



**DOWNTOWN  
LAFAYETTE**

**2020 ★ IN REVIEW**





## DEAR DOWNTOWN LAFAYETTE SUPPORTER,

My 2020 reflections are very difficult to put into words. The challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created hardships for so many of us, but also taught us lessons about what is most important in life and forced us to dig deeper than ever before to find ways to contribute to the betterment of our families, workplaces, and the community we live in.

Throughout the year, the teams at DDA and DLU continued to wake up everyday focused on how we can support downtown stakeholders - residents, property owners, business owners, partners, and enthusiasts - and we realized that the work of our two organizations was more important than ever.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we focused on personal outreach to let you know we were here and find out how we could help. As we moved through the year, we put all we

had into creating opportunities to keep our community connected through online programming and encouraging the entire parish to support small businesses located downtown. As the year drew to a close, we put our heads down to look ahead to amazing opportunities on the horizon. All year long, we aimed to provide a listening ear, celebrate small wins, and remain optimistic about the future.

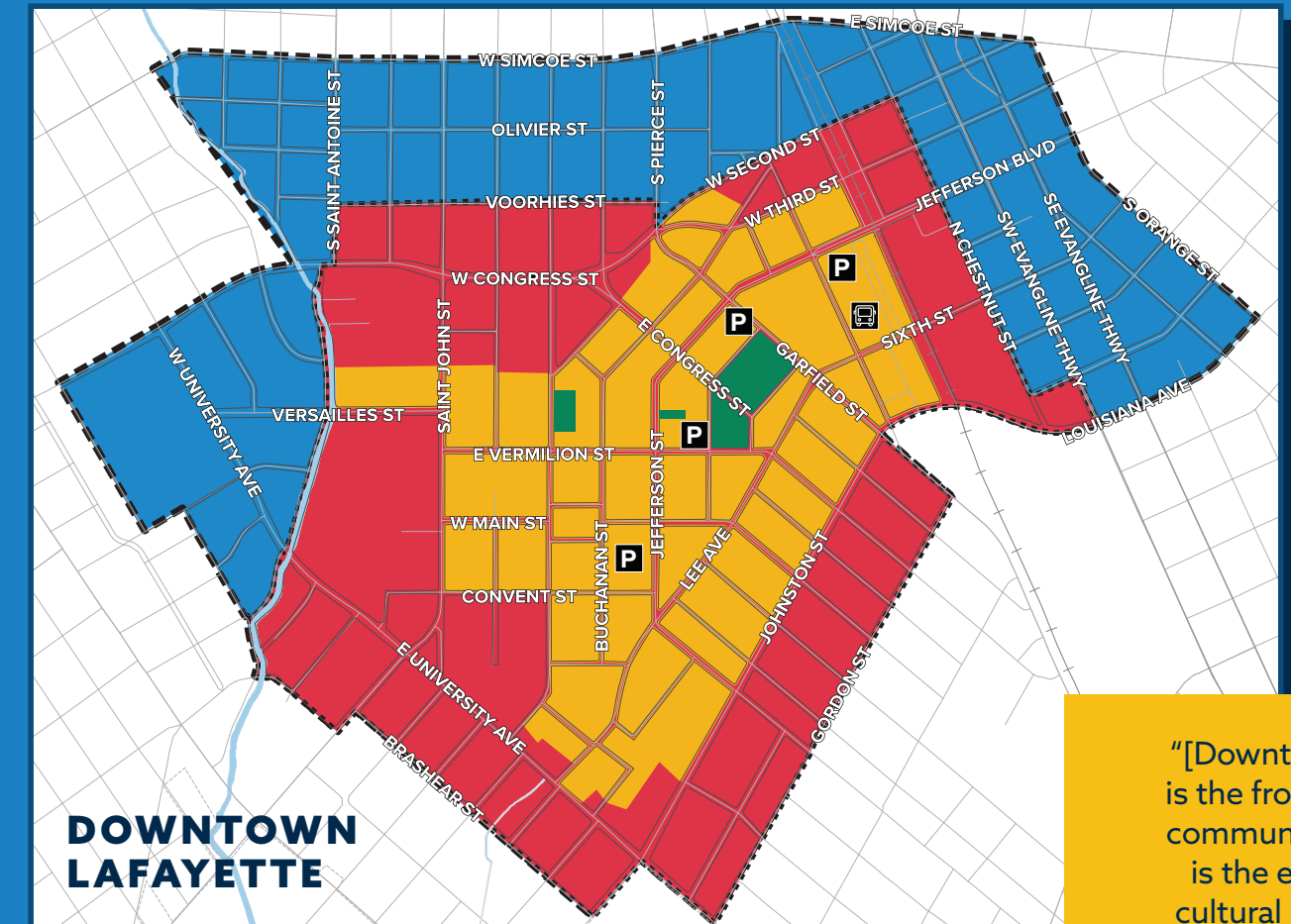
2020 showed us how resilient Downtown Lafayette truly is. How our community steps in and steps up for each other. That we understand we are better together. Businesses helping businesses... neighbors helping neighbors... nonprofits helping nonprofits... and everything in between. New friendships and partnerships were formed. People made bold moves that I believe will help us recover faster and better as the central business district of Lafayette.

