

FYE2019 Annual Synopsis

East & West Dearborn Downtown Development Authorities

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OVERVIEW

The East and West Dearborn Downtown Development Authorities (EDDDA/WDDDA) continue their pro-active role as catalysts for improvements in both districts of Downtown Dearborn via their continued support of marketing and promotions, streetscape improvements, maintenance, business recruitment, property development and the continuation of past commitments.

The WDDDA and EDDDA continue to collaborate with each other on managing the downtown districts, as well as other partnering organizations and businesses throughout Dearborn, to build a cohesive Michigan Avenue Main Street program focused on creating a vibrant downtown experience for all. The goal is to reposition Dearborn in the Metro Detroit market by transforming its image as a regional destination and a place that residents are proud to call home by focusing on five key **Transformational Strategies, identified by the community in 2016:**

- Image
- Walkable Public Spaces
- Cohesive Community
- Millennial/Next Gen Appeal
- Innovative Retail

Collectively, they are working to market and promote Downtown Dearborn with a unified voice and message; improve the building and street first impressions; create a more walkable and bike-able downtown area, especially along Michigan Avenue; cross-promote districts to grow the economic base of each; attract the next generation with fresh events, new housing options and one-of-a-kind businesses; as well as recruiting innovative retail businesses that provide an experience in Downtown Dearborn.

ORGANIZATION

The WDDDA and EDDDA Boards continue to follow the Main Street approach to revitalization, building their grassroots network to achieve their goals. They continue to work towards the Main Street-style organizational structure as the “Downtown Dearborn” umbrella organization and maintaining their DDA activities.

The steering committee continues working on the details of the restructure and outreach to the community to engage residents and businesses in the process. The Michigan

Main Street offered the DDAs to apply for Main Street as “One Downtown Dearborn” in August 2018, but the DDAs chose to delay the application process to further investigate organizational structural security in relation to tax increment financing, as well as continued education and outreach with Michigan Main Street, other similar organizations in the State of Michigan and the DDAs’ constituents. The Boards will redetermine if they are ready for the application process again this fall, and if not, the next application time will be in the fall of 2020.

The Promotions and Design/Economic Vitality Committees have now been in place for three years and continue to actively meet monthly to implement action plans to meet the transformational strategies. The Boards also shifted all executive management staffing and services, planning and operations to contractual positions with POW! Strategies, Inc. to build on the collaborations, and improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of both DDAs. This is an exciting adaptation that will enhance business and redevelopment opportunities in both DDA districts.

PROMOTIONS

In 2017, the WDDDA and EDDDA partnered together on a communications consolidation plan. The WDDDA and EDDDA migrated their social media handles for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to Downtown Dearborn in order to grow the reach of their audience and keep followers updated on special events and activities taking place within both districts. Social media followers and interactions have almost tripled since this consolidation. In 2018, the DDAs began combining their websites under one platform, www.downtowndearborn.org, to provide one portal for ease of use for the consumer, as well as ease of management for staff. As part of the consolidated Public Act 57, reporting requirements are being maintained on this site.

The DDAs are now in their third year of partnership with Metromode, an online media source for community-based economic positive news stories available online, in social media and distributed to their thousands of newsletter subscribers. In 2018, it generated 49 news stories around the talent economy here in Dearborn and the future of Downtown Dearborn, as well as created a unique four-part speaker series coupled with a start-up contest for businesses. In addition to this, the DDAs have continued their contracts with Tanner Friedman for the third year to develop future communications strategies and implementation to grow the market reach in the Metro Detroit region and beyond, exposing residents and visitors alike to the many great assets of Dearborn. This alone generated 6.8 million in media exposure with 89 media placements.

In August 2018, the DDAs launched its Branding campaign effort, contracting with Octane Design and Applied Storytelling to develop a community-wide brand that encompasses Downtown Dearborn and the various districts. The DDAs have received financial support from Ford Land to support this initiative and are securing more community partners for the campaign as it moves forward. The brand messaging and style guides are now in development and targeting a Fall 2019 release.

The DDAs continue to roll out successful event after event, with 60 events in all, creating a sense of place and downtown community; bringing attention and business to the districts. In 2019, all events in the WDDDA are now taking place at Wagner Park off of West Village Drive behind the new Wagner Place development, including: Friday Nites, Kids Days, Ice Cream Social, Doggone Dearborn, Tunes at Noon, Movies in the Parks, Farmers & Artisans Market and Winterfest Market. The EDDDA has increased event

presence in City Hall Park with the ever-successful Jazz on the Ave, Music in the Park, Movies in the Park, and Perennial Exchange. New this year in August will be a Caribbean Festival, partnering with the Caribbean Carnival and Festival Organization of Detroit. The EDDDA also continues to invest in the Eastborn Neighborhood CleanUp by providing resources for landscaping improvements and clean up supplies that volunteers graciously plant and use to help clean the district on the event day.

