



Goals

- Develop an easily communicated 5-year vision for Downtown Staunton & SDDA
- Establish SDDA as key actor in the community success narrative
- Strengthen the connections of individual members to each other & SDDA's success
- Develop outcome oriented 2-year committee plans

Participants

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Complete Board Wishlists	attached
Group Downtown Stories	attached



A nonprofit association established to enhance Downtown Staunton's economic environment as a center of commerce while maintaining the character and integrity of the City's central business district as an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Making Downtown Staunton "As You Like it."

What the SDDA logo represents to us

- The intent of our group to create a thriving downtown
- We're a convening point
- An umbrella
- The glue
- We keep everything moving in the same direction
- We're tied in with the city
- The Queen City
- Goal: recognizable—it's us!
- Feminine beauty of the city
- Health and aesthetics of the business community
- We're a jewel in the commonwealth

A quick response: **what we want Downtown to be in five years**

- Alive
- More of what it is
- Bursting at the seams
- People in the street all the time
- Consistency
- Triple the downtown residents
- With a parking plan
- Vibrant
- Customer friendly
- Art
- Food
- Density—bumping up against others, proximity
- Commonality
- Old town art community
 - And contemporary
- Aging and younger populations
- Destination for living
- Like Charleston and Asheville, but less crowded
- Variety
- Quality of life
- Beauty
- People use it
- Synergy
- Supportive
- Service & tourism & arts
- The spectrum
- Quirky and interesting
- Alive
- Jamming, energy, dynamic
- Reliability
- Internet and physical

Making Sense of Downtown...**what we want to experience in** Downtown Staunton in five years:

- Children’s laughter
 - Every day’s a vacation
 - Had fun, I’m coming back
 - People chatting
 - Benches
 - People
 - Talking
 - Tourists
 - Full Occupancy
 - Horses & Carriages
 - People
- Green spaces
 - Wee parks
 - Shoppers with stuffed billfolds
 - Shade and Light(Variety and relief)
 - Open businesses
- Chocolate
 - Food
 - Ethnic food
- Flowers
 - Blanket wash
 - Plants
 - Not Lewis Creek
 - Cinnamon
 - No exhaust
 - Not Garbage
 - Chocolate
- Happy
 - Energy
 - Bricks...more bricks

I hear

- Lots of people on the streets
 - Happy chatter
 - Sound of cobblestones
 - Music being played
 - My cash register ca-chinging
 - Live music
 - Music
 - Art Performance
 - No Horns
 - Traffic Moving
- Conversational Excitement
 - People Talking
 - Vivaldi
 - People Talking
 - Jazz
 - Laughter, adults too
 - People
 - Fewer Sirens
 - Music

I see

- Laughter
 - Flowers
 - People with Shopping Bags
 - Plants and Flowers
- More restored ground level storefronts
 - Friends
 - Art performance
 - Wrought Iron
 - Trolley

I taste

- High Quality Cuisine
 - Ethnic foods
 - Thai food
- Thai Food
 - Trolley

I smell

- Flowers
 - Food
 - Fresh food from
 - Waffle cones
 - Food
 - Baking Breads
 - Chocolate
- Not stinky sewer smell
 - Plants
 - Flowers
 - Baking
 - Good food

I feel

- Curious
 - Crowded
 - Warmth
 - The Vibe
- Brushing against leaves of trees
 - Inspired
 - Less Concrete

- More Grass
 - Benches
 - Excitement
- Small groups pulled out **themes from the Wishlists**:

Promotions

- Better Communications: gauge effectiveness and change accordingly
- More positive perception of the district by the general public
- Move event locations around to benefit the whole district?

Organization—Participation

- More effective and efficient communications
- Responsible Stakeholders
- Volunteer arm: managed program
 - Increase ownership engagement, loyalty, so they will want to be part of the organization:
 - Self interest
 - Relevant
 - Time
 - Governing volunteers
 - Task oriented volunteers
 - Some are cause-driven
 - Specific tasks
 - Make them fun too
 - Rewarding

Design

- Modes of Access/Connectivity, how the district communicates
- Parking / Greenspace
- Car/Pedestrian
- Park areas for Staunton
- Use of small informal spaces – alleys
- Experience the town as a tourist to see what can might be needed
- Pavilion/Bandstand

Economic Development (Economic Restructuring and Retail Strategies.

- Continuing extended hours strategy
- Non profit and retail match strategy
 - Incubation
 - Communication
 - Networking
 - Offbeat spaces
 - 2nd Story & alley
- Central point for entrepreneurs, emerging businesses
 - Bringing together in a pathway, with a starting point
 - SBDC, Score, Forum, SCCF
 - City Conversation
- Clustering and Flow of district
- Safety and comfort balance

A general discussion of opened the conversation on **challenges and barriers** for the organization:

Challenges:

- Communications
- Parking perceptions
- One-way streets
- Topography
- Limited input from stakeholders
- Business positioning—fewer customers for higher end retail
- Complementary Cluster potential---but this isn't conventional wisdom—that's a challenge
- “We've always done it this way” That's a challenge
- Underground rivers: Private clubs beneath the surface—changing informal networks...how do we tap?
- How do we tap private sources for downtown spending. Memberships and sponsorships...in this libertarian environment, can we effectively demonstrate leveraged resources?
- Is the relationship with the City a challenge
- Is our perception as part of the City a challenge?
- Private donation opportunities aren't being taken advantage of: opportunity for memory gifts
- City Communication:
 - Need earlier engagement by the city on Street closures, but it's much better now than in the past.
 - A tight City budget has sparked reductions across the community
 - Policing: need to be okay with responsible enjoyment
 - How do we promote all living together in a downtown environment?

