

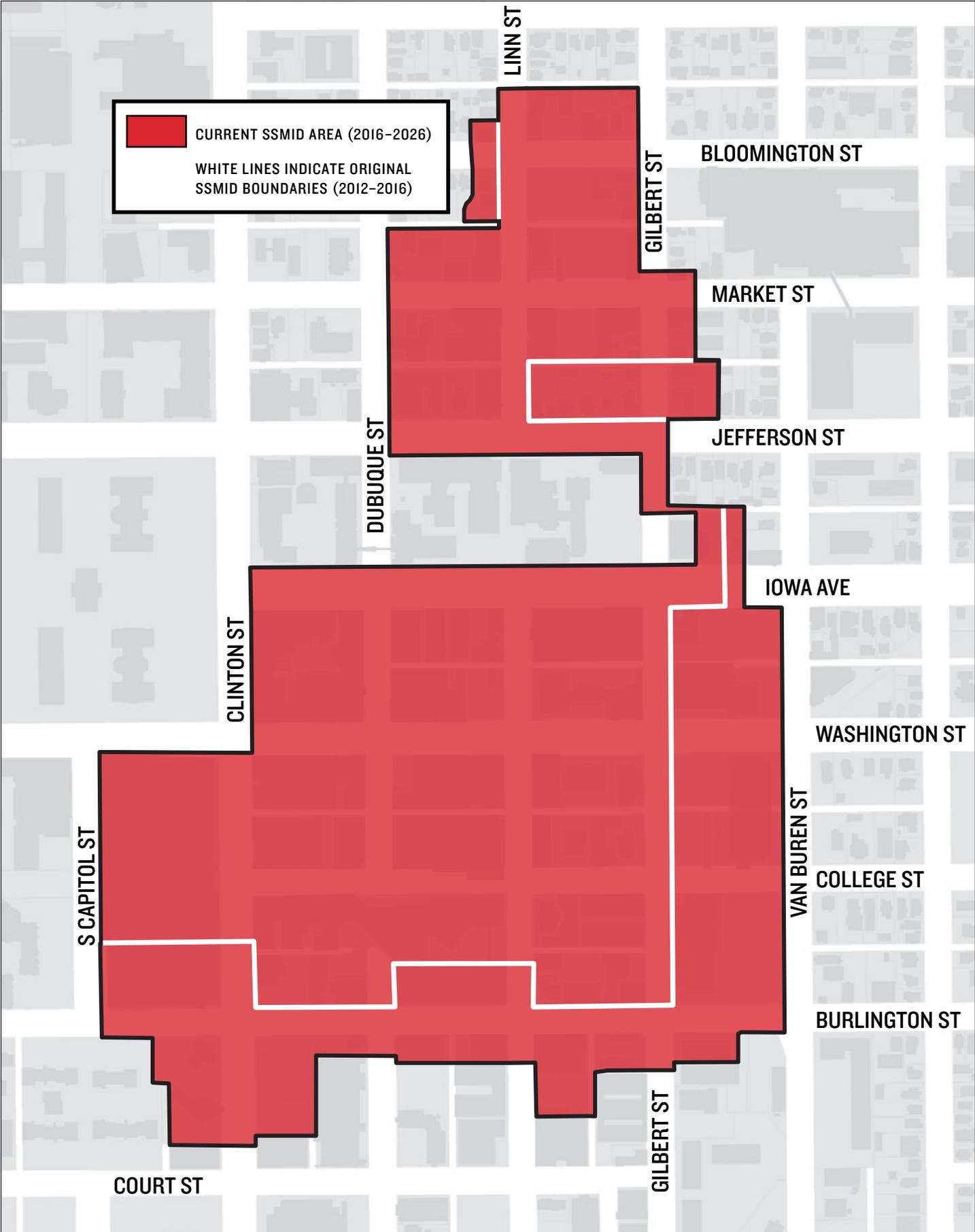
IOWA CITY DOWNTOWN DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLAN

2016-2021

The Iowa City Downtown District (ICDD) is a 501(c)6 nonprofit organization established in 2012 as a Self-Sustaining Metropolitan Improvement District (SSMID) for the benefit of member Downtown and Northside Marketplace property owners and businesses, as well as the region at large. In the first years of its existence, the accomplishments of the ICDD have been many.

