

# *Strategic Plan* 2017 - 2019



Downtown Inc

## Introduction

Downtown Inc is the trade name for a joint venture between the York Business Improvement District Authority (YBIDA) and Main Street York, inc. (MSY), a 501(c)(3) not for profit. Together they work to enhance and foster reinvestment in downtown York. The organization is comprised of a staff of seven, a board of eleven directors, and more than 100 dedicated and committed volunteers.

In 2006, the board of directors for both MSY and the YBIDA determined that, due to the similar missions of the organizations, a merger of the two entities would be the most effective use of time and resources. This merged entity would be called Downtown Inc. Although the two merged entities share the same board and mission, their financials are kept separate due to funding sources and differing tax exemption determinations. The board of directors is tasked with oversight of the YBIDA and the vitality of the charitable arm of Downtown Inc, formerly Main Street York, Inc. Financial support for the organization is paid entirely through a joint funding effort between Downtown Inc's charitable fundraising efforts and the YBIDA assessments collected annually from downtown property owners.

A constant for the Downtown Inc organization has been its commitment and work on the four points of the "Main Street" approach:

- Economic Development/Restructuring
- Physical Appearance/Design
- Promotion and Marketing
- Organization/Administration

Downtown Inc is now at a turning point, in terms of expanded capacity, new leadership, and an increasingly vibrant central businesses district. The board of directors felt it was the right moment to assess our past successes, identify missed opportunities, and plot a course for the future.

## Overview of the Planning Process

The Downtown Inc board of directors engaged CTY Consulting Group to facilitate the planning process, conduct stakeholder interviews and surveys, and develop an early draft of this plan.

The strategic planning process began by interviewing 18 community leaders and all Downtown Inc staff. Topics included the value Downtown Inc brings to the community, the YBIDA assessment, future direction of the organization, potential strategic alignment with other community-based organizations, revenue streams, and the characteristics of the next leader for the organization.

**Community leaders interviewed:**

Louis J. Appell, Jr. | Doug Berman | Tony Campisi | Jane Conover | Joe Crosswhite | Dominic DelliCarpini | Anne Druck | Todd Fogdall  
Jan Herrold | Carol Hill-Evans | Doug Hoke | Bob Kinsley | Bill Kerlin | Kevin Mosser | Blanda Nace | Henry Nixon | Bill Shipley  
Cindy Steele

In order to solicit input from a broader group of stakeholders, a survey of 16 questions was distributed to 311 individuals. 63 responded for a response rate of 20%. **Topics included:**

- Community awareness and perception of the past and current initiatives of Downtown Inc;



- Value assessment of the benefits brought to the York community and individual businesses by Downtown Inc;
- Effectiveness of the Downtown Inc staff and communication efforts;
- How closely aligned are the priorities of Downtown Inc and those of business owners;
- Perception of the existing and potential impact of Downtown Inc; and
- Suggestions for opportunities to partner and collaborate on initiatives to increase ROI on investment capital and to improve services offered.

Following the interviews and survey, the board held a half-day planning retreat on April 13, 2016. Topics discussed included the mission, vision, and values of Downtown Inc, a SWOT analysis, review of the interview and survey results, and strategic discussions. From May through July, the Executive Committee and the Board reviewed the draft plan and provided feedback. On July 13, 2016, the board approved the new mission, vision and values statements, but decided to table approval of the draft strategic plan until the new chief executive officer, Silas Chamberlin, was hired in October 2016. After additional feedback from staff and community partners, Chamberlin presented a final draft of the plan to the board for approval on April 12, 2017. The development of a three-year implementation plan will follow.

## *Mission Statement*

To drive, enhance, and encourage investment in Downtown York.

## *Vision Statement*

Through leadership and community collaboration, we will drive York's prosperity and be a national model for successful downtown organizations.

## *Values Statement*

1. We embrace our role as the **connector** in downtown York.
2. We **champion** the interests of downtown businesses and residents.
3. We are **action-oriented** and results-driven.
4. We have a **vision** of the future that requires us to challenge conventional thinking.
5. We anticipate and **adapt** to change ensuring we remain vital in a dynamic environment.
6. We are focused on **professionalism and best Practices** in all of our work.

## *Strategic Imperatives, Goals, & Objectives*

### **Strategic Imperative #1: Continually Improve the Value of the Four Core Focus Areas**

The Main Street component of Downtown Inc is based upon a national model that focuses on business and residential development, placemaking; promotion; and public safety. Working at a grassroots level in these areas of focus have been, and will continue to be, critical keys for success. As the only organization in downtown York that focuses on these core areas, they will be used to guide our allocation of staff time and resources.



