

Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan

WORKING DRAFT – June 11, 2008



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I. Executive Summary

Downtown Columbia has emerged as a successful, vibrant destination. While the years have taken their toll on many Midwestern central cities, Columbia navigated these challenges to not only sustain, but improve the Downtown environment thanks in part to the development of the Downtown Special Business District (SBD) and the Central Columbia Association (CCA). Together, these organizations have invested funds to improve the management and marketing of Downtown, while also tackling streetscape initiatives – including the successful canopy removal – and advocating for initiatives important to Downtown stakeholders and center city vitality.

Recent years have brought significant change and new challenges. As Downtown Columbia prepares for new development opportunities amidst economic uncertainty, there is recognition by the SBD and CCA that the focus of their organizations must shift from maintaining Downtown to growing it. In addition, the current CCA/SBD management structure dates back to the 1980s, a time in which downtown's challenges were very different from today. To address these changes, consulting assistance was sought to analyze the current structure of the organizations and the future needs of Downtown and to provide a working plan for a refreshed Downtown management structure that is better equipped for future growth.

In the Spring of 2008, the SBD commissioned P.U.M.A. to develop a strategic plan. The plan aims to meet the following objectives:

- Assess the dynamics of Downtown Columbia's current economic, political and planning environment.
- Determine how the Downtown Columbia Special Business District should best be organized to respond to challenges and opportunities.
- Evaluate new organizational opportunities for Downtown and develop a blueprint to ensure that new initiatives strengthen and unify overall development, marketing and management efforts.
- Engage Downtown and civic leaders in a participatory process.

The Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan process began with a comprehensive analysis of Downtown Columbia's current economic, social and political position within the marketplace. Past studies and plans, as well as current efforts underway, were absorbed, and the SBD's organizational structure was reviewed, including work programs, budgets and operating practices. Following the initial research, P.U.M.A. conducted extensive interviews and forums with Downtown stakeholders, and a survey of Downtown business and property owners was distributed. More than 50 property owners, businesses and city officials were involved in the process, with an online survey revealing opinions and priorities from an additional 129 business and property owners. The SBD and CCA boards of directors met together to review and discuss the initial recommendations from the Strategic Plan and set priorities for moving forward.

From this evaluation, a fundamental shift in the way Downtown Columbia is managed is recommended. This shift suggests a greater emphasis on creating an environment to attract and leverage investment by focusing both private and public sector resources on advancing economic development and improvements to the public realm. Organizational implications suggest a gradual re-engineering of the SBD and CCA from events and marketing towards a stronger management and economic development focus to become a more effective and self-sustaining leader for Downtown today and beyond.

II. Planning Process

To determine the economic context for Downtown and to map out the most effective strategic plan for the SBD, P.U.M.A. undertook a comprehensive review of both internal organizational documents and external market forces in the spring of 2008. This included on-site research, surveys of Downtown business and property owners, and extensive interviews and forums with Downtown stakeholders. In addition, P.U.M.A. undertook best practices research and examined five comparable Downtown organizations focusing on how they are structured, staffed and funded. The following summarizes our findings.

Stakeholder Interviews: In March 2008, P.U.M.A. conducted a site visit in Downtown Columbia to appraise the dynamics of Downtown's economic, political and planning environment. During this visit, the team engaged more than 50 key Downtown stakeholders through focus groups and one-on-one interviews, including:

- SBD Board of Directors
- CCA Board of Directors
- Property Owners
- Merchants
- Civic Leaders
- Festivals and Attractions Leaders

P.U.M.A. led these groups through a participatory visioning process which probed stakeholder's perceptions on how Downtown Columbia had evolved in the past ten years, and what their vision for Downtown Columbia is ten years ahead, in 2018. The following table summarizes the results of this exercise:

Ten Years Ago	Today	Ten Years Ahead
Empty	Inviting, enjoyable, attractive	Vibrant, beautiful, welcoming, safe and clean
Rundown, stagnant	Growing, rejuvenated, expanding, on the verge, challenging	Actively being developed, wildly successful
Slow	Active, busy	Energized
Eclectic, but aging	Fun, entertaining, vibrant	Diverse and artful, local and distinctive
Old	Progressive, young and diverse, highly creative, inclusive	Sky is the limit! Creative explosion, progressive, eclectic
Transition, gaps	Destination	Unique hub of activity, the nucleus of Columbia
Lack of vision	Limited vision	Innovative

Based on this feedback, P.U.M.A. inquired about improvements and investments which need to occur to achieve this vision, and asked stakeholders to prioritize these items, ranking their importance towards achieving the desired goals. The priorities for Downtown Columbia that emerged from the stakeholder focus groups include:

DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS AND PRIORITIES

- 1 **Attract New Business and Investment:** Become an incubator of creative activity and business. Focus on filling empty storefronts and coordinate incentives for unique, independent, stable businesses and retail.
- 2 **Downtown Residential:** Encourage development of a quality mix of residential uses.
- 3 **Cleaner and Safer:** Focus on cleanliness and maintenance and improve standards for Downtown. Improve policing and safety, vagrants, bar problems, and provide comprehensive security.
- 4 **Improve the Pedestrian Experience:** Create a more walkable environment and focus on improving connections. Improvements could include greening, trees and landscaping, appealing night lighting, and upgraded infrastructure.
- 5 **Parking:** Combat negative perceptions, encourage use of garages, discourage surface parking.
- 6 **Marketing:** Strengthen and diversify marketing to create a “call to action” for both consumers and investors.
- 7 **Improve Aesthetics and Facades:** Including identifying design standards.
- 8 **Stronger Downtown Organization:** Mobilize more energy and resources to create a stronger leadership presence. Work to unify businesses and encourage participation. Collaborate and solidify civic partnerships.
- 9 **Complete a Downtown Master Plan:** Focus on connections and transition areas and clarify public and private sector roles.

A summary from the stakeholder interviews is provided as **Appendix I**.

Organizational roles were also probed in the stakeholder focus groups, with specific questions focusing on how the SBD and CCA could be positioned to implement priority projects and programs and how the organizations should be positioned within the contextual environment of the City of Columbia and the Downtown community. The following themes emerged:

ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE

- 1 **Advocacy and Leadership:** Be a stronger and more vocal advocate for Downtown and provide a liaison role between the public and private sectors. Organization should have the ability to influence political processes, collaborate and facilitate relationships in order to make Downtown a top priority of the City.
- 2 **Attract (and Retain) Business and Investment:** Nurture businesses to help them grow and survive by serving as a central clearinghouse for Downtown Columbia to help businesses find resources and important information.
- 3 **Strengthen the Organization:** Generate more resources for the Downtown through a stronger Downtown authority organization, perhaps a CID. Mobilize as many resources as possible to facilitate change. Look at bringing sales tax to parity as a potential funding source.
- 4 **Promotion and Marketing:** Provide both consumer and investor marketing for Downtown.
- 5 **Communications:** Facilitate constant communication among stakeholders Downtown and use that information to provide a unified voice, influence and leadership.

Stakeholder Survey: Following the initial on-site visit, P.U.M.A. conducted an on-line survey to Downtown business and property owners to assess overall satisfaction with the Downtown Columbia SBD's activities and to probe their priorities for Downtown improvements and investments. P.U.M.A. was particularly interested in investigating whether the priorities of stakeholders interviewed during the initial site visit matched the priorities of survey respondents. 129 individuals responded to the survey, with the respondents fell into the following categories:

Downtown Interest	Percentage of Respondents
Downtown Business Owner	63.9%
Downtown Commercial Property Owner	28.6%
Government	12.6%
Resident	10.9%
Charitable/Non-Profit	5.9%
Other (Downtown employees, consumers)	5.9%

In assessing the current state of Downtown Columbia, respondents noted the following projects and investments have been "Very Important" in improving the Downtown environment over the past five years:

VERY IMPORTANT to Improving Downtown Over the Past Five Years

Overall Rank	Improvement	DT Property Owner Rank†	DT Business Owner Rank
1 (60.8%)	Safer	2-TIE (55.9%)	1-TIE (54.7%)
2 (54.4%)	Beautification Efforts	1 (63.6%)	1-TIE (54.7%)
3 (45.6%)	More festivals and events	5 (40.6%)	3 (46.7%)
4 (44%)	Cleaner	2-TIE (55.9%)	4 (43.2%)
5 (43.2%)	Better marketing and information about Downtown		5 (42.7%)

†Downtown Property Owners ranked "Canopy Removal" as #4 (44.1%).

