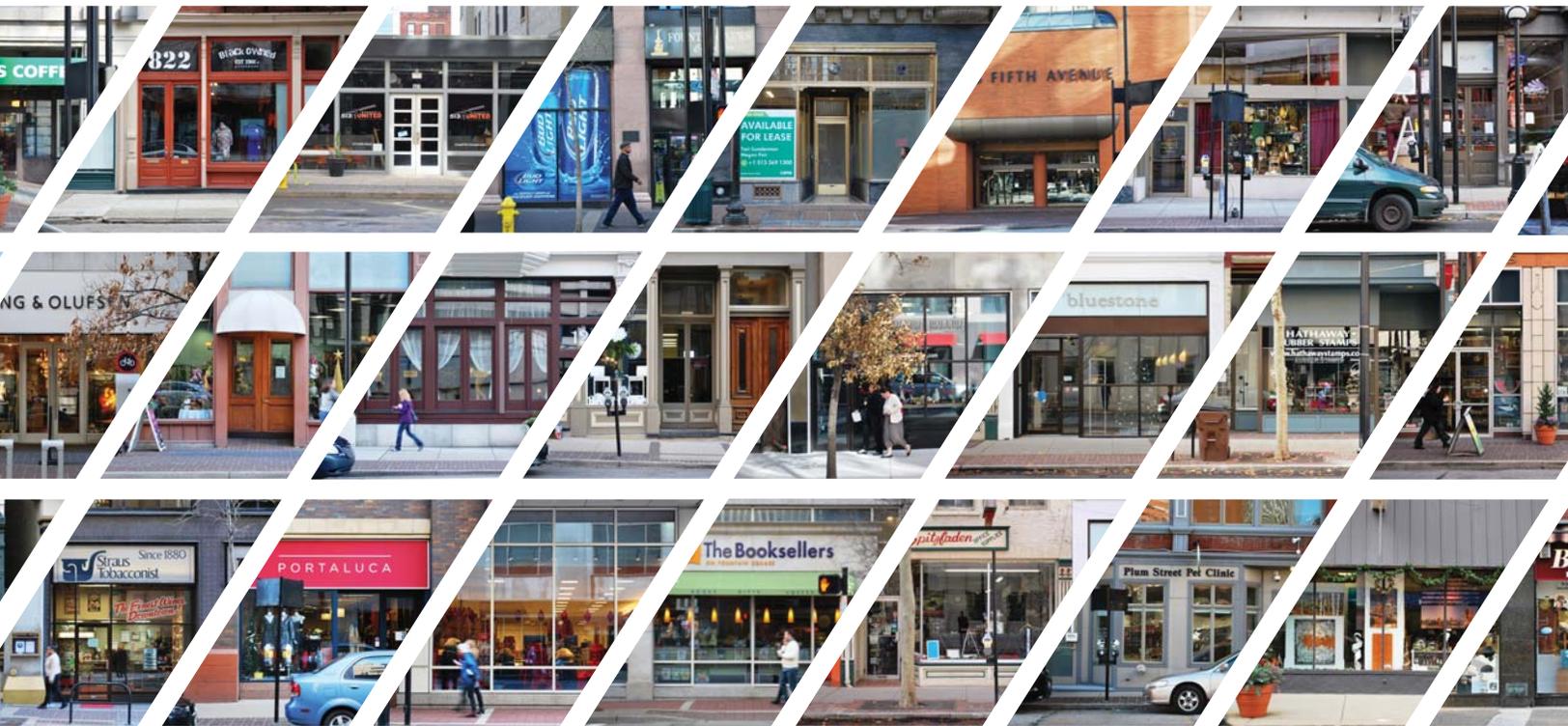


Cincinnati Downtown Strategy

RETAIL ACTION PLAN

Department of Community and Economic Development



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Spots supporting high-rise multi-family development and investment - think ... **Fountain Square in Cincinnati** - fit the description of the kind of walkable, amenity laden neighborhoods that support high street retailing.

PWC Emerging Trends in Real Estate, 2016



Letter from the Director



Oscar Bedolla

DIRECTOR

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Cincinnati's urban core is thriving. With vacancy rates trending downward, population growing and a dynamic riverfront, downtown is booming.

In the wake of this unprecedented growth, now is the time to position Cincinnati for long-term success by continuing to cultivate development and identifying the necessary steps to perpetuate this evolution. The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has set out to create a comprehensive downtown plan that examines the sectors of our Central Business District and their respective roles in supporting a healthy mixed-use urban core. A new, collaborative downtown approach will maximize this economic resurgence.

Essential to achieving this objective is a cohesive and tactical downtown Retail Action Plan that recognizes the changes in our urban core, as well as dynamic trends in the retail industry.

To that end, in working with strategic partners and key stakeholders, we have created a downtown Retail Action Plan that responds to these developments and provides for sustained growth. In developing this approach it is our intent to establish a blueprint for a vibrant retail market that meets the needs of downtown residents and serves as a tool of attraction for visitors and guests.

The creation of this Retail Action Plan is made possible with the help and feedback of countless stakeholders, including small and large retailers, brokers, real estate professionals, and others. These individuals and organizations will continue to play a crucial role in securing a bright future for our urban core through the implementation of this Action Plan and in their constant work to cement downtown as the nexus of our thriving region.

With this thoughtful, strategic approach toward **moving retail forward**, I believe we can and will cultivate a stronger downtown.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Oscar L. Bedolla". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Oscar L. Bedolla

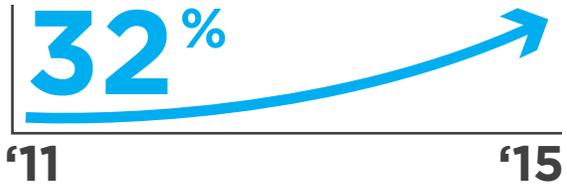
Downtown Snapshot

\$698

Million

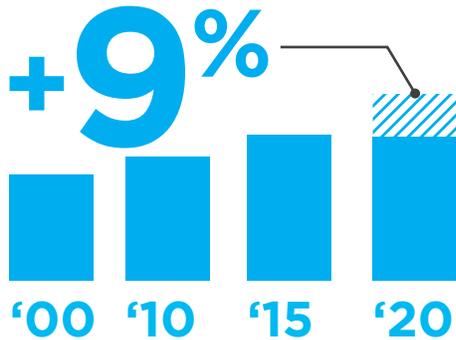
INVESTMENT

\$698 million in developments currently under construction in CBD



HOTEL ROOMS

Increase in number of hotel rooms in the Central Business District between 2011 and 2015



