

DOWNTOWN

Development Authority

Annual Report

October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025



FUELING BUSINESS, COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

The Power of Downtown Investment

At the Downtown Development Authority, our mission is to strengthen and sustain a vibrant Downtown Delray Beach — one that supports our businesses, welcomes residents and visitors, and creates a beautiful, engaging downtown experience. As the **Village by the Sea**, Delray Beach offers something truly special: a downtown that feels welcoming and personal, while delivering the dining, arts, culture, shopping and experiences of a world-class destination.

This year, that mission came to life through the strategic reinvestment of DDA tax dollars collected from commercial and residential properties within the district. Through events, marketing, beautification, safety and cultural programming, the DDA strengthened the local economy and enhanced the downtown experience. These investments supported more than 100 events and promotions designed to increase foot traffic, support local businesses, create jobs, build partnerships and give residents and visitors meaningful reasons to gather, explore and return downtown.

From Savor the Avenue, Art & Jazz on the Avenue and First Friday Art Walk to Icons of Art, Sunset Concert Series, and Jimmy Buffett Fest, our programs showcased the businesses, restaurants, artists and experiences that make Downtown Delray Beach one of South Florida’s most dynamic destinations.

At Old School Square, the rebrand reinforced its role as the beloved community gathering place — the place where Delray comes together through arts, culture, entertainment and shared experiences.

Our investment in our Safety Ambassadors helped ensure that our downtown remained welcoming while supporting the more than 3 million visits to Downtown Delray Beach, elevate the quality of life, for residents and visitors alike, and ensuring that our **Village by the Sea** continues to shine as the heart of our community.



Laura Simon
Executive Director
Downtown Development Authority

PROUD MEMBER AND PARTNER OF



Our Mission

To stimulate, enhance, and sustain the economic vitality of Downtown Delray Beach and the quality of life enjoyed by locals and visitors.

DDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-25

- Dr. Al Costilo**, Chair
- Brian Rosen**, Vice Chair
- Cole Devitt**, Secretary
- Jule Guagliardi-Zelman**, Secretary (appointed July 2025)
- Jim Knight**, Treasurer
- Harold (Sonny) Van Arnem**, Board Member (until June 2025)
- Aaron Hallyburton**, Board Member
- Vera Woodson**, Board Member (until July 2025)
- Anthony Barber**, Board Member

DDA TEAM

- Laura Simon**
Executive Director
- Marusca Gatto**
Cultural Arts Director
- Suzanne Boyd**
Director of Marketing
- Danielle Morien**
Marketing Development Manager
- Liliana Fino**
Operations Coordinator
- Shelly Likosar**
Visitor Information Center Coordinator
- Emily Oliveras**
Marketing & Social Media Coordinator
- Victoria DeSilvio**
Old School Square Special Events Planner
- Alexandra Cosenza**
Old School Square Coordinator

