

Downtown Dahlonega 2023 Strategic Work Plan

Vision

In 2032 downtown Dahlonega has advanced its reputation as a thriving district that preserves its historic, small-town character. It is loved by residents and visitors who enjoy the experiences it offers in shopping, dining, and living within a clean, safe, and vibrant center of business and community. Successful, locally owned small businesses are brimming with a robust blend of young professionals and families, university professionals and students, as well as visitors who are drawn to the local history, architecture, and friendly charming atmosphere. Everyone enjoys spending time in downtown because of the diverse entertainment, dining, and shopping options. Pedestrians enjoy moving with ease through an expansive network of sidewalks and crosswalks that are well-lit and connected to nearby residential streets, the University campus, and the reservoir trails. Streets are lined with new trees, flowering plants, and colorful banners throughout the shopping district. The historic integrity of the downtown area has been well maintained and preserved. A comprehensive parking management system makes it convenient and affordable for everyone - employees, locals, and visitors – to park, thanks to new signage, information, off-street facilities, and a shuttling system that serves the business district. Downtown Dahlonega is one of the greatest small-town centers in America because of its uniqueness, history, and preservation-minded pride of its residents.

Community Transformation Strategies

1. *Community Serving*
2. *Beautification Initiatives and Design*

Rationale

In 2021, the DDA-Main Street office conducted three surveys: 1) a Business Owner Survey, 2) a Community Input survey, and 3) a Downtown Leadership survey. Data showed local residents’ very strong commitment to the historic preservation of downtown buildings, their plea for more businesses to serve the community, and for more locally oriented entertainment and placemaking initiatives. Because of the desire to see more resident-based services, the DDA and Main Street team selected *Community Serving* and *Beautification Initiatives and Design* as their transformation strategies. These strategies are intended to spark business development and retention, and intentional design and placemaking projects to create a robust downtown area. Dahlonega is a leader in creating a climate for business success based on the historic preservation of its central business district. The extensive and concise data from the surveys are translated into this economic development plan of work for the Dahlonega DDA-Main Street board and staff.

Wildly Important Goals

Community Serving

Beautification Initiatives and Design

Goals

1. Proactively work to enhance resident experiences in the categories of entertainment, shopping, dining, and service industries.
2. Retain, Expand, and Recruit (RER) businesses.

Goals

1. Repair and preserve downtown buildings and enhance public properties.

Definition for Success

1. Five new programs have been implemented to increase the quality of life for residents and enhance the experiences of visitors by December 2024.
2. Retain current businesses; help expand two current businesses; recruit six new businesses that provide a needed service to residents, by July 2025.

Definition for Success

1. 100% of public properties are cleaned and prepped for greenspace and pocket park projects by March 2025.
2. An education initiative has been implemented to bring blighted buildings, both historic and not, into compliance, by December 2023.

Lead Board Member Amy

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Community Transformation Strategy: *Community Serving*

<p>Goal 1</p> <p>Proactively work to enhance resident experiences in the categories of entertainment, shopping, dining, and service industries.</p>	<p>Definitions for Success</p> <p>Five new programs have been implemented to increase the quality of life of residents and enhance the experiences of visitors by December 2024.</p>
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Partners: Dahlonega City Council, Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce, Discover Dahlonega (Tourism), Downtown Dahlonega Business Association

Tasks	Staff & Board Responsible	Due Date (Start & Complete)	Partners	Budget
Educate on the importance of business hours that coincide with commuter metrics in the city and the county.	Skyler Alexander Tony Owens	ASAP - continuous	DDBA, GDOT, Tourism	No cost
Plan and execute weeknight promotional events (ticketed events, crawls, etc.) once a month that incentivizes “after 5 p.m.” sales and provide entertainment for locals; advertise current local discounts and encourage more businesses to offer them.	Skyler Alexander Deb Rowe	4/2023 - continuous	DDBA, Tourism, Chamber of Commerce	Fund Balance, sponsorships
Maintain a downtown community calendar to share with city and county residents via, social media, email campaigns, and physical mail.	Skyler Alexander Deb Rowe	3/2023 - continuous	Tourism, DDBA, Chamber of Commerce, LCSS, UNG	\$400.00
Provide recommendations for alterations to the farmer’s market ordinance to allow a diversified market. Recruit live music and food vendors to create a lively environment; partner with Art in the Park when possible.	Skyler Alexander Ryan Puckett	3/2023 – 5/2023 (maintain after that)	Market vendors, Chestatee Artists, Dahlonega Arts Alliance, LCHS, UNG	\$400 + additional sponsorships
Advocate for and recruit Downtown Dahlonega Program Sponsorships to not only add more dates for community events but enhance them as well: hire food trucks and allow for business pop-up sales.	Skyler Alexander Amy Thrailkill	ASAP - continuous	DDBA, Chamber of Commerce	No cost
Purchase “giant games” to activate underutilized space to create fun centers for family activities.	Skyler Alexander Wendi Huguley	10/2023 - completion	City Public Works	\$3,000.00
Develop and maintain a downtown ambassador program: a group of community volunteers who are eager to share positive news about downtown and provide information to visitors. Create a Victorian costume rental program to coincide with this.	Ariel Alexander & Skyler Alexander Awtrey Moore	8/2023 – 10/2023 (maintain after that)	DDBA, Chamber of Commerce, Visitor’s Center	TPD: T-shirts, Costumes. \$300 printing
Design and implement a mini bronze statue program: unique, bronze statues placed strategically around the downtown area as a walking tour/scavenger hunt for families: Miners on Main & Bears on the Square	Skyler Alexander Wendi Huguley	7/2023 - completion	Tourism, UNG, statue production company	TPD

