

Downtown Urban Initiative Program Description

Bellingham Square and the Broadway Corridor – Chelsea’s downtown – offer the potential of a vibrant and diverse social and economic center that connects neighbors to each other and to the larger region. Downtown is already a bustling transportation hub with a varied and active business corridor. But, its potential is currently restricted by a high rate of crime and a number of undesirable social elements. And, there is not sufficient public activity to draw residents from other areas of the City. This *Downtown Urban Initiative* strives to build a healthy business environment and welcoming public realm that invites, connects and accommodates the cultural and economic diversity of the community.

The initiative will be managed through a new ***Downtown Coordinator***, a proposed new municipal position that will facilitate cross-municipal department and cross-sector coordination. The Downtown Initiative will:

- Organize and manage *Team Broadway* – public employees working downtown to address problems personally and rapidly and create a welcoming environment;
- Activate the downtown with cultural, social and business events;
- Strengthen downtown businesses and storefronts through a marketing plan and retail assistance;
- Improve the appearance of buildings with a façade improvement pilot program.

The Downtown Coordinator will create a baseline of information in order to understand the impact of the proposed initiative, evaluating changes and reporting outcomes to the Council annually. Details of the proposal are as follows:

1. Understanding Users, Needs and Issues: Learning about who occupies and passes through Bellingham Square / Broadway Corridor.

Develop a baseline of users and uses, conditions, and attitudes about the downtown that can inform strategies, ensuring they are appropriately targeted, then measure changes, creating a feedback loop that further informs on-going learning and refinement.

Activity A: Roundtable conversation to share existing knowledge of who is regularly in the downtown – lingering, loitering, and passing through - and identify sources of data to document occupants and uses.

Activity B: Formal Data Gathering to inform the initiative’s work and establish a baseline of social conditions (arrests, service referrals, etc.), users, and satisfaction surveys that can be updated periodically for on-going evaluation and learning.

It will be the responsibility of the Downtown Coordinator to develop and implement existing conditions and user perception tools to create a baseline for measuring progress, with particular attention given to information that is useful for assessing changes to social conditions. Tools or measurements can be repeated periodically to understand changing patterns.

Cost: Downtown Coordinator \$70,000

2. Address Broadway and Bellingham Square Social Service Needs:

Reduce undesirable loitering and inappropriate public behaviors stemming from unmet service needs.

Activity A. Create Team Broadway utilizing existing professionals working in the downtown to create a positive on-street presence: The *Downtown* Coordinator will develop a coordinated system of professionals (i.e.: police officers, outreach workers, Navigators, parking enforcement officers, etc.) already present in the downtown to create a welcoming environment for all in the downtown district; ensure appropriate training; create a logo for the downtown district and utilize branding to demonstrate inclusivity among this system of professionals. Through coordination and feedback loops, Team Broadway will create a system that ensures residents in need are connected with the appropriate social services to address negative social activity in Bellingham Square. The Coordinator will develop clear service measures and outcomes, with a readily understood data dashboard that facilitates participants learning what works and helps inform broader community of progress.

Cost: \$0

3. Activate downtown with cultural and business events:

The new *Downtown Coordinator* will be responsible for coordinating and scheduling *creative placemaking, cultural, social and business events* designed to foster community and create opportunities for people to socialize with neighbors and patronize local businesses. These activities will highlight the strength of Chelsea's diversity, emphasize the hub of immigrant owned restaurants in the Corridor, and advance community ownership of the Corridor. Special emphasis will be placed on positive youth engagement. In Year One the *Downtown Coordinator* will research and evaluate the viability of expanding the Farmers Market and introducing Pushcarts or Food Trucks. Regular activities and events will be supported by 4 types of grant-funded activities that ensure sufficient scale of activation to change perceptions of the Square to be administered by the Chelsea Community Fund.

1. Small Event grants (\$500 - \$1000) will support cultural, social and educational events, including ones that build on annual Chelsea events such as Chelsea Art Walk, Chelsea River Revel and the Holiday tree lighting.
 - \$7,500 will support 10-15 grants of \$100-\$1000
2. Business promotions, including seasonal activities and resurrected traditions such as Chelsea Day at which the street is closed to traffic and programmed with sidewalk sales; temporary art and recreational activities will be supported through a grant to an organization representing businesses.
 - \$5,000 grant for business promotions.
3. *Youth Led Downtown Ambassadors Program* will employ local youth to help organize activities designed to encourage positive and active youth participation in downtown.
 - Grant of \$5,000 to support coordinator and Youth.
4. Broadway Shines Campaign to enlist residents and business owners to clean and beautify downtown.
 - \$5,000 for planning, organizing and implementing 4 clean-ups that enlist 200 volunteers and result in 20 businesses pledging to clean regularly in front of their businesses.

Cost: \$22,500

4. Strengthen downtown business and business mix:

New residential and economic development in Chelsea represents an opportunity for both new and existing retail businesses to benefit from a broader customer base. The Downtown Initiative will ensure the emerging market needs are met without displacing viable existing businesses that contribute to Chelsea's economy and culture.

Activity A: Create a marketing and retail assistance plan to strengthen downtown, building on MAPC's retail market analysis with: (1) a business district assessment to identify Broadway corridor strengths, assets and weaknesses, with attention to elements that create a vibrant retail district, including strengthening local businesses, the general marketability of the district, and its business diversity; and (2) engage businesses in developing recommendations to improve the business district, including but not limited to marketing/branding, culturally appropriate programming, merchandising, facades and window/store displays. Develop and implement culturally appropriate technical assistance and a small business training program to support the strengthening and increased profitability of the small businesses in the Broadway Corridor District.

- WHO: RFP (may be a partnership of entities that responds) for marketing consultant to develop district marketing plan, individual business TA plan and implementation; small business training program.

Cost: \$80,000

Activity B. Pilot a Façade Improvement Program to improve the appearance of the business district by supporting physical improvements to facades, windows and signage while protecting the character of the Broadway corridor. The Pilot program will serve 3-4 businesses in the Broadway Corridor, testing design and funding guidelines and business receptivity.

- WHO: Dept of Planning and Development
- WHEN: Initiate Pilot by Spring of 2017

Cost: \$100,000

Total Cost: \$272,500