DOWNTOWN’S TOP 20 STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR 2024
DOWNTOWN HOUSTON

Central Houston

downtown district

Downtown Redevelopment Authority
DOWNTOWN’S TOP 20

STRICTIC ACTIONS FOR 2024

DOWNTOWN HOUSTON

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STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Champion major projects, initiatives and investments that improve Downtown

2. Enhance and maintain a comfortable, welcoming, and well-managed public realm

3. Drive vibrancy through improved street-level connectivity, a commitment to walkability and inclusive programming strategies

4. Foster a vital and thriving economy through business growth, residential expansion, and enhanced reasons to be in Downtown

5. Develop a hivemind of intelligence and goodwill by genuinely engaging and convening stakeholders
2024 AGENDA FOR ACTION

- Create fund development strategy & pursue grants that expand impact
- Build new relationships bolstering DTH+’s engagement with Houston’s diverse community
- Establish new and nurture existing partnerships with civic leaders
- Create tools to communicate NHHIP Segment 3’s schedule & community impact
- Position the EaDo cap project for federal grant submission
- Advance engineering for Main Street Promenade
- Complete Montrose St. Bridge design & engineering
- Expand ability to facilitate office conversions
- Refresh Downtown Living Initiative to attract a broader spectrum of households
- Construct priority initiatives from pedestrian lighting master plan
- Identify and install distinctive, strategically positioned 2024 holiday décor
- Re-envision and deploy new street pole banners
- Develop a special events & programming strategy
- Establish a third-party event hosting program for DTH+ parks
- Foster a new homeless engagement-focused unit within safety program
- Pilot a Flock camera network
- Produce a storefront recruitment strategy & support program
- Publish and promote quarterly market reports
- Enhance murals through façade lighting
- Plan for and enhance connections among Downtown destinations
PUBLISH & PROMOTE QUARTERLY MARKET REPORTS
TELLING DOWNTOWN’S STORY WITH DATA

• Proactively lead the Downtown Houston narrative through data-backed insights
• Consistently publish one month after the quarter ends
• Continue the DTH+ legacy of trusted reports that feature trusted data and market insights, including office, hospitality, and residential
• Evoke new perspectives by revealing the dynamism of Downtown on the daily
• Showcase the outsized impact of Houston’s beloved Downtown destinations
• Write and design a report that’s accessible, concise, and informative
BEHIND THE DATA

• Public webinars with Q&A
• In-person presentations to economic development partners and stakeholder groups
ESTABLISH NEW & NURTURE EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIC LEADERS
NEW CIVIC LEADERS

• Period of considerable transition
• Outcomes enhanced through collaboration
• On the Horizon:
  • Municipal budget challenges
  • Homeless funding evaporating
  • Business attraction
  • Convention campus planning
  • NHHIP design and implementation
BUILD NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOUSTON’S DIVERSE COMMUNITY
EXPANDING RELATIONSHIPS

• Champion and enhance Downtown Houston as a connected and thriving place for everyone.

• Downtown as everyone’s neighborhood:
  • Reinforcing Houston’s reputation as diverse and welcoming
  • Expand ability to attract the local market
  • Operationalizing intent through our program design
CREATE TOOLS TO COMMUNICATE NHHIP SEGMENT 3'S SCHEDULE & COMMUNITY IMPACT
I-45 rebuild in Harris County expected to start in 2024 & end in 2042

According to TxDOT’s recent presentation to the Houston-Galveston Area Council, its $9.7 billion plan to widen and reroute I-45 north and north of downtown includes a series of sub-projects in three overarching segments.

**TRANSPORTATION**

- **I-45 rebuild in Harris County expected to start in 2024 & end in 2042**

**RELATED**

- No. 6; high highway signs in out bowed, feels say.
- TxDOT revises $47 million; elevating into near downtown neighborhood.
- Houston drivers will see 6th wrap up, start of I-45 work.