The number of residents living downtown has increased, the number of businesses seeking to locate downtown has increased, the number of visitors has increased, and many other positive developments have taken place—all are evidence of the value and effectiveness of the ICDD.

The 10-year renewal of the SSMID in 2016 was an opportunity to revisit long-term planning for the ICDD, and this strategic plan is one outcome of that opportunity. The ICDD engaged in a three-month process March through June 2016 to evaluate the current state, envision the desirable future state, and build a plan for achieving that vision. With this plan in place, the ICDD is positioned to move boldly toward a vibrant future.



WHY WE EXIST

To champion the Iowa City Downtown District as a progressive, healthy, and culturally vibrant urban center of the region.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

To advance a Downtown that thrives as the heart of the Iowa City community, **integral** to the lives of community members and with **far-reaching renown** for the authentic character, **unique** contributions, and **opportunities** it offers.

HOW WE WORK

At the center the Iowa City Downtown District's work are core values, which are the means by which the ICDD will achieve its vision. These BOLD values drive how the ICDD operates internally as well as how it functions within the community and region.

BIG THINKING:

The ICDD has a reputation of thinking big and we strive to push the creative envelope with proactive endeavors, initiatives, and thought.

ORIGINAL AND AUTHENTIC:

The ICDD is invested in this place. We keep it authentic to the heritage and culture of this space—home to many “firsts,” perhaps a few “lasts,” in an original Downtown (circa 1839).

LOCALLY CONSCIOUS AND SUSTAINABLE:

Our practices are thoughtful or our economic, environmental, and social impact to the larger community and we encourage this ethic amongst our members.

DYNAMIC:

Collaboration is a key feature of our working model and we strive to establish programs that advance many community objectives in meaningful ways. We value imagination and innovation in envisioning possibilities and finding solutions to challenges—the entrepreneurial courage to embrace the future and the creative flexibility to respond with dynamic results.

WHAT WE DO

1. **WELCOME** – create a welcoming environment
2. **DRAW** – encourage “feet in the street” by drawing people downtown, and
3. **SHAPE** – influence the shaping of the urban center.

Within each of these areas of work, the ICDD develops programs, campaigns, and initiatives where the organization informs, invests resources, and advocates.

For each area of investment, the table on the following pages notes these items:

- An identifying number.
- The priority level the Board of Directors has assigned the item for the 2017 fiscal year. A priority of 1 indicates highest priority, and 3 is lowest. Note, however, that the board has deemed all items listed to be important in achieving the new vision of the Iowa City Downtown District. Higher priority items will generally be addressed sooner than lower priority items.
- Which items in the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis are addressed by the given item. The SWOT report is included in an appendix to this report.
- High-level, potential metrics for each item. As detailed work plans are developed for each item, specific metrics will be identified.

1: WELCOME

The heart of a community must fill all of the community’s fundamental needs, and the Downtown District works to ensure that there is solid, sustainable infrastructure and functional, appealing space for living, learning, working, and playing within the geographical boundaries of the Downtown District.



2: DRAW

The Downtown District aims to be a place where people of all backgrounds and ages are drawn; a community where people feel welcome in an environment of mutual respect, in which they collaborate and make connections with one another; and where a shared community identity can flourish at the same time that differences and variety are valued.



3: SHAPE

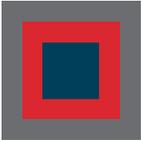
With people coming together to live, learn, work, and play in the Downtown District, it is vitally important to be thoughtful about encouraging a mix of ventures that will enable the Downtown to flourish as a vibrant urban center. The Iowa City Downtown District works actively to support the location and successful operation of diverse and complementary ventures in the city center.



