



## **Dupont Circle Business Improvement District (BID) Marketing Committee Recommendations**

### **SUMMARY**

The purpose of the Dupont Circle BID Marketing and Branding Advisory Committee is to update the organization's marketing messaging, so that stakeholders have a clear impression of the Dupont Circle BID's overall vision. The recommendation for such a committee evolved from a BID Strategic Plan meeting, in which the Board participated and agreed that the original messaging and [brand guidelines](#) developed by [Trajectory Marketing firm](#) was high quality, but outdated in some aspects. The Board agreed that the messaging needed an update since BID was now operational and had an expanded Board of Directors, not all of whom were involved in the original marketing decision-making process. The Committee is also responsible for brainstorming opportunities and/or methods to increase awareness of the Dupont Circle BID brand to potential partners, government agencies and community members.

The Dupont Circle BID hosted the first Marketing Committee meeting on March 5, 2020 at the Phillips Collection with group of 18 of engaged BID colleagues (you can view the member list [here](#)). The group brainstormed ideas on messaging and marketing for both the organization and the neighborhood overall. It was a robust and exciting discussion.

During the first week of May, the notes from the [minutes of the first meeting](#) were distributed and committee members were asked to provide feedback and additional suggestions on the ideas and concepts discussed in the meeting. An overview of that feedback and the subsequent recommendations are presented below:

### **OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK**

#### Brand Pillars (Dupont Circle's strengths)

Committee members agreed across the board that each pillar is considered a major strength of the Dupont Circle area: 1) International, 2) People, Ideas & Culture, 3) Gathering and Celebration. During the meeting, some members discussed marketing The Circle (park) and Dupont Circle (place) separately. In the feedback, half of members agreed with this, while the other half fell equally into the "No" and "Maybe" categories.

I think it's important to remember that this doesn't mean the Park wouldn't be included in the marketing for the Place. It just means that the Park is strong enough to be promoted on its own, *in addition* to promoting it with the Place. Over 60% of committee members agreed that The Circle should be added as a 4<sup>th</sup> brand pillar.

### Other Strengths

Committee members were asked whether or not they agree with other strengths offered in the first meeting. Strengths that most members agreed should be added were 1) the accessibility/the ease of getting into Dupont and 2) LGBTQIA community and history.

### Taglines/Slogans

During the meeting, committee members brainstormed a variety of slogan options. After analyzing the feedback from the first meeting, the top slogans included: DC's neighborhood, Your Neighborhood, Authentically DC, and Meet Me at The Circle.

Additional slogans suggested in the feedback were "DC = Dupont Circle" and "You may not live here, but you'll feel right at home".

### Tone of Voice

The majority of committee members agreed in the feedback that the tone of voice options below should be used when communicating with the public or our stakeholders about the Dupont Circle neighborhood: 1) Welcoming, 2) Personal/Conversational. 3) Fresh/Edgy. In the feedback, a member suggested Inclusivity as a tone of voice to be incorporated.

### Biggest Challenges Facing Your Business/Organization During COVID-19?

In order to gauge what committee members were facing during this time, the BID asked the committee to report on biggest challenges. Many agreed that the decreased revenue and the overall impact on tourism and hospitality was a major challenge. Some members noted that the biggest challenge in this environment is the significant reduction in business, leisure, and international travel. This has resulted in reduced hours and major layoffs within the hospitality/tourism industries. Members also noted that going digital and finding alternative business models were difficult as well.

### How is Your Business/Organization Marketing During COVID-19?

Most members explained that leaning into digital programming/online sales was important for their survival during the pandemic. Others mentioned that a new emphasis on safety and social media were strategies taken as well.

Other marketing plans during COVID-19 include looking for ways to stay involved in the community, staying in touch with our current client base and partners (i.e. through Zoom meetings), and creating useful virtual content that includes safety and cleanliness.

### What Are Your Plans for Marketing Your Business/Organization After COVID-19?

The majority of members were unsure about post COVID-19 plans, as many are focusing on the present at this time, rather than future marketing endeavors. The few that have solid marketing plans for post COVID-19 reported virtual events, incubator programs, and digital programming.

### Do You Have Any Thoughts, Comments, or Ideas on Marketing Efforts That the BID Should Take During COVID-19?

Most members agreed that the BID should be focused on helping and supporting local businesses. A couple of members suggested highlighting the work of business efforts. One member expressed their excitement around the #DupontStrong campaign and [blog series](#), and suggested the BID take it one step further by showcasing the work of local artists outside.