Respondents also were asked to express their opinion on which general improvements will be very important to enhancing Downtown Columbia in the next five to ten years:

VERY IMPORTANT to Downtown in the Next Five to Ten Years

Overall Rank	Improvement	DT Property Owner Rank	DT Business Owner Rank††
1 (62.1%)	Attract new businesses and more jobs	1 (75.8%)	2 (56%)
2 (58.2%)	Safer	2 (67.6%)	1 (58.6%)
3 (50.4%)	More convenient parking	3-TIE (50%)	3 (52.7%)
4 (45.2%)	Cleaner	5 (48.5%)	4 (48%)
5 (44.7%)	Improve shopping and the selection of stores		

†Downtown Property Owners ranked "More Downtown Housing" as #3-TIE (50%).

††DT Business Owners ranked "Better marketing and information about Downtown" as #5 (46.7%).

When asked to use brief words to summarize their vision for Downtown Columbia as they look ten years ahead to 2018, the following words were most frequently noted:

Friendly	Attractive	Accessible	Diverse
Safe	Trendy	Local	Vibrant
Clean	Unique	Alive	Charm

To achieve this vision for Downtown, respondents suggested the following actions will be important:

VERY IMPORTANT Actions to Improve Downtown in the Next Five to Ten Years

Overall Rank	Improvement	DT Property Owner Rank	DT Business Owner Rank†
1 (72.7%)	Attract new businesses and help existing businesses grow	1 (75.8%)	1 (75.7%)
2 (54.5%)	Make Downtown safer	3 (60.6%)	2 (54.7%)
3 (52.1%)	Develop new destination attractions, such as a hotel, museum, others	4-TIE (48.5%)	5 (49.3%)
4 (50.4%)	Improve Downtown cleanliness	2 (62.5%)	3 (52%)
5(48.4%)	Improve the pedestrian experience		

†Downtown Business Owners ranked "Improve parking management" as #4 (50%).

Most interestingly, a majority of respondents said they would consider paying new or additional assessments to support these actions, improvements and/or investments:

Willing to Pay?	Overall Score	DT Property Owner Rank	DT Business Owner Rank
Definitely Yes	9%	23.5%	10.5%
Probably Yes	45.1%	29.4%	50%
Don't Know	36.9%	35.3%	30.3%
Probably No	4.9%	2.9%	5.3%
Definitely No	4.1%	8.8%	3.9%

Of those items respondents would be willing to pay for, the following ranked the highest:

SERVICES respondents would consider paying for

Rank	Service	DT Property Owner Rank†	DT Business Owner Rank††
1 (44.2%)	Attract new businesses and help existing businesses grow	1-TIE (47.8%)	1 (39.7%)
2 (38.4%)	Make Downtown safer	1-TIE (47.8%)	2 (34.5%)
3 (30.2%)	Develop new destination attractions, such as a hotel, museum, others		4 (29.3%)
4 (27.9%)	Improve the pedestrian experience		

†Downtown Property Owners ranked "Develop a Downtown Master Plan that builds on the Sasaki Plan" and "Encourage Downtown Residential Development" as #3-TIE (30.4%).

††Downtown Business Owners ranked "Increase Downtown marketing efforts" as #3 (32.8%).

Overall, the priorities which emerged during initial stakeholder outreach was verified by the survey results, creating a clear stakeholder direction for future efforts. A complete summary of the stakeholder survey results is provided as **Appendix II**.

Internal Assessment: P.U.M.A. also conducted an internal assessment of the Downtown SBD, evaluating the SBD and CCA's programs, budgets and organizational structures. Workshops were also held with each board to discuss internal organizational issues and identify strengths, weaknesses and priorities for improvement. Additionally, other district planning studies and reports completed in the past five years, or currently underway, were reviewed, including:

- 2006 Sasaki Plan
- CCA Budgets, Bylaws and Work Plans
- SBD Budgets, Bylaws, Work Plans and Ordinance/Charter
- Downtown Sign Ordinance
- Downtown Columbia Streetscape Plan
- Downtown Columbia Branding Strategy
- Downtown Columbia Marketing Pieces
- Imagine Columbia's Future Plan
- North Central Columbia Neighborhood Urban Conservation Overlay District
- Downtown Leadership Council Information

Best Practices Research: To provide context for recommendations, P.U.M.A. also conducted "Best Practices" research of five comparable Downtown markets and their management organizations, including:

- Downtown Boulder, Inc. (Boulder, CO)
- Cedar Rapids Downtown District (Cedar Rapids, IA)
- Downtown Lincoln Association (Lincoln, NE)
- Urban Districts Alliance (Springfield, MO)
- Downtown St. Louis Partnership (St. Louis, MO)

The research provided information on the programs, funding, organizational structure and governance of the respective organizations. A summary of the stakeholder survey results is provided as **Appendix III**.

III. Implications for Downtown Columbia

From the preceding summary of research and outreach conducted by P.U.M.A., the following observations were made. These statements set the stage for the strategic plan and begin to define the evolution of the SPD and the CCA organizational structures and their priorities and focus moving ahead.

“The District” is a Strong Product: Surrounded by educational institutions and supported by the Downtown workforce, “The District” grown as a vital, sustainable, recognizable environment. Many past barriers have been overcome, and the unique clusters of retail and restaurants as well as proposed new development means the coming years will be about ensuring Downtown can mature into consistently vibrant, strong economic destination. In other words, it's time to take it to the next level, and develop a strong public/private partnership that can support Downtown as it exists today and as it grows in the years ahead.

Need for a Stronger Downtown Advocate: The SBD and CCA have served Downtown well in the past nearly 30 years, investing in major projects that changed the Downtown landscape, and supporting the environment with consumer marketing and events. The challenges of Downtown in 2008 and in the next five to ten years look different. Turbulent economic environments, combined with new growth, means the Downtown needs a strong, unified voice representing it. Partnership with civic and private sector leaders must be established, and clear goals and actions will need to be tackled by following a straight-forward game plan. A new, sustainable Downtown management model will likely need to emerge to create the resources, both financial and staff, to support the needs of the next decade.

A Shift from Marketer to “Property Manager”: Downtown Columbia needs to refocus priorities and strategic directions to respond to the current and future environment. A shift away from marketing and events and towards creating an environment to attract investment should occur through initiatives to not only create a more welcoming environment for business and development, but to support and help recruit the types of small, innovative and creative businesses that make Downtown Columbia unique. To help lead and guide the economic development, the CCA/SBD needs to shift from an emphasis on promoting Downtown, to managing Downtown much as a property manager within a shopping mall. This role suggests working closely with property owners and businesses to monitor vacancies, recruit prospective tenants and ensure that Downtown’s common areas are safe, clean and attractive.

A Shift from Tasks to Strategy: Like many downtown organizations throughout the country, CCA/SBD has evolved to take care of the many details that make Downtown a great place – from cleaning alleys to installing street furniture to developing a distinctive Downtown brand. To meet the stakeholder priorities revealed by the Strategic Plan surveys, CCA/SBD must also be prepared to look at the big picture strategies for Downtown – attention to both the trees *and* the forest is important to help advance a new era of Downtown development.

