



**Downtown Raleigh Alliance  
Organizational Assessment  
Final Report  
June 15, 2017**



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*Philanthropic Counsel, Executive Search & Organizational Strategy*



## Downtown Raleigh Alliance Report: Organizational Assessment

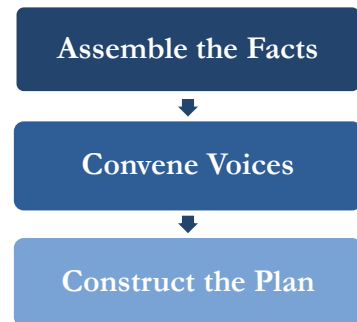
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### Project Overview

The Downtown Raleigh Alliance (“DRA”) was founded 20 years ago with the goal of jumpstarting and providing support to revitalize downtown Raleigh. Through its mission *to continue the revitalization of Raleigh’s downtown by enhancing its quality of life and contributing to its economic success*, the DRA provides core services and leads strategic initiatives that benefit a wide variety of downtown stakeholders.

Facing a transition in executive leadership and given the evolving landscape and needs of downtown Raleigh, the DRA engaged PMA Consulting (“PMA”) in February 2017 to conduct an organizational assessment and assist with the development of a strategic plan. PMA is excited and grateful for the opportunity to be a part of these efforts to enhance organizational planning, clarify strategic focus, and define concrete business goals for the next three to five years (*see Appendix B for an overview of the Organizational Assessment RFP*).

PMA utilizes a three-step approach to organizational assessment and strategic planning that ensures hard data and creative ideas are married with the voices of multiple constituencies. The in-depth assessment, research, and analysis completed throughout Phase I of the project will be the foundation for the Strategic Plan, which PMA will help develop in Phase II, targeted to take place in the second half of 2017. PMA commends DRA for recognizing this timely opportunity to undertake an external, forward-thinking planning process that will build capacity, ensure that the organization is meeting community expectations, and better define DRA’s role and mission.





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## Assembling Facts, Convening Voices

PMA has engaged in various discovery activities to ascertain and evaluate the current condition of DRA’s operations and programs. The targeted discovery process informs plan development, incorporates the input and feedback from DRA’s stakeholders, and guides future implementation. PMA’s discovery process included both primary and secondary research:

- Review and study of internal and public documents to understand and assess past and current operations including organizational structure, board roles and responsibilities, fundraising and marketing, financial management, and volunteer engagement.
- In-depth interviews and topic-specific conversations with staff members to better understand process, capacity, and priorities.
- Stakeholder interviews with external stakeholders including current and past board members, downtown community leaders, City of Raleigh representatives, developers, residents, and members.
- Secondary research and analysis of comparative organizations to better understand best practices and opportunities to adopt tested strategies.

### The DRA Organizational Assessment process included:

<b>One-on-one in-person or phone interviews</b> with		10 Exec. Committee and Board members 2 City of Raleigh representatives 8 downtown leaders, residents, professionals 9 current and former staff
<b>Facilitated sessions</b> with		DRA Executive Committee DRA Board of Directors
<b>Surveys completed</b> by		560 DRA stakeholders, including downtown visitors, employees, property and business owners, residents, and DRA members.
<b>Comparative and best practice research</b> of		6 comparative organizations

*Please see Appendix A for the list of individuals who were interviewed*

Independent secondary research included studying DRA’s website, calendar of activities, financial materials, and internal documents. Key documents that have informed PMA to date include:

- Contracts with and reports to the City
- 2025 Downtown Raleigh Plan
- Notes from 2016 DRA Board retreat
- FY2017 Budget
- Board Materials – member list, roles and responsibilities
- Staff and Governance Org. Chart

The PMA team utilized the information from these meetings, interviews, and research to determine key priorities and areas of focus leading to the recommendations included in this report.



## Comparative Research

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*\*Please see Appendix C for detailed analysis on each comparative organization.*

PMA conducted research of comparative regional and national organizations. Comparative examples allow both PMA and DRA to understand long-term potential operational, funding, and programming options. Using **Charlotte Center City Partners, Downtown Denver Partnership, Downtown Durham, Inc., Downtown Seattle Association, Philadelphia Center City District, and Venture Richmond** as key comparative examples, PMA analyzed elements such as operational structure, strategic focus, programs and services, membership and volunteer engagement strategies, and revenue generation. Highlights include:

### Organization Structure

*Finding:* Distinguishing between BID operations and the rest of the organization's activity

- Denver, Seattle, and Philadelphia are all structured with a separate staff and board dedicated exclusively to BID operations: safe and clean, streetscape improvements, marketing/events, etc.
  - Example: Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) manages the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District (BID). They share a mission and office space, but otherwise operations are separate. The BID is a quasi-governmental public organization that provides services to make downtown Denver cleaner, safer, and more vibrant. DDP is a nonprofit that describes itself as a fast-moving, forward-thinking business organization that is the driving force behind important initiatives, programs, events, and downtown activation. DDP has a robust membership program.
- This structure avoids the “double dipping” that many DRA stakeholders mentioned: having businesses pay taxes as part of the MSD and then going back to them for additional investment/membership in DRA for the same services and benefits.

### Events/Programs

*Finding:* making the shift from large-scale, annual events

- *Out to Lunch Concert Series:* pop up concerts throughout the summer in the middle of the day at various locations within the BID (Seattle)
- Awarding small marketing grants to other downtown organizations that are activating spaces (Seattle)
- Downtown Durham – with a full-time staff of only 5 – is almost exclusively focused on Economic Development, retail recruitment, and Clean & Safe. They oversee/manage very few annual events and programs. Instead, they collaborate with other organizations that “own” the event (like *Third Friday Durham*, managed by local arts organizations) and provide clean and safe services, sponsorships, or other in-kind support at the events.
- The larger, more impactful downtown organizations are heavily involved as active advocates and planners for transformative policies and projects that foster development and business growth (diversity in housing type and affordability; public schools; bicycling infrastructure; public spaces) rather than devoting resources to events



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### **Volunteer, Member, Stakeholder Engagement**

*Finding:* Committees or Councils offer a way for residents, members, volunteers, and other stakeholders to get involved and add their voice to downtown issues:

- Downtown Seattle Association and Downtown Denver Partnership “lead conversations” that shape the city; members are invited to share their voice through participation in exclusive committees, such as Urban Experience, Economic Development, Parks & Public Space, etc. Committees meet regularly (monthly, bi-monthly) and cover a new agenda or topical issue each time.
- *Downtown Residents Council* (Seattle): quarterly forums and exclusive communications to inform and engage downtown residents in advocacy efforts; ~1,500 members

### **Business Model / Revenue Generation**

*Finding #1:* creative approaches to membership and partnership/sponsorship programs:

- Downtown Durham Inc.’s *Partnership in Progress* Program is its annual investor program that provides an opportunity for businesses outside of the BID to receive services and benefits from DDI.
- Venture Richmond does not have a formal membership program. Revenue is generated through government contracts, tax assessments, private investments, and program fees. The organization receives private funding from local businesses and foundations, and communicate their stated focus to “Increase return on investment to private investors and city government”. The contributor program is managed by a Director of Marketing and Development.
- Downtown Seattle’s membership program includes more than 2,000 businesses, organizations, and residents. Again, the services, benefits, and programs for this membership program are separate from the BID. Benefits center mostly around offering exclusive access to downtown initiatives, communications, and networking opportunities. DSA offers two distinct membership options: Corporate (with various pricing and options) and Resident (\$45 per year per household).

*Finding #2:* Charitable foundations provide a vehicle for long-term planning and sustainable funding to make sure as the city grows, public services and spaces also grow.

