

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT COMMUNICATION PLAN

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
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MISSOURI

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI (DREAM) PROGRAM SPONSORS:



MARKETING PLAN

PLANNING CONSULTANT



TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMUNICATION PLAN..... 1

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS 3

PHASES, GOALS, & STRATEGIES 5

 Phase I.....5
 CID PLANNING

 Phase II.....5
 EDUCATION & PETITION SIGNING

 Phase III.....7
 CITY COUNCIL CID DECISION

 Phase IV..... 8
 GET OUT THE VOTE

 Phase V..... 9
 ELECTION RESULTS

 Phase VI 9
 ONGOING CID COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION PLAN

The Core Message for the St. Joseph Downtown Community Improvement District (CID) Communication Plan is that additional funding sources must be developed in order to continue the positive momentum of Downtown Revitalization in St. Joseph. A CID funded through an additional sales tax would provide the needed funding to achieve desired enhancements. All auxiliary messages to Target Audiences include these ideas.

The Primary Target Audiences for the Plan are:

- Business Owners,
- Property Owners,
- Residents in the CID area,
- City of St. Joseph Elected Officials.

These groups have a direct impact whether a CID is created. Consequently, the majority of the strategies contained in this Plan target these Audiences.

Secondary Target Audiences are:

- Local media

The media plays a significant role due to the relay of information to the Primary Target Audience.

The Communication Plan has a heavy focus on direct communication with Primary Target Audiences about the facts and issues of the CID, the media also plays an important roll in relaying accurate and impartial information about the CID.

The following communication channels will be available to relay information to the Primary and Secondary Target Audiences.

Communication Channels include:

- Focus Group meeting of business/property owners in the CID
- Survey of residents in CID
- News releases
- Memos
- Fact sheets
- FAQ & Answers
- Direct mail
- Meetings
- City Website
- Personal contacts

The Communication Plan is broken into six Phases:

Phase I

Lays the foundation for CID support by engaging the Primary Target Audiences in setting goals for Downtown Revitalization. Before Downtown businesses, residents and property owners are presented with a proposal for a Downtown CID, it is critical that they help develop and embrace the vision for Downtown Revitalization. To do that, they must clearly identify Revitalization goals they want to achieve and understand what must be done to achieve these goals.

Phase II

Focuses on the education of all Primary Target Audiences about the CID and how it fits with Downtown Revitalization goals, especially those established in Phase I. Phase II also employs the use of a CID Brochure with

messages specifically targeted to the unique concerns of the residents, business owners and property owners in the CID area.

The goals of Phase 2 are:

- To reach the Primary Target Audiences with information specific to their concerns about the CID
- Obtain an understanding by a majority of the Primary Target Audiences of the costs and benefits of the CID.

Phases III and V

These phases focus on the decision of the voters and the City Council. Major importance is placed on relaying all voter and City Council decisions to the public.

Phase IV

Includes sending the actual CID ballots to voters. An important part of this Phase is continuing voter education and working with the media during the 30 days voters have to make their decision and return their ballots. Sending a reminder to voters near the end of the 30-day period is also suggested to ensure voters don't set their ballots aside and forget about them.

Goals in Phase 3 include:

- Ensuring voters have adequate means to answer any remaining questions they may have during the voting period; and,
- Receiving a sufficient number of completed ballots.

Phase VI

The final Phase in the Communication Plan, outlines a necessary ongoing communication campaign to keep the Target Audiences informed and involved as Downtown Revitalization Plans progress.

To ensure future support of other Revitalization initiatives, it is imperative that the Target Audiences know, understand, and are repeatedly reminded of the benefits the CID is bringing them. Phase VI also focuses on the importance of a strategic approach to building the partnership with the media in helping to keep progress in the CID area before the community.

There are several Important factors to keep in mind as this Communication Plan is implemented. First the CID cannot be created in a communication vacuum. It is essential to first work on gaining support for Downtown among Primary and Secondary Target Audiences.

Second, it is essential that St. Joseph's residents and all of its elected officials understand the whole community is affected by the health of Downtown. A healthy, vibrant Downtown has a positive effect on the whole community, not just Downtown businesses and residents.

Most people judge the importance of an issue based on how it affects them. Until residents and all City officials understand that the health of downtown is connected to the health of the community as a whole, there will always be the temptation to use City resources for other purposes.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Below is an analysis of the factors that either will or could have an impact on the success of St. Joseph's Community Improvement District Communication Plan.

