



DRA STRATEGIC **PLAN 2018**

Approved by the DRA Board on June 21, 2018

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Bike to Work event at GoRaleigh Station

I. INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Raleigh Alliance (DRA) was founded 22 years ago with the goal of jumpstarting and providing support to the revitalization of Downtown Raleigh. As an independent non-profit organization and administrator of the Downtown Municipal Services District (MSD), the DRA has historically brought business, government, non-profit, and neighborhood leaders together to advance strategic planning, investments, and community building efforts. This document includes an overview of the 16-month planning and engagement effort conducted from 2017-2018 intended to provide a refreshed strategic plan for the organization.

II. BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Facing a transition in executive leadership and 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 assisted DRA by enhancing organizational planning, clarifying its strategic focus, and proposing goals for the next few years.

PMA engaged in various discovery activities to ascertain and evaluate the condition of DRA's operations and programs. The targeted discovery process informed plan development, incorporated the input and feedback from DRA's stakeholders, and guided future plan development. Primary and secondary research methods in PMA's discovery process included:

- A 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, and
- Secondary research and analysis of comparative organizations to understand best practices and opportunities to adopt tested strategies.

This initial phase of work produced a snapshot of the organization from the perspective of community and board members, key partners, residents, and businesses. Called the DRA Organizational Assessment, it collected the perceptions and opinions from **over 590 stakeholders**, and its synthesis provided a directional framework for the subsequent public engagement effort intended to shape the strategic plan. The DRA Organizational Assessment in its entirety can be found attached to this document as Appendix B.



First Community Meeting hosted by William Peace University on March 27

III. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Following the hire of a new President & CEO to lead the organization, the DRA launched into the second phase of its process to develop this strategic plan. The second phase built off the intelligence and insight gathered during the Organizational Assessment, digging deeper into its framework to better understand the hopes, needs, and aspirations of the Downtown community. The secondary engagement process included three public input opportunities for members of the community to participate in the planning: focus groups, community meetings, and an online engagement portal through the Neighborland web-based platform.

For the focus groups, the DRA invited approximately 120 community stakeholders to participate in one of four tracks of three-stage, progressive group engagement opportunities. Invitations were sent to members of the Raleigh City Council, current and past DRA Board members, non-profit partners, business owners, Downtown employees, churches, Downtown residents, amongst others. A total of 12 focus groups were held during the process.

For the broader stakeholder base, the DRA held three community meetings (one corresponding to each focus group planning stage) in different neighborhoods around Downtown Raleigh. They included:

Community Meeting #1:

Assessing the DRA – *Review of programs, services, and other opportunities*
Tuesday, March 27, 2018 @ 6:00 PM, William Peace University

Community Meeting #2:

Assessing the Downtown – *What other ways can DRA serve the community?*
Wednesday, April 11, 2018 @ 6:00 PM, Sir Walter Apartments

Community Meeting #3:

Assessing the Draft Strategic Direction – *Where should the DRA go from here?*
Wednesday, May 16, 2018 @ 6:00 PM, Christ the King Church

For those not able to participate in person, the DRA also partnered with a specialized community engagement portal called Neighborland to provide an online forum for participation which was available throughout the engagement process.

Within this second phase of developing the strategic plan, the DRA engaged an **additional 625 stakeholders** and collected more than **1,700 individual comments**. When taken together with the input from the Organizational Assessment, **more than 1,200 citizens helped provide the DRA with clarity** regarding its new mission and strategic direction. Appendix C includes categorized and verbatim public input collected throughout the public engagement process.



IV. ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Advancing the vitality of Downtown Raleigh for *everyone.*

Why this matters:

Two decades of unprecedented growth and investment have delivered thousands of new stakeholders to Downtown Raleigh. While the history of the DRA includes strong partnerships between the public, private, and non-profit sectors, the focus of this strategic plan intends to offer a more intentionally human-scaled, inclusive focus. The plan reflects the voices of more than one thousand stakeholders; the term everyone emphasizes the intent to work toward a state where all people can pursue healthy and happy experiences in Downtown.



"Bring businesses and people together to build a better community." -PLAN PARTICIPANT

GOAL 1

Build a culture of authentic engagement and inclusion with Downtown's diverse community

Why this matters:

Among the most common refrains heard during the public engagement process was the desire for the DRA to earn a reputation as the convener of Downtown stakeholders. In direct response to resonant concerns expressed during the process, Goal 1 also demonstrates an intent to build a stronger partnership with the Downtown residential community. Accomplishing the goal will require additional investments in repositioning long-term programs such as the Ambassadors, plus a cultural shift among DRA staff. Further, there exists a growing concern about the effects of displacement which motivates the DRA, as a community based organization, to rally behind efforts that support a diverse Downtown community.