• **Goal #1**

**Enhance Our Business and Residential Development Efforts**

Investment in businesses and real estate in the Business Improvement District (BID) are foundational to the success of Downtown York. In order to attract investment, there needs to be a sufficient number of consumers patronizing businesses, renting or purchasing residences, and making repeat visits to the downtown.

**Objective #1**

Develop and implement a strategic Business Recruitment, Retention, and Expansion Program to ensure downtown attracts and retains a diverse and sustainable mix of businesses.

**Objective #2**

Use technological solutions to build a database related to the downtown business community and monitor metrics for business health and growth over time.

**Objective #3**

Work with the Business Recruitment Committee and the private sector to assess first floor retail and office occupancy rates and determine occupancy goals.

**Objective #4**

Proactively support and inform business and residential developments that impact the downtown landscape.

**Objective #5**

Through the Economic Development and Business Recruitment committees, convene meetings of key stakeholders to mitigate threats and leverage opportunities related to downtown's economic vitality.

**Objective #6**

Provide strategic support to micro-districts and merchant groups, while continuously seeking to build their capacity and gauge their success.

**Objective #7**

Create and implement economic development plans the BID, parts of the BID, and major gateways, and assist city-wide and county-wide entities in their economic development planning.

**Objective #8**

Develop and implement a strategy to increase access to business opportunity and make the business community more inclusive of all city residents and visitors.

• **Goal #2**

**Enhance Our Placemaking Efforts**

Downtown York must be an inviting and comfortable place in order to attract people to work, play, and live here. Downtown Inc is focused on improvements to infrastructure, public space, and the downtown environment to make downtown York attractive and safe.



**Objective #1**

Continuously implement and improve our strategy to maintain an outstanding, unique public environment for residents and visitors.

**Objective #2**

Work with the County of York and City of York to develop and continuously refine Downtown Inc's transportation agenda based on "complete streets" and multi-modal transportation improvements.

**Objective #3**

Complete the City of York's portion of the Heritage Rail Trail.

**Objective #4**

Working with the City of York and the General Authority, proactively develop an overall parking and wayfinding strategy within the central business district.

**Objective #5**

Improve the policies, committee structure, and funding stream that govern the development, placement, and maintenance of public art throughout the downtown.

**Objective #6**

Expand the capacity of the Clean-Up Crew through new equipment, more staff, and good management.

**Objective #7**

Ensure the fiscal sustainability of Downtown Inc's urban landscapes strategy.

**Objective #8**

Continue to seek opportunities to leverage the Codorus Creek and its corridor as a major community asset.

**• Goal #3**

**Enhance Our Promotion Efforts**

The promotion and marketing capabilities of Downtown Inc are deep and well respected. Being able to continually attract people downtown by making them aware of the activities happening is critical to the vitality of the area.

**Objective #1**

Create and implement a communications plan for the organization and its downtown activities.

**Objective #2**

Articulate and celebrate the behind-the-scenes work Downtown Inc's board, staff and volunteers do to make the central business district thrive.

**Objective #3**

Brand and promote Downtown York as a destination for county residents and tourists visiting from more than 50 miles away.



#### Objective #4

Expand the quality and impact of community events, while assessing the sustainability and impact of all existing and proposed events.

#### Objective #5

Expand our social media reach to 25,000 Facebook and Twitter followers by 2019.

#### Objective #6

Partner with York College, Penn State York, and other educational institutions to increase the number of students that visit downtown York.

### • Goal #4

#### Enhance Our Public Safety Efforts

Our goal is to address both real and perceived issues of public safety. The visible presence of security helps assure patrons, business owners, and residents that they will be safe when spending time in downtown York. Working with local law enforcement agencies to collaboratively reduce crime will create greater visibility and convey greater credibility to all stakeholders.

#### Objective #1

Build stronger relationships with the York City Police Department and York County Sherriff's Department in order to enhance the level of involvement with and awareness of Downtown Inc priorities.

#### Objective #2

Continue to work collaboratively with YCPD to educate property and business owners on how to mitigate crime risks.

#### Objective #3

Evaluate ways to help the York City Police Department develop local expertise in crime prevention through environmental design. (CPTED)

#### Objective #4

Leverage partnerships with the City of York, Better York, York County Economic Alliance, York County Bar Association, and others to secure new resources for our public safety initiatives.

