

## Downtown Rock Island Steering Committee Recap

Dec. 21, 2021, at The Law Centre

**In-person attendees:** Mayor Mike Thoms, Barrett Essman, Monta Ponsetto, Miles Brainard, Eric Rowell, Patrick Stolley, George Crouse, Nicole Watson-Lam and Kyle Carter

**Virtual attendees:** Arron Sutherland, Matt Pappas, Charlotte Morrison and Kyle Peters

### I. Major funding secured for Downtown improvements

- In case you missed it, we successfully [secured \\$4M in City of RI funds for major Downtown improvements](#) in the coming years! Thank you to City Council for their unanimous decision Monday to allocate \$2.5M in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for this vision. Reaction on social media is extremely positive! (42,794 people reached and 8,168 engagements on [Facebook](#) alone)
- As you all know, we are trying to leverage these dollars as we apply for an additional \$3M through the State of Illinois Rebuild Downtowns & Main Streets Capital Grant program.
- We are making final tweaks to the grant's narrative and budget before submitting it by Jan. 10. The State expects to get back to applicants in April; we are still waiting to hear back on the State of IL Tourism Attraction grant submitted at the end of September. More details, including updated project renderings: <http://downtownrockisland.org/2021/12/ar> | City and Chamber staff will work together to propose multiple phases for the project.
- In addition to the City funds, Illinois Casualty Company has committed to donating their property at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue/21<sup>st</sup> Street – and \$100,000 – to the development of a state-of-the-art dog park. The park will honor the former ICC President (son of the company's founder) John R. Klockau, who was adamant that ICC construct its current headquarters in Downtown RI.
- Let's hear it for ICC President/CEO Arron Sutherland and his Board of Directors for their continued investment in Downtown!

### II. 2021 highlights

- Began providing place management services for the City of Rock Island and **hired a director** to explore the creation of a place management organization with a sustainable funding model.
- Requested and secured **\$2.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds** for major improvements; combined with \$1.5 million in Downtown TIF dollars, these funds will serve as the local match for a \$3 million request through the State of Illinois Rebuild Downtown Grant.
- Secured grants in partnership with Quad City Arts to help Rock Island High School student Riley Jones create a **large-scale mural downtown**. This

initiative brought the entire community together and ultimately led to Augustana College offering Riley a full-ride scholarship!

- Expanded **Alternating Currents** to Downtown Rock Island with eight music, film, comedy and art events at eight different venues.
- Assisted with the execution of **Ya Maka My Weekend**, which drew 2,407 attendees, generating \$24,070 in revenue.
- Coordinated the launch of a **storefront window art program** with Quad City Arts to creatively market two available retail spaces on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.
- Collaborated with River Music Experience (RME) and Downtown businesses to host the **Downtown Rock Island NOLA Block Party** featuring nationally recognized jazz band Tuba Skinny.
- Attracted **two new revenue-generating businesses** to Downtown – Refined Fit Lab at 313 20<sup>th</sup> St. and Just Beachy Home+ at 1700 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.
- Built support for a **public-private place management organization** funded by the City and property owners through the establishment of a Special Service Area.

### III. **7<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman update**

- Bill Healy, owner of The Stern Center and Bridges Catering, was appointed to 7<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman on Monday, Dec. 20. Bill will no longer be a member of our Committee as we already have Ald. Dylan Parker and Mayor Mike Thoms on board. City Attorney Dave Morrison said Bill's ability to vote on Downtown-related items at City Council will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Thank you to Bill for your commitment to this group over the past several months! We look forward to working with you in a new capacity to make Downtown and the entire City thrive.

### IV. **Property owner outreach and Committee leadership**

- Jack's next quarter (Jan. 3-March 31) will be focused on ramping up outreach to property owners to educate them about our public-private place management partnership, placemaking plans and the Downtown SSA.
- Arron Sutherland and Nicole Watson-Lam (Ms. BriMani's/The Urban Reserve) expressed interest in leading the Committee and helping Jack build support for the SSA. Committee members subsequently voted to appoint Arron to Chair and Nicole to Vice Chair. Their enthusiasm and passion for seeing Downtown thrive – not to mention unwillingness to lose – is contagious! Thank you to Arron and Nicole for stepping up to lead our Committee for the revitalization of Downtown Rock Island. I'm honored to be working alongside both of you!