

**Aurora '98: A Strategic Plan
for the
Development and Management of
Downtown**

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I. Strategic Planning for Downtown Aurora

The Aurora Downtown Redevelopment Corporation (ADRC) convened a strategic planning process in March 1993 to examine the strengths and weaknesses of downtown Aurora and its organizations, and to explore the creation of a structure or organization that would be able to take advantage of the opportunities facing downtown while overcoming threats to its future.

The consultant team of James Capraro and Joel Bookman was retained to assist the ADRC in working with residents, business owners, property owners, elected and appointed officials, and others to determine strategies, goals, and objectives for the future of downtown.

The direction to the consultants was clear and concise: work with the people who have a stake in downtown to determine a vision of what Aurora can and should be. Develop a structure that will assist in the development and management of downtown. Aid stake holders in a process to establish goals, objectives, and work plans to implement the vision for downtown.

Downtown Aurora faces a unique opportunity presently. The City has devoted a substantial amount of funds to improve the physical conditions in the central business district, with new sidewalks, parking, lighting and other improvements. The new "Foxwalk" river front development is being completed. New businesses are investing.

In June 1993, riverboat gaming opened on the Fox River in the heart of downtown. The Hollywood Casino is expected to draw well over a million people to the downtown area. Many area leaders see this as an opportunity to capture much needed business to improve the vitality of downtown.

With the strategic plan, the ADRC directors hope to create a blueprint for the improvement of downtown: not only to use the stimulus of the riverboats to leverage additional investment and growth, but also, to help local stake holders focus upon cooperative activities that will improve the downtown economy in addition to and independently of the opening of the new riverboats.

The strategic plan is the collective work of over 100 people who participated in interviews, public meetings, committees, and focus groups. From March through August 1993, they crafted a blueprint to guide individuals, businesses, institutions, and organizations in a plan of action to achieve a thriving, successful downtown Aurora.

II. Methodology

The strategic plan for downtown Aurora was created through a process of meetings, focus groups, interviews, and analysis completed during the spring and summer of 1993. The methodology included the following steps:

1. The ADRC board of directors met with the consultant team to design the planning process and outline the issues to be addressed.
2. Staff of the ADRC and the Aurora Economic Development Commission briefed the consultant team, providing historical background, previous studies, and information on projects currently underway.
3. Focus group interviews were held with 75 downtown stake holders, including business and property owners, residents, government officials, area civic organization leaders, and others with an interest in downtown.
4. Comments were compiled by the consultants and organized in a SWOT analysis: strengths and weaknesses (those items that are within the direct control of those in downtown) and opportunities and threats (those items that affect downtown but are not directly under the control of local stake holders).
5. The SWOT analysis was presented to the ADRC board. The ADRC board established a process to distribute the results more widely and involve participants in using the analysis to develop goals and objectives through a downtown forum and subsequent planning meetings.
6. A downtown forum was held at which the SWOT analysis was presented and discussed with 150 participants. Sixty volunteers agreed to attend small group meetings to develop recommendations for a vision, goals and objectives.

7. Three successive small group meetings were held. Participants separated into six committees, and created a collective vision for downtown, goals, objectives, and work plans.
8. Representatives from the planning sessions presented the plan for discussion at a downtown forum, with implementation of the plan to begin immediately following the forum.

III. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats: SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was completed from observations made by 75 stake holders in focus group and individual interviews conducted during the spring of 1993.

Strengths and weaknesses are seen as those factors that are internal to those individuals or organizations in downtown, and that are within the capacity of those people or groups to change if they wish. Opportunities and threats are those environmental factors that affect the ability of stake holders to achieve their goals, but are not directly within their control.

The SWOT items have been grouped in categories. The numbers along side each category and each item refer to the frequency that a particular issue was mentioned.

The SWOT analysis is the foundation upon which the vision, goals, and objectives are based. The items listed are an indication of the ideas and perceptions of those interviewed. Goals and objectives are created to build upon the strengths, to take advantage of opportunities that may be presented, and to overcome the weaknesses and threats to the development of downtown Aurora.

Aurora Downtown Redevelopment Corporation **Strengths** **Strategic Management Plan**

(Frequency of mention precedes category/element)

<u>Spirit</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Riverboats</u>
<p>19</p> <p>10</p> <p>6</p> <p>3</p> <p>14</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>10</p> <p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p>	<p>16</p> <p>6</p> <p>6</p> <p>3</p> <p>1</p> <p>11</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>5</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>	<p>14</p> <p>8</p> <p>5</p> <p>1</p> <p>10</p> <p>5</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>5</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>5</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>4</p>
<p>New opportunities have created confidence that downtown is already getting better and will improve more ("Downtown is a wonderful place to be")</p> <p>Aurora people have genuine community spirit and real desire to improve downtown</p> <p>Downtown leaders are great sales people for central area -- they welcome new businesses</p> <p>Investment</p> <p>Aurora is a good investment with good values and solid investor interest</p> <p>Recent successes encourage more investment: Paramount, parking garages, new restaurants</p> <p>More local owners are investing</p> <p>New investment in riverboats will stimulate more investment</p> <p>Downtown Anchors</p> <p>Hispanic "Little Mexico" on Broadway strengthens downtown -- merchants accommodate customers</p> <p>Waubensee College draws students and staff to downtown in clean, attractive buildings</p> <p>Sci - Tech is an attraction that draws 20% of its visitors from Chicago</p>	<p>City of Aurora is cooperative, efficient, supports/drives development</p> <p>City has TIF, SSA and Facade Loan programs to support development</p> <p>City is in strong fiscal shape with gaming revenues to capitalize downtown development</p> <p>Mayor has cleaned -- up bad bars</p> <p>Organizations/leadership</p> <p>Many strong, competent downtown organizations that get along</p> <p>Strong leadership & interest in implementing cooperative, coordinated downtown management</p> <p>ADRC staff works hard</p> <p>ADRC provides constituency to advocate for downtown</p> <p>Energetic new tourism director</p> <p>Infrastructure</p> <p>New parking garages provide 800 new spaces for cars</p> <p>Aurora has good infrastructure</p> <p>Architecture</p> <p>Downtown has beautiful, charming buildings with significant architecture</p>	<p>Riverboats are unique resource that will capitalize downtown development ("a fantastic renaissance")</p> <p>Riverboats will generate traffic conducive to new retail/private development</p> <p>Riverboat workers will support existing businesses</p> <p>Riverfront/Riverwalk</p> <p>Riverwalk is an attractive amenity on a beautiful river, beautiful island</p> <p>Riverwalk will help distribute riverboat patrons throughout downtown</p> <p>Canoe shoot and Pinney Street boardwalk will stimulate business</p> <p>Security</p> <p>Downtown has low crime rate</p> <p>Gang problems are decreasing through efforts to remove gangs/prostitution</p>