IV. Strategies

To respond to the current challenges of the external environment in Downtown Columbia and meet the goals previously outlined, the following strategies are recommended:

A. Economic Development

Columbia has seen continued growth and vitality and has continuously offered a vibrant Downtown experience. Continued vitality, however, requires continued vigilance. A commitment to enhance Downtown by both the public and private sectors is necessary to secure and build upon the gains that have been made to date. To achieve this, the strategy moving ahead should be to create an environment that encourages investment and the development of creative activity and business.

ED1: Develop a Business Retention and Recruitment Initiative: Downtown Columbia currently lacks a strategy to retain, broaden and diversify its small business base. The SBD should be positioned to serve as the primary point of contact for business development assistance in Downtown Columbia. Working in partnership with the City of Columbia, the SBD should nurture businesses and help them grow by coordinating and packaging information important to doing business in Downtown.

To accomplish this, a business support program model successfully used in other Downtowns is recommended. This business support initiative would position the SBD as an “entry portal” for any business which wants to start, expand or relocate within Downtown Columbia, including:

- Compilation and dissemination of up-to-date Downtown market information to assist existing and prospective businesses.
- Business counseling to refine business plans and merchandizing practices.
- Space referrals to identify specific sites suitable for new business concepts.
- Trouble-shooting to assist existing or new businesses through local permitting and development review processes.
- Information on a variety of incentive tools to assist in financing tenant finish improvements, lease subsidies and working capital for innovative business concepts.

Such a program provides the support necessary to help get independent businesses started and fill vacant Downtown space. The program consists of the implementation of three specific elements:

1. Up-To-Date Market Information

This strategy is developed by pulling together in one place all the market research and necessary information about the existing conditions of the real estate in Downtown. Market information that should be compiled includes:

- **Business Mix:** Data should be collected on the existing business inventory in Downtown Columbia and an analysis should be performed to identify future demand.
- **Property Information:** In order to acquire all the necessary information needed to understand the business inventory, outreach to individual property owners will be necessary. Detailed property information should be sought including space available, lease rates, condition of space, and, if possible, expiration dates of existing leases.
- **Data, Maps and Leasing Collateral:** All the necessary data which prospective entrepreneurs will need in deciding whether to locate in Downtown Columbia should be well organized and packaged. Brokers, interested businesses and other Downtown stakeholders should have easy access to this information and should be able to quickly find the comprehensive information about the district that they need. Recommended pieces include:

Recruitment Target Area Map: The map should clearly illustrate: Location of first floor occupants; Vacant spaces with square footage; Occupied spaces that could be considered available by the property owner.

Marketing Information Package: This package should include general information about the Downtown market, including: Demographics; Sales Tax Trends; Development updates; Positive attributes about Downtown Columbia.

2. Incentive Program

An incentive program could work to entice desirable creative and innovative small businesses to the core of Downtown Columbia by matching eligible business entrepreneurs with incentives in an effort to assist them in locating Downtown. A variety of incentive tools are envisioned, including loan and/or equity programs to finance tenant finish improvements, lease subsidies and working capital for innovative business concepts. These incentives could be funded in a variety of ways:

- **Bank CDC:** CDC's are often utilized to assist in the development of under-utilized real estate and to attract business capital for small businesses. The SBD could create a CDC between the multiple banks located in Columbia to facilitate the development of real estate to accommodate new business concepts, providing predevelopment, construction and long-term financing. The CDC could also house a seed capital loan and equity fund to launch new business concepts.
- **City Supported Revolving Loan Fund:** The SBD could work with the City of Columbia to create a Revolving Loan Fund housed at the City. This fund could provide low-interest or no-interest loans to start-ups, with the money paid back available to reinvest in future business concepts.

Business and property owners would seek incentives on a competitive basis, with ratings developed that reward desirable business types, locations and operating practices. How each prospective business scores against established eligibility criteria would determine the amount of incentive for which they are eligible.

3. Economic Development Marketing

Marketing, as it relates to economic development, should essentially revolve around the following:

- **Packaging the Vision:** In order to effectively launch the Business Support Program, it is extremely important to sell the vision of what the Downtown "will be" and encourage retailers and innovative small businesses to become investors in the future of Downtown. Packaging the new vision for Downtown that results from the City's Downtown Development Plan (see PR5) provides an opportunity to illustrate Downtown's potential.
- **Educating the Investment Community:** Marketing needs to be conducted for retail brokers, potential retailers, and the customer. Messages should carry a specific call to action for each segment. CCA/SBD could conduct a public relations effort surrounding every new development including lease signings, construction announcements, "coming soon" teasers, and grand openings.
- **Selling the Incentive Program:** Once an incentive program is activated, a marketing/PR campaign should be launched to introduce the program and its workings to property owners, local real estate professionals and prospective tenants.
- **Marketing Suite/Website:** A retail marketing suite or "war room", recommended within the CCA/SBD office, can be used as an additional tool to entice retailers, innovative small businesses, brokers and developers to review the area, share in the vision of Downtown and eventually invest in this "up and coming" destination. Components of a marketing suite could include: enlarged versions of district maps, presentations about the future developments Downtown, charts and graphs on demos and boards on existing space.

Staffing and Budget: The development and management of this program would be handled by the SBD. One additional full-time staff person, a Business Support Manager, is recommended to manage the program. The individual should have experience in real estate, be entrepreneurial and motivated and have a strong street presence. Duties will require a responsibility to not only manage the incentive program, but

to develop, compile and provide data on economic development information. In addition, this individual should serve as an “ombudsman” assisting in overcoming challenges to Downtown development, including issues revolving around zoning, permitting and parking among other things.

To sustain the Business Support Program, an annual operational budget of \$60,000 to \$100,000 is recommended to cover staff and marketing costs.

Program Activity	Estimated Cost
Business Support Manager Salary and Benefits	\$40,000 to \$50,000
Program Marketing Support	\$20,000 to \$50,000
TOTAL	\$60,000 to \$100,000

For the incentive program, a funding target of \$500,000 to \$1 million over a five-year period is envisioned. A goal for recruiting a set number of quality businesses should be set for the five-year period.

ED2: Consumer Marketing: The existing marketing of “The District” is well recognized and supported and should continue to be reinforced in consumer marketing efforts. However, a new marketing component should be explored to support the business retention and recruitment initiative.

To augment the proposed economic development strategy, the SBD should explore adding resources to both consumer marketing and investor marketing. “Consumer Marketing”, which is currently the focus of SBD marketing efforts, aims to attract customers to drive sales and improve regional image. Consumer marketing efforts should continue and be strengthened if additional resources can be secured. “Investor Marketing” is targeted to attract jobs, businesses and investment. An investor marketing focus could be directed towards developing the Downtown product and creating a vision for what the SBD is trying to achieve (see description of Economic Development Marketing in ED1). Marketing pieces should include a “Call to Action” for investors and consumers and should help to make markets feel compelled to engage in Downtown.

ED3: Events: The Central Columbia Association was formed primarily to provide an events and marketing function for Downtown. With a small budget and no staff, the organization contracted with the SBD to provide these services. In recent years, however, these events have taken up a substantial amount of the staff and financial resources of both organizations. In stakeholder outreach and survey work, events were often mentioned as a reason for Columbia’s past successes, yet they were infrequently mentioned as a key priority for the organization in the future. Given this, a shift away from the internal development and management of events is suggested. If special events can become more self-sufficient over time, this will create opportunities to reallocate assessment funds to other priority programs.

