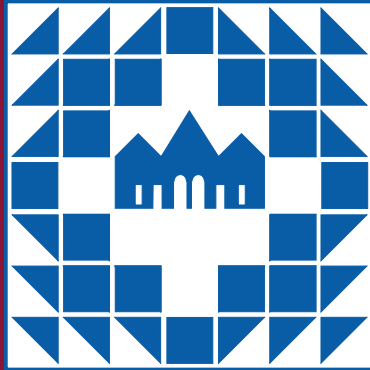


# Lancaster Downtown



# Investment District Authority

DID PLAN

2007-2012

(6-YEAR PLAN)

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Lancaster Downtown Investment District Authority (DID) began operation in 1992 when property owners within the DID District granted their approval for its formation. Since that time, property owners, civic leaders and area businesses have supported DID programs, such as DID bike patrols, the daily sidewalk sweeping, the pursuit of DCED grants for streetscape improvements and business recruitment and retention, to ensure that downtown Lancaster is safe, clean, attractive and vital. DID programs have added real value and created a better environment in the Downtown. Downtown is safer. It is cleaner and more vital. The occupancy rates for commercial space continue to increase. Through the DID efforts the Downtown is attracting new visitors each year. The DID is now in the process of seeking approval from its property owners to continue operation for the next six (6) years. This document outlines the accomplishments of the DID and its plans for the future as well as the procedure for DID renewal.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The DID is a nonprofit municipal authority which is dedicated to the continued economic vitality of Downtown Lancaster. The DID operates under the Central Business District Authority Act, which was signed into law by Governor Dick Thornburgh in 1980. This law allows downtowns, with the prior approval of property owners, to set up special assessment districts like the DID District, which provide a reliable and equitable source of funding for downtown management programs.

The Central Business District Authority Act was created because the State recognized that in recent years downtowns were having difficulty competing with suburban office parks, shopping malls and residential living complexes. Businesses and residents located in these privately

owned suburban complexes contribute to common area maintenance and security, participate in cooperative marketing and promotional programs, and retain a paid staff to manage the complex and conduct business recruitment and retention efforts. The Central Business District Authority Act allows a DID to provide similar programs, which supplement regular municipal services. Prior to the creation of DIDs, it was virtually impossible for downtowns to compete on such a level.

On August 31, 1991, Lancaster City Council unanimously passed an ordinance creating the DID Authority. It is important to note that although the DID was created by Lancaster City Council and functions under state law, it is directly accountable to its property owners and cannot operate without their approval. When property owners of Downtown Lancaster granted approval in 1992, the DID was born.

The 1992, 1995, 1998 and 2001 DID Plans contained a “Sunset Provision” which allowed property owners to decide whether to renew the DID at the conclusion of the term. In order to receive feedback for developing the new 6-year Plan for 2007–2012 the DID scheduled focus groups on June 20th, 21st and 27th and a public meeting on September 26, 2006. Surveys of DID property and business owners and DID Board planning sessions identified goals, objectives and strategic projects. This document constitutes the new DID Plan. For the DID to continue operation, DID property owners must now grant their approval for its renewal.

### **III. TERM AND SUNSET PROVISION**

Because it is important that the DID remain accountable to its property owners, this Plan will once again include a “Sunset Provision” which grants the DID a six-year existence. The next term of the DID will begin on January 1, 2007 and end on December 31, 2012. Renewal will once again require approval of DID property owners.

#### IV. RENEWAL PROCESS

Renewal of the DID will be similar to the procedure followed for ratification which has been previously used. It is important to note that only legal owners of taxable properties located within the DID District have the ability to approve the continuation of the DID and its new Plan.

1. December 8, 2006—The DID mails the new 6-year Plan for 2007–2012 to all property and business owners in the DID District.
2. January 12, 2007—The DID will hold a public hearing at 6 PM at Southern Market Center to review the new Plan and allow public comment.
3. January 13 to February 27, 2007—DID taxable property owners who wish to object to the continuation of the DID and its new Plan must submit a signed written objection within the 45-day review period to both the DID Office located at 44 North Queen Street and to the City of Lancaster located at 120 North Duke Street. Objections will be considered valid if they: 1) are received (by mail or hand delivered) during this time period; 2) are received at both the DID and the City; and 3) are signed by someone who is the legal owner of a taxable property in the DID.
4. February 27, 2007—This date marks the end of the 45-day review period. If one-third or more of DID taxable property owners in either number or in dollars of assessed value have submitted valid objections by this date, then the DID will not be renewed and will discontinue operation. The DID has contracted an independent auditor, Trout, Ebersole and Groff, to tabulate any objections.
5. March 13, and March 27, 2007—If the DID successfully passes the 45-day review period, then the new Plan will go before City Council for its approval. The first reading will be held on March 13 with the final reading and vote scheduled for March 27, 2007.

