



Downtown Partners Board Retreat
Sioux City Career Academy
January 26, 2023

In Attendance: Jason Allen, Stacie Anderson, Kaylee Betterton, Jeff Carlson, Ragen Cote, Carly Howrey, Chris Jackson, Erin Kuehl, Matt Rixner, Angela Rogers, Julie Schoenherr, Katie Towler, Alex Watters, Anne Westra

The purpose of the retreat was to provide focused opportunity for the following:

1. New board members to integrate and network with existing board members
2. Identify alignment of projects to focal areas
3. Prioritize projects and create action plans for the top 2 in each workgroup

New Board Member Integration

The retreat provided opportunity for newer board members to interact with existing board members in a purposeful way. Appreciation was expressed by all for the scope of activity the organization spearheads or supports and the action orientation of the board. The facilitator observed positive interaction between all individuals in attendance making it difficult to determine who was new and who had previously established rapport.

Alignment of Projects to Focal Areas

The attendees divided into workgroups of: Community, Environment and Vision. Each group was provided a stack of notecards with the projects those workgroups spearhead. The groups first separated projects which are 'operationalized', meaning they have been honed to the point they are well executed by the staff of Downtown Partners with defined engagement by the workgroups and community stakeholders. These projects aligned to the established 1-5 Year Focal Areas of the organization as outlined below:

Focal Area – Aesthetics:

- 4th & Virginia Street Park
- Planters
- United Center Greenspace
- Lighting Enhancement Plan
- City Façade Program
- Litter Dash/Litter Pickup

Focal Area – Walkability:

- Pedestrian Report Recommendations
- Streetscape Plan/Map Updates

Focal Area – Markets as Cultural Draw:

- Bike Shares/Scooters
- Outdoor Gym/National Fitness Campaign
- Holiday Parade & Seasonal Décor

Focal Area – Targeted Business Recruitment

- Social Media Content Calendar
- Weekly E-blasts
- Welcome Packets
- On street parking rates/Ramp overflow
- College Connections
- Experience Downtown video marketing

Each workgroup also aligned projects needing additional work/support under the focal areas. These will be outlined in the next section titled “Project Prioritization.” Before prioritizing, the entire board reviewed alignment to reach consensus and evaluated the balance of activity in each focal area. One ‘project’ was deemed to span all focal areas that being “clean and safe”.

The work of Downtown Partners is closely aligned to the board expressed objectives and focal areas. Intentional efforts to maintain that focus is essential to over mission creep which could lead to overextension of staff/organizational capacity.

Project Prioritization

Each workgroup also aligned projects needing additional work/support under the focal areas. These projects were then prioritized by all in attendance to identify where efforts should focus first. The project prioritization, organized by workgroup is listed below:

Workgroup – Community:

- Website Update (Action Plan attached)
- Storefront grants for outdoor dining spaces
- Project Promotion Packages/Calendar
- Events/New Programming Spaces
- Vendor Street Market
- Hotel Training Needs for CVB

Workgroup – Environment:

- Skywalk Activity/Wayfinding (Action Plan attached)
- Outdoor Music Installation
- Virginia Street Corridor Riverfront Connection (Action Plan attached)
- Recycling
- Pedestrian Only Districts

Workgroup – Vision:

- Entrepreneurial Support Event (Action Plan attached)
- Programming Coordinator Staff Position (Action Plan attached)
- Storefront Grants for Outdoor Dining
- Grocery/Market Recruitment
- Innovation Center
- Pop-up Business Location

Part Two: Observations and Recommendations

The facilitators observed several behaviors and undertones throughout the event that are worth noting. These are thematically summarized below along with recommendations for managing or maximizing these sentiments.

Observations

1. Awareness of capacity and need for mission focus.

Good conversation was held to remind people that past drifts from organizational core mission led to overextension and disengagement of SMID members. An intentional focus on partnering and supporting rather than ‘owning’ work in areas that are not the responsibility of Downtown Partners is paramount.

Two examples discussed by the group were:

(1) Lighting related to safety. While DP can advocate and raise awareness, this is really a responsibility of the City Public Works.

(2) Event coordination. While DP can assist and guide organizations through processes of launching new large-scale events, the ongoing management and coordination needs to belong to the sponsoring organization. Crafting and communicating the intentional transition plan is essential to avoid taking on events.

2. Challenge with personality trait distribution, could impact future productivity.

Much of the group is centered in the same quartile of the DISC diagram. Intentional focus on recruiting new members with other styles will help to provide more balance and allow everyone to function in the natural style more often. In the interim, the board members were reminded of the need to adapt at times to make sure work is accomplished. Additionally, a schedule of action plan review and development will help to drive achievement along with creative visioning.

3. Board members are engaged and passionate about continuing progress in downtown.

Positive words were consistently used to express the accomplishments, activity and experiences of the board and staff. There appears to be true appreciation for the contributions of each person.

Recommendations:

1a. Continuous review for focal area alignment. The board is conceptually aware of the extensive amount of work required of staff members, while also expressing desire to continue to expand impact of the organization. Regular (annually suggested) review of activity that is operationalized and those projects in development and the alignment with focal areas of the organization is essential to maintaining focus.

1b. Articulate ongoing activities and the engagement level of Downtown Partners stakeholders. Developing a strategy to remind SMID members of the ongoing work and the impact it has in maintaining downtown as a positive environment will balance the more public awareness of new project activity.

1c. Encourage and appreciate comments/input from board members that focuses on collaboration, transition of responsibility or challenges the role of DP in new activity. This provides a positive opportunity to reflect and determine if the activity is aligned and within scope.

2a. Intentional focus on recruiting new members with other styles will help to provide more balance and allow everyone to function in the natural style more often.