### **Strategic Imperative #2: Expand the Presence and Influence of Downtown Inc beyond the BID**

Downtown Inc should provide a high level of expertise and service across the footprint of the BID and seek opportunities to expand that expertise—and knowledge of our work—beyond the traditional boundaries of the BID.

### • Goal #1

#### Identify New Geographies Where Downtown Inc Services Strategically Influence the Success of Downtown

Downtown Inc's primary service area will always be the BID; however, the organization must recognize that threats and opportunities beyond the BID boundaries have the potential to adversely or positively affect downtown York. As such, the organization should strategically engage in external activities that benefit downtown York.

#### Objective #1

Partner with the City of York and other stakeholders to beautify gateways and image corridors within and beyond the boundaries of the BID, to ensure downtown visitors have a consistently positive experience.



#### Objective #2

Ensure that signage leading from major highways and gateways properly and consistently reference Downtown York.

#### Objective #3

Explore Downtown Inc's role in advocating for, support, and providing technical expertise to the development and reinvigoration of neighborhood associations, Neighborhood Improvement Districts, and/or other economic revitalization organizations within the city and the region.

#### Objective #4

Continue to participate in relevant taskforces and stakeholder groups related to regional planning and transportation, as a means of proactively identifying threats and opportunities before they affect downtown York.

### • Goal #2

#### Increase Awareness of the Work and Accomplishments of Downtown Inc beyond the BID

Since its inception, Downtown Inc has been the behind the scenes facilitator of many successful initiatives in Downtown York, but this story is unknown to many stakeholders beyond the boundaries of the BID. Downtown Inc should proactively connect with major businesses and other stakeholders to explain why downtown—and Downtown Inc—are important to the county and the region.

#### Objective #1

Seek opportunities to share the Downtown Inc story with stakeholders, businesses, and influencers throughout York County through public presentations, one-on-one meetings, strategic public relations activities, and relationships with the county commissioners and the York County Economic Alliance.

#### Objective #2

Identify opportunities to promote and share Downtown Inc successes with both regional and national audiences by participating in conferences and placing articles in relevant publications.

#### Objective #3

Evaluate our relationship with the National Main Street Center, Pennsylvania Downtown Center, the Urban Land Institute, and other fee-based membership organizations that have the potential to promote our work.

#### Objective #4

Develop an advocacy strategy to continuously cultivate relationships with our legislative delegation and relevant policymakers at the local, state, and federal level.

#### Objective #5

Identify opportunities for Downtown Inc staff, especially the leadership team, to serve on prominent boards, taskforces, and committees, in order to build relationships with key influencers and increase the prestige of the organization.

### Strategic Imperative #3: Recruit and Retain the Best and the Brightest People

Downtown Inc has a legacy of its staff and board working hand-in-hand to increase the capacity of the organization and execute on our strategic goals. To continue this legacy, the organization will continue to recruit the best and the brightest people on staff, in governance, and as volunteers.



• **Goal #1**

**Recruit and Retain an Effective and High-Energy Staff**

Downtown Inc is only as good as the staff it is able to recruit and retain. Proactively identifying the needs of the organization and building relationships will make the difference in being able to bring the correct skill sets into the organization in a timely manner—and retaining them over time.

**Objective #1**

Seek opportunities to hire candidates from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds and constantly evaluate hiring practices to ensure inclusivity.

**Objective #2**

Build and maintain relationships with local talent through volunteer opportunities, paid and unpaid internships, and other creative collaborations, especially with higher education institutions.

**Objective #3**

Create and communicate opportunities for growth within and between roles.

**Objective #4**

Provide opportunities for professional development that expands our organization’s capacity and skill set.

**Objective #5**

Proactively maintain and foster a professional, respectful, inclusive, and dynamic culture.

• **Goal #2**

**Recruit and Retain a High-Energy, Engaged Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors is responsible for both the governance of the organization as well as increasing its prominence in the community. Downtown Inc will benefit from a board that represents our various stakeholders, has the capacity for individual giving, and exercise influence throughout the community.

**Objective #1**

Recruit board members that represent diverse skill sets and perspectives.

**Objective #2**

Provide clear guidance to Advisory Board members about roles and expectations during the recruitment and onboarding process.

**Objective #3**

Develop and maintain a pipeline of board candidates.

**Objective #4**

Develop and implement a board officer succession plan.

**Objective #5**

Provide regular opportunities for ongoing board development around governance issues and opportunities for continuing education related to economic development and other aspects of Downtown Inc’s work.