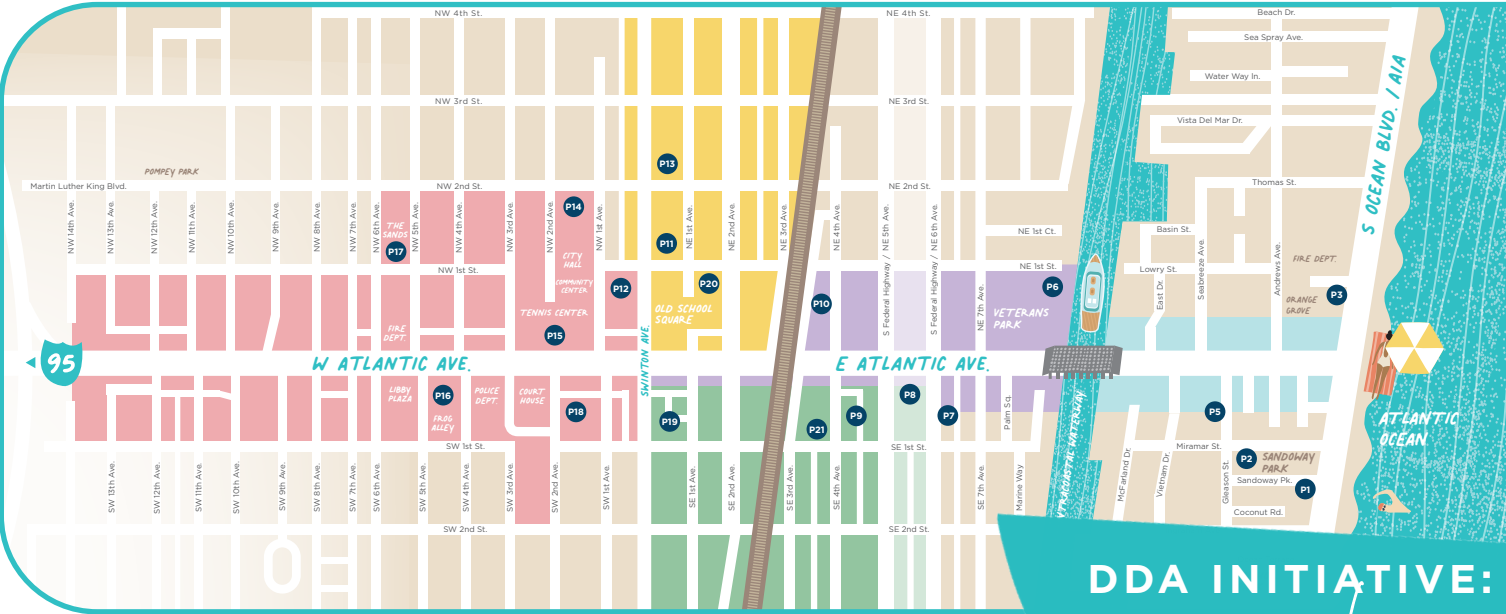
Our Story

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) District encompasses 340 acres east of I-95 in Delray Beach, extending along Atlantic Avenue from I-95 to the high tide mark and including a vibrant mix of commercial, residential, city, and county properties.

Established in 1971, the DDA was created by the State of Florida as a bold initiative to provide downtown oversight and drive economic revitalization. Since then, it has served as a leading force behind the transformation and growth of Downtown Delray Beach.

Today, the DDA serves as the dedicated management entity reinvesting ad valorem tax dollars — collected from 1% of commercial and residential properties within the district boundaries — directly back into downtown. Through strategic marketing, placemaking, and economic development initiatives, the DDA supports local property and business owners while enhancing the area’s vitality and charm.

Our mission is clear: to stimulate, sustain, and elevate the economic strength of Downtown Delray Beach while preserving the exceptional quality of life for residents and visitors alike.



GROWING STRONG A Clean Bill of Financial Health

The Downtown Development Authority’s Financial Statement of revenues and expenditures for fiscal year 2024-2025, which ran from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025, is shown here. The Downtown Development Authority team continued to promote, strengthen, and support the businesses and stakeholders in the Downtown Development Authority district along with the Old School Square campus. Our efforts for the three areas of responsibility: Economic Vitality, Placemaking, and Position Marketing continue to be successful.

REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Ad Valorem Tax	1,864,563	Economic Vitality, Placemaking, Position Marketing	1,003,046
Sponsorships & Misc	67,280	General Operating	844,902
Interest Earnings	2,802	Old School Square	1,332,196
Old School Square	1,242,743		
TOTAL REVENUE		TOTAL EXPENDITURES	
\$3,177,388		\$3,108,144	
For a complete copy of the Audited Financial Report conducted by Marcum LLP, contact the City of Delray Beach or the Downtown Development Authority.		NET INCOME	
		\$69,244	

Brightening the Downtown Experience

This year, the DDA invested in a series of beautification upgrades to make Downtown Delray Beach shine brighter and celebrate our community's biggest moments in style. We introduced new street pole banners for the holiday season and 4th of July, representing a \$16,000 investment that brought festive color and civic pride to the corridor throughout two of downtown's most celebrated times of year.

Lighting was the centerpiece of this year's beautification efforts, with a total investment of \$50,000. On West Atlantic Avenue, our gateway from I-95 into the core business district, we refreshed the street pole lights on 125 poles with brighter rope lighting, dramatically improving the look and feel of this critical entry corridor. We also extended new lighting to the trees and poles along West 5th Avenue and replaced the street pole lighting throughout Pineapple Grove, ensuring these vibrant neighborhoods continue to reflect the energy and character that make Downtown Delray Beach special.



Visitor Information Center and Economic Impact:

Our wonderful volunteers welcomed almost 12,000 visitors, each contributing approximately \$900 to our local community, resulting in a **\$10.8 MILLION** economic boost.