## V. BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the DID District will run roughly from Vine Street to Lemon Street and from Water Street to Lime Street. This 4.4 million square foot area is approximately four times the size of Park City Mall. Within the DID District there are 400 businesses and 540 properties, 76 of which are tax exempt properties. The boundaries of the DID District have been drawn to capture most of the activity within the Central Business District.

## VI. FUNDING

Funding for the annual DID budget is provided through several sources that include DID property assessments, grants, DID marketing efforts, and cash and in-kind donations from area businesses and organizations. The current mil rate of 1.99 will be raised to 2.15 for fiscal years 2007 and 2008, 2.21 for 2009 and 2010 and 2.23 for 2011 and 2012 in order to fulfill the objectives outlined in this Plan. Consistent with this change, the DID assessment base will be set annually, rather than being set for the life of the Plan. Assessment bills will be mailed to all property owners in April of each year.

### Sample Chart

Assessed Value		\$ 100,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 200,000
Current mil rate	1.99	\$ 199	\$ 299	\$ 398
Proposed mil rate				
2007 & 2008	2.15	\$ 215	\$ 322.50	\$ 430
Proposed mil rate				
2009 & 2010	2.21	\$ 221	\$ 331.50	\$ 442
Proposed mil rate				
2011 & 2012	2.23	\$ 223	\$ 334.50	\$ 446

## **VII. DID PROGRAMS AND USES OF FUNDS**

The DID will continue to provide programs that address the following five major initiatives for Downtown Lancaster: Safety, Streetscape, Residences, Marketing and Business Retention and Recruitment. All of the programs which the DID provides will continue to be over and above the regular services provided by the City of Lancaster.

### **1. Safety**

Security remains a primary concern of DID property owners. Close to 33% of the revenue raised through assessments has been appropriated to the DID Community Policing Program. This program, which is a joint effort between the DID and the City, has increased the amount of police coverage in the Downtown by 72% and reduced crime by over 60%.

#### **Patrols**

DID Community Policing Officers are highly visible and serve as a deterrent to crime in the Downtown as well as goodwill ambassadors. They also visit with residents and businesses, conduct free security audits, and attend neighborhood and employee meetings. These professional police officers, who patrol the DID District on foot, bicycle and horseback, provide a sense of security, deter crime and help to improve both the perception and the reality of a safe downtown.

#### **Community**

The DID Officer also participates in several community programs that improve the quality of life in the Downtown. DID Officers have partnered with the United Way to develop a program that assists in getting the homeless to the proper agencies. They conduct safety classes for women at the YWCA, bicycle safety and informational classes in the public schools.

### **Lighting**

National studies continually support the fact that increased lighting is a deterrent to crime and loitering in urban areas. The DID will seek funding to install additional boulevard and sidewalk lighting in the DID District during the life of the Plan.

## **2. Streetscape**

The appearance of the Downtown is an important factor in the aesthetics and positive perception of the Downtown.

### **Sidewalks**

Close to 33% of the revenue raised through assessments has been appropriated to the cleaning of the sidewalks. The DID provides sidewalk cleaning of all 15 square blocks of the DID District, 6 days each week collecting over 4500 pounds of trash monthly. The DID contracts with an independent company to mechanically sweep and clean the sidewalks in the District and to remove snow from the curb cuts and street catch basins.

### **Mulch**

The DID cleaning crew will exterminate weeds in the 460 tree guards and then mulch in order to re-enforce the cleanliness and neatness of Downtown.

### **Flowers**

The DID will continue to contribute and support Lancaster's Economic Action for Downtown Success (L.E.A.D.S.) in their flower basket program that contributes to the beautification of the Downtown.

### **Trashcans**

The DID has conducted a trashcan survey for the district. With the aid of grants there will be 200 new trashcans placed in the DID boundaries. All trashcans will blend with new design standards set for the streetscape.

