

Iowa City Downtown District
ADVOCACY STATEMENT
SEPTEMBER 2021

The ICDD provides a voice for downtown businesses, nonprofits, cultural entities, and residents. We believe that when the downtown thrives the whole community flourishes.

The Iowa City Downtown District provides vision, leadership and influence on a range of issues impacting downtown. Our work includes welcoming public spaces, drawing business interest and visitors downtown and shaping the downtown landscape through our influence.

Advocacy is an important tool for this work. We work closely with City and local leaders, community organizations and government agencies to ensure issues important to our members – and our urban core – are heard, understood, and acted upon.

The economic viability of the downtown is integral to our community's well-being. A vital downtown with growing property values helps build the City's tax base, which is used to support community parks and recreation, police and fire services, and health and human service agencies to name a few. A healthy downtown can also increase and protect property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods. A strong downtown supports the community in many ways. Therefore, we believe that when the downtown thrives, the whole community can flourish.

The ICDD strives to conduct our work using a lens for social justice. Advocacy is an important filter to social justice, along with providing access, agency and solidarity, for long term, thoughtful change. The following positions reflect our values and commitment to systemic change.

1.0 Welcoming Urban Experience

We believe downtown is the heart of our community. 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. We lead public realm initiatives that are crucial to the vitality, cleanliness, and friendliness of our downtown.

ICDD Positions:

The Downtown District is the economic and cultural engine of the Iowa City community. It is home to a wide variety of national and independent, locally-owned boutiques, cultural venues, hotels, and some of the very best in dining and entertainment, and is a place where University and local business innovations merge. To sustain this engine, the ICDD partners with the City to support a welcoming environment for all residents and visitors.

We advocate for the following to enhance these efforts.

1.1 Welcoming Community

The ICDD supports inclusion and creating a community that prospers because everyone feels welcome. This means ensuring downtown is accessible to our residents as shoppers, workers, residents, and business owners. This includes support for the City of Iowa City's designation as a "Welcoming City" to visitors that reside or visit from around the globe and advocacy for the creation of inclusive policies and practices such as making it easier for entrepreneurs to start a business or having wayfinding and public signage available in multiple languages.

1.2 Support for Under-Represented Businesses

We support the expansion of the City of Iowa City's financial assistance for current and emerging historically under-represented businesses and property owners. The ICDD encourages and can offer support for these targeted businesses, including recruitment to be on the Board of Directors of the ICDD.

1.3 Clean & Safe

We believe the downtown must be fundamentally clean and feel safe for all community members and visitors first in order for the area to thrive. We advocate for the following to ensure this baseline is met.

1.3.1 We support the Iowa City Police Department's placement of a daytime police officer as a liaison to downtown stakeholders as well as other public safety resources in the evening that proactively support downtown businesses and venues. The ICDD will continue to invest in these services where positive impact is the proven result. These officers assist with issues of shoplifting, counterfeit money, and a variety of safety issues businesses may face. We also believe the ICPD's community-based approach pays dividends for local-problem solving related to serving those underserved and experiencing mental illness, addiction, and/or homelessness.

1.3.2 We advocate for City support of additional study of downtown nightlife, calls for service, and other data to guide further ICDD public safety investments. Additional data and analysis from the ICPD will help identify the appropriate services that could prevent or deter incidents in the later evening and prevent violence downtown.

1.3.3 We support the ICPD's use of security cameras in the downtown area if:

- Cameras are not actively monitored;
- Cameras are identified so that the public is aware they are on;
- They are used to recall video for investigative purposes and officially subpoenaed requests only; and
- Video feeds are deleted every 6 months.

1.3.1 Downtown hosts thousands of people daily in the City center, as well as large public events, live music, children’s activities and a playground, a public library, and a host of other attractions and sensitive uses. We advocate for State legislative action to change the law(s) that permits guns in public spaces such as the downtown pedestrian mall.

1.4 Support for Community Services

Downtowns are often the last refuge for individuals experiencing mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness. We advocate for the following to enhance community services supporting individuals experiencing these conditions.

1.4.1 We support the continuing Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for police, fire, and emergency staff to help support a less confrontational environment and to de-escalate events with offenders that may lead to violence or further crisis. Further, we advocate for CIT training community-wide where those going through the training open up the opportunity for others to attend as possible.

