

St. Thomas Downtown Development Board Strategic Plan



JANUARY 31, 2018

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Acronyms

CIP – Community Improvement Plans

DDB – Downtown Development Board

INTRODUCTION

What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is a collaborative planning tool that guides the decision making process toward the creation of the goals, objectives and actions of the Downtown Development Board (DDB) through their mission and vision statements.

Strategic planning is a process that examines where they are now, where they are going and how they are going to get there. It creates a framework for creating clear outcomes, ways of measuring success, focusing energy and the sharing of resources within the members of the DDB in the attainment of the goals. The DDB will be able to look at the potential issues and challenges affecting the downtown core and determine the most important to address at the present time and take the appropriate action to remedy. The DDB can also adjust the goals and objectives over time or as new and pressing issues become apparent.

Why Develop the Plan?

The development of a strategic plan aids in the creation of a written action plan that looks at the implementation of the goals and objectives and is adjusted as needed within a three - five year timeframe. It looks at the social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of the downtown core and uses this information to create a vibrant place where members of the community and businesses alike feel a sense of belonging and pride.

By allowing the DDB to combine their resources with other members of the community and City of St. Thomas in the creation of programs that could provide incentives to businesses and property owners in the downtown core to make improvements to their properties. This would enhance the visual appeal and align with the vision and mission of the DDB.

The benefits of creating a strategic plan

A strategic plan allows the DDB to focus on the current issues affecting the downtown core and within their organization to better serve the community. This is then used to establish a clear vision, mission and goals along with realistic objectives in the completion of the goals. The creation of a strategic plan holds the DDB accountable for their actions, provides guidance in the activities they generate in the downtown core and provides performance measures of success in the implementation of the plan and the vision of the DDB.

Examples of some benefits that could occur in downtown St. Thomas through the development of this strategic plan are as follows:

- To better understand the needs of the downtown core
- To create clear long and short term goals and objectives
- To encourage better communication between members of the DDB and downtown St. Thomas property and business owners
- To establish better connections with business owners in the development and promotion of the downtown programs
- To create a greater social media presence that allows all members of the DDB and the surrounding community the ability to access information about downtown St. Thomas
- To promote events and activities within the downtown core, such as the Nostalgia Nights, Tree Lighting or the Shop Hop.
- To create an environment where residents and businesses alike want to visit and enjoy.

Data Collected

Population Growth in past 5 Years



Total Property Assessment for 2016/2017
\$57,197,088
Increase over \$10,000,000 from Previous Years

BEST PLACES TO LIVE IN CANADA

87th of 219



48th of 450

of similar sized Municipalities in Ontario



90,000 sq.ft. of Vacant Space available on Talbot St.
with an average lease rate of \$12.00/sq.ft.

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

The DDB is a volunteer committee that oversees the improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally-owned land, buildings and structures in the downtown core. They also are involved in the promotion of the business and shopping corridor.

Through this they have developed a mission and vision statement which will oversee the improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally owned land, buildings and structures. To designate areas as improvement areas and establish a board of management and to promote this area as business or shopping areas.

This mission and vision statement may be revised overtime as they achieve the current goals or new challenges arise that effect the social, economic or environmental factors of the downtown core.

A Mission Statement is used to explain the purpose and function of the DDB, who they serve, the service area and acts as a guide towards the creation of goals. It should be clear, concise, realistic and easy to understand along with showing the uniqueness of the DDB.

OUR MISSION

To cultivate a community of all downtown property and business owners and residents, while advocating, beautifying and actively promoting our businesses and authentic heritage in Downtown St. Thomas

A Vision Statement is used to inspire and motivate the DDB towards the future of Downtown St. Thomas. It should be a clear and compelling picture of the future which can be used to motivate and focus the resources of the committee towards a desired end state of the downtown core.

OUR VISION

To engage, inspire and welcome our community and visitors to experience downtown St. Thomas as a unique destination.



ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The environmental scan is a diagnostic tool used to create an analysis of the community surrounding the downtown core. It can be done using a variety of methods in this case a PESTO and SWOT Analysis were conducted to determine any potential issues. They allow the DDB to understand the factors involved with the creation of the goals and objectives to aid in the future development of the downtown core. Each analysis is broken down into chart format to visualize the main points of each factor and their effect on the downtown core. The results discovered through the analysis are used to determine the critical issues that shape the action plan.

A **PESTO Analysis** looks at the Political, Environment/Economy/Education, Social, Technological and Other potential trends, issues/challenges or opportunities within the downtown core.

