

# UPDATE: IMAGINE DOWNTOWN



Downtown San Diego Partnership  
March 2015



## Executive Summary

More than two years ago, the Downtown San Diego Partnership embarked on an ambitious mission to engage communities throughout the region to help us deliver a strategic vision for Downtown San Diego. With the support and financial backing of The San Diego Foundation’s Malin Burnham Center for Civic Engagement, the Downtown Partnership implemented an extensive outreach effort that included 38 town halls – 26 held outside of Downtown – and an online survey. Through this process, more than 6,000 San Diegans weighed in on the future of Downtown San Diego.

Coupling that feedback with best practices from around the globe, the Downtown Partnership developed “Imagine Downtown,” a 20-year strategic vision to revitalize our urban center.

Released in October of 2013, “Imagine Downtown” serves as a to-do list on how to best create a world-class Downtown that serves and advances the aspirations of the entire San Diego region.

This update is designed to demonstrate the progress that has been made over the last year as well as identify ways the Downtown San Diego Partnership can continue to work with communities throughout the region to deliver a world-class Downtown like no other.

## Background

“Imagine Downtown” is divided into five focus areas and contains more than 200 goals and objectives. It is these five areas that have informed and guided the work of the Downtown San Diego Partnership throughout the last year.

These focus areas are:

1. **Build Your Business** offers a robust economic development strategy to grow and attract businesses to Downtown, especially in the innovation sector, as well as position Downtown as a hub for our bi-national mega region.
2. **Made to Move** focuses on making Downtown easy to get to and around with a variety of programs, including a circulator system and advanced parking technology as well as initiatives to make our streets and sidewalks more walkable and bikeable.
3. **Create the Vibe** delivers a comprehensive placemaking strategy to bolster Downtown’s public spaces with a renewed emphasis on fostering a distinct arts and cultural scene.
4. **Make Your Place** ensures that Downtown’s distinct neighborhoods are safe and attractive with a mix of housing and education options to encourage diversity.
5. **Collaborate** focuses on building relationships throughout the region and across our border so that together we can tackle the challenges facing San Diego constructively and comprehensively.



This report is designed to provide updates on each of the five focus areas.

## BUILD YOUR BUSINESS

Mission Statement: Downtown is a hub of a vibrant, bi-national economic region, uniquely positioned to compete in the global marketplace.

### Goal: Attract, Grow & Retain Business

- ✓ Helped lure new tenants to Downtown including Bumble Bee Foods, Kleinfelder, AECOM, Cypress Insurance, Southwest Strategies, Houzz.com and Rev.com.
- ✓ Highlighted Downtown companies through a variety of channels including traditional and social media, gaining recognition for the companies as well as Downtown as a regional economic hub.
- ✓ Commissioned UCSD to conduct a comprehensive demographic study of Downtown, with the first phase to be released this spring.
- ✓ Sponsored a variety of educational forums on emerging industry clusters in Downtown including digital marketing, tech startups and cybersecurity.

### Goal: Strengthen Key Economic Sectors in Downtown

#### *Tech Ecosystem*

- ✓ Promoted Downtown as an emerging hub for innovation via traditional and social media channels and through sponsored events during San Diego Startup Week.
- ✓ Established a Downtown Tech Startup Committee to attract and grow tech startups in Downtown.
- ✓ Advocated for innovative, place-based office space and provided assistance to Downtown tech companies such as Underground Elephant and Mindgruve in securing desired office space.
- ✓ Supported current Downtown incubators and co-working space and advocated for more affordable tech space.
- ✓ Partnered with CyberHive on a range of programs to continue to foster a cybersecurity cluster in Downtown.
- ✓ Developed “San Diego Innovates,” a comprehensive economic development strategy for growing Downtown’s innovation sector.
- ✓ Organized a Downtown Startup Roundtable for Mayor Kevin Faulconer.



Downtown is becoming innovation’s newest address as more tech companies are setting up shop in our urban core.

### Tourism Industry

- ✓ Supported phase 1 of North Embarcadero Visionary Plan and continued to work with the Port of San Diego on an activation strategy.
- ✓ Supported the County Waterfront Park and provided a variety of events – from concerts to yoga classes – to help activate and draw people to area.
- ✓ Promoted and supported Comic-Con ensuring Downtown delivered a top-notch experience for visitors.
- ✓ Created a marketing campaign with *San Diego Magazine* to highlight Downtown’s offerings during summertime, which was augmented with a robust social media strategy.
- ✓ Supported the hotel and open space project at Lane Field, which is scheduled to open in 2016.



The Downtown Partnership is working on a plan to activate San Diego’s “Front Porch” with a variety of events.