Weaknesses

(Frequency of action precedes category/element)

59	Downtown Stakeholders/Organizations	Investment/Development	42	City
11	Too many downtown group/meetings with overlapping responsibilities, repetitive talk/activities, not enough accomplishment	A gap—financing/incentive financing package is needed now for local merchants/property owners to leverage private \$\$	12	Inspection/engineering/permit departments discourage development/penalize renovation & reward inaction
9	Merchants & property owners aren't sufficiently involved in leadership & planning of downtown redevelopment (Plans are thrust upon them)	Facade program needs to be a better incentive — the economics do not support major rehab	6	City caters more to outside developers while not adequately supporting existing local investors, property owners, & businesses
7	ADRC should be a non-profit development corp representing all of downtown & its organizations, with sufficient trained staff, to put together its own programs to do economic development	Speculators/absentee landlords make investment/development difficult	6	City should force problem/absentee property owners to fix up
5	Organizations/SSAs are fragmented, coordinated only informally, responsibilities not delegated	Difficult to borrow from local banks for downtown/small business investment; local banks need to participate/cooperate in financing for downtown	5	City should invest more \$\$ (including casino revenue) in downtown & its businesses
5	Need to organize ourselves, develop clear priorities, become unified, strong leaders with structure to manage/coordinate/develop downtown	Riverboats will cause parking & traffic problems, take spaces from customers of downtown, yet may not benefit more than a few blocks	4	Taxes (real estate assessments) are increased dramatically for businesses that fix up, while new businesses get no breaks
4	Organizations/City do lots of planning (some poor, some good) but not enough action/development, not quick enough	LINK project sucked energy from Aurora — LINK should be out & their properties should be fixed up	4	City needs to improve financial incentives to make rehab/development economically feasible
4	Organization(s) need more staff with high levels of organizational/development skills	Many people, especially old-timers, are sitting back, waiting to see what happens	3	City has focused on one developer it couldn't control, didn't pan out, trying to hit a home run, rather than assisting a lot of small businesses "putting together a string of singles"
3	SSAs should be producing more improvements	Roundhouse project has been talked about for years — nothing's happened	1	City requirements are costly, economically infeasible in many older bldgs
3	Leadership needs to have "big picture" of what downtown should be	Need more and better development in downtown	1	Downtown improvement program is engineering-driven
2	Tendency among local owners to blame City rather than take responsibility/action	Infrastructure/Parking		
2	SSAs cover part of downtown — what about the rest?	Downtown needs more parking/more strategically located	40	
2	We should have been planning for riverboat spillover 2 years ago	Need employee parking/off-street parking to be available, used to free other spaces for customers	5	
1	More Hispanics need to be brought into planning	Aurora was the "City of Lights"; it's not anymore — downtown should be "lit up"	5	
1	Need a citizens' group to put pressure on bad property owners	Streetscape improvements need to be part of unified plan, upgraded, with "vandal-proof" materials	4	
		Streetscape improvements are nice but not enough — they are "icing on the cake" — not much good if stores are vacant	4	
		Traffic & pedestrian flow needs improvement (Galena to/from riverboats & parking)	4	
		Need free parking; our competition has free parking	3	
		Need taxicab stand, public rest room facilities downtown	2	
		Need unified parking plan to deal with meters throughout downtown	2	

Opportunities

(Frequency of mention precedes category/element)

	31	29	29	29
	Development	Downtown Anchors	Downtown management/organization	
7	Hotels: Lehard/Aurora/other properties have great prospects	8 Downtown civic center/conference/events center would complement riverboats & anchor downtown	6 All downtown groups should work together and/or be combined to better manage downtown and coordinate projects	
5	Numerous sites offer development potential: Roundhouse, Woolworth/Krege sites on Broadway, West New York Street, many others	7 Entertainment/education & culture can provide anchor for downtown (Waubensee, Sci--Tech expansion, Paramount "science island" and outdoor science park concept "parents could leave kids at Sci--Tech while gambling"	4 Coordinated management can figure out "what goes where", manage investment, unify downtown	
5	Housing development in brownstones/lofts/old factories/new construction would bring more people to live downtown	4 Restaurants could anchor new downtown	4 Coordinated downtown management organization could assist owners in building renovation, encourage selective demolition, offer incentives and encourage rehab	
3	A non-profit developer (ADRC) could acquire, develop, co-venture strategic properties	3 Sci--Tech expansion could be anchor of south downtown	4 More coordination between downtown businesses/groups & City could attract more public & private dollars to downtown, & spur additional investment	
3	17--acre site southwest of Broadway & Clark could be southern anchor, developed for housing or warehouse store(s)	2 Antique mall at LaSalle Street could anchor east downtown	3 SSAs should be combined to share staff & eliminate duplication	
3	Property on west side of Broadway, north of New York Street will be valuable development opportunity	2 Professional services could anchor LaSalle Street	3 SSA revenues, program --related investments ("PRI's") of foundations could be used by a not-for-profit development organization to buy/fix up properties	
3	Bars (Chatterbox), social clubs, could be improved and developed for better uses	2 Potential telecommunications link between downtown, area college(s), conference center	2 Create a Stolpe Avenue SSA to fix up nucleus	
2	Area behind Paramount could be courtyard shopping center with fountain	1 Elks building could be developed for south anchor	2 A cultural umbrella organization could organize downtown events/promotions and plan calendars	
22	Business mix/business attraction	Infrastructure	1 ADRC should involve community and coordinate management	
5	Downtown has potential as entertainment, financial, professional hub	5 Shuttle buses/tram/carpools can bring gambling patrons to downtown in an attractive, fun manner		
3	Riverboats will increase demand for existing space	4 New parking will make it easier for shoppers		
3	Empty storefronts/low rents are opportunities for new business	4 Remote lots for employees/valet parking/casino patrons and shuttle service will increase number of people downtown		
3	Riverwalk will draw people downtown and make property more attractive for retail uses	2 New Galena Street bridge will help encourage investment		
3	Hispanic businesses could create attractive Broadway mercado	2 Stolpe Avenue street improvements could improve business		
2	Moving government offices (e.g., election commission) could open up space for retail/arts use			
2	Casino restaurants won't have enough seats to satisfy demand			
1	"Sky club" could be developed			