In the short term, event criteria should be developed to filter new events and measure the effectiveness of existing events. Events that do not meet the criteria should not be pursued and/or discontinued. Event criteria could include:

1. **Revenue Generation** (income, sustainability, sponsorship opportunities)
2. **Logistical Feasibility** (physical, regulatory, safety, disruption, timing)
3. **Compelling Community Benefit**
4. **Organizational Capacity** (staff capacity, appeal to volunteers, partnerships)
5. **Event Characteristics** (fun factor, attract diverse markets, “uniqueness”, compatibility with Downtown image)

Looking ahead, a more entrepreneurial approach to managing special events is suggested. If a more aggressive events production approach is desired, it is suggested that the SBD consider the future formation of a for-profit and/or non-profit events production company as a subsidiary to the Downtown

organization. A similar event subsidiary, “The Updowntowners”, has been created for the downtown organization in Lincoln, NE.

ED4: Advocacy: Stakeholders clearly feel that the SBD should be positioned as a strong Downtown advocate that can provide visionary leadership and a unified, influential voice for Downtown. The SBD’s advocacy efforts should be focused on advancing strategic issues that affect Downtown, and on serving as a liaison between the public and private sectors. Recommendations for strengthening SBD’s advocacy role include:

- Focus on issues and policies that affect the collective interests of Downtown Columbia.
- Ensure the outcomes of Downtown planning efforts provide consensus and direction for future public and private investment and direct advocacy efforts around top priorities. Top priorities include: encourage the development of Downtown residential and amenities to support it, securing destination attractions in Downtown, and bringing a full-service hotel to the central business district.

Regulatory Issues: Recently, the SBD took a leadership role on new signage standards for the Downtown. While well intentioned, the signage issue created divisiveness within the Downtown community and the CCA/SBD was unable to represent Downtown with a unified voice. In the future, the CCA/SBD should avoid the perception of being in a regulatory role. As an entity that collects mandatory assessments to improve Downtown, the CCA/SBD’s primary role is to be an advocate for the private sector by marketing, maintaining and managing Downtown. It is government’s role to regulate activities, such as design and signage codes. The CCA/SBD can support these efforts by helping to educate and inform downtown stakeholders on the advantages and disadvantages of regulatory issues. CCA/SBD may also explore developing coalitions to support and/or implement regulatory changes, but it is inconsistent with its core purpose to unilaterally lead regulatory processes.

B. Public Realm

Maintaining a vibrant, safe and beautiful environment is vital to ensuring the people feel welcome in Downtown Columbia and are encouraged to stay. The following strategies are suggested to improve the public realm.

PR1: Cleaner: Stakeholder outreach has suggested that maintaining and improving the cleanliness of the environment is key to Downtown Columbia’s continued success. Specifically, the maintenance and upkeep of alleys and parking garages was mentioned as key. The SBD currently funds a small maintenance staff that spot clean and sweep as necessary in the Downtown, but limited funds mean this service can’t be expanded much beyond its current scope. To address this issue effectively, the SBD has two potential options:

- **Increase Funding Sources:** An increase in the current SBD levy or the creation of new funding district could be explored to increase the resources available for managing a larger cleaning and maintenance program downtown.
- **Advocate for Stronger City Resources:** A stronger, defined relationship with the City could be explored and advocated for to partner on tackling the cleanliness issues Downtown and provide comprehensive cleaning.

PR2: Safer: Providing a safe Downtown environment also was revealed a critical to the future of Downtown. Stakeholders are particularly interested in seeing additional Police presence, and less interested in securing a private security detail for Downtown. To address this, the SBD should look to the City of Columbia to develop a stronger partnership to manage Downtown safety. A Downtown Detail, or localized deployment of police, could provide a stronger police presence at the times and locations most crucial to overcoming the perception of crime that still exists in Downtown, and could specifically address issues with vagrants and increased issues raised by late-night bar environments.

If CCA/SBD looks at expanding its resource base, it may also want to consider direct investment options to improve safety. The Strategic Plan survey found that nearly 40% of respondents are willing to pay additional assessments to make downtown safer - the second highest priority following attracting new businesses. Options to enhance safety with assessment funding could range from purchasing equipment for city police to deploying Downtown Ambassadors to contracting for off-duty police at peak hours of need.

PR3: Improve the Pedestrian Experience: Downtown Columbia has undergone tremendous beautification efforts in recent years with the removal of the canopies and the upgrading of the streetscape. To build on this, stakeholders noted interest in adding some new elements to activate and better connect Downtown through the use of landscaping and flowers, lighting, public art and additional sidewalk cafes and activities to make the pedestrian environment more walkable and inviting. Suggested strategies include:

- **Incorporate Ideas in Downtown Development Plan:** The SBD has an immediate opportunity to incorporate connectivity and major streetscape investments into the scope of the Downtown Development Plan currently underway by the City of Columbia, and being led by the Downtown Leadership Council.
- **Invest SBD Resources into Incremental Improvements:** Past SBD efforts and resources were invested into the development of major streetscape improvements for Downtown. Looking forward, there is an opportunity for the SBD to build on past efforts by greening and activating the environment, focusing more on the details than the major infrastructure, and focusing more on “experience” enhancements. This could be funded through a rate increase or the development of a new district funding tool, to invest funding into making incremental improvements in “softscape” treatments to enhance the pedestrian experience, including planters and greening, banners, pedestrian lighting, public art, tree lighting, etc.

PR4: Façade Improvements: Currently, no local financial incentives exist for business or property owners who would like to improve the facades of their buildings, including their signage, or their alleyways. Such programs are common in Downtowns, and a similar program could be developed in Downtown Columbia. Generally, the process that can be followed is:

- Funds are set aside each year to provide a matching grant or low interest loan for business or property owners who want to improve their building frontage or alleys.
- The business or property owners must apply for the funds.
- The improvement proposed would have to go through a design review committee before the grant or loan was approved.

Such a program provides an incentive for business and property owners to upgrade their properties and allows for design review recommendations as part of the process. As a “carrot” as opposed to a “stick”, this approach is more favorable from the SBD’s perspective than mandatory regulations. A façade improvement loan program could also be part of the Incentive Program proposed for the Business Retention & Recruitment Initiative (ED1).

PR5: Downtown Development Plan Involvement: Recently, the Columbia City Council established a “Downtown Leadership Council” (DLC) to advise them on a number of “big picture” Downtown issues including spearheading Downtown MODESA grant applications. The city is considering the DLC as an important policy advisory board. Per the ordinance establishing the DLC, the Council will have the following duties:

- Develop and recommend to the City Council proposed boundaries of an expanded Downtown Development Plan.
- Assess current assets and additional opportunities within the expanded study area that would assist in the area’s redevelopment.

- Advise City staff and consultants on preparation of a blight/conservation study and preparation of a MODESA application.
- Develop for City Council consideration a strategic plan for the area and an underlying concept plan, similar to the plan prepared for the Downtown area by Sasaki Associates. The Sasaki plan should be used as a base for the expanded area.
- Recommend to the City Council possible development guidelines and physical attributes for Downtown Columbia.

As the City moves forward with the Downtown Development Plan, the SBD and CCA need to ensure active involvement in the process. The ultimate goal of this plan is to create a unified public/private strategy for future projects, programs and investments in Downtown Columbia. Such an effort should identify priorities for the public and private sectors and would provide the SBD with a leadership opportunity. The CCA/SBD should aim to influence the scope of the Concept Plan to ensure there is an urban design component that identifies key streets, connectors and ways to improve the pedestrian experience. The plan should build on existing activity centers to make sure that all of Downtown benefits from new investment, and should ensure that the most catalytic sites are identified for new investment.

The SBD should work with the City to ensure that the plan not only provides a vision for the future of Downtown, but also provides a detailed, tactical plan with recommendations for priorities, sequencing, roles and responsibilities, financing and benchmarks to measure success. The plan should aim to define and solidify ongoing working relationships that merge both the energy and resources of the public and private sectors in creating a more vital Downtown. This plan should aim to forge an enduring public/private partnership to champion Downtown Columbia for the next decade and beyond. An emphasis on “quick wins” and short-term achievable tasks will ensure that the plan is a catalyst to visible change.