GROWTH

9% projected increase in CBD households by 2020

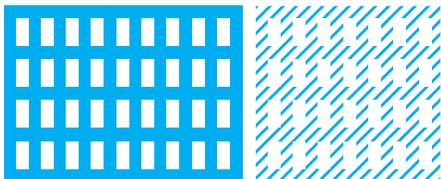
98%



WALKABILITY

98% Walk Score, Downtown Cincinnati
38% of CBD residents walk to work

2,392



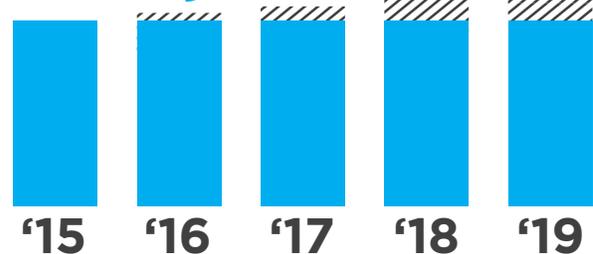
Construction

Planned

NEW HOUSING

2,392 Residential units under construction or planned for CBD between 2015-2017

\$77,143



INCOME

Estimated Median Household Income projected to rise by 15% through 2019

Introduction

Pieces of the Downtown Puzzle

All sectors of the downtown economy are connected and dependent on one another. This Retail Action Plan will be followed by focus from DCED on Residential, Office, Parking, and Mixed Use development types.

The Role of Retail in an Urban Evolution

In downtown Cincinnati, residential development has momentum, hotel development is booming, and office and convention markets are strong and getting stronger. Downtown is safer, cleaner, and more accessible than ever.

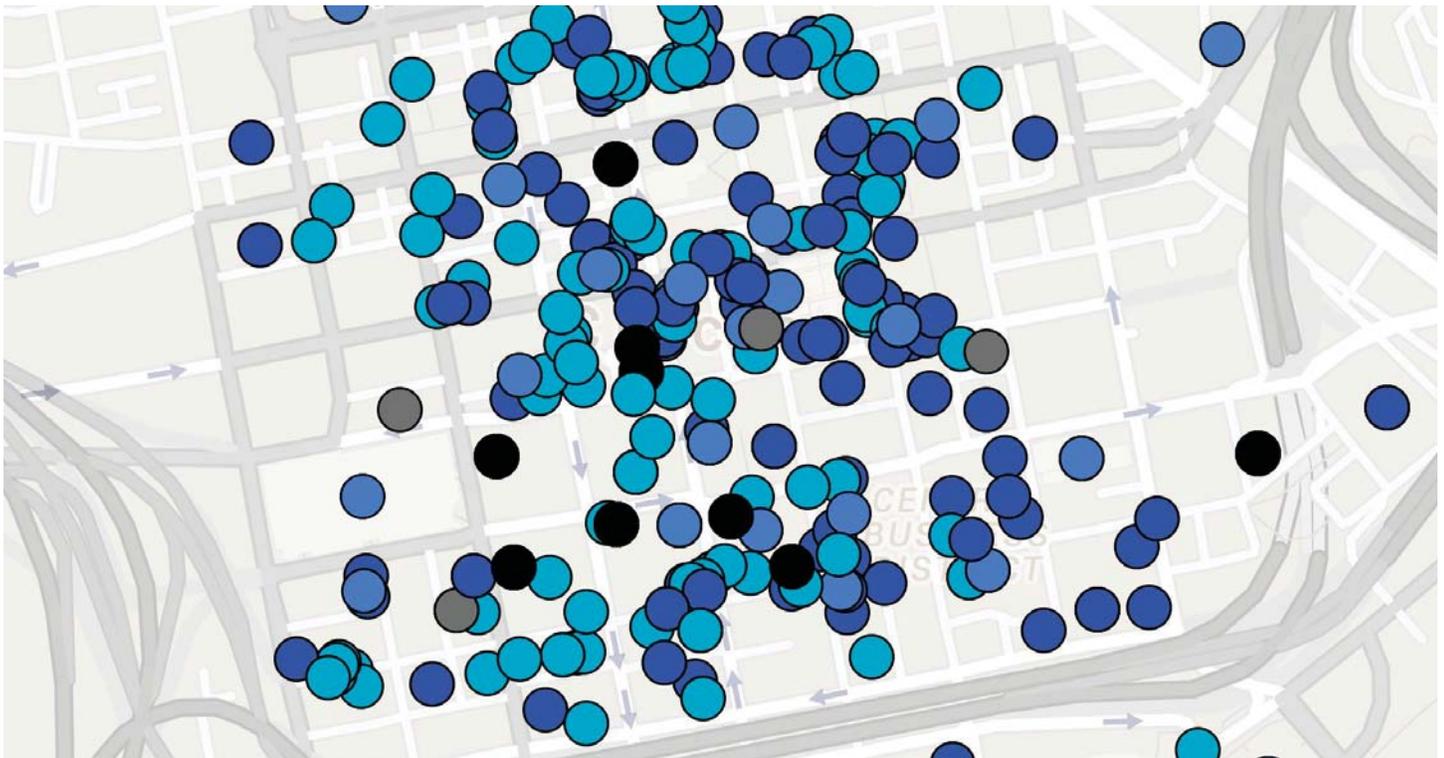
The neighboring Over-the-Rhine (OTR) and Banks districts, once liabilities for downtown, are thriving. Restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues continue to

open and succeed. This momentum has led to a population increase in the urban core and the establishment of downtown as a place of choice for entertainment, dining and shopping.

This growth and momentum hugely impacts the future role of retail in downtown Cincinnati. How can we retain our existing retail businesses? How can we attract new businesses?

Tackling the challenge of urban retail is more complicated than simply “rooftops follow retail”. We cannot overstate the importance of respecting all stakeholders and using a strategic approach to create a lively retail environment that suits the needs of residents and visitors alike.