### Support the Military

- ✓ Continue to engage Navy leaders to ensure Downtown’s goals align with the Navy’s larger strategies and objectives.
- ✓ Partnered with CyberHive on a range of programs to continue to foster a cybersecurity cluster in Downtown.
- ✓ Supported the work of elected officials, the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and the Port of San Diego during lobbying efforts in Washington D.C. to craft a comprehensive strategy to support our Downtown military assets.

### Goal: Grow Up – High Density Development

#### Achievements

- ✓ Served as a leading advocate for such high-density residential projects including Pinnacle Towers, Blue Sky Apartments and others.
- ✓ Championed location of Sempra’s new headquarters in Downtown San Diego.
- ✓ Advocated for leading-edge mixed-used projects in I.D.E.A. District and Makers Quarter, which are scheduled to break ground later this year.

### Goal: Recruit, Retain and Train Talent

- ✓ Convened Downtown University Working Group to develop a strategic plan as well as identify opportunities to bring institutions of higher learning to Downtown.



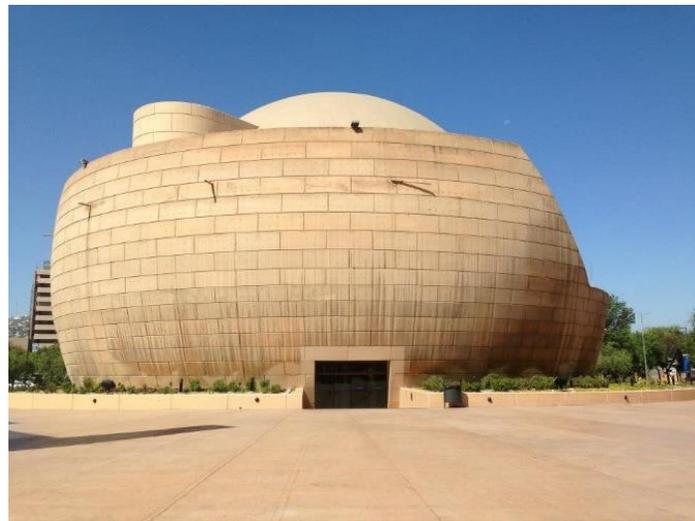
- ✓ Continue to meet with officials at UCSD to explore creating satellite programs in Downtown.
- ✓ Met with officials from various universities to encourage them to offer programs in Downtown.

### Goal: Go Green, Be Smart

- ✓ Supported the City of San Diego’s partnership with SDG&E and GE that installed a cutting-edge smart-lighting system of more than 3,000 streets in Downtown, which helped to save energy and enhance safety.
- ✓ Worked with internationally recognized technology companies to explore the deployment of smart energy systems in Downtown.
- ✓ Installed drought-tolerant landscaping throughout Downtown neighborhoods and continued to use graywater in sidewalk power-washing program.

### Goal: Become a Bi-National Hub

- ✓ Held “Downtown San Diego Meets Downtown Tijuana” where staff and Partnership Board members met with Tijuana elected officials and business leaders to share best practices and build relationships.
- ✓ Held a successful “Downtown San Diego Tech Startup” exchange between tech entrepreneurs on both sides of the border to nurture the cross-border tech ecosystem.
- ✓ Connected Downtown tech entrepreneurs with the Tijuana Innovadora, making it easier for them to attend this important event.
- ✓ Served as co-chair of the Urban Land Institute’s Binational Committee and continued to work to produce two ULI breakfast panel’s on cross-border efforts.
- ✓ Worked with hard-tech entrepreneurs to develop a cross-border manufacturing ecosystem.



The Downtown Partnership is working to create close cultural and economic connections with our counterparts in Tijuana.

## MADE TO MOVE

Mission Statement: Walk. Bike. Drive. Ride. People want to get to and around Downtown any way they like.

### Goal: Highlight Parking in Downtown

- ✓ Worked with Civic San Diego to create a real-time parking app, which is scheduled to launch in spring 2015.
- ✓ Highlighted Downtown's 65,000 parking spaces via our website and social media.
- ✓ Advocating for new solutions on how developers can satisfy parking requirements in Downtown.

### Goal: Create a Downtown Circulator System

- ✓ Partnered with Civic San Diego to develop an RFP for an on-demand circulator system that will help move people in and around Downtown in a manner that is both environmentally and economically sustainable.
- ✓ Staff and Board members sit on the circulator system selection committee.
- ✓ Launch of circulator system is scheduled for this summer.

### Goal: Make Downtown More Walkable and Bikeable

- ✓ Working with Civic San Diego on a "Complete Streets" Mobility Plan.
- ✓ Supported installation of more than 200 bike racks in Downtown.
- ✓ Supported launch and deployment of more than 100 bike-sharing stations in Downtown.

