

DOWNTOWN LONG BEACH ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) is a 501 (c) (6) non-profit organization operating on behalf of commercial and residential property owners and tenants in Downtown Long Beach and surrounding areas. It is dedicated to the management, marketing, security, maintenance, advocacy, economic and community development of its two assessment districts in cooperation with the City of Long Beach and the private sector. The assessment districts include the 85-square block Property Based Improvement District (PBID) and the Downtown Parking Improvement Area (DPIA), shown on the map below.

The DLBA has evolved over the years to reflect the changing nature and priorities of the Downtown community. **This strategic plan seeks to refresh the DLBA work program, organizational culture, and operations to ensure it continues to provide an enhanced value proposition to all Downtown stakeholders over the next five years and beyond.** Undertaken in 2021 during the latter stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, this strategic plan provides direction for both near-term economic recovery and longer-term improvements over a five-year planning horizon, and informs a new management plan for the PBID in advance of the district's renewal.



Downtown Long Beach DPIA/PBID Map

■ DPIA ■ PBID



COMMUNITY INPUT AND PRIORITIES

5

ROUNDTABLE
DISCUSSIONS

50

INTERVIEWS

500

ONLINE SURVEY
RESPONSES

A variety of Downtown and community stakeholders were engaged to understand the strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in Downtown Long Beach. This involved virtual and in-person engagements including over 50 interviews, roundtable discussions with dozens of participants, workshops with the Board of Directors and project Steering Committee, and an online survey that collected 500 responses. Stakeholders included but were not limited to: property owners (both commercial and residential), merchants, developers and real estate professionals, City leadership and staff, representatives from the arts and non-profit sectors, along with numerous other partners. The priorities for improvement were used to inform a refreshed work program for DLBA.

DOWNTOWN LONG BEACH IMPROVEMENTS

Based on input received from Downtown stakeholders, the following were identified as priority improvements.

TOP PRIORITIES *{not listed in order of importance}*

- Improve outcomes and services for people experiencing homelessness in Downtown, exploring a variety of solutions
- Improve both the perception and reality of safety in Downtown; overall the sense of safety was seen to diminish with COVID-19 and fewer people being out in Downtown
- Help to fill vacant storefronts throughout Downtown
- Help to re-activate Downtown by bringing people back for events and other in-person programming
- Continue open streets concepts and expanded outdoor dining options that were started during the pandemic and consider making such options permanent
- Place enhancements to make Downtown fun and exciting, such as more public art installations
- Improve connectivity between different activity centers, in particular create better synergy between the Waterfront and Downtown neighborhoods to the north.
- Improve cleanliness and maintenance of public spaces
- More residential amenities, in particular full-service grocery store options
- Marketing Downtown in several dimensions: 1) encouraging people from the suburbs to come Downtown and 2) acknowledging and celebrating the customer who is already in Downtown



OFFICE AND RETAIL SPOTLIGHT



The pandemic wrought unprecedented disruption upon downtowns, particularly to the traditional economic engines of central business districts – office employment and retail. In response, a special focus was placed on these two market segments within the strategic plan, with recommendations for how DLBA can play a role in supporting these sectors through COVID-19 recovery and beyond.

OFFICE

In the near- term a sluggish recovery is predicted for conventional office formats and adapting to new hybrid workstyles will dominate the conversation. In the longer term, the next three to five years, it is anticipated that the hybrid option may lose some of its luster and the office market will recover to pre-pandemic absorption levels as economic growth and social patterns return.

DLBA can support Downtown Long Beach by helping to define and promote its unique and competitive advantages for the office market.

CORE POSITIONING STRATEGY FOR THE DOWNTOWN OFFICE MARKET:

Downtown Long Beach offers Southern California's affordable oceanfront urban lifestyle for small and mid-sized businesses with unique amenities and vitality – live, work, dine and enjoy daily experiences within a truly diverse and inclusive city.

