

Downtown Tempe Authority ~ Work Plan 2026-2027

We are the combined force of two organizations. Downtown Tempe Authority (DTA) is a 501(c)6 enhanced services district formed in 1993 to create a clean and safe space and to actively curate the downtown experience. Downtown Tempe Foundation (DTF) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that supports the work of DTA with its placemaking and event efforts to showcase and support the downtown. The two work together to make Downtown Tempe the best urban experience in the Valley with an inclusive approach to partnerships and outcomes. This annual work plan is derived from the overarching goals within the 2026 five-year strategic plan.

Downtown Tempe Authority (DTA) exists to create a vibrant, connected, and thriving downtown experience. As Downtown Tempe continues to evolve, our strategic plan establishes a clear direction for how DTA will support investment, strengthen businesses, enhance community experiences, and elevate the district's reputation.

This plan is grounded in a simple but powerful idea:

When we execute consistently across key areas, we create a reinforcing cycle of success.

DTA will focus its efforts on four strategic themes and align its work to measurable outcomes that drive long-term impact.

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PURPOSE (Why We Exist)

We create a vibrant Downtown Tempe experience.

MISSION (What We Do)

We promote and activate Downtown Tempe, provide a safe and clean environment, advance transportation and parking solutions, and advocate as the unified voice for the district.

The DTF exists to curate diverse and impactful experiences that cultivate community engagement.

CORE VALUES (How We Act)

- Passion – We care deeply about our work and its impact
- Collaboration – We work together with trust and transparency
- Stewardship – We responsibly guide and protect downtown's growth and assets

VISION (Where We Are Going)

Downtown Tempe becomes Arizona's most desirable urban destination for investment, business success, and community gathering.

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2026-2031 Strategy

Throughout 2026-2031, we will concentrate our strategic resources on the following major focus areas (where we play):

District Excellence and Operations

- Best-in-class safety, cleanliness, and parking
- Infrastructure that makes Downtown Tempe welcoming and accessible
- Foundation that enables everything else

Activation and Experience

- Signature events and year-round programming
- Placemaking and public spaces
- Consistent community gathering opportunities

Business Support & Brand Building

- Merchant support and business sustainability
- Strategic communications and storytelling
- Partnerships that amplify our impact

By focusing on these areas, our approach will result in the following (how we win):

Excellence in Execution

- Deliver operational services and signature events at consistently high quality
- Create experiences that exceed expectations
- Build reputation through reliable performance

Strategic Partnerships

- Partner with City Economic Development on tenant attraction
- Leverage City, ASU, Tourism, and Chamber partnerships for collective promotion
- Collaborate and advocate to achieve what we can't do alone

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Year-Round Consistency

- Maintain presence and activation beyond seasonal peaks
- Create a predictable, reliable downtown experience
- Reduce reliance on ASU calendar through diverse programming

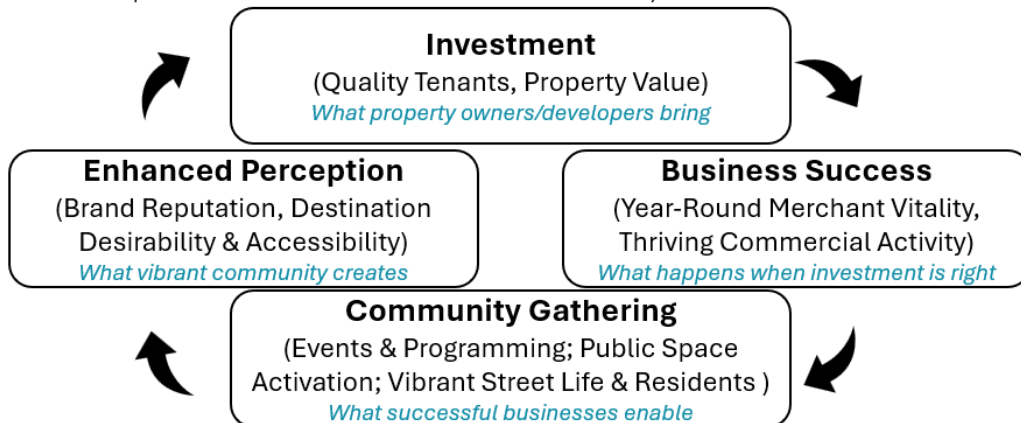
Our Theory of Change: The Downtown Flywheel

DTA's strategy over the next 5 years is built on a reinforcing cycle called the Strategic Flywheel, a reinforcing cycle of success.