THE SIZE OF EACH COLOR IN EACH INITIATIVE’S GRAPHIC INDICATES THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF EACH WORK AREA IN THAT INITIATIVE

	NUMBER	PRIORITY	INITIATIVE	SWOT	METRICS
	1.1	2	BRING BACK CREATIVE SIGNAGE (NEW) Program to facilitate collaboration between business and artists to create practical and unique signage through the Downtown District	S 1, 2, 7, & 12 W 9, 11, & 12 O 7 & 11 T 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 new signs annually 5-year City funding reserved for Building Change program
	1.2	3	IMPROVE NIGHTTIME ATMOSPHERE (NEW) Program to enhance current efforts to improve the perception and reality of underage drinking in the Downtown District at night and the impact of the “10 o’clock spill out” on other venues	S 11, 12, & 13 W 2, 4, & 10 O 14 & 15 T 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working committee established Added representation on Partnership for Alcohol Safety Business-to-business conversations initiated 2 additional alcohol-free businesses open until 12 A.M.
	1.3	1	CLEAN AND SAFE (CONTINUING) Investments in lighting and alleyway enhancements; caring for the natural environment; cleaning services that are supplemental to city services ensure clean, appealing public spaces; and partnering with the City of Iowa City to fund a beat officer position dedicated to the Downtown District.	S 11 & 12 W 1, 2, 3, & 10 O 6, 14, & 15 T 1, 6, & 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linear feet of sidewalks cleaned Increased alley cleanings Targeted lighting projects conducted
	1.4	2	COMMUNITY SERVICES (NEW) The public spaces of the Downtown District are a gathering place for people of all backgrounds and circumstances. Advocating in support of the community service agencies that help those in need is a natural focus for the ICDD. The ICDD recognizes that caring for people with limited resources strengthens the community as a whole.	S 8, 9, 11, & 13; W 3 O 3, 4, 10, & 14 T 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As new FUSE program is initiated, support with 5 Letters to the Editor Role on the committees that support community services
	1.5	1	SAFETY (CONTINUING) The ICDD collaborates with the Iowa City Police Department and other organizations and agencies to develop approaches for enhancing the safety of the Downtown District.	S 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, & 13 W 2, 3, & 10 O 14 & 15 T 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City-supported Spot Clean and safety communication system amongst business owners Support for additional security cameras

- WELCOME
- DRAW
- SHAPE

NUMBER	PRIORITY	INITIATIVE	SWOT	METRICS
 1.6	1	<p>COMMUNITY BUILDING (CONTINUING)</p> <p>Continue ongoing work in <i>community building</i>—helping people with shared interests connect within the larger Downtown District community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Entrepreneurial community meetups at First Round ■ Business community: Retail and Restaurant Caucus ■ Arts community: quarterly meetups ■ The University of Iowa and visitors: website, brochures ■ ICAD, CVB, and Chamber event support 	<p>S 10 & 12</p> <p>W 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 12</p> <p>O 1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, & 15</p> <p>T 1, 2, 3, & 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with Economic Development partners to support communications and streamline efforts ■ Hosting business caucuses and reporting on District initiatives
 2.1	2	<p>PLACEMAKING (SHIFT IN EXISTING)</p> <p>The ICDD will shift over time from the role of only hosting promotional events to one that also proactively coordinates the physical wayfinding, the creation and quality of Downtown public spaces, and event activities of other organizations and government entities to ensure that there is a healthy rhythm of coordinated activity in the Downtown District for the mutual benefit of all. This coordination will create and support opportunities to experience things that cannot be experienced elsewhere. This effort will be marketed and communicated through the street banner system, kiosks, and schedule of Downtown activities.</p>	<p>S 1, 8, 9, 11, & 13</p> <p>W 4, 5, & 6</p> <p>O 1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, & 15</p> <p>T 1, 2, 3, & 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased pedestrian counts taken annually ■ Perception survey metrics ■ Added wayfinding signage ■ Event schedule for pedestrian mall permits ■ Social media metrics ■ Support of other organizations in their quest for venues and open dates
 2.2	3	<p>COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN (NEW)</p> <p>The ICDD currently develops marketing materials to help people understand what Downtown Iowa City has to offer and to encourage them to spend time Downtown. The communications campaign will focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vision (the ICDD as the heart of the community, known far and wide for all it has to offer); 2) The new top investments designed to welcome and draw people Downtown; 3) shaping of the urban center. 	<p>S 10 & 12</p> <p>W 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 12</p> <p>O 1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, & 15</p> <p>T 1, 2, 3, & 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Direct mail campaign to reach local households ■ 10 public presentations to local groups