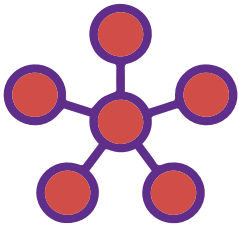
RETAIL

Downtown Long Beach experienced more retail resiliency than might have been expected given its reliance on submarkets, such as office workers, conventioners and cruise- ship passengers, that virtually disappeared during the pandemic. Some of this resiliency can be attributed to Long Beach's residential growth in and surrounding Downtown over the last decade, expanded capacity of outdoor dining, government financial relief, technical assistance from the DLBA, and willingness of some landlords to provide flexibility to their tenants.

The strategic plan offers several recommendations for how DLBA can support existing retailers and capture new entrepreneurial activity in Downtown, including:

- Encouraging refinements to the City's ground floor requirements to help maximize the potential of "Main Street" and reinforce retail clustering;
- Helping to elevate Downtown's profile within the broader leasing community;
- Seeding and nurturing small businesses by creating affordable spaces where entrepreneurs can get started;
- Encouraging unique aspects of Pine Ave, which might include flexible street closures, inventive design treatments, parklets, and more.





STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

VISION

Downtown is the thriving urban center of Long Beach, embodying and celebrating the region's diversity, innovation, and adaptability.

MISSION

To cultivate, preserve and promote a healthy, safe and prosperous Downtown for all.

GOAL 1

Master the fundamentals, ensuring a model clean and safe program for Downtown Long Beach

- A. Create a Homeless Outreach Program that is tailored to the unique qualities and needs of the unhoused population in Downtown Long Beach
- B. Enrich services to enhance the feeling of safety in Downtown
- C. Better publicize existing public restrooms and explore adding more
- D. Establish higher standards for clean services
- E. Enhance lighting levels throughout Downtown
- F. Formalize a new base level of services agreement between DLBA and the City
- G. Improve maintenance of trees, tree wells, and walkways

GOAL 2

Strengthen existing businesses and encourage entrepreneurship and innovation in Downtown

- A. Assist new and existing businesses in accessing resources and working through City processes
- B. Work with property owners, developers, and the leasing community in support of Downtown retail and office tenants
- C. Activate vacant or underutilized storefronts and help to prevent future vacancies
- D. Assist the Downtown office market in evolving to meet the new reality

GOAL 3

Market and promote Downtown as a whole and as a collection of unique neighborhoods

- A. Develop a comprehensive marketing & communications strategy
- B. Continually seek ways to build awareness of DLBA and educate stakeholders about DLBA's role and value proposition
- C. Increase use of online platforms to promote the people, businesses, and activities in Downtown
- D. Re-think DLBA's role in the production of events



GOAL 4

Showcase the beauty, creativity, and unique sense of place in Downtown for all to enjoy

- A. Activate key locations with art, music, and culturally responsive placemaking, including programming and physical place enhancements
- B. Partner with the City to ensure a clean, safe, and enjoyable experience at the newly developed Lincoln Park
- C. Green Downtown
- D. Develop comprehensive wayfinding (signage) throughout Downtown
- E. Differentiate Pine Avenue

GOAL 5

Be a leading voice in planning for the future of Downtown

- A. Pursue all necessary requirements to renew the Downtown property- based business improvement district (PBID) for another ten-year term
- B. Re-define, and advocate for, projects, policies, and initiatives that are considered transformative based on community benefit
- C. Work with partners to improve connectivity throughout Downtown
- D. Actively track and participate in plans and special projects that impact Downtown

ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS



To continue to evolve and meet the goals and objectives of this strategic plan, there are a series of recommendations pertaining to the organization and its operations, including:

- Optimal level of staffing, increasing capacity within program areas that were priorities for stakeholders:
 - Increasing Safety Ambassador service
 - Increasing homeless outreach support
 - Improving frequency of select cleaning methods
 - Supporting small businesses in navigating City processes; helping to fill vacant storefronts
- Strategies for long-term office and field staff retention
- Continuing to expand the diversity of the Board of Directors and committee participants
- Streamlining reports and meeting frequencies to allow staff more time to focus on programmatic work
- Integrating strategies from DLBA's work with BDS Planning on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access
- Diversifying revenue sources to leverage PBID assessments and DPIA fees
- Exploring the feasibility of forming a new non-profit 501(c)(3) affiliate to support initiatives that provide community benefit and innovation in Downtown in alignment with the goals of this strategic plan