Another member expressed that the #DupontStrong campaign should highlight that Dupont is open for business. Although "open for business" doesn't mean in the traditional sense, the BID could highlight all

the creative efforts that the community has taken to stay alive and pivot during this environment. This will give specific business (big and small) an opportunity to tell their story.

### Do You Have Any Thoughts, Comments, or Ideas on Marketing Efforts That the BID Should Take After COVID-19?

Most members agreed that promoting social distancing practices (marketing Dupont as a safe place to meet up with a friend or a small group). Another member suggested that the BID continue to share weekly updates, and personal stories of the neighborhood and business owners.

Members also encouraged the BID to focus on promoting the safety and cleanliness of our public spaces in order to make Dupont become a destination again, and not just the events related to the individual businesses.

### **MARKETING POST COVID-19: What Moving Across Phases May Look Like**

In early March, the BID immediately pivoted to focus on helping businesses in a number of ways including:

- Promoting businesses as they reopened
- Getting up-to-date information out regarding local and federal loans and grants, as well as offering technical assistance for these loans and grants
- Working on behalf of the businesses to apply for public space permits that helped with the curb-side pick-up and delivery operations
- Use of #DupontStrong hashtag and the blog series



The BID has already begun to use the phrase and hashtag “#DupontStrong” to build community within the neighborhood. The BID now has a [#DupontStrong blog series](#) dedicated to sharing stories of how Dupont Circle BID businesses are overcoming COVID-19. In order to build momentum of this phrase, the BID could work on a campaign built around the phrase, encouraging a socially distant reopening of the Dupont Circle area during Phases Two and Three.

Now that the District is officially in Phase Two, it is important to understand the different phases and the flexibility that is provided to different industries within each Phase. The chart below, from the Mayor’s [ReOpenDC Report](#) (pages 19 and 20) provides background on the opportunities and limitations that a Business Improvement District must navigate in the near future.

ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS	PHASE ONE Declining virus transmission	PHASE TWO Only localized transmission	PHASE 3 Sporadic transmission	PHASE 4 Effective vaccine or cure
<b>Restaurants and Food</b>	Restaurants open outdoor seating with physical distancing and safeguards	Restaurants open indoor seating with physical distancing, safeguards, and up to 50% capacity	Restaurants continue 50% capacity, with case-by-case approvals for expansion consistent with physical distancing	“New Normal”
<b>Bars and Nightclubs</b>	CLOSED	CLOSED	Bars and clubs open with capacity limits (5 people per 1,000 sq. ft. not to exceed 50% capacity)	
<b>Outdoor Large Gatherings (parades, etc.)</b>	CLOSED	Outdoor events reopen with up to 50 people with physical distancing	Outdoor events expand with up to 250 people with physical distancing	
<b>Indoor Venues (entertainment, arenas, theatres)</b>	CLOSED	Venues reopen with up to 50 people with physical distancing	Venues expand with up to 250 people with physical distancing	
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>	Parks, fields, tennis courts, tracks and golf courses reopen with safeguards, while playgrounds remain closed	Some playgrounds reopen with safeguards	All parks and recreation facilities open with safeguards	
<b>Museums and Exhibits</b>	CLOSED	Museums open with limited capacity (5 people per 1,000 sq. ft. not to exceed 50% capacity) and physical distancing	Museums can allow limited tours (10 people per 1,000 sq. ft. not to exceed 75% capacity) and physical distancing	
<b>Shared Transit</b>	Non-essential shared transit discouraged	Non-essential shared transit can resume	Operational with safeguards	
<b>Public Transit</b>	Meet demand and allow for physical distancing	Continue to meet demand and allow for physical distancing	Expand to meet demand and allow for physical distancing	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are based on feedback regarding the tone of voice, taglines, and strengths from both the previous meeting, and the most recent feedback.

### A. Semi-Permanent Sidewalk Stencils/Permanent Sidewalk Decals

Adams Morgan BID



Capitol Hill BID



Golden Triangle BID



Shaw, DC Neighborhood



Both the Adams Morgan Partnership and the Capitol Hill BID have invested in semi-permanent sidewalk stencils in varying designs to spray on the sidewalk of the neighborhoods. Golden Triangle BID (examples above) and the Georgetown BID (example [here](#)) have both invested in outdoor decals and signage for social distancing. Each effort mentioned above aims to promote social distancing, while bringing some color and curb appeal to the streets.

One member suggested that because in certain parts of the country, wearing a mask has become stigmatized, it is important that Dupont continues the “stay safe...wear a mask” message, and includes it in all Dupont Circle’s COVID-19 specific messaging.

