

Downtown Anderson – The Brightest Part of the Electric City of Anderson

2010 Annual Report

Downtown is more than historic, its eclectic, vibrant, and moving forward; a destination for all to enjoy! All this does not happen by accident; the City developed a Downtown Master Plan that guides us in our revitalization process. Public and private investments are paramount to our success.

The plan is based on four principles that include Organization, Design, Economic Restructuring and Promotions. Organization generally happens behind the scenes and includes the City's collaborative work with downtown businesses and organizations. Design is the most evident of the principles. It includes many elements that enhance the look of the Downtown. The City helps to recruit and retain downtown businesses as part of the Economic Restructuring principle. The last principle, Promotions, is like the glue for the other three. The branding, imaging and marketing of downtown are critical for the success of our revitalization efforts.

This report contains our many accomplishments; we have much to be proud of.

Organization

Main Street Program

The Downtown Development office works closely with the Main Street Program of Anderson to coordinate efforts that fulfill common goals and objectives of the revitalization of downtown. The Downtown Development Director is an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors.

Downtown Business Meeting

A Downtown Business Meeting is also held periodically as a means to share information on city projects in downtown and to solicit their input in the on-going process of the Master Plan Implementation.

Downtown Development Commission

The DDC formed Design and Promotion Committees to facilitate their identified priority areas for Downtown Development. These priorities are the development and implementation of a Wayfinding Plan and promotional/marketing materials for use by hoteliers to showcase downtown. The DDC also applied for/received ATAX funding for implementation of the Hospitality Program.

Design

A Little Birdie Told Me: A Bird's Eye View of Downtown

Collaboration with the tba private investors brought to us a special installation of a basalt rock fountain and a boy and a girl bronze statue that has been incorporated in our streetscape at the corner of River St and S. Main St. Additionally, several bronze Carolina wrens were placed in various locations throughout Downtown.

Construction of Streetscapes

The development of The Bleckley Inn facilitated the need for public infrastructure construction such as sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, paving, and landscaping along McDuffie Street, Church Street, and the public parking lot adjacent to The Bleckley Inn.

Redevelopment of the former Belk site

The focus of the redevelopment of this site changed from a hotel/mixed used development to a greenspace/park development. In June of 2010 The City accepted the proposal from RSCT Architecture + Design for a design of the site. Through public input and a planning committee a design concept has been prepared. When developed the greenspace will be a venue for events, musical entertainment, small performances and picnic lunches.

Wayfinding Plan

The wayfinding system begins with the creation of an area identify, the definitions of the boundaries for the area and then direction of vehicles and pedestrians to specific destinations within that area. Twelve Downtown Anderson directional signs have been erected to guide motorists from I-85 exits and Highway 29 from Georgia to Downtown. Banners with the Downtown logo have been placed on street light poles in strategic areas announcing to the public they have arrived in Downtown.

Wise Walks

Wise Walks is a public/private art initiative and collaborative project between the City of Anderson and the Anderson Arts Center. An epigram is any witty, ingenious, or pointed saying tersely expressed. Epigrams have been etched on granite tiles and have been placed in the sidewalks in various locations in Downtown; to date there are 15 epigrams.

Promotions

Marketing Materials

ATAX funding provided the funding for reprinting of some of the brochures we use to market Downtown. We presently have a Downtown Brochure, Parking Brochure, Historical Buildings Brochure and a Downtown Walking Tour that highlights the many historical and cultural attractions in Downtown. We continued to utilize the downtown brand to further downtown's identity.

Events

The Ralph Hayes Toyota Block Party is a weekly musical event that was held every Thursday from in April through October from 6pm to 9:00pm. The event was held on Main Street between Whitner St and Earle Street and was organized by the Main Street Program.

The Main Street Car Show was held on the Saturday before Father's Day and, with more entries than previous years, was another successful event for Downtown. The City partners with the Main Street Program of Anderson to sponsor and staff this growing event.

The 2010 Chili Cook-off in its 12th year is a popular October Downtown event. After sampling the chili from 9 area restaurants, the People's Choice award was given to Matty's Downtown. The judges' panel award winners were Highway 29 Café in first place, followed by Uptown Lounge in second place, and Tiger Cove Grill in third place. The Victoria Tea Room received an award for the Best Decorated Tent.

Holiday Walk & Tree Lighting is an annual event sponsored by the Main Street Program in partnership with the City. This event is seeing increased attendance each year.

Hospitality Program

This program is a marketing initiative directed to hotel guests. Downtown Brochures, restaurant menus and driving directions to downtown have been provided to Hotels so they may suggest our unique offerings to their guests. Hoteliers were invited to our Hospitality Nights so they could experience Downtown firsthand. They visited our cultural attractions, retail stores and were provided taste samplings from our restaurants.

Sidewalk Entertainment and Non Motorized Vehicles

City Council approved ordinances allowing sidewalk entertainment and non motorized vehicles. Allowing sidewalk entertainment and horse drawn carriages, pedicabs and rickshaws to operate can have positive social and economic implications. These types of activities provide entertainment value, generate foot traffic, add pedestrian interest and also help us market Downtown as a "Destination".

Church Street Planning Grant

The City contracted with The Arts Center to facilitate the process of shaping a plan for a public art installation to commemorate the economic and cultural contributions of African American citizens to the Church Street Community and to the City. A committee was formed to offer public input with expertise in the areas of design, marketing, art, history, business and local government. The committee's overall concept was creating a space that would tell the story and commemorate buildings, people and an overall spirit that was unique to Church St. The exact artistic interpretation will require an artist to complete the visual aspect of this component. A mural, relief or sculptural component will depend on the artists chosen to best illustrate this concept. However, the concept of a park and space dedicated to telling the story is the model.

Economic Restructuring

Economic Development Incentive Program

City Council approved an Ordinance establishing an Economic Development Incentive Program. Incentives will provide a financial impact on the decision making process for economic development prospects. The proposed ordinance simplifies the process and delivery of economic development incentives through the establishment of a grant mechanism. The proposed ordinance applies to developments in the TIF district as well as addressing specific types of businesses.

Electric City Investments was the first to receive an Economic Development Incentive grant for the development of a hotel; The Bleckley Inn. A hotel in downtown not only fills a void, but will be a catalyst for other businesses looking to capitalize on the tourism industry while meeting local needs.

Available Properties

An Available Properties Listing is maintained and available on the Downtown website; the visual appearance of this relates to the Connections document which is a user-friendly guide for use in investing and locating in downtown.

Tax Increment Financing District

On December 16, 1996, City Council adopted a 20 year Redevelopment Plan for Downtown that included a Tax Increment Financing District; this plan was extended to 25 years in 2008. The components set forth in the plan are several blocks of streetscape improvements, gateways at key intersections, parking decks and other parking improvements, greenspace and landscaping improvements, courtyard improvements, utilities and lighting, site furnishings, and the necessary planning and consultant services to design and implement the improvements.

Building Permits in the amount of \$499,297.33 were issued in the TIF district.

New Business Activity:

Among the new businesses in Downtown Anderson last year were: Cann Land & Timber, Tetra Investment, With Woman With Child, Art & Frame Gallery, Consolidated Career Care, Heavenly Health, J Peters, Chez La Rouge, Remnants and Viva Il Vino.

Thanks to all for taking part in the process that leads to our success. Our revitalization achievements have created a pedestrian friendly, aesthetically pleasing and safe environment designed for a great place to live, work and play!