



## Cleaner, greener, safer downtown

### What's working

#### **The Downtown Business Improvement Special Service District becomes operational on July 1, 2009.**

- The district will maintain or grow downtown's competitiveness. Enhanced services are a means to make downtown better and, ultimately, reposition downtown.
- The district got done because a lot of people worked to get it done.

#### **Downtown is safer.**

- Downtown crime has dropped over the last year or two. In terms of real numbers, downtown is very safe.
- The police have found ways to provide sufficient service without asking for more money.

#### **Streetscaping and infrastructure improvements are under way.**

- The Washington Avenue and Third Avenue greening projects and the downtown improvement district will mean new plantings, more attractive medians and better maintenance.
- The Marquette Avenue and Second Avenue rebuilds are promising improvements.

#### **Public/private partnerships are getting things done.**

- The City is listening and cares about downtown; that's a breath of fresh air.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Precinct played a significant role in the security collaborative, and the private side is at the table and contributing resources. This public/private sector effort has evolved and gotten better.
- The City will be hiring a special service district manager who can devote time to public/private partnerships and help everyone get things done.
- We couldn't do the Holidazzle and other events without the City's help with public safety and traffic direction.
- The Republican National Convention proved what we can do. Thanks to multiple efforts, we made downtown shine. Visitors said they'll be back.
- Heading Home Hennepin outreach workers are getting homeless people off the streets.

#### **Downtown is benefitting from improved political capital and good will.**

- Elected officials and City leaders are listening.
- The downtown improvement district wouldn't have happened without the public side listening and elected officials being willing to vote for it.

### What isn't working

#### **We limit our success by failing to think big.**

- Events happen in silos; we don't connect events and leverage them to our fullest advantage.
- We come back from other cities saying we want to do something similar here, but in the end we're too stubborn to change our practices to make it happen.
- Why don't we want crowds on Nicollet Mall all the time instead of just on farmers market Thursdays?
- We don't have a real strategy for encouraging downtown workers and residents to spend time and money downtown.
- To revitalize downtown, we have to be more open to shutting down streets for events.

#### **It's not always clear who's in charge or where to get help.**

- There's a gap in knowledge about who's responsible for what in downtown. Who cleans sidewalks? Who's responsible for planting trees? Is it a park dedication fee or special service district? What are basic City services versus extraordinary City services?
- Nuanced policy interpretations cause confusion on the use of Nicollet Mall and the skyways.

Are skyways public or private? Can I call the Police Department for a problem in the skyway? Sometimes the Nicollet Mall board isn't comfortable with something, but the City says it should happen.

- Public Works and the Park and Recreation Board disagree about how to plant trees, and downtown is caught in the middle.
- We don't know enough about the resources for homeless people.

#### **Partnerships take time and resources.**

- Public/private partnerships are good, but the challenge is how to do them with limited staff resources and within a sustainable public policy framework.

#### **Political challenges and competition for dollars hurt downtown.**

- Neighborhoods and politicians operate with an us versus them mentality and overlook what the downtown tax base contributes to the entire city. There's resentment about who gets what and why.

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### What isn't working *continued from previous page*

- Some of our own State legislators aren't supportive of downtown.
- Other commercial districts sometimes feel that downtown gets favored status.
- Some businesses on the edge of downtown are resistant to the downtown improvement district.

#### **Downtown residents aren't engaged.**

- Downtown residents don't feel downtown is *their* community. They have to feel invested in making Macy's better and want more from downtown.
- Downtown is a neighborhood, but it doesn't vote like one.

#### **Downtown isn't a shopping destination.**

- The challenged retail sector makes vitality of downtown more difficult.
- Dining and entertainment are doing relatively well, but we aren't turning downtown into a shopping destination – even with all the downtown workers.

#### **Nicollet Mall needs attention.**

- We're redoing Marquette, but Nicollet Mall is falling apart.
- We still aren't sure what Nicollet Mall should be.

### What should be done next

#### **Build a significant park downtown that can serve as a major gathering space.**

#### **Take a new look at Nicollet Mall.**

- Rethink how we should use Nicollet Mall.
- Rebuild Nicollet Mall.

#### **Offer more downtown activities.**

- Formulate a strategy to encourage downtown workers and residents to spend time and money downtown.
- Make downtown vibrant nine months a year by offering frequent, positive activities that would bring people downtown and provide a better experience for people who work downtown. For example, close a street so people can sit on a blanket, buy popcorn and watch a movie. We should be closing the streets for activities once a month. Businesses and the public sector must be more flexible and open to new things.
- We need jugglers, caricature artists and street level activity — then we'll have a destination.

#### **Engage downtown residents and workers.**

- Partner with downtown residents to get them and their buildings involved.

- Reach out to the downtown workforce. Devise specific strategies to represent and engage them.

#### **Build enthusiasm and support for downtown.**

- Take advantage of the new business possibilities resulting from the downtown improvement district.
- Communicate what downtown is doing for neighborhoods and what neighborhoods can do to support downtown. Make it clear that devoting resources to downtown doesn't always mean you're taking resources away from some other area.

#### **Inform the business community about policy changes and who does what so they know what to do when a problem comes up.**

#### **Take steps to support retail.**

- Get people on the streets.
- Get people excited about spending and supporting downtown retail.
- Make policy shifts to support retail by encouraging more walking and less reliance on cars.

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*"We need a commissioner of cool – someone who's responsible for making fun things happen downtown."*

*- Downtown Council member*

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