We are on the verge of getting past the challenges of one of the most difficult years of our lives, and I want you to know that Downtown Lafayette is still full of momentum. I also want to remind you that support amongst the members of the Downtown Lafayette community remains more important than ever. I encourage you all to continue reaching out to each other, lending a helping hand where you can, and looking for ways to support one another's dreams and goals for the downtown district.

I look forward to celebrating brighter days ahead with all of you, as we work together to continue building on the momentum we celebrated before the pandemic. I believe Downtown Lafayette will come out of one of the toughest years in history stronger than ever!

Thank you for your investment in and support of Downtown Lafayette.

Anita Begnaud  
CEO, DOWNTOWN LAFAYETTE



### TOTAL EMPLOYEES

Cultural District: 4,987  
Taxing District: 4,387

### TOTAL BUSINESSES

Cultural District: 1,172 (approx.)  
Taxing District: 1,016 (approx.)

### TOTAL RESIDENTS

Cultural District: 1,495  
Taxing District: 677  
LaPlace: 1,924  
Freetown-Port Rico: 3,034  
Saint Streets: 3,858  
McComb-Veazey: 5,451  
Sterling Grove  
(Historic District): 110

"[Downtown Lafayette] is the front porch of our community. Downtown is the epicenter of our cultural identity here in Lafayette and Acadiana. It's an important connector to the university and it's critical that we keep downtown vibrant."

KYLE BACON  
Partner at Jones Walker

## WHO WE ARE

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is the governmental entity responsible for encouraging and promoting private development and coordinating public development in the downtown district.

Downtown Lafayette Unlimited (DLU) is a 501(c)(6) organization with a mission to preserve, restore, and expand Downtown Lafayette, Louisiana as a business and cultural center.

These two organizations' board leadership and staff work together to ensure Downtown Lafayette serves as an engine for economic development, cultural preservation and growth, and quality of life.

### DDA AND DLU STAFF

Anita Begnaud, *CEO*  
Rachel Holland, *Director of Development & Planning*  
Jamie Hebert, *Director of Programming & Engagement*  
Hunter Hebert, *Operations Manager*  
Amy Trahan, *Executive Assistant to CEO & Office Manager*  
Cali Comeaux, *Marketing & Communications Manager*  
  
Maureen Dugas Foster, *Director of DLU (resigned)*  
Matthew Holland, *Marketing & Communications Manager (resigned)*

### 2020 DDA BOARD

Miles Matt, *Chairman*  
Lisa Thomas, *Secretary/Treasurer*  
Mike Delcambre  
Ross Fontenot  
Jim Keaty  
Gus Rezende  
Gregory Walls

### 2020 DLU EXECUTIVE FINANCE COMMITTEE

David D'Aquin, *President*  
Jason Matt, *Immediate Past President*  
Matthew Thibodeaux, *President-Elect*  
Julie Chauvin, *Secretary/Treasurer*  
Michael Leblanc  
Luke Sonnier  
Missy Theriot

### 2020 DLU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cindi Axtell  
Eric Crozier  
Valerie Garrett  
Kyle Gideon  
Jared Guillot  
William LaBar  
Chris Matt  
Alex Prochaska  
Brad Ridge  
Nic Walts  
Rev. Max Zehner





SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

At the onset of COVID-19, we pivoted from our business-as-usual marketing, events, and business development, to providing business support and creating promotional efforts to help our downtown businesses and Downtown Lafayette Unlimited members withstand the impacts of the pandemic, recover, and reopen.