Strategies to address SWOT and Survey issues

Working with Property Owners

Engage property owners as a specific group

- Host a roundtable

Empty Windows

- Facilitate creative uses of empty windows
- Nonprofit community theater
- Jack & Greg have sample agreements for community groups using empty spaces

Working with Businesses

Business Coaching for startups

- Can a central contact point be formalized and promoted for entrepreneurs wanting to start a business downtown
- How are appropriate businesses steered toward downtown properties
- How can the emerging collective retail project be tapped as an avenue for business assistance
- Where are these services soft? Where should they be formal?

Signage (for property owners and businesses)

- Put signage ordinance and easy-to-understand how-tos on the website

Exit interview strategy for businesses that didn't make it in their downtown location

- What methodology could work
- Who could help build it?
- Is a letter the right way to introduce the conversation...as standard procedure, after the closure and with a positive bent
- What are the warning signs prior?

Perception of limited service area

- Market Baskets as a giving opportunity to fund expansion of services
- Change event locations where possible
- Provide additional non-monetary services

Communications: Website

- Annual event calendar
- Host a coordinated Staunton calendar
- Committee calendar and notes
- Post merchant strategies
- Business phone/websites

Communications: Organizational promotion

- Launch the website & Train people to go to it
- Brand organization with shirts, buttons, or shopping bags
- Have an organizational info table at events

Committee Growth

- Actively invite and engage new faces in committee participation
- Set goals
- Invite guests
- Bring-a-friend strategy

Committee Functioning

- Spark chair and committee ownership
- ED/ Committee Chair meeting between committee meetings to recap, update, and plan
- Joint Agenda setting (not just ED)
- Invite committees to have secretaries to ensure written reporting

Expansion

- Newtown property owners make the request if they want to be included and support them as they do.

SECOND DAY OPENING CONVERSATION

We had a conversation around the following statement:

It is the role of SDDA to foster investment downtown through a clear and actionable plan.

Comments included:

- We have to sell the plan and its benefit so it has to be clear.
- SDDA plays a unique role separate from government, we're advocates and we represent stakeholders.
- We foster the progress so that it evolves organically.
- The plan has to have action steps or it could remain just a wish.
- It's a long term strategy.
- We can measure it through property value and tax revenue increases.
- An indicator is the number of storefronts filled, but it's more than that...it's also quality that we want.
- We are fostering an environment that is attractive to investment
- Its aesthetically, but it's also attitude—psychically shifting the environment

CLOSING EVALUATION

+ Plus (things that worked)	Δ Delta (Change for others or for next time)
The group = open to ideas	Carrying it the next step: how to get it done...engaging committees
Strong group of people, conversational	Second day was tricky
Informative	
Reinforcing	
A minimum of ice breakers	
Worksheet # 5	

WORKING VISION synthesized from the retreat:

Downtown Staunton will be a real community and lively cultural hub connecting customers, entrepreneurs, residents, and visitors.

Connect Residents with meaningful community participation opportunities (*Organization*)

Potential Strategies:

- Develop, promote, and manage rewarding volunteer experiences
- Fully staff committees , building a deep bench of community leaders
- Develop a downtown Youth Development program
- Develop a giving program as part of the membership campaign
- Engage property owners as a stakeholder group
- Creatively use the new online tools & brand to strengthen identity
 - Launch Website
 - Community wiki?
 - Tap existing community blog
 - Logo opportunities
- Evaluate promotions
- Consider staffing level and an appropriate funding strategy to support it
- Actively promote SDDA and its goals though the board members, committee members, & volunteers

Connect visitors and residents in a welcoming and real community (*Promotions*)

Potential Strategies:

- Develop an annual calendar of promotional events
- Explore possibility of hosting the community event calendar
- Explore expanding/moving event location areas to other parts of the district
- Encourage ‘participation’ businesses such as the music store
- Build the tradition of local performance, both formal and informal, traditional and unexpected
- Expand the extended hours campaign...(there’s always something happening downtown)

Connect Entrepreneurs with customers and businesses resources (*Economic Development*)

Potential Strategies:

- Become a convening point for business resources
- Identify path for emerging entrepreneurs
- Provide resources for entrepreneurs in developing ‘mall’ venues
- Expand the strategic role in property leasing and business location
- Explore and promote cluster or co-location strategies

- Explore creative connections between nonprofits and businesses

Connect contemporary business clusters in a historic setting (Design)

Potential Strategies:

- Further development strategy for Central Avenue, identifying opportunities around the Globe Theatre development.
- Increase physical connectivity
- Identify and use discovery nodes as informal public spaces
- Explore landscape, hardscape and streetscape donation opportunities
- Identify clear path for commercial use of small and unusual properties
- Support Newtown property owner's district request when the time is right
- Provide clear signage guidance to property owners
- Publicize a parking plan/tip sheet to address perception