CBD RETAIL SHOPPING LOCATIONS, 2015



GOALS OF THE RETAIL ACTION PLAN

1

Continue to support existing retail businesses as the core of our urban retail environment.

2

Develop solution-oriented policies and activities to solve retail-specific challenges in the CBD.

3

Create a healthy and vibrant street-level environment in our urban core.

4

Recognize the connection between development sectors to build a multi-faceted and stronger downtown.

5

Catalyze retail offerings that appeal to the diversity of the Cincinnati market by providing small and unique business opportunities.

About this Action Plan

An Action Plan cannot be developed or implemented in a vacuum. **Collaboration** with private, nonprofit, and public stakeholders will leverage their expertise in implementation.

Each component of this Plan has specific **implementation** assignments, responsibilities, and timelines with critical tasks and a focus on short-term action.

Downtown Cincinnati, Incorporated (DCI) a nonprofit organization charged with the mission to “build a dynamic metropolitan center valued at the heart of the region” will be a crucial partner in implementation.

The board of DCI has recently identified retail development as a key component to an enhanced downtown user experience that complements their “safe, clean, and beautiful” initiatives.

A number of studies, plans and vision documents have preceded this Retail Action Plan. Rather than working in isolation, City staff completed a comprehensive review of past work, national trends, and best practices research. This and other supplemental information can be found in the accompanying appendix of this document.

Plan Cincinnati

One such plan that influenced our Action Plan is Plan Cincinnati. This comprehensive plan for the City of Cincinnati, adopted in November 2012 by the Cincinnati City Council, is the road map for the future of our City. To maintain the City’s strategic direction for moving forward, projects and activities are frequently assessed to understand their alignment with the priorities of Plan Cincinnati.

This downtown Retail Action Plan aligns with the “Compete” initiatives of Plan Cincinnati, including Goal 1 “Foster a climate conducive to growth, investment, stability, and opportunity” and Goal 2 “Cultivate our position as the most vibrant and economically healthiest part of our region.” For more information, please see <http://www.plancincinnati.org>.

Why Retail? Why Now?

Over the past few decades, the retail market has been massively impacted by **changing national and local trends** working to adapt to consumer online shopping habits and the rise of omnichannel retailing. Since 2000, ecommerce has grown from *1% of total retail sales to 7.5% in 2015. These trends coincide with stagnant growth in regional malls and slowed development of big box stores.

This has led retail businesses to develop new ways to find and interact with customers, including a new generation of consumers shopping with their mobile phones. Experience-oriented retail is on the cutting edge of new strategies to attract customers, and big-box retailers are even experimenting with small, urban stores. Some of these trends will provide opportunities for a new generation of retail that combines bricks and mortar locations with a strong web presence.

Locally, new retail businesses are occupying small footprints and creating unique experiences with greater impacts and lower costs. One challenge in Cincinnati’s urban core is related to available space and helping locally-based retailers become established. Meanwhile, a competitive advantage of downtown

is a shifting trend which finds retailers increasingly attracted to mixed-use and amenity-rich locations.

Similar to other mid-size cities, Cincinnati’s food and beverage and residential development industries have momentum. Our competitive advantage includes growth opportunities for small shops searching for ways to grow their businesses. Retail is a crucial component of this opportunity.

This Retail Action Plan was developed in response to these trends, offering a **fresh perspective** on downtown retail informed by expert knowledge and stakeholder engagement. It includes two the fundamental elements of retention and attraction.

Retention

Efforts are already underway to retain existing retailers, some of whom have been located downtown for decades. Existing CBD retailers have had a role in shaping this Action Plan. In partnership with DCI, DCED has taken an action-oriented approach toward engaging, listening and understanding existing retailers.

Attraction

The four components of this Action Plan were developed through conversations with developers, retail brokers, design professionals, downtown partners and retailers. The four components are:

- I. Build Accessible Data
- II. Invest in Place
- III. Get Smart on Retail
- IV. Unify the Message

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly E-Commerce Report

BUILD ACCESSIBLE DATA

The availability of timely, relevant, and accurate data plays a crucial role in communicating the advantages and momentum of the CBD. That means putting useful data into the hands of real estate professionals, brokers, property owners, agents, and potential business owners to help them understand market opportunities and characteristics.

In the past, cities have advocated broad data creation and management. Today most data, such as demographic information, is already available to retailers. Rather than emphasizing ubiquitous data, this Action Plan recommends a focus on **enhanced levels of data** not available to retailers. The City, DCI and other partners will create focused and useful data along with other tools for messaging and analysis.

Inventory Available Property

Summary

An online, interactive map will be developed to catalogue available street-level retail (and in some cases, skywalk-level), restaurant, and service-oriented spaces.

This catalogue will include information such as square footage and price per square foot, contact information, adjacencies, plans, and photos. It will utilize unique market knowledge to display “shadow” properties that may be available but not listed. The inventory will aggregate key information into a central, digital location.

Implementation

Currently, DCI and the Over-the-Rhine Chamber of Commerce maintain similar information for the CBD and Over-the-Rhine, respectively. Implementation will begin with information provided by DCI and supplemented by the City as necessary. Other sources of information may include Loopnet, Xceligent data, stakeholder market knowledge, or local retail brokers.

The listing of available properties will be utilized by DCI, the City, and other partners (e.g. embedded in stakeholder websites) to use in communicating street-level opportunities for attracting and locating new businesses.

DCI, in partnership with the City, will play a central role in keeping this data accurate and up-to-date. Utilization of this catalogue will be measured and reported annually and should include monthly visitors, as well as the number of property inquiries. Information from this database, such as a hierarchy of available retail properties, may be utilized as a recruitment tool locally or at the International Council of Shopping Centers annual (ICSC) conference.

Timeline

Development of this tool will be complete by the end of 2016.

Updates

Data will be updated in real time.

Create a Momentum Map

Summary

Create a standard graphic tool for communicating development activity. This momentum map will include activity in all sectors of the CBD, including retail, office, residential, parking, etc. It will communicate current, recent, and proposed development activity.

Implementation

DCED will create an online interactive momentum map for quickly and accurately describing the volume and typology of development projects in the Central Business District.