The hands-on assistance provided from our office helped business owners gain access to emergency aid, find marketing support, take advantage of outdoor dining options, transition to takeout, and increase online sales.

From the creation of the **Downtown Snackdown food competition series**, designed specifically to support restaurants while they couldn't be fully open, to a concentrated **Small Business Saturday** effort to give a boost to district retailers, these all-hands-on-deck efforts comprised some of the best and most important work we've ever done as an organization.

Approximately 40 restaurants operate in the downtown district, and the majority of them temporarily closed in the first few weeks of the pandemic. These businesses are a huge part of the culture and economy of our district, owned and operated by local residents with family ties here in Acadiana. While restaurants could only sell food via takeout or delivery, our organization kept a list of restaurants and other businesses that remained open downtown on our website and created a **Toot-and-Scoot system for curbside service** to help these downtown businesses get through a difficult period. This system helped to provide a safe way for patrons to still support their favorite restaurants and retail shops.

Using the power of social media to promote what our district has to offer, these initiatives brought countless visitors to Downtown Lafayette and the revenue boost helped businesses bounce back.



"Downtown really is a family of businesses. We are all in this together. DDA and DLU's support of local business during the pandemic was so important to keeping our doors open."

LIZ PAYNE  
Owner of Carpe Diem Café & Wine Bar



SOCIAL MEDIA & WEB REACH

During a time when we couldn't physically be together, it was imperative that we utilize social media and virtual events to keep our community connected and remind people to support small businesses in any way they could.

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

January 2020  
21,546  
January 2021  
24,937  
Growth  
15.74%



INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

January 2020  
11,346  
January 2021  
14,584  
Growth  
28.54%



EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

January 2020  
2,654  
January 2021  
3,781  
Growth  
42.46%



VIRTUAL EVENTS

38

Virtual Events were held in 2020.

459,905

People reached in 2020.

2,261

Times that 2020 events were shared.

57,700

Viewers of Christmas programs alone.





# PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

Our operations strategy involves keeping the downtown district clean, safe, vibrant, and maintained. From ensuring trash is picked up, to coordinating with public safety agencies, to commissioning public art, we strive to ensure the district is one of the cleanest and safest neighborhoods in the city.

**Our goal for Downtown Lafayette is that it's a desirable place to live, work, and visit.** Because we don't have a fully staffed clean and safe team like larger downtown districts, we coordinate daily with city departments — primarily the police department and the department of public works — to ensure our district has daily services to maintain the security and cleanliness of the district.

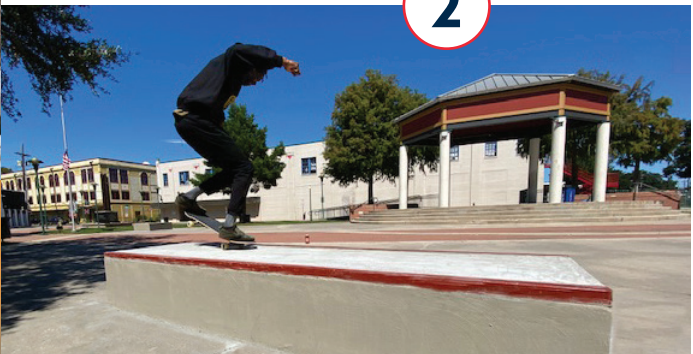
**In 2020, we put our focus on small-scale improvements to bring new users to our parks, create new spaces for outdoor dining, make it easier for patrons of downtown to help keep our district clean, and showcase talented muralists.**

**"It is important for the DDA to demonstrate the impact that investments in public spaces can have on our district's vitality. Whether it's investments in landscaping, outdoor dining, or park upgrades, our board of directors and staff are dedicated to improving public spaces throughout Downtown Lafayette in order to create a resilient neighborhood for all to enjoy."**

**HUNTER HEBERT**  
DDA Manager of Operations



1



2



3



4



5



6a



6b



6c

## 1. TRASH CANS

The DDA partnered with Parish Proud and Lafayette Consolidated Government to purchase and install 28 new trash cans throughout the district in 2020.

## 2. PARC SANS SOUCI SKATE

Operations Manager Hunter Hebert partnered with Rukus skate shop to design and install new benches in Parc Sans Souci, which are reinforced with square tubing to double as skate furniture.

