



2024



ANNUAL REPORT

WELCOME LETTER

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, most of us were hopeful that the worst would be over within a matter of months. Unfortunately, this global crisis stretched throughout 2021, marking the second straight year of business *not* as usual for our downtown merchants, restaurants, visitors and residents.

The Downtown Development Authority worked hard to ensure that our city center remained safe, vibrant and welcoming for everyone during another year of this unprecedented pandemic. Many of the proactive measures taken in 2020 were continued in 2021, helping our unique and dynamic shops and restaurants make the most of these difficult circumstances. There is no question that the pressures of this ongoing pandemic have tested – but in many ways strengthened – the resolve of the wonderful people who earn their livelihoods in Northern Michigan’s most celebrated and visited downtown.

Our downtown events, many of them modified for safety protocols, provided joy and a much-needed distraction for countless residents and visitors. These events were a constant reminder that our downtown is a place that both energizes and inspires those who walk its blocks, and we’re proud to play a role by helping bring people together.

And despite these trying times, the DDA and its community partners looked to the future and forged ahead with several exciting projects in 2021. While each distinctly different, these projects share a common thread of helping to create a downtown that is even more embraced by the community than it already is.

From plans to create a beautiful and functional civic square to detailed discussions about revamping the way people interact with the Boardman River, together we are working toward a downtown that engages people in a deep and meaningful way. We could not be more excited to see what the future holds as these efforts continue to take shape.

As we head into 2022, the DDA will continue its efforts on all fronts to strengthen, promote and celebrate the physical and spiritual core of our community. We must continue to make downtown a destination of choice, and doing so will require a proactive mindset and efforts to analyze what we’re doing well and what we can improve on.

To stay ahead of this important curve, we’re starting a visioning process to make sure our priorities are in line with the needs of our community. This spring and summer, we’ll engage our board, business leaders, downtown residents, elected officials, businesses, and partner organizations in a series of focus groups and surveys. We want to know where you want to see downtown Traverse City in 5, 10 or 20 years into the future, and more importantly, how we get there. Answers to these and dozens of other questions will be transformed into action items that will guide our programs moving forward.

See you downtown!

Jean Derenzy, DDA Chief Executive Officer
Gabe Schneider, DDA Board Chair



DDA BOARD 2021

Gabe Schneider, Chair	Leah Bagdon-McCallum	Pete Kirkwood
Scott Hardy, Vice-Chair	Jim Carruthers	Damian Lockhart
Richard Lewis, Secretary	T. Michael Jackson	Pam Marsh
Steve Constantin, Treasurer	Jeff Joubran	Steve Nance

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

DTCA ★ Venture North ★ Traverse City Tourism ★ Norte ★ TART ★ BATA ★ SEEDS ★ Rotary Charities
★ National Cherry Festival ★ Traverse Connect ★ Taste the Local Difference ★ Traverse City Light and Power ★
Lake Effect ★ Consumers Energy ★ DTE ★ Regional Community Foundation ★ United Way of Northwest Michigan ★
Traverse City Film Festival ★ Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities ★ Britten Studios ★ Michigan Economic Development Corporation ★ 9&10 News ★ Serra Automotive ★ Midwestern Broadcasting ★ Bay Area Recycling for Charities ★ Cherry Republic ★ Hotel Indigo ★ Cintas ★ C.H. Robinson ★ Pepsi Beverages Company ★ Northwest Michigan Arts & Culture Network ★ Arts for All ★ Michigan Legacy Art Park ★ Up North Pride ★ Great Lakes Wine & Spirits ★ MSU Master Gardeners ★ And many more! ★



★Mission★

Collaborate with all stakeholders to provide a world class downtown that is active, thriving and inclusive. Through investments in sound, sustainable infrastructure and civic amenities, the DDA corrects and prevents deterioration in the Downtown District to encourage historic preservation, to create and implement development plans and to promote economic growth.

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★Vision★

Traverse City is America’s most inclusive, family-friendly freshwater destination – featuring world class dining and shopping, a growing economy, entrepreneurial opportunity and all-season recreation.

DDA PROJECTS

The DDA and its community partners were hard at work in 2021 on several projects that will bring continued energy and vibrancy to downtown. Keep an eye out for the next steps in these transformative projects in the coming months.

Civic Square

A long-held dream of creating a civic square in downtown is much closer to reality now that the site was identified and purchased in late 2021. This excellent location at the southwest corner of State and Union streets checks all the boxes, and we're thrilled to dive into the next steps of a project that will serve downtown for generations to come.