2b. In the interim, help board members recognize the need to adapt at times to make sure work is accomplished. Utilize a scheduled review of action plan to drive achievement. Set an expectation that each work group has two action plans in execution mode at any given time.

2c. Embrace the creative visioning and 'dreaming' of board members by documenting ideas for review/discussion once current objectives have been attained. These can also be reviewed at the next board retreat to determine prioritization.

3. Continue periodic board retreats. The participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage in focused work for a longer than usual time frame. Continuing to have periodic board retreats serve to maintain focus, confirm alignment, and fuel passion for involvement.

Conclusion:

The board retreat achieved the communicated expectations and resulted in clearly articulated goals and alignment of board members around those goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you and the board for strategic planning. If Groundswell, LLC can further support the execution of the work identified, please reach out.

Sincerely

Dr. Cyndi Hanson & Ike Rayford

Addendum
Action Plan Documents

Project: Website

Focal Area Alignment:

Why is this important?

- Increase SEM
- Top marketing & recruitment tool, along with social media
- Current site has weekly issues

Who Should be Involved/Who are the stakeholders:

- Carly
- Web Developer
- Community Workgroup
- Downtown Business Owners
- Board for Approval

What does success look like?

- Mobile Friendly
- Accessible
- High Traffic – measurable analytics
- User friendly backend for businesses to manage their profile
- Money
- How to Contact on Website
- Economic Impact of Events

What are primary challenges/barriers to achieving success?

- Buy-in and interest from business owners
- Time consuming

What steps need to be taken? When does it need completed? Who is responsible? Steps and deadlines to complete:

Action Step	Who is Responsible	Target Completion Date
Identify Needs	Carly/Ragen	2/3/23
Create RFP	Carly/Ragen	2/17/23
Review RFP Responses	Committee	3/15/23
Board Approval	Board	3/23/23
Contract	Ragen/Developer	4/1/23
Launch	Ragen/Carly/Developer	10/1/23

Project Leads/Co-Chairs: Carly, Ragen & Anne

Project: *Event Planning/Program Coordinator*

Focal Area Alignment:

Why is this important?

- Keep balance
- Demonstrate value to business owners

Who Should be Involved/Who are the stakeholders:

- Vision Workgroup
- Ragen

What does success look like?

- Balance for staff
- Support for new events and ongoing value to partners

What are primary challenges/barriers to achieving success?

- Determining financial support

What steps need to be taken? When does it need completed? Who is responsible? Steps and deadlines to complete:

Action Step	Who is Responsible	Target Completion Date
Create Master Check List for events		
Fiscal Evaluation for Adding Staff		
Communicate Value of Operations		
Define event handoff process		

Project Leads/Co-Chairs: Stacie, Kaylee & Jeff

Project: Entrepreneur Support – Fund Ads

Focal Area Alignment:

Why is this important?

- Grow Downtown
- Retain small businesses

Who Should be Involved/Who are the stakeholders:

- Downtown
- Siouxland Initiative
- Iowa West Coast
- Chamber
- Renee
- CVB

What does success look like?

- Helping showcase vision
- More collaboration
- Everyone aware of programs

What are primary challenges/barriers to achieving success?

- Participation
- Testimonials

What steps need to be taken? When does it need completed? Who is responsible? Steps and deadlines to complete:

Action Step	Who is Responsible	Target Completion Date
Meeting with Stakeholders	Vision Group	May
Marketing Budget	Vision	
Small Business Marketplace Event		June
Small Business Marketplace Event		December

Project Leads/Co-Chairs:

Project: Skywalk

Focal Area Alignment:

Why is this important?

- Connects downtown businesses and attractions
- Inclement weather walkability
- Exercise for employees and residents
- Positivity, Safety, PR

Who Should be Involved/Who are the stakeholders:

- Police Department
- First Class Security
- MercyOne
- CVB
- Businesses Connected

What does success look like?

- Increased pedestrian use
- Storefront access
- Safety
- Cleanliness
- Safety
- Double the force

What are primary challenges/barriers to achieving success?

- Storefront entrances are dungeony
- Accessibility
- Financial Issues
- Condition/HVAC
- Cameras/Comms Center

What steps need to be taken? When does it need completed? Who is responsible? Steps and deadlines to complete:

Action Step	Who is Responsible	Target Completion Date
Exercise Signage	Matt/Skywalk Board	3/31
Explore Litter Dash type event	Carly/Parks & Rec	3/31
Accessibility – Lighting Entrances/HVAC	Ragen w/ Public Works & Skywalk Board	3/31

Project Leads/Co-Chairs: Environment Committee

Project: *Connect to Riverfront (Virginia Street Corridor)*

Focal Area Alignment:

Why is this important?

- Ugliest connect to riverfront
- Remodeling intersection has made this a major corridor
- Interstate to downtown and vice versa

Who Should be Involved/Who are the stakeholders:

- City
- DT
- Active Transportation Board
- Siouxland Cyclists
- SIMPCO
- City Council
- Property Owners
- McClure Engineering
- DOT
- Public Works

What does success look like?

- Clean, safe, aesthetically pleasing
- Easy & accessible connection to riverfront and downtown
- Bringing all entities together

What are primary challenges/barriers to achieving success?

- Traffic
- Working with Property Owners
- Money
- Renovating spaces that may be dilapidated
- City & DOT involvement – if they are on board, much of the rest falls into place

What steps need to be taken? When does it need completed? Who is responsible? Steps and deadlines to complete:

Action Step	Who is Responsible	Target Completion Date
Continue to present renderings to stakeholders	Ragen, McClure, Boards, Council	Spring 2023
Determine who takes ownership of each piece		

Project Leads/Co-Chairs: Environment Committee