The map is intended to be proactively shared with stakeholders and developers. It will be hosted online and available in digital format to facilitate sharing and communication.

The momentum map will include the following:

- Data from the previous 1-2 years of development activity.
- Current construction activity.
- Forecasted data from planned/proposed projects.
- The ability to view the data according to sector (residential, mixed use, office, etc.)

Timeline

Conversations with CAGIS are already underway as of May 2016. DCED aims to launch the map in 2016.

Updates

The momentum map will be updated at least quarterly.

BEST PRACTICE: DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY TOOL



Generate Enhanced Data

Summary

To support retail investment and recruitment, generate new data useful to retailers, real estate professionals and brokers. Focus on generating data not currently or generally available.

Implementation

DCED, in partnership with DCI, will be responsible for implementing this task. Certain data can be efficiently collected by City or DCI staff while other data may require a consultant or contribution by a partner or stakeholder organization.

As a means of discovery, DCED will proactively work with stakeholders, including retailers, brokers, developers, or experts to solicit suggestions or requests for useful data.

DCED and DCI will be responsible for feeding the new data into marketing and other recruitment efforts.

Examples already solicited from stakeholders include:

- Pedestrian traffic counts on a “to order” basis.
- Sales-per-square-foot information by category or within areas.
- Residential permits pulled.
- Growth in tables at restaurants.
- Growth in rooms at hotels.
- Convention and tourism-related data.
- Hospitality data, luxury and average.
- Safe/clean, perception data.
- Focused comparison data to peer cities and their downtowns.
- Entertainment data.
- Establish point of contact for data and information needs, a custom service rarely available in municipalities.

In addition to quantitative data listed above, local expert retail brokers have suggested qualitative data, such as anecdotal quotes (anonymous, if necessary) from retailers in downtown and Over-the-Rhine. These quotes might serve useful in ICSC marketing materials.

Steps

DCED, DCI and implementation partners will proactively solicit feedback from retailers, brokers, developers, and/or experts about new data that should be generated. After data points are identified, DCED and DCI will ensure the collection, compilation, and release of this data.

Updates

The City, DCI and other stakeholders will keep data up-to-date.



INVEST IN PLACE

The success of downtown as a retail location is influenced by the quality of the place. A safe, clean, beautiful and walkable urban experience is the “price of entry” to additional development and vibrancy. These goals can be challenging in the CBD where property is owned and managed by numerous entities.

Future investment in downtown should be driven by a thoughtful, systemic action plan taking into account the impacts of infrastructure and streetscape investment on the urban experience. Consensus among key stakeholders will be important for ensuring consistency and leveraging investment.

Priority Development Opportunities

Summary

Identify priority sites and properties which present major opportunities for investment in the CBD. Catalogue these opportunities in a central, online, accessible location.

Priority development opportunities include retail businesses, or any other vertical or mixed-use development in the CBD, including residential, hotel, office, or others.

Implementation

Priority development opportunities will be compiled and communicated in a manner similar to the momentum map (Build Accessible Data). It will take the form of a graphic tool utilized by DCED to clearly communicate information about these opportunities in the CBD.

Sites need not be City-owned in order to be listed as priority development opportunities. Possibilities include vacant structures, underutilized land (such as parking lots), or other good prospects

for development activity. This tool will encourage focused attention from the City and private developers.

Timeline

Development of this tool will be completed by the end of 2016.

Updates

This tool will be updated semi-annually by DCED staff to reflect recent developments and accurate information.



Outline Infrastructure Opportunities

Summary

Stakeholders and development experts have drawn connections between the condition of the urban environment in the CBD and retail activity. Investment and improvement in the urban environment will yield a positive impact on the ability of retailers, large and small, to succeed. Therefore, the City finds it necessary to outline opportunities for investing in right-of-way infrastructure to satisfy public needs while also being responsive to business and community concerns.

Implementation

The content of this deliverable will be primarily housed within the City's Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) in consultation with other City departments and other ongoing processes. The scope of the outline will encompass public space and rights-of-way in downtown. This deliverable is envisioned as a living concept plan for outlining future infrastructure investments in downtown.

As part of the creation of this Outline, external stakeholders will be engaged by DOTE to solicit feedback and information about infrastructure opportunities from the business community and community at large.

Opportunities may be categorized by the type of intervention, including, for example:

- Traffic signaling alterations.
- Travel or Parking lane alterations.
- Pedestrian infrastructure alterations (e.g. sidewalks, paving, crosswalks, etc.).
- Street tree and landscape enhancement.
- Street furniture addition/removal.
- Traffic direction or flow changes.
- Transit facility improvements (e.g. bump out).
- Skywalk maintenance or demolition.

- Bicycle Infrastructure.
- Lighting enhancement.
- Wayfinding systems.
- Technology solutions (e.g. information kiosks).
- Use of technology solutions.
- Third party use of public right-of-way (e.g. sidewalk dining).
- Parking (on- and off-street).
- Additional interventions, to be determined.

Each opportunity will be assigned a hierarchy for implementation (e.g. quick win, mid-term, long term). When combining hierarchy and location the outline will provide a mechanism for assigning priority to these investments.

One example of this process is the skywalk system. While certain portions of the system play an important role in the CBD pedestrian infrastructure and include retail businesses, other portions are in disrepair or even detract from the vibrancy of the pedestrian environment. The outline will designate those portions that will remain and be maintained, and those that are good candidates for demolition.

As part of business retention, economic development, or real estate development projects initiated by DCED, an Infrastructure outline will leverage public

and private investment to accomplish long-term goals for the public right-of-way.

Project priority can be utilized by DOTE, DCED, and other departments and with external partners to maximize and catalyze development impact. More broadly, it will also insert more predictability into investment in downtown. When coordinated, these changes will have a meaningful impact on the urban environment. As implementation continues, DOTE may devote more resources to feasibility and planning of individual projects.

This outline is envisioned as a flexible tool. At times, infrastructure investment suggested by the outline will precede or even take place independent of other development activity. In other situations, the outline will provide opportunities for leveraging investment precipitated by real estate development projects.

With the understanding that funds dedicated to these investments are limited, the outline will also discuss the need for a long-term maintenance program for special improvements, particularly when such responsibilities are not codified by the City's Municipal Code.