1.5 Support for the Arts Access Initiative

Support the Arts Access Initiative championed by the Downtown Arts Alliance to encourage additional Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) into arts programming. The more diverse content, the more people of color see others like themselves in downtown venues to support a more welcoming environment. (# 1 in the *2021 Downtown Recovery Brief*.)

2.0 Shape the Urban Landscape

One of the constants about downtown is that it is ever changing. The ICDD is an organization that values our history and helps guide its next chapter. We recognize that change is hard, yet necessary for growth—both in density and diversity of offerings downtown. We acknowledge that there are challenging discussions ahead regarding height, density, redevelopment, and historic preservation; and there is no consensus on these matters in the community or amongst ICDD membership.

The ICDD supports a planning strategy that places focus on a larger area, versus looking at individual properties, to **increase predictability**. Ideally, there are clear delineations of what decisions are policy driven and therefore, made by the city council, and which are administrative, and delegated to staff.

We need to design the ideal downtown of the future, taking into consideration an increasingly diverse population, climate change, creating experiential retail, changes in technology, and ensuring gathering spaces are malleable and programmed for various purposes and safe for all.

The ICDD wants to play a role in facilitating and leading these discussions in a concerted and thoughtful manner.

The ICDD's approach to our built environment is to listen, conduct research, educate, communicate, and innovate. Hosting forums that inform best practices that shape a quality downtown built environment and access to it is a great way to provide opportunities for strategic learning.

ICDD Positions:

2.1. Urban Character:

The ICDD believes in a "smart growth" approach to sustainable downtown development and regional growth. This approach encourages compact and more dense development in the City's commercial core, with a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, development within existing neighborhoods, and community engagement. The juxtaposition of old and new provides a rich analogy of our community that we hope to maintain and steward.

The following statements guide our advocacy.

- Our urban character includes an integrated mix of contemporary structures and historic buildings that are both highly valued by our organization.
- "Infill" projects help financially support the downtown ecosystem by bringing additional customer base to businesses in older buildings that often struggle with higher maintenance costs. It is recognized that most development over 3 stories is viewed as increased downtown density.
- We support land use policies and regulations that encourage sustainability and foster and encourage downtown reinvestment.
- Well designed taller buildings that have a positive impact on the streetscape have a place in the downtown.
- A mix of housing types (apartments and condos, student and community, low-income to market rate) will keep a balance of income and young to older generations living downtown. When this mix is out of balance, incentives should be offered to housing developers and landlords to meet the objective.
- Thoughtful downtown development can grow the City's tax base, which in turn provides support for City services throughout the community. When the downtown thrives, the whole community flourishes.
- Alleys are an opportunity to be used not only for solid waste, recycling, and deliveries. Our alleys can also become a destination, utilized as outdoor retail with seating areas, as a place to view and participate in public art, and to become beloved walkways connecting other downtown destinations.

In addition, the City conducted a Downtown and Pedestrian Mall Streetscape Update Plan in 2014 (www.icgov.org) to support the revitalization of and reinvestment in Downtown Iowa City. The ICDD advocates for continuing the implementation of the 2014 Streetscape Update Plan.

2.2 Land Use Regulations

The 2019 Downtown and Riverfront Crossing Master Plan update (Downtown Comprehensive Plan or RFC Plan) (www.icgov.org) provides land use guidance for the Downtown and Riverfront Crossings area. The ICDD supports the general guidance of the plan. However, the ICDD advocates for a review of the Downtown Comprehensive Plan by staff to address several incongruencies. In doing so, those interested in investing locally will be better served with a more predictable process - which can keep investment local and the reputation of the community strong.

Currently, several areas of the plan are out of date and introduce ambiguity as to how the existing zoning and the plan's suggestive guidance should be implemented through new development or renovations downtown. The following options could help de-politicize proposed projects considerably:

1. An administrative clarification added in the rear Appendix of the Downtown Comprehensive Plan on page 112 on a map entitled "Heights" that states the following: "This map was developed to provide market projections of possible heights of downtown development in 2009 and is not to be used as a regulatory guide for actual development or renovations projects, where the downtown zoning code prevails." OR
2. Ensure that the zoning code and maps within the Comprehensive Plan are in alignment. For example, the zoning code does not permit one-story development downtown and this same map indicates properties where it is a "preferred height."