- Philadelphia and Charlotte have separate 501(c)(3)’s that generate charitable funding from government, corporate, and foundation sources in support of specific projects with public benefit. They also have dedicated "fundraisers" on staff.
- Project examples: public art installations, workforce development programs, homeless outreach services, Charlotte ArtsFest, bike share

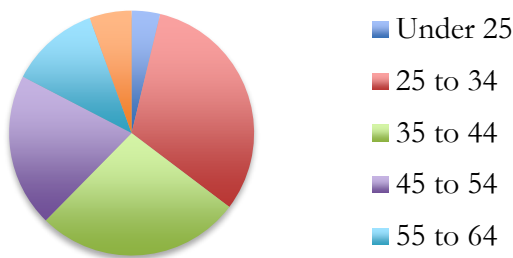




## Survey Highlights

As part of the Organizational Assessment, PMA and the DRA distributed a survey on April 19, 2017 to approximately 10,000 DRA stakeholders, including downtown residents, professionals, visitors, and DRA members (*see page 9 for further breakdown*). The survey received 560 responses. A full report including each survey question and responses is included as a separate attachment to be referenced by targeted task forces and in the strategic planning process. Included below are select findings and highlights.

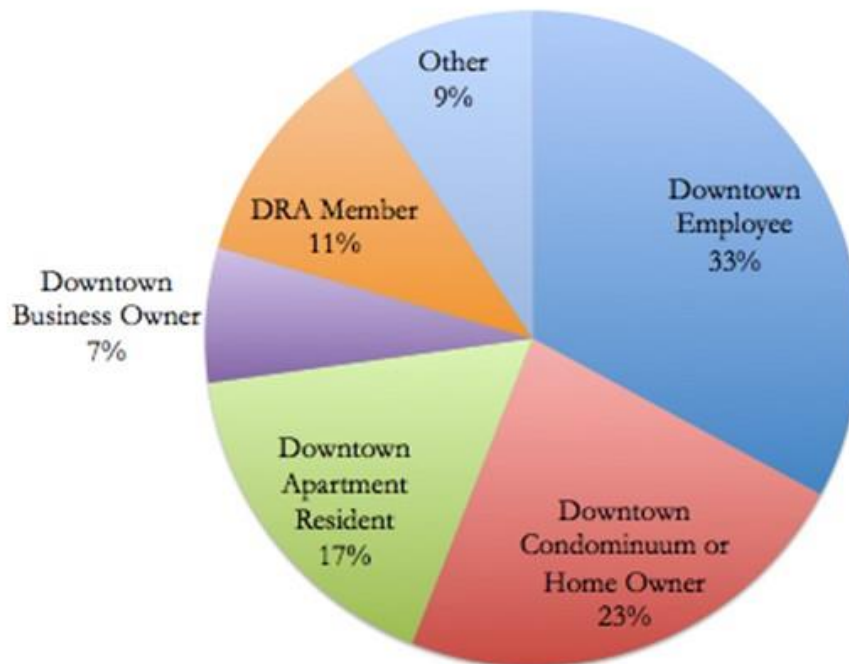
### Age



### Gender

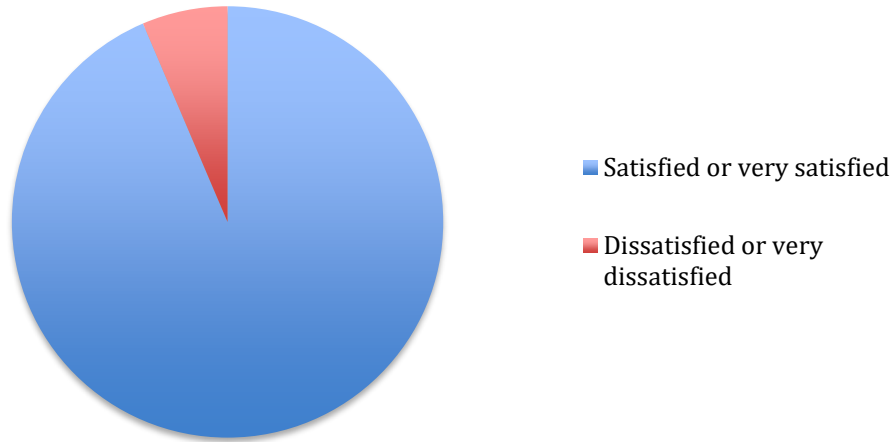


### In what capacity are you affiliated with the DRA?

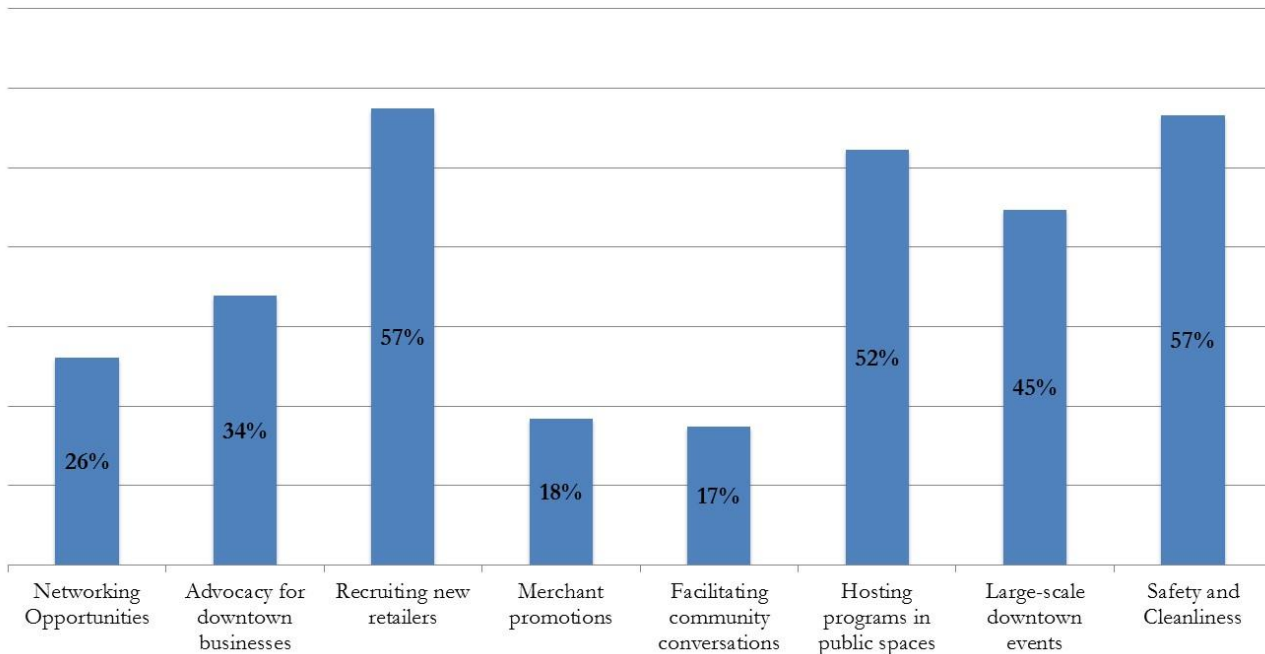




### Overall, how satisfied are you with DRA programs and services?



### What should the DRA be MORE involved in? (Select up to three)



Other (mentioned by multiple responders):