Opportunities

15	Entertainment/arts	14	Marketing	8	Appearance/maintenance
8	New entertainment district (outdoor bandstand, clubs, dinner theater) could/should be developed & become community focal point	5	Cooperative advertising/marketing, displays, maps, kiosks, gateways, banners, can help capture new shoppers	3	Regular maintenance/clean-up program will help cause riverbent patrons to stay & shop
6	Arts businesses & groups would like to locate downtown for gallery, working space, museums	5	Marketing as a conference center/entertainment center could attract consumers "Aurora could be a world class entertainment center"	2	Could use sheriff's "DUI" convict program to clean up downtown
1	Could attract a minor league basketball team	4	New people and wealth in downtown (2 million boat rides per year) offer potential market expansion	2	Window display program could improve appearance of current stores & make vacant stores look filled
		3	Regular promotions & special events: canoe races, marathons, sales, would generate customer traffic	1	City overlay district could help improve appearance, use & maintenance

15	Riverboat Gaming	4	Developments	2	Economic trends
4	Riverboats could produce major parking & traffic problems; may keep some from coming downtown	2	Link is still in Aurora/in courts; it owns run-down buildings & threatens to stymie new development	1	Commercial areas outside of downtown have drawn most of business away
3	Casino workers & customers could take shoppers parking	2	If Sci-Tech cannot expand here it will be forced to move elsewhere	1	Downtowns are having difficulty everywhere
3	People/government may assume riverboats will solve problems & not commit resources necessary to make it better				
3	A "gambling only" economy will not succeed; we need diverse economy/solutions			1	Crime
1	Riverboats will capture restaurant trade within its own facilities			1	Aurora is overrun by gangs
1	Riverboats will drive rents up				

IV. A Vision for Downtown

Participants in the planning process met in three concurrent groups, each to discuss a "five-year vision" for downtown. They were asked the following questions:

Imagine you are a journalist covering a large event celebrating "Newly-Reborn Aurora Downtown" and all of your accomplishments at the end of the year 1998. Create an outline which includes the following information:

Who? Who belongs to the organization? Who is responsible for its accomplishments? Who benefited from its work?

What? What were the accomplishments which are being recognized? What were the benefits realized because of these accomplishments?

When? When did these events take place?

Where? Where did the accomplishments take place? What areas did they have an effect upon?

How? How did these accomplishments come to exist? What methods were employed? Describe the chain of events.

Why? Why did this happen? What was the rationale?

Participants were asked to begin with the "What" question first.

Their vision is summarized in the following chart "Aurora '98: Five-Year Vision." The most noteworthy finding from the exercise was the remarkable similarity in vision among the groups. Each has a vision of downtown Aurora with a thriving economy. Participants would like to see downtown Aurora established as a "destination," to attract more shoppers, consumers, tourists, and business people.

Many feel that Aurora could be more of a destination, and its economy would thrive more, with additional downtown "anchors." Hotels, a convention center, the riverwalk, museums, galleries, and

housing were envisioned as possible anchors. The attraction of anchors was seen as critical to attract additional small stores to downtown and to generate customer traffic to help existing stores succeed. Most seek a high occupancy rate with quality stores in the downtown of 1998.

Each group noted the necessity of marketing downtown through advertising, promotion, public relations, and other activities. They see downtown as a place for entertainment and enjoyment, with a range of family-centered attractions.

In order to achieve that vision, the groups recognize that downtown must be made more attractive, safe, and convenient, through additional street improvements, building renovation, and expanded security measures. Financial incentives are viewed as an important method to be used to assist local business and property owners in improving their properties.

To achieve these broad visions, participants agreed that it would require a concentrated, coordinated effort by downtown stake holders through a dynamic central development and management organization. This organization would serve as an "umbrella" group that would coordinate planning, link owners with resources needed to expand, unify existing organizations, and reach out to encourage wide participation. It would link existing Special Service Areas, either through the creation of one SSA, or, through increased cooperation between existing SSA's.

The organization would be the central forum for the planning and implementation of programs and policies for the development and management of downtown Aurora.