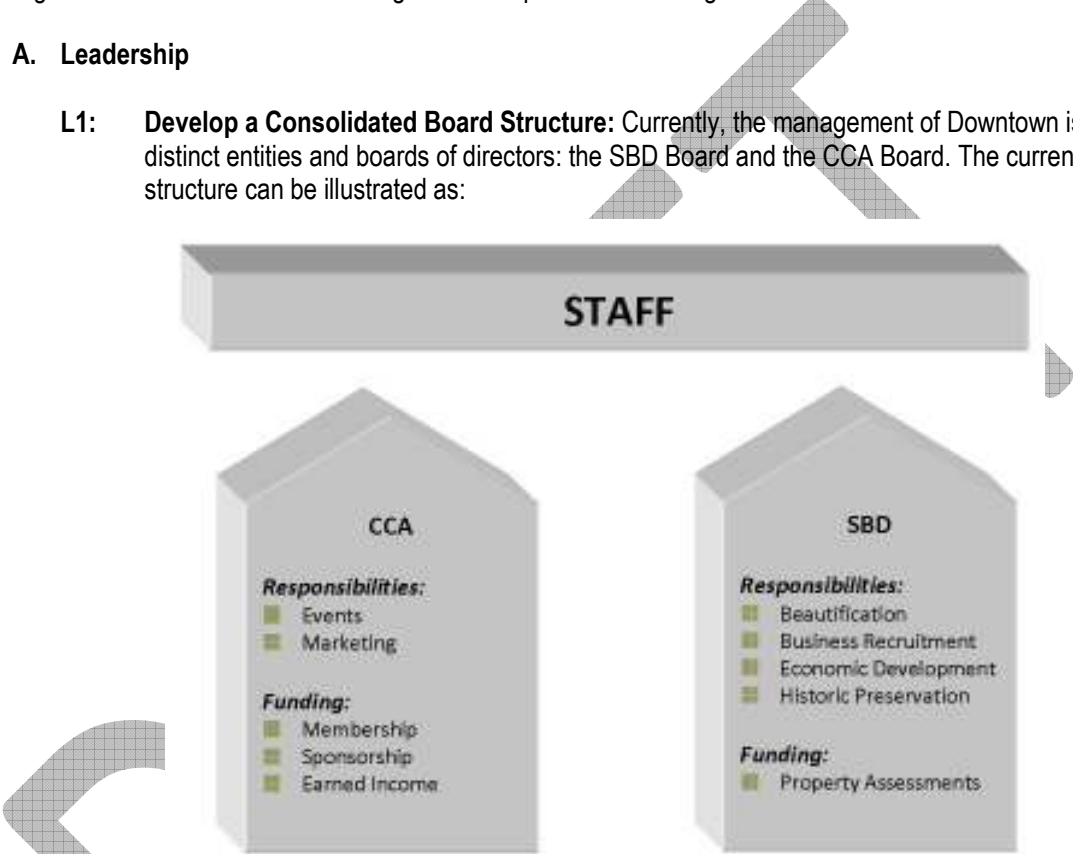
V. Organizational Response

As part of the Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan, P.U.M.A. was charged with determining how the Downtown SBD and CCA should best be positioned and organized to respond to current challenges and opportunities. Stakeholder outreach identified the development of a stronger Downtown organization as a key priority, and suggested seeing an organization that was able to mobilize more energy and resources to create a stronger leadership presence.

The following organizational adjustments are recommended to accommodate areas of emphasis and growth, including anticipated impacts on staffing, budget and organizational structure, as well as other suggested steps to improve the organization’s influence in advancing the development and management of Downtown Columbia.

A. Leadership

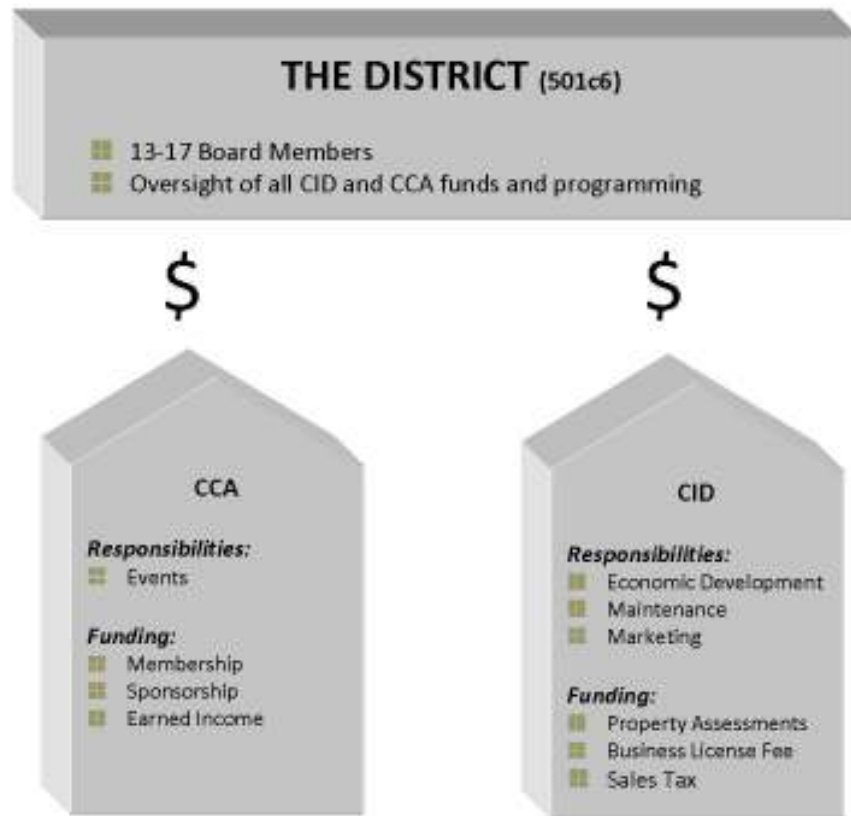
L1: **Develop a Consolidated Board Structure:** Currently, the management of Downtown is overseen by two distinct entities and boards of directors: the SBD Board and the CCA Board. The current organizational structure can be illustrated as:



Under this structure, the management of Downtown is provided by two boards – the Central Columbia Association and the Special Business District - and a multitude of committees that sometimes do, and other times do not, intersect effectively. Staff is the only connection between the two organizations and boards of directors, and even though the staff is shared, the two boards do not meet together. A summary of the positives and negatives of the current structure include:

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Sense of accountability, i.e. those who pay govern how their money is spent	Occasional lack of communication and coordination between boards
	Administratively cumbersome
	Duplication of effort at times
	CCA funds go directly to the cost of programming, but does not contribute to the costs of overhead and staff

To eliminate these inefficiencies and disconnects and to maintain the accountability desired by ratepayers, reorganization under the following consolidated organizational structure is recommended.



Board Governance: The preceding organizational structure would be governed by one consolidated board of directors – The District - overseeing all functions of Downtown management. The governance is envisioned as follows:

- The District:** The District is envisioned as the primary management group for Downtown Columbia. It is recommended that the board be composed of between 13 and 17 members with individuals representing a new CID (or the existing SBD), the CCA, and at-large directors. Non-voting ex-officio members would also sit on the board. Ex-officio members could include City representatives, representatives from the colleges and members of other important community organizations. The District board would maintain the overall vision and direction for the organization, and would approve an annual consolidated budget, serve as the joint finance and nominating committee and oversee all staffing selection decisions. The District Board would meet monthly.
- CCA:** The CCA would serve as an advisory board on downtown events, perhaps meeting quarterly, Sponsorship, membership and earned income would be funneled directly into The District to leverage larger marketing and events effort. The officers of the CCA board would also sit on The District board.
- CID:** A new CID, (or an expanded SBD), is proposed to provide a larger stream of revenue to the organization. The CID would contract with The District to provide services. The CID Advisory Board would be comprised of up to nine (9) members who would meet quarterly. The officers of the CID Advisory Board would sit on The District board. Similar to the CCA board, the CID board would serve in a policy role, meeting quarterly to ensure that The District is utilizing assessments in accordance with the legislative intent of the CID (or SBD).