Quite a few members agreed that the sidewalk stencils/decals don’t have to be COVID-19 related. It’s possible that the BID can develop two designs: one that’s COVID-19 related, and another that it not.

The example from the Shaw neighborhood is included because it is eye-catching, and the circle shape is intriguing as the Dupont Circle BID brand features a circle. Artwork such as this can be applied to the recently approved Streatery locations.

Any artwork approved would be reflective of the updated BID brand story, which aligns with the goals in our strategic plan to increase awareness if the Dupont Circle BID and improve the perception of our brand story.

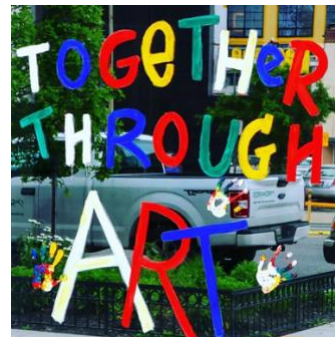
Example: [Georgetown BID’s Safe in Public Space Signage](#)

## **B. Murals/Outdoor Art**

Adams Morgan BID



Downtown DC BID



Georgetown BID



**Outdoor Art Examples:**

Boston, MA



Georgetown, DC



Neighborhood art was one of the most popular committee responses/ideas. The Dupont Circle BID could reach out to property owners/businesses who would be interested in having a temporary mural on their windows. The mural would in some way tie the BID brand together with the local business.

Rotating art was suggested as well. The Dupont Circle BID would match the property/business with a local artist or through a partnership with a local Dupont Circle Museum (The Phillips Collection, IA&A) or Gallery.

Such a series could dovetail nicely with First Friday Art Walk, a popular monthly event run by Historic Dupont Circle Main Streets. Incorporating art and/or murals aligns well with our strategic goal of developing a series of events and activations in The Circle and throughout the Dupont Circle BID boundary, that are explicitly tied to our fresh and dynamic brand messaging.

Example: [Downtown DC BID's BLM mural exhibit](#)

**C. Video Series**

As either an extension of #DupontStrong or on its own as a separate initiative, the Dupont Circle BID could promote businesses in the BID through a series of short and sharable videos highlighting businesses during Phase Two and Three of DC's Reopening.

The video series fits well with many of our strategic plan goals, including our aim to promote Dupont's special qualities (one being our wide variety of businesses) in order to attract more visitors and residents to the area.

#### **D. Digital Programming**

Organizations around DC have experimented with digital programming of some sort – the BID could look into events that can be done virtually or via Livestream. Examples of successful virtual events include: “[Friday Nights From Home](#)” virtual concert series by the Capital Riverfront BID, [Virtual Trivia](#) by the Rosslyn BID, [Virtual French Market](#) by the Georgetown BID, and [Feel Good Fridays](#) by the Downtown DC BID.

Another idea mentioned was partnering with a BID member Yoga Studio to host a Yoga in the Circle with limited attendees, and then Livestreaming that Yoga session via Zoom or Facebook Live. This event in particular aligns very well with one of the initiatives in our Strategic Plan, which involves developing an activation strategy that draw visitors, residents, and local employees to The Circle for informal gathering. (i.e. move away from medium scale events and focus on smaller and safer activations) with local partners in order to focus on compelling Dupont Circle area messaging.

#### **E. Deep Dive: A Dupont Circle BID Business Series**

In 2018 and 2019, the Dupont Circle BID held a variety of roundtables for BID members. The roundtables were successful in establishing the BID as a go-to entity for business needs, obtaining feedback and insight into perceptions of the neighborhood and creating community with the BID as the facilitator. To further support the business community and solidify the BID brand, the Dupont Circle BID will continue to host virtual, industry-specific roundtables.

One of the BID's strategic initiatives includes gathering economic intelligence about Dupont Circle's service area to better understand current office, retail and hospitality market conditions and potential opportunities to support recovery and shape a vision for economic vibrancy. This business series falls under this initiative quite nicely.

Example: [Rosslyn BID's Rosslyn Ready program](#)

#### **F. Dazzling Dupont Tree Box Competition**

To enhance the curb appeal of the neighborhood, the Dupont Circle BID could host a tree box competition that would have the effect of beautifying the neighborhood, conveying the BID Brand and further establishing a sense of belonging to the Dupont BID community. Tree box planting guidelines proposed in the strategic plan for FY 2021 would be utilized for this effort.

In our Strategic Plan we have prioritized revitalizing the streetscape and public realm. The tree box competition aligns with our strategic initiative to coordinate with community stakeholders to foster a safe and welcoming environment.

Example: [Golden Triangle BID's Golden Haiku Poetry Contest](#)