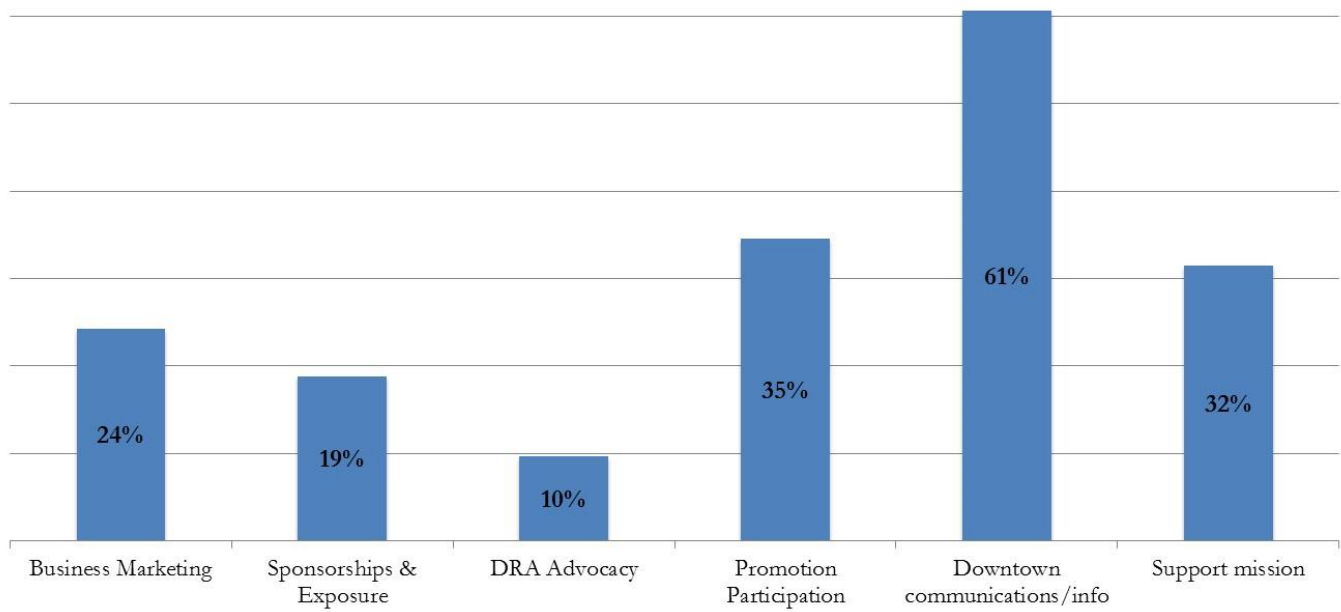
- Better transportation
- Address inadequate parking
- Helping the homeless/panhandling
- Affordable housing
- Addition of a grocery store or market



**Top 3 Downtown Raleigh issues of most concern to stakeholders:**

1. Economic Development (retail recruitment, business retention, jobs)
2. Clean and safe streets
3. Green spaces and public places

**Why did you become a DRA member (select all that apply)?**



**Do you feel you fully understand the benefits to your DRA membership?**

- 47%: Yes
- 44%: No
- 8%: Unsure

**How likely are you to recommend a DRA membership?**

- 35%: Definitely will
- 43%: Probably will
- 12%: Probably will not
- 1%: Definitely will not

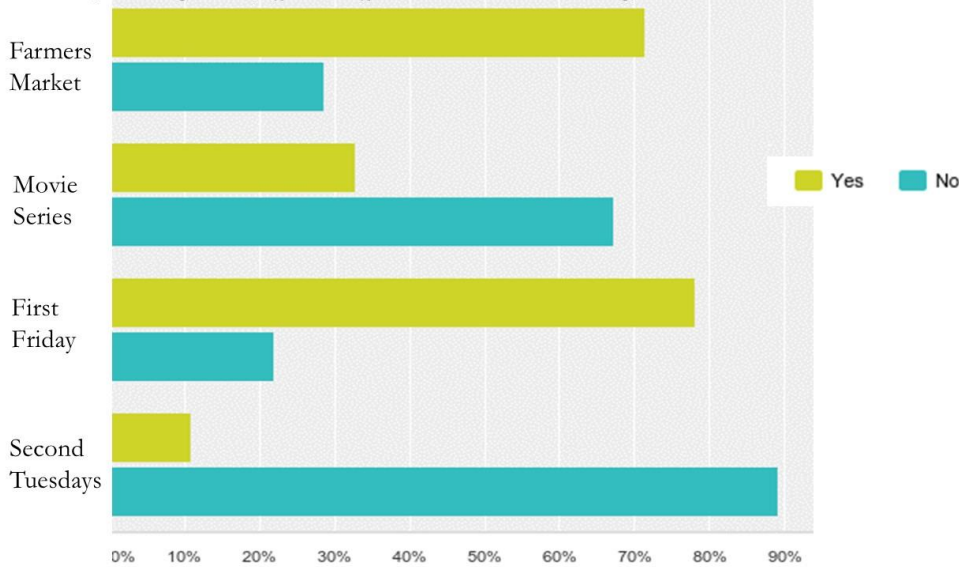




### Is the DRA responsive to your business needs?

- 37%: Agree
- 42%: Neutral
- 5%: Disagree
- 16%: Unsure/Other

### Do you regularly participate in the following:



### Additional representative comments:

- Focus on **housing** for all income levels.
- Work to keep it affordable for small businesses to stay downtown, including **affordable parking**.
- Stop contributing to **so many events** being programmed downtown.
- Encourage **family-friendly/30+ aged** residents livability. (i.e. affordable housing, kid-friendly outdoor play areas, and grocery store)
- Find a way to take care of the **homeless** issue.
- Have a downtown **residents group**... residents feel forgotten.
- Work on getting **unused buildings and spaces** in continued use for positive purposes.
- Create **meaningful communications** between the Ambassadors and the downtown regulars (police) and lobby for more visible police on bikes or Segways.
- More **sports teams**.
- I'd love the DRA to shift its focus to supporting the continued growth of **smaller businesses** and establishments.

NOTE: the survey was distributed to approximately 10,000 individuals which includes 1,400 DRA members. The remaining recipients are stakeholders interested in downtown Raleigh and downtown events. As of 2016, these recipients reported that 37% work downtown and 24% live downtown.



## Summarized S.C.O.T. Analysis

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The following analysis includes blended highlights emerging from the stakeholder discussions, survey, analysis of DRA resources, operations, and structure, and independent secondary research.

### **Strengths**

- Retail recruitment and Economic Development activity/team
  - o Data gathering and analysis; specifically, content shared through State of Downtown
- Safety ambassadors: key piece of DRA services and critical to downtown quality of life
- High-level, impressive Board of Directors looking to become more engaged

### **Challenges**

- Limited staff support, with events draining staff capacity across the org. chart
- Too many brands dilute community presence and relevance
- Lack of alignment between downtown constituencies on various issues; need to find balance
- Boundary confusion: what defines downtown?
- Defining metrics to measure DRA and downtown success (qualitative and quantitative)
- Better stakeholder engagement: members, volunteers, residents, board

### **Opportunities**

- Position DRA as proactive and collaborative in providing solutions/recommendations and bringing constituents together over tough topics (before city has to step in)
- New leadership: fresh ideas, vision, and renewed focus on collaborations and relationships
- Create a more sustainable structure for annual fundraising/investment
- Focus renewed efforts on board development and engagement
- Actively seek key strategic partnerships with other economic development and neighborhood/corridor institutions
- Revisit membership model and benefits associated with membership levels
- DRA as leader for implementing downtown plan
- Strategic use of events to activate public spaces, collaborate with other organizations

### **Threats**

- Lack of clarity on DRA role, vision, and identity
- Too much large-scale event activity
- Heavy reliance on revenue from the City (MSD, parking contract, economic development grant)
- Internal staff retention and performance metrics
- Burn out from investors who are being approached too often for funding support without clear benefits



## Keys to Organizational Excellence & PMA Recommendations

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PMA focuses on five keys to organizational excellence, adapted with specific recommendations and action steps for DRA to consider as it moves into the Strategic Planning phase of the project.

### 1) SHARPEN YOUR VISION AND MISSION

- Define purpose with greater clarity
- Respond to emerging priorities and be amenable to change
- Communicate vision and mission with compelling messages

### Findings

PMA’s research and assessment indicate that the purpose and vision of DRA lacks articulation, focus, and clarity around its core message of “continuing the revitalization of Raleigh’s downtown by enhancing its quality of life and contributing to its economic success.” Confusion exists throughout the community regarding DRA long-range objectives and ultimate impact.