### **Banners**

The DID maintains approximately 150 Downtown banners in order to help a visitor know they have arrived Downtown. The DID will continue to purchase and replace these banners. During the life of this Plan, new banners will be designed and installed to more closely support the marketing strategy developed to attract visitors/tourists/City residents. Banners are a key element in our efforts to give visitors, residents and workers a sense of the vibrancy of Downtown.

### **Façades**

The DID will seek funds for a façade improvement program. The Residential and Commercial Building Improvement Grant program allows property owners to improve their building façades and lighting by applying to the DID to access these funds for their improvements. This program will be a dollar for dollar matching fund. The DID will continue to apply for these funds for the life of the Plan. Building facades provide an instant impression to customers and historically accurate, attractive facades help convey a positive image about Downtown.

The DID's primary goal will continue to be ensuring a clean and attractive environment for Downtown residents, workers, customers and visitors.

## **3. Residences**

The vitality of the Downtown depends on having residents that want to live in the Downtown.

### **Quality of Life**

As a result of DID efforts to keep the Downtown clean, safe, and attractive to businesses, the quality of life for Downtown residents has improved dramatically and assessed property values have increased, on average, 12% per year. The market value of these properties have increased by 30% to 100% during

the past six years. The DID will act as an advocate for the residents when dealing with problems that will interfere with their quality of life.

### **Neighborhood Groups**

The DID has worked with several neighborhood groups to help improve their neighborhoods. The Grant Street Coalition, with the help of the DID and grants provided by the DID, was able to improve the Christian Street area by implementing a pedestrian-friendly streetscape design and painting a mural. The DID has begun work with the "Library Commons" group to investigate possibilities of doing similar work in the area surrounding the Library and St. James Church.

### **Communications**

The DID will hold meetings with residents at least three times a year. A bi-annual newsletter will be mailed/emailed to each resident to keep them current on the issues and projects in which the DID is engaged.

### **Facades**

The residents of the DID will be eligible to apply for the Residential and Commercial Building Improvement Grant. If the resident is residing in a condominium, the condo association will be the applicant.

## **4. Marketing**

Marketing the Downtown is an important goal for the DID to keep the Downtown vital. The DID will continue to work with the South Central Assembly for Effective Governance compiling information on demographics, drive shed study, buying power and trade area study for Lancaster's Downtown. The DID is one of the founders of the Lancaster County Downtown Consortium. This is an organization that is embarking on a marketing campaign to raise public awareness of the values of working, shopping and living in the Downtown.

### **Brochures**

One of DID's principal marketing tools is the "Discover Lancaster City" brochure. The DID currently produces and underwrites the 215,000 copies distributed throughout the City, Downtown businesses, the County, ten stops along the Turnpike and several states' Visitor Centers and hotels. The 2006 brochure is in full color and has an exciting user-friendly format. Due to the high demand for the "Discover Lancaster City" brochure the number of brochures produced has increased by 30,000.

In addition to the "Discover Lancaster City" brochure, the DID produces the brochure for the County Jurors and partners with the City to produce the "Holiday Weekends" brochure that highlights shops, restaurants and special events.

### **Web Presence**

With the growing need for organizations to have a web presence, the DID has established two vehicles to market the downtown via the web; our web page [www.downtownlanaster.com](http://www.downtownlanaster.com) and the Downtown Difference, our online newsletter. The improved website is another marketing tool that will be enhanced over the life of the Plan. All DID businesses will be listed at no charge and hyperlinks will be available to all DID businesses at a nominal cost. The "Downtown Difference", a monthly online newsletter features current events, features new businesses, hot shops, dining, First Friday information, a monthly quiz, and little known facts about the downtown. Not only is the "Downtown Difference" online, but hard copies of the current events are distributed to 120 businesses in the Downtown.

### **Tourism**

In our efforts to market Downtown to visitors and tourists, in order to increase the number of people shopping, eating and seeing Downtown, the DID will continue to fund new initiatives and partner with the PA Dutch Convention and Visitors Bureau.

One of many of these initiatives is “City Tours,” a program that has created six very inventive tours of the Downtown. These tours feature history, folklore, fun facts and interesting locations.

### **LancasterARTS**

The DID recognizes the arts are growing and is an economic driver in the Downtown. The DID has been actively working with LancasterARTS and First Fridays. In the past year, through our efforts and leadership, First Friday has grown by the thousands. The DID will work towards creating the Downtown as an Arts Destination.