Aurora '98: Five Year Vision

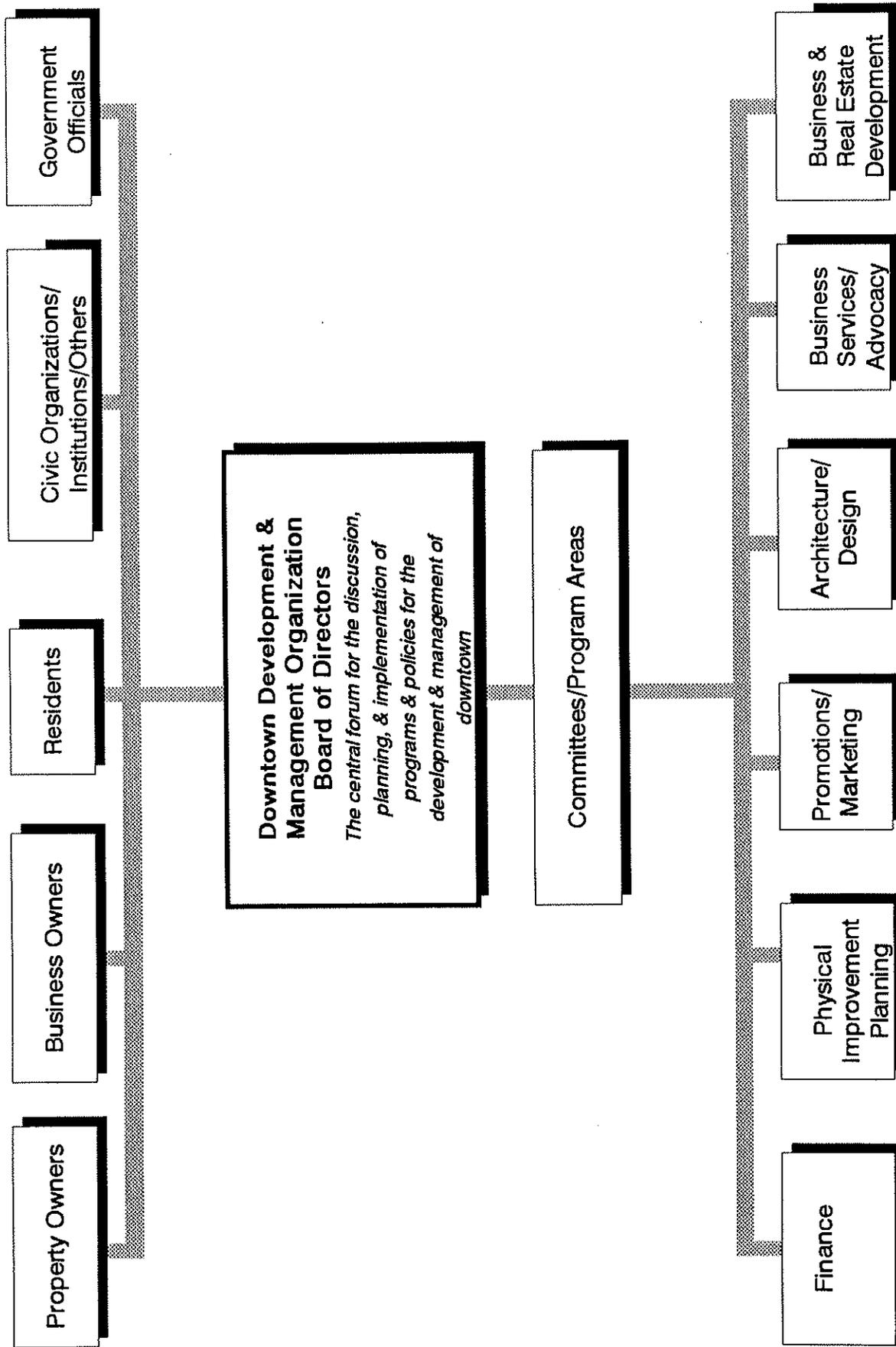
Business & Real Estate Development Committee		Finance Committee		Physical Improvement Planning Committee		Architecture/Design Committee		Business Services/Advocacy Committee		Promotions/Marketing Committee	
What?	<p>Occupant Mix</p> <p>Urban/Residential</p> <p>Retail/Office</p> <p>Government operations</p> <p>Entertainment/Hospitality</p> <p>Three Major Anchors:</p> <p>Amusement Park</p> <p>Hotel</p> <p>Convention Center</p> <p>Cultural</p> <p>Retail</p> <p>Riverboat Gaming</p> <p>Educational</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <p>Recognized destination point</p> <p>Additional tax benefits</p> <p>Strong image/pride</p> <p>Family attraction</p> <p>Economically strong</p> <p>Job creation</p> <p>Environmental impacts (improved)</p>	<p>Financial viability & independence</p> <p>Building restoration</p> <p>100% occupancy; mixed</p> <p>Hotels</p> <p>Residential</p> <p>Office</p> <p>Retail</p> <p>Activity</p> <p>Celebrate 15,000,000th visitor</p>	<p>Energetic, bustling downtown</p> <p>"The Place to Be"</p> <p>A Source of Pride</p> <p>Parking deck east of River</p> <p>Historic lighting throughout</p> <p>Convention Center</p> <p>Ample hotel space</p> <p>Residential component: new & converted</p> <p>Roundhouse:</p> <p>public attraction - mixed use?</p> <p>Foowalk: public/private expansion</p> <p>All downtown bridges repaired</p> <p>Gateways improved</p>	<p>Communication to developers/City</p> <p>Ombudsman office</p> <p>Vision center</p> <p>Riverwalk completed per guidelines</p> <p>Downtown bldgs renovated & attractive</p> <p>Downtown expanded (include gateways)</p> <p>Increased tourism opportunity due to architectural/built environment/amenities</p> <p>Strong, exciting lighting displays</p> <p>"City of Lights"</p> <p>City in the park: City/Park</p> <p>District partnership</p> <p>Improved parkways/riverways</p> <p>Renovated elevated railroad (gateway)</p> <p>Architectural product/vendor catalog</p> <p>Cost-effective code enforcement</p> <p>Stront water features</p> <p>Destination</p> <p>Design Guidelines</p> <p>Vision 1998 invited to Chicago "Vision 2003"</p>	<p>High occupancy rate</p> <p>More cohesive look</p> <p>Increased profits & foot traffic</p> <p>Completion of riverwalk</p> <p>More positive attitude among downtown merchants</p> <p>Improved image (safe, clean)</p> <p>New business development on empty sites</p>	<p>Hotels/upscale suites</p> <p>Bed & breakfasts</p> <p>Convention center</p> <p>Significant events</p> <p>Festivals (regular)</p> <p>Riverwalk (complete)</p> <p>Major office development</p> <p>Museum</p> <p>Festival market of upscale shops</p> <p>Holiday theme decorations by merchant</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <p>Image</p> <p>Increased revenues</p> <p>Increased employment</p> <p>Downtown programs</p> <p>Increased tourism budget</p>					
When?	<p>Two phases</p> <p>Planning & development phase</p> <p>Implementation</p>	<p>Tomorrow - July 1998</p>	<p>Over next 5 years</p> <p>Based on comprehensive plan</p> <p>Dedicated efforts of central management organization</p>	<p>Planning: on-going initiative (begin 1990)</p> <p>Communication/coordination 1993-7</p>	<p>1990 - 1998</p>	<p>Chicago "Vision 2003"</p>					
Where?	<p>North Broadway</p> <p>Old depot site</p> <p>Roundhouse/Burlington Northern</p> <p>E. New York Street corridor</p> <p>Stolp Island</p> <p>Indian Trail</p> <p>Downtown CBD</p>	<p>Transit center to South Island</p> <p>LaSalle to River Street</p>	<p>Boundaries:</p> <p>North: Illinois Avenue</p> <p>South: North Avenue</p> <p>West: View</p> <p>East: Union</p>	<p>Downtown commercial/residential elements</p> <p>Comfortable progression to arrival</p>	<p>Downtown overstay district</p> <p>Entire community</p>	<p>North: Transportation Center/ Roundhouse</p> <p>South: North Avenue</p> <p>West: Locust Avenue</p> <p>East: Lincoln Avenue</p>					
Who?	<p>100% participation of community</p> <p>Community elected board</p> <p>Volunteers</p> <p>Board supported by community \$\$</p> <p>Community responsible for accomplishments through its bd</p> <p>Benefits to:</p> <p>downtown</p> <p>environs</p> <p>merchants</p> <p>City of Aurora</p>	<p>Belongs:</p> <p>Property owners</p> <p>Business owners</p> <p>Tenants</p> <p>Government</p> <p>Residents</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <p>Neighborhood</p> <p>Downtown</p> <p>Visitors</p> <p>TIF-wide SSA</p> <p>Gap Financing</p> <p>Faade loans</p> <p>Private sector loan pool</p> <p>Public improvements</p> <p>Downtown SSA</p>	<p>Central management organization</p> <p>Business owners</p> <p>Property owners</p> <p>Local government: City, Township, FUPD, WCC, County, library</p> <p>Finance committee</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <p>Business owners</p> <p>Residents</p> <p>Tourists</p>	<p>Stakeholders</p> <p>Owners</p> <p>Tenants</p> <p>Downtown communities</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <p>All of Aurora</p> <p>Greater metro area</p> <p>Tourism-related industry</p> <p>Increased sales/tax revenue</p>	<p>Everyone belongs</p> <p>Business owners</p> <p>Landlords & tenants</p> <p>City departments</p> <p>Media</p> <p>Community service orgs.</p> <p>Financial institutions</p> <p>Area residents</p>	<p>Merchants</p> <p>Businesses</p> <p>Government</p> <p>Civic organizations</p> <p>Residents</p> <p>Property owners</p>					
How?	<p>Determine geographic/physical mix</p> <p>Community board (CDC)</p> <p>Cooperation w/business/government</p> <p>Target marketing: go sell</p> <p>Contracting/building improvements</p> <p>Obtaining cooperation of existing building/property owners</p>	<p>Communication to all</p> <p>\$\$</p> <p>Incentives</p> <p>Cooperation</p>	<p>Incentives to existing businesses</p> <p>Commitment</p>	<p>Incentives to existing businesses</p> <p>Commitment</p>	<p>Advertising initiative & program developed from umbrellas org</p> <p>Multimedia</p> <p>PR firm</p> <p>Public/private partnerships</p> <p>Satisfy market need</p>						