- City established its first Special Business District (SBD) Downtown in 1990 primarily for the removal of a pedestrian mall. The SBD had a seven-year sunset clause and it has already been renewed twice. The SBD is under the jurisdiction of an independent advisory board appointed by the City council.
 - Funds for the SBD are being used for capital expenditures. The advisory board has been reluctant to use any funds for marketing.
 - Tax Increment Financing (TIF) area for Downtown was approved and the Community Improvement District (CID) would probably be the same area as the downtown TIF.
 - A large percentage of voters who returned the ballot on the SBD were in favor of it.
 - The people voting on the CID will be the ones who passed the SBD and so are likely familiar with this type of initiative.
 - The SBD Funds have been used to leverage state and federal programs to accomplish large projects for downtown, such as the historic lighting program and the current streetscape project.
 - The CID would generate funds through a 1% sales-tax; at first, with the option, at the sunset of the SBD in 2011, to impose a property tax in lieu of the SBD property tax.
- The CID has the potential to address significant concerns of residents and business owners which include:
 - Security issues
 - Need for general cleanup
 - maintenance practices
 - Parking garage issues
 - The City's Downtown Precise Plan has specific recommendations on what needs to be done in the Downtown St. Joseph
 - City is considering doing two adjoining CIDs if plans for a Convention Center go forward, in order to enable different financing options for the Convention Center area—a non-convention center CID and a CID that would include the convention center.
 - Current sales-tax level in Downtown is 7.8%, lower than both Kansas City area and the East Hills Mall whose sales tax rate is 8.7%
Recommendation: For communications with business owners it will be important to do a comparison of the sales tax levels in areas that have a higher rate, but still have drawn shoppers away from Downtown St. Joseph.
 - The community tends to be resistant to indebtedness and maintains an anti-bond position to financing, but there will be no assumption of bonding with the CID or TIF revenues.
 - The general attitude in the community is they are negative about taxes unless they are told specifically what the money would be spent on. It should be possible, however, to develop a list of

amenities/services/improvements the CID revenue will finance.

Recommendation: It will be important from the beginning to identify why the CID is needed, what will be done to improve the area and make it more appealing, and how these changes will help.

- The current City Council has made downtown development one of its goals.
- The St. Joseph Downtown Partnership has a quarterly newsletter that can publicize the benefits of the CID and the progress of the Community Improvement District.
- The City Council's attitude in general has been a "wait and see" approach to things. They have been slow to take action on issues.
- The local newspaper editor tends to be negative. Need him/her to be neutral on the issue, so education of newspaper writers concerning plans, goals and ramifications for the community will be important.
- Most of the City's communication with residents has been through City Council meetings, other public meetings and newspapers.
- Although attitudes are beginning to change, people in St. Joseph generally have had the opinion that downtown will always be what it is. They have little faith in change for downtown.
- City Council members need to be educated on the CID and what it would do for the area and City.

PHASES, GOALS & STRATEGIES:

PHASE I - CID PLANNING

Target Audiences: City Elected Officials (primary); Downtown Businesses, Residents and Property Owners in the CID area (primary); St. Joseph Downtown Revitalization Dream Team (primary); Local Media (secondary).

Communication Tools: Meetings/Public Outreach, News Releases, Articles in the *Downtown Digest*.

Need Assessment: Before Downtown businesses, residents and property owners are presented with a proposal for a Downtown Community Improvement District (CID), it is critical that they help develop and buy into the vision for Revitalization in their area of Downtown, and see it as a real possibility.

Strategy 1

Hold public meetings and/or planning charrette to gather input from the primary target audience in an effort to formulate a popular, cohesive "vision" for Downtown St. Joseph.

This strategy may be currently fulfilled via Huden Strategic Partners' downtown vision planning for the City of St. Joseph. Results of HSP's meetings with downtown stakeholders and citizens at-large could be incorporated into the goals/plans for the Downtown St. Joseph CID.

PHASE II - EDUCATION & PETITION SIGNING

PHASE II Target Audiences: City Elected Officials (primary); St. Joseph's Downtown Revitalization Dream Team (primary); Residents, Businesses and Property Owners in the CID area (primary); Local Media (secondary)

Communication Tools: Presentations; News Releases; CID fact sheet (covers what is a CID, what it can do for the area, and how it fits as the next step in Revitalization of the area).

Need Assessment: It is important to demonstrate to the Target Audiences how the creation of a CID can facilitate achievement of Downtown Revitalization goals elucidated via the DREAM Initiative, focus group surveys and other public/stakeholder meetings and/or charrettes.