Regarding funding, DOTE, DCED and other departments will examine and pursue the creation of a downtown infrastructure fund for capital improvements such as those identified by the infrastructure outline.

Timeline

By the end of 2016, DOTE will create a first draft of the infrastructure opportunities outline. Further in the implementation process, DOTE will determine a timeline and set realistic milestones for the development of the outline.

Updates

This tool is envisioned as a living document that will be frequently updated and adjusted based on new information, development activity, public investment, and a variety of other factors.



Redesign the Urban Experience

Summary

The City of Cincinnati, in partnership with DCI's Urban Experience Committee, will create a plan to redesign the downtown experience through strong urban design principles that leverage and enhance downtown's walkability. DOTE will have a central role, in collaboration with DCI and a cross section of downtown stakeholders. These community representatives will include, but not be limited to, business owners, retailers, the downtown residents council, and developers.

The results of this plan will be a set of standards or recommendations to be acted on by both public and private entities. Elements of streetscape typology, transparency requirements, façade and tenant improvements, awnings, materials, canopies, wayfinding signage, lighting, "parklets," public parking, public art, etc. will all be considered. The recommendations will coordinate with code enforcement and align with City plans, municipal code, right-of-way regulations, and processes.

Implementation

This effort will be led by the DCI Urban Experience Committee in partnership with DOTE and DCED. The committee has mapped out future phases of a work plan, including an audit of the current urban street character, identification of best practices, and recommendations for and the identification of a public and private funding strategy.

Public input will also play an important role via design thinking workshops, charettes, brainstorming, and focus groups. Participation and buy-in from various City departments tasked with maintaining and planning for the urban core will be crucial to implementation. DOTE, for example, is already well underway with research, developing an inventory of, and strategizing for the implementation of downtown pedestrian wayfinding and identity improvements.

Part of the strategy is to organize public engagement sessions to better understand community needs. In addition, existing City resources (e.g. CAGIS) may serve as useful input throughout the process. City staff will work collaboratively to fold this work into DCI initiatives.

The ultimate outcome of the work and dialogue between stakeholders will be a set of standards and recommendations that take into account the complexity of the urban environment.

The scope (below) will be refined and revised as more details unfold.

Task 1: Audit & Analysis

Continue inventorying the existing urban experience, including the presence of signature street character elements:

- Retail signage/awnings
- Wayfinding
- Maps
- Materials
- Landscaping
- Lighting
- Furniture
- Green space and “parklets”
- Bicycle facilities and infrastructure
- Transit
- Parking facilities
- All signage and pedestrian systems.

The inventory includes examining and documenting the physical characteristics of each distinctive urban area or retail corridor (i.e. Vine Street, 6th Street, Fountain Square, Lytle Park, etc.).

Task 2: Strategy and Recommendations

The goal of this task will be to gather input from the DCI Committee, key retailers, the general public, and visitors. Input received will define key pilot projects along with specific budget estimates, funding resources, and key stakeholders.

This may include the following:

- Host a charette/brainstorm session, as well as facilitate visitor focus groups.
- Develop recommendations for the assessment of the new urban experience guidelines, taking into account existing situations and recommended improvements, and high level budgets.

Steps

As of May 2016, the DCI Urban Experience Committee is planning for Task 1. DOTE is mobilizing to collaborate with other City departments and outside stakeholders, and will participate in charettes and information gathering.

Upon completion of the work, the Urban Experience Committee will present a report or recommendations to the City. The City will review those recommendations, and take steps to incorporate them into City projects, practices, and plans, as much as is feasible.

GET SMART ON RETAIL

Market forces primarily determine the location of new retail establishments.

However, innovative new programs and personnel created in consultation with downtown stakeholders can catalyze future retail investment. Results include increased street vibrancy and activity, an enhanced customer experience, new business opportunities, more jobs, and increases in sales and tax revenues.

The City and DCI will work to explore creative programmatic solutions and implementation strategies that are practical and effective. Program offerings focused on retail are small but impactful tools. Other neighborhoods in the City, and many cities across the nation, utilize similar programs. Proper implementation is crucial to the success of these initiatives.

The goal of these offerings is to create a critical mass of supportive retail downtown.

Establish a Retail Recruitment Specialist

Summary

Partner with DCI to vet the creation of a retail recruitment specialist to identify, attract and connect retail opportunities within the CBD. This tactic has been implemented in other cities and will focus and coordinate efforts. It will also facilitate the retention of existing retailers and act as a service to property owners. DCI is well positioned to be a natural fit for implementation of this initiative.

Implementation:

Collaboration between DCI, the City, and other stakeholders in the commercial real estate market is key in designing the retail recruiter role.

In previous work by Urban Fast Forward, a local consultant specializing in urban real estate, a number of recommendations and solutions were proposed as a result of a process that included numerous downtown retail stakeholders. Those recommendations built the foundation for this recommendation but have been updated and refined.

Four components of a retail recruitment strategy are necessary:

- Merchandise Mix
- Focus Area
- Recruitment Process and Staff
- Recruitment Tools

Merchandise Mix

Past studies, consumer research and stakeholder input will determine the mix of retail which the recruiter will target. Priority will be given to unique retail and to diversity, both in terms of the target businesses and customers served.

DCED will leverage the expertise of retail brokers, developers, and real estate professionals to define an ideal merchandise mix. The mix will outline retail targets and prioritize recruiting activities for the retail recruiter. As necessary, the mix will be reevaluated, at least annually, to ensure that it stays relevant and responds to market trends, consumer preferences, and activity.

Recruitment Area

Past efforts, in Cincinnati and elsewhere, have included the development of “districts” (e.g. “Vine Street Entertainment District”). Over time, these can conflict with market forces or changing trends.

The recruitment program will consider the entire center city, from the Banks through the CBD to Over-the-Rhine. It will work with stakeholders to shape focus areas and ensure density and critical mass.

Recruitment

Recruitment will work best if the process is unified under one position, a retail recruiter, whose full-time job description is to pursue, educate and encourage local, regional, national, or entrepreneurial, and independent retail businesses to locate in downtown Cincinnati. Such a position will require a clear message, appropriate support and marketing tools, a healthy and collaborative working relationship with the commercial real estate community and a specific work-plan.