DID YOU KNOW?

34% of our visitors to the Center come from the Northeast, over 9% from the Midwest, while 12% are our friends from abroad - Canada, Europe and beyond, and the remaining from within Florida.

As a downtown driven by hospitality, the Downtown Visitor Information Center connects visitors with local businesses, events and attractions—encouraging exploration, supporting tourism and strengthening our local economy.



Downtown Safety in Action

Downtown Delray's recognizable "yellow shirts" are on duty by foot, bike, and golf cart, handling more than 300 interactions and service calls each month.

Their work includes:

- Offering safe walks at night
- Addressing nuisance issues
- Connecting individuals experiencing homelessness with services
- Supporting the Delray Beach Police Department and Homeless Task Force

This program remains one of the DDA's largest investments in creating a safe, welcoming downtown for everyone who lives, works, and visits.

Meet our Ambassadors:

- Sunday - Thursday: 7AM - 9PM
- Friday - Saturday: 7AM - 10PM



Wellness Campaign Boosts Summer Foot Traffic

Launched June 1, 2025, **#LOVEDELRAY FEEL GOOD SUMMER** boosted summer pedestrian traffic with wellness events, special offers, and community experiences under the theme **Live Well. Save Big. Love Delray.**



The campaign kicked off with an **MC Yogi concert** drawing thousands to Old School Square, and included Full Moon Yoga and a community sound bath. With 75 businesses and 575 participants, the campaign inspired people to explore Downtown, support local businesses, and feel good all summer long, and reinforce Downtown Delray Beach as a place where community, connection, and healthy living come together.

NEW INTERACTIVE TOOL CREATES A DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE A Destination Website Built for Discovery

Created as a digital gateway to the downtown experience, **DOWNTOWNDELRAYBEACH.COM** helps residents, visitors, businesses, and organizations engage with Downtown Delray in a more intuitive way.

Key features include:

INTERACTIVE

DESTINATION MAPPING

Shops, restaurants, spas, galleries, hotels, cultural destinations, and signature attractions are cross-mapped for easy discovery.

NEARBY PARKING & AMENITIES

Each listing connects users to nearby parking, dining, shopping, and amenities, making it easier to plan a visit and move throughout the downtown district seamlessly.

CURATED GUIDES & EXPERIENCES

Editorial-style guides and themed experiences — including dining, shopping, wellness, arts and culture,

events, and more — link directly to mapped destinations.

BUILD-YOUR-OWN FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK

CUSTOMIZED ITINERARY

Visitors can now choose the galleries and stops they want to explore and follow their custom route through the interactive map.

NEW HAPPY HOUR EXPERIENCE

Users can search happy hour specials by day and discover participating restaurants and bars.

STREAMLINED BUSINESS SUBMISSIONS

Businesses and organizations can submit listings, happy hours, and events through online forms, helping keep the site current

while creating efficiencies for the DDA team.

More than a website, **DOWNTOWNDELRAYBEACH.COM** is a dynamic destination platform connecting people, places, and experiences across Downtown Delray Beach.



SMART INVESTMENTS STRENGTHEN THE DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE

New Energy Keeps Downtown Delray Growing

One of Downtown Delray Beach's most anticipated developments began opening in 2025 with **SUNDY VILLAGE**, a seven-acre mixed-use campus at Atlantic Avenue and Swinton Avenue.

Downtown Delray Beach continues to attract businesses that bring energy, creativity and confidence to the district. This year, the DDA welcomed an impressive mix of new restaurants, retailers, wellness studios, creative businesses and corporate headquarters, reinforcing downtown as one of South Florida's most dynamic places to dine, shop, work and invest.



Across the district, new restaurants and cafés added even more flavor and personality, from immersive dining and nightlife concepts like **Roka Hula**, **Kapow Noodle Bar** and **Good Night John Boy**, to Italian favorites, steakhouses, coffee shops, cafés, Southern comfort food and beachside treats. Retail and lifestyle openings also expanded downtown's appeal, with national names like **Free People** and **Huk** joining locally-owned eco-friendly boutiques, custom fashion, creative studios and neighborhood conveniences.

Together, these openings reflect a healthy, resilient downtown where spaces are reactivated quickly, businesses are investing with confidence, and Downtown Delray continues to grow as a vibrant destination for dining, shopping, working, wellness and community.