V. A Downtown Development & Management Organizational Structure

The flow chart and committee summary on the following pages reflect the proposed structure of a new downtown development and management organization. It incorporates the participation of residents, business and property owners, other organizations, and government officials in a participatory process that oversees programs and committees.

Existing groups come together to discuss policies and programs that will benefit downtown. The programs and committees reflect areas of emphasis or need that arose out of the planning process. They also reflect functions commonly used by downtown organizations around the country to encourage growth and development.

**Aurora '98:
Downtown Development and Management Program**



Downtown Development and Management Program: Committees/Program Areas

Finance

- Directs activities between board meetings
- Oversees financial status of organization
- Assists in preparation of budgets and fund raising
- Packages/reviews loans & grants
- Identifies, negotiates & implements private & public financial incentives to induce investment
- Administers financial, legal, and technical assistance programs

Physical Improvement Planning

- Plans & coordinates programs for new infrastructure (trees, lighting, benches, parking, downtown ID signs)
- Negotiates with City or other governmental entities (e.g., County, IDOT, Army Corps) to ensure that improvements will benefit & not harm downtown businesses (e.g., traffic flow, bridge reconstruction)

Promotions/Marketing

- Coordinates joint advertising & promotion of downtown businesses
- Works with existing organizations to create positive image & identity for downtown
- Undertakes activities to create good public relations & "make the cash register ring"

Architecture/Design

- Works with City, "Overlay District," & downtown businesses to encourage attractive renovation & new construction of properties
- Assists owners in obtaining resources to renovate properties (facade loans, grants, easements, historic tax credits, etc.)
- With City & private sector, creates additional incentives to encourage attractive rehab (e.g., free architects, matching grants, low interest loan programs, etc.)
- Negotiates with owners to obtain compliance with design guidelines; monitors & enforces compliance of completed projects

Business Services/Advocacy

- Provides services to businesses to increase profitability, encourage expansion
 - group major medical health insurance
 - sidewalk sweeping/window washing
 - private security patrols
 - plate glass insurance
 - snow removal from sidewalks
- Advocates for business interests in downtown
 - negotiates with police for more/better patrols
 - reviews/monitors/influences issuance of liquor licenses
 - encourages public agencies to enforce drug laws/monitors court proceedings, community service programs

Business & Real Estate Development

- Undertakes site marketing to offer space for local business expansion & new business location (demographics, brochures, letters, call campaigns)
- Assists developers & investors in acquiring & developing properties suitable for business expansion
- Develops properties alone or as co-venture partner to make new development possible, consistent with organization's vision for downtown
- Engages in "master-leasing", & other activities to facilitate appropriate business expansion in downtown

VI. Goals and Objectives

The sixty participants in "small group" planning sessions were divided into six committees to create goals based upon their five-year vision. The six committees were:

- ▶ Finance Committee
- ▶ Business & Real Estate Development Committee
- ▶ Physical Improvement Planning Committee
- ▶ Architecture/Design Committee
- ▶ Business Services/Advocacy Committee
- ▶ Promotions/Marketing Committee.

Each committee agreed upon at least one goal and three or four short-term objectives for each goal. Goals were seen as those general conditions or accomplishments that were required in order to achieve the vision. Objectives were defined as specific activities that were measurable, attainable in the short-term (usually one year or less), and that would help the organization or committee attain its goal and vision.

Seven goals were established in all: two for the Finance Committee, and one for each of the other committees.

Goal 1: Create, fund, and staff a central management and development organization.

Create a dynamic downtown central management and development organization that will unite existing organizations and stakeholders in a participatory process to plan the growth of downtown and implement policies and programs to create a thriving downtown economy.

Objective: Form the organization.

- Form a board of directors.
- Establish organization by ad hoc group from existing organizations.
- Form new organization within 60 days.
- Include initial group of existing organizations, 3 SSA's, and others.
- Unify organization to create membership.

Objective: Start the organization.

- Create a mission statement & prioritize goals.
- Determine tasks & budget
- Establish plan.

Objective: Finance the organization.

- Define the central management & development organization's area.
- Create one SSA.
- Decide how to fund organization within 30 days.
- Identify means of financing the organization and an implementation strategy.

Goal 2: Create a centralized system for the allocation of funds and resources.

Initiate a program of expanded financial and technical assistance and resources to existing business and property owners and others that will leverage additional private sector investment in downtown Aurora.

Objective: Complete a needs assessment & resource analysis.

- Determine need & analyze resources.
- Identify current financial resources.
- Identify existing sources of technical assistance available.
- Identify financial & technical needs of businesses.

Objective: Offer a program of financial and technical assistance to business and property owners.

- Provide technical assistance for businesses to use grants, TIF, loans, and other resources.
- Package incentive programs.
- Market financial incentive programs.

Objective: Create a financial resource database.

- Make available a pool of funds to encourage development.
- Work to establish a private sector loan pool.
- Secure joint private & public commitments to develop and implement financial incentives.

Goal 3: Identify and work with business and property owners to encourage business growth and property improvements.

Encourage and require responsible building ownership to create a downtown with attractive, well-maintained properties, and small business and property owners that will find it profitable to invest in upgrading the condition and appearance of their land and buildings.

Objective: Identify 10 buildings that need repair and target their owners to induce them to improve their properties.

- Identify current owners & tenants and their needs.
- Identify buildings that need repair.
- Target 10 owners of properties needing improvement.
- Develop cooperative relations between inspectors & building owners.
- Conduct workshops to help owners improve property maintenance.
- Recognize the best maintained property of month.

Objective: Market properties to make them more profitable.

