



Strategic Plan Framework for 2022 to 2026

Background

The Riverside Downtown Partnership (RDP) is a non-profit organization that was formed in 1981 by a group of downtown business owners and stakeholders. RDP was charged with the responsibility for the Riverside Downtown Parking and Business Improvement Area (Downtown BID) when it was created in 1986. At the time the Downtown BID was established, RDP determined six areas on which to focus its efforts. These areas were parking, beautification, public events, music in public places, promotion of business activities, and security.

In 2007, RDP adopted a vision, mission, and five broad goals for the organization and developed its first strategic plan for 2008 to 2010. The vision and mission were reaffirmed in the strategic plan for 2011 to 2013 but the goals were refined to three that were considered more actionable. The strategic plan adopted for 2014 to 2016 was the last comprehensive one prepared and used the same vision, mission, and goals as before.

In late 2019, RDP acknowledged the need for a new strategic plan that would reflect the changes in downtown Riverside. It was decided to begin planning in March 2020 coincident with the new Board of Directors. However that was derailed by the onset of the pandemic and the shutdown of many activities to stop the spread of COVID-19. The continuation of the pandemic through 2020 and 2021 further delayed strategic planning as RDP's activities shifted to reflect and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

By the latter part of 2021, it was clear that the downtown environment had changed and RDP's priorities needed to reflect those changes. RDP conducted several surveys during 2021 and held a downtown forum in November 2021 to get in-person responses and concerns from downtown businesses and constituents about issues and priorities. Some initial findings included RDP increasing its advocacy efforts and outreach to businesses, as well as adding new programs such as 'clean and safe' efforts. RDP engaged the services of a consultant in January 2022 and strategic planning efforts began.

Process

RDP engaged Matt Lehrman of Social Prosperity Partners as the consultant for its strategic planning. The intent was to focus on what RDP's purpose should be in the future, considering the changes in downtown and the post-pandemic environment.

Accordingly, the strategic planning process was developed to enable RDP to consider the fundamental question of **"Who are our stakeholders and how shall we work to advance their interests?"**

To answer that question, RDP's Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Staff needed to determine:

- What is our **VISION**? – i.e., what is RDP’s greatest aspiration?
- What is our **MISSION** – i.e., what is RDP’s clear, crucial & compelling purpose?
- What are our organizational **VALUES**? – i.e., what organizational culture is expected to permeate RDP’s relationships at every level?
- What are our organizational **GOALS** – i.e., what high-level objectives does the Board expect RDP to achieve over time?

To determine the answers to those questions, a number of focus groups and interviews were held by the consultant with various stakeholders during February and March. The questions asked and responses were as follows:

What are some specific things that Riverside Downtown Partnership (RDP) does right now that you consider highly valuable or very important?

Valuable and important functions that were identified included advocating for businesses, keeping businesses informed, representing business interests, and providing services to businesses such as security patrols.

What immediate priorities or challenges must be addressed before RDP can turn its attention to long-term opportunities?

Key priorities and challenges that RDP needs to address included helping businesses recover from the pandemic effects, addressing security concerns including those related to homeless, making it easier for businesses to work with the city, advocating for improvements in parking supply and operation, and improving the appearance of downtown.

What is the ideal role of the RDP?

RDP’s ideal role is seen as a voice of diverse downtown interests, an open forum that brings people together, and a forum that brings people together to educate, share concerns and increase attention to shared challenges.

How well does “Our mission is to cultivate, preserve, and promote a healthy, safe, and prosperous Downtown” fit your expectations of RDP?

Most of those responding felt the current mission statement did not match the expectations of RDP.

Since strategic planning is about the long-term future (5-10+ years), what goals or projects or anything should RDP prioritize as a long-term goal and start working on today?

Responses were varied but included security and homeless, parking, advocating for businesses interests, connecting downtown to the broader region, extending activities and efforts beyond the downtown core, attract more visitors to downtown, and helping businesses expand their customer base.

The Executive Committee held a retreat on April 26th to discuss the findings and formulate an initial framework for the strategic plan with the assistance of the consultant. Materials prepared included examples from other cities and the responses from the focus groups and interviews. The initial framework was then refined by the Executive Committee at their May 31st meeting to move forward with preparation of the first draft of the Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026.

The Strategic Plan Framework will be continually reviewed and refined to reflect progress and necessary adjustments in response to emerging needs and environmental factors.