Internal and external stakeholders use the following terms and phrases to describe DRA’s ideal future identity:

<b>Convener</b>	<b>Relationship-driven</b>	<b>Downtown business advocate</b>	<b>Downtown experts</b>	<b>Collaborative</b>
<b>Hands-on</b>	<b>Innovative</b>	<b>Conversation facilitator</b>	<b>Voice for private sector</b>	<b>Professional</b>
<b>Proactive</b>	<b>Visionary</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Solution provider</b>	<b>Bold idea generation</b>

### PMA Recommendations:

- Assess current mission statement and make revisions as needed
- Develop a vision for DRA based on the assessment and feedback from stakeholders
- Use assessment findings to define DRA core services, priorities, and role in the community; evaluate and identify a bold yet realistic mixture of services and programs, based on the defined identity:
  - Safety operations
  - Retail strategy: recruitment and retention
  - Voice/advocate for private sector
  - “Relationship organization” focused on stakeholder engagement, consensus building, mediation; convening in controversial situations
  - Downtown planning, communications, and promotions
  - “Torch-bearer” for the downtown vision
- Assert the DRA as a proactive, forward-thinking leader, convener, and advocate for policies, initiatives, and issues that positively impact the economic prosperity, quality of life, and strong business climate of downtown
  - Examples: affordable housing; one-way street initiative; grocery; Southeast Raleigh; diversity; gentrification



- Streamline DRA’s many brands into one consistent brand that will build credibility and relevance beyond event-driven awareness
  - Demonstrate the DRA brand visually, verbally, and continually and repeat it with singular focus and passion
  - Deliver a concise, integrated, honest message (“Things We Are” and “Things We Are Not”)

## 2) DEVELOP YOUR TALENT

- Maximize efficiency in DRA’s internal operations and structure
- Utilize board member talent and effectively engage volunteers
- Recognize talent as the core of DRA’s success and build the capacity of staff and board members

### Findings:

The assessment uncovered a need to develop, retain, and structure both volunteer and staff talent more effectively. The DRA has been described as “perpetually understaffed” with team members taking on more responsibility than outlined in their job description or for which they are qualified. This results in burnout, turnover, and inefficiencies. Specifically, staff across the organizational chart are dragged disproportionately into event management.

Further, stakeholders consistently identified board engagement as a key organizational opportunity, given the impressive and high profile board members that DRA attracts. Finally, DRA would benefit from new and enhanced methods of engaging other volunteers and stakeholders.

### PMA Recommendations:

- More intentionally align teams by the priorities identified in the refreshed mission and vision statements
  - Choose the priority objectives DRA wishes to accomplish (*per #1 above*) and implement all restructuring and realignment around this statement of intent and the overall mission
  - Staff positions to consider:
    - External Relations: focused on relationships with City, alliances/partners, vendors/merchants, etc.; responsibilities: mediation, stakeholder engagement, participating in downtown planning initiatives
    - HR/Operations to manage internal operations, culture issues, staff accountability
  - Evaluate current staff to ensure their skill sets align with DRA’s needs and that they are being utilized to maximum capacity
- Identify and implement board engagement and development initiatives
  - Annually convene current and former board members to assure continued engagement
  - Implement new policies that address issues in transparency, nominating/recruiting, and overall board effectiveness
  - Consider the use of committees or task forces to further engage board members
- Create opportunities for volunteer committees, councils, and task forces.
  - Councils can be comprised of various downtown stakeholders including DRA members, current and former board members, residents, and professionals
  - Examples include: Economic Development; public spaces; hospitality (clean and safe); resident council; transportation



### 3) SEEK AND STRENGTHEN YOUR ALLIANCES

- Understand that constituent needs are more important than organizational politics
- Build partnerships, not competitions, to effectively provide services
- Lead initiatives to identify collaborations and partnerships that enhance the greater good

#### Findings:

Stakeholders want to see the DRA as an intentionally collaborative organization, working in partnership with other nonprofits, government agencies, and businesses to enhance the vibrancy of and quality of life in downtown Raleigh.

#### PMA Recommendation:

- Comprehensive Partnership Audit: assess current and potential relationships with City of Raleigh, other neighborhood/corridor associations, Raleigh/Triangle economic development organizations, downtown events/arts/culture organizations
  - Who are the key partners that we need to better engage and cultivate?
  - Who do we not yet have a formalized relationship with but should?
  - Which partnerships are functioning effectively or ineffectively?
  - Which partnerships do we invest too much time and resources into and could consider scaling back?
- Eliminate competition with other downtown agencies in pursuit of collaboration
- Effectively communicate the nature of the working relationships between DRA and organizations with aligned missions and services
- *Note: a DRA Partners Task Force comprised of DRA board and staff is in progress with a goal to conduct the “partnership audit” by August 2017*

### 4) ATTACK YOUR REVENUE CYCLE

- Communicate DRA message effectively, segmented to different stakeholders
- Identify potential investors and members strategically and plan outreach intentionally
- Demonstrate vigorous gratitude to members, sponsors, and investors

#### Findings:

DRA receives significant annual funding support from the City of Raleigh through the MSD tax assessments, parking contract, and economic development grant. Continuing to provide key programs and services on behalf of the City, meeting contractual obligations, and nurturing this relationship is key to DRA’s future. That said, this undiversified revenue model threatens the future growth and sustainability of DRA and it is important for the organization to explore and enhance additional revenue opportunities.

#### PMA Recommendations:

- Diversify revenue streams through a robust annual fundraising/business development program
  - Given the recent turnover in the Director of Business Development position, now is a timely opportunity to assess and enhance DRA’s staff responsibility over revenue generation based on priorities to build the donor base, strengthen funder relationships, and identify new and increased partnerships.



- Develop a comprehensive “revenue plan” that includes corporate partnerships, memberships, event sponsors, government/public support, and grant funding
- Consider a year-round investor/partner program vs. one-off sponsorship requests
- Narrow DRA’s business development focus by identifying an evolving list of top funding prospects for cultivation and solicitation
- Be intentional and diligent about building investor relationships. Develop relationships of substance with relevant community partners, advocates, and potential funders. Approach each with a strong story of DRA impact and community need
- Maintain but modernize and enhance the DRA membership program model and benefits
  - DRA members should understand the benefits received through their membership and these should be distinct from benefits/services received through the MSD
    - Existing or potential membership benefits include: exclusive communications; opportunity to participate in exclusive events and committees
    - In addition to tangible membership benefits, explicitly demonstrate the Economic Impact of membership (separate from MSD tax)
    - Provide members more opportunities to share their voice on important downtown issues and strategic initiatives
  - Consider new membership options:
    - “Premiere membership” that provides exclusive access to information, networking opportunities, and communications (stakeholders indicate they would pay a premium for a “seat at the table” in discussions about key downtown policy issues and strategic initiatives)
    - Resident membership
    - Membership for businesses outside of MSD
  - Engage members through an exclusive committee/council structure
  - Continue to market the membership program wisely and creatively
    - Revisit *Second Tuesdays* as a membership recruitment opportunity instead of simply a networking/social event
  - *Note: a DRA Membership Task Force comprised of DRA board and staff is in progress with a goal to revisit and refresh the Membership Program by August 2017*

## 5) ASSURE EVALUATION

- Adapt to meet change, both organizationally and in programming and events
- Develop timelines, benchmarks, and accountability measures
- Continually keep mission and constituent interests in mind to make decisions and execute services

### Findings:

DRA needs to adapt and evolve with downtown Raleigh, which has changed drastically in recent years. Now is a timely opportunity to assess how staff time and organizational resources are invested and how the organization’s success is measured in order to effectively advance the mission and priorities. Specifically, over time, DRA has become heavily focused on and invested in event management and execution, which causes a drag on staff and resources that could be more effectively and efficiently directed elsewhere.

### PMA Recommendations:

- Define metrics of organizational success beyond attendance



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- In addition to metrics tied to event attendance, incorporate qualitative measures that demonstrate impact
- This process will help the board, funders (the City), and staff leadership objectively evaluate performance
- Clarify boundaries of downtown (DRA “area of influence”) and communicate to internal and external audiences
- Conduct a strategic evaluation of the annual event calendar in order to shift focus from large-scale events to smaller activations, pop-ups, and programs. Questions to consider:
  - Is it within the DRA’s priorities and mission to “own” this event or is there another organization more appropriate? Are we missing opportunities to collaborate?
  - What is the purpose of this event and are we accomplishing that purpose (to raise money? educate constituents? build community? activate public spaces? promote downtown?)
  - Is this event still relevant and “moving the needle”? Is it tied to our role in the community?
  - Are we competing with the businesses and organizations we are charged to support?
  - *Note: an Events Task Force comprised of DRA board and staff is in progress with a goal to conduct the event calendar evaluation by August 2017*



## Final Thoughts & Next Steps

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The collective information included in this report provides DRA with a platform for the next phase of strategic planning. In Phase II of the project, PMA will guide DRA through a planning process, detailed below, that results in clear and detailed business goals and strategic direction for the next three to five years.