The Downtown Comprehensive Plan provides a great starting place for these discussions and clarity in the use of the guidance and the zoning code will assist all parties know what they can and cannot develop in Iowa City.

Similarly, the City has expressed the desire to explore a Form Based Code (FBC) approach to zoning land use for both Downton proper and the Northside neighborhoods (www.formbasedcodes.org) to help streamline development and preserve character.

As it pertains to land use, zoning, and regulatory code compliance, we advocate for:

- A Form Based Code approach for the Northside at a similar neighborhood scale as CB-5 zoning, or a roughly five story building.
- A zoning approach for the downtown core proximate to the pedestrian mall that allows the market to express demand for buildings at a variety of heights and uses.
- Review of impediments such as parking regulations to downtown renovations and investments to support infill projects and additional housing opportunities for long-term community members.
- Exploration of downtown parking regulations in the special exception process, especially

as it relates to the shallow nature of the local water table (deterring underground parking) and the size of smaller property footprints that may not allow a development to accommodate the required parking on the site without demolishing adjacent properties.

- Review of the intent and outcomes of the “500-foot rule” and explore if any updates while still having appropriate regulation of alcohol licenses are warranted to create a more competitive restaurant environment and even playing field with restaurants and bars outside the downtown area.

Last, the ICDD developed Design Guidelines in partnership with the City of Iowa City to support business openings downtown, quality sign standards, and storefront enhancements. High quality design standards are important to attract other high quality businesses. The City has never adopted these standards and it would be very helpful to our organization to have the City adopt them so that we are both promoting the same positive street character and well designed storefronts. We have advocated since these standards were developed for the City to adopt this document and continue to do so.

2.3. Housing for the Community

We support the City’s goal of increasing the affordable housing stock, including in the downtown area. Affordable housing is defined as a household spending no more than 30% of their income on rent/mortgage and utilities. We similarly support mixed-use development that incorporates residential units targeted towards long-term tenants as a particular need of downtown neighborhoods. Increasing the supply of residential units targeted at a variety of income levels will support the community’s overall need for additional housing stock.

2.4 Remove Incentives for College-Oriented Housing Development

The current ratio of student to community housing downtown is out of balance and impacts the downtown market by strengthening the market demand for traditionally student offerings (pizza, beer, and coffee.) In order to offer a stronger merchandise mix targeted at the larger community, we advocate for incentives for community-based housing at mixed income ranges and a removal of incentives for student housing identified in the Downtown and Riverfront Crossings Master Plan.

2.5 Access and Mobility

We support study of the Iowa City area's mobility systems to assess and address the growing demand for safe, clean, green, reliable, accessible and affordable transportation options that serve businesses, residents and visitors alike. We advocate for:

A New Vision for Transit for the Iowa City area that:

- Provides electric buses to support the economy, provide a cleaner alternative to automobiles and diesel engines, reduce road congestion, and to continue to provide a safe, reliable, and equitable mobility service.
- Create a consistent and timely public transit schedule.
- Expands busing on Sundays and exploring “on demand” transportation options

- Fosters public transportation solutions through Transportation Network Companies (TNC) pilot opportunities.

Street Design Downtown, that:

- Consider input from downtown stakeholders before modifications are made.
- Changes Market Street from one way to two-way to support accessibility to the Northside from Dubuque Street. This change is critical to the success of this retail neighborhood.
- Support for street design and parking changes to increase mobility and safety for both motorized and non-motorized traffic while ensuring there is sufficient parking for visiting shoppers.
- Carefully reviewing safest locations to support new bike lanes downtown that do not conflict with critical operations (deliveries, utilities, and visitor parking.)

