal of giving resources to people to grow the economy. BizGrid is a pretty static document; the work comes in keeping it alive once it’s printed.”

When starting from scratch, “one of the biggest things is to leverage your own resources,” says Camp. “When I first started on this project, it was a little difficult getting in touch with everybody because I didn’t have those relationships. But, in reaching out to those service providers with whom I did have a relationship, and asking them to get the message out to their network, we were able to reach out by leveraging what we had.”

The 2011 list of service providers was a starting point. “We reached out to make sure they were still open, and still wanted to be included,” Camp says. And organizations were asked to recommend any other service providers that should be invited to become part of the BizGrid. A digital contact form on the BizGrid website allows organizations to provide updates going forward, and, “we get inquiries from service providers that want to be included on the website,” she says.

Contact: Cydney Camp, Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, (313) 294-5803, ccamp@degc.org. **DIX**

Lighting projects enhance downtown economic development, revitalization, and tourism — Continued from page 1

Haven, CT; and Boston, MA, were explored during the recent International Downtown Association webinar, *New Research: Positive Economic Impacts of Lighting Projects*. Fifty-four percent of the downtown professionals participating said they already have iconic or architectural light displays in their city centers, while 93 percent said they were

exploring doing more with lighting in their downtowns.

Creating artistic infrastructure drives economic development

Light is being used by city centers to, “increase tourism, economic development, community engagement, and neighborhood

revitalization,” says Marina Leight, of the Philips Lighting Government Solutions team, a partner in River Lights.

Lighting the bridges connecting Little Rock to North Little Rock was on the communities’ wish list, but it took the combined donation of \$2 million from a local energy company and its charitable foundation to launch the municipal/county effort to string more than 2,000 energy-efficient, low-maintenance LED lights on three of the bridges. Custom light shows for each bridge can be programmed and synched with all three bridges or to create a scheme across all three structures.

The social and economic impacts of the light installations have been significant, according to Little Rock Assistant City Manager James Jones. Bonds between the two communities, as well as foot traffic, have increased. Because the lights can be customized, conventions in downtown Little Rock often have the bridges illuminated in special colors. The bridges have been lit for more than 105 days for conventions. The local CVB uses the opportunity for bridge lighting as a value-added sales tool when talking with meeting planners, and in meeting advertising. The CVB estimates the economic impact of conventions utilizing the bridges at \$19 million.

More than 20 nonprofits have also paid a reduced fee to have bridge lights reflect their color schemes. Regular rates begin at \$200 per evening for one bridge; \$500 for all three; and an additional \$100 for a special light show. From September 2014 to May 2016, more than \$13,000 had been raised from bridge lightings. These funds are used for maintenance of the bridges.

The inaugural lighting event attracted national, as well as local, media coverage. The CVB maintains a dedicated website for River Lights, and spends \$500,000 annually on direct advertising in which the Lights are prominently displayed. The downtown has made strides on



Creatively lit bridges are an economic development tool for city centers.

the social media front, as well, gaining impressions on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and Tumblr, as well as with photograph repositories such as Getty Images and Google Images. Several online media outlets have also featured coverage of River Lights.

Downtown areas within viewing distance of the bridges have seen additional investment and economic development since the light installation. Two downtown hotels have invested in significant renovations, and a downtown performance, convention, and exhibition space is undergoing a \$60 million renovation which will provide better views of the bridges from a ballroom and a new outdoor terrace. Local real estate brokers now list views of the bridges as an asset when advertising downtown condominiums.

According to the report, *Ambient light empowers places*, the total installation cost for River Lights was \$2.4 million; annual electricity usage is \$7,200; and the county’s Gross Regional Product has expanded more than \$1.2 million since the installation.



DowntownDevelopment.com

To read *Ambient light empowers places* in its entirety, visit our website and click on Web Extras.

A temporary installation earns its keep

Bay Lights, in San Francisco, CA (est. pop. 805,235), “is the largest architectural light sculpture in the world,” says Leight. “It was originally installed as a temporary exhibit, but overwhelming public support for it initiated another round of private funding to reinstall and maintain this as a permanent feature.”

The installation was initially meant to be a tourism draw, but impacts became much broader than anticipated, leading to the more permanent lighting project. More than 30 hotels and restaurants are located within viewing distance of the illuminated Bay Bridge. Some of these businesses reported as much as a 30-percent increase in revenue, as well as requests for later dinner reservations for better viewing. Property values within the viewing area have also increased, says the report.

The project has garnered the city national media coverage, as well as a feature-length documentary about the installation which has screened at multiple film festivals. Bay Lights also has a strong social media following.

The original installation cost about \$8 million; annual electricity costs are \$11,000; and, Philips says, an additional \$4 million was spent in 2015 to convert the lighting to a permanent display. The combined impact of construction in 2012 and 2015, and electricity usage, expanded the county’s Gross Regional Product by \$10 million. “The total impact on San Francisco

County is nearly \$18 million, including taxes, as well as the initial investment that remained in the county,” says Philips. State and local taxes generated as a result of the installations are more than \$570,000.