Tools

Newly created programmatic offerings will add cache and incentive to retail businesses contacted by a Retail Recruiter. These tools will clearly state defined objectives and set benchmarks for analysis and performance.



One such tool that can facilitate retail development is an example work letter to be shared with downtown building owners. This real estate transaction document typically describes how a space will be delivered by the building owner to potential tenants. A work letter often includes standard information about the subject space, as well as typical terms and helpful information.

With many vacant street-level spaces owned by a wide variety of owners, some of whom don't have much experience in working with new businesses, a retail recruiter may find it helpful to bring a template work letter to the table as a means for collaboration and cooperation with building owners.

In addition, many owners do not have the experience or capacity for understanding what resources or expertise is necessary to get to a ready-to-lease real estate space. A retail recruiter may leverage downtown relationships to educate building owners about this process.

Moving Forward

DCI and DCED will work with real estate brokers and professionals to further define the recruitment model. This will include collaboration with retail brokers to delineate the relationship between a Retail Recruiter position and the retail brokers and other stakeholders who are active in the downtown retail market.

Timeline

The design of a retail recruiter position will begin in Q2 2016 and be finalized by the close of 2016.



Creative Retail Programs

Summary

Program offerings focused on street-level and retail businesses are utilized by City neighborhoods and other cities across the nation. The goal of these offerings is to create a critical mass of supportive retail downtown. When appropriate, City resources associated with programs will be leveraged based on matching funds or similar strategies, and invested funds will be carefully tracked and monitored to ensure they are achieving results.

The City will work with stakeholders to explore creative programmatic solutions for attracting retail and street-level businesses to stay, relocate, or start in downtown Cincinnati.

POP-UP PROGRAM

Vacant storefronts are prevalent throughout the CBD. They are counterproductive to the goal of creating a more vibrant street-level environment. The term “pop-up” typically refers to a retail, restaurant, event or other business which opens for a short period of time in a vacant space. In downtown Cincinnati, the benefit of low risk, short-term, affordable space can apply to retail as well as any street-level use.

Benefits of the pop-up model for businesses include:

- Vetting a new business idea.
- Research and testing the market.
- Test driving a brick and mortar storefront.
- Capitalizing on seasonal trends.
- Flexibility not offered by traditional leases.
- Affordable space for manufacturing, collaborating, selling, or starting a business.

Benefits of the pop-up model for downtown include:

- Activation of vacant spaces.
- Increased pedestrian traffic.
- Connecting landlords with potential long-term tenants.

- Providing low-risk, temporary space for business and job growth.
- Positive media attention.
- Potential growth of new businesses.

There are numerous possibilities for locating such uses in the CBD. One possibility includes vacant City-owned assets. However, a wide array of buildings with varying owners might benefit from a program aimed at the short term occupancy of vacant space.

Research and Best Practices

Research has revealed pop-up programs in places as diverse as Dayton, Norfolk, Brooklyn, Portland. Inspiration has also been drawn from large companies in the retail sector demonstrating flexibility and pushing boundaries with internal pop-up and retail mashup concepts, including Macy’s and Whole Foods.

In 2008, the Brooklyn Flea started small. After success, it expanded into other events (such as the food-focused Smörgåsbord). It grew into a permanent fixture in the retail and small business scene. Cincinnati’s City Flea launched in 2011. The once-a-month market connects small vendors with shoppers and provides cultural, social and economic value. The

City Flea is an asset for the small retailing community.

However, small retailers and other types of businesses still have trouble finding accessible, affordable, and flexible spaces in which they can create, expand, make, and nurture their small businesses with relatively low risk.

Some cities start small and grow their programs over time. This may be a useful approach for Cincinnati.

Implementation

The City will create a pop-up program.

Four program parameters will be defined:

- 1 Program Goals and Description
- 2 Stakeholders and Partners
- 3 Data, Spaces and Location
- 4 Resources

1. Program Goals and Description

In defining the program, DCED will establish goals of the program, identify qualifications for participation, suggest potential participants, delineate the program process, draft a program application, and create a program brand.

The primary goal of the pop-up style program is to activate vacant spaces through business, art, shopping or other activities.

There are numerous potential program participants. These include short term retail stores, creative entrepreneurs, local small manufacturers, first-time business owners, artists or art installations, or a large variety of other uses.

An important element of the program will outline solutions to issues related to the building code. Code violations in

vacant spaces are frequently noted by retail brokers and landlords as barriers to redeveloping vacant spaces or finding suitable tenants. Retail businesses do not typically have sufficient resources to address code issues, and landlords are hesitant to invest in vacant spaces without tenants lined up.

A Pop-Up program will provide a temporary fix for this “catch-22” scenario. Solutions might include a simple application which streamlines the permitting process, the establishment of “grace periods” for Pop-up uses, or other solutions. This element of the program will be created in collaboration with the Buildings and Inspections Department.

Past conversations with Retail brokers have noted the benefits of clustering pop-up activities in the Central Business District, e.g. a retail incubation corridor. This and other possibilities will be explored during program design.

When creating the application and considering the bandwidth of DCED to manage a pop-up program, DCED will consider whether the program will be year-round or focused on a smaller time period such as the holiday season. In addition, participation qualifications will weigh flexible eligibility requirements against a more competitive program selection.

When designing the program, DCED will create and vet a brand, including a name, logo, and color palette. The brand of the program will spread awareness, communicate flexibility, and emphasize motion and action - all principles of the Retail Action Plan itself.



2. Stakeholders and Partners

More than a dozen local organizational stakeholders may have interest in a pop-up program. These stakeholders will be made aware of the program. They may serve on the front lines for connecting businesses and entrepreneurs to the program.

3. Data, Space, Location

A number of different spaces in the CBD are good candidates for this program. The first step to creating a list of potential pop-up spaces is the inventory of available property, spearheaded by DCI. Once this inventory is complete and the program has been designed, landowners will be contacted to ascertain their interest.

As previously noted, City-owned assets might be good for testing or piloting the program. The City will also collaborate with for-profit and non-profit companies to identify spaces suitable for the program as a means to fill vacant spaces, stimulate demand, and bringing vibrancy to downtown assets.

As news of the program spreads, DCED will also explore collaboration with other landowners with suitable space.