Addressing Parking Needs, such as:

- Adding street parking on streets with capacity.
- Prioritizing parking in ramps for visitors and business employee permits above others (residents / students) by requesting this information when providing permits.
- Advocating the University of Iowa to encourage students to leave cars at home and instead of driving utilize free University and City bus/shuttles, E-bikes, zip cars, Uber/Lyft, bicycles, and walking.
- Encourages delivery trucks to temporarily park on-street to preserve parking for patrons as the best method to preserve parking spaces in front of stores.
- Encourage delivery trucks to drop inventory prior to 11am daily
- Strengthen enforcement of illegal parking downtown and agreements with Target

Addressing Aging Parking Facilities by:

- Installing systems to help patrons know when garages are reaching capacity

Creating a bike friendly environment that:

- Expands bike trails and lanes to encourage safe biking options to and from downtown
- Increases bike parking and bike shares downtown and across the area.

2.6 Sidewalk and Street Cafes and Open Dining Opportunities

Iowa City cafes create an unmatched vibrancy that benefit the business, the ICDD and the City. The ICDD commissioned a Sidewalk Cafe Case Study Report in March 2021 to analyze a variety of cities across the country and their approach to outdoor dining policy post COVID-19. The cities selected were other cold weather cities finding ways to embrace all four seasons, even when the temperatures drop. The case studies presented some alternative solutions to similar challenges of promoting and regulating outdoor dining and entertainment in downtown.

The report recommends encouraging private investment in the outdoors as a way to support a 4-seasons environment.

We advocate for:

- Adoption of 4-season sidewalk café permit for those that want to participate.
- Café opportunities for nightlife businesses.
- An opportunity to establish “minor cafes” (8 people or less) without fencing and “major cafes” (more than 8) that require temporary fencing similar to existing regulations.
- A reduction and simplification of permit costs to a flat, all inclusive fee for major and minor sidewalk and street cafes. Reward well managed cafes with opportunities for a 3-year permit.
- Create a process for businesses to establish winterized cafe structure
- A policy revision to allow high seating and bar service use outside in cafes
- Allow businesses additional seating permissions to provide more opportunities for the general public to congregate.
- Explore city-owned natural gas fire-pits for annual usage during the winter months

2.7 Historic Preservation:

In 2017, the City of Iowa City commissioned a Downtown Historic Survey to document the history of the buildings, the people, and the downtown area and to gain recommendations for its preservation. The ICDD supported one of the Survey’s key accomplishments, which was the City of Iowa City’s 2021 listing of downtown Iowa City as a National Register of Historic Places. The survey has many other recommendations that are more complex and could require regulatory changes related to zoning.

The vitality of properties and their tenant businesses are crucial to the success of downtown, and achieving a common ground between what is appropriate for the contemporary retail environment and what contributes historically should be considered. The public process for establishing next steps for historic preservation downtown should include the ICDD and these stakeholders. Those who steward these properties currently have valuable information to share and exchange that will help support a robust conversation about preservation and how to best achieve it.

The goals of the ICDD will be to explore ways to achieve balance between incentives provided by the City and any possible requirements of owners with historic properties. The ICDD advocates for public financial support (such as tax relief) to ensure the costs of historic preservation and its importance to the entire community is shared.

2.7.1 Incentivize Historic Preservation - In April, 2021, the Iowa City Downtown District conducted a survey of property owners on historic preservation that demonstrated that downtown stewards are interested in and would be very motivated by additional opt-in incentives as part of downtown preservation. The Iowa City Historic Preservation Commission also recently updated their work plan that includes “developing opt-in incentives for local landmarks in commercial zones.”

2.7.2 New Guidelines and Supportive Process - Current Iowa City Historic Preservation Guidelines don't adequately address commercial buildings but utilize the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines as a default. The City should develop with the Historic Preservation Commission and Downtown District clear and easy to understand guidelines about what is or isn't allowed to a local landmark building in commercial areas.

For consideration:

- Allow discretion and flexibility of which historic era of the building should be preserved;
- Establish a framework that encourages preservation as an incentive for collaborative development processes, with the new College Street development as a leading example;
- Provide clear guidance for mitigation and signage and other educational opportunities that celebrate the history of the site or preserved building;
- Establish clear guidelines that prioritize City goals related to sustainability and preservation, especially where increased levels of natural light meet data-driven social, environmental, and economic sustainability goals.

The program could also consider other tools to support accessibility and make historic buildings work better today, such as the allowance of smaller elevator shafts in local landmarked buildings with small footprints.