## 3. SIDEWALK DINING PILOT

Our office worked with LAND Architecture to rethink the areas between the cypress trees at Pamplona Tapas Bar as a pilot to expand Jefferson Street's capacity for sidewalk dining.

## 4. BIKE CORRAL

We recognized a need for additional bike parking in the district and piloted a bike corral on the 500 block of Jefferson Street because this block has heavy pedestrian traffic due to its vibrant retail scene. The project gives downtown visitors an easy and accessible spot to secure their bicycles.

## 5. BISTRO TABLES

Our office purchased new bistro tables and chairs for two public spaces to respond to the pandemic, help support small businesses, and provide more options for dining safely outdoors.

## 6. PUBLIC ART

While on winter break from Pratt Institute, artist and Lafayette-native Colette Bernard created the I-Spy mural inspired by the many faces she sees in NYC. The mural is located on Polk Street, on a wall of the Children's Museum. (6a)

The DDA partnered with property owners, Larry Sides and Kathy Ashworth, to commission a mural by artist and illustrator Hannah Gumbo. The mural incorporates downtown-inspired motifs to remind us of all the reasons we love this community. (6b)

Baton Rouge-based artist Marc Fresh combined his street-art style with downtown's historic color palette for a placemaking mural in Parc de Lafayette. (6c)





In March 2020, I was worried that everything we loved about Downtown was about to end – it was like a ghost town with empty parking garages and no one on the streets. Yet, we saw more new businesses opening downtown during this year than the past 5 years combined. This is an exciting time to be a part of the downtown community, and we are proud to call it our home."

**JACI RUSSO**

*CEO/Brand Strategist at brandRUSSO,  
celebrating 20 years in Downtown Lafayette*

"As Downtown residents, our DLU membership was one of the best investments during the pandemic. We never felt isolated between virtual events, porch visits, and lots of outdoor or curbside dining options. We are so proud to show it off as more people are discovering all the new (and classic) treasures of Downtown Lafayette."

**MAGGI BIENVENU**

*DLU Family Member since 2019*





ADVOCACY & IMPACT

We were thrilled to build upon the momentum of 2019, but the lack of critical infrastructure to support development remained challenging and created barriers to getting projects completed.

That’s why DDA convened board leadership, business and property owners, and developers through one-on-one and small group meetings, as well as educational opportunities like our virtual Lunch & Learn and Coffee Talk events, to discuss how together we could advocate for improvements that would move the needle.

These individuals stepped up to advocate for tools like the Downtown Economic Development District, drainage solutions on Jefferson Street, Buchanan Parking Garage repairs, and the sewage lift station on LPTFA’s campus, **sending a clear signal to the private sector that we’re serious about overcoming obstacles to achieve development.**

**In 2020, our team stayed engaged with projects in motion by meeting regularly with elected officials and LCG departments to help move projects like the district-wide sidewalk improvement and Main Street projects through the process to design and construction.**

We also spearheaded new opportunities for long-standing issues like sewage capacity by connecting the LPTFA to LUS to find a short-term solution, so residential development would be viable. In October, the LPTFA broke ground on construction of a new lift station, and this project alone will allow several hundred more residential units to be built in the district.



BUCHANAN GARAGE

The Parish Council approved emergency funds in March to remove concrete panels from the garage due to safety concerns. In September, the same council directed \$3.5 million to repair the garage and put it back into commerce.

“As a Downtown business owner who has experienced drainage issues since we opened in 2015, it was amazing to see how quickly progress could be made when DDA connected us to LCG’s new drainage director. We brainstormed together how to solve our particular challenge and we are very impressed with the results.”

**COLLIN CORMIER**  
*Owner of Pop’s Poboys*



NAVIGATING NIGHTLIFE

The pandemic produced unique issues for our nightlife operators, and the **DDA recognized its important role in gathering restaurant and bar owners and operators to discuss regulation challenges and assist in navigating each of the Governor’s new mandates.** We also convened government and law enforcement agencies with owners and operators to have open dialogue about how to use the time during the pandemic as an opportunity to improve long-standing problems with safety and enforcement in the district.

Now, as restaurants and bars reopen at increasing capacities, we have a plan to coordinate trash pick-up utilizing the city’s street sweepers, and the stakeholders responsible for delivering a vibrant nightlife economy now recognize the importance of investing in a nightlife management plan and looking at best practices from other cities to improve Downtown Lafayette’s nightlife experience.