The Political factors are the current political climate, any changes in leadership at all levels of Government, any shifts in thinking that could affect programming or regulations.

Environmental/Economic/Educational factors are those which see a change in spending patterns, the general economic state of the region, educational needs of the community and any environmental trends or potential impacts.

Social factors are the changes in demographic, cultural trends and any changes in the ways we interact.

Technological factors are and changes in the current trends of communication, technology and the way it is applied.

Finally, the Other factors that could affect the analysis such as the changes in industry, customers and the current client base.

PESTO ANALYSIS

<p>P Political</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United States Political Environment - Funding to Preserve Heritage - Planning & Building Strategy - CIP's - Newcomers - Tax Breaks for Empty Buildings - Assessment Increases from Success - Property Standards
<p>E Environment/Economy/Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban Sprawl - Residential Development - Seniors/Aging Population - Cautious economy - Exchange Rates - Current Spending Patterns - Outside investors purchasing and upgrading properties
<p>S Social</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newcomers - Aging Population - Buy Local - Sustainable Living - Urban Sprawl - Sense of Community
<p>T Technological</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pay for Experiences/Local Culture - E Commerce/ On line Shopping
<p>O Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Options to live downtown/ residential - Outside investors purchasing and not upgrading properties

A **SWOT Analysis** looks at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to establish the internal and external factors to determine the critical issues that affect the downtown core and the potential to affect the vision of the DDB.

The strengths are the positive internal aspects of the DDB and how they contribute to the overall vision.

The Weaknesses are the negative internal aspects that could prevent or hinder the DDB in meeting their vision.

The Opportunities are the positive external aspects, circumstances or trends that contribute to the success of the vision.

The Threats are the negative external aspects, circumstances or trends that could hinder the realization of the vision.

SWOT Analysis



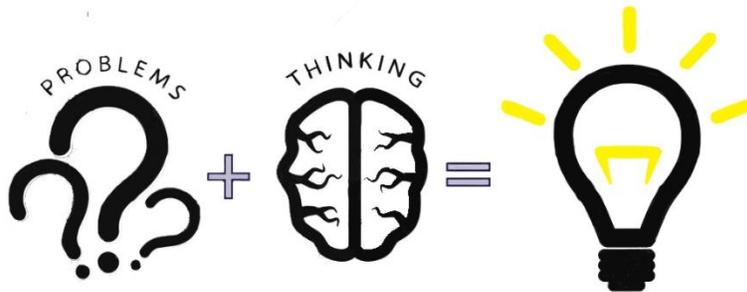
SWOT ANALYSIS	
<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">S</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Strengths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reasonable rent rates - Availability of Space - Historic/Architectural Significance - Unique Businesses - Independent Business Growth - Tourism - CIP's - New entrepreneurs/Millennials
<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">W</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Weaknesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of engagement of membership - Communication - Poor Perception of downtown - Length of downtown - Lack of property standard enforcement - Legal Concerns -> Sutherland Press Building - No Business Retention and Expansion Plan - CIP Funding - Lease rates higher than comparable Market Values
<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">O</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vacancy Rates - Seniors Living/ Aging in Place - Taxation maybe less than London - New Businesses Opening - Close to London - CIP's
<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">T</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Threats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Millennial Involvement -> Leaving the area - Taxation - Vacancy Tax Reduction - Aging Population - Electricity Costs - Online Shopping - Proximity to London

CRITICAL ISSUES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The critical issues, goals and objectives for the DDB are created from the results of the analysis and what they determine will have the biggest impact.

Once the critical issues are established the goals to solve those challenges are developed and the objectives or methods are determined to create a timeframe for mitigating the issues.

The results of each analysis are used to determine the main strengths that could provide opportunities to be capitalized upon, which strengths could help solve some of the issues connected to the weaknesses/threats discovered and what change will have the biggest impact on the downtown as a whole.



Critical Issues

The critical issues are the visualization of the opportunities within the downtown, and what will have the biggest impact? They are the starting point to the creation of the goals and objectives and are listed by priority. This allows the DDB to focus on the most critical and uses that to create attainable goals for the future.

- 1) Property Standards -> Remove Stigma/Perception
- 2) Business Retention -> Businesses closing due to owner retirement
- 3) Vacancy Tax Reduction
- 4) Membership Involvement -> More Involvement = Less Work = Better Results
- 5) CIP Funding -> More Money/ Better Promotion = Standard Improvements
- 6) Marketing -> Media Involvement/Press Releases, Social Media

Goals

The goals are more specific than the vision statement, they may be long or short term and usually place emphasis on particular areas of interest and what the DDB would like to accomplish. They can be internal which are focused directly on the DDB or external which focus on the members and businesses in downtown St. Thomas. They are the main issues that the DDB feels are the main areas of improvement at this point in time.