DDA INITIATIVE
elevate

DDA INITIATIVE:
stimulate



DOWNTOWN EVENTS KEEP VISITORS COMING

Signature Events Strengthen Downtown Economy

Downtown Delray Beach kept the momentum going with a lively calendar of signature events that brought people downtown year-round, generating more than 9.3 million visits and \$128 million in total spending during the fiscal year.

Art & Jazz on the Avenue continued to transform four downtown neighborhoods into vibrant open-air celebrations, bringing live music, local artists and visitors to the doorsteps of nearly 400 businesses for unforgettable evenings filled with creativity and energy. **First Friday Art Walk** offered a more intimate way to experience the arts, inviting guests to stroll through galleries, meet artists, discover new works and enjoy downtown at a relaxed, inspiring pace.

Savor the Avenue once again delivered one of Delray Beach’s most iconic experiences, transforming Atlantic Avenue into an elegant outdoor dining room for nearly 1,000 guests. With beautifully designed tables, chef-curated menus and a spectacular setting in the heart of downtown, the event showcased the strength of Delray’s culinary scene and its reputation as a premier dining destination. The DDA also celebrated the second annual **Jimmy Buffett Festival: Party in Paradise**, bringing tropical energy, music and laid-back island fun honoring Florida’s legend.

Seasonal promotions also helped drive traffic and support local businesses. The **Mother’s Day Orchid Giveaway** brought shoppers downtown with a simple, joyful incentive to shop local, while **Restaurant Month** expanded the spotlight on Delray’s dining scene with a full month of prix-fixe menus, special offers and culinary experiences. The **#LoveDelray** summer programming also highlighted the DDA’s growing investment in wellness downtown, creating feel-good experiences that encouraged residents and visitors to move, connect, recharge and support local businesses during the summer season. During the holidays, the DDA encouraged the community to pledge to **#ShopSmall**, supporting the 96% of Downtown Delray businesses that are small, locally owned and independent.

From arts and dining to wellness, shopping and live entertainment, these programs reflect the DDA’s commitment to creating year-round experiences that drive foot traffic, strengthen the local economy and keep Downtown Delray Beach vibrant, welcoming and full of reasons to return.



“Downtown Delray’s events are more than moments on a calendar — they are economic drivers, community builders and invitations to experience everything that makes our downtown so special. From dining under the stars at Savor the Avenue to shopping small during the holidays, each program supports our businesses while creating memories for residents and visitors alike.”

— Laura Simon
Executive Director
Delray Beach
Downtown Development Authority



The Heart of Delray, Refreshed

NEW BRAND IDENTITY HONORS ITS PAST WHILE GIVING FRESH ENERGY TO ITS FUTURE AS DOWNTOWN’S CULTURAL HEART

This year **OLD SCHOOL SQUARE** entered a new chapter with a refreshed brand identity designed to honor its history, celebrate its creative spirit, and strengthen its role as Downtown Delray Beach’s most meaningful cultural anchor.

The rebrand was built around a simple but powerful idea: *Old School Square is where Delray comes together*. It is more than a campus, more than a collection of venues, and more than a place to attend an event. It is a gathering place for art, music, education, celebration, conversation, and community connection.

At the center of the new identity is a logo created by **PATRICIA TORRAS**, a Delray resident whose design captures the spirit of Old School Square as both historic and forward-looking. In addition to the logo, the brand was inspired by the character



of the campus. The brand blends a sense of heritage with a more vibrant, contemporary feel. Architectural details, venue-specific patterns, bold typography, and a refreshed color palette help tell the story of a place that is deeply rooted in Delray’s past while actively shaping its cultural future.

With its refreshed identity, Old School Square is better positioned to communicate its impact, expand

its reach, and invite residents and visitors to experience the campus in new ways. The brand now reflects the full energy of the place itself — historic, artistic, unexpected, inclusive, and alive with possibility.

As Old School Square continues to evolve, its purpose remains clear: to be the place where culture, creativity, and community come together in Downtown Delray Beach.

Old School Square Annual Highlights

2024–2025 Exhibitions:

Hot Glass; Nature’s Palette: Art Inspired by the Earth; Icons of Art: Italian Mosaics Portraits; Multicultural Youth Art; Reflections by Andre Lopez; Mirror, Mirror: Celebrating Women in the Arts; Impressions of Italy by Ralph Papa; and Pop Culture: Pixels, Paint and Pop Art.