Lighting up other downtown assets

Communities need not have an iconic bridge to benefit from unique lighting displays. Gateway Community College in New Haven, CT (est. pop. 129,779), received funding from the state’s Commission on Culture and Tourism Art in Public Spaces program to install a large LED digital mural that would feature faces of students, faculty, and staff. The College Faces installation is seen as a symbol of Gateway Community College’s mission, “to bring the school community out into the streets, just as it brings the community into the campus,” says the report.

“The faces are rotated during the day,” says Leight. “I get a lot of questions about this installation. People like this as an idea to reinvent the downtown landscape.”

Del Boyette of Boyette Strategic Advisors said the project, which cost \$734,000, has had a \$1.4 million economic impact, including more than \$80,000 in state and local taxes.

And finally, in the heart of the new Innovation District in Boston, MA (est. pop. 617,594), a unique and colorful lighting installation inside District Hall captures the curiosity of passersby and, “reinforces an inviting quality,” according to the facility’s general manager, Nicole Fichera. “In fact they have a beacon effect that sucks people into the space.”

The facility offers space for entrepreneurs and innovators to meet for networking and events, and also includes a restaurant and café, a lounge, work space, and flexible pods for meetings, classes, and exhibitions. It is also the, “front door to Boston’s innovation community,” says Boyette.

The installation of the lighting cost about \$25,000, yet expanded the county’s Gross Regional Product by \$21,308 and had a total impact of \$37,413, in addition to attracting extra foot traffic to the area and the facility, says the report. **DIX**



Creative lighting projects are reinventing the downtown landscape.

Idea Exchange

Walk audit engages and informs

One of the most basic ways to assess the walkability of sidewalks and streets is with a walk audit. AARP provides a downloadable Walk Audit Tool Kit that can be used by professionals or local citizen groups. The walk audit download provides step-by-step instructions and checklists for examining intersections, sidewalks, driver behavior, public safety, and more.



The AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit and Leader's Guide may be accessed via the DowntownDevelopment.com website. Click on Web Extras.

300 businesses in 10 years

The SPARK program in Holyoke, MA, set an ambitious goal of 300 new businesses in 10 years. SPARK — Stimulating Potential, Accessing Resources & Knowledge — is part of a larger program in the state known as the Working Cities Challenge, led by the Federal Reserve of Boston.

In a wide-ranging interview with MassLive, Program Manager Tessa Murphy-Romboletti described the program objectives. "The goal of SPARK is to strengthen and grow the Holyoke economy from within its own residents, which are often under-represented and have untapped potential to increase business and social ventures within the city and region. SPARK also helps to eliminate barriers within the community for the startup business," she says.

An essential part of that work is a nine-week accelerator course, which

SPARK licenses from Co.Starters. "The Launch program is great for anyone who has ever had an idea for a business but isn't quite sure where to start or how to get their plans off the ground," Murphy-Romboletti says.

More on the Co.Starters program is available online at www.colab.com.

Big ideas, small ideas, fun ideas

The team at real estate blog Curbed has assembled 101 DIY ways that citizens and community leaders can improve their cities. Largely focused on low-cost physical improvements and connecting as a community, it is a fun read with some practical ideas that have appeared in *Downtown Idea Exchange* and *Downtown Promotion Reporter* in the past.



The article may be accessed via the DowntownDevelopment.com website. Click on Web Extras.

Providing everything drivers need to know

Downtown Houston, TX, provides a wealth of parking information on its website. Enter a destination and the site finds the best places to park. Want to know if free parking applies on Thanksgiving day? Check the calendar. Trying to use the pay-by-phone option for the parkmobile system? There are step-by-step instructions.

There's even a list of helpful parking tips, such as Number 8: Explore downtown by foot, which

ISSN 0012-5822

Downtown Idea Exchange

A publication of the
Downtown Development Center

36 Midvale Road, Suite 2E
Mountain Lakes, NJ 07046

Phone: (973) 265-2300 • Fax: (973) 402-6056

Email: info@DowntownDevelopment.com

Website: www.DowntownDevelopment.com

Editor

Sheila Grant, ext. 110

sgrant@DowntownDevelopment.com

Technical Editor

Laurence A. Alexander

Customer Service

Mary Pagliaroli, ext. 101

mpagliaroli@DowntownDevelopment.com

Reprints and Permissions

Michael DeWitt, ext. 107

mjdewitt@DowntownDevelopment.com

Publisher

Margaret DeWitt, ext. 106

msdewitt@DowntownDevelopment.com

Downtown Idea Exchange® is published monthly by the Downtown Development Center. The Center provides news, information and data for successful downtown revitalization through its newsletters, books, reports, and website.



Alexander Communications Group

© 2017 Alexander Communications Group, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Alexander Communications Group.