Community Transformation Strategy: *Community Serving*

<p>Goal 2 Retain, Expand, and Recruit (RER) businesses.</p>	<p>Definitions for Success Retain current businesses; help expand two current businesses; recruit six new businesses that provide a needed service to residents, by July 2025.</p>
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Partners: local business owners, potential business owners, Ga. Power’s ESRI customer demographic and retail leakage data, Chamber, Tourism Board, schools (work training), Lumpkin Co. Development Authority, UNG Marketing, and the city’s planning and zoning department

Tasks	Staff & Board Responsible	Due Date (Start Complete)	Partners	Budget
Create a private Facebook for local merchants to receive updates from the DDA, Main Street, City, and fellow merchants. Send out bi-weekly email updates with this information also.	Skyler Alexander Wendi Huguley	ASAP - continuous	DDBA, Tourism, Chamber of Commerce, City Staff	No cost
Hire a UNG intern to develop and maintain a comprehensive social media program, coordinating with all businesses as well as other advertising entities: Tourism, Chamber, etc.	Skyler Alexander Wendi Huguley	8/2023 – continuous (Fall 2023 semester)	Tourism, DDBA, Chamber of Commerce, LCSS, UNG	Use FWS, Intern Budget
Recruit a boutique grocery/beverage market w/tasting room, café) (Ask existing area markets about expansion to downtown).	Ariel Alexander Awtrey Moore	ASAP - completion	Targeted Prospects	No cost
Recruit a children’s clothing store. Ask existing area businesses about expansion to downtown.	Ariel Alexander Awtrey Moore	ASAP - completion	Targeted Prospects	No cost
Advertise and share available vacant properties and meet with interested parties to educate them about the services Dahlonega is lacking.	Ariel Alexander Amy Thrailkill	ASAP - continuous	Targeted Prospects	No cost
Continue to pursue a public art initiative and work to provide funding mechanisms for strategic murals and other art installations in the downtown area.	Ariel Alexander Tony Owens	3/2023 - continuous	UNG Art Department, GA Council for the Arts	TPD
Provide recommendations for “pro-business” alterations to city ordinances to streamline the process of opening a business downtown.	Ariel Alexander Tony Owens	ASAP - completion	DDBA, City Council, Planning & Zoning, Parking Committee	No cost
Create and maintain a “Job Opportunities” page on dahlonegadda.org for downtown positions with contact information.	Skyler Alexander Donna Logan	3/2023 - continuous	Business Owners	No cost
Create and implement a Downtown Dollars program: a self-sufficient fund for gift certificates, managed by the DDA, to be used at participating businesses.	Skyler Alexander Deb Rowe	4/2023 - continuous	Business Owners, Tourism	\$1,000 seed
Connect business owners in need of trained staff with the Georgia Mountain Regional Commission WorkSource GA program.	Skyler Alexander Donna Logan	5/2023 - continuous	GMRC	No cost

Community Transformation Strategy: *Beautification Initiatives and Design*

Goal 1

Repair and preserve downtown buildings and enhance public properties.

Definitions for Success

1. 100% of public properties are cleaned and prepped for greenspace and pocket park projects by March 2025.
2. An education initiative has been implemented to bring blighted buildings, both historic and not, into compliance, by December 2023.

Partners and Resources: Dahlonega City Council, Historic Preservation Commission, city planning and zoning department, planning commission, property and business owners

Tasks	Staff & Board Responsible	Due Date (Start & Complete)	Partners	Budget
Develop or sell the 147 North Park Street property.	Ariel Alexander Amy Thrailkill	ASAP until completion	Interested developers, City Council	No cost
Install new “Dahlonega Stories” plaques, including one at the Head House and incorporate them into a new and improved walking tour, to be distributed through paper copies as well as digitally.	Ariel Alexander Ryan Puckett	3/2023 - continuous	Historical Society, UNG History Department, business & property owners	\$7,000
Advocate for and support the installation of increased and diversified lighting downtown: streetlights at crosswalks, string lighting at storefronts and key streets, etc.	Skyler Alexander Donna Logan	Spring 2023 – Spring 2024	City Public Works Staff, GA Power, DDBA	As Needed
Identify possible land acquisitions for pocket parks and greenspace.	Ariel Alexander Awtrey Moore	4/2023 - continuous	DCA, property owners	As Needed
Further educate on the current incentives programs and contact business and property owners eligible for state incentives.	Ariel Alexander Amy Thrailkill	ASAP - continuous	Property owners, volunteers	No cost
Perform a walk-through of the central business district to identify key project areas and create design recommendations for both private and public areas.	Ariel Alexander Tony Owens	5/2023 – 5/2023	HPC, Planning and Zoning, City Council,	No cost
Begin a strategic plan for residential improvement projects in conjunction with council’s direction from housing study: to include code compliance, improvement zones, residential façade incentives, and legacy programs.	Ariel Alexander Amy Thrailkill	6/2023 - completion	Planning & Zoning, City Council, key stakeholders, Code Enforcement, DCA	As Needed
Continue to develop a comprehensive parking program and seek public-private partnerships to ease the burden on existing spaces. Research and develop a parking shuttle in conjunction with this effort.	Ariel Alexander Wendi Huguley	ASAP - continuous	DOT, City Police, City Public Works Staff, property owners	As Needed
Inventory all current signage and consolidate, when possible, to clear the area for pedestrians and drivers. Purchase banners for light poles instead of on-street signage when possible.	Skyler Alexander Deb Rowe	3/2023 – 3/2024	City Public Works Staff, outside vendors	\$800.00