

CRC Annual Meeting Engagement Summary (completed by NEOO Partners)

A group of 14-16 community members and community leaders from the Downtown neighborhood participated in small group discussions about the growth of Downtown at the Capitol River Council Annual Meeting on June 27, 2023.

- After reading a summary about the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance's vision for increasing visitorship, residents, and jobs, there was unanimous agreement (amongst participants) about the underlying goals for growth in the community (i.e. increasing residents, jobs, and visitorship).
- Many participants identified and emphasized the need to attain higher efficiency in the market for retail space Downtown, in particular; the small groups seemed to identify it (i.e. retail space) as uniquely important because it directly impacts residents, jobs, and visitorship.
- In response to a prompt asking community members where investment should be directed, most groups seemed to agree about the need to prioritize resolutions to issues with current assets and capitalizing on current resources (participants referenced both, tangible assets, like the riverfront and parks, as well as intangible resources, like the artist community). The small groups seemed to favor strategies centered on reinforcing cultural and financial efforts that have already gained some momentum.
- Participants also suggested and considered several ideas for increasing safety and sustainability Downtown Saint Paul; the underlying sentiment seemed to be that the impact created by any additional investment will be suppressed, to some degree, by underlying concerns related to safety and environmental issues.

A transcription of the summarized content of the discussions is included below:

Question prompt for small groups:

Discussion Prompt 1:

The Saint Paul Downtown Alliance has a vision to increase the vitality of the Downtown area by increasing the number of residents (housing), increasing the number jobs (employment), and increasing visitorship.

Is your vision for the future Downtown in alignment with the vision described above? Are there any other important variables (besides housing, employment, and visitorship) that you feel should be taken into account as we think of ways that strategic investments can be used to boost vitality?

Discussion Prompt 2:

Where do you think targeted investment should be directed (i.e. which areas/sites/properties/projects), if the goal is to make the most catalytic impact on the Downtown area? In other words, where must investments be made to attract the most subsequent investment and economic activity?

Discussion Prompt 3:

What do you see as the greatest challenges that we'll have to overcome to boost vitality Downtown using strategic investments?

Small Group Discussion Content

Group 1 (Purple)

1.
 - "RETAIL, RETAIL, RETAIL".
 - Community Resident Events / Rec Center.
 - Make Downtown a "destination" (i.e. Capitol City).
 - We need to capitalize on our current resources: Artists. Farmer's Market. Beauty. Union. River Front. Event Centers - make these destinations. Residents often need to order services online while we WANT to walk the city + spend locally.
2.
 - Riverfront and Lowertown - Galtier 1st floor. Mears Park. Rothmore. Hat Trick Lounge. Bigos Property. Transportation.
3.
 - Homelessness - restrooms.

- Seed \$ for businesses (start ups).
- Crime perception.
Parking.
Clean up nasty areas.

Group 2 (Red)

1. Need business to support housing i.e. more grocery choices, retail, and hours of availability for residents who work elsewhere.
- Visitorship increasing in Central area. Improving public transit both routes and public safety.
2. Focus on vacant/underutilized property (Downtown old retail corridor: (Dayton's, Gokey's Frank Murphy's, etc.) before new development.
3. Affordable Housing, Reputation - public safety, unhoused people and how to find solutions across groups.

Group 3 (Green)

- Recruitment (residents) - Esp. out of State (FL, TX, AZ).
- Housing - Diversify (size, value, rental + owned).
- Improve the streetscape and beautify Downtown.
- Jobs - Help Securian, EcoLab, Other Corporations Maintain and Expand. Innovate (e.g. childcare).
- Corporations. And Services.
- Safety includes perception.
- Visitation - Riverfront!!! Restaurants. Build it!!!
- Biking - connect the dots.

Group 4 (Turquoise)

Vision

- Sustainability
 - Green Energy.
 - Urban Agriculture & Green Spaces/Parks.
 - Sense of Safety.
 - Connecting Downtown to the River.

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