These guidelines should be directed at current and new landmark buildings also zoned commercial. In tandem, the City should provide adequate staff time or third-party consultant support to ensure they can reasonably be available to address applications.

2.7.3 Third Party Review - The City should hire a third-party consultant approved by the HPC and ICDD to approve the historic review of commercial landmark buildings, based on the guidelines developed by the City and approved by HPC. This use of a consultant in this manner would be similar to the current process the City uses for Tax Increment Financing projects that undergo third-party review by the National Development Council.

The third party consultant would support a more consistent, predictable, and expedited time frame - which would address one of the primary reasons stewards of historic buildings are not interested in officially listing properties. The consultant could also provide regular updates on projects approved by the HPC.

2.7.4 Opt-In Incentives - Similarly, consider the following financial incentivization for those that Opt-In to local listing:

- Provide professional support for state and federal tax credit applications (shared cost)
- Establish a revolving loan for approved tax credit projects whereby the City allocates funds early that get paid back by the owner when tax credits eventually are realized from the state; and
- Freeze property tax levels on newly listed historic properties to 2018 levels for a period

of time (e.g. 10 years or a phased tax increase to assessed market level during later years.)

2.7.5 Preserve Heritage Businesses - Preservation is about more than buildings. The City's heritage businesses are part of what makes Iowa City a special place. We advocate for the following:

- Create a Heritage Building program that would certify, recognize and support businesses over 25 years old that are unique to our community to stay viable over time (e.g. Prairie Lights Book Store).
- Similar to landmark buildings, establish financial programs to help support heritage businesses continue for future generations.

2.8 Strengthen a Diverse Economy

2.8.1 Support for Retail - Business retention and recruitment is important to the ICDD and we strive to achieve a balanced mix of community-serving versus visitor / student-oriented retail. This requires City support and attention from other economic development organizations. We advocate for:

- Financial incentives to help attract and recruit retailers that meet the co-sponsored City-ICDD 2014 Retail Strategy and 2019 Retail Strategy Update for community-based soft retail goods.
- Financial, TIF assistance, parking reductions or other departures for building improvements that would support improving the accessibility of older properties and retaining independent retailers as a community benefit.
- City support for ICDD-led retail initiatives that enhance the built and regulatory environment.

2.8.2 Support for Local Arts Economy - Local art and culture venues support the success of our authentic place and ICDD mission. ICDD initiatives deliberately serve to foster a local arts industry that appreciates a range of both locally driven, national, and international art. As one of many public art administrators, the ICDD is committed to working with downtown stakeholders and the City of Iowa City to facilitate the installation of work that is of artistic and civic worth, with a strong but not exclusive focus on involving local artists. (See section 3.1). Specifically, we advocate for:

- Restoration of a meaningful financial commitment to the City's Public Arts Program.
- Fair pay for artisans and the development of paid art opportunities.
- City commitment to support the preservation of existing cultural venues and operations as needed.

2.8.3 Support for Historically Marginalized Businesses - We advocate for City and County public programs that provide financial incentives for BIPOC businesses and cultural entities. This dialogue has begun and could be led by the Iowa City Area Business Partnership and Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD) in a nimble manner.

The ICDD can do our part by inviting these businesses to review our vacant spaces and supporting connections with property owners.

2.9 Establish a More Resilient Economy Post 2020-2021 Coronavirus Pandemic

The 2020-2021 novel coronavirus pandemic resulted in behavioral changes throughout the world that have radically altered the way people gather, interact, shop and dine. We've observed at a local level the need for downtown businesses and entities to have multiple methods for reaching clientele and opportunities for additional space. We've also realized with society re-opening that it will remain important to build a stronger downtown destination in light of the many emerging districts around us. The following initiatives are under exploration. We advocate for the following:

2.9.1 Winterization | Four-Seasons Downtown - Downtown needs flexible, common winter cafe / weatherization opportunities for sidewalk cafes and within the pedestrian mall. We advocate for the City to permit year round sidewalk cafes for winter dining outdoors and support winter programming throughout Johnson County to help encourage a culture shift in dressing for and enjoying the winter season (refer to Section 2.6 for additional details).