**Plan Development:** Working with the DRA Executive Committee, Board, and staff, PMA will coordinate the creation and refinement of language and action steps, developing a draft Strategic Plan that creates connections between the research, analysis, and voices of stakeholders. The process will be collaborative and largely structured around task forces that build out targeted strategic goals and tactics based on the findings from the organizational assessment. The resulting plan will serve as a consensus agreement regarding organizational goals, the DRA's role in the Raleigh community, and the next strategic steps, with a focus on vision, mission, goals, and action. Additionally, the plan will identify potential metrics that will support ongoing implementation and assessment.

PMA looks forward to implementing Phase II of our project. Based on the timing of the hiring and onboarding process for the new DRA President, PMA will conduct the below activities over an estimated three-month timeline:

- Collaborate with DRA staff and board to develop a draft DRA three- to five-year Strategic Plan, including:
  - Summarized assessment findings:
    - Market needs and gaps, best practices, innovative approaches
    - Strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats
    - Key strategic issues and priorities; community/stakeholder expectations
  - Clarified or redefined mission statement and vision statement
  - Organizational goals and objectives to meet strategic priorities and guide direction
  - Work plans with actions, timelines, and metrics for moving forward
- Present and disseminate Strategic Plan to DRA stakeholders





## Appendix A: List of Stakeholder Interviews

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Andrews, Andy  
Dominion Realty Partners

Baldwin, Mary-Ann  
City Council, Holt Construction

Blondin, Pam  
Deco Raleigh

Chilton, Ellen  
DRA Event Planning Contractor

Clayton, Marty  
Duke Energy

Cole, Adrienne  
Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce

Dempster, Bo  
Poyner Spruill

Diaz, David  
DRA President (former)

Edwards, Sally  
Marbles Kids Museum

Gladdeck, Matt  
Downtown Durham Inc.

Gorse, Cameron  
Skyhouse

Hall, Ruffin  
City Manager

Hansen, Jim  
PNC

Hatem, Greg  
Empire Properties

King, Bill  
DRA Director of Economic Development

Lindstaedt, Lacie  
DRA Communications Director (former)

Macken, O'Hara  
IPREO

Meeker, David  
Trophy Brewing, Busy Bee

Melville, Ashley  
DRA Director of Business Dev. (former)

Moe, Sharon  
North State Bank

Quarles, Orage  
N&O (former), DRA Interim President

Quinn-Wolf, Rebecca  
PNC

Ralph, Brian  
William Peace University

Reed, Craig  
DRA Director of Events

Simeone, Stacey  
DRA Director of Marketing

Smith, Jason  
18 Restaurant Group

Stewart, Andrew  
Empire Properties

Wilser, Stephanie  
DRA Finance Manager (former)

Wilson, Jon  
Kimley-Horn

## Appendix B: RFP Overview

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Request for Proposal —  
Downtown Raleigh Alliance  
ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT + STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTANT  
Proposal Deadline  
January 24, 2017  
5:00 PM

### **Project Objective:**

The Downtown Raleigh Alliance (DRA) seeks consultant services to conduct an organizational assessment and develop a strategic plan to guide the organization's growth and direction through the next three to five years. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is being issued December 28, 2016 with responses due by January 24, 2017 by 5:00 PM. Questions should be put in writing and emailed to Kimberley Jones at DRA by January 13, 2017. Questions and answers will be shared with all Proposers.

### **Summary:**

DRA is seeking a consultant for an organizational assessment to define specific business goals for the next three to five years and assist with the development of a strategic plan. The DRA Board of Directors is seeking to build DRA's capacity to meet current and future demands, ensure that the organization is meeting stakeholder expectations, and better define the organization's role and mission. Some elements of the assessment will include: updating the mission statement, assessing current governance structure, staff composition and leadership, setting broad multi-year goals, and articulating the DRA's value proposition. The organizational assessment will be the foundation for the strategic plan, as well as a new branding initiative scheduled in 2018.

The DRA's Executive Committee will be responsible for oversight of this initiative in conjunction with the CEO, David Diaz. Jon Wilson, Principal with Kimley-Horn and DRA Board Chair, will oversee this initiative. Others on the Executive Committee include:

- Sharon Moe – North State Bank (Treasurer/Chair-elect)
- Jason Smith – 18 Restaurant Group (Immediate Past Chair)
- Neil Gray – JDavis (Secretary)
- Bo Dempster – Poyner and Spruill (Legal Counsel)
- Tashni-Ann Dubroy – Shaw University (At-large)

### **Timetable:**

- RFP Issued: December 28
- Questions Must be Received by: January 13
- Responses to Questions Provided by: January 18
- Due Date for Proposals: January 24, 5:00 PM
- Potential Interviews with Finalists: January 30 - 31
- Selection of Consultant: January 31

### **Potential Deliverables:**

- Assessment of current state of organization including leadership, performance and expectations, including governance/organizational recommendations
- Detailed summary of research data
- Revision of mission statement
- Creation of vision statement
- Development of multi-year goals
- Creation of a strategic plan



## Appendix C: Comparative Research Detail

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### Enclosed research includes:

1. Charlotte Center City Partners
2. Downtown Denver Partnership
3. Downtown Durham, Inc.
4. Downtown Seattle Association
5. Philadelphia Center City District
6. Venture Richmond

### Charlotte Center City Partners

200 S. Tryon Street, Suite 1600  
 Charlotte, NC 28202  
 (704) 332-2227 | [msmith@charlottecentercity.org](mailto:msmith@charlottecentercity.org)



### Mission

Charlotte Center City Partners (CCCP) facilitates and promotes the economic, cultural, and residential development of the urban core.

### Vision

For Charlotte’s Center City to be viable, livable, memorable, and sustainable, with modern infrastructure, a tapestry of unique neighborhoods, and a diversity of thriving businesses. We envision and implement strategies and actions to drive the economic, social, and cultural development of Charlotte’s Center City. The vision is the continuation of the growth of our city as pedestrian-friendly and walkable, with comfortable and interesting neighborhoods. It must have mixed growth, with balanced initiatives that are leveraged by public and private investment.

### Structure

CCCP is led by a staff of 22 and a 35-member board of directors. In addition to a CEO and COO, the staff is organized around the following functions:

- Planning & Development (7 staff): strategically guides the growth and development of Center City; partners with organizations and citizens to advocate for innovative planning and urban design practices; liaison between City and County governments, city planners, and consultants
- Finance (2 staff): VP of Finance, Accountant
- Marketing & Communications (4 staff): marketing, media, social media, and branding; enhances and sustains CCCP’s current brands and manages all marketing initiatives and communications plans
- Special Events & Programs (4 staff): responsible for the animation and marketing of Center City through a series of annual programs and events; programs entertainment and events in public spaces; vendor relations, banners, promotions; sponsorships

Additionally, the staff includes a Director of Uptown Neighborhoods, Director of Historic South End, Director of Historic West End, and an Executive Assistant. The neighborhood Directors work closely with neighborhood stakeholders and local businesses, coordinating CCCP’s efforts to create and implement a vision for strong neighborhood centers that preserve and enhance existing neighborhood assets while attracting new investment.