**DOWNTOWN**

- Downtown Connector replaces Pierce Elevated.
- Structural cap built over I-69 depressed section from Lamar St to Commerce St next to the George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB) could be developed by others.
- Structural cap built over I-69 depressed section from Lamar St to Caroline St could be developed by others.
- Access between Downtown and East Downtown increased by construction of new southbound street between Commerce St and Leeland St.
- Downtown Connector replaces Pierce Elevated.
- Straighten and add two Express Lanes in each direction; materials will use to travel through Downtown.
- Straighten I-69 and widen from 8 to 10 or 12 lanes in each direction.
NHHIP TOOLKIT

- Serves as clear and accurate voice
- Equips stakeholders as project ambassadors
- Removes barriers to digesting project details
CREATE FUND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY & PURSUE FUNDS TO EXPAND IMPACT
IDENTIFY + DIVERSIFY FUNDING

• CHCI: Apply for federal, state, and philanthropic grants to expand our impact.

• Areas of focus to include:
  • Expanding our existing programs, such as homeless outreach and public safety
  • Identify funds to support strategic initiatives, such as placemaking and connectivity
  • Ramp up grant writing capacity to support NHHIP implementation
POSITION THE EADO CAP PROJECT FOR FEDERAL GRANT SUBMISSION
EADO CAP
EADO CAP

• Builds consensus around shared vision
• Uses inclusive community engagement
• Connects public voices to decision-making
• Serves as catalyst for future investment
• Reconnects adjacent communities
EXPAND ON THE ABILITY TO FACILITATE OFFICE CONVERSIONS
OFFICE MARKET CONTEXT

• Average vacancy rate of 24%

• 3rd highest among 35 largest US Cities
CONVERSION CANDIDATES

The Challenge

• 37 buildings holding 53% of available office space
  DT are conversion candidates (28M SF total)

• 22 of those 37 buildings are >40% vacant (14M SF in total)

• 23 of those 37 buildings built between 1975-1986
  (20M SF in total)

• Large floorplates and remaining tenants
FISCAL IMPACT

Cost of the “Do Nothing” Scenario
- Declining office building occupancy = declining values
- Ripple effect reducing value

Benefit of Incentivizing Conversion
- Incentives recouped through the long-term boost in property tax revenue
- Ripple effect enhances values
- Amenities increase community vibrancy and value
- Inclusive residential offerings boost tenant absorption rate
## Financial Incentive Structure

- Enhanced tax incentive program
- Partnering with other taxing units
- Public Facility Corporation vehicles on select properties
- State and Federal funding

## Project Selection Criteria

- Chronic high availability
- Low acquisition costs
- Residential and/or adaptive reuse experience
- Historic tax credit eligibility
- Strategic neighborhood amenities
- Impactful unit pricing

## Technical Assistance Program

- Office conversion liaison
- Streamline permitting process
- Concierge for historic tax credits
- Address lease burden
REFRESH DOWNTOWN LIVING INITIATIVE
DOWNTOWN LIVING INITIATIVE 2.0

• Reignites residential population base

• Complements retail recruitment efforts

• Activates pedestrian realm

• Creates a genuine “neighborhood”
COMPLETE DESIGN & ENGINEERING FOR THE MONTROSE BRIDGE
Establish a 3rd party event hosting program for DTH+ Parks
3rd Party Event Hosting

- Clear, fair, predictable
- Amplify impact on public parks
- Reflect community aspirations
- Respect the public assets
- Serves as a catalyst for Downtown
DEVELOP SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMMING STRATEGY
PROCESS

• Build consensus on desired outcomes
• Test, Measure, Learn
• Differentiated
• Vibrant Public Realm
IDENTIFY & INSTALL
DISTINCTIVE,
STRATEGICALLY
POSITIONED 2024
HOLIDAY DECOR
SENSE OF PLACE

• Synergy with public realm + placemaking
• Differentiated
• Measurable *strategic* impact
RE-ENVISION & DEPLOY NEW STREET POLE BANNERS
ARRIVAL

• Bold Color + Simple Graphics

• I AM Downtown!