Other technology tools may play a role in supporting the program. Kinglet is a business on the cutting edge of real estate brokerage and is a relatively new addition to the Cincinnati market. Such tools might complement the pop-up program.

4. Resources

Implementation of this program will require a stream of funding. While creating the program, DCED will identify funding needs, potential sources, and likely uses. Research will also be completed to understand if philanthropy (including grants, donations, technical assistance, or other funding streams) can play a role. Many cities leverage temporarily donated space from building owners to save resources. In return, building owners gain access to potential future tenants.

Due to the flexible nature of the program, DCED will also establish metrics examining appropriate amounts of investment in a project in City-owned spaces versus projects in privately held property. In privately held property, careful attention will be paid to monitoring the investment to ensure that City funding is not being abused.

Timeline

A final pop-up program will be designed, written, approved and in place by August 31, 2016.

STRUCTURED PROGRAMS

Overview

In addition to a pop-up program, the City will investigate and vet the applicability of additional City programs focused on retail and street-level businesses. Such incentives or programs will be predictable, easy to understand, and

focused on the CBD. They will involve fair implementation across different projects and be simple for City staff to track and enforce. Programs will provide appropriate incentive at relatively low investment and risk levels from the City's perspective.

DCED, in partnership with DCI, will continue to engage small retailers through regular meetings to address concerns, provide updates on the Retail Action Plan, and gather feedback and input.

Landlord Incentive Program

Consider the possibility of a structured program which encourages landlords to invest in their vacant or dilapidated street-level spaces. DCED will work with building owners and retail brokers to understand the most efficient and feasible method of incentive. The goal is to support capital improvements in unused and underutilized storefronts.

Signage Grants

Consider the possibility of a program focused on small grants or other means of financial support for signage, with the understanding that even minimal support can make a difference in the decision of a small retailer to locate in the CBD. The City may also facilitate the sign permitting process to streamline requirements and timelines.

Financial Backstop

Some landlords or building owners are hesitant to take a chance on new, small, or start-up retail businesses because they have unproven credit-worthiness. Consider the possibility of the City providing some sort of financial backstop

for potential deals that involve tenants with non-national credit. Such extra security can help push more deals from potential to reality.

Implementation of this program could include setting aside a small portion of funds in the District TIF, to be leveraged for capital improvements.

Downtown Districts

There are generally two methods for naming non-governmental districts urban centers. The first type includes use-related districts such as "financial district", "cultural district" or the "8th Street Design District". Alternatively, place-related districts could be useful, such as "SoLi - South of Liberty" or other crowd-sourced or geographic naming conventions.

In partnership with other departments and in consultation with the non-profit sector, the private sector, the public, and the development community, DCED will explore such naming possibilities.

Street Vending Retail

The City's current street vendor program can become more creative and dynamic through, among other interventions, greater flexibility in the use of public right-of-way. Other urban areas embrace street sales, both merchandise and food, to add character to the street experience. Transitioning from market "spaces" to market places is an opportunity to allow street vendors to contribute to a better sense of place in the CBD.

UNIFY THE MESSAGE

Collaborative communications efforts will strengthen the message about opportunities and momentum in Cincinnati's urban core.

Communication of the advantages of the CBD currently takes place through a multitude of avenues. By coordinating with the work of stakeholders we can ensure an effective and efficient impact with our collective marketing efforts and dollars.

Collaborate on Messaging

Summary

Convene external partners and stakeholders who market the CBD. Break down institutional barriers to increase collaboration and communication. Results of this collaboration may include common mapping, terminology, graphics, or other materials, as well as better cross-promotion and of events and ideas for the CBD.

Implementation

The Retail Committee of DCI will play a role in centralizing communication related to downtown with a focus on collaboration. Proactive efforts will also be utilized, such as the downtown constituent surveys conducted by DCI.

When appropriate, this collaboration will flow to existing stakeholder groups focused on the larger region, such as Source Cincinnati, the CVB, the Cincinnati Communications Alliance or other groups.

Events, Tours and Programs

The City should consider two possibilities for showcasing downtown assets. First, consider a new downtown tour of living. With many new residential units coming onto the market, the ability to brag about our new housing downtown is a great marketing and word-of-mouth tool.

Second, consider the possibility of a downtown tour of commercial or street-level storefront spaces to demonstrate to potential retailers or businesses the opportunity to locate in the CBD. These two events can be paired with exciting programming in the streets and public areas during the day, such as Cincy Summer Streets.

The City can also provide information and education about recent or upcoming opportunities that benefit downtown retailers. For example, with the City's recent transition to mobile-friendly parking applications, there are future opportunities for retailers validate parking costs for their customers.

Timeline

The DCI Retail Committee will provide a realistic timeline for implementation of this item.

ICSC Conference Attendance

Summary

Attend the ICSC RECON conference held annually in May. Secure booth space (the convention floor has an area devoted to Cities and Municipalities) and set up meetings with pertinent retailers well in advance of the conference dates. Identify Cincinnati retail brokers and real estate representatives from local companies to work one to two hour shifts at the booth. Be well-prepared with accurate, appropriate materials and a follow-up plan.

The objectives of attending the ICSC conference are:

- Communicating opportunities within the entire City on a broad scale.
- Developing and enhancing the visibility and credibility of Cincinnati as an attractive retail market.
- Building and enhancing relationships with industry leaders.
- Attending appropriate programs and sessions to become educated about industry trends and issues.

The value of participating in ICSC programs is a long-term commitment based on consistently developing relationships and the national image of Cincinnati. In addition to the RECON Conference, DCED and partners may attend other regional ICSC events and similar networking events.

Implementation:

In the past, the City has had success by leveraging the contacts and expertise of private firms to set up meetings and create a conference agenda. This model might be pertinent for future ICSC conferences.

DCI's Retail Subcommittee may serve as a partner for the City's participation in ICSC, assisting the City with suggestions for preparatory materials and relationships. Consider asking existing downtown retailers and brokers attending ICSC events to introduce the City to new retailers as a show of support for the downtown Cincinnati opportunity.

Timeline

The conference is generally held in May of every year.

On a longer timeframe, goals for ICSC conference attendance include holding an event or a booth with local and regional developers and stakeholders to communicate our close collaboration and present a unified team to prospective retailers and showcase the "Cincinnati opportunity".