### **Business Development: Fundraising, Sponsorship, and Membership Activity**

CCCP does not have a formalized membership or fundraising/investor program. Sponsorships are available for most events, with sponsor relations managed by the events team. In 2015, CCCP’s revenue breakdown was:

- Contributions and grants: \$148,500 (4%)
- Municipal tax revenue: \$3,705,998 (88%)
- City Center Vision Awards: \$165,950 (4%)
- Various Programs: \$133,416 (3%)
- Investment income: \$51,843 (1%)
- Total: \$4,205,707

### **Events & Programs**

- Recent effort to shift focus from large events to more frequent street-level programming that activates and animates while connecting stakeholders
- *Center City Vision Awards*: honors, recognizes, and celebrates the contributions of individuals, businesses, and organizations that have made the Center City a more vibrant urban core; provides a view into what is next for Center City
  - Held in April at the Convention Center with ~1,000 attendees
  - Sponsorships include: Presenting, Reception, Supportive, Media, Printing; 2015 revenue \$166k

### **Interesting Takeaways**

- CCCP is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit with an affiliated 501(c)(3): *CCCP Community Trust*. CCCPCT’s mission is to provide a platform for city-wide community-building arts, education, sustainability, health and wellness initiatives, including:
  - Charlotte ArtsFest (coordinated festivals)
  - Charlotte B-Cycle bike share program funded by BCBSNC
  - \$1.8 million in revenue in 2015; \$1.1 million from contributions/grants

### **Downtown Denver Partnership**

1515 Arapahoe Street  
Denver, CO 80202  
(303) 534-6161 | [info@downtowndenver.com](mailto:info@downtowndenver.com)



### **Mission**

The Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) creatively plans, manages, and develops Downtown Denver as the unique, diverse, vibrant, and economically healthy urban core of the Rocky Mountain Region that is recognized for being prosperous, walkable, diverse, distinctive, and green.

The Partnership is a *leader, place-maker, convener, idea generator, facilitator, recruiter, team-builder, and policy advocate*. The Partnership’s key areas of focus – Leadership, Environment, Experience, Jobs, Connections, and Housing – are the basic, integrated elements of the organization.

### **Overview & Structure**

The DDP also manages the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District (BID) that provides enhanced services to make Downtown Denver a cleaner, safer, and more vibrant place. The BID is a quasi-



governmental, public organization funded by private commercial property owners through annual assessments. The seven-member BID board of directors is appointed by the Mayor of Denver and approved by Denver City Council. DDP manages the BID's day-to-day operations.

DDP is led by three separate boards:

- *Denver Civic Ventures (DCV)*: charitable, public purpose board. DCV focuses on community planning and development, provides educational forums and raises funds through charitable contributions, grants, sponsorships, and events.
- *Downtown Denver, Inc. (DDI)*: advocacy board for the membership. DDI takes positions on ballot issues, city ordinances and legislative referenda and focuses on programs that serve the Downtown membership.
- *Downtown Denver Partnership Management Group, Inc.*: DDP's executive committee made up of representatives from DCV and DDI. Ensures consistency and clarity of policy and public positions. It is also responsible for the fiscal policy and financial reporting for the organization.

DDP and the BID are managed by a 30-person staff organized into the following functions:

- Executive Office (7): Marketing and communications for DDP; innovation and entrepreneurship projects; board and stakeholder relations
- Membership Experience (4): Leadership programs; member recruitment and retention; sponsorship development; member events
- Economic Development (1): Author of reports; coordinates research; external requests for information
- Downtown Environment (10): Public and urban planning projects; safe and clean programs; research; access and transportation; BID Operations
- Downtown Experience (4): Program and event management; sponsorships and community/corporate relationships
- Support Services (4): finance and administration

*Member Committees and Councils* are chaired by DDP members and open for members to join year-round. Meetings are typically monthly or bi-monthly at a set time. Span a broad range of topics:

- *Economic Development Council*: Identifies, develops, and facilitates the Partnership's role in city, regional and state economic development activities to enhance and maintain the economic vitality of downtown.
- *Downtown Hospitality Committee*: Provides an environment for members to share, leverage and implement cross-promotional strategies between restaurants, retail, lodging and attractions.
- *Member Experience Committee*: Establishes strategies and policy recommendations to ensure that DDP recruits and retains business members from diverse industries; also reviews member benefits and dues.
- *Mobility Council*: Plays an important role in identifying, developing and facilitating DDP's role in providing enhanced mobility options in downtown.
- *Public Realm Council*: Improving the experiences people have in public spaces in downtown.
- *Retail Council*: Pursues the goal of making Downtown Denver a metro and regional shopping destination by attracting national and first-to-market retailers to Downtown.
- *CityBuild Denver*: Engages the next generation of leaders in various events that educate, engage and inspire the community to shape and create a better center city.



**Business Development: Fundraising, Sponsorship, and Membership Activity**

DDP was supported by 25 corporate sponsors in 2015-16. Sponsorships Opportunities include:

- The Downtown Denver Partnership
  - Platinum (\$20,000) through Downtown Partner (\$1,500)
  - Open to *members* aiming to: build client relationships, foster increased brand awareness, show support for DDP’s overall vision
- Signature Event Sponsorship
  - Annual Awards, Annual Meeting, Member Forums, State of Downtown Denver
- Program Sponsorship
  - CityBuild, Downtown Denver Leadership Program, Urban Exploration Trip

*DDP Membership Program* allows businesses and civic organizations (more than 720) to become informed about topics important to the center city, get connected to respected Downtown business leaders, and be heard by getting engaged with one of the Partnership’s many committees and councils. Benefits at a glance:

- Regular email communications (daily news highlight, bi-weekly member update)
- Member Forums: breakfast panel presentations on current topics; members attend at a discounted rate
- Quarterly Lunch & Learns: learn about DDP’s goals, how DDP operates, make the most of membership
- Discounts to other DDP events: Annual Awards Dinner, Annual Meeting
- Access to Leadership Program and Alumni Association
- Annual Urban Exploration Trip: annual trip to different city
- Advertising and Promotions: exclusive sponsorship opportunities and advertising discounts

**Events & Programs**

*BID* areas of focus: safety and homeless outreach programs; cleaning and maintenance; Economic Development: business recruitment and retention; enhancements to pedestrian and bike environment; targeted visitor marketing and communications

*DDP key initiatives and programs:*

- Leading voice for private sector businesses in downtown through robust member engagement opportunities and programs:
  - *CityBuild Denver* is a group of Denver’s youngest movers and shakers who come together and collaborate on big ideas that help shape and create a better downtown. Nearly 1,000 millennials that are the future business leaders and partners of downtown. Provides participants with the platform, connections, and resources to create positive change within the center city.
  - The *Downtown Denver Leadership Program* provides an intense immersion in urban issues, policies, and practices through an annual group project that challenges the participants’ ability to research, analyze and collaborate. This year’s project is The Downtown Loop: Linking Neighborhoods, Connecting People, focusing on connecting city center neighborhoods to each other.
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation:
  - *Denver Startup Week*: largest free entrepreneurial event in North America
  - The *Commons on Champa*: public campus for entrepreneurship in partnership with City, County, and Colorado Technology Association; gathering place for entrepreneurs; drives innovation



### Downtown Raleigh Alliance

- Active advocate for transformative policies that create an economic epicenter to foster development and business growth
  - Diversity in housing type and affordability; Community Center opening, bicycling infrastructure, safety and security
- Place-based economic development strategy: attracting and retaining businesses, employees, residents
  - Identify and pursue attractive downtown amenities (Whole Foods, schools, retailers, relocations)
- Drive transformative projects, neighborhoods, public spaces, and districts
  - Activate urban core, focus on long-term future of parks and public spaces
  - Maintenance services and managing events to activate spaces
- Build and promote a powerful brand
  - Research publications and related events
- Special events and programs that bring people to downtown

### Interesting Takeaways

- Example as fast-moving, forward-thinking nonprofit business organization that is the driving force behind important initiatives, programs, events, and activation
  - See DDP key initiatives and programs above
  - *Leader, place-maker, convener, idea generator, facilitator, recruiter, team-builder, and policy advocate*
- Member and volunteer engagement through the committee and board structure and targeted events/programs
  - Leading conversations important to downtown

### Downtown Durham, Inc.

115 Market St, Suite 213  
 Durham, NC 27701  
 (919) 682-2800 | [matt@downtowndurham.com](mailto:matt@downtowndurham.com)



### Mission

Create an environment for private development in Downtown Durham by focusing efforts in five main project areas: Economic Development, Parking, Appearance, Safety, and Promotion.