Each of these boards should incorporate term limits into their operational bylaws to encourage the development of new leadership and representation..

- L2: Develop Formal Communication Strategies:** It is recommended that the organization(s) establish a formal communication strategy with the City of Columbia, particularly with the City Manager and the City Council. The City has already indicated to the SBD that they are looking for this type of communication method. These communication efforts will be particularly important to ensure consistency in efforts with the new Downtown Leadership Council in place. Methods to accomplish this include:
- Establish a monthly memo to be distributed to the City Manager and City Council which includes detailed information about the top five projects and priorities the organization is currently working on. Ensure feedback and discussion is invited if individuals have more questions or want to become more involved.
 - Ask the City Council to set aside time at their work session periodically (once per quarter?) to discuss Downtown matters.

B. Operations

- O1: Restructure Committees:** Currently, there are five standing committees under the SBD and four standing committees under the CCA that serve in an ad hoc function, meeting as necessary. In reality, most of these committees rarely meet, and when they do they struggle to come to effective consensus on moving forward. The current committee structure also provides some significant challenges both operationally and administratively. Volunteer resources are spread thinly and the methods by which these committees communicate to one another, the boards and the staff, are not well defined. We propose doing away with all existing committees, aside from the Executive Committee, and moving towards a committee structure that focuses on issues key to the items outlined in the new strategic plan. The new committees would all be overseen by The District Board and would include:

- **Downtown Economic Development Committee:** This committee could assist staff to create materials and programs that help retain, recruit and incubate new businesses in Downtown. Committee members could include real estate brokers, lenders, property owners, appraisers, etc. The chair of the Economic Development Committee would sit on the CID (or SBD) Board.
- **Downtown Operations Committee:** This committee would address landscape and development and maintenance, lighting, safety and cleanliness and security issues in the Downtown environment. Committee members could include downtown business and property owners among others. The chair of the Downtown Operations Committee would sit on the CID (or SBD) Board.
- **Downtown Marketing Committee:** The Downtown Marketing Committee could offer creative input into the development of new marketing tools and events and help coordinate the overall marketing message for downtown. This group could include representatives from the arts, culture, restaurant, retail and hospitality segments as well as other local marketing organization. The chair of the Marketing Committee would sit on the CID (or SBD) Board.

As the organization is reforming these committees, it is recommended that operational procedures and leadership processes are clearly outlined, including how chair positions are elected, term limits and communication procedures with the board. While it is recommended that at least one board member sit on each board, the committee makeup should also aim to involve other stakeholders such as property owners, business owners and interested residents.

One key problem that emerged as we looked at the internal structure of the organization is the number of unplanned requests that eat up staff time and the issues that pop up that are beyond the primary focus of the organization. To address these challenges, such requests and recommendations should first be sent to the appropriate committee for discussion, research and action recommendations and that information should be communicated to the board, with appropriate actions, if any, for staff to take. Additionally, short term task forces can be appointed to address larger issues outside the realm of any committee. While

deliberating any request, the committee should formulate criteria to evaluate whether the requested action is within the organization's current mission statement and resource level. Suggested criteria could include:

- Is the request for action consistent with the strategic plan?
- Does the organization have the staff capacity to respond to the requested action?
- Is there a revenue source associated with the requested action to cover any expenses?

If the committee cannot positively answer these questions, the proposal should be returned to the submitter.

O2: Redefine Staff Positions: Like any business, the Downtown organization requires a professional staff to manage programs and elevate the overall sophistication of Downtown improvement efforts. To implement this strategic plan, a redefinition of current staff tasks, and the addition of one more staff person, is recommended. Staff would be hired and managed by The District Board. The following key staff positions are suggested:

- **President and CEO:** The existing senior management position should be upgraded from "executive director" to "president and CEO" and reflect the responsibilities of advancing a multi-billion dollar real-estate asset, which is Downtown Columbia. This individual will be responsible for leading the advocacy role of the organization and guiding change as the work program shifts to an economic development focus.
- **Business Support Manager:** A full time business support manager is recommended to manage the day-to-day tasks associated with the Business Support Program. Envisioned duties include conducting ongoing meetings with business prospects and property owners, providing support services including technical assistance and permit liaison activities, administering incentive programs, supervising the research manager and overall coordination with program sponsors.
- **Research/Special Projects Manager:** The research and special projects manager would provide project support to the President and CEO, particularly for economic development functions. Tasks would include developing and maintaining a comprehensive Downtown property database and working with small business prospects to identify available space and viable market opportunities, as outlined in ED1 of this plan. This individual would also focus on the development and implementation of consumer marketing programs, collaborative promotions and the management of any special event programming.

In addition to these staff positions, this work plan assumes that the management of events will be outsourced or filled by a part-time staff position to ensure the organization has the needed resources to support economic development for Downtown.

O3: Reassess Communications Tools: The SBD has worked to improve its constituent communications in the past few years, and the organization currently has several communications tools used to distribute information to constituents, including:

- An SBD Update for members which focuses on downtown development and infrastructure issues.
- A SPD Update for customers which focuses on marketing and events.
- Monthly postcard to all members and general contacts about downtown events and happenings as well as a distribution of "event overviews" to downtown businesses.
- An Annual Report, mailed out to all members.

Despite these resources, participants in the strategic planning process indicated that the SBD needs to improve its ability to inform stakeholders on issues affecting Downtown and, perhaps more importantly, needs to clarify its mission and role. Specifically, stakeholders would like to see the organization facilitating

communication among Downtown stakeholders and using that information to provide a unified voice, influence and leadership.

After analyzing the existing communication tools, we feel part of this may be because of the nature of the communication, which is heavily focused on events for consumer purposes, while the external, strategic efforts of the organization are restricted to communication strictly for ratepayers. The result of this is that different constituents are receiving different information about downtown, and the general feeling is that the work of the SBD is primarily events and marketing focused. The following recommendations are suggested to provide better communication to all constituents and to clarify the organization's important role to all stakeholders moving forward:

- ***The SBD should explore high-touch options to develop one-on-one relationships with Downtown stakeholders.*** In order to reach as many people as possible, it is recommended that the organization assign retention calls to members of the board of directors. If each director was assigned to contact one stakeholder each month, more than 100 contacts would be completed in a year.
- ***Merge consumer and stakeholder outreach channels.*** Instead of providing separate newsletters and emails for separate constituents, merge the two into one communications channel which balances discussions of current issues and advocacy efforts with brief marketing and events updates.
- ***Consider an annual meeting or regular updates open to the public.*** Use these forums to create an exciting environment in which to share information about everything that the organization is doing.

C. Resources

The preceding recommendations assume that the Downtown organization will need more resources. These anticipated changes are expected to add anywhere from \$130,000 to \$365,000 per year to the annual budget. The following chart provides a SAMPLE budget comparing current general budget expenditures for the SBD/CCA to future potential expenditures, including options for both a minimum budget and an optimal budget:

The “minimum” budget illustrates how the recommendations from the Strategic Plan can be implemented with a limited increase in resources. The “minimum” budget is suggested as a reasonable short-term strategy, but does not provide sufficient resources for Downtown to compete over an extended period of time. The “optimal” budget illustrates a more desirable resource base for implementing the Strategic Plan and offers more flexibility to reallocate resources within Downtown in the future as conditions change. Again, the budget below is offered as an example. Any proposed budget will be based on organizational priorities, member input, cost of services and available funds.