Key Objectives:

- Be the proactive convener of all stakeholders, both regularly and as opportunities and challenges require, to advise on the direction of Downtown and the work of the DRA.
- Position the Ambassador program with a community engagement focus, building on the foundation of safety training. Use the program as on-the-ground feedback and insight collection for stakeholder-facing programs and initiatives.
- Expand DRA-produced engagement opportunities to offer more inclusive and diverse opportunities for stakeholders to engage with and participate in the Downtown community.
- Support efforts to build a Downtown community that is home to a diverse population.



GOAL 2

Foster a thriving and diverse storefront economy

Why this matters:

The DRA's work in economic development, specifically retail recruitment and market analysis, are among the highest regarded of the organization's core areas of focus. To that end, Goal 2 aspires to position the DRA as the go-to organization for storefront business development with a particular emphasis on supporting the expansion of the Downtown retail marketplace. The public engagement process yielded further clarity about the DRA's expanded role in economic development, including serving as the convener to develop program direction for areas such as big-picture economic development strategies for Downtown Raleigh and the expansion of women- and minority-owned businesses Downtown.

Key Objectives:

- Utilize existing public-private economic development partnerships to develop an economic development vision and strategy for Downtown.
- Define a strategic retail recruitment plan which prioritizes locally owned, unique, differentiated businesses and, where feasible, national anchor tenants.
- Develop a storytelling approach for promoting local retailers and small business owners.
- Advocate for increased density in Downtown and growing the economic base that fuels Downtown's retail vitality, including residential, hospitality, office, and institutional uses.



“Convene stakeholders and include businesses more in events: help connect event producers with businesses to help both sides benefit more from each other.” -PLAN PARTICIPANT

GOAL 3

Facilitate strategic partnerships to produce positive, balanced activations across Downtown

Why this matters:

Over the past two decades, a special events strategy and focus has helped fuel the revitalization of Downtown Raleigh. However, as the community has grown, the impact of special events to those stakeholders generates a mix of opinions and positions. Public input regarding events is varied – however, there is a strong indication that Downtown’s success in attracting and hosting events could use a more empathetic, collaborative approach that acknowledges that events can cause disruption and inconvenience to some area residents, business owners, and people visiting Downtown to worship. Additionally, there is an appetite for intermittent, smaller scale activations – particularly in neighborhoods such as Glenwood South – as opposed to an expansion of major events that involve road closures.

Key Objectives:

- Leverage partnerships to produce smaller scale, high impact activations and events that appeal to a diverse set of Downtown stakeholders and visitors.
- Produce modular wayfinding system to be installed at special events to connect attendees with nearby storefront businesses.
- Serve as a facilitator between event producers, the City of Raleigh, and affected stakeholders, such as storefront businesses and residents, to mitigate challenges and optimize outcomes associated with special events.