Tagline: *Downtown Durham Inc is the driving force behind Downtown Durham's revitalization.*

### Structure

Downtown Durham, Inc. (DDI) is a 501(c)6 organization, formed in 1993. DDI is led by a five-person staff and a 25-member board of directors. The staff consists of:

- President & CEO (newly hired in January 2017)
- Director of Business Operations (focus on retail)
- Director of Policy & Planning (interface with the City planning department and other downtown organizations)
  - Previously, Director of Government Affairs
- Office Manager
- Marketing and Communications (works closely with Convention & Visitor's Bureau on downtown promotions, collateral design, etc.)



- Part-time contractors: bookkeeper and event planning

DDI does not have any volunteers outside of the board.

### **Business Development: Fundraising, Sponsorship, and Membership Activity**

Revenue breakdown as of 6/30/2015 (most recent 990 available):

- Contributions and grants: \$994,102
  - Government grants (including Business Improvement District): \$963,551 (95%)
  - Other contributions and gifts (*Partnership in Progress Program*): \$30,551 (3%)
- Annual Meeting revenue: \$21,460 (2%)
- Other: \$3,828 (0.5%)
- Total: \$1,019,470

DDI does not have a formalized membership program. The *Partnership in Progress Program* is DDI’s fundraising/investor program to provide an opportunity for business’s outside the BID to receive services and benefits from DDI. In 2016, DDI was supported by 19 Partners in Progress, including both local businesses (i.e. Durham Magazine) and larger corporations with a Durham presence (i.e. Duke Energy and BB&T). Benefits include advertising at the DDI Annual Meeting and other events.

### **Key Events & Programs**

- *The Blue Team*: nine-person Ambassador Team (including a manager) provides Clean & Safe Ambassador Services in downtown. Ambassadors provide services such as cleaning and maintaining public sidewalks and spaces, welcoming and assisting visitors, and connecting those in need with social services. Ambassadors can be reached through the ambassador hotline, online form, or in person. This is a huge program for DDI. It is funded through the BID and makes up more than half of the organization’s budget.
- *Third Friday Durham*: explore downtown Durham’s galleries, artist studios, shops, restaurants and music, from 6-9 p.m. every Third Friday.
  - Downtown arts organizations have made it clear they want to “own” Third Friday. DDI provides promotional support and Blue Team services.
- DDI recently released its *2016 Downtown Master Plan*, the result of significant public input over more than a year. The plan is organized into four main project categories: design, diversity, connectivity, and logistics (partnerships, programming, communications).
- *Annual Meeting*: held at the Durham Convention Center in November, featuring Annual Downtown Awards, an update on progress over the past year, and a program. Sponsorships include Platinum (\$1,000), Gold (\$600), and individual tickets (\$65 for partners/stakeholders and \$75 for non-partners).
- DDI also sponsors a number of events downtown and provides in-kind support.

### **Interesting Takeaways**

- DDI staff are heavily focused on Economic Development, retail recruitment, and Clean & Safe services. They oversee very few annual events and programs.
- Named Nicole Thompson as new CEO in January 2017; Thompson joins DDI from Lake County Economic Development Corporation in Leadville, CO, where she was the Executive Director. She has more than 25 years’ experience in economic development and community revitalization and earned her MA in City and Regional Planning from UNC-CH.





- o Prior CEO, Geoff Durham, left in 2016 to run the Durham Chamber after three years with DDI

### Downtown Seattle Association

1809 7th Ave #900  
Seattle, WA 98101  
(206) 623-0340



### Mission and Overview

Mission: *to champion a healthy, vibrant urban core.*

The Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) is a 501(c)(4) non-profit community advocacy organization comprised of more than 2,000 member companies, organizations and downtown residents. DSA is focused exclusively on making Downtown Seattle a great place to live, work, shop, and play through public policy advocacy, economic development, and marketing.

The DSA founded and operates the Metropolitan Improvement District (MID), a service district which implements neighborhood cleaning, hospitality and safety services – as well as research, events, promotions and human services outreach for Downtown Seattle.

In partnership with city and county agencies, DSA also founded Commute Seattle, which provides transportation resources for commuters, and consulting services for Downtown businesses, property owners and managers.

### Structure

DSA is managed by a staff of 33 organized in the below functions:

- Executive (1): President & CEO
- Operations & Services (7): includes COO, VP Finance, HR, admin support
- Advocacy & Economic Development (6): includes research, policy and planning, strategic initiatives and special projects, and economic development
- Communications & Marketing (9): includes resource development, member relations, communications/media, and marketing
- Commute Seattle (10): includes a separate Executive Director, business development, and program staff

MID has its own Operations staff of 17:

- Clean & Safety Team personnel (7)
- Marketing, events, public space (5)
- Human Services and Outreach (3)
- Urban Planning and Design, data and surveys (2)

### Business Development: Fundraising, Sponsorship, and Membership Activity

*DSA's membership program* includes more than 2,000 businesses, organizations, and residents working together to make one powerful voice. Membership is a way for stakeholders to get involved in DSA's initiatives, with benefits including:

- Exclusive communications and alerts



- Free access to *Focus Forward* breakfasts
- Member rates to events

Membership options:

- Corporate: “membership means access”; special benefits include:
  - Participate on DSA committees, work groups, task forces (see below)
  - Free semi-monthly *Idea Exchanges* – casual small group forums followed by afternoon happy hour
- *Downtown Residents Council*: “come together with neighbors to lend your voices, ideas, and passion important to those who call downtown home”; special benefits include:
  - Participate in *Downtown Residents Council* quarterly meetings and *Downtown Living 101* Events

Corporate membership rates are based on number of employees with 3-10 @ \$600 and 401-999 @ \$3,000; membership for 1,000+ employees are negotiated. Discounted memberships are available for independent retailers and restaurants; educational institutions; and arts, human services, faith-based, and neighborhood organizations. Property owners / managers’ rates are based on the same FTE count as corporate members plus building square footage of properties owned or managed in downtown. Resident membership rates are \$45 for individuals (includes spouse/partner if same address) and \$5 per unit for condo associations or apartment buildings (includes all residents). Hotels memberships are \$8.15 per hotel room

DSA leads the conversations that shape Seattle. Members are invited to add their voice through participation in the below exclusive committees:

- Urban Experience: examines and guides strategy for streetscape and public realm improvements, public safety; transportation
- Transportation and Access: suggestions on an array of transportation concerns and projects
- Economic Development: guide and encourage investments, smart growth and economic development
- Communications & Marketing: with DSA staff, informal networking and a download on timely DSA policy issues, programs and events (also open to residents)
- Membership: help bring members on board, identify prospective new members, and plan member orientation and networking events
- MID Clean & Safe: with MID staff provide updates on services and answer questions about programs
- Parks & Public Space: upcoming events, potential partnerships

*Sponsorship Opportunities*

DSA and MID produce a variety of events tailored to Downtown’s visitors, residents and business/community leaders. These year-round events – as well as advertising opportunities – serve as a great opportunity for sponsors to increase their exposure, educate the public, and launch new products and services while supporting DSA’s mission:

- Annual Meeting: \$2.5k to \$10k
- State of Downtown Economic Forum: \$750 to \$14k
- Focus Forward Breakfast Roundtables
- Holiday Sponsorship (holiday carousel)
- DSA Member Directory: advertising opportunities \$250 to \$1,000
- Out to Lunch Concert Series: summer noon-time events, twice weekly at various locations



- Seasonal Campaigns: multi-media marketing campaigns designed to drive visitor traffic downtown

### **Key Events & Programs**

#### *DSA Key Initiatives and Programs:*

- *Downtown Residents Council:* nearly 1,500 members. The Downtown Residents Council hosts quarterly forums to inform and engage Downtown residents in DSA’s advocacy efforts such as public safety, Downtown public school issues, and a smoke-free policy in Downtown parks.
- *Commute Seattle:* commuter service organization working to improve access to and from – and mobility within – downtown. Provides resources for commuters and consulting services for downtown businesses, property owners, and managers looking to develop commute packages for employees and tenants.
- *Focus Forward Breakfast Roundtables:* monthly panel discussions focused on a wide range of topics impacting the economic environment in Downtown
- *Idea Exchange:* quarterly, the DSA, Commute Seattle and the MID host intimate settings for topics ranging from transportation to a tour of the remodeling of Nordstrom’s flagship Downtown store