• **Goal #3**

**Recruit and Retain an Influential and Engaged Advisory Board**

Advisory Board members are especially influential in the community. They serve as high-profile ambassadors for the organization, provide guidance on strategy, and substantially contribute to the organization's financial development strategy.

**Objective #1**

Strategically recruit advisory board members to ensure diverse skill sets and perspectives are represented.

**Objective #2**

Provide clear guidance to Advisory Board members about roles and expectations during the recruitment and onboarding process.

**Objective #3**

Cultivate relationships with individual Advisory Board members between meetings and identify opportunities to engage them with specific projects and programs.

**Objective #4**

Develop and implement an Advisory Board leadership succession plan.

• **Goal #4**

**Understand the Volunteer Needs of the Organization and Develop a Volunteer Strategy**

Volunteers are important to successfully implementing Downtown Inc's ambitious agenda.

**Objective #1**

Conduct a volunteer needs assessment by the four core focus areas.

**Objective #2**

Develop a volunteer utilization strategy for each core focus area.

**Objective #3**

Evaluate the structure and role of the organization's existing volunteer committee structure and adapt the committees to make them as impactful as possible.

**Objective #4**

Adapt the roles and responsibilities of staff to better manage the recruitment and supervision of volunteer support.

**Objective #5**

Use volunteer opportunities to identify individuals who could potentially serve on a committee or the Board of Directors.

**Strategic Imperative #4: Develop a Balanced, Financially Sustainable Business Model**

Downtown Inc has traditionally relied on two primary sources of revenue, the BID assessment and what many view as philanthropy. The opportunity moving forward is for an optimized BID assessment that is sensitive to other mandatory payments for City property owners and a contributed revenue model that focuses more on the community value generated by an investment in Downtown Inc instead of a philanthropic gift, because it is "the right thing to do."



• **Goal #1**

**Create a Productive Contributed Revenue Model**

Create a sustained revenue stream that supports the day-to-day operations based on the value delivered by Downtown Inc, help which will ensure the long-term viability of the organization.

**Objective #1**

Create an annual development plan for the organization with best and worst-case scenario projections and quarterly tracking thresholds.

**Objective #2**

Launch an individual giving program targeting donors of between \$50 and \$1,000.

**Objective #3**

Launch a business membership program targeting downtown merchants and other small businesses.

**Objective #4**

Create a strategy to increase the number of Tier 1 Donors (\$20,000+) and create a pipeline for new Tier 2 Donors (\$5,000+).

**Objective #5**

Create a Board of Directors giving plan with clear expectations for either “giving” or “getting” a specific level of donations.

**Objective #6**

Develop a planned giving program and a strategy to promote it.

**Objective #7**

Create a stewardship plan for key donors.

**Objective #8**

Explore and implement technological solutions to manage membership, donations, solicitations, grants, and stewardship activities.

**Objective #9**

Explore grant funding opportunities to support operations, programs, and specific projects.

• **Goal #2**

**Optimize the BID Assessment Revenue Stream**

The BID assessment is a delicate topic as many stakeholders view it as a tax. Downtown Inc should clearly articulate the importance of this revenue stream to fulfilling the organization’s mission. Any adjustments to the BID rate must be coordinated with City of York officials to ensure it fits with a larger city-wide strategy.

**Objective #1**

Work with York City officials and significant accounts to determine the appropriate long-term BID assessment strategy.



**Objective #2**

Explore the opportunities and challenges of expanding the BID footprint.

**Objective #3**

Explore the opportunities available for additional revenue from property owners that are not paying but should be or are capable of making a “payment in lieu of” the assessment.

**Objective #4**

Develop and execute a strategic communication plan focused on the value Downtown Inc delivers to property owners and businesses that pay the BID assessment.

**• Goal #3**

**Identify and Explore Opportunities for Greater Collaboration**

Downtown Inc’s mission overlaps with several key partners, including the York County Economic Alliance, the York County Convention & Visitors Bureau, the City of York, Better York, and others. There may be opportunities for partnerships with these like-minded organizations that result in cost savings and efficiencies for both parties.

**Objective #1**

Explore opportunities to improve the compensation and benefits packages available to full-time employees through cost-sharing partnerships and development of new financial resources.

**Objective #2**

Identify opportunities to maximize the benefits afforded by consolidating back office services.

**Objective #3**

Evaluate the pros and cons of co-location in a single downtown space.

