

City of Santa Rosa – Economic Development and Housing Department

DOWNTOWN PROGRAM WORK PLAN

UPDATED APRIL 14, 2008

The goal of the Downtown Program is to strengthen and support the Downtown in a comprehensive, proactive, and collaborative manner. The Program capitalizes on Downtown's existing resources, and creates and attracts new resources to affect positive change by enhancing "sense of place." The Program will further the City's efforts to attract innovative, entrepreneurial and creative individuals and companies, and create a model urban live-work-play environment that is linked to community, cultural, and open space amenities. The Downtown Program Work Plan is organized according to the four nationally recognized focus areas for creating downtown vitality: Promotion/Identity-Building, Design/Physical Improvements, Economic Development, and Organization.

I. Promotion/Identity-Building

Purpose: Identify, develop and promote the image and promise of Downtown by marketing its districts' unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors; create an effective promotion strategy to forge this positive image ; and create an atmosphere of fun and activity

Goals:

1. Create brand recognition of Downtown and its programs/events
2. Establish effective marketing/PR strategies
3. Increase the level of activity in, and use of, the Downtown

Strategy: Develop the image of Downtown with a link to existing collaborative messaging/branding efforts

- Continue participation in the coordinated efforts with Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce, Santa Rosa Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), and Santa Rosa Main Street (SRMS)
- Continue participation in the City's intra-departmental marketing committee

Strategy: Create and implement the Downtown Business Tool Kit (Shared task with Economic Development element of this work plan) to help businesses improve their success in Downtown

- Create programs such as business development trainings, business resources clearinghouse, advertising discount packages, marketing template package, architectural design assistance, tenant improvement and façade improvement loans, etc.
- Work with Police Department to foster use of best management practices among Downtown entertainment businesses
- Create a Downtown-specific "brand book" for City and business users

Strategy: Utilize/expand upon existing tools and programs to communicate about activities in, and goals for, Downtown; and develop a marketing/PR strategy

- Create and distribute a quarterly newsletter and other resources and collateral materials promoting Downtown programs, activities, events, and City services
- Maintain a Downtown-specific website
- Review and potentially revise the City's banner ordinance with an eye toward creating a more effective banner program
- Maintain the information kiosk in Courthouse Square (CHS)
- Collaborate with the City Manager's Office (CMO) and SRMS to develop a master calendar of Downtown events to keep merchants and other Downtown stakeholders informed and prepared for potential event impacts
- Take advantage of special projects as they arise for the purposes of cross promoting and expanding outreach

Strategy: Play a leadership role in the creation and/or leveraging of events to increase interest in, and build identify of, Downtown and the Downtown Arts District

- Facilitate development of comprehensive Downtown events strategy with other departments to ensure year-round programming
- Manage creation/implementation of annual events such as First Friday Downtown Art Walk, Downtown Puzzle Hunt, Thursday Noon Concerts, and Chalk It Up/Kid's Market
- Lead the production of the Amgen Tour of California
- Develop and/or leverage other event opportunities
- Assist as needed with SRMS productions by providing such things as technical help, access to resources, fast-tracking City processes

Promotion Accomplishments to Date:

- North Star Destination Strategies community brand strategy completed and accepted by partners (the City's Economic Development Program, Chamber of Commerce, CVB, SRMS); initiating joint economic development marketing campaign using new brand
- Staff working with the CMO to modify community brand for City-wide use and create a City-wide brand management guide
- An increase in cross-departmental and coordinated interdepartmental marketing and shared resources has resulted in elevating the Downtown's overall presence, and other programs gaining presence via Downtown outreach efforts
- Distributed the seventh Downtown quarterly newsletter; in coordination with SRMS, met with merchants and Downtown stakeholders to unveil the year-out 2008 event list; quarterly event rack card and event-specific rack cards and posters created as needed; upkeep of information at the CHS Information Kiosk; upkeep of the Downtown Web page and events list; and contributions to private sector newsletters and outreach efforts

- Revised street pole banner guidelines are in the process of being written; the All America City/Downtown Arts District banners are in place
- Staff has initiated discussions with the CMO on how to create and share a web-based master calendar of events specific to the Downtown
- Staff is in active coordination mode for the 2008 First Friday Downtown Art Walk, including development of potential cost sharing with the private sector – e.g. offering businesses sponsorship opportunities such as paying for street musicians
- Staff led the coordination of the 2008 Amgen Tour of California and, while still assessing the final 2008 budget, is researching new approaches to implementation of the 2009 event; to further promote Downtown, staff led the effort to capitalize on the international reach of the Amgen Tour of California
- Expanding on the successful development of the first annual Thursday Noon concerts, staff has doubled the number of weekly concerts and has initiated conversations with the Railroad Square Association to replicate, modify or incorporate CHS side events in the Railroad Square area
- With the development of the hugely successful first annual Downtown Santa Rosa Puzzle Hunt staff has expanded the offering of City-sponsored events to every month with the exception of March and November