- Create a property marketing program.
- Market properties.

*ADD
doing
adds in Daily
Herald.*

Objective: Analyze, educate, enforce, & revise standards for the renovation of properties in downtown.

- Revise ordinances to encourage rehab & maintenance.
- Establish guidelines or standards for design & maintenance.
- Streamline facade program.

Goal 4: Plan, coordinate and monitor capital improvement projects for downtown.

Plan, coordinate, monitor, oversee, and assist, as needed, in the completion of capital development projects for the downtown area, including streetscape improvements, parking the riverwalk, and street and bridge construction, to provide for an urban environment that encourages business growth and minimizes disruption and inconvenience for business and property owners and customers.

Objective: Create an effective communication plan and presentation to consider proposed capital improvements and generate support for the adoption and implementation of a single Capital Improvement Plan.

- Draft a community relations plan.
- Adopt the Chamber of Commerce Capital Improvement Plan.
- Advocate for the adoption of the plan by the City as a part of its Economic Development Plan.

Objective: Support the adoption of the "Overlay District" and completion of the Foxwalk.

- Establish standards for inclusion in Overlay District and communicate to building owners.
- Encourage the completion of Foxwalk engineering and design plans and review and consider them for approval.
- Assist in and support the approval of Foxwalk plans by the Army Corps, DWR, and IDOT.
- Obtain a formal endorsement of the Overlay District by the new central management and development organization board and support its adoption by the City.

Objective: Identify the need for additional infrastructure improvements, plan them, and oversee their completion.

- Plan and coordinate clean-up of the bridges and rail overpasses.
- Design new lighting and gateway improvements.
- Identify and implement improvements to traffic flow in downtown.

Goal 5: Attract downtown anchors and other complementary businesses to downtown.

Attract anchors and a complementary mix of other businesses to locate in downtown Aurora to develop and establish Aurora as a family-centered, entertainment, business, and tourist destination.

Objective: Develop and offer a program of private and public incentives to induce new businesses to downtown.

- Plan and provide an incentive program for new businesses.
- Contact potential anchors and complementary businesses and offer available incentives. *can do*

Objective: Seek support for and attract a hotel/convention center.

- Secure incentives from the City and private funders to offer to a major hotel.
- Contact and meet with hotel/convention center operators to locate in downtown Aurora.
- Obtain commitment for hotel/convention center.

Objective: Identify interests of citizens for various potential downtown uses and work to attract those uses.

- Consider 24 hour shops, restaurants, and lounges and develop ordinances to allow their operation if appropriate. *white Hen family*
- Support funding for more, regular children's events at the Paramount Theater.
- Assist the City and PACE to bring in additional popular attractions to complement the casino's efforts.
- Attract a retail anchor to downtown. *says mwd's*

Objective: Finalize plans and seek support for a museum/art center.

- Create plans and obtain commitments for a downtown historical museum and arts center.
- Establish a centrally-located site for a downtown museum/arts center on Stolp Island.
- Bring the Aurora Historical Museum to downtown.

Goal 6: Design and implement a unified marketing plan.

Design and implement a unified marketing program to promote, advertise, and market downtown to enhance its image, overcome negative perceptions, generate increased customer traffic, and attract investment from existing and new business and property owners.

Objective: Develop and implement a professionally-designed and coordinated marketing plan.

- Obtain the services of a marketing professional to assist in the design and implementation of a marketing plan.
- Establish a marketing theme for promoting and advertising downtown.
- Create a logo to support theme.
- Implement the plan.

Objective: Create a cooperative advertising campaign to market downtown and attract shoppers.

- Plan a cooperative advertising campaign based upon the marketing theme and logo that is developed.
- Sign up businesses to participate in campaign.
- Conduct cooperative advertising campaign.

Objective: Run promotions, special events, and programs to promote, advertise, and market downtown Aurora.

- Organize and run two city-wide events to be held in downtown.
- Establish a downtown festival.
- Encourage organized street vendors in downtown, especially near the riverwalk.

Water St.

Goal 7: Assist business and property owners in creating a safe, secure, clean, and hospitable business environment.

Assist business and property owners in obtaining the services they need to create a safe, secure, clean, hospitable business environment.

Objective: Complete an owner opinion survey to identify downtown business needs.

- Poll business and property owners regarding the services they need to better run their businesses.
- Identify the gap between City services and the needs of local businesses.

Objective: Explore and consider the creation of programs to meet the service needs of downtown businesses.

- Determine and undertake a strategy to address the unmet needs of businesses.
- Identify two programs that could be created to fill the service gaps that exist.
- Design and implement those two programs.

Objective: Consider and implement programs appropriate to meet a variety of downtown needs.

- Explore the creation of an "Adopt-a-Sidewalk" program.
- Consider the expansion of a "Downtown Watch" program on every block.
- Research and consider the possibility of a voluntary coordinated shopping hours initiative.
- Establish and run at least two programs to meet the service needs of downtown businesses.

VII. Work Plans for Objectives

Each committee created six-month work plans for its goals and objectives. The work plans are designed to provide concrete, clear steps for the committees to achieve its objectives. Each committee was asked to determine what result they are looking for at the end of six months. They identified the initial activities that are required to start on the path of reaching its objectives; the intermediate activity; the final push.

The committees also indicated who would be responsible for leading the effort, and where the resources would come from in order to complete the work plans.

The work plans are seen as a critical component of the strategic plan. They translate vision into reality: specific steps to take in the first six months to move toward the goals. The work plans offer a method to evaluate committee work and staff. When they are clearly stated and measurable, it becomes much easier to assess progress, determine the resources that may be required, and adjust plans as needed.

The work plans are a working document, changed regularly as new information is obtained. They serve as a guide to committee members, so that everyone has a common understanding of what is expected, and what must be accomplished to achieve the organization's goals and objectives.

Goal 1: Create, fund, and staff a central management and development organization.
Objective 1: Form the organization.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days

1) Kickoff Activity:

Invite 2 representatives from each downtown group to join ad hoc committee.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Ad hoc committee decides the size of board and how they are elected.

3) Final Effort:

Elect the board of directors.

4) Results:

Organization leadership is in place.

Who is responsible for this work?

Finance Committee
Representatives of other committees

Who should lead this effort?

Finance Committee
Representatives of other committees

Where do the resources come from?

Committee members as required.

Goal 1: Create, fund, and staff a central management and development organization.
Objective 2: Start the organization.

Time period for this workplan: 90–120 days

<p><u>1) Kickoff Activity:</u></p> <p>New board meets</p>	<p><u>2) Intermediate Activity:</u></p> <p>Board creates mission statement and prioritizes goals.</p>
<p><u>3) Final Effort:</u></p> <p>Board prepares budget.</p> <p>Board determines staffing needs.</p>	<p><u>4) Results:</u></p> <p>Mission statement</p> <p>Plan of Action</p> <p>Budget</p> <p>Staffing</p>

Who is responsible for this work?

