



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

### *Economic Development Division*

#### m e m o r a n d u m

**TO:** Bruce K. Walden, Chief Administrative Officer

**FROM:** Elizabeth H. Tyler, Community Development Director

**DATE:** March 4, 2004

**SUBJECT: Campaign to Build Downtown Urbana**

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### **Introduction**

The Campaign to Build Downtown Urbana (Campaign) is a downtown redevelopment and promotion plan drafted for the City of Urbana by Council members Chynoweth, and Huth. This plan recognizes a national trend towards revitalizing downtowns and their economies. The Campaign will build upon the unique character of Downtown Urbana and address deficits to recreate a vibrant cultural and commercial nexus of the community. The Campaign proposes to form a public-private-partnership between downtown businesses and city government to conduct subsequent activities. The partners cited include:

- The City – The Mayor, Council, and Staff
- The Urbana Business Association and the Urbana Builder's Association
- 40 North 88 West and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- Developers, Realtors, Business owners and involved citizens

### **Background**

A consensus document has been drafted and entitled the Annual Action Plan for Downtown, which outlines Campaign's activities for 2004-2005. The Campaign is summarized by the six goals found in the Annual Action Plan for Downtown:

1. **Invest in and promote investment in downtown** – features streetscape construction, mixed use development, establishment of artistic activities, expansion of development incentives, increased collaboration with the private real estate sector and development of a Broadway corridor plan. Completion of the Urbana Free Library is an example of a completed objective.
2. **Make it easy to start or grow a business in downtown** – proposes additional coordination of city development services for business convenience and expedience. Publishing of business start-up and site information is an example of completed tasks.
3. **Promote visible outdoor activity in downtown** – endorses cultivation and promotion of outdoor commerce, cultural events, beautification and green space development.

4. **Improve ability to find, travel to, and park in downtown** – improves bike trail access, parking, mass transit stops, access to campus, and downtown gateways.
5. **Bring visibility to the current and future development in downtown** – collaborates with UBA to track Campaign progress, create and disseminate promotional materials and progress reports and press releases.
6. **Implement the downtown strategic plan** – review and coordinate with current actions to complete the plan and expand upon its goals.

The Campaign to Build Downtown Urbana is compatible with the community goals set forth in the Downtown Strategic Plan adopted in 2002. The Plan calls for redevelopment and promotions that would prompt more residents to live, work and play in Downtown Urbana. The Campaign's objectives are consistent with current redevelopment efforts. Increased staff commitments, services and completed projects are noted in the Campaign's plan.

### **Economic Impact**

With implementation of the Campaign to Build Downtown Urbana and the Downtown Strategic Plan more commercial investment and activity will occur in the downtown. Streetscape, greenway and building construction projects will not only beautify the downtown, but will also accommodate more economic and development activity. This increased capacity will benefit new promotional, recreational and cultural activities and will result in increased investment and activity in Downtown Urbana to help make it a true community centerpiece.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends adoption of the Campaign to Build Downtown Urbana's Annual Action Plan.

Attachments: Annual Action Plan for Downtown Urbana  
Kick Off Cover Letter

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
John G. Regetz, Manager  
Economic Development Division



# Campaign to Build Downtown Urbana

## Welcome to the campaign kick off!

The campaign is a public/private partnership to grow our downtown. It includes participation by:

- The City – The Mayor, Council, and Staff
- The Urbana Business Association and the Urbana Builder's Association
- 40 North 88 West and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- developers, realtors, business owners and you!

We have been working together to generate a consensus document – the Annual Action Plan for Downtown – which charts a course for our work over 2004-2005.

The Annual Action Plan for Downtown will come before Council for discussion on March 8 and voted on at the March 15 meeting. The Plan and will be revised and renewed every year.

The Plan sets out 6 goals and immediate, short, and long-term tasks to meet these goals.

Goals:

- 1) Invest in and **promote investment** in downtown.
- 2) Make it **easy to start or grow a business** in downtown.
- 3) Promote visible **outdoor activity** in downtown.
- 4) Improve ability to **find, travel to, and park** in downtown.
- 5) Bring **visibility** to the current and future development in downtown.
- 6) Implement the **downtown strategic plan**.

Highlights of the plan include:

- 1) The **extension of TIF 2** which can be used to finance downtown development projects.
- 2) A focus on **new construction** – incentivize mixed-used developments on city owned land.
- 3) Constitute **downtown "task force"** as one-stop-shop for city services meeting with business owners *on location*.
- 4) Create a **single right-of-way usage license** for businesses and organizations that would allow for sidewalk sales, vendors, sidewalk and alley cafes, sandwich boards, and outdoor displays.
- 5) Make downtown **THE destination place for families**.
- 6) Promote the downtown as a **vibrant arts & cultural center**. Work on establishing a **Public Arts program**.

# **Annual Action Plan for Downtown Urbana**

## **Draft – to be voted on by Council March 15, 2004**

### **Invest in and promote investment in downtown**

#### ACTIONS

##### Done

1. Expand the Urbana Free Library (\$8 million from city and community).

##### Immediate

1. Extend TIF 2 to 2021.
2. Build multiple mixed-use developments on city owned lots using RFP process.
3. Invest in high quality, long lasting streetscape (\$2 million).
4. Convert industrial to commercial zoning in downtown in conjunction with property owners.

##### Short term

1. Increase and promote grant/loan programs.
2. Develop new incentives for targeted improvements.
3. Invest in and promote Public Art (with 40 North 88 West).
4. Encourage broader real estate broker activity downtown.

##### Long term

1. Create redevelopment plan for Broadway corridor.

### **Make it easy to start or grow a business in downtown**

#### ACTIONS

##### Done

1. Create business start-up informational package.
2. Pre-inventory available spaces in downtown and promote properties for target uses: housing, restaurants, etc.

##### Immediate

1. Constitute downtown "task force" as one-stop-shop for city services meeting with business owners *on location*.
2. Offer service guarantees for downtown businesses - (prompt building inspections, quick building permit review).

## **Promote visible, outdoor activity in downtown**

### ACTIONS

#### Immediate

1. Kick off campaign to "Take It Outside."
2. Create a single right-of-way usage license for businesses and organizations that would allow for sidewalk sales, sidewalk and alley cafes, sandwich boards, and outdoor displays & exhibits.
3. Make downtown THE destination place for families on weekends. Encourage outdoor library/school events at downtown locations. Market weekends in downtown for out of town tour packages. (Market via UBA, CVB, Library, Park District).
4. Expand and promote Farmers' Market: dates, location, infrastructure (with the UBA).
5. Increase green spaces. Beautify alleyways, minipark, and promote their use by the public and area businesses. Explore converting public ROW to green space with outdoor seating.
6. Attract food vendors to outside underserved areas such as courthouse and privately owned plazas.
7. Allow and encourage beer gardens.
8. Promote arts and outdoor festivals and events (Boneyard Arts Festival, Beer and Chili Cook off, Sweetcorn Festival, Annual Street Theater Festival, Renaissance Faire, Grrrrfest, IMC Street Fest, and others).
9. Expand downtown banner program (via UBA).

#### short term

1. Work on establishing a Public Arts Trust Fund and Public Arts Commission (with 40 North 88 West).
2. Create plan for Boneyard Creek from Main Street to Vine that includes conversion into a beautiful streamway with trail and other amenities for downtown residents and visitors to downtown.
3. Promote rooftop gardens and increased vegetation on private property.

#### long term

1. Create outdoor public square and performance venue.
2. Implement Boneyard plan.

## **Improve ability to find, travel to, and park in downtown**

### ACTIONS

#### Short term

1. Redesign Leal Park to accommodate improved access via bike trail and to prepare for reuse of Rail ROW when abandoned. (In progress with Allen Strong and UPD)
2. Review parking in downtown based on future planned development.
3. Allow contributions to a city parking fund in lieu of on-site parking in Main Street, Office and Government Districts.

4. Create artful MTD downtown stop and information kiosks downtown (with MTD)
5. Promote more pedestrian and bike traffic to downtown. Increase number and location of visible bike racks.

#### Long Term

1. Prepare plans for redevelopment of Rail ROW when abandoned to become a bike path extending from at least Lincoln Avenue to County Farm Complex west of Vine. Secure Illinois Bicycle Grant from state for reconstruction.
2. Create stronger, visible link between University and Downtown
3. Enhance and mark entrance gateways to downtown.
4. Establish visible, safe bike route(s) between campus and downtown – Green, Illinois, Main.
5. Support joint-planning with the MTD in future Campus to Downtown transportation developments.
6. Enhance gateways to downtown.

### **Bring visibility to current & future development in downtown**

#### ACTIONS

##### Done

1. Distribute Downtown Brochure. (via UBA)
2. Develop and promulgate calendar of downtown events. (via UBA)

##### Immediate

1. Kick off a public/private campaign to "Build Downtown."
2. Send out regular press releases on progress of campaign. (with UBA)
3. Post council goals and campaign status to city web site.
4. Review progress on Build Downtown campaign monthly.
5. Hang banners about the Build Downtown campaign.
6. Expand usage of marketing co-operative. (via UBA)
7. Increase visibility of and promote downtown businesses in all downtown events. (with UBA)

### **Implement the Downtown Strategic Plan**

#### ACTIONS

##### Done

1. Hire Economic Development Manager.
2. Hire TIF and Downtown redevelopment specialist.

##### Short term

1. Review status of and update Downtown Strategic Plan.