II. Design/Physical Improvements

Purpose: Capitalize on and improve Downtown's physical assets; create an inviting atmosphere to convey a visual message about the comfort and vibrancy of Downtown; and increase the utility and user-friendly quality of Downtown

Goals: 1. Improve and maintain the physical environment of the Downtown
2. Develop policies to reflect City goals and today's market

Strategy: Coordinate with City departments and private sector partners to address maintenance and physical/visual improvement issues

- Pursue development of Street Furnishing Palettes for Downtown
- Develop Façade Improvement Loan Program
- Coordinate with the Public Works Department on:
 - Expansion of special maintenance services in the downtown core
 - Implementation of special improvement projects such as street furniture purchases and maintenance, increased landscaping, etc.
 - Implementation of Pedestrian Linkages Program improvements
- Coordinate with the Recreation and Parks Department on street tree improvements
- Coordinate with the Police Department for development of a private property graffiti abatement program

- Coordinate with partners to assist with private improvement initiatives such as SRMS' spring and fall clean-up days
- Pursue or support special projects and opportunities such as Transit Mall improvements with the Transit and Parking Department
- Coordinate with the Office of Advance Planning and Public Policy on studies and implementation strategies pertaining to Downtown (e.g. corridor plans, General Plan Amendment)

Strategy: Review City ordinances and policies pertaining to Downtown's physical environment

Design/Physical Improvements Accomplishments to Date

- Drafted Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit consultant proposals for Street Furnishing Palettes project in consultation with the Office of Advance Planning and Public Policy, Design Review Board Members, and key staff in other departments; issuance of RFP can occur in mid-2008 pending final review, administration plan, and funding confirmation
- Developed Façade Improvement Loan Program launched in early 2008
- Surveyed locations, contents, and conditions of the 200+ newsracks in Downtown; coordinating with Public Works for enforcement to address "clean and neat" policy infringements in near term; researched and prepared potential framework for long-term newsrack program in Downtown
- Helped spearhead the establishment of a Downtown Recycling roundtable comprised of other City departments, outside agencies, and community members; projects include: 1) Secured \$43,000 in grant funding from Sonoma County Waste Management Agency (SCWMA) to purchase 30 recycling containers for the Downtown, to be in place by late Spring 2008. 2) Partnering with North Bay Corporation on an outreach campaign to assess and increase recycling efforts among Downtown businesses, launching in April 2008; staff leveraged \$2,800 in grant funds from SCWMA to provide recycling bins for give-away incentive for campaign
- Coordinated with Public Works for increase in special maintenance service territory and expanded planting budget, starting in July 2007
- Purchased and placed on Courthouse Square West a set of permanent picnic tables to encourage daily use of that area and to facilitate events; reception of tables has been very positive; umbrellas were also purchased to use at the tables during special events
- Provided assistance to Railroad Square Association for purchase of new district pole banners, to be installed by summer 2008
- Assisted Public Works with the outreach and education effort associated with the pilot Pedestrian Scramble at 4th and D Streets
- Coordinated with Public Works to identify \$100,000 in redevelopment funds for design work on the future 6th Street underpass, in keeping with the North Pedestrian Linkages project. The funds are projected to be used during FY 08-09

- Coordinated the creation of the Downtown information kiosk in the former bus shelter on CHS, including reconfiguration of structure, painting, lighting, signage, bulletin boards, and planters.
- Coordinated with the Recreation and Parks Department for implementation of new street tree gates and guards with a contribution of Downtown Redevelopment funds.
- Served on Courthouse Square Design Process Committee and Technical Advisory Committee
- Purchased 55 new trashcans for Downtown area
- Served on Technical Advisory Committee for Station Area Plan

III. Economic Development

Purpose: Support existing Downtown businesses and recruit new businesses to respond to the current market, balance business mix, and provide amenity for Downtown users and residents; convert unused space into productive property; sharpen the competitiveness of business enterprise

Goals: 1. Attract and retain a variety of businesses and uses
2. Enhance the spirit of cooperation and community

Strategy: Develop a strategic approach and specific tactics for business development

- Work with Chabin Concepts to develop a business attraction and existing business development strategy for Downtown

Strategy: Create and implement the Downtown Business Tool Kit (shared task with promotion element of this Work Plan) to help businesses improve their success in Downtown

