



To: Downtown Memphis Commission (DMC) Board of Directors  
From: DMC Staff  
Date: August 27, 2026  
RE: Update - Downtown Action Plan

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**Background:**

At its October 16, 2025 meeting, the DMC Board of Directors adopted the Downtown Action Plan. The plan was developed by DMC Board and staff beginning in December 2024 through a robust public engagement process with stakeholders, property owners, residents, businesses, employees, and the general public. It will guide staff efforts and financial resources over the next three years, helping set budget priorities and align affiliate boards with the broader strategy. It also establishes a framework for tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) and other metrics to measure the DMC's impact.

The Downtown Action Plan is organized under the following five priority areas:

- **Make Downtown Memphis attractive, safe, and welcoming.**  
Positive economic development can only happen in a place where employees, residents, and visitors feel safe, welcomed, and comfortable.
- **Reduce blight and fill ground-floor vacancy.**  
Uncertainty is the enemy of private investment. Blighted and vacant properties erode the existing property tax base and signal a level of risk that discourages potential investors and contributes to a reduced sense of public safety.
- **Grow the tax base of Memphis and Shelby County through a strong Downtown.**  
Downtown Memphis is the economic engine of our region, attracting talent and private investment to the Mid-South that pay dividends for the entire community.
- **Build a bold and unified identity for Downtown Memphis.**  
A strong, consistent brand is essential to fueling economic growth, increasing community pride, and reinforcing Downtown's unique identity.
- **Expand the DMC's ability to do its mission-critical work.**  
The Downtown Memphis Commission consistently turns limited resources into high- impact results for Downtown. Returning to pre-pandemic levels, building on momentum, and accelerating a world-class vision will require bold action. The DMC must have the capacity and resources to meet this challenge.

**2026 All-Boards Retreat:**

The Downtown Memphis Commission's 2026 All-Boards Retreat, held in late February 2026, brought board members together during a key moment in DMC's strategic planning and research work. As DMC advances its annual State of Downtown (SOD) report and participates in the International Downtown Association's "Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities" study, the retreat focused on how to define, measure, and communicate progress toward Downtown Memphis's long-term vision.

The session focused on sharing early research findings and gathering board input on what metrics best reflect Downtown performance, helping guide future reporting, research priorities, and public communication.

Three core takeaways emerged from the Board input and retreat discussion:

1. **Overall activity, measured by the number of people choosing to visit, live, work, and spend time Downtown, remains the most fundamental indicator of short-term progress.** Over the long term, increased investment in commercial properties, along with resulting growth in property values and the Downtown tax base, continues to serve as the strongest indicator of DMC’s overall impact.
2. **DMC can do more to clearly demonstrate the direct connection between the organization’s work and measurable outcomes, including reduced blight and vacancy, improved perceptions of safety, increased foot traffic, and greater investment in commercial properties.** A first step will be identifying key metrics to share publicly and creating a “Results & Impact” dashboard with quarterly updates. This dashboard would complement the Downtown Data Room section of the DMC website by providing an accessible snapshot of organizational impact, while the Data Room would continue serving as a source for more comprehensive information drawn from a variety of trusted external sources.
3. **DMC should conduct and publish an annual perception survey.** Collecting this primary data will help strengthen understanding of community priorities, as well as identify shared perspectives on key challenges and opportunities. Tracking feedback from stakeholders, property owners, downtown residents, and regional visitors can provide valuable insights to help guide organizational priorities and inform the annual work planning and budgeting process.

### **Immediate Next Steps:**

**New Data Dashboard:** The DMC Marketing Team is actively working to update and enhance the DMC website, with a focus on making it a key repository of property, demographic, and activity data for a broad range of Downtown stakeholders. As part of this effort, DMC will also publish a simple data dashboard highlighting key performance indicators (KPIs) and other metrics used to measure the organization’s results and impact. The proposed data points below were identified through Board member feedback during the All-Boards Retreat and subsequent staff-led research into best practices. While the Board may ultimately choose to organize these metrics around the five priority areas of the Downtown Action Plan, the proposed framework offers an alternative approach that minimizes redundancy and recognizes the interconnected nature of many of DMC’s priorities.

| Safe & Welcoming (How does Downtown feel?) |                           |                    |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Downtown Data                              | Data Source(s)            | Update Frequency   |
| Annual Perception Survey                   | DMC                       | Yearly (SOD)       |
| Crime Statistics                           | City of Memphis/MPD       | Quarterly & Yearly |
| Ambassador Program Key Stats               | BBB SMART System          | Monthly            |
| Earned Media (news)                        | DMC Marketing & Meltwater | Yearly & Quarterly |

| People & Activity (Are people coming Downtown?) |                                         |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Downtown Data                                   | Data Source(s)                          | Update Frequency   |
| Residential Population                          | Census, ACS 5-yr estimate               | Yearly             |
| Office Population                               | LEHD On The Map                         | Yearly             |
| Total Daytime Population                        | Placer.ai                               | Yearly             |
| Foot Traffic / Pedestrian Activity              | <a href="#">Placer.ai</a> & Eco Counter | Quarterly by month |
| # of Downtown Events                            | DMC Marketing                           | Yearly             |
| Total Event Attendance                          | DMC Marketing, Venue Partners           | Yearly             |
| Hotel Room Occupancy                            | MCVB                                    | Yearly             |
| Hotel - Total Room Nights                       | MCVB                                    | Yearly             |
| Parking Garage Transactions                     | Parking Operator Dashboard              | Yearly             |
| Social Media Shares                             | DMA Marketing & Sprouts                 | Yearly & Quarterly |

| Investment & Vibrancy (Are property conditions improving?) |                         |                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Downtown Data                                              | Data Source(s)          | Update Frequency |
| Development Pipeline (\$)                                  | DMC                     | Yearly (SOD)     |
| Total # of Businesses                                      | D&B Hoovers             | Yearly           |
| Downtown Building Permits                                  | Memphis/SC DPD          | Twice-Yearly     |
| DMC Incentivized Projects                                  | DMC                     | Yearly (SOD)     |
| Vacant & Blighted Property                                 | DMC, MLGW, Property Hub | Yearly (SOD)     |
| Property Value Downtown                                    | Certified Tax Rolls     | Yearly           |

**Downtown Perception Survey:** DMC staff will launch the first annual Downtown perception survey soon. The survey results will be incorporated into the annual State of Downtown (SOD) report in Q4 2026 as an important data point for priority setting and for better understanding how perceptions and impressions of Downtown evolve over time.

**Work Plan Update:** DMC staff will provide regular progress updates highlighting work planned, underway, and recently completed to advance the key strategies of the Downtown Action Plan. While the Plan establishes an initial three-year implementation horizon, staff recommends using the annual DMC All-Boards Retreat, held early in Q1 each year, as a prime opportunity to assess progress and, as needed, recalibrate strategies to ensure continued alignment with evolving challenges, opportunities, and stakeholder priorities.