	Current Budget	Source	Minimum Changes	Minimum Budget	Optimal Changes	Optimal Budget
- Personnel & Admin	126,000	SBD				
Add: Business Support Manager			45,000		45,000	
Add: Administrative Adjustments			20,000	191,000	50,000	221,000
City Enhanced Services	12,500	SBD	city contribution	0		0
Maintenance Services	22,000	SBD	redefine?	22,000		22,000
Enhanced Clean & Safe				25,000		100,000
Special Projects	50,000	SBD	retain	50,000		100,000
Admin -- CCA	14,000	??	events pay	14,000		14,000
Special Event Expenses	40,000	CCA		40,000		50,000
Outsource Events			events pay	15,000		25,000
Holiday & Image Advertising	18,000	CCA				
Replace: Holiday & Image Marketing				20,000		50,000
New: Eco Devo Marketing				20,000		50,000
TOTAL	282,500			397,000		632,000
Sources of Funds						
SBD	200,000			200,000		200,000
CCA Membership	17,500			17,500		17,500
Event Sponsorships	55,000			50,000		50,000
Budget Gap				129,500		364,500
Total	272,500			397,000		632,000

The following recommendation explains methods to obtain these added resources to fill the budget gap.

R1: Explore New Assessment Options: Downtown Columbia currently has a Special Business District (SPD), created in 1979, which encompasses 43 blocks of the Downtown. The SBD raises assessments to finance services including beautification, business recruitment, economic development and historic preservation as well as staff to manage those services. The SPD generates just over \$200,000 yearly to cover these services. The strategic planning process revealed a desire to not only explore new services, but to additionally explore options to strengthen the organization and generate more resources for Downtown. Special districts such as the SBD are the strongest funding source for managing and marketing Downtowns because they provide a constant, reliable stream of revenue for organizations over a long-term period.

In Missouri, Downtown organizations can utilize the SBD tool, or they can also use a newer special district tool called the Community Improvement District (CID). The following chart explains each tool and the differences between the two:

	Special Business District (SBD)	Community Improvement District (CID)
Eligible Uses of Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public capital improvements Special services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public capital improvements Private capital improvements, identified in petition, located in a blighted area and serving a public purpose approved by City. Special services
Formation	By City Council, upon petition by at least one property owner. A public hearing follows. City Council adopts an ordinance to establish.	By City Council, upon petition by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owners of more than 1/2 of property in the district by assessed value; and More than 1/2 of owners of property in the district (irrespective of number of parcels owned) A public hearing follows. City Council adopts an ordinance to establish.
Governance	Advisory Board, with final authority in City Council	Board of directors, elected by voters or appointed by City. Must be an owner of real property or a business within CID or a registered voter residing in the CID. Can also be governed by an existing non-profit but can ONLY collect special assessments.
Revenue from Property	State legislation states districts can impose a tax on real property in the district not to exceed \$0.85 per \$100 valuation. The Hancock Amendment lowered that threshold to \$0.47. Exceeding the Hancock Amendment requires a vote. All taxes and assessments require a majority vote of all residents plus all owners of real property in the district.	Can impose special assessments on real property by petition. With a vote of "qualified voters", can collect property taxes (no limit). "Qualified voters" consist of registered voters residing in the district, if any eligible voters reside in the district. If not, "qualified voters" are all owners of property within the district.
Revenue from Businesses	Can impose business license tax, not to exceed 50% increase. All taxes and assessments require a majority vote of all residents plus all owners of real property in the district.	With a vote of "qualified" voters, can collect retail sales tax and business license taxes (no limit). (See above for definition of "qualified voters".)
Treatment	Can establish special assessment rates for	Can establish special assessment rates for

of Different Uses	different classes of real property (i.e. commercial, residential). Non-profits are exempt unless they voluntarily choose to participate.	different classes of real property (i.e. commercial, residential). Non-profits are exempt unless they voluntarily choose to participate.
Modifying the District Term	Same as process to create.	Same as process to create.
Borrowing Authority	Perpetual	May be defined as a minimum, maximum or definite number of years
	Able to bond.	Able to bond.

Following a detailed review of the SBD and CID tools, the consultant team identified the following positives and negatives of each option:

	SBD	CID
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requires vote, no petition ▪ Definition of elector includes property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can impose sales tax ▪ No caps on taxes/assessments ▪ Can do special assessment ▪ More revenue ▪ Flexibility ▪ New contract, accountability ▪ Equitable distribution of cost
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burden on property owners • Limit on resources - caps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenging to form ▪ Definition of “electors”

The current SBD in Downtown Columbia could generate a higher amount of revenue through a vote to raise the property assessment cap from the current 0.47 per \$1,000 to \$0.85 per \$1,000, generating an estimated additional \$100,000 in revenue; however, the CID clearly emerges as a stronger tool because it:

- Provides for the ability to spread the costs more equitably between all downtown stakeholders (i.e. property owners, business owners and customers through a sales tax)
- Offers the ability to collect greater revenue over time as needs arise (more than \$500,000 annually is estimated from a one-half cent sales tax adjustment, which would bring Downtown sales tax rates to parity with other shopping destinations in Columbia).
- Creates the opportunity to simplify Downtown Columbia’s assessment structure through one legal mechanism (i.e. CID) as opposed to multiple methods (i.e. SBD, CID, membership dues, etc.)

The consultant team recommends the creation of a new Community Improvement District to replace the existing SBD in Downtown Columbia.

CREATE A NEW DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA CID: Although very beneficial, the creation of CIDs requires significant organizational focus and effort and support from the majority of affected property owners and electors. Significant education and outreach among downtown stakeholders and civic leaders will be required to successfully create a Downtown CID. It is recommended in the short-term that the initial work to develop a CID be initiated, including:

- Work with an attorney on legal aspects of CID creation, including a timetable
- Establish a CID study area that may or may not be contiguous with the existing SBD
- Develop a base level of services agreement with the City to ensure partnership on how Downtown is cared for
- Based upon recommendations within the Strategic Plan, develop a work plan and operating budget for a CID
- Assessment modeling, identifying property tax, sales tax, business license tax and special assessments to be used
- Review a draft CID operating plan with affected stakeholders and civic leaders

With the creation of a new CID, some existing funding sources for Downtown could be replaced, with increased resources from the CID covering those expenses. The following is recommended:

Current Funding	Proposed Funding
SBD – Property Assessment	CID – Property Assessment
SBD – Business License Assessment	CID – Business License Assessment
CCA - Membership Revenue	CID – Sales Tax
Sponsorships	Sponsorships
Government Contributions	Government Contributions

The creation of a CID assumes the dissolution of the existing SBD and CCA funding mechanisms. Under a CID, both property and business license assessment would continue to be collected. Additionally, it is suggested that the CCA membership dues be eliminated for businesses located within the boundaries of the proposed CID. These funds are minimal and consume substantial staff and financial resources to collect and manage. Memberships could remain for businesses located outside of the formal boundaries of the CID if they would like to share in CID program benefits.

The sales tax component of the CID would be a new funding tool for Downtown Columbia, It appears to be a particularly good fit for Columbia, because Downtown’s sales tax is currently lower than sales tax being charged elsewhere in the City of Columbia by a half-cent. Bringing the sales tax to parity by increasing it a half-cent through a CID could raise in excess of \$500,000 per year

Overall, the CID emerges as a better tool for Downtown Columbia both in the short-term – to jump-start economic development programming – and long-term, in order to tackle bigger, costlier items such as infrastructure improvements, increased clean and safe efforts and other unforeseen needs that may arise..