Updates

After ICSC attendance each year, DCED will create a report documenting successes, failures, lessons learned, and future opportunities.

Implementation & Evaluation

Implementation

We understand this Action Plan must be different from past retail or downtown strategies. Therefore, it was crafted with a focus on action. It requires collaborative implementation and leveraging the wisdom of stakeholders. It aims to facilitate and hasten the development of a critical mass of retail businesses in the CBD that will result in more sustainable downtown core.

DCI is intimately involved, by mission, in the success of the CBD. Their historic focus on creating a clean and safe downtown will continue to be central and is a well-recognized precondition for all development and progress.

Because the retail sector is a critical element of the downtown user experience, DCI has specified a focus

on retail as a key initiative for 2016 and beyond. This is an optimum time to leverage their focus through three DCI Committees:

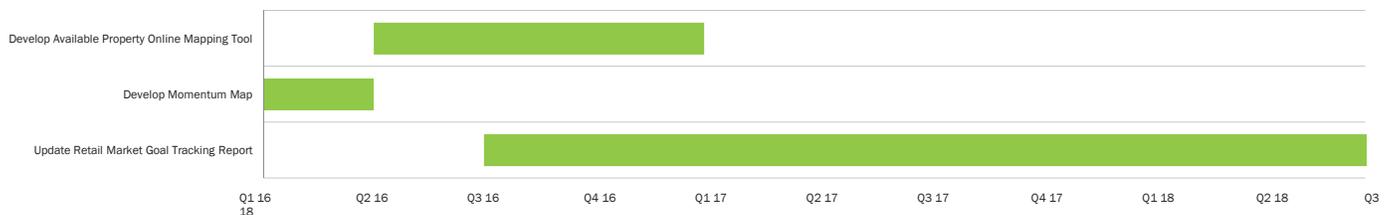
1. Urban Experience Committee
2. Retail Committee
3. Marketing Committee

During implementation, DCED will ensure DCI has staff bandwidth for additional downtown advocacy.

DCED will also proactively engage other organizations, such as the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, Source Cincinnati, REDI, the Cincinnati Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC), and private developers to play role in implementation. The City should tap into their expertise and leverage their investments.

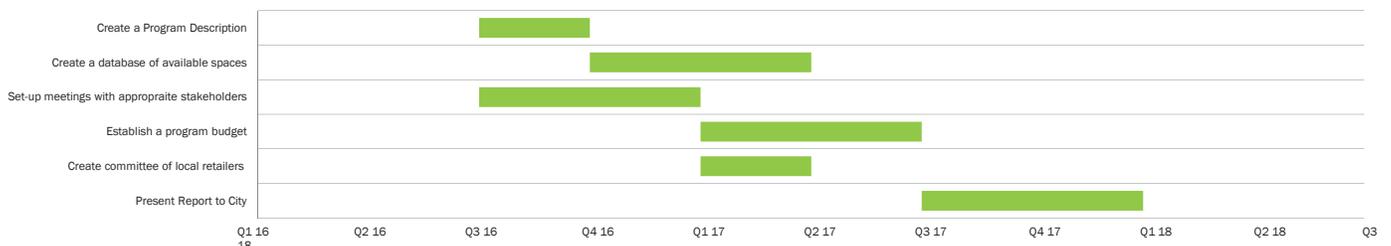
RETAIL ACTION PLAN TASK TRACKING

Building Accessible Data (Strategy I)



My Tasks	Department	Contact	Start Date	Due Date	#Quarters to Complete	% Complete	On Schedule	Notes	Last Updated
Develop Available Property Online Mapping Tool	DCI				3.0	0%	Yes		
Develop Momentum Map	DCED				1.0	0%	Yes		
Update Retail Market Goal Tracking Report	DCED				20.0		Yes	Updates to occur quarterly for foreseeable future	

Pop-Up Program (Strategy III.B)



My Tasks	Department	Contact	Start Date	Due Date	#Quarters to Complete	% Complete	On Schedule	Notes	Last Updated
Create a Program Description	DCED				1.0	0%	Yes		
Create a database of available spaces	DCED				2.0	0%	Yes		
Set-up meetings with appropriate stakeholders	DCED				2.0	0%	Yes		
Establish a program budget	DCED				2.0	0%	Yes		
Create committee of local retailers	DCED				1.0	0%	Yes		
Present Report to City	DCED				2.0	0%	Yes		

Overall, the City will leverage the expertise of a variety of stakeholders throughout the implementation of the Action Plan. The roles of different stakeholders will naturally change over the course of implementation.

Participation by and communication from existing downtown retailers is important as the Action Plan is implemented. DCED and DCI will continue to engage with real estate professionals, property owners, brokers, residents, and others. These meetings will feed into the implementation of the Retail Action Plan.

Evaluation

The City has two primary methods for tracking and evaluating the implementation of this Retail Action Plan.

The first method will track the progress and completion of the written strategies and tasks using “percentage complete” methodology.

The second method for measuring implementation is to analyze broader metrics evaluating the health of the retail sector. Examples include retail vacancy, pedestrian traffic, retail sales, and resident satisfaction. These metrics paint a picture of how the retail sector is doing.

Taken together, these qualitative and quantitative analyses will provide City staff and leadership with information to aid future decision-making. Examples of these tracking metrics appear on the following page.

Annually, the City will issue a report evaluating implementation of the Retail Action Plan.

RETAIL ACTION PLAN GOAL TRACKING



	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016	Q1 2017	Q2 2017	Q3 2017	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019
Office/Retail Property Value per SF	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Office/Retail Property Value per SF	TBD														

Actual Results	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016	Q1 2017	Q2 2017	Q3 2017	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019
Office/Retail Property Value per SF															
Resident Satisfaction Survey															
Median Household Income															
# of Residential Units															
# Retail Businesses															
Annual Retail Business Rentention Rate															
# Jobs in City (Retail)															
Retail Vacancy Rate															
Total Retail Sales															
# of Pedestrians															



Cincinnati Downtown Strategy
RETAIL ACTION PLAN
Department of Community and Economic Development

MOVING RETAIL FORWARD 

**Department of Community &
Economic Development**

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CINCINNATI