GOAL 4

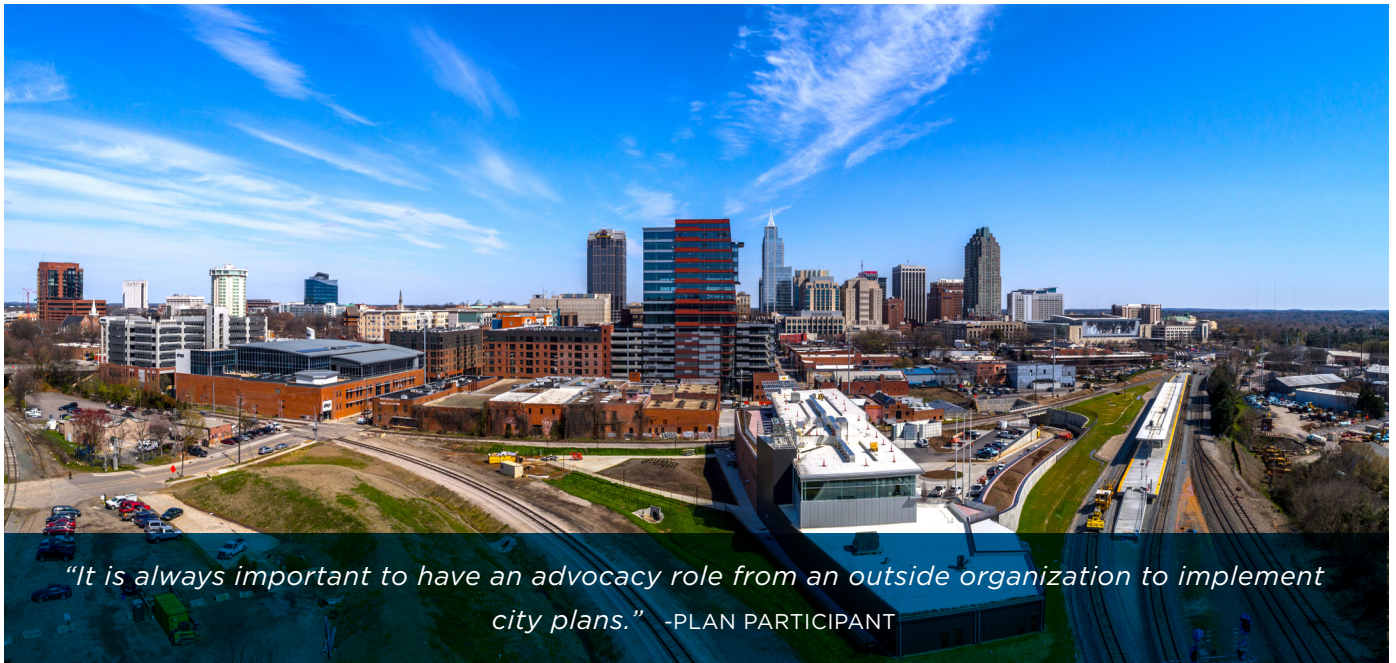
Improve physical connectivity and accessibility within and around Downtown

Why this matters:

One of Downtown Raleigh's greatest assets is its traditional urban street grid which helps disperse congestion and maximize development potential. While new development activity is happening all around Downtown, members of the public still cite connectivity as a major challenge of transitioning into a pedestrian-friendly Downtown. There exists opportunities to better connect Downtown's neighborhoods and activity nodes via a modal design hierarchy, place-making interventions, and a land use approach that focuses investments along strategic streets and block faces.

Key Objectives:

- Conduct an inventory of streetscape elements, such as benches and trash cans, including their condition, and develop a plan to beautify, improve, and expand upon the network.
- Build partnerships to advance art projects and creative place-making in the public realm.
- Educate and inform Downtown stakeholders on available mobility options, programs, and other approaches that advance an efficient multi-modal transportation network.
- Outreach with public and private property owners to beautify targeted corridors to improve connectivity.



GOAL 5

Position the DRA as reliable, responsive, representative, and mission- directed

Why this matters:

Downtowns are never done. They are evolving, dynamic, and comprised of ever-changing stakeholder constituencies. The DRA, an urban place management organization, must adapt to meet the needs of today's Downtown and should deploy an approach that pro-actively influences stakeholders' awareness and knowledge regarding its purpose and initiatives. In both the Organizational Assessment and strategic planning processes, stakeholder perceptions about the role and relevance of the DRA were identified as an organizational threat. The strategies proposed would help to correct misperceptions and assume ownership of a renewed direction for the DRA.

Key Objectives:

- Work with key stakeholders to build awareness of the revised mission and role of DRA for today's Downtown.
- Transition current Membership / Sponsorship fund development model to an Investor / Friends model for private contributions.
- Build a DRA Board of Directors that represents the diversity of stakeholders of Downtown Raleigh.
- Develop a set of quantitative and qualitative metrics that can be used to measure outcomes associated with this plan specifically, and the health of Downtown generally.
- Champion implementation of the City of Raleigh's Downtown Plan.



DowntownRaleigh Alliance



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APPENDIX A: FULL STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX KEY

The following few pages include the full contents of all five goals of the DRA's FY19-21 Strategic Plan. Each of the goals is subdivided into a series of partnerships, projects, programs, and positions that were informed and affirmed through stakeholder engagement and designed to implement the plan. Additionally, there is also a three-year implementation matrix that determines when the DRA will initiate and/or continue pursuit of the corresponding action.

-  Initiate action item
-  Prepare for or continue pursuing intent of action item
-  N/A in the fiscal year

Although not included in this document specifically, the DRA's annual budget was reformatted to reflect the priorities of this plan. Further, the DRA Board of Directors will also consider adopting a dashboard of activity targets and outcome metrics associated with tracking the progression of the plan and the overall vitality of Downtown Raleigh.