- Create programs such as tenant improvement and façade improvement loans, business development trainings, business resources clearinghouse, advertising discount packages, marketing template package, architectural design assistance, etc.
- Work with the Police Department to foster use of best management practices among Downtown entertainment businesses

Strategy: Attract key target businesses to Downtown

- Create “opportunities” marketing and outreach packet of information targeted to businesses, property owners, and real estate agents
- Promote the Downtown Business Tool Kit as incentive to locate Downtown
- Analyze and implement best practices for cultural use attraction

Strategy: Promote and leverage Downtown public parking resources as an asset for businesses and visitors

Economic Development Accomplishments to Date

- Developed Façade Improvement and Tenant Improvement loan programs for the Downtown, launched in early 2008; the Tenant Improvement Program targets grocery stores, drug stores, arts and cultural uses, retail, and restaurants as key businesses
- Retained Chabin Concepts to develop a specific strategy to guide City and private partners' business recruitment and development efforts in the Downtown; field study kicked off with onsite work, focus groups, and a shopper survey in early April 2008; the strategy is expected to be completed by fall 2008
- Organizing restaurant business development training and four-part "Retail Academy" training for Downtown businesses to begin in June 2008; exploring opportunities for expanding the program into the next fiscal year if the initial trainings are well-received
- Coordinating with Utilities and Recreation and Parks Departments and North Coast Bank for production of a "Downtown Business Fair" on June 24, to provide business owners and employees easy opportunities to learn about ways to save money by reducing energy use, increasing recycling, taking advantage of rebates and incentives, and using "green" best practices
- Worked with Transit and Parking to organize a series of community meetings about Downtown parking for March-May 2008, to present information about upcoming changes and improvements to parking systems and receive input from community members and Downtown stakeholders; initial discussions have identified parking promotion and development of a merchant validation program as key opportunity areas
- Wrote, designed, and produced a "Downtown Parking Information Package" in coordination with Transit and Parking staff and distributed to all Downtown businesses in fall 2007; coordinated with SRMS on graphic design of parking map postcard, printed, and distributed to businesses, visitors, and at events
- Recruited the California Downtown Association's (CDA) 2008 annual statewide conference, a gathering of 200+ professionals in the Downtown revitalization field; developing two evening networking events, soliciting sponsors, organizing panels and tours, and developing conference program and content with CDA; conference will be held October 1-3, 2008 at the Hyatt Vineyard Creek Hotel
- Efforts to build a relationship with the proposed Children's Museum of the North Bay to encourage this museum to locate in Downtown have included featuring the "Mobile Museum" at Downtown events to increase visibility

IV. Organization

Purpose: Establish common goals for Downtown's development, and build and organize consensus and cooperation among Downtown stakeholders

- Goals:
1. Provide proactive and streamlined City services for the benefit of the Downtown
 2. Support private sector organizations that promote and service the Downtown
 3. Increase resources that support Downtown programs

Strategy: Establish an interdepartmental Downtown Team to capitalize on existing or planned activities in the Downtown, and to provide proactive and streamlined City service for the benefit of Downtown

- Identify point people from key City departments to participate on the Downtown Team; build interdepartmental relationships through the Team to streamline services, facilitate communication and resource-sharing, create new programs to address service gaps, and establish the Downtown Program as the hub for information about Downtown

Strategy: Support and provide technical assistance to private sector partners such as SRMS and Railroad Square Association

- Attend SRMS Board and committee meetings; provide technical assistance in the areas of organizational development, and program development and implementation; manage the City-SRMS contract; relationship-building to better leverage resources

Strategy: Build relationships with Downtown business and property owners to facilitate communication and service delivery, and foster leadership on Downtown improvement

Strategy: Leverage internal and external resources for Downtown improvement

- Manage the redevelopment funds establishing the Downtown Program and allotted for cross-departmental activities; coordinate with other departments to leverage their resources for Downtown improvement; and seek outside funding as appropriate

Organization Accomplishments to Date:

- The Downtown Team was convened in February 2007 and continues to provide valuable collaborative opportunities; collaborative efforts and resource-sharing among departments have increased since launch of Downtown Program in January 2007
- Staff has worked closely with SRMS on a number of projects, including a great deal of technical support related to the new "Community Partners Program," SRMS' new fundraising and outreach campaign; technical assistance, project development and implementation, and event coordination with SRMS have averaged 10 staff hours per week
- Staff organized a series of successful meetings between SRMS and Railroad Square Association representatives to discuss better communication and collaboration between the two organizations
- Staff the City Council Downtown Subcommittee on an ongoing basis