In addition to the Cornell Art Museum, The Amphitheatre and The Vintage Gym produced over 250 events in partnership with the City of Delray Beach and private entities.

CORNELL ART MUSEUM:

Wednesday, Thursday & Friday: Noon – 5PM
Saturday: 10AM – 5PM
Sunday: Noon – 5PM

DELRAYOLDSCHOOLSQUARE.COM
#OLDSCHOOLSQUARE
@DELRAYOLDSCHOOLSQUARE

Cornell Showcases Global Artistry

The **CORNELL ART MUSEUM** continued to elevate Downtown Delray Beach as a destination for exceptional arts and culture with two standout exhibitions that brought international talent, rare artistry and unforgettable experiences to the community.

In a first for the Cornell, the museum presented its inaugural glass exhibition in collaboration with the *Benzaiten Center for Creative Arts*, featuring 35 national and international glass artists. The exhibition celebrated the beauty, precision and drama of contemporary glass, with a special panel discussion featuring artists from *Netflix’s Blown Away*.



The museum also presented *Icons of Art: Italian Mosaic Portraits*, featuring 40 one-of-a-kind mosaic portraits, bringing centuries-old Italian craftsmanship into an inspiring and visually stunning experience.

These exhibitions reflect the Cornell Art Museum’s growing role as a vibrant cultural anchor, bringing bold ideas, global artistry and museum-quality experiences to the heart of Downtown Delray Beach.

DDA & OSS: ANOTHER YEAR OF BUILDING CONNECTIONS

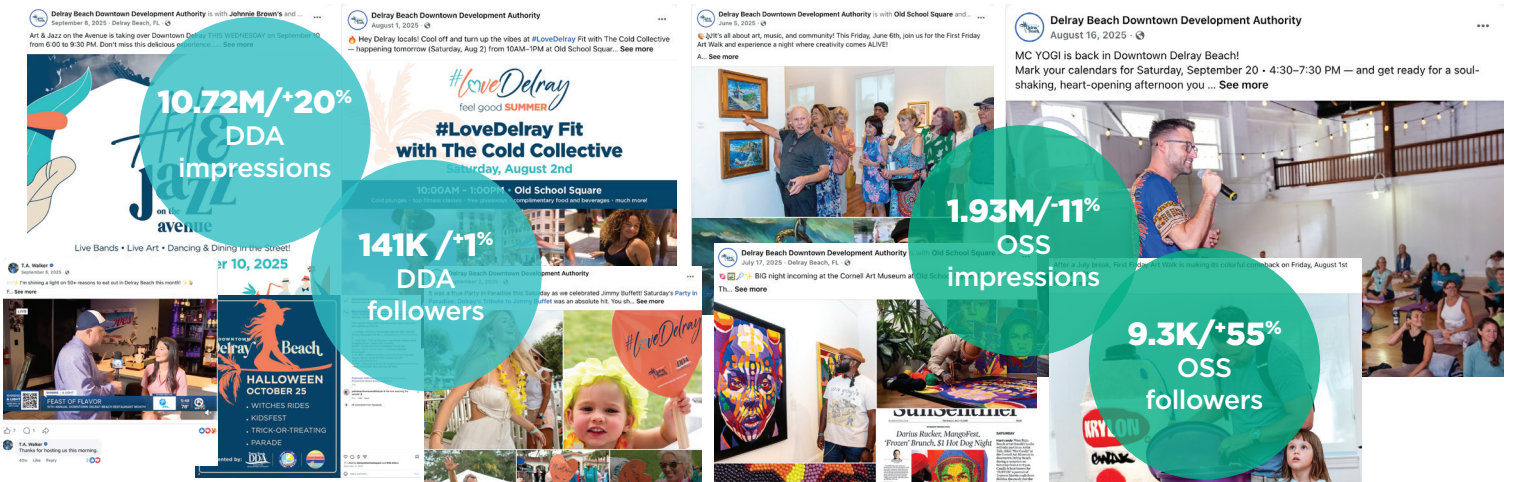
Engagement by the Numbers

PUBLIC RELATIONS



SOCIAL PLATFORMS

@DOWNTOWNDELRAY | @DELAYOLDSCHOOLSQUARE



WEBSITES

DOWNTOWNDELRAYBEACH.COM | DELAYOLDSCHOOLSQUARE.COM