Strategy 1

Use a CID fact sheet distribute information to the Target Audiences. The brochures should include the following Information

- What is a Community Improvement District is
- CID Program & Services
 - Cleaning & Maintenance
 - Public Safety Programs
 - Marketing
 - Capital Improvements & Beautification
- CID Process
- CID Funding

The City currently has a draft CID fact sheet which it may use for this purpose.

Strategy 2

City staff and/or volunteer stakeholders should visit and meet face-to-face with business and property owners in the CID area. In these meetings, the staff member or volunteer should explain the following:

- What is a CID?
- How does it work?
- Examples of how CIDs have been successfully used to achieve Downtown Revitalization in other communities
- The planned CID Area.
- What effect the CID might have on the current Special Business District Tax
- CID sales tax
- What identified goals it can help the City achieve for Downtown
- How the CID fits in with the City's plans for Downtown St. Joseph

The staff member or volunteer should leave the CID Fact Sheet with the person they've visited to speak with.

Strategy 3

Hold a special, CID presentation/meeting for the City Council, Downtown Dream Team members, and the County Commissioner who represents St. Joseph.

Use graphics to help the audience members comprehend and visualize benefits the CID offers. The presentation should cover the same topics as Strategy 1. Each attendee should

receive a printed packet of information that summarizes the presentation.

Strategy 4

Once the CID Fact Sheet has been distributed to all primary audiences, distribute a media packet (which includes DREAM Downtown Strategic Plan) about the CID being considered as a funding option for Downtown St. Joseph. Including the Downtown Strategic Plan, or elements therefrom, educates the media about the City's plans for Downtown and places the CID initiative within the larger context of St. Joseph's downtown planning efforts. The packet can be e-mailed, mailed or personally distributed.

Timing will be important. Primary Target Audiences should get their information from the City.

Strategy 5

Hold a meeting specifically for property owners in the CID area. The meeting should include a presentation related to the CID process and benefits and include a question and answer session. It is particularly important that the following information is addressed at this meeting:

- People shop based on product, convenience, and atmosphere more than tax rate.
- Sales tax rate in the proposed CID would still be lower than Kansas City's sales tax, and would be the same as the sales tax rate at the East Hills Mall.

- Identify the programs and services the CID would provide
 - Cleaning & Maintenance
 - Public Safety Programs
 - Marketing
 - Capital Improvements & Beautification
- Improvements resulting from the CID could enhance property values
- An increase in shoppers and a more attractive area will result in buildings that are easier to lease/sell.

Petition Signing: At this meeting the CID petition should be made available for property owners in attendance to view and to sign. Any property owners who do not, or cannot, attend for whatever reason should be approached shortly thereafter regarding signing the petition.

CID Board: At this meeting as well, the CID Board should be proposed. The composition of the CID Board can be stipulated within the CID Petition as either composed by appointees by the Mayor or members elected at large, from a pool of candidates populated by Downtown residents and business owners, or a combination of the two. It may be best to have a combination board; some appointed and some elected.

After the “petition signing” meeting, hold a meeting specifically for residents and business owners in the CID area to determine who would be interested in becoming CID Board members. The meeting format should include a presentation of information as well as question-and-answer time.

PHASE III - CITY COUNCIL CID DECISION

PHASE III Target Audiences: Residents, Businesses, and Property Owners in the CID area (primary), City Elected Officials (primary); Local Media (secondary)

Communication Tools: Letter to Voters in CID Area

Need Assessment: The main communication concern with this Phase is that residents, businesses and property owners in the CID area know immediately the City Council decision about the proposed CID.

GOAL: Continue the partnership with the media to keep residents informed about the CID.

Strategy 1

Send a letter to all residents, business and property owners, informing them about the City Council’s decision and stating what the next steps will be.

Strategy 2

Send out a news release about the final decision on the CID. Include quotes from City staff and City elected officials on what they feel the implementation of the CID will mean to Downtown and the community overall.

PHASE IV - GET OUT THE VOTE—CID SALES TAX & BOARD MEMBERS

PHASE IV Target Audiences: Residents, Businesses, and Property Owners in the CID area (primary), Local Media (secondary)

Communication Tools: Ballots, Follow-up Mailer, Meetings, CID-Information Number and E-Mail Address, News Releases

Need Assessment: This action deals with the submittal, via mail-in ballot, to residents of the CID, the question whether the CID should be allowed to impose an additional sales tax as well as the approval of additional board members. Once ballots have been mailed and the voters have the ballots in their hands, it is important that they have answers to any remaining questions they may have.

GOAL: Receive a sufficient number of completed, returned ballots to validate the CID sales tax election and elect the remaining board members.

