

Downtown Priorities for FY 2011

With the beginning of the new fiscal year comes a reaffirmation of the five year goals for downtown -but in a revised priority order. Each identified goal has an attainment horizon of more than one year but less than five years and several prioritized objectives to help advance the likelihood of individual goal success. Downtown goals for the new fiscal year are as follows: 1.) increase community awareness about the value of downtown, 2.) continue implementation of the Downtown Retail Strategy, 3.) increase residential offerings and occupancy, and 4.) increase visits to downtown by tourists and other non-residents. FY 2011 goals were developed by the Downtown Improvement Board (DIB) during its annual planning retreat in July and confirmed at its August meeting prior to the beginning of implementation in October.

For the goal to “Increase community awareness about the value of downtown”, identified objectives planned for implementation include: continued presentation and promotion of the Palafox Public Market during the spring, summer, and fall, redesigning the downtown website to make it more inviting and interesting to potential visitors and consumers, continuing to use social media to promote downtown opportunities and happenings, continuing to facilitate a special edition of a regional business magazine highlighting the positive changes occurring in downtown, forging partnerships to install seasonal holiday decorations, and developing a plan to achieve replacement of the holiday decorations

“Continued implementation of the Downtown Retail Strategy” identifies many ongoing activities to further realization of the outcomes projected in the forty-eight month plan. Chief among the identified objectives for this year include: manufacturing and installing the new wayfinding directional signage system, development of cooperative retail marketing campaigns for promotion of downtown offerings in area Visitor Guides, continuation of market research, acceleration of retail recruitment efforts, modification of signage ordinances and storefront design guidelines to allow for more creativity and retail supportive building elements, continued implementation of the Downtown Parking Management Strategy to make parking more convenient and accessible for customers, adding angled curbside parking to North Palafox Street, replacing old mechanical meters with solar powered paystations, enlarging and promoting the validation program for customer parking, and continuing to provide a case manager to new downtown retailers for coordination and streamlining of the permitting process.

The third goal to “Increase Residential Offerings and Occupancy” has as its primary objectives: development of a mixed-income infill housing program for downtown and the close-in neighborhoods, continuing to recruit national developers to address the need for more rental residential projects, and facilitation of a financial incentive program to reuse existing upper floors of commercial buildings as rental housing.

The goal of “Increasing Visits to Downtown by Tourists and Non-Residents” identifies the following major objectives for advancement of the identified goal: continue to present and promote Gallery Nights, continue marketing of downtown offerings to tourists, presenting and

promoting the Pensacola Wine Festival as well as several smaller special events targeted at tourists, closing and programming Government Street between Tarragona and Jefferson Street for use as an entertainment area each weekend, and increasing the distribution of the downtown events calendar through electronic and social media outlets.

While the annual and five-year goals for downtown were developed by the DIB, the specific objectives and activities for each goal were developed primarily by the almost 200 business owners and property owners that populated the eight DIB committees during the past year. Oversight and responsibility for implementation of the FY 2011 objectives have likewise been assigned to one or more of the DIB committees. There are a lot of exciting activities planned to help move downtown further forward in a meaningful way. It's going to be a great year.

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