Board

Who should lead this effort?

Board

Where do the resources come from?

Board members as required.

Goal 1: Create, fund, and staff a central management and development organization.

Objective 3: Finance the Organization

Time period for this workplan: 90 days

1) Kickoff Activity:

Form ad hoc group
(see Goal 1, Objective 1)

2) Intermediate Activity:

Ad hoc committee identifies alternative financing sources.

3) Final Effort:

Alternative strategies presented to public (the downtown community).

4) Results:

Financing mechanism is determined.

Who is responsible for this work?

Finance Committee
Ad hoc committee

Who should lead this effort?

Finance Committee
Ad hoc committee

Where do the resources come from?

Committee members as required.

Goal 2: *Create a centralized system for the allocation of funds and resources.*
Objectives: *Complete a needs assessment & resource analysis.*
1-3 *Offer a program of financial & technical assistance to business & property owners.*
Create a financial resource database.
Time period for this workplan: 90-180 days

<p>1) Kickoff Activity:</p> <p>Establish committees in each program area to direct staff activities.</p>	<p>2) Intermediate Activity:</p> <p>Gather information to assess needs and available resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify current financial resources. - Identify existing sources of available technical assistance. - Identify financial & technical needs of businesses. <p>Plan programs for financial & technical assistance to meet needs.</p>
<p>3) Final Effort:</p> <p>Report results of analysis, potential programs, and obtain approval of board to implement programs.</p> <p>Establish technical assistance for businesses to use grants, loans, and other resources.</p> <p>Market financial incentive programs.</p>	<p>4) Results:</p> <p>Completion of needs and resource analysis.</p> <p>Financial & technical assistance program established and offered.</p> <p>Financial resource database established.</p>

Who is responsible for this work?

Finance Committee
Board

Who should lead this effort?

Finance Committee
Board

Where do the resources come from?

Committee members as required
Financial institutions, government

Goal 3: Identify and work with business & property owners to encourage business growth and property improvements.

Objective 1: Identify 10 buildings that need repair & target their owners to induce them to improve their properties.

Time period for this workplan: 6 months

1) Kickoff Activity:

Identify problem buildings.

Plan a workshop to encourage property maintenance and improvement.

Create a plan, and coordinated approach for encouraging property improvements.

Identify potential incentives to assist owners to improve their properties.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Run the workshop.

Begin joint discussions between owners/City/inspectors toward a cooperative agreement to encourage rehab.

3) Final Effort:

Market incentive/rehab programs.

Follow-up with workshop participants to assist them in the rehab process.

Complete agreement with owners/City/inspectors.

4) Results:

10 buildings targeted for rehab.

2 buildings with rehab underway.

Agreement with owners, City, inspectors, committee to encourage rehab.

Commitment to implement agreement.

Who is responsible for this work?

Architecture/Design Committee

Downtown Development/Management Organization

Who should lead this effort?

Architecture/Design Committee

Downtown Development/Management Organization

Where do the resources come from?

Incentive programs

Downtown Development Management Organization

Goal 3: Identify and work with business & property owners to encourage business growth and property improvements.

Objective 2: Market properties to make them more profitable.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days

1) Kickoff Activity:

Plan visual/marketing aid materials.

Identify community groups, property owners, realtors, contractors, and others to market to/show visual aids.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Create visual aids (video & print).

Show video and distribute printed matter to target groups.

3) Final Effort:

Expand marketing efforts:
Show video & distribute materials to those outside of downtown.

4) Results:

Program and marketing materials developed to increase occupancy of 1st floors & begin residential development on upper floors of commercial properties.

Who is responsible for this work?

Architecture/Design Committee
Marketing professional

Who should lead this effort?

Architecture/Design Committee
Marketing professional

Where do the resources come from?

Downtown Development & Management Group
Participants/sponsors of marketing program.

Goal 3: Identify and work with business & property owners to encourage business growth and property improvements.

Objective 3: Analyze, educate, enforce, & revise standards for the renovation of properties in downtown.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days

1) Kickoff Activity:

Attend public hearing (August 25) regarding Overlay District.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Create support for Overlay District.

Establish guidelines for maintenance and renovation in ONE document.

3) Final Effort:

Distribute maintenance and design standards to downtown owners & businesses.

4) Results:

Overlay District in place.

Design & maintenance standards in place.

Who is responsible for this work?

Architecture/Design Committee
Foxwalk Commission

Who should lead this effort?

Architecture/Design Committee
Foxwalk Commission

Where do the resources come from?

Downtown Development & Management
Organization

Goal 4: Plan, coordinate and monitor capital improvement projects for downtown.
Objective 1: Create an effective communication plan & presentation to consider proposed capital improvements & generate support for the adoption & implementation of a single Capital Improvement Plan.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days

<p><u>1) Kickoff Activity:</u></p> <p>Establish Physical Improvement Planning Committee.</p>	<p><u>2) Intermediate Activity:</u></p> <p>Identify capital improvement projects to be supported.</p> <p>Determine costs.</p> <p>Identify funding mechanisms for each project.</p> <p>Draft a community relations plan to generate support for projects.</p>
<p><u>3) Final Effort:</u></p> <p>Secure adoption of plan by City Council.</p>	<p><u>4) Results:</u></p> <p>Draft community relations/capital improvement plan completed.</p> <p>Capital improvement plan adopted.</p>

Who is responsible for this work?
 Physical Improvement Planning Committee

Who should lead this effort?
 Physical Improvement Planning Committee
 Business & property owners

Where do the resources come from?
 Government and private resources

Goal 4: Plan, coordinate and monitor capital improvement projects for downtown.

Objective 2: Support the adoption of the "Overlay District" and completion of the Foxwalk.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days

<p><u>1) Kickoff Activity:</u></p> <p>Actively promote adoption of proposed Overlay District.</p>	<p><u>2) Intermediate Activity:</u></p> <p>Establish & gain community support.</p> <p>Obtain downtown organizational representation on Overlay District board.</p>
<p><u>3) Final Effort:</u></p> <p>Work toward final adoption by City Council.</p>	<p><u>4) Results:</u></p> <p>Overlay District established.</p>

Who is responsible for this work?

Physical Improvement Planning Committee

Who should lead this effort?

Physical Improvement Planning Committee

Where do the resources come from?

Government sources

Goal 5: Attract downtown anchors and other complementary businesses to downtown.