Subscription Order Form:

Please start/renew my one-year subscription to *Downtown Idea Exchange* for \$227.*

NAME

TITLE

FIRM/ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

N15



MAIL: 36 Midvale Road, Suite 2E
Mountain Lakes, NJ 07046



FAX: (973) 402-6056



PHONE: (973) 265-2300



EMAIL: info@DowntownDevelopment.com

* North America, \$227. Elsewhere, \$257
(includes international delivery).

Idea Exchange

notes, “Contrary to popular belief, Downtown Houston is walkable! Most of downtown’s most popular destinations are never more than a 5-10 minute walk from each other. For example, you can easily park in the Historic District, grab a drink at one of the neighborhood bars, then walk to Sundance Cinemas at Bayou Place to see the latest indie flick. Walking is more fun, adventurous, and not to mention, lighter on your pocketbook!”

The website is at www.downtownhouston.org/parking.

City considers new downtown mobility options

In an ongoing effort to improve mobility in the city center, Las Vegas, NV, is eyeing pedicabs, three-wheeled bicycles that can carry up to three passengers, and pedal-buses that accommodate four or more passengers. In November the Las Vegas City Council approved an ordinance allowing the vehicles on downtown streets and providing licensing regulations. The city is also considering a free electric-powered shuttle service from The Free Ride (see *DIX* October 2016). The service is funded through advertising and sponsorships sold by the company.

People along the vehicles’ mapped route could summon a ride via an on-demand app or catch one at a fixed stop. “It is a hop-on, hop-off service as long as the driver has a safe and legal spot to pull over,” James Mirras, the company’s co-founder tells the *Las Vegas Sun*.

Food Halls come to America

Walnut Creek, CA, may get a downtown food hall. Long popular in Europe, food halls typically feature food retailers and restaurants. “It’s just catching on now here in the United States,” developer Brian Hirahara told the city’s Design Review Commission.

Plans call for a 33,387-square-foot two-story main building with about 21,942 square feet devoted to restaurant space, 11,795 square feet for outdoor dining, and about 900 square feet dedicated to grocers and artisan food vendors. Built on a vacant lot, the food hall will offer fast-casual, food truck, and street-food styles says the local *East Bay Times*. **DIX**

New facility provides parking and community space

An Automated Vehicle Storage and Retrieval System (AVSR) is helping the city of West Hollywood, CA, meet parking needs and provide desirable amenities in a much smaller footprint than a conventional parking structure with a similar capacity.

The automated parking garage opened to fanfare in spring 2016 and recently won an Innovation Award from the National Parking Association. The project helps, “resolve the growing problem of residents and businesses struggling to find parking in the increasingly crowded mid-city area,” said Lauren Meister, West Hollywood mayor, when announcing the project.

The space savings nets more than 7,000 square feet for a community plaza and entry service area that will be used for community events. The automated garage will help to answer the city’s need for parking for city hall and for surrounding businesses.



To see video of the AVSR system in operation, visit DowntownDevelopment.com and click on Web Extras.

Order *Downtown Idea Exchange* today and save 20%

This unique three-part service includes:

Downtown Idea Exchange. Each month, *Downtown Idea Exchange* shares practical strategies and tactics for improving the physical, social and economic conditions downtown.

Web Extras. Each issue of *Downtown Idea Exchange* includes links to valuable background material, additional information, and related resources at the newsletter website.

Business Recruitment and Retention. You will also receive the Executive Report, *Business Recruitment and Retention*. In its pages, you'll see how communities of all sizes are supporting at-risk businesses, nurturing start-ups, and bringing the best new businesses downtown. Sold separately for \$29.50, it is free with your new subscription.



Subscribe today and take advantage of the special New Year savings!

Risk-Free Order Form — Fax to (973) 402-6056

☒ Yes, I want my downtown to prosper in the New Year!

Please send me the monthly *Downtown Idea Exchange* at the Special Introductory Rate of \$181 — that's a \$46 saving off the regular subscription price. I'll also receive the Executive Report, *Business Recruitment and Retention* — a \$29.95 value!

☐ Payment Enclosed.

(Rush my Report by return mail.)

☐ Check enclosed.

☐ Charge my credit card.

☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ AmEx ☐ Discover

Card Number

Exp. Date

Signature

☐ Bill me.

All checks must be in U.S. dollars or equivalent. Outside of North America please add \$30 for airmail delivery. Please make checks payable to Downtown Development Center.



Mail: Downtown Development Center
36 Midvale Road, Suite 2E
Mountain Lakes, NJ 07046



Phone: (973) 265-2300



Fax: (973) 402-6056



Email: info@DowntownDevelopment.com



Web: www.DowntownDevelopment.com

This special offer expires January 10, 2017

Name

Title

Firm

Address

City

State

Zip

Country

Phone

Email

No-risk, money-back guarantee:

You may cancel your subscription at any time for a full, 100% refund.