SEWER LIFT STATION

The LPTFA hosted a crowd of downtown stakeholders at its campus on W. Second Street to break ground on the sewer lift station in October.



“We continue to be engaged in the conversations at every level of government about the infrastructure needs of the district that will help to make downtown a safer, vibrant, and more development-friendly place.”

**ANITA BEGNAUD**  
*CEO Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Lafayette Unlimited*

NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

DDA and LCG worked with the The National Parks Service to approve the Lafayette Central Business (Le Centre) National Historic District in October. This historic designation on the National Register proves that there is a rich and diverse history in the district worthy of preserving. Property owners with structures more than 50 years old can now qualify for a 20 percent to 40 percent tax credit when making renovations or making preservation efforts.





BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH

We’re encouraged by the level of investment downtown, despite the logistical challenges and uncertain economic conditions experienced in 2020. Our downtown family grew with new businesses opening, existing businesses growing and expanding into storefronts, and businesses moving into the district from other parts of town.

**The DLU and DDA created initiatives targeted at encouraging spending locally, and the community responded by supporting both long-standing and new retail businesses.** Lafayette Parish as a whole saw an uptick in sales tax collections, even breaking the previous 2014 record during the month of December. We understand the importance of a strong retail base in the district, and we plan to continue cultivating and supporting downtown businesses through our office’s initiatives.

Two residential development projects completed construction in 2020, bringing 54 new residential units to the district. We’re well on our way to achieving our goal of 500 new units by 2025, pending the completion of the Old Federal Courthouse renovation, as well as several additional residential projects in the works. **We’re confident the newly created Downtown Economic Development District will incent more private interest and make new development projects possible** as we continue to see an increase in interest.



VERMILION LOFTS

Stephen J. Ortego, developer of Vermilion Lofts and principal architect at SO Studio, was named “2020 Rising Young Business Leader” by Junior Achievement of Acadiana for their annual Business Hall of Fame awards. Stephen’s leadership in developing Vermilion Lofts brought 24 new residential units to the market in March of 2020.

Businesses made bold moves in 2020, amidst the challenges of the pandemic. In fact, **we celebrated 31 business wins that are already having a tremendous impact on the vibrancy of downtown.** Welcome!

- Agape Premium Tax*  
*Beal Hernandez*  
*Beausoleil Books*  
*Bougie Beauty Bar*  
*CGI*  
*Designs by Robin*  
*Golfballs.com*  
*Grocery Tavern*  
*Grouse Room*  
*Handy Stop Market & Café*  
*Hideaway*  
*Hubcity Cycles*  
*Joie de Vivre Salon*  
*Kean Miller, LLP*  
*Lilou*  
*L. Shaun Trahan*
- Main Street Real Estate*  
*Nations Lending*  
*Orbit Energy*  
*Parish Realty*  
*Pop-A-Licious Popcorn*  
*Precht Law Firm*  
*Sans Paquet*  
*Shale Support Holdings*  
*Spruced Group*  
*SO Studio*  
*Southstar Urgent Care*  
*Sugarwolf Outdoors*  
*The Cajun Hatter*  
*Wild Child*  
*Zaunbrecher Designs*

Additionally, our office tracked tenant occupancy in downtown office towers throughout the year and are pleased to report that no office building lost tenants in 2020 due to the pandemic, and in fact, the **CHASE TOWER** signed 12 new leases during the year and is now fully occupied. This positive news proves the resiliency of downtown businesses and indicates the district is positioned for continued growth.

**“As more residents move downtown, we anticipate increased demand for retail services in the district. Our hope is that we will become a retail destination area for Acadiana residents, where shops, cafés, restaurants, and parks combine to provide a unique experience you can only find downtown.”**

**RACHEL HOLLAND**  
*DDA Director of Development & Planning*



**LILOU**  
Mitzi Guidry moved back home from Los Angeles in 2019 and in 2020 opened Lilou, a concept thrift shop and coffee bar with an environmentally-friendly focus.



**CAJUN HATTER**  
A New Iberia-native, Colby Hébert moved his custom-made hat shop from Magazine Street in New Orleans to Jefferson Street to immerse himself back in the culture of Cajun country and raise his family.

