



FLINT DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

STRATEGIC PLAN FINDINGS + DRAFT FRAMEWORK

P.U.M.A. Consultant Team Presentation | January 12 & 13, 2023

AGENDA

- Project Background + Process
- Community Engagement Themes + Key Findings
- Guiding Principles for Downtown Flint
- Draft Recommendations
- Next Steps + Q&A



PROJECT BACKGROUND & PROCESS

About PUMA

- Denver-based real estate economics and community development firm
- Specializing in organizational strategic planning for place-management entities like BIDs and DDAs
- P.U.M.A. brings 30+ years of experience in 300 communities, 37 states, including work in Detroit, Grand Rapids and Traverse City

PROGRESSIVE URBAN
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES



PROJECT BACKGROUND & PROCESS

Flint DDA Strategic Plan Objectives

- Visionary and implementable goals for the next ~5 years
- Participatory process
- Assess market opportunities with a focus on how the district can evolve post-pandemic
- Assess internal organizational conditions and refresh the mission, objectives, and program structure
- Include findings and recommendations for Downtown overall
- Guide the DDA's evolution and enhance its value proposition



PROJECT BACKGROUND & PROCESS

Process

- External environment assessment
 - Market research and review of existing plans & initiatives
 - Stakeholder interviews
 - Community survey
- Internal organizational assessment
 - Comprehensive review of programs, financing tools, budgets, and structure
 - Explored best practices from comparable organizations
- Synthesis and development of the Strategic Plan



ENGAGEMENT THEMES + KEY FINDINGS



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Stakeholder interviews and roundtables

Met with more than 50 key stakeholders including:

- DDA staff and board members
- Downtown property owners
- Downtown business owners
- Leaders from partner organizations
- Representatives from the City of Flint
- Residents and community leaders

Online community survey

- 652 responses



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT THEMES

Downtown Flint Overall

- There is enthusiasm and momentum to create a vibrant and equitable Downtown Flint.
- Retail, restaurant, and entertainment offerings should reflect more diverse consumer markets.
- There is widespread interest in further elevating Downtown Flint's entertainment, arts, and cultural offerings, and to reimagine public gathering places.
- Downtown will succeed by cultivating emerging entrepreneurs, creatives, and next-generation talent.
- More work is needed to make Downtown feel welcoming to all Flint residents, particularly African American/Black residents, and those from adjacent neighborhoods.
- There are varying perceptions of Downtown parking, safety, and maintenance conditions.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT THEMES

The DDA

- Lack of clarity about the DDA's identity, mission, and responsibilities.
- Confusion about whether the DDA or the City is responsible for certain basic services including