Build a culture of authentic engagement and inclusion with Downtown’s diverse community

GOAL 1

IMPLEMENTATION

PARTNERSHIPS

FY19 FY20 FY21

1.1	Be the proactive convener of all stakeholders, both regularly and as opportunities and challenges require, to advise on the direction of Downtown and the work of the DRA.			
1.2	Provide a resource to support communications with residential and collaborative associations within Downtown and its near neighborhoods.			

PROJECTS

1.1	Identify and transition into a new database and CRM that will improve the DRA’s capacity to communicate with and engage stakeholders, inclusive of Downtown companies, agencies, employees, residents, partners, and others.			
1.2	Simplify and streamline DRA newsletter, enabling opportunities for interest area self-selection. Transition from broadcasting information to compelling engagement.			

PROGRAMS

1.1	Position the Ambassador program with a community engagement focus, building on the foundation of safety training. Use program as on-the-ground feedback and insight collection for stakeholder-facing programs and initiatives. Ensure Ambassadors are trained to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with area resources.			
1.2	Establish residential coordinator position at DRA to provide direct link between the needs of residents and neighborhoods and the organization.			
1.3	Expand DRA-produced engagement opportunities to offer more inclusive and diverse opportunities for stakeholders to engage with and participate in the Downtown community.			
1.4	Develop programs and collateral to orient new companies, employees, and residents to Downtown.			

POSITIONING

1.1	Weave priorities from the Downtown Plan into general stakeholder communications to improve awareness and encourage implementation.			
1.2	Through engagement and knowledge of industry best practices, offer context-sensitive solutions that maximize benefits for Downtown’s diverse set of stakeholders.			
1.3	Support efforts to build a Downtown community that is home to a diverse population.			

Foster a thriving and diverse storefront economy

GOAL 2

IMPLEMENTATION

PARTNERSHIPS

		FY19	FY20	FY21
2.1	Utilize existing public-private economic development partnerships to develop an economic development vision and strategy for Downtown.	Grey	Green	Gold
2.2	Identify and build partnerships with key partners such as the GRCVB, City of Raleigh, and Chamber of Commerce to leverage opportunities for shared content and information.	Green	Gold	Gold
2.3	Identify and convene a coalition of partners and mentors to advance and expand minority and women-owned business ownership in Downtown.	Green	Gold	Gold

PROJECTS

2.1	Define a strategic retail recruitment plan which prioritizes locally owned, unique, differentiated businesses and, where feasible, national anchor tenants. Update plan annually.	Green	Green	Green
2.2	Prioritize recruitment efforts, where possible, to focus on filling available properties that already have retail co-tenancy to help improve connectivity and clustering.	Green	Gold	Gold
2.3	Be the go-to organization for Downtown market research and intelligence.	Gold	Gold	Gold
2.4	Enhance data capabilities to include more robust pedestrian counts, bike counts, demographic, and psychographic information to provide more detailed market intelligence to prospects.	Green	Gold	Gold
2.5	Redesign website to be mobile ready and more user-friendly.	Green	Gold	Gold
2.6	In collaboration with partners, explore the development of brand positioning for Downtown that embodies Downtown's strengths and competitive differentiation.	Grey	Green	Gold

Foster a thriving and diverse storefront economy

GOAL 2, CONTINUED

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAMS

		FY19	FY20	FY21
2.1	Following the direction provided by the Partnership 2.3, develop and fund a program that will advance and expand minority and women-owned business ownership in Downtown.	Grey	Green	Gold
2.2	Develop focused marketing materials and incentive programs intended to support recruitment and retention efforts for Downtown retail.	Green	Gold	Gold
2.3	Provide business planning assistance to prospective business owners.	Gold	Gold	Gold
2.4	Provide assistance to help Downtown businesses navigate regulatory processes.	Gold	Gold	Gold
2.5	Develop a storytelling approach for promoting local retailers and small business owners.	Green	Gold	Gold
2.6	Utilize opportunities to activate empty storefronts / underutilized parcels as a mechanism to improve connectivity.	Grey	Green	Gold

POSITIONING

2.1	Advocate for increased density in Downtown and growing the economic base that fuels Downtown's retail vitality, including residential, hotels, office space, and institutional uses.	Green	Gold	Gold
2.2	Advocate for land use guidance that focuses retail on certain streets.	Grey	Green	Gold
2.3	Work with community assets and partners to continue raising awareness of racial and economic disparities and help strengthen efforts that build the case for equity, inclusion and justice as an urgent economic and social priority.	Green	Gold	Gold

Facilitate strategic partnerships to produce positive, balanced activations across Downtown

GOAL 3

IMPLEMENTATION

PARTNERSHIPS

FY19 FY20 FY21

3.1	Serve as a facilitator between event producers, the City of Raleigh and affected stakeholders to mitigate challenges and optimize outcomes associated with special events.			
3.2	Enhance and add value to existing promotions and events.			

PROJECTS

3.1	Produce a modular wayfinding system to be installed at special events to connect attendees with proximal storefront businesses.			
3.2	Combine the DRA Annual Meeting and State of Downtown into one event that celebrates the market's year-in-review and strategic plan accomplishments.			

PROGRAMS

3.1	Develop a special events strategy for the DRA to activate public spaces across all of Downtown's neighborhoods.			
3.2	Leverage partnerships to produce smaller scale, high impact activations and events that appeal to a diverse set of Downtown stakeholders and visitors.			

POSITIONING

3.1	Work with the City of Raleigh to develop and implement a quantitative and qualitative evaluative criteria for assessing special events.			
3.2	Advocate for adequate rest periods for Downtown open spaces, and where possible, encourage reducing the production of events that involve road closures.			

Improve physical connectivity and accessibility within and around Downtown

GOAL 4

IMPLEMENTATION

PARTNERSHIPS

FY19 FY20 FY21

4.1	Partner with the City, the State and other organizations to better integrate public realm maintenance and beautification efforts.			
4.2	Build partnerships to advance art projects and creative place-making additions in the public realm.			
4.3	Establish a task force focused on improving and preserving accessibility in Downtown.			
4.4	Participate in partnerships to plan, design, support and program exceptional Downtown parks and open spaces.			
4.5	Develop key partnerships for improved parking management techniques, pricing, and payment methods that maximize the utility of existing facilities. Organize and simplify user-oriented communications with the goal of parking being a forgettable experience.			
4.6	Support partnerships that work for improved transit, safer bicycle lanes, passenger loading areas, transit shelters, and other non-motorized transportation options to effect safer, more equitable transportation options into and around Downtown.			

PROJECTS

4.1	Conduct an inventory of streetscape elements, including their condition, and develop a plan to beautify, improve and expand upon the network.			
4.2	If feasible, deploy a digital wayfinding program.			

PROGRAMS

4.1	Facilitate the delivery of street pole banners in partnership with area organizations and in accordance with local regulations.			
4.2	Encourage and facilitate the removal of clutter in the public realm (old wayfinding, haphazard café seating, temporary signs, etc.).			













Improve physical connectivity and accessibility within and around Downtown

GOAL 4, CONTINUED

IMPLEMENTATION

POSITIONING

FY19 FY20 FY21

4.1	Advocate for appropriate balance of private and public installations and uses of the public realm, promoting hospitality while protecting accessibility.			
4.2	Outreach with public and private property owners to beautify targeted corridors to improve connectivity.			
4.3	Support the planning for and delivery of improved multi-modal transportation options into and around Downtown.			
4.4	Educate and inform Downtown stakeholders on available mobility options, programs, and other approaches that advance an efficient multi-modal transportation network.			

Position the DRA as reliable, responsive, representative, and mission-directed

GOAL 5

IMPLEMENTATION

PARTNERSHIPS

FY19 FY20 FY21

5.1	Work with key stakeholders to build awareness of the revised mission and role of DRA for today's Downtown.			
5.2	Demonstrate efficacy and value in service delivery to drive renewal of the MSD contract with the City of Raleigh and an enhanced scope where appropriate.			
5.3	Build a DRA Board of Directors that represents the diversity of stakeholders of Downtown Raleigh.			

PROJECTS

5.1	Following the adoption of the FY19-FY21 DRA Strategic Plan, align organizational resources and capacities with plan implementation.			
5.2	Develop a set of quantitative and qualitative metrics that can be used to measure outcomes associated with this plan specifically, and the health of Downtown generally.			
5.3	Produce new "About DRA" collateral, including the use of short videos and other mediums to build greater awareness of the mission of the DRA, its strategic priorities, and its key initiatives.			

PROGRAMS

5.1	Transition current Membership / Sponsorship fund development model to an Investor / Friends model for private contributions.			
5.2	Seek out grants, philanthropic support, and other revenue sources that align with the organization's mission and key programmatic priorities.			

POSITIONING

5.1	Remain vigilant in pursuit of the organization's mission, never losing sight of the many types of stakeholders whom have an interest in Downtown.			
5.2	Champion implementation of the Downtown Plan.			