

## **Downtown Rock Island Steering Committee Recap**

Sept. 27, 2021, at Illinois Casualty Company

**In-person attendees:** Thad Denhartog, Matt Pappas, Matt Stern, Barrett Essman, George Crouse, Kevin Maynard, Jamie DeRudder, John Friederich, Monta Ponsetto, Eric Rowell, Miles Brainard, Brandy VandeWalle, Arron Sutherland, Pat Stolley and Kyle Carter

**Virtual attendees:** Nicole Watson-Lam, Jon Keim, Bill Healy, Phil & Shelly Dingeldein, Liz Tallman, Charlotte Morrison and Dylan Parker

### **Background**

Members of the Downtown Rock Island Steering Committee agree Downtown Rock Island is tired, blighted and in need of a revitalization. However, the City of Rock Island, just like other municipalities across the Quad Cities and the rest of the country, does not have the capacity or the resources to routinely clean, maintain, program and update its downtown on its own to draw more people and businesses to the commercial neighborhood.

While the Development Association of Rock Island (DARI) previously provided place management services for the Downtown, this is no longer the case. DARI's current agreement with the City is to provide economic development services for the entire City of Rock Island.

In late January 2021, the Rock Island City Council approved a contract with the Quad Cities Chamber to explore the creation of a new place management organization supported by sustainable funding to deliver services that enhance public spaces, encourage investment and improve quality of life in Downtown Rock Island. Jack Cullen was hired April 1, 2021, to lead the effort with the guidance of the Downtown Rock Island Steering Committee made up of property owners, City officials and other stakeholders.

### **Update**

At its meeting on Sept. 27, 2021, property owners on the Downtown Rock Island Steering Committee voiced support for a new place management organization as well as a corresponding budget and sustainable funding model to provide special services for the Downtown area.

The proposed model includes the creation of a business improvement district (BID) – a Special Service Area (SSA) in Illinois – to assess an additional tax on downtown property owners to fund and govern improvements and special services for a five-year period.

The Steering Committee directed Jack to contact all other Downtown property owners and potential partners with a stake in the success of Downtown to seek support of the revitalization model. Below is an overview of the draft budget, funding streams, service area boundaries and top organizational goals presented at the meeting. If established, property owners and other members of the Steering Committee would make up the organization's governing board of directors and subcommittees to oversee the administration of funds as well as the implementation of services, improvements and programs.

## **Draft place management budget – 3 core areas of work**

### **Business & Economic Growth**

- Business attraction & retention; property owner outreach & advocacy; promotions & programs | **\$85,000**
- Capital improvements, including façade and interior improvement grants | **\$50,000**

### **Infrastructure and Livability**

- Oversight of cleaning crew & hospitality ambassadors; assistance with services | **\$65,000**
- Cleaning & maintenance – six part-time contract staff at \$20/hour – 100 hours/week | **\$104,000**
- Cleaning supplies and equipment (ATVs, trash bags, graffiti remover, sanitizer, PPE, etc.) | **\$19,000**
- Hospitality/public safety ambassadors @ \$25/hour – 80 hours/week | **\$104,000**
- Public art (murals, storefront wraps, seasonal decorations, etc.) | **\$10,000**

### **Advocacy and Promotions**

- Marketing Downtown | **\$10,000**
- Small impromptu events | **\$10,000**

### **Support**

- Human resources, accounting, marketing, oversight, etc. | **\$68,550**

### **Total annual budget | \$525,550**

\* Some members of the group called for a bigger budget to provide a bigger impact in multiple areas, including capital improvements and public safety, but there was not consensus on this matter; more discussion is needed before amending the budget. \*

### **Annual funding model – 5-year program**

- Downtown property owners (438) | **\$300,000-\$350,000**
  - Average contribution would fall between \$685-\$800 or \$1.87-\$2.18/day
- City of Rock Island | **\$150,000**
- Partner voluntary contributions | **\$25,000+**

## Special Service Area boundaries

Purple line - closely aligned with the Downtown TIF District south of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue



## Top organizational goals, scope of work

- Clean, safe & beautiful Downtown streets
- Increase in business activity; more vibrant storefronts
- Enhanced public spaces throughout Downtown core
- Noticeable improvement to building façades
- Positive reputation as destination for visiting and doing business
- Increase in business sales and sales tax revenue

\* Some members of the Steering Committee requested the Chamber team to produce specific leading indicators to measure the success of the place management organization and overall revitalization effort. Stay tuned! \*

## Downtown refresh, leveraging grants

Meanwhile, the Chamber in partnership with the City of Rock Island and others are applying for two State of Illinois grants to make major enhancements to Downtown Rock Island. The two grants are:

- **Rebuild Downtowns & Main Streets Capital Grant:** Modernization of the Downtown Core
- **Tourism Attraction and Festivals Grant:** Activation of Arts Alley

Both grants require local matches, and we are recommending funds from the City's Downtown TIF District as well as some of the City's ARPA funds be used to leverage these grants, funded by the State's ARPA dollars.

## Next steps, timeline

- Submit application for State of Illinois Tourism Attraction Grant by Sept. 30
- Begin formal outreach with property owners
- Present to City Council on Oct. 11 or Oct. 25

- Next Downtown Steering Committee meeting is Oct. 12
- Baby Cullen is due is Oct. 30; 1-month paternity leave
- Property owner outreach ramps back up in December/January, continues through April
- Submit application for State of Illinois Rebuild DT grant by Jan. 10
- Return to Council in May/June 2022 with report from property owner outreach
- Propose ordinance to set up funding streams
- rebuild begins in summer 2022
- SSA info submitted to Rock Island County by last Tuesday in December 2022
- Create formal Downtown RI entity with board and committees to guide organization within Quad Cities Chamber & Quad Cities Community Partnership