2.9.2 Excite through significant winter public arts installation - We advocate for City support and partnership with local hotels and University sponsors and partners on winter public art installations or activities that entice the public to get active and out in the winter season.

2.9.3 Reimagine Dubuque Street - Post-pandemic, people have found more importance in being outdoors, walking and biking over cars, and are interested in more space in the public right of way. Therefore, we see the future construction of Dubuque Street as an opportunity to reimagine the planned 2023 streetscape project for possible change. In 2021, the ICDD commissioned a study to review opportunities for Dubuque Street that built onto the vision in the 2014 Downtown Streetscape Plan that resulted in the following recommendations:

Establish a flexible design of Dubuque Street that allows easy transition of the street during special events and winter and better announces the entry into downtown Iowa City. Specifically:

- Monument features that establish you are in downtown Iowa City
- automated bollards;
- flexible parking and loading - consideration of reducing paved lines
- unique ambient lighting;
- sustainable features;
- infrastructure for outdoor heating;

- extended cafe opportunities;
- connection with an improved, resurfaced “arts” alley.

This streetscape project should be advanced for a future State of Iowa grant (Vision Iowa or Enhance Iowa) for upcoming State placemaking initiatives.

2.10 Create a Hub of Integrated Neighborhoods

Public input from the 2019 ICDD community survey suggests that the community places a high value on Downtown Iowa City and the operations of the ICDD and they would like to see more opportunities to connect Downtown with other neighborhoods of the City. As an organization, the ICDD advocates for the following as a means to support our larger vision of serving as a “hub” connecting all Iowa City neighborhoods and our surrounding cities together.

2.10.1 Connections through Public Art - The ICDD advocates for the City or other public art programs to invest in and carry themes that serve to connect downtown and other community neighborhoods or local communities together. The ICDD will similarly invest in public art programming that demonstrates our shared history, education and pride between downtown and the larger neighborhood system as one community.

We advocate to the City to incorporate new and updated downtown improvements with public art.

2.10.2 Foster new and expanded SSMID opportunities and/or neighborhood partnerships - Input received during the 2019 Strategic Plan Update from the ICDD Board, larger community, and City Council suggested that the ICDD’s services could be of value to other neighborhoods. Property owners proximate to the Downtown have sought input on how to be included in ICDD services and events. Currently, there is no clear path for how to best work together.

Because many stakeholders agree it is within the ICDD’s benefit to work collaboratively with emerging areas and new businesses that may impact the downtown market and City and ICDD service areas, the ICDD advocates to support new neighborhood organizations such as Self Supporting Municipal Improvement Districts (SSMIDs.)

Specifically, the ICDD supports the encouragement of a new neighborhood organization for part or all of the 500-acre Riverfront Crossings area and the South District area (or others). Property and business owners in these areas are not organized to take advantage of a united marketing message, neighborhood branding, enhanced services, or a united voice. ICDD leadership and staff will make a pointed effort to inform other interested neighborhoods of its own story, the path toward successful organization, and the legal and other considerations to encourage a united voice that would serve as a sister organization and co-collaborator with the ICDD. Neighborhoods working together, instead of apart, will build a stronger, healthier Iowa City area community.

2.10.3 Incentivize Investment in the Individual Commercial Properties Community-Wide - The City should encourage the care and investment in all commercial areas of Iowa City so that all small business owners have similar investment opportunities. We advocate for government incentives to support continuous investment into the commercial areas of the City through programs such as matching facade and signage grants.

2.11 Support for a County-Wide visioning process through Better Together 2030

Build on ICDD's involvement in Project Better Together's COVID-19 emergency actions and collaborative success and evolve the initial reaction to a global pandemic toward a proactive effort to unify the Iowa City area. This community-wide vision should engage everyone in the community, the University of Iowa, people of all ages and those who work or play here, to set a course of action for achieving their hopes and aspirations for their future in the Iowa City area.

Similarly, strengthening the town-gown relationship continues to be a priority. The University of Iowa and community leaders from across Johnson County must work together in a more intentional and strategic way. Because downtown is a prominent destination and a recruitment tool for local workforce, we advocate for a supportive town/gown relationship to advance the health of the downtown and the entire community.

