

DOWNTOWN TEAM SERIES #2



A Closer Look at Your Downtown Team: Member Roles and Interests

As mentioned in the first document of this series, “Downtown Teams in the Kentucky Promise Zone,” downtown revitalization requires more than a single person’s best intentions and is often predicated on having a diverse and committed team. While these processes may start with a single person investing their time addressing an issue, it cannot be emphasized enough that cultivating shared ownership and subsequent positive results requires a deeper commitment by individuals on your team. In order to strategically build a team we must first think about the connections between potential members and the roles they can play and why they may be interested in various efforts.

Is it more important to think about WHO is on your team or WHY they are on your team?

Given the archetypal representatives we identified in the previous activity, let’s look at what each member of the downtown teams brought to the project.

Local Government Roles

- Provided local coordination of departments. (Public works, streets, waste management, tourism, etc.)
- Acknowledged that successful and attractive downtowns are a draw for industry recruitment and county-wide area businesses.
- Provided opportunity to improve relations between city hall and the private sector.
- In kind contributions to help meet grant requirements involved labor or staff time associated with specific projects or departments.
- Fiscal agent for grant funding providing administrative support and accounting.
- Often track a variety of community indicators and collect data.

Local Government Interests

- Increased tax base and revenue by increasing property values, increasing the numbers of jobs and hotel/restaurant taxes.

Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work. – Vince Lombardi

- Increased community involvement in addressing goals allows the municipality to focus on additional priorities.
- The identification of additional resources helps to address challenging community problems.
- Participation in downtown revitalization in the Promise Zone also meant there were grant dollars available for strategic investments. [This may not always be the case but efforts involving diverse team members and an engaged public are often favored by funders.]
- Municipal departments are sometimes at heart of team member complaints or solutions.

A review of Downtown Teams in the Promise Zone (check out the first publication in this series to learn more) revealed a high frequency of local government involvement but what role do they actually play and what do they hope to gain from participating? Every team included or involved local government (i.e. Mayor) or the municipal staff in some way.

Cautionary tale about local government as ‘the starting place’ – many, if not most, local governments are more likely to support a new project or idea after demonstrated, broad-based, undeniable public support, it can showcase tangible results and impacts, or is required for a specific philanthropic funder. Local governments are facing steady budget declines and increased responsibilities to adequately serve their communities and may not prioritize your vision or even acknowledge your efforts until it’s in their best interest to do so. While local government may not be an early adopter of your vision, they will come around in time if your project starts to gain attention.

Chamber of Commerce Roles

- Attract or cultivate high value, authentic local businesses.
- Strengthening, retaining, sustaining and expanding existing businesses.
- District wide marketing strategies rely on the community's assets and unique features.
- Addressing economic leakage of local retail was often a priority.
- Increased sales, jobs, and ultimately quality of life for members and residents.
- Often required to track a variety of data related to downtown businesses and overall marketplace performance.

Chamber of Commerce Interests

- A great ally in leveraging business support for innovate ideas.
- Increased occupancy rates and rent stability allows for more diverse businesses to operate and helps buildings stay in optimal condition.
- Efforts to improve the image of downtown are critical in impacting a visitors' or potential investors' first impression. [Associated with this were efforts in increase community pride.]
- Increased traffic and ease of flow of both automotive and pedestrian traffic increases the volume of potential customers.

Local Chambers of Commerce or Main Street Merchants Associations were present in 90% of the Downtown Teams in the Promise Zone. Their members (local businesses) are at the heart of downtowns. Positive outcomes for their members is the primary driver behind for their involvement.

Tourism Roles and Interests

- Tourism directors and staff often have grant writing experience.
- Tasked with regional promotion providing the opportunity and interest to create a great first impression.
- Engaged in efforts to promote creative placemaking often thinking how to create destinations and experiences for visitors.
- Create and cultivate positive visitor experiences that provide opportunities for visitors to spend money locally.
- Were interested in data collection and were often

very versed in both collection and analysis of available data.

- Financial skills to act as fiscal agent to administer and account for grant funds.
- Tasked with curating and executing an interconnected tourism vision.
- Experience working with musicians and coordinating public festivals/events.

