

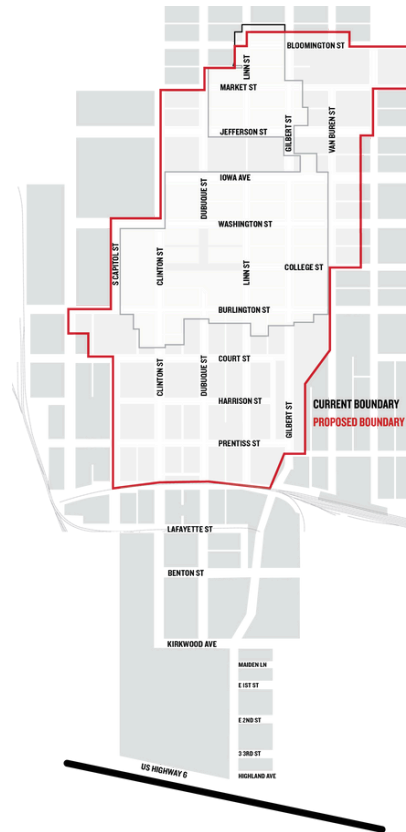


IOWA CITY DOWNTOWN DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2031



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 | Plan on a Page
- 4 | Strategic Planning Process
- 5 | Priorities, Goals, & Objectives
- 7 | Implementation
- 8 | Acknowledgements



It is with great pride and optimism that we launched the Iowa City Downtown District’s organizational Strategic Plan for 2025–2031. This plan is the result of a six-month process filled with thoughtful evaluation, robust engagement, and forward-thinking visioning. It builds on over a decade of experience and positions us to meet the challenges and opportunities of the next five years with renewed focus and enthusiasm.

As we prepare for the renewal of our Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID), this moment offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reenergize our work in service of Downtown Iowa City. Downtown Iowa City has always been more than a place—it is the cultural and economic heartbeat of our region. It is where creativity meets commerce, and where history and innovation coexist. This strategic plan reflects that spirit and charts a focused and strong path forward.

Whether it’s through activating and investing in place management, supporting local businesses, promoting and driving foot traffic, or investing in mobility and infrastructure, we aim to ensure that Downtown Iowa City continues to be a place where all are welcome, and where everyone can thrive.

We are ready to move with a strong focus into the future. This is our chance to build on past successes while embracing new ideas, partnerships, and strategies to deepen our impact. I invite you to join us as we embark on this exciting new chapter—full of possibility, purpose, and progress.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The ICDD provides a leadership directive that advocates for the District mission and serves as a mechanism to more efficiently implement District-wide marketing, programs, events, and projects that support vitality for the benefit of all the businesses within it, the University of Iowa, community members, and the region at large. Since its inception, the Downtown District continues to forge an exciting and deliberate path forward towards cultural vibrancy, resiliency, and sustainability.



Wendy Zimmerman
Board Chair



Betsy Potter
Executive Director

PLAN ON A PAGE

VISION

Downtown Iowa City is the creative and innovative heart of the region.

MISSION

The Iowa City Downtown District champions a thriving downtown economy, fostering a vibrant community and welcoming experiences for all.

VALUES

- Big Thinking
- Original & Authentic
- Locally Conscious
- Welcoming, Supportive & Collaborative



ECONOMIC VITALITY

- Economic accessibility
- Development & redevelopment
- Arts & culture
- Economic development

PLACE MANAGEMENT

- High-quality events
- Walkability & approachability
- Community perceptions & downtown's brand identity
- Ambassador services
- Placemaking

LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP, & COORDINATION

- Advocate
- Partnership & coordinated initiatives
- Coordinate with UI Healthcare Downtown Campus

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Funding
- Board engagement, perspectives, & participation
- Operational & advocacy capacity
- Independent & community-based

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Between August 2024 and March 2025, the Iowa City Downtown District (ICDD) embarked on a strategic planning process, structured into three phases: assessment, planning, and implementation.