### Goal: Enhance Regional Public Transportation

- ✓ Promoted public transportation on Downtown's new mobile responsive website.
- ✓ Advocated for the development and expansion of car-sharing programs.
- ✓ Offered discount transit passes to participating Downtown businesses to encourage the use of public transit to and from Downtown.



Downtown is becoming one of San Diego's most bike-friendly neighborhoods with more than 200 new bike racks and 100 bike-sharing stations.

## CREATE THE VIBE

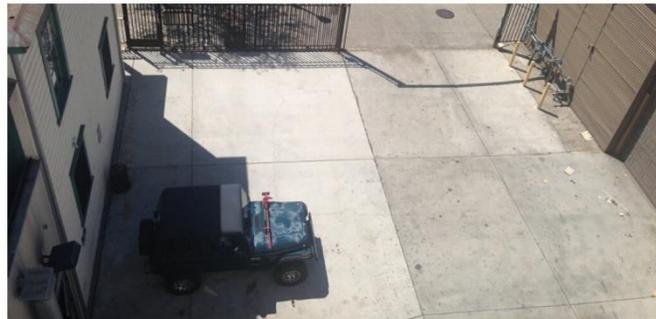
Mission Statement: Downtown offers a can't-miss experience for residents and visitors alike.

### Goal: Nurture a Distinct Creative Culture

- ✓ Highlighted all of the programming at SILO in Upper East Village, including La Jolla Playhouse's production of "El Henry" and its Foodtruck Friday events.
- ✓ Launched first-ever "Sounds of Summer" pop-up concert series, offering performances by local musicians on street corners and in parks and plazas throughout Downtown.
- ✓ Worked with the American Institute of Architects and the San Diego Architecture Foundation to hold an "Archtobefest" event, which featured open house tours at 15 of Downtown's most iconic or historic properties.
- ✓ Advocated for revisions to the City's joint-use agreement with the Padres, which helped attract a number of marquee events to Petco Park, including the Davis Cup and a Paul McCartney concert.
- ✓ Supported and highlighted Comic-Con through a robust social media program.
- ✓ Continued to support the arts and local businesses while adding to the visual texture of Downtown with a street banner program.

### Goal: Foster Placemaking to Build Community

- ✓ Held a "Chairs in Squares" event at the newly opened Gaslamp Square Park to help activate and reimagine that space.
- ✓ Worked with Fred Kent, president of Project for Public Spaces, to hold two community design meetings to develop an innovative placemaking program in Horton Square Plaza.
- ✓ Implemented an extensive decorative tree-lighting initiative, lighting more than 500 trees through the Clean & Safe program.
- ✓ Held a "Light Up the Night" event to highlight the tree-lighting program and activate the plaza at 600 B Street.
- ✓ Worked with design firm RAD Lab and property owners HP Investors to create the "Pocket Park" at 13<sup>th</sup> and J Street to provide a unique community gathering spot in the East Village.



Pocket Park: What was once a private parking lot is now an innovative community gathering spot.

- ✓ Launched “Healthy Living in the City,” a Downtown wellness initiative with Scripps Health, that offers free lunchtime strolls, cooking classes and yoga sessions in unique urban locations. The inaugural yoga class was held on the flight deck of the *USS Midway* and attracted more than 400 participants.
- ✓ Launched the “Moving Parklet” Design Challenge, which asked the community to design and build a small movable urban park that could be used to activate public spaces throughout Downtown. The “Moving Parklet” is scheduled to be deployed throughout Downtown starting this spring.
- ✓ Planned extensive activities throughout Downtown for annual PARK(ing) Day festivities.
- ✓ Developing a mapping approach to our placemaking activities to more strategically identify opportunities for future events.
- ✓ Selected master’s degree intern to catalogue and research blighted property and design a plan to address them as well as select “demonstration block” locations.



“Healthy Living in the City,” a Downtown wellness initiative sponsored by Scripps, helped activate Downtown with yoga classes in unique locations.

### Goal: Shop Local, Dine Local

- ✓ Developed “Summer in the City” a special advertising section with *San Diego Magazine* to highlight Downtown’s unique retail and restaurant offerings.
- ✓ Held Annual “Taste of Downtown” event to promote and highlight Downtown’s restaurants.
- ✓ Offered discounts from local retailers to “Healthy Living in the City” participants during the holiday shopping season.

### Goal: Advance World Class Amenities and Attractions

- ✓ Championed the completion of Horton Square Plaza, which will add a world-class plaza in the heart of Downtown.
- ✓ Supported the completion of phase 1 of the North Embarcadero Visionary Plan and continued to work with the Port of San Diego on an activation strategy.
- ✓ Supported County Waterfront Park and provided a variety of events – from concerts to yoga classes – to help activate and draw people to area.