Downtown Tempe's Strategic Flywheel

Our Theory of Change – this is why our vision will be achieved

DTA will partner with stakeholders to 'turn the crank' on this flywheel (DTA doesn't crank it alone).



Each element reinforces the next: **supporting investment** leads to **business success**, which **creates community gathering**, which **enhances perception**, which **attracts more investment**...

DTA will organize all work under four enduring themes:

1. Operational Excellence – delivering the foundation for success
2. Strategic Activation & Experience – making downtown compelling
3. Business Ecosystem Support – enabling business success
4. Brand & Perception Transformation – strengthening downtown's reputation

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2026-2031 Strategic Themes

THEME ONE:

Operational Excellence – Creating the foundation for success.



Includes: Clean & Safe, Parking, Internal Infrastructure, Finance

THEME TWO:

Strategic Activation & Experience – Making Downtown compelling.



Includes: Events, Programming & Placemaking

THEME THREE:

Business Ecosystem Support – Enabling year-round vitality.



Includes: Support for merchants, partnering to attract quality tenants

THEME FOUR:

Brand & Perception – Strengthening awareness and reputation.



Includes: Marketing, communications & storytelling

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During the Staff Retreat held in early 2026, each department was asked to identify their specific purpose within the organization. The results are here:

- **Leadership** – To provide resources for people to get their work done, maintain organizational sustainability, and uphold financial responsibility to our stakeholders. "We equip you with what you need to achieve success."
- **Merchant Relations** – Listen to and represent the voices of downtown merchants, explaining their views, struggles & needs to DTA Team and stakeholder directing our work and enhancing the overall success of the downtown business community.
- **Parking Operations** – To be a steward of Downtown Tempe's parking and mobility infrastructure as a strategic asset that supports economic vitality, public safety, and district growth.
- **Enforcement Operations** – The purpose of parking compliance is to educate the public about parking rules, answering questions, and ensuring that drivers understand and comply with the regulations in place.
- **Clean & Safe Operations** - We develop and maintain a clean and safe downtown Tempe. The clean team not only keeps the current structures within downtown but also makes improvements with painting, deep cleaning, and repairs of structures. The safety team patrols downtown by foot, bike and vehicle to ensure city code ordinances are being enforced. In addition, the safety team provides hospitality services, escorts, and business check-in to reinforce the business community.
- **Marketing** – We tell the story of our work, our commitment, and everything that happens here - driving awareness & engagement to connect people to this place and the businesses, events, and experiences.
- **Placemaking** – Curate passive programming in downtown that creates interest and invites members of the public to feel comfortable and increase time spent in Downtown Tempe public spaces.
- **Events** – We create inclusive opportunities for connection using public activations that draw people out and together for a shared experience to benefit our stakeholders.

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THEME ONE:

Operational Excellence

STRATEGY – Maintain best in class safety, cleanliness and parking; Infrastructure that makes Downtown Tempe welcoming and accessible; a foundation that enables everything else.

LEADERSHIP GOALS & TACTICS:

- Implement structured mentorship and leadership training opportunities.
- Identify and develop future leaders within the organization.
- Strengthen knowledge-sharing initiatives to ensure smooth transitions & succession.
- Enhance organization-wide sustainability efforts (reduce waste, improve energy efficiency, optimize resources).
- Implement digital solutions to streamline workflows and reduce redundancy.
- Foster a culture of innovation to drive operational efficiency.
- Review performance evaluation tools to ensure they provide effective feedback, evaluation and accountability.
- Expand financial training to improve budgeting and resource allocation understanding.
- Strengthen financial oversight mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability.
- Diversify revenue streams to enhance financial sustainability.
- Encourage and maintain cross-functional teams to address key organizational challenges.
- Promote regular interdepartmental meetings to share insights and foster alignment.
- Encourage open communication and knowledge exchange to build a cohesive organization.
- Reinforce a culture of ownership and pride in the mission and work.
- Support diversity, equity, and inclusion within all initiatives.
- Ensure every team member has support and opportunities to excel.
- Establish capacity forecasts within each department for all major events, programs and services.
- Establish a formal strategic filter/decision tree for evaluating new requests and initiatives.
- Lead each departmental team in identifying outcome metrics for our flywheel: investment, business success, community gathering (residents, workers, visitors) and perception.