• Unique Experiences (Differentiated)
PILOT A FLOCK CAMER A NETWORK
FLOCK CAMERAS

- Camera system that provides direct support to the Houston Police Department
- Cameras deployed to specific locations that read vehicle license plates
- Captures two (2) lanes of traffic simultaneously, with ability to process up to 30,000 vehicles per day
- Part of growing network: 5,000 Flock cameras deployed around the greater Houston metropolitan area
FOSTER A NEW HOMELESS ENGAGEMENT-FOCUSED UNIT WITHIN SAFETY PROGRAM
QUALITY OF LIFE TEAM

• 6 Quality of Life Response team members

• Specially trained to deter quality-of-life issues and offer an enhanced sense of safety in Downtown

• Proactively deployed to known “hotspot areas” during peak times

• Address all nuisance, City ordinance compliance issues

• Works closely with outreach teams, providing referrals

• Analytic data collection
PLAN FOR & ENHANCE CONNECTIONS AMONG DOWNTOWN DESTINATIONS
NEIGHBORHOOD VIBRANCY, DAY & NIGHT, ANY DAY OF THE WEEK
CONNECT OUR DESTINATIONS

• 8.3 million people visited Downtown 39 million times in 2023
• Population has grown nearly 2.5x over the last decade
• Workers are returning, seeking more dynamism in the workplace
• 2023 yielded public realm studies and recommendations:
  • ARUP Pedestrian Lighting Study (January 2024)
  • More Space: Main Street Basis of Design (January 2024)
  • Downtown Ground-floor Block Face Study (May 2023)
  • Vision Zero: Downtown High-Injury Network and Recommended Interventions (December 2023)
ACTION PLAN FOR URBAN DESIGN & PROGRAMMING

• With the support of an urban design consultant and through community engagement, goals include:
  • Enhanced connectivity between Downtown’s districts and outperforming destinations
  • Developing a coordinated open space network that ensures the 20+ parks of Downtown thrive together
  • Programming for all Downtowners in parks and along streets that is coordinated
  • Pedestrian-centric design for safe, more comfortable and illuminated public spaces and sidewalks
  • Art and cultural integration throughout
ALIGN PARTNERS & PROJECTS

- Theater District’s Placemaking Plan
- Minute Maid Park Entertainment Destination
- Toyota Center
- George R. Brown & SB 1057 public realm projects
- Discovery Green
- Buffalo Bayou and Buffalo Bayou Partnership
- Main Street Promenade
- Remembrance Park
- Historic District
- EaDo Connections
PRODUCE A STOREFRONT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY & SUPPORT PROGRAM
• Despite residential population growth and the steady return of visitors to our major destinations, street-level storefronts and retail nodes struggle to shine

• This isn’t a tunnels problem (entirely)
  - 3 out of 4 storefronts are not in the tunnels
  - Tunnels storefront occupancy is 72% and street-level occupancy is 82%

• What’s needed: Enhance, diversify, and strategically pivot street-level storefronts and their tenants toward a mixed-use Downtown neighborhood
STRATEGY-INFORMED GRANT PROGRAM FOR STOREFRONTS

• Develop a strategic plan in partnership with a national retail expert to consider cities and solutions that mirror Houston.

• Stand up a strategic grant program or multiple programs for street-level storefronts.

• Connect retail nodes through placemaking and connectivity efforts occurring at street level.
CONSTRUCT PRIORITY INITIATIVES FROM PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING MASTER PLAN
LIGHTING

- Assessment and Masterplan Issuance: January 2024
- Over 6,500 light measurement points taken
- 24 case study sites assessed
- 34 murals evaluated

8 Areas of Opportunity
ENHANCE MURALS THROUGH FACADE LIGHTING
ADVANCE ENGINEERING FOR MAIN STREET PROMENADE
MAIN STREET PROMENADE

• RFQ to be issued: January 2024

• Continuous communication with Main Street businesses and owners will be an important part of the process

• Designing with programming in mind

• Engineering phase will run through early 2025