

Stay on the side of town management

Main Street Oakland County

DDA Refresh:

Best Practices to Keep Your Community
in Compliance and in the Know

Thursday, September 26, 2019

Managing a downtown is multifaceted and complex. And, it's easy to get frustrated when focus is lost. Here are some practical ways to stay above the fray and work your plan for lasting success and with abundant optimism.

Topics:

- Creating a plan and sticking to it
- Involving the right stakeholders
- The value of pulling versus pushing
- Communication
- Arm yourself with knowledge
- Self-care for staff members & treatment of staff by the board

Create a plan and stick with it

- Which plan is appropriate?
 - Downtown Master Plan – when you want to establish an overall vision and direction for the downtown
 - TIF and Development Plan – when you want to comply with Act 57 and use TIF as a funding mechanism
 - Strategic Plan – when you want to establish goals and a medium-term action strategy for your organization
 - Annual Work Plan – when you want to list all the projects your organization wants to accomplish in a particular year
 - Project Work Plan – when you want to outline the steps, timeline and responsibility for a particular project

Create a plan and stick to it

- How do we stay focused?
 - Routine monthly reports and project updates, read your vision statement at every meeting
 - Annual affirmation of mission, vision and goals; project prioritization
 - “Check up” on your strategic plan, are your goals and objectives still relevant?
 - Update your Downtown Master Plan in accordance with the planning act (every five years) with a major review every decade
 - Update your TIF/Development Plan when your project list does not align or when you anticipate a bond issue (if needed)
- Ensure your plans are based on sound economic development/market research

Involve the right stakeholders

- Target stakeholders with relevant experience, input or influence
- Look under rocks for the right people
- Don't be afraid of the ask
- Don't overload your committees
- City council is your friend

The value of pulling versus pushing

- BOLO for/sensitive to resistance/objections to ideas
- Pushing people results in resistance, pulling people results in concurrence or, at least, compromise
- Invite participation of projected objectors and give them a voice
- Be respectful when acknowledging differences in opinion
- "Let's solve this problem together"

Communication matters

- Prepare your key messaging as a first step in preparing your communications so important facts or discussion points are reiterated throughout
- Positivity blossoms
- Never think you are communicating enough, but ...
- Balance in-person communication with other forms
- No opportunity is a wasted opportunity – press releases, social media, presentations, board updates, walkabouts, newsletters – print and email, blog, video, coffee hours, etc.

Arm yourself with knowledge

- Keep ahead of the curve by attending workshops and trainings that add critical knowledge and skills to your bag of tricks
- MDA, MAP, MML, SEMCOG, MEDC/MMS, NMSC, MEDA, MSOC, PPS, MIFMA, MFEA, SBA/SBTDC, online and local colleges and universities (MSU-Extension)
- Research same organizations for best practices/papers
- SNEAKY ADVERTISEMENT: The MDA will announce a new professional development program and certification at the annual downtown conference this November!
- Peer groups add an interactive element and moral support

Self-care for staff members & treatment of staff by the board

- You typically are your organization's biggest volunteer, but ...
- Recognize capacity, organizationally and personally
- Know your value – the talents you bring to your organization
- Know when to say when
- Your board does not assign your work; your Chair/President is your direct line of supervision; it is up to the Chair to field the board's competing interests and concerns
- Most of all, have fun!

Questions? Ask away ...

And, thank you for listening!