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CLEAN + SAFE GOALS & TACTICS:

- Safety team members complete training in CPR, active shooter response, mental health crisis intervention, and medical triage to handle diverse incidents.
- Purchase and internally modify a trailer frame to increase capacity for events, landscape support and supplies.
- Review cleaning routes to identify inefficiencies and reduce gaps between cleaning passes for faster issue detection.
- Research and select modern, durable cleaning carts that are visually appealing and practical for daily use.

PARKING OPERATIONS GOALS & TACTICS:

- Strategic Curb & Mobility Management: Establish a proactive, data-driven curb framework by completing district-wide curb management study; Identify and implement solutions for bus parking and peak event demand; Align parking operations with TMA initiatives.
- Infrastructure & Asset Protection: Elevate safety, maintenance standards, and asset longevity. Upgrade priority cameras and lighting.
- Strengthen preventative maintenance tracking.
- Audit and update Rules & Regulations signage district wide.
- Customer Experience & Wayfinding: Improve visibility, navigation, and user clarity. Implement digital wayfinding or real-time availability pilot.
- Improve consistency of facility messaging.
- Workforce Sustainability: Strengthen resilience within a lean operational model. Implement tiered event staffing plan.
- Continue cross-training while protecting core duties.
- Launch quarterly performance scoring system.

ENFORCEMENT GOALS & TACTICS:

- Enforcement & Operational Intelligence: Modernize enforcement systems and strengthen revenue protection. Strengthen LPR and enforcement integration; Improve citation accuracy and reporting capabilities; Formalize Friday event staffing model.
- Update and improve training material for new officer onboarding.
- Audit new parking layout for inconsistencies and overall ease of understanding.
- Educate district employees about long-term and monthly parking options.

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THEME TWO: **Strategic Activation & Experience**

STRATEGY – Make Downtown compelling by leveraging signature events and year-round programming; Curate placemaking and public spaces; Foster consistent community and stakeholder gathering experiences.

EVENTS GOALS & TACTICS:

- Conduct annual reviews and rebalance of all events.
- Focus on continuous improvement for each event with a post event review and action plan based on the previous year's event. 100% of the ideas from the prior year are reviewed, acted on or removed.
- Review and update the Fantasy of Lights Boat Parade. Complete an operational review to identify the pinch points and implement solutions. Redesign parade flow to increase the audience viewing of parade units, increase parade units to 50 boats.
- Conduct an events operations audit. Review workflows to identify redundancies and inefficiencies and implement at least three workflow improvements that reduce planning time or administrative burdens.
- Demo 3 – 5 new operational platforms to be more efficient, including at least one AI-based tool by June 30.
- Fully document the Tempe Blooms event workflow by September 1.
- Community Group Engagement. Recruit and integrate 3 -7 community groups into DTA events to provide programmatic activations.
- Track participation and collect feedback from the community groups to measure impact and inform future collaborations.

PLACEMAKING GOALS & TACTICS

- Onboard a new banner vendor and complete a seamless transition ensuring 100% of banner installations are completed on schedule with no service interruptions.
- Install and activate a lighting plan in the downtown district to increase safety and overall feel in Downtown after dark.
- Evaluate the impact of placemaking improvements (banners, lighting, furniture, plantings, trash cans, etc.) by collecting feedback from at least 50 businesses and visitors, achieving 75% positive perception of downtown aesthetics by year-end.
- Plan, coordinate, and install at least one crosswalk art project in the downtown district including securing approvals, engaging an artist or community partner, and completing installation.

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THEME THREE: **Business Ecosystem Support**

STRATEGY – Enable year-round vitality; Maintain and advocate for merchant support and business sustainability.