- WELCOME
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NUMBER	PRIORITY	INITIATIVE	SWOT	METRICS
2.3	1	<p>MARKETING CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS (CONTINUING)</p> <p>The ICDD conducts marketing campaigns on behalf of Downtown Iowa City to keep the area top of mind as a shopping and entertainment destination for local residents and visitors. The District also hosts a number of successful events that promote Downtown venues and neighborhoods. Events such as Northside Oktoberfest, Taste of Iowa City, Sidewalk Sales, and holiday campaigns are important services of the organization. These endeavors draw people Downtown in clear ways.</p>	<p>S 1, 8, 9, 11, & 13 W 4, 5, & 6 O 1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, & 15 T 1, 2, 3, & 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased social media metrics ■ Increased bike and ped counts ■ Increased sales indicators
3.1	2	<p>WASHINGTON/DUBUQUE STREET INTERSECTION (NEW)</p> <p>This item is in support of a priority identified in the 2014 Retail Strategy report. Shaping a plan for each of the four corners of this intersection would strengthen contiguous, vibrant uses in the core of the Downtown. This work would also address two blocks of dead space along the US Bank walls and ultimately enhance the economic vitality of the District.</p>	<p>S 2, 8, 9, & 12 W 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9 O 1, 11, & 15 T 1, 4 & 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Working committee established
3.2	3	<p>DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (NEW)</p> <p>The ICDD will explore options for and the feasibility of establishing a development corporation for the purpose of actively pursuing strategic development projects.</p>	<p>S 10 & 12 W 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10 O 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6 T 1, 3, 4, & 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Working committee established
3.3	1	<p>RETAIL SUPPORT AND TENANT RECRUITMENT PROGRAM (STRENGTHEN)</p> <p>The ICDD will continue to support a position to execute the Downtown District's retail strategy, which is aimed at fine-tuning the tenant and retail mix of the District so that it is healthy and diverse. The ICDD Gift Card program and other targeted small business support should also be tailored to support retail businesses.</p>	<p>S 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, & 12 W 4, 6, 7, 8, & 10 O 1, 2, 3, 4, & 11 T 1, 3, 4, 5, & 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Measures of economic vitality ■ ID new tenants, review of merchandise mix, # of tours ■ Establish "tool kit" for members with ICDD support services