Objective 1: Develop and offer a program of private and public incentives to induce new businesses to downtown.

Time period for this workplan: 1–5 months

1) Kickoff Activity:

Identify existing public and private incentive programs.

Identify potential business and property owner users.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Develop new incentive program to target unmet needs.

Create application and marketing process.

3) Final Effort:

Match businesses with incentive programs.

Identify businesses that will help create a good tenant mix in downtown.

Obtain support of local tenants and businesses.

4) Results:

Begin funding projects.

Who is responsible for this work?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee

Who should lead this effort?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee

Where do the resources come from?

Downtown Development & Management Organization

Banks, government

Goal 5: Attract downtown anchors and other complementary businesses to downtown.

Objective 2: Seek support for & attract a hotel/convention center.

Time period for this workplan: Months 1–6 (for #1,2, & 3), Months 7–12 (#3–4)

1) Kickoff Activity:

Identify sites for hotel/convention center.

Identify potential users.

Determine project size.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Establish project costs.

Determine incentives needed.

Create an incentive program:

– tailored to hotel and convention industry.

3) Final Effort:

Market the site, the incentives, and the program to attract a hotel/convention center.

4) Results:

A commitment in place for a hotel/convention center.

Who is responsible for this work?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee

Who should lead this effort?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee
Downtown Development & Management
Organization

Where do the resources come from?

Downtown Development & Management
Organization
Government, banks, private sources

Goal 5: Attract downtown anchors and other complementary businesses to downtown.

Objective 3: Identify interests of citizens for various potential downtown uses and work to attract those uses.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days – 1 year

1) Kickoff Activity:

Begin needs assessment:

- Establish a survey tabulating the interests and needs of citizens.
- Create survey questions to determine current shopping destinations for downtown residents.

Obtain professional advice to assist in determining the most desirable business mix.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Complete market study.

Analyze interests of residents/those surveyed.

3) Final Effort:

Develop a strategy to respond to new information on consumer needs and interests.

Market the responses and survey information to assist in attracting new businesses to downtown.

4) Results:

Commitment of interest from businesses in locating downtown.

Who is responsible for this work?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee

Who should lead this effort?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee
Downtown Development & Management
Organization

Where do the resources come from?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee
Downtown Development & Management
Organization

Goal 5: Attract downtown anchors and other complementary businesses to downtown.

Objective 4: Finalize plans and seek support for a museum/art center.

Time period for this workplan: One year and beyond

1) Kickoff Activity:

Identify museum users and sites.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Explore possibilities of combining various curators & museums into a council & museum district.

3) Final Effort:

Market the museum concept, district, and site(s) to potential users.

4) Results:

Obtain a commitment from a museum user or art center to locate downtown.

Who is responsible for this work?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee

Who should lead this effort?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee
Downtown Development & Management
Organization

Where do the resources come from?

Business & Real Estate Development Committee
Downtown Development & Management
Organization
Government and private incentives

Goal 6: Design and implement a unified marketing plan.

Objective 1: Develop and implement a professionally –designed and coordinated marketing plan.

Time period for this workplan: 1–6 months

1) Kickoff Activity:

Conduct a search and hire a marketing professional to assist in developing marketing plan.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Work with marketing professional to research, discuss, and draft plan.

3) Final Effort:

Present marketing plan to board and members for review, discussion, and adoption.

4) Results:

Completed marketing plan.

Public relations event to announce the plan and its implementation.

Who is responsible for this work?

Board hires marketing professional & approves plan.

Promotions/Marketing committee plans & works with professional.

Who should lead this effort?

Promotions/Marketing committee plans & works with professional.

Where do the resources come from?

Downtown Development & Management Organization

Finance Committee fund –raising

Goal 6: Design and implement a unified marketing plan.

Objective 2: Create a cooperative advertising campaign to market downtown and attract shoppers.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days from selection of marketing professional.

1) Kickoff Activity:

Select marketing professional, marketing director, or ad agency representative.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Work with members and potential advertisers to develop a list of possible advertising and promotion ideas.

3) Final Effort:

Select options to create an advertising or promotion schedule, for general events and individual promotions.

4) Results:

Kick-off marketing event on the steps of the North Island Center.

Who is responsible for this work?

Promotions/Marketing Committee
Marketing director/ad agency

Who should lead this effort?

Promotions/Marketing Committee

Where do the resources come from?

Downtown Development & Management
Organization
Individual businesses

Goal 6: Design and implement a unified marketing plan.

Objective 3: Run promotions, special events, and programs to promote, advertise, and market downtown Aurora.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days from selection of marketing professional.

1) Kickoff Activity:

Select theme for the advertising and marketing of downtown Aurora.

Design logo.

Plan 2 events (e.g., festival)

2) Intermediate Activity:

Obtain involvement from businesses

- in planning
- in participation.

3) Final Effort:

Promote and market the events or promotions.

4) Results:

Stage the events.

Who is responsible for this work?

Promotions/Marketing Committee

Who should lead this effort?

Promotions/Marketing Committee

Festival Committee

Where do the resources come from?

Participating businesses

Downtown Development & Management

Organization

Goal 7: Assist business & property owners in creating a safe, secure, clean, and hospitable business environment.

Objective 1: Complete an owner opinion survey to identify downtown business needs.

Time period for this workplan: 90 days

1) Kickoff Activity:

Develop survey.

Obtain list of all downtown businesses.

Mail surveys.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Contact one person per block to obtain surveys from each block.

3) Final Effort:

Committee and "block captains" personally contact non-respondents.

Tabulate results of surveys.

4) Results:

Completed owner opinion survey.

Who is responsible for this work?

Business Services/Advocacy Committee

Who should lead this effort?

Business Services/Advocacy Committee

Where do the resources come from?

Downtown Development & Management Organization

Goal 7: Assist business & property owners in creating a safe, secure, clean, and hospitable business environment.

Objectives: Explore and consider the creation of programs to meet the service needs of downtown businesses.
2-3

Consider & implement programs appropriate to meet a variety of downtown needs.

Time period for this workplan: Month 3 through Month 6

1) Kickoff Activity:

Examine survey results.

Compare needs with existing City services.

Identify City liaison.

2) Intermediate Activity:

Identify properties and owners that might benefit from services.

Identify possible programs that could be used to address needs of businesses.

3) Final Effort:

Create two programs to fill the gap.

(e.g., Adopt-a-Sidewalk, expanded downtown watch program)

4) Results:

City liaison in place.

Two service programs in place.

Who is responsible for this work?

Business Services/Advocacy Committee

Who should lead this effort?

Business Services/Advocacy Committee

Where do the resources come from?

Downtown Development & Management Organization

Other sources to be determined.