- 1) Improve Communication with DDB Membership -> More Involvement, better informed membership
- 2) Increase the level of Beautification efforts in the downtown core
- 3) Increase the level of Promotional Programs -> Creating a unique identity
- 4) Engage, Inspire and Welcome -> Increase the number of visitors to the downtown
- 5) Increase the number of new businesses in the downtown and help to retain existing businesses



Objectives

They give a time line to the goals, make achievements measurable and possible with in a realistic and timely time frame. The DDB has used the SMART formula to drive the objectives strategy, which breaks down points to consider when developing potential objectives to achieve the goals.

Specific – Are the objectives easy to understand and to communicate to others.

Measurable – How will the DDB measure their achievements and if they are progressing and meeting the target. This will be done with the charts below that are outlined in the action plan and performance measures.

Achievable – Is the objective something the DDB is able to do and do they have the capacity of achieving it.

Realistic – Is it realistic to expect the DDB membership to help accomplish their goals/objectives.

Timely – Has the DDB identified a timeframe or deadline to achieve their goals/objectives?

- 1) Enhance the method of Communication to our members through a revamped newsletter, an improved website and increased social media presence.
- 2) Increase the level of Beautification projects through enhancing green spaces, planters, member sponsorship of future projects
- 3) Promote the DDB Programs/Events through an increased level of Social Media Presence, Signage and addition of Summer Student
- 4) Engage, Inspire and Welcome – Develop a new event to attract more visitors to the downtown, Better signage, promote the DDB Slogan, Events, Media/Press Involvement
- 5) Business Retention and Expansion – work with the EDC and the City to develop ways to engage businesses that are leaving and new businesses that are considering Downtown St Thomas.



ACTION PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Action Plans are a group of actions or activities that contribute to achieving your goals and objectives and ultimately the vision of the DDB. They describe in detail the specific steps needed and what performance measures and methods will be used to determine the success of the goal.

The Target provides a timeframe to each action involved in achieving the main goals. Through this the DDB will be able to determine who will be able to help them with each step, what resources they need, and a timeframe for each desired outcome.

Performance Measures are a tangible way of measuring the success of each action, the target time frame and who is participating. This allows for continuous improvement and a way for the public and merchants to understand the goals that the DDB would like to achieve and how they are planning to go about it. They are important as they provide opportunities to the DDB to make improvements, address challenges with the downtown, focus energy to the main issues and make decisions that will benefit all users of the downtown core.

The Following charts break down each goal and their corresponding objective with the action plan, the method in which it will be done, who is participating and the target to determine if the performance measure has been met.



GOAL #1: Increase the level of communication with DDB Members			
OBJECTIVE: Enhance existing and develop new methods of communication strategies to inform members of DDB activities.			
ACTION <i>(What)</i>	METHOD <i>(How)</i>	WHO	TARGET <i>(When)</i>
Weekly Newsletter Program	Develop a consistent weekly newsletter system with analytics capabilities	DDB	Redesign our newsletter program by month 6 with a 25% Increase in open rate by month 12
Newsletter Database System	Implement a new Database Management System	DDB	Implement a new newsletter Database with capabilities to link through website & social media
Redesign/ Enhance our Website	Investigate and implement website upgrades with visitor management tools & analytics	DDB	Complete by month 6, and increase open rate by 75% of membership by month 12
Social Media Engagement	Encourage members to “LIKE” our Social Media Pages Implement consistent paid posts boosts	DDB	Membership: Ensure that 75% of our current membership have “Liked” our Social Media Pages by month 6 Public: Increase current Social Media “Followers” by 25% by month 6 Develop an Instagram Account and have at least 100 Followers by month 12