- WELCOME
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NUMBER	PRIORITY	INITIATIVE	SWOT	METRICS
3.4	1	<p>ICDD PROPERTY EVALUATION PROGRAM (STRENGTHEN EXISTING) Offers incentives to ICDD property owners to evaluate older properties in the District to enhance economic vitality. The program provides historic and structural integrity information, two design scenarios for improvements, and estimates of return on investment.</p>	<p>S 2, 7, & 12 W 4, 6, 7, 11, & 12 O 1, 5, & 6 T 3 & 4</p>	<p>■ 2 number of evaluations conducted in FY 17</p>
3.5	2	<p>ADJACENT DEVELOPMENT (NEW) As the City of Iowa City, the University of Iowa, and private property owners continue infill development of areas adjacent to the Downtown District, the ICDD will research and develop position statements that seeks to influence development patterns that would be mutually beneficial to all. In particular, the ICDD will study whether a SSMID expansion into the Riverfront Crossings area would be of benefit to members.</p>	<p>S 4 & 12 W 4 & 5 O 2, 3, 8, & 13 T 1, 3, 4, 5, & 6</p>	<p>■ Develop working group</p>
3.6	3	<p>HOUSING POLICY (NEW) The ICDD recognizes that housing issues affect the entire community. The organization should develop a policy position that contribute to solutions for community-wide housing issues while supporting the achievement of the future vision of the District.</p>	<p>S 13 W 7 O 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, & 14 T 4, 5, 6, & 8</p>	<p>■ Develop working group</p>
3.7	2	<p>KEY ISSUES (CONTINUE) The ICDD will keep its finger on the pulse of the larger community issues to ensure that it can respond when new key issues arise that may warrant the articulation of a position statement or policy recommendation in support of the ICDD's mission and vision.</p>	<p>S 12 O 14 T 1, 5, 6, & 7</p>	<p>■ Identify issues through legislative committee ■ Strengthen partnership with the Chamber</p>
3.8	3	<p>UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COLLABORATION (STRENGTHEN EXISTING) Recognizing that there are many opportunities for collaboration between the ICDD and the UI, as well as many shared concerns, the ICDD will initiate a standing, working relationship with the UI to address issues such as education and internship opportunities, innovation incubators, housing, nightlife and alcohol-related issues, and more.</p>	<p>S 1, 4, 11, & 13 W 2 & 4 O 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, & 13 T 2</p>	<p>■ Strengthen connection with ICAD and CVB boards ■ Add business representation on PAS</p>

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STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Key meetings and activities undertaken by the Iowa City Downtown District (ICDD) in the development of this strategic plan were conducted March – June 2016. A general timeline is as follows:

MARCH 21

INITIAL STAFF DISCUSSION
of project process and timeline

MARCH 30

INITIAL SURVEY:
Initial input regarding ICDD direction and needs requested from all original board members, incoming board members, and ICDD staff

APRIL 19

STRATEGIC PLANNING KICKOFF MEETING:
35 participants, including original board members, incoming board members, and ICDD staff

APRIL 29

SURVEY REGARDING CORE VALUES AND CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS:
Input requested from strategic planning steering committee members

Kickoff meeting space and small-group discussion at April 19, 2016, kickoff meeting at home of ICDD president Ritu Jain



IOWA CITY DOWNTOWN DISTRICT SWOT ANALYSIS: JUNE 2016

The following SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) results are drawn from the 2016 analysis by the Iowa City Downtown District staff, the 2015 Signage and Storefront Design Guidelines report, and the 2014 Downtown District Retail Strategy report.

STRENGTHS

(What does Downtown Iowa City do better than anyone else? What advantages does it have or offer?)

- S1. High concentration of arts and culture institutions
- S2. High concentration of unique and locally owned restaurants and retail
- S3. The Ped Mall
- S4. Proximity to the University of Iowa
- S5. Outdoor patio seating creates an active street life
- S6. Small scale
- S7. Historic character
- S8. Highly walkable and bike-able
- S9. Highly trafficked (both foot and vehicle)
- S10. Secure, consistent revenue stream and financial position
- S11. Strong, committed partners in the City of Iowa City and The University of Iowa
- S12. High number of invested local retailers and businesses who are committed to the success of downtown (the stakeholders).
- S13. Dual populations (community and student)/varied audiences

WEAKNESSES

(What could the downtown improve? What factors are at play when a business decides to locate somewhere else, someone decides to live somewhere else, or someone decides to spend money elsewhere for dining/entertainment/shopping?)

- W1. Negative perceptions of cleanliness
- W2. Safety concerns, primarily at night
- W3. Vagrancy
- W4. Perception that Iowa City is “just a college town”
- W5. Convenience of access (parking perceived as difficult; other dining/ shopping/ entertainment options are closer to home and/or work)
- W6. Small business owners with limited resources
- W7. High rent and property prices
- W8. Lack of office/building supply
- W9. Large buildings and empty parking lots interrupt continuous retail experience
- W10. Too many bars and restaurants (lack of retail diversity)
- W11. Cluttered street facades
- W12. Inappropriate and poorly designed signage and wayfinding

MAY 12

STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:

Discussion of core values, vision, and organization of the work to be done

MAY 26

ICDD BOARD MEETING:

Discussion of strategic plan report draft, including vision, core values, and the defined areas of work

JUNE 3

SURVEY REGARDING IMPORTANCE AND PRIORITY OF THE PROPOSED INVESTMENTS AND AREAS OF ADVOCACY:

Input requested from strategic planning steering committee members

JUNE 9

STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:

Discussion of survey results and the priorities for investments and areas of advocacy

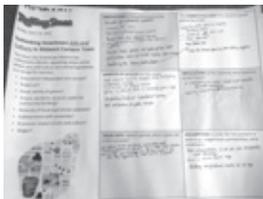
JUNE 23

ICDD BOARD MEETING:

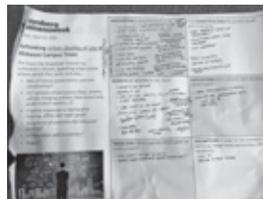
Discussion of full draft of strategic plan; vote to adopt

Future vision idea boards from April 19, 2016, kickoff meeting

Arts and Culture



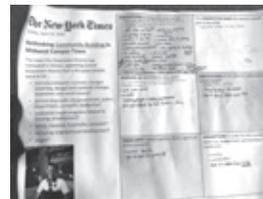
Urban Quality of Life / Economic Development



Events



Clean – Green – Safe – Community Building



OPPORTUNITIES

(What urban trends could the ICDD could take advantage of? If downtown eliminated or mitigated some of its weaknesses, what opportunities would open up? Which of our strengths, if improved upon, open up new opportunities?)

01. Potential development and/or adaptive reuse of underperforming properties
02. Geographic expansion with Riverfront Crossings
03. Development of live/work environments
04. Micro-housing
05. Efficiency and sustainability initiatives
06. Creative new uses of outdoor public space, including alleyways
07. Creative signage
08. Innovative collaboration with the University of Iowa
09. Hosted and supported events—exploring new options, partnerships, types
010. Attracting the creative class and active retirees
011. Cultivating the District to become a nationally renowned arts and culinary destination
012. Hancher Auditorium's resurrection in its new physical space (also a potential threat)
013. New UI School of Music building opening at the corner of Burlington and Clinton Streets
014. Influence and support social change related to homelessness and mental illness Downtown and throughout the community
015. Play a larger role in "placemaking" and Downtown programming

THREATS

(What obstacles does the ICDD face? What is the competition? What is the competition doing?)

- T1. Population growth in the region is shifting north: Restaurant, residential, office, and retail growth in Cedar Rapids, the Cedar Rapids NewBo District, North Liberty, Solon, and Coralville creates quality dining and entertainment options closer to regional residents' homes and places of work (more convenient options than Downtown Iowa City)
- T2. Hancher Auditorium's resurrection in its new physical space (also a potential opportunity)
- T3. New development of the Iowa River Landing Arena
- T4. Lack of new real estate development within the Iowa City Downtown District
- T5. Constant change within local politics
- T6. Lack of alignment between some City and ICDD priorities, including some areas of investment and some outdated regulations and ordinances that could help the two entities work better together if revised
- T7. E-commerce disruption to the traditional brick-and-mortar retail model
- T8. Lack of quality affordable housing and strong public transportation access plagues the region, driving those who support restaurant-, retail-, office-, and hospitality-driven employment farther from the Downtown core and making working and living in Iowa City difficult for longtime residents as well as newcomers.

2016 STRATEGIC PLAN CONTRIBUTORS

Ritu Jain	President
George Etre	Past President
Michele Galvin	Secretary
Kent Jehle	Treasurer
Mark Ginsberg	President Elect

CONTRIBUTING BOARD MEMBERS

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Jason Deppe	The Saloon
Bill Nusser	Hands Jewelers
Joni Schrup	Discerning Eye
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Wesley Ward	Business Owner
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Linda Schreiber	Master Gardener
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Nate Kaeding	Special Projects
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STRATEGIC PLANNING SUPPORT

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