## MAKE YOUR PLACE

Mission Statement: Downtown is a collection of distinct, thriving neighborhoods – all clean, safe and engaging.

### Goal: Keep Downtown Clean & Safe

- ✓ Renewal of Clean & Safe, Downtown’s Property and Business Improvement District, is on track to be completed by July 1.
- ✓ Held volunteer events to encourage community collaboration and pride.
- ✓ Increased community engagement and transparency through weekly e-newsletters, weekly neighborhood walkabouts as well as annual community meetings.

### Goal: Create Active Parks, Plazas and Open Space

- ✓ Worked with Civic San Diego to map open spaces throughout Downtown.
- ✓ Championed “One Park” plan, a comprehensive strategy to ensure Downtown has well-designed, walkable streets that connect with green and open spaces.
- ✓ Provided activation at various parks and open spaces in Downtown through “Healthy Living in the City,” a Downtown wellness initiative, as well as “Sounds of Summer,” a pop-up concert series sponsored by THE US GRANT and Sycuan.
- ✓ Helped clear obstacles for QuartYard, a tactical urbanism project at Park and Market, to offer a public gathering space and dog park.
- ✓ Helped to oversee the growth of the Downtown San Diego Public Spaces Foundation, which serves as a champion for Downtown parks and open spaces.



To create a sense of community, the Downtown Partnership’s Clean & Safe program instituted a tree-lighting program, illuminating more than 500 trees throughout Downtown.

### Goal: Advance Efforts to End Homelessness

- ✓ Delivered a comprehensive and compassionate approach to ending homelessness on behalf of property owners, by working with all stakeholders, including the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, the San Diego Housing Commission and the San Diego Police Department.
- ✓ Expanded integrated homeless outreach efforts, adding two additional homeless outreach workers to the Clean & Safe team, to benefit Downtown property owners.

- ✓ Developed a multi-faceted anti-panhandling campaign called “Make Change Count” centered around Downtown’s donation stations, or red meters, to reduce panhandling and raise funds for programs to address homelessness.
- ✓ Successfully advocated to secure 25 triage beds to assist in efforts to better assess and assist homeless individuals on the street and helped managed those triage beds in conjunction with the San Diego Police Department.
- ✓ Participated in the 25 Cities Initiative to end chronic and veteran homelessness by the end of 2016 in Downtown.
- ✓ Championed efforts by the City of San Diego and the San Diego Housing Commission to create more permanent supportive housing.
- ✓ Implemented a three-hour unattended property collection program in Downtown with the support of homeless rights advocates and the City of San Diego.

**Goal: Support Diverse Neighborhoods**

- ✓ Promoted individual neighborhoods through our new Downtown San Diego Partnership website.
- ✓ Supported Business Improvement Districts and Neighborhood Associations through social media and other digital platforms.
- ✓ Worked with the San Diego Metropolitan Transit Service and the City of San Diego to ease crossing bell noise during the evening hours.

**Goal: Promote a More Livable Downtown for All**

- ✓ Supported K-12 education in Downtown by highlighting all of the offerings on our new website.
- ✓ Helped recruit Urban Discovery Academy to its new Upper East Village location and promoted its efforts.
- ✓ Advocated for improved parking ratios for new housing developments.



Urban Discovery Academy, an award-winning charter school, is scheduled to open its new facility in the Upper East Village this fall.

**Goal: Make Downtown Beautiful**

- ✓ Expanded our beautification efforts, installing planters and hanging baskets in Downtown neighborhoods.
- ✓ Expanded urban forestry program to ensure proper care and maintenance of Downtown’s trees.
- ✓ Implemented tree-lighting program, illuminating more than 500 trees throughout Downtown with energy-efficient lights to beautify Downtown and create a sense of safety.
- ✓ Enhanced landscaping program in medians with drought-tolerant plantings.

## COLLABORATE

Mission Statement: Downtown will work with all communities to help improve the San Diego region – together.

### Goal: Regional and Local Collaboration

- ✓ Continued to dialogue with communities throughout the region, with a special focus on those neighborhoods closest to Downtown.
- ✓ Worked to develop broad-based support for policies to encourage regional solutions for challenges that cross municipal and county boundaries.
- ✓ Worked on an urban symposium for the spring of 2016 that will gather community members and elected leaders from around the region to offer best practices for creating an urban community that serves the entire region.
- ✓ Fostered a more prominent relationship with Tijuana business leaders and elected officials through cross-border trips and programming.



Community members from Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods met last October to brainstorm ideas for an urban symposium in spring of 2016.