Tourism Interests

- Trail development and maintenance as a way to promote natural assets and increase tourism opportunities.
- Often had technical skills associated with mapping software.
- Broad reaching partnerships and connections.

As downtowns are increasingly considered integral to the tourist and visitor experience we see both local and regional tourism offices engaged in downtown revitalization efforts. This trend is great for downtown revitalization efforts because we have found these members bring a variety of technical skills to the team often suited for tourism development but synonymous for downtown revitalization efforts as well.

Downtown Manager Roles

- Specific interest and most often requirement to collect data and measure impacts of various downtown efforts.
- Promotion of downtown activities and opportunities is often a priority.
- They were steadfast downtown advocates.
- In some cases nonprofits associated with local Main Street affiliates have acted as fiscal agents for grant funds.
- Often had grant writing and management experience.
- Project coordination and often play pivotal roles in redevelopment efforts acting as liaison between multiple parties.

Downtown Manager Interests

- Broad reaching relationships with downtown constituents.
- In particular those affiliated with Kentucky Main Street program have a commitment to support enhanced urban design & placemaking efforts.



A critical piece for many Downtown Teams in the Promise Zone was a paid staff member to drive and provide leadership for the community's downtown revitalization process. This team member was most often the executive director of a Kentucky Main Street affiliate program or municipal downtown manager.

Nonprofit Roles

- Fiscal agent for grant or had experience in grant administration and accounting.
- Often provided in kind contributions drawing upon their constituents or members.

Nonprofit Interests

- Had a commitment to public engagement and were often issue or topic focused and citizen driven.
- Were engaged in innovative creative placemaking rooted in the expression of their missions.

The majority of Downtown Teams in the Promise Zone included both local and regionally focused nonprofits representing variety of interests including the arts, trails, local food, natural environment, or economic development.

County Extension Agent Roles

- Often have a strong understanding of the community and its systems.
- Brought a connection to current information, resources, and often are engaged in a variety of community endeavors.
- Public outreach and education.

County Extension Agent Interests

- Have a programmatic focus area. (4H, FCS, etc.)
- Often had a strong connection to the Farmer's Market and can act as an advocate for local food economies.
- Often a strong community health advocate supporting pedestrian and walkability efforts.

An often underutilized community asset, county extension agents, were present in nearly half of the Downtown Teams in the Promise Zone.

Cultural/Historical Heritage Roles

- Repositories for accurate historic data on buildings and industry.
- Curate local genealogy data which remains a consistent asset attracting visitors from out of town with local familial connections.

Cultural/Historical Heritage Interests

- Keen interest in historic preservation and often engaged in efforts to protect historic and cultural assets.
- Have an interest in cultivating and promoting the community's historic narrative.

When cultural and historical assets are valued as components of the downtown visitor experience local historic societies and cultural heritage organizations become a valuable team member.

Community Foundation Roles

- They acted as fiscal sponsor or a pass-through for monies raised for specific projects.
- Great resource for fundraising strategies.
- Provide in kind contributions or matching funds for projects.
- Provided valuable technical assistance
- Often has connections to a wide variety of additional resources.

Community Foundation Interests

- Efforts aimed at improving quality of life
- Building capacity and creating permanent, locally controlled community assets.

A growing strategy to capture local wealth for current and future reinvestment has been the creation of local foundations & philanthropic organizations and one third of Downtown Teams in the Promise Zone included representation of their local or community foundations.

This summary provides insights on the roles and interests underpinning a variety of members on Downtown Teams in the Promise Zone. While this list is expansive, it is not exhaustive and you may find that your specific issue requires an additional team member who fills a void. For example you may need representation from your housing authority if local housing is your focus or school system if youth are a focus. Additionally, if your goal is to address outmigration of young families, it is important to include those voices on your team or seek them out.

Please see the Downtown Team Member Inventory Model for a worksheet you can use to account for team member contributions and commitments. The worksheet is designed to help articulate the specific skills, interests and roles of downtown revitalization team members.