GOAL #1: Increase the level of communication with DDB Members			
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ACTION <i>(What)</i>	METHOD <i>(How)</i>	WHO	TARGET <i>(When)</i>
Membership Engagement & Understanding of DDB Programs	Develop a plan to encourage “Downtown Ambassadors” to assist in communicating new and ongoing DDB programs. “Downtown Ambassadors” will visit the membership on a consistent basis to explain DDB programs	DDB	Achieve a 25% increase in Membership attending the 2018 AGM Implement a quarterly Membership social “Meet and Greet” program by month 6 Develop 6 new “Downtown Ambassadors” by month 6 Establish a quarterly meeting with Downtown Ambassadors
New Membership Welcome Program	Develop a welcome package for new businesses opening in the Downtown that explains the DDB	DDB	Implement a new business welcome plan with a 100% delivery success rate by month 6
Summit Meeting	Hold one Summit Meeting per year – Activity Updates, Guest Speaker	DDB	Schedule an annual Summit Meeting every October
New Member Meeting / Breakfast	Hold a semi-annual New Members Meeting to discuss DDB programs and benefits	DDB SBEC	Implement the first meeting in the 2 nd quarter of 2018 Guest Speaker - from within the DDB Membership preferred

GOAL # 2: Increase the level of Beautification efforts			
OBJECTIVE: Enhance existing and develop new methods of beautification strategies.			
ACTION <i>(What)</i>	METHOD <i>(How)</i>	WHO	TARGET <i>(When)</i>
Community Improvement Plan (CIP)	Lobby City Hall to Increase CIP funding during, 2018 street revitalization	DDB City Council	Encourage a minimum of 2 Property Owners to Participate in CIP Program during 2018 Big Dig
Business/owner participation in Beautification efforts	Encourage businesses to help sponsor downtown events and beautification programs Encourage community partners to sponsor beautification programs	DDB	Encourage 5 downtown businesses and 1 community partner to fund/participate in beautification efforts by month 12
Increase the Existing Beautification Program	Increase the quantity of hanging flower baskets and planters	DDB	Install baskets on all lamp poles by Spring 2018 Install 10 more large planters by Spring 2018
New Beautification Enhancements	Investigate ways to implement one new Beautification enhancement	DDB	Implement one new Beautification enhancement by Spring 2018
Sidewalk Urn Fall Planting	Implement a Fall Planting Program	DDB City Parks	Ensure that a Fall planting plan is implemented for Fall 2018 (mid September to Remembrance Day)

GOAL # 3: Increase the Level of Promotion Efforts			
OBJECTIVE: Enhance existing and develop new methods of promotion strategies to inform the community of Downtown activities.			
ACTION <i>(What)</i>	METHOD <i>(How)</i>	WHO	TARGET <i>(When)</i>
Downtown Directional Signage	Develop a new Downtown Business District signage program	DDB Tourism EDC City	Implement a New Downtown Attraction and Directional Sign Program by Month 12
Consumers perception of our Downtown	Improve the public’s understanding of Downtown Businesses through new promotional campaigns	DDB	Implement a newsletter, TV, radio and social media program to communicate an understanding of Downtown by month 6
Investigate Promotional efforts of similar sized communities for ideas that would work in our Downtown	Visit other local communities Study Best Practices of larger cities OBIAA Conference Investigate groups offering education to identify and implement new Downtown promotional programs / webinars	DDB Downtown Development – Roger Brooks Training System	Attend 2018 OBIAA Conference Join an education / webinar program that shows ways to improve promotional efforts by month 6
Share Promotions knowledge base with Membership	Develop a plan to share new and ongoing promotional programs with our membership Newsletter Updates	Downtown Development – Roger Brooks Training System	Implement a system to share this knowledge with our membership through seminars / workshops / newsletters etc by month 6

GOAL # 3: Increase the Level of Promotion Efforts			
OBJECTIVE: Enhance existing and develop new methods of promotion strategies to inform the community of Downtown activities.			
ACTION <i>(What)</i>	METHOD <i>(How)</i>	WHO	TARGET <i>(When)</i>
Community Sponsorship	Develop a new program allowing sponsorship of infrastructure items like bench's, plantings, banners	DDB City Community Partners	Encourage sponsorship of one project by summer 2018
Downtown Discount Card Program	Develop a Downtown Discount Card program to encourage Members and Member Employees to shop downtown	DDB	Encourage 20 businesses with 100% of their employees to participate by month 6

GOAL # 4: Engage, Inspire and Welcome			
OBJECTIVE: Develop an activity to attract more visitors and residents to our downtown.			
ACTION <i>(What)</i>	METHOD <i>(How)</i>	WHO	TARGET <i>(When)</i>
Develop a Strategic Plan to Implement a Consistent Train Ride Schedule	Work with community partners to determine how to implement a Downtown Train Program	DDB ECRM EDC Tourism City PSTR	Implement a consistent train schedule by summer 2019 Add one new Train Ride Program by Fall 2018
Bring more people Downtown	Develop a new Downtown Event / Activity	DDB Tourism Horton Market	Launch new event, such as a Street Festival by summer 2018 Example: Harvest Fest, Dogs Downtown Join an education / webinar program that shows ways to improve promotional efforts by month 6
Membership & Visitor Involvement	Parkette Lunches/BBQ	DDB	Develop a Fundraising BBQ Schedule in a Downtown Parkette for Summer 2018