The Downtown District supports:

- A formal organizational structure with partner organizations to advance opportunities to address campus and community-wide challenges and long-term opportunities with trusted partners. This type of collaboration will benefit the Downtown District area and support the vision for economic development, community development and cultural endeavors.
- Advocating on community-wide issues to the State of Iowa that generally benefit the ICDD where the ICDD voice can add to those of other municipal, University, economic development and/or other local leadership in the region.
- The coordination of maintenance and construction projects with and between the City and UI to reduce the number of disruptions to downtown pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- Support for collaborative downtown events with these partners to help familiarize, welcome, and promote local shopping, employment, participation in the arts and culture scene, and welcoming of new, long-term community members.

3.0 Draw Visitors and Community to Downtown

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.

ICDD Positions:

3.1 Bring to Life Underutilized Spaces (Placemaking)

We support activating underused areas of downtown to ensure their safety and to promote the relevance of our downtown as a dynamic place to engage with the community. We advocate for support to continue and grow our placemaking efforts downtown. Specifically:

- Continued, predictable annual financial support from the City to activate the north end of the Pedestrian Mall known as Black Hawk Mini Park and other areas in need of activation. If the funding was predictable and secure, the ICDD could plan for traveling national exhibits that are enjoyed in other cities. Without predictability of funding, this type of art will likely not visit Iowa City.
- Implementation of a simple and flexible City approval process for temporary public art projects that use or otherwise activate public spaces.

3.1.1 Activate the University of Iowa Pentacrest. - We advocate to University of Iowa leadership to invest in the Pentacrest yard as a way to welcome and encourage activities in the largest green space available to downtown. The low black fence should be removed for its "stay off" message and both public and student programming should be integrated as one community. Opportunities include wrapping and uplighting trees, uplight and line Pentacrest buildings with lights, allow additional projection art, and programming all season activities throughout the Pentacrest with emphasis on the flat yard along Clinton Street.

3.2 Draw Feet in the Street (Events)

The ICDD advocates for events that draw people downtown, supports the downtown economy, and fosters art, music, and literary advancements. Recognizing that the Downtown landscape is a living and breathing ecosystem of businesses in need of customer traffic, utility access corridors, and pathways for people and deliveries, events require a thoughtful approach in order to keep business operations from being significantly disrupted. Collaboration with our local businesses and properties is an easy way to encourage diverse, integrated and successful events for the entire community.

We advocate for:

- Minimal requests for street closures that have significant negative impacts on soft-good retailers.
- Prioritization of support for downtown businesses over outside vendors.
- Communication and accommodation of brick and mortar businesses when planning the event layout to minimize, where possible, the blocking of businesses by vendors or entertainment.

3.3 Continuation of ICDD Place Management Opportunities

The ICDD is interested and has capacity to manage the stage banner system as it does the Street Pole Banner system so that we can provide all event producers equitable access to the stage and a method to receive accurate measurements and opportunities for advance marketing. Currently, different departments of the City provide the stage access, lighting opportunities, and access to the banners system yet the process to access these tools isn't yet streamlined or public facing.

3.4 Foster a Vibrant and Fun Nighttime Atmosphere (Nighttime Initiative)

In 2017, the ICDD invested in a new Nighttime Mayor position to support nighttime businesses and to serve as a support for nighttime businesses and as a community concierge for residents, visitors, college students, and area employees. The ICDD is working to activate public spaces downtown that are inviting people of all ages to change the image of downtown at night. However, we need support from the City and UI to explore best practices from other cities, a review of local regulations, and ultimately the development of a program that will encourage an evenly robust downtown environment for all visitors, students, residents, businesses and cultural entities.

The following items are opportunities to support a healthier nightlife economy.

- We support a change in State administration to allow local City control of liquor licenses so that a simpler regulatory environment could be explored that would allow additional flexibility for restaurants to open past 12am while ensuring liquor license holders are accountable for nuisance or calls for service.
- Explore opportunities to mitigate potential nuisances related to noise, music management, and alcohol license abuses through the use of an "Entertainment Management Plan" that could replace the rule that excludes a bar within 500-feet from another bar and that precludes restaurants from being open past 12am.