In the assessment phase, ICDD revisited its vision, mission, and values to ensure they were aligned with the current status of the organization and Downtown. Ultimately, these foundational elements evolved to better reflect the bright future envisioned by downtown stakeholders. Engaging a wide range of participants—including business and property owners, residents, ICDD board members, and institutional partners—provided critical insights that helped shape the organization’s strategic priorities for disproportionate emphasis over the next five years: **Economic Vitality, Place Management, Leadership Partnership, & Coordination, and Organizational Infrastructure.**

During the planning phase, strategic priorities were carefully refined through workshops with board members and community partners, which defined success for each priority and established measurable objectives.

In the final phase of the planning process, ICDD staff, board members, and community leaders developed initial tactics, implementation guidelines, and accountability measures to ensure the successful execution of the plan. This comprehensive, inclusive process ensures that ICDD is positioned to effectively serve and strengthen downtown Iowa City for years to come.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Economic Vitality



Place Management



Leadership, Partnership, & Coordination



Organizational Infrastructure



ASSESSMENT
WHO & WHERE WE ARE

PLANNING
WHERE WE WANT TO GO

IMPLEMENTATION
HOW WE WILL GET THERE

ECONOMIC VITALITY

PLACE MANAGEMENT



GOAL

A thriving downtown economy fosters a balance of business, university, arts and cultural activities, as well as residential and public spaces.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Enhance downtown's **economic accessibility** and desirability as a place to live, work, and visit.
- ✓ **Development & redevelopment** proactively elevates downtown's economy and character - with emphasis on high impact properties and attractor businesses.
- ✓ Support the local **arts & culture** economy as the most creative place in the Midwest, including artists and downtown arts & cultural venues and events.
- ✓ Collect and leverage data to support and inform **economic development**.



GOAL

Downtown enjoys the most vibrant sense of place in the region.



OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Curate a finite portfolio of **high-quality events** that are intentionally targeted toward specific outcomes.
- ✓ Increase downtown's **walkability & approachability** - increasing foot traffic and promoting parking and transportation options for downtown users.
- ✓ Continue to improve **community perceptions** and leverage downtown's brand identity.
- ✓ Sustain and grow **ambassador services**.
- ✓ Sustain intentional, inclusive, and interactive **placemaking**.

LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP & COORDINATION

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE



GOAL

A coalition of community, city, university, and regional leaders continue to shape a vibrant, safe, and inclusive downtown.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Advocate for downtown issues.
- ✓ Consciously multiply ICDD's impact by leveraging **partnership & coordinated initiatives** with the city, university and other regional partners on critical issues.
- ✓ Collaborate with **UI Healthcare Downtown Campus** as an active partner in downtown Iowa City.



GOAL

ICDD is an exciting, effective, and responsive organization with bold leadership and diverse resources.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Increase overall **funding** by 15%.
- ✓ Strengthen **board engagement, perspectives, & participation** in organizational leadership.
- ✓ Increase and allocate **operational & advocacy capacity** focused on strategic priorities.
- ✓ Reinforce our role as an **independent, community-based nonprofit organization**.



IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of this five-year strategic plan for the Iowa City Downtown District will be a dynamic and iterative process, with specific tactics continuously refined through ongoing, detailed work planning. This adaptive framework includes:

- Defining critical steps to advance strategic priorities.
- Tracking progress through key metrics that will inform future actions and demonstrate the plan's impact.
- Identifying accountable individuals or partner organizations for each objective and tactic.

To initiate implementation and establish accountability ICDD staff in collaboration with its partners and Board of Directors, has developed a set of high-level metrics for each strategic priority. Monitoring progress against these metrics will enable the ICDD, its leadership, and partners to assess the plan's effectiveness and guide future efforts.

Monitoring Progress:

ECONOMIC VITALITY

To understand the vitality of downtown, the ICDD will consistently track key business and property metrics, including the diverse retail mix, the rate of space utilization and any vacancies, the success of business retention efforts, and the strategies in place for business succession. The organization will monitor tourism trends and the evolving number and variety of residential units and downtown residents.