Strategy 1

Send voters a postcard that provides a phone number they can call with questions, and an e-mail address where they can send their questions. It is essential that this phone number and e-mail address be regularly maintained and answered during the month the voters have the ballots.

Strategy 2

Hold a meeting specifically for residents in the

CID area. The meeting format should include a presentation of information of particular interest to residents as well as question-and-answer time. It is particularly important that the following information is addressed at this meeting:

- A sales tax is paid by people who come to the area to shop, but shops and residents in the area receive the enhancement benefits.
- CID-funded improvements will correct some of the infrastructure problems in the area, will result in an improved streetscape, and make the area a more appealing place to live and shop.
- CID funds can be used to correct the parking problems in the area and address safety and security issues.

Send residents postcard invitations to the meeting. A news release can also be sent out about this meeting. This meeting should also be held in the evening to enable more people to attend.

Strategy 3

One week before the ballots are due, residents should receive a postcard reminding them of the importance of completing and returning their ballot. The postcard should also include the phone number and e-mail address voters can use if they have any remaining questions.

Strategy 4

Send out news releases with statements by City elected officials about some of the first high-priority projects they would be addressed if the

CID passes. These projects should be ones the residents, business owners, and property owners indicated were important to them in the survey conducted during Phase 1. Since the aforementioned group is the one that will vote on the CID, it is imperative that the projects identified are ones they have indicated are important to them.

PHASE V - ELECTION RESULTS

PHASE V Target Audiences: Residents, Business Owners, and Property Owners in the CID area (primary); City Elected Officials (primary); Local Media (secondary)

Communication Tools: News Release; Memo to Elected Officials

Need Assessment: It is important to inform elected officials and voters of the decision on the CID election immediately. It's also important to continue keep the media in the updated on progress with the CID.

Strategy 1

As soon as the results of the vote is known, send a memo announcing the results to all City elected officials.

Strategy 2

Send a news release to the media announcing the results of the vote as soon as they are known. Include what the next step will be in the process and when it can be expected to take place.

PHASE VI - ONGOING CID COMMUNICATION

PHASE VI Target Audiences: Residents, Businesses, and Property Owners in the CID area (primary); City Elected Officials (primary); St. Joseph Downtown Revitalization Dream Team (primary); Local Media (secondary)

Communication Tools: *Downtown Digest*; CID Annual Report Card; Annual meetings with City Elected Officials, City Staff and St. Joseph Downtown Revitalization Dream Team Members, about Downtown Revitalization progress and future goals

Need Assessment: The main communication concern with Phase VI is to keep the Target Audiences' informed with the Downtown Revitalization projects to be funded by the CID and their progress.

GOAL: Develop regular communication for all Target Audiences

Strategy 1

Identify a person to serve as the primary media liaison for the Community Improvement District. This person should field all questions and issue press releases about CID activity.

Strategy 2

Send frequent news releases to keep the media informed on all positive progress in the CID area. All CID funded projects should be acknowledged.

Strategy 3

When construction projects in the area are CID funded, place signs in the project area stating “This project made possible through voter support of Community Improvement District funding.”

Strategy 4

News releases accompanied by fact sheets and bullet points should be distributed to the media. They are a valid resource in keeping the public updated. If reporter have any questions refer them to the dedicated CID liaison.

Strategy 5

Create an annual CID Report Card that goes into the *Downtown Digest and Downtown Partnership Newsletter*. List all CID projects and progress, the amount of funds raised through the CID, and additional funds received due to leveraging of CID funds.

The CID Report Card should be distributed to City staff, the St. Joseph Downtown Revitalization DREAM Team, be made available to the media and the public. Including business information in the CID Report Card would be beneficial in measuring the progress of Downtown Revitalization Goals. This information should include:

- Assessed value of downtown properties
- Number of downtown restaurants
- Number of Retail Establishments
- Number of Commercial establishments

- Number of residential units (broken down by type)
- Number of hotel rooms
- Sales tax collected
- Recently opened and closed establishments
- Any other economic indicators that illustrate the health and viability of downtown.

Strategy 6

Hold annual meetings with City Staff, City Elected Officials, the St. Joseph Downtown Revitalization Dream Team, and the County Commissioner who represents St. Joseph to discuss progress with Downtown Revitalization or the lack of it. At these meetings, it’s essential these stakeholders take an honest look at what is happening in Downtown.

If there is a sustained lack of progress or negative progress in the area, it is important to look at those factors and discuss what needs to be done to correct them and get Revitalization back on course. These meetings should also serve to identify future goals and strategies for achieving those goals. These meetings will ensure that Downtown Revitalization remains a conscious, dynamic goal of these influential Target Audiences.