The site was the longtime location of a bank, which is being prepped for demolition and should be cleared by the summer of 2022. A community visioning process led by the DDA will help determine how this public resource will look and function. The opportunities for such a special space are nearly endless, and we look forward to seeing how the community will use this wonderful new asset.

The DDA remains tremendously grateful to Rotary Charities of Traverse City for a \$1 million grant for this exciting project, as well as the state of Michigan for a \$2 million grant.



Lower Boardman River

After more than three years, the plan is here! The DDA, in cooperation with a community-led leadership team, initiated a process to develop a comprehensive plan for the 1.6 miles of the Boardman/Ottaway River that meanders through downtown. The goal is to improve the health of this iconic river while creating more and better ways for the public to engage with this tremendous resource.

In December, the DDA approved the Lower Boardman River Unified Plan after years of research, studies and public input. Aside from being designed to guide all future decisions in regard to the river, the plan also identifies key capital improvement projects. In 2022, the DDA hopes to launch one of these projects – a riverwalk and pedestrian plaza behind the 100 and 200 blocks of Front Street that could serve as the largest placemaking effort in the history of downtown.

Reimagine East Front Street

The Reimagine East Front Street initiative kicked off in August and was charged with developing a new streetscape design plan for East Front Street, one of the key gateways to downtown. The project also included plans to replace underground infrastructure (including new sewer leads to existing buildings) along this stretch. In conjunction with this planning effort, the DDA and city conducted a traffic study to determine the possible conversion of one-way streets throughout downtown.

The draft design for East Front Street was derived from the results of the traffic study as well as feedback from community surveys and several rounds of public engagement in August through October. The goal is to think beyond the street itself and create a corridor that is welcoming, safe, visually appealing and engaging for all users.

Construction of the new streetscape will be scheduled in the future as funding allows.

DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH

Downtown Traverse City is an exciting, dynamic place. Here's a look at some development highlights for the past year. Taxes captured on developments and improvements like these fund critical public infrastructure and services for everyone.

\$37 MILLION
IN NEW INVESTMENTS IN 2021

West End Lofts

This project near the Boardman River's bend under Front Street broke ground last summer. It includes more than 90 residential units, with a portion of them earmarked for affordable workforce housing. In addition to residential units, it will have commercial space at the street level. The developers have granted an easement along the Boardman/Ottaway River river to ensure public access to this important natural resource.



Greenleaf Trust (Old City Hall)

Old City Hall received a vibrant and welcome facelift as financial services firm Greenleaf Trust and its partner company Catalyst Development completed renovations in the spring. This beautiful building was built in 1904, and renovations were designed to maintain its historic charm while modernizing and transforming the interior into first-class office space. Jarboe & Pfiel and Birch Infrastructure are also calling this new space home.

NEW BUSINESSES

We were excited to welcome these businesses that opened their doors (or moved to downtown) in 2021:

Fresh Coast Beer Works
Modern Bird
The Tasting Room by Legacy Distillers
Barrio
The Big Salad
Bahia
I'm Planty AF (And Fancy)

Muse Blow Dry Bar
OMPT Physical Therapy
Earth Labs
4 Front Credit Union
Dharamsala TC
Zest
Zips 45th Parallel
Harley-Davidson



Lofts at Hannah Lay

Work continued on the installation of seven luxury lofts in the upper floors of one of the city's most iconic and historic buildings. The Hannah Lay building, built in 1883, was once the headquarters of founding father Perry Hannah's large mercantile operation. Most of the units have already been sold.



Honor Bank

Crews finished the new Honor Bank building along the Boardman River and held a grand opening in 2021, complete with a wonderful partnership with the DTCA that hid \$5,000 in downtown gift certificates for shoppers to find throughout downtown. This bold new building now serves as the local bank's commercial lending center.

Private Business Improvements

Despite these trying times, several downtown business owners have made substantial investments in their businesses. Golden Shoes owner Bill Golden, for example, began the process of renovating his historic facade and adding residential units in the unused space above his store.

Public Capital Improvements

Several of these projects had components that benefited everyone who visits downtown. For example, snow melt systems were installed in sidewalks in front of Honor Bank and Greenleaf Trust. This improves walkability downtown and takes a step further toward an eventual interconnected snowmelt system throughout downtown.



ARTS COMMISSION

The Traverse City Arts Commission was proud to present four striking new murals along Union Street. Aside from adding artistic beauty, these murals are important in terms of placemaking. In increasingly turbulent times, the theme for this year's murals was unity.

Two murals were painted on the south side of the AT&T building at Eighth and Union Street by Brooklyn-based artist Natasha Platt. One is her own design and the other is a reproduction of a design by Mexican artist and collaborator Miriam Castillo. Two more on the side of the Dish Café were completed by Traverse City artist Rebecca Howe and Kalamazoo-based artist Amy O'Hanlon.