PLACE MANAGEMENT

In its commitment to developing downtown's vibrant sense of place, the ICDD will measure the attendance and economic impact of its events and activities. These metrics will shape future event strategies. Regular assessments of cleanliness and safety will be conducted through tracking of cleanliness and public safety statistics (i.e. trash pick-up, graffiti removal, and reported crime incidents.)



LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

To guide its actions and foster effective partnerships, the ICDD will develop and annually update a comprehensive policy agenda. The organization will track progress and use this information to inform collaborations in critical areas for downtown's advancement, including growth, affordability, accessibility, and public safety.



ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A significant milestone for the ICDD will be the successful renewal of the SSMID. Additionally, the organization will focus on measuring and strategically planning for diversified and increased revenue streams. Ensuring appropriate allocation of staff capacity and active engagement from the Board of Directors and Committee members will also be key in tracking the progress of successful strategic plan implementation.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

STRATEGIC PLANNING LEADERSHIP

Jason Paulios, Iowa City Public Library
Wendy Zimmermann, Get Fresh
Tony Branch, United Action for Youth
David Kieft, University of Iowa
Charlie Nusser, Hands Jewelers
Rachel Kilburg, City of Iowa City
Josh Immerfall, Giddy Up, Donnelly's,
Camp, Scout's Honor
Michelle Galvin, Velvet Coat
Sheila Davisson, Revival
Nancy Bird, Greater Iowa City
Reine Gelman, Webster, Paper Crane
John Schickendanz, Englert Theatre
Nate Kaeding, Old Capitol Hospitality
Jamie Skinner, Molly's Cupcakes
MAKA Hayek, Hayek, Moreland Lawfirm
Angie Brown, MidWestOne Bank
Diego Lasansky, Lasansky Gallery
Robyn Hepker, Benson & Hepker Design



IOWA CITY DOWNTOWN DISTRICT STAFF

Betsy Potter, Executive Director
Christopher Hunter, Director of Marketing
Katie Carpenter, Director of Events
Joe Reilly, Nighttime Mayor

CONSULTING TEAM

UNCOMMON BRIDGES

Brian Scott
Jacqueline Robinette
Skylar Benson
Em Piro

ICDD BOARD MEMBERS

Wendy Zimmerman, Get Fresh
Jason Paulios, Iowa City Public Library
Angie Brown, MidWestOne Bank
Tony Branch, United Action for Youth
Charlie Nusser, Hands Jewelers
Jeet Saini, Om Gifts
Allison Hoflen, Graduate Hotel
Bethany Young, Iowa Artisans Gallery
Sophie Donta, OPN Architects
Kriss Mondanaro, Reunion Brewery,
Bread Garden Market, Joseph's Steakhouse
Jamie Skinner, Molly's Cupcakes
Kevin Felker, Prairie Kitchen Store
Josh Immerfall, Giddy Up,
Donnelly's Irish Pub, Camp, Scout's Honor
Nina Lohman, Brink Literary
David Kieft, University of Iowa
Diego Lasansky, Lasansky Gallery
Macy Krall, 223 Baby Co
Rachel Kilburg, City of Iowa City
Monica Nieves, Think Iowa City
Kylie Buddin, United Action for Youth
Jennifer Miller, University of Iowa
Health Care Downtown
Cady Gerlach, Better Together

KEY STAKEHOLDER

INTERVIEWS

Jim Mondanaro, Property Owner
Pete Matthes, University of Iowa
Josh Moe, City Councilor
Karen Kubby, Business Owner
Josh Schamberger, Think Iowa City
Andy Hodge, Property Owner
Ben Kinseth, Property Owner
Catherine Champion, Business Owner
Laura Bergus, City Councilor
Geoff Fruin, City of Iowa city
Nick Linsley, Downtown Business
Marc Moen, Property Owner
Susan Felker, Business Owner
Jeff Clark, Property Owner