**WILD CHILD WINES**  
Denny and Katie Culbert opened Wild Child Wines, a natural wine shop with retail and by-the-glass offerings, in January of 2020. They quickly pivoted to an online, contact-free business model in March and were even featured in GQ Magazine for their nimbleness mid-pandemic.



**POP-A-LICIOUS**  
Justin Cormier relocated Pop-A-Licious Gourmet Popcorn to Lee Avenue from the Acadiana Mall. Cormier still serves up his sweet and savory popcorn flavors at the new location, but his new storefront has enabled him to add new food items to draw in lunch crowds.



**BEAUSOLEIL BOOKS**  
Bryan Duprée and James Colvin opened Beausoleil Books with friends, Blair Boles and Endya Hash, after spending time downtown and realizing there was a need for more daytime retail and activities. The bookstore incorporates francophone culture and literature and serves as an information hub for tourists.

**HANDY STOP**  
Bradley Cruice opened Handy Stop Market and Café on Jefferson Street to give downtown residents and daytime workers the essentials – fresh produce, meats, dairy items, as well as general merchandise.



**“DBR is truly excited to be a part of the resurgence of retail and restaurant establishments in Downtown Lafayette.”**

**ROBIN THIBODEAUX**  
*Designs by Robin*

**DESIGNS BY ROBIN**  
DBR Designs is one of 7 new businesses that opened its doors on the 500 block of Jefferson Street in 2020. In addition to interior and exterior design services, the showroom offers local art, custom bedding, lamps and lighting, silk plants and more.



PROGRAMMING

After building great momentum in 2019, our team established a strong lineup for 2020 programming, focusing on events that both connect DLU members and generate foot traffic for downtown businesses, including retail, restaurants, and salons alike. Changes in public health regulations forced us to think quickly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During an unprecedented time, we leapt into action to increase our digital communications and virtual networking opportunities to meet the demand for engagement. We established new events including DTA! House Sessions, put a virtual twist on ArtWalk, and launched a webinar series to connect local businesses to resources available to help them navigate uncertain conditions. We were thrilled that our virtual concerts brought the talent of local musicians into the homes of music lovers from across Acadiana and the world, and our social media contests were truly a hit!

Our Downtown Snackdown events helped participating restaurants generate over \$100,000 in collective revenue throughout the months of June and November. As a result of these efforts, many of our restaurants had better sales in June 2020 than June of 2019, which is a testament to how strongly the community responded to our call-to-action to support local businesses we love.

We closed the year with a heartwarming Merry & Bright Christmas series, welcoming more than 30 local artisans for our Holiday Art Market and highlighting visual art performances as part of Window Wonderland. Additionally, the Christmas Tree Extravaganza and a virtual concert by Curley Taylor & Zydeco Trouble that drew over 40,000 viewers provided holiday cheer at a time when our community needed it most.

Thanks to the generosity of local sponsors, DLU members, and the entire community, we were able to continue our mission to support the physical, economic, and cultural revitalization of the downtown district.

79  
TOTAL  
EVENTS

110  
PARTNERS  
& SPONSORS



"Relocating to the heart of the Hub City and becoming a part of DLU has been one of our best business decisions. Downtown's unique culture is championed by amazing, forward-thinking individuals who have not only welcomed us with open arms, but also helped us grow our customer engagement and database through joint marketing efforts that produced amazing results during a challenging year."

JUSTIN CORMIER  
Owner of Pop-A-Licious



2021 FOCUS

- Assisting with small business recovery
- Marketing the district's assets to our community, business prospects, and visitors
- Returning to in-person programming to increase foot traffic to businesses
- Advocating for public investments to encourage and leverage private investment
- Investing in public spaces to continue adding vibrancy to the district

SPOTLIGHT ON RETAIL

DDA's Retail Tenant Improvement Program will help to grow downtown's retail economy by providing certain funds to eligible retail business owners in order to defray a portion of the costs incurred when starting new and expanding existing businesses. Our hope is that this new program brings more retailers to the district who provide needed and desired products to address the demands of residents, employees, and visitors, as well as increase foot traffic in the commercial core.







Thank you to our contributing photographers and designer who helped to make this annual review beautiful!

- Scott Clause/USA TODAY NETWORK
- Denny Culbert
- Travis Gauthier
- Philip Gould
- Paul Kieu
- Blake Lagneaux
- Reece McDaniel
- LeeAnn B Stephan



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