VI. Implementation

The 2008 Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan provides a framework to guide the development of Downtown Columbia, and the organization managing it, over the next five years. The steps outlined in this implementation section are intended to be carried out by a range of entities, both public and private. Some are relatively easy to undertake, others are more complex and time consuming. It will take a concerted, sustained partnership among all stakeholders to tackle these initiatives and set the course for success.

To assemble this implementation strategy, the SBD and CCA Boards met in May 2008 to review and discuss plan recommendations that had emerged following substantial outreach with Downtown Columbia stakeholders. Priorities for implementation were set at the work session through an exercise that asked each participant to identify their five most important recommendations. Top priorities from the May joint board retreat included:

PRIORITY	ACTIVITY
1	ED1: Develop a Business Recruitment & Retention Initiative
2	ED2: Add Resources for More Effective Consumer & Investor Marketing
3	PR5: Be Active in the Downtown Development Plan Process
4	PR2: Make Downtown Safer
5	ED4: Be a More Effective Advocate for Downtown
6	PR3: Improve the Downtown Pedestrian Experience

The following chart outlines the sequencing of key recommendations made as part of the Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and identifies a clear phasing strategy for implementation:

IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITIES – NO INCREASED FUNDING

L1: Develop a Consolidated Board Structure

O1: Restructure Committees

O3: Reassess Communications Tools

L2: Develop Formal Communication Strategies

ED3: Events – Explore Options for Outsourcing

ED4: Advocacy

PR5: Downtown Development Plan Involvement

FUNDING

R1: Explore New Assessment Options – Replace the SBD with a new CID

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES – WITH ENHANCED FUNDING

ED1: Develop a Business Retention and Recruitment Initiative

ED2: Marketing – Develop Investor Marketing, Enhance Consumer Marketing

ED3: Events – Complete Shift of Event Management

PR1: Cleaner

PR2: Safer

PR3: Improved Pedestrian Experience

PR4: Façade Improvement Program

O2: Redefine Staff Positions

IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITIES

In the short-term, the staff and boards of the Columbia SBD and CCA should focus primarily on internal restructuring that will strengthen and best position the organization to tackle the other strategies outlined in the plan. The following action strategies require minimal financial investment and present immediate opportunities to begin moving both organizations forward in a new direction.

L1: Develop a Consolidated Board Structure

- In the short-term, the SBD and CCA boards should move towards a consolidated structure informally. The two boards should schedule cooperative quarterly meetings until a new funding mechanism and a new more formal organizational structure is in place.
- Once a new funding mechanism is in place, the boards should move towards a new formal board governance structure with "The District" holding company, as identified in L1 of the Strategic Plan.

O1: Restructure Committees

- The SBD and CCA boards should work with staff to restructure committees as identified in O1 of the Strategic Plan. Committees will be under the purview of the joint SBD/CCA group in the short term.
- The boards and staff should implement special request criteria for the committees.
- Long term, move the committees to the purview of "The District" holding company.

O3: Reassess Communications Tools

- The boards and staff should work together to assign board retention calls
- Staff should work to merge consumer and stakeholder communications
- The organization should hold a public forum on the Strategic Plan and use this event to launch regular public forums and/or an Annual Meeting

L2: Develop Formal Communication Strategies

- Schedule City Council work session for 2008
- Immediately develop communications with City Council and City Manager and begin monthly distribution

ED3: Events – Explore Options for Outsourcing

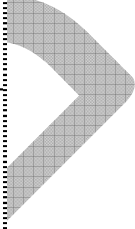
- Short-term, explore options for outsourcing events including cost-comparisons on moving events to an outside organizer versus hiring part-time staff

ED4: Advocacy

- Ensure Downtown Leadership Council is aware of the SBD and CCA's short term and long term strategies moving forward, including the creation of the CID. Strive to maintain ongoing communication.
- Communicate to organization's stakeholders – including ratepayers as well as City partners - new organizational advocacy efforts as highlighted in the Strategic Plan

PR5: Downtown Development Plan Involvement

- Create work session with the Downtown Leadership Council to bring them up-to-date on the Strategic Plan and next steps.



LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

With immediate opportunities in progress, efforts should turn to securing future funding via a new organizational structure which will ensure the long-term viability of the Downtown organization and provide it with the resources necessary to implement long-term initiatives important to the future of Downtown Columbia. The developing of a secure funding stream is critical to the success of the remainder of the priority initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan.

R1: Explore New Assessment Options – Replace the SBD with a new CID

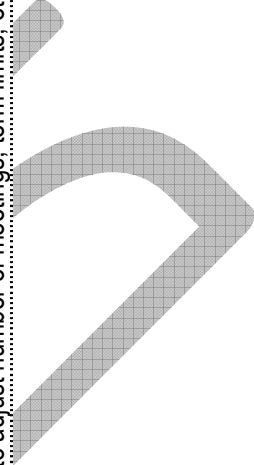
The following steps are suggested to advance the process of replacing the SBD with a new Downtown CID:

- Create a CID Steering Committee composed mostly of property and business owner “champions” that are willing to lead the CID formation process
- Establish a CID formation timetable including identifying all legal steps required
- Establish a CID study area boundary
- Create a property owner, business and “elector” database that is contiguous with the CID study area
- Work with the City of Columbia to create a verifiable “base level of services” agreement
- Based upon the Strategic Plan, create a CID “Business Plan” with a proposed work program, assessment methodology, boundary, governance structure
- Conduct a series of stakeholder meetings to review the draft CID Business Plan
- Assess whether there is sufficient support to advance the CID Plan through both petition and voting processes
- If there is sufficient support for the CID Plan, initiate the petition campaign, city council public hearings and elector vote required for form it.

From initiation to completion, the development of a new CID can take anywhere from six to nine months and generally requires the support of outside consulting assistance to provide objective development support and business plan creation as well as legal expenses to ensure the CID process and plan meet legislative requirements. These costs can range from \$30,000 to \$45,000.

If the CID is formed, proceed with implementing “The District” holding company legal structure

- Initiate development of 501c6 for holding company
- Amend CCA Board Bylaws to adjust number of meetings, term limits, etc.



The following strategies for Downtown Columbia address larger concerns held by Downtown stakeholders. These strategies will require substantial resources – both financially and in staff support – to carry out. Successful implementation will require long-term commitment on the part of the organization.

O2: Redefine Staff Positions

- Create new job descriptions for staff of the organization
- Begin shift of job tasks with current staff, and hire new staff person as needed

ED1: Develop a Business Retention and Recruitment Initiative

- Develop up-to-date market information
- Create awareness for Downtown and for the organization as a one-stop-shop for doing business
- Work to find/develop funding for an incentive program

ED2: Marketing – Develop Investor Marketing, Enhance Consumer Marketing

- Focus new resources on an investor marketing campaign to support business retention and recruitment initiative
- Enhance consumer marketing campaign

ED3: Events – Complete Shift of Event Management

- Move management of events to an outside source or hire part-time individual to manage events in-house

PR1: Cleaner

- Work with stakeholders to identify specific areas requiring enhanced cleaning and develop cost estimates
- Work with City to assist in subsidizing increased cleaning efforts
- Roll-out increased cleaning efforts

PR2: Safer

- Work with Police to identify opportunities to partner on increased safety presence Downtown
- Work with City to assist in subsidizing increased safety Downtown
- Roll-out increased safety efforts

PR3: Improved Pedestrian Experience

- Work with Downtown Leadership Council to identify improved connectivity opportunities and major streetscape improvements as part of overall Downtown Development Plan
- Identify smaller, incremental improvements which the CID could assist in funding short-term to enhance the environment
- Implement incremental improvements

PR4: Façade Improvement Program

- Identify funds which could be used for the program
- Develop program standards and create public/private design review committee
- Market the program as part of ED1