GOAL # 5: Develop a Business Retention and Expansion Strategy			
OBJECTIVE: Develop a program to attract new businesses to downtown and to retain existing businesses			
ACTION <i>(What)</i>	METHOD <i>(How)</i>	WHO	TARGET <i>(When)</i>
Develop a new Downtown Dollar Program	Implement a new revised Downtown Dollar Program to develop and expand upon a Shop Downtown program	DDB	Implement a new Downtown Dollar Program by month 6 Reach a Goal of 75% Membership Participation in the Downtown Dollar Program by Month 12
Customer Service	Develop a Business Education Plan to educate Downtown Businesses through Seminars / Training Luncheons	DDB SBEC	Work with SBEC to Develop one Training Seminar by October 2017 and continue on a twice yearly schedule.
Develop a “Partners Ambassador” program for our Downtown	Work with local partners to ensure our community understands the vital role a successful Downtown is to St Thomas	DDB EDC Tourism City OMAFRA Workforce Development Corp Oxford/Middlesex/Elgin Elgin Business Resource Centre Community Businesses Chamber of Commerce	Implement a twice yearly meeting with strategic community partners to explain the new and ongoing DDB programs and activities and find ways to work together. Implement a “Partners Ambassador” program with a minimum of 6 volunteers by month 12

GOAL # 5: Develop a Business Retention and Expansion Strategy			
OBJECTIVE: Develop a program to attract new businesses to downtown and to retain existing businesses			
ACTION <i>(What)</i>	METHOD <i>(How)</i>	WHO	TARGET <i>(When)</i>
Win This Space	Develop a new program to encourage new businesses to locate in the Downtown Core	DDB SBEC EDC Community Sponsors	Implement a Win This Space Program in 2018

IMPLEMENTATION

The DDB plans to implement their Goals, Objectives, and Actions in a way that supports their vision for the downtown core and making St. Thomas a vibrant and unique place. This is based on the desire to use the Railway Heritage of St. Thomas as a spring board towards future events and activities that draw the public to the downtown core as well as promoting the local businesses and encouraging the residents of St. Thomas to shop locally. This will be done through the collaboration of the DDB, their members and the City of St. Thomas.



The DDB is committed to:

- Increasing the level of Communication with DDB Members and encouraging them to participate in activities that promote the development of the downtown core;
- Increasing the level of Beautification, which will enhance a sense of pride within the community and residents of St. Thomas;
- Increase the level of Promotion, through social media, emails and improved signage of events in the downtown core and programs associated with the DDB;

- Engage, Inspire and Welcome through encouraging the public to participate in the activities created by the DDB;
- Development of a Business Retention and Expansion strategy which would provide support to businesses and property owners.

The success of the DDB's plan will be measured by the performance measure set out with each goal, this will allow them to have attainable steps to implement the goals. It will also provide them with some flexibility to change the plan and goals along the way and when they need to be altered.



This means they are committed to:

- Reviewing and enhancing or improving the plan every 3 years;
- Ensuring they are meeting the actions and performance measures they set out;
- Connecting with the businesses to get their feedback about the current plan and the implementation of the actions
- Encouraging the membership to attend meetings and participate in discussions that lead to the success of the plan.

With a successful implementation of this plan, the DDB will see the Downtown St. Thomas evolve into a community of all downtown property and business owners and residents, while advocating, beautifying and actively promoting the businesses and authentic heritage in Downtown St. Thomas. This will create an area that is welcoming, inspiring and engaging to all visitors, residents and businesses of St. Thomas.



THANKS

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Matt Janes – Railway City Brewing Company

Paul Jenkins – St Thomas Elgin General Hospital Foundation

Tara McCaulley – Small Business Enterprise Centre

Kevin Stover – Scotiabank

Cathy Taylor – Employment Services Elgin

Dana Vanzanten – St Thomas Public Library

St Thomas Downtown Development Board

Earl Taylor – Chair, Coldwell Banker at Success Realty, Brokerage

Beth Burns – Vice Chair, K & K Locksmith

Dave Thomson – Treasurer, myFM 94.1 St Thomas

Ian Gillespie – Oh My Fur and Whiskers

Russell Schnurr – Fanshawe College

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