The DDDAs coordinated for the third year in a row, Dearborn Restaurant Week, with over 35 participating businesses, as well as growing the trick-or-treating event in the downtowns, a pumpkin carving in City Hall Park, the downtown-wide Shop Small program, and new in 2018– Winterfest and Ladies Night. The DDDAs also support other community events and organizations, and promote the districts via advertising, such as the The Henry Ford, Arab American National Museum, Little Martian Marathon, and Dearborn Area Chamber of Commerce. In addition to this, the DDDAs are supporters of public art including Art Month, Midwest Sculpture Initiative – which is now being provided by local artists the Nordine Brothers, and mural projects with the POP Club and stand-alone projects including three new murals in 2018. Plans for art in 2019 include activating more public/private partnerships for murals and other forms of art in the districts, as well as developing an “Art in Public Spaces” plan to determine and focus the investment over the next five years.

DESIGN

The Connector Street Improvements of Howard, Mason and Monroe in the WDDDA have been developed, bids have been received, and installation is planned for early Fall 2019 and Spring 2020. New public infrastructure improvements are coming to completion around the Wagner Place development along Michigan Avenue and West Village Drive including streetscape improvements, a public gathering space and a new parking deck—all part of the BRA Plan for Wagner Place. This is being coupled with the City’s investment in redesigning Michigan Avenue, projected for 2021 pending conversations with MDOT at the State level.

More walkability and biking facilities are desired and being designed into the streetscape plans, as well as the Dearborn Bike Share system now has 14 stations with the Henry Ford coming on in 2018, and three new stations at UofM Dearborn. The WDDDA also supported the installation of market-style lights in West Village Commons Plaza in 2018, and three new bike corrals throughout the district. The EDDDA invested in alley improvements and parking lot striping improvements in the district in 2018. In 2019, the EDDDA is investing in new street lights on Schaefer, as well as releasing an RFP for alley and parking lots improvements to improve vehicular parking lots and a pedestrian corridor along the alley just north of Michigan Avenue between Schaefer Road and Williamson Street, as well as the alley south of Michigan Avenue between Maple and Schlaff. The goal is to improve the overall walkability and pedestrian connection, as well as providing a safe and visually appealing environment in the public parking lots for the downtown business district. The EDDDA is also planning to redesign City Hall Park to make it more engaging and event-friendly.

The DDDAs both have made a significant increase in landscaping and maintenance services, taking over all contract services in the districts and assuring a higher level of service. The program and services include annual and perennial plant installations and

maintenance of the grounds, planter pots and tree wells, as well as litter and debris removal throughout the district, and snow removal and salting in the winter. Additional streetscape amenities include decorative banners on pedestrian light poles, tree well and planter pot décor, and holiday decorations within the district for the winter holidays, as well as seasonal displays for the fall and spring. New banners and holiday décor were installed this past holiday season, as well as summer banners. The EDDDA is investing in trash receptacles that not only function well, but they will also have an art-bent to them. The WDDDA is also investing in festival area enhancements for the Wagner Park area including event seating and safety road closures.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Downtown Dearborn provides local businesses and property owners with business and recruitment assistance, working towards driving up occupancy in both districts and strengthening businesses. Currently occupancy is 96% (up 2%) in the WDDDA and 85% (up 4%) in the EDDDA, with new businesses coming in all the time, including places like Fishnet Studios, Orange Theory, and many more coming soon as the Wagner Place and Artspace Connector commercial spaces come into play.

Downtown Dearborn made it in Corp! Magazine highlighting the transformations underway in both downtowns, and pinpointing investments now being made and opportunities for businesses. A marketing and recruitment strategy has been deployed for Downtown Dearborn, including tenant recommendations for Wagner Place and Artspace Connector. The EDDDA will also be conducting intercept surveys of consumers to help better define its Trade Market Area and recommendations, as the WDDDA did in 2017. The DDAs recently held a property owner roundtable to build stronger communications amongst property owners, the City, DDAs and real estate professionals to help market and increase occupancy. This roundtable program will continue on a quarterly basis moving forward.

To encourage businesses to locate in the DDAs, as well as existing businesses to beautify their facades, the DDAs recently adopted a new business incentive program called "Open Door Dearborn". The incentive program is designed to recruit specific types of businesses needed for the districts, as well provide encouragement for greater quality design. The DDAs also adopted design guidelines to serve as the criteria for the incentive program, but also to provide an education to businesses and property owners on the preferred methods of redesigning spaces in the downtowns. The EDDDA also adopted a tree well removal and redesign for the large planters on Michigan Avenue in order to allow for sidewalk cafes and public spaces.

Overall, the DDAs are economically strong and redevelopment opportunities in both districts are on the rise. In 2019/20, the WDDDA is focused on working with the City on the parcels between the East and West Parking decks, Gateway Project and Howard/Michigan site; while the EDDDA is focused on 5050 Schaefer redevelopment and reactivating the Dearborn Town Center. Housing in both districts is a priority, as well as continuing to build out the arts and culture in the EDDDA, and the entertainment and dining in the WDDDA.

PA57 PUBLIC INFO SESSIONS

PA57 public information sessions were held jointly by the EDDDA & WDDDA on July 18, 2019, and on October 17, 2019.

AUTHORITY TIF REVENUE ACTIVITY

The EDDDA & WDDDA does not have any TIF funds not expended within five nor ten years of receipt.

Please refer to the CAFR FYE2019, the annual audit of expenditures and revenue.