### **Downtown Dollars**

The DID manages the “Downtown Dollars” gift certificate program which fully reimburses businesses that accept them. “Downtown Dollars” gift certificates are purchased by large businesses for employee rewards as well as by individuals for gifts. This successful program encourages people to shop and dine Downtown and exposes new people to Downtown businesses. This past year we have doubled the amount of “Downtown Dollars” sold, injecting an additional \$15,000 into the Downtown economy.

## **5. Business Retention and Recruitment**

Having a healthy business community is essential to the vitality of the Downtown. The DID provides positive publicity for Downtown as a destination and for its small businesses and unique shops on an ongoing basis in order to attract people to Downtown. In the past year we have had over 30 new businesses move into the Downtown.

### **Recruitment**

The DID produces recruitment packages that are accurate, informative and extensive. They are sent out to prospective small business owners. The DID Executive Director also meets with

individuals to discuss education resources for writing a business plan, funding resources and the benefits of locating Downtown.

### **Retention**

#### **Retail Meetings**

The DID Retail Committee is staffed by the DID to encourage group advertising and promotions and to provide retailers with current information about Downtown and market trends. The committee will facilitate the group to share their “Best Practices” which will help the retailers as a whole.

#### **Retail Education**

The DID is dedicated to Retail Education which will assist local merchants with information and speakers on subjects that pertain to independent retailers such as; customer service, battling the Big Boxes, trade area analysis and e-commerce.

### **Studies**

The DID has created and administered several surveys to determine the needs of businesses in the Downtown.

The DID has and will create studies on Drive Shed, demographics, consumer intercepts, existing business analysis and trade area analysis. This information is available to all businesses in the Downtown and will help in making decisions in regard to advertising, development and market trends.

## **VIII. MISSION and VISION**

Through our plan and funding the DID will be successful in fulfilling its Mission and Vision for the Downtown.

### **Mission Statement**

Lancaster Downtown Investment District Authority’s mission is to ensure economic vitality and the highest quality of life in the D.I.D.

**Vision Statement**

The vision of the Lancaster Downtown Investment District Authority is to enhance the value of real estate in the D.I.D. and position the D.I.D. as a compelling destination for retail, commercial, and residential investment.

**IX. BENEFITS SUMMARY**

Reliable and equitable source of funding to produce tangible, ongoing results that protect and enhance property values and enable Downtown to remain competitive with suburban complexes and other similarly sized cities.

- Increase in police coverage of 72% to improve both the perception and the reality of a safe Downtown. Decrease in crime over 60% since the DID's inception in 1991.
- Sidewalk sweeping and appearance programs to create a clean and attractive environment for downtown residents, workers, customers and visitors.
- Business retention and recruitment efforts to keep existing businesses healthy and attract new businesses.
- Marketing Downtown to attract more people to work, live, visit, dine and shop Downtown.
- Tourism and visitor promotion to capture a greater share of the \$1.2 billion generated annually by tourism in the County.
- Over the past six years the assessed property values increased by an average of 12%. Market Value of these properties has increased by 30% to 100%.
- Increased sidewalk lighting to enhance safety.
- Streetscape improvements to make Downtown more inviting, comfortable and easier to walk.

- In the last year the DID has acquired and aided in bringing \$1,023,450 in Grants monies to the Downtown.
- The DID has become a “Main Street Achiever.” The Main Street program is a community-driven, comprehensive methodology used to revitalize older, traditional business districts throughout the United States ([www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)) As a result we are eligible for many more DCED Grants (Department of Community and Economic Development) that will aid in the funding of many of our initiatives.
- The DID Executive Director serves on several Boards of Directors such as: Assets (an entrepreneurial education program), Elm Street Advisory (a residential arm of the Main Street program) and LancasterARTS.

Advocacy and lobbying efforts provide a strong voice for Downtown and represent the vital interests of its business community. The DID leverages our funds with private, public and government partners to accomplish our objectives.

Our partners include: The City of Lancaster, The County of Lancaster, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, The Heritage Center of Lancaster County, The Lancaster Campaign/Alliance, The James Street Improvement District, Inner City Group, East King Street Improvement District, The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry, The Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County, The PA Dutch Convention and Visitor’s Center, United Way, PA Downtown Center, Lancaster County Downtown Consortium and South Central Assembly for Effective Governance, the Elm Street Advisory Board and the International Downtown Association.