Vision Statement

The previous vision statement read “Downtown Riverside is the regional destination for businesses and service industries. With employment opportunities and attractive locations for growth, downtown Riverside is recognized for the quality of its cultural life, concentration of arts, educational programs, and urban living opportunities”.

The consensus was the vision should be aspirational and concise. Accordingly, the new vision statement is *“Downtown Riverside is a welcoming and exciting destination to work, live, and play while celebrating heritage and inspiring business innovation and success”*.

Mission Statement

The previous mission statement read “Riverside Downtown Partnership will promote, represent, and manage an environment to support downtown Riverside as a regional destination for economic, arts, cultural and residential uses”.

We were told that our mission statement should reflect our expectations. Accordingly, the new mission statement is *“Riverside Downtown Partnership’s mission is to foster a vibrant, safe, and successful business and cultural community in downtown Riverside by celebrating our past and defining our future”*.

Values

Previously, RDP did not espouse specific values. The consultant pointed out that values were essential in defining and developing RDP’s organizational culture. The Executive Committee spent time reviewing the responses from stakeholders and discussing key words and phrases to encapsulate RDP’s value.

The values and descriptive phrases that were agreed upon are:

- Welcoming – We embrace those within our community and those who visit.
- Advocacy – We are a champion for our community’s needs and priorities.
- Responsive – We are supportive, helpful and add value to our members.
- Connected – We encourage dialogue, and cooperation within our community.
- Proactive – We continually seek ways to support and enhance our community.

Objectives / Goals

RDP’s previous goals were broad and in retrospect, did not address the needs of its stakeholders.

- Promote downtown Riverside as a destination for residents and regional visitors.
- Develop and enhance RDP’s influence and activities with downtown stakeholders.
- Promote Riverside as a regional center for private sector commercial and residential development.

Again, the Executive Committee spent time reviewing the responses from stakeholders and discussing what RDP could do to serve its stakeholders, and how the goals could be phrased to lead to specific actions.

After due consideration, the goals for RDP are:

- To serve as the essential liaison between downtown businesses and local government representing our members' interests.
- To create an effective partnership with local government that advances downtown business priorities.
- To expand our services and value for our members.

Achieving RDP's stated goals

RDP has several challenges in achieving the stated goals, including organizational challenges such as limited funding and reduced staff. Staff will be looking at ways to increase funding, through eligibility for grants as an example, and to leverage capacity through partnerships. A plan for both will be developed and presented to the Board.

Achieving the goals will also require a greater degree of board commitment and engagement of the business community in particular. One way of engaging the business community is to involve them directly in the organization through the Board and committees. In the case of the Board, this will mean reviewing Board composition and adopting term limits so that new members can be cycled on and others cycled off. Staff will bring a proposed change to the Board for consideration.

In the following section, the actions to move forward on the goals over the next few years, specifically to the end of 2023 are listed. It should be noted that these actions could be adjusted should the study regarding the feasibility of a Property-based Business Improvement District indicate establishment should proceed.

To serve as the essential liaison between downtown businesses and local government representing our members' interests.

- Identify key individuals in the local governments, including City, County, and State, and initiate meetings to introduce RDP and its role and goals.
- Monitor both City Council and County Board of Supervisors agendas for items of importance to RDP and downtown businesses, and submit comments and / or attend and speak as needed.
- Establish a Governmental Affairs committee with representatives from the Board and the business community to determine the priorities and issues to discuss with local governments.
- Establish a forum through which businesses can advise of their concerns and issues with local governments, and request assistance if needed.

To create an effective partnership with local government that advances downtown business priorities.

- Governmental Affairs committee will take the lead on this goal with the Executive committee overseeing its work and staff providing coordination.

To expand our services and value for our members.

- Set-up quarterly 'town hall' meetings for businesses to hear information, voice concerns, and network with each other.
- Implement changes to both the Security committee and Land Use committee to make them more relatable to businesses, increase attendance, and improve effectiveness.
- Expand security efforts.
- Survey businesses more frequently for concerns and issues.
- Implement a Business Visitation Program.
- Establish a Downtown Parking Committee to address concerns and make recommendations.
- Extend activities and efforts beyond the downtown core.
- Help businesses expand their customer base through workshops and promotions.
- Help attract more visitors to downtown.

Reporting and Measurements of Success

Metrics will be established and Staff will provide the Executive and Board with regular reports on progress and on successes as well as possible failures.