Terry Beia, who owns both buildings, graciously allowed these talented artists to utilize them for these beautiful works.

The Arts Commission, in partnership with TART, also hired Michigan artist duo Adrienne Pickett and Kellie Bambach (known together as Sous La Ciel) to create beautiful murals as well as paint picnic tables at TART's 10th Street trailhead.



FARMERS MARKET

This year marked the much-celebrated return of a full season of the physical farmer's market after an online-only market for a portion of 2020. But since the online market was so well received, the DDA continued this option in conjunction with the physical market

in 2021. With our friends and partners at SEEDS, who help us manage this operation, we are so proud to offer fresh, local produce and goods from dozens of local vendors in this community-supported event.

\$41,973
TOTAL VALUE OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

TOTAL ONLINE ORDERS
3,512

VALUE OF ONLINE ORDERS
\$121,307

TOTAL VENDORS (Online & Physical)
More than 90



PARKING & MOBILITY

New Technologies

We replaced nearly 300 coin-only meters with smart meters in 2021. While still accepting coin and mobile payments, these meters also accept credit cards in a quick and streamlined fashion. This gives much greater flexibility to our customers while significantly reducing the number of coins that need to be collected and counted by staff. These meters also offer reporting software that we can use for transactional data and trend information.



This project also included in-ground sensors for the 100 and 200 blocks of East Front Street, allowing us to gather data on when spaces are used and for how long.

We also began laying the groundwork for installation of 40 more security cameras to the existing system, a process that will be complete this year. This will allow for better deterrence of unwanted activity and provide documentation for incidents and accidents.

Managed Systems Approach

2021 marked the first year of implementing process and policy changes from the Managed Systems Approach adopted in 2020. Highlights:

- Handicap meter policies updated to align with state of Michigan policies.
- Premium and non-premium meter rates were implemented, with the former located at Munson Medical Center and in core downtown retail areas. The purpose of zone-based pricing is to shift occupancy to underutilized areas by encouraging customers to park in cheaper areas, both alleviating parking congestion and encouraging visitors to patronize a broader range of merchants.
- A progressive meter rate was implemented for the 100 and 200 blocks of East Front Street. The goal is to keep access to these spaces open for quick trips and pick-ups while also offering availability for visitors who are not familiar with other parking locations.

EVENTS

Our businesses – and indeed the greater community – rely on the DDA/DTCA to host fun and engaging events in our downtown every year. As the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to change the way we do things, staff worked hard to provide memorable experiences for those who shop, work, live and visit downtown. Some highlights from more than a dozen events throughout the year:

Shop Your Community Day

After an experimental three-day version in 2020, the DTCA returned to a one-day event for this tremendously popular event in November of 2021. Participating downtown merchants and restaurants donated 15 percent of each sale to the shoppers' charity of choice from a list of 30 participating local nonprofits. It's a great way for shoppers to support their favorite local merchants and nonprofits as they get a jump on their holiday shopping. We're pleased to report that **\$26,276** was raised in 2021, more than double the 2020 figure.



Three generations of Allens (from left to right, Meredith, Jason, Amanda and Maurie) work at Maurie's 55th street sale in August. Maurie founded Captain's Quarters in 1966.

Street Sale

What would the downtown experience be without this annual bargain-filled favorite that's been bringing smiles to local faces (and dollars to local vendors) for decades? Our merchants reported excellent sales and great spirits for this August event, which returned to its roots as a one-day sale.

Downtown Light Parade

Though the annual tree lighting was canceled amid a COVID-19 spike, people of all ages were able to safely spread out along the street to watch tens of thousands of sparking lights adorning more than 20 float entries. In addition to everyone's favorite jolly old elf bringing holiday cheer, Santa was joined by the National Cherry Queen and dozens of representatives from local nonprofits and businesses.



GIFT CERTIFICATE SALES

After a record-smashing 2020, this past year saw only a slight dip in sales for the downtown gift certificate program. Though sales in 2021 were lower than 2020's \$1.02 million, they were still considerably higher than the \$400,000 - \$700,000 range registered for many years prior. Robust marketing of this program combined with increased affinity for local shopping has continued to help this important program prosper.

\$903,788
IN GIFT CERTIFICATE SALES



BROUGHT TO YOU BY



Consumers Our Town Program

For the second year in a row, this program benefited from a generous 1 to 1 gift certificate match from the Consumers Energy Our Town program. Consumers donated \$20,000 worth of certificates that served as a match for purchasers. Thank you to Consumers Energy for supporting our local businesses!



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