#### *MID Key Initiatives and Programs:*

- Clean Team, Hospitality & Safety Team
- Outreach services: connect the homeless and mentally ill on the streets of Downtown Seattle with services, housing, treatment, employment and other basic needs.
- Destination Marketing: PR, retail promotions, advertising, community events
- Business development and market research
- MID awards marketing funds each year to projects benefitting its six neighborhoods; priority projects include community events (family friendly, drive retail traffic, activate public spaces and include participation opportunities for neighborhood merchants) and neighborhood marketing initiatives (collateral that helps brand and market MID neighborhoods)

### **Interesting Takeaways**

- Resident engagement and membership options
- Homeless and Mentally Ill outreach program
- Activating public spaces and neighborhoods:
  - Out to Lunch Concert Series: pop up concerts throughout the summer in the middle of the day at various destinations within the MID
  - Marketing funding awards to other organizations activating spaces

### **Center City District**

### **Center City District Foundation**

### **Central Philadelphia Development Corporation**

660 Chestnut Street

Philadelphia, PA 19106

215.440.5500 | [info@centercityphila.org](mailto:info@centercityphila.org)



### **Mission**

The Center City District (CCD) and Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) share a common mission: *to enhance the vitality of Center City Philadelphia as a thriving 24-hour downtown and a great place to work, live, and have fun.*



Joint Tagline: *Working together every day to enhance the vitality of Center City Philadelphia.*

### **Overview and Structure**

CCD, CPDC, and Center City District Foundation (CCDF) work together to enhance the vitality and competitiveness of Philadelphia's downtown. In 1991, the business leadership organization CPDC (founded in 1954) created the CCD business improvement district to deliver daily services with the goal of making Center City clean and safe. This helped transform Center City into a vibrant 24-hour downtown, attractive to businesses, residents, students, shoppers, and tourists.

CPDC is a nonprofit, business leadership organization that serves as a vehicle for planning, advocacy, and civic engagement for projects and initiatives that enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of Center City and which may be implemented by CCD, private developers, or public agencies.

CCDF, the 501(c)(3) charitable affiliate of the CCD, was reactivated in 2016 to initiate, test, and support the projects and activities of the CCD that enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity of downtown Philadelphia. The Foundation raises funds to support efforts that assist the homeless and disadvantaged workers, increase Center City's tree canopy, and create new parks and public spaces.

These organizations are governed by separate boards of directors, but share a common staff and offices. Leadership staff include:

- President and CEO: with the organization since its founding in 1991
- VP of Parks & Streetscape Operations: management responsibility for CCD's four parks and for the installation and maintenance of all streetscape improvements (lighting, landscaping, signage)
- VP of Planning & Development / Executive Director, CCD Foundation
  - Directs the development and fundraising activities of both the CCD and CCDF; oversees the planning and development of public space improvements for CCD.
- VP of Finance & Administration
- VP of Marketing & Communications: print, TV and radio, website content and design, media, events, retail attraction and other promotional activities

### **Business Development: Fundraising, Sponsorship, and Membership Activity**

The organization's total operating budget has grown to \$23.5 million, supported by distinct business models for each entity:

*Center City District* directly bills and collects mandatory payments from properties in the business improvement district. CCD also receives voluntary contributions from the owners of tax-exempt properties that benefit from CCD services. To generate revenues for park maintenance and provide amenities for customers, CCD leases three park cafés and hosts events in the parks.

*Central Philadelphia Development Corporation* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, supported by a business membership model that includes more than 100 leading businesses and institutions. Membership provides exclusive access to programming, communications, and networking opportunities.

*Center City District Foundation* is supported by charitable donations and grant funding for specific projects:

- Installing the innovative Pulse interactive art experience at Dilworth Park;
- Completing the first phase of the Viaduct Rail Park;



DowntownRaleigh  
Alliance

- Enhancing Sister Cities Park to make it the country’s most celebrated park for families and children
- Expanding employment opportunities for disadvantaged workers.

### **Key Events & Programs**

*CCD* key services and initiatives include:

- Clean crews 7 days a week; public safety services
- Streetscape: makes physical improvements to the downtown, installing and maintaining lighting, signs, trees and landscape elements to make downtown welcoming, brighter, and more accessible.
- Marketing & Events: promoting downtown as a great place to work, live, shop, dine, and enjoy
  - Focus on co-sponsoring events with merchant organizations, cultural groups, and attractions
- Management of four high-quality parks

*CPDC* key services and initiatives include:

- Research, advocacy, promotions; current focus areas:
  - Comprehensive tax reform to promote job growth
  - Center City schools to retain families with children
  - Public space improvements and transportation
- Business attraction: retain downtown office tenants, support start-ups, technology, and creative economy firms

### **Interesting Takeaways**

- Manages seven websites through one cohesive brand
- Success with grant funding from government, corporate, and foundation sources in support of specific projects with public benefit. The foundation allows a vehicle for long-term planning and funding to make sure as the city grows, the public services and spaces also grow.

### **Venture Richmond**

200 South Third Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
(804) 788-6466 | [contactus@venturerichmond.com](mailto:contactus@venturerichmond.com)



### **Mission**

Venture Richmond (VR) engages business and community leaders in partnering with the city to enhance the vitality of the community, particularly downtown, through economic development, marketing, promotion, advocacy and events.

### **Overview and Structure**

VR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a full-time staff of 10 and an annual budget of about \$7 million. VR is governed by a large board of directors consisting of almost 100 local business leaders and led by approximately 50 Executive Committee members. Currently, the small staff includes:

- Executive Office (3): Executive Director, Deputy Director, Executive Assistant
- Events and Programs (4): Events and booking manager; Program Manager, Riverfront Canal Cruises; Festival manager, Event operations manager
- Accountant
- Director of Marketing and Development



In January 2017, VR named Laura Sims as its new Executive Director. Sims had been with the organization since 2006 and served as its interim Executive Director since Jack Berry's retirement in April of 2016. Previously, Sims was Director of Events, responsible for managing all of VR signature events. VR manages programs and projects for downtown Richmond special services districts and assessment districts in accordance with a contract with the City.

### **Business Development: Fundraising, Sponsorship, and Membership Activity**

VR does not have a formalized membership program and revenue is generated through government contracts, tax assessments, private investments, and program fees. The organization receives private funding from annual contributors – local businesses and foundations – with approximately ~40 designated as “Major Contributors” on their website. VR also has at least two contracts with the city: managing the Riverfront Canal area – operating boats, maintaining the canal walk – and the General Services District.

VR also invites sponsorships to support free community events stating that “Your gift supports our goal to energize downtown Richmond and unite the community through festivals and celebrations. These events directly benefit the local economy, encourage tourism and further strengthen the cultivation of the arts and entertainment in our city.”

### **Key Events & Programs**

Five focus areas include:

- Support the strategic direction of the city
  - Engage senior business and community leaders
  - Provide a resource to the city to advance key economic and promotional initiatives
  - Leverage resources of organizations throughout the region
- Provide enhanced services downtown
  - Marketing, promotion and events management
  - The Clean & Safe program (in partnership with the city), including sidewalk cleaning and safety ambassadors
- Landscaping, riverfront canal management, beautification
  - Canal operations, tour boats, etc.
  - Canal Walk planning and development
- Support efforts to enhance the business climate
  - Support teacher recruitment and recognition initiative
  - Help build successful school-business partnerships
- Ensure diverse representation and benefit
  - Maintain board makeup that reflects diversity of community
  - Promote corporate supplier diversity
- Operate in an accountable and efficient manner: increase ROI to private investors and government

### **Interesting Takeaways**

- VR lists “formal” partners on its website, including a section for Government and Businesses; partners include City of Richmond, Greater Richmond Chamber, Historic Richmond Foundation, Greater Richmond Partnership, Inc., Richmond Sports Backers, 17<sup>th</sup> Street Farmers Market, and Richmond Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau
- VR Richmond oversaw the widely popular ‘RVA’ campaign, an effort that brought together VCU Brandcenter students and multiple, otherwise competitive, Richmond advertising agencies to launch the RVA brand identity as an open-source symbol of a vibrant and creative community.