MERCHANT REALTIONS GOALS & TACTICS:

- Conduct bi-monthly small-group merchant roundtable discussions (3-5 businesses per group) to encourage collaboration and feedback, achieving participation from at least 50 unique businesses.
- Audit and update 100% of merchant contact records and implement a process to ensure quarterly updates.
- Increase direct merchant engagement by conducting a minimum of 15 in-person or virtual merchant check-ins per month, while reducing time spent on event and construction mitigation tasks.
- Increase proactive merchant participation in events by 25% compared to 2025 baseline.
- Reimplement a standardized onboarding program (welcome packet, checklist, intro meetings) and ensure 100% of new street-level businesses receive onboarding within 30 days of opening.
- Clean & Safe: Create a systematic method for monthly business visits documenting feedback and service outcomes to build trust.

THEME FOUR: **Brand & Perception**

STRATEGY – Strengthen awareness and reputation; Focus on strategic communications and storytelling; Maintain and develop partnerships that amplify our impact

MARKETING GOALS & TACTICS:

- Launch an ASU student engagement campaign.
- Launch Driftscape as an interactive and incentivized tool to promote tourism and business support.
- Collaborate with the events team to revise messaging, positioning, and promotional strategy for Fantasy of Lights Boat Parade.
- Develop a messaging and promotional strategy for alternative transportation and parking for events.

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- Align organizational resources and leadership engagement behind Brand & Perception, making it a shared strategic priority, not just a marketing team responsibility.
- Improve marketing efficiency and cost-effectiveness by evaluating marketing operations, to include event signage processes, marketing tools, social media platforms, and outreach strategies.
- Implement one unified social media strategy to tell the story of DTA, DTF, our programs & services, while also promoting events and happenings throughout the entire downtown district.
- Leverage the relationship with key partners (e.g. Tempe Tourism, City of Tempe, ASU) to collectively promote the downtown district, businesses, events and happenings, using shared resources and collaboration in social media to make a larger impact.

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Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

Assessments/In Lieu Fees	1,892,301
Partnerships	704,373
Parking Management Fees	366,378
Accounting/Liability Recovery	318,988
Special Program Revenue	155,755
Grants & Contributions	162,500
GOS Expense Sharing	33,135
Reserves	86,611
COGS	-3,600

Total Income 3,716,441

Expense

Programming - Events & Placemaking	866,545
Safety Patrol	838,389
Administrative Employee Wages & Benefits	458,614
Clean & Beautification	353,604
Marketing	299,588
Liability Insurance	221,496
Rent/Office Maintenance/Utilities	141,754
Administrative Expenses	331,352
Donations	35,800
Business Development	140,300
Conferences/Meetings	47,000

Total Expense 3,734,442

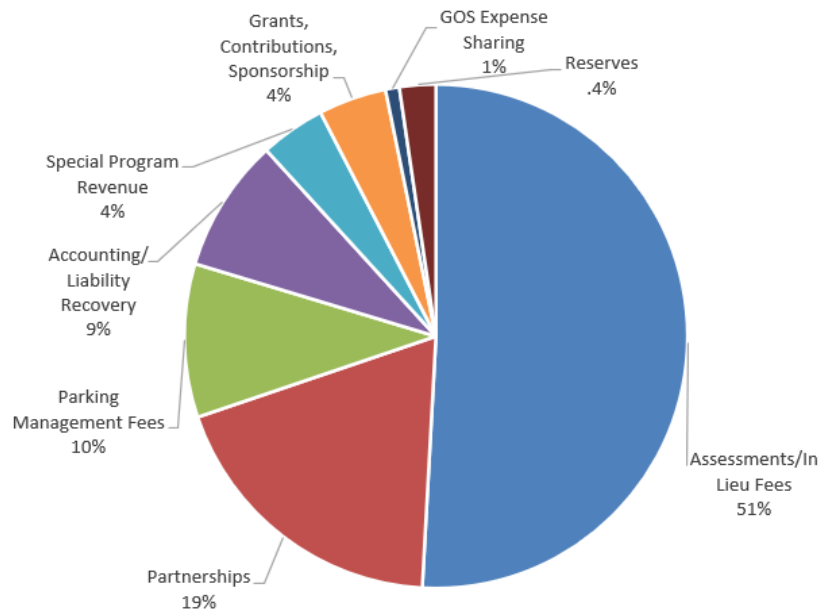
Net Ordinary Income **-18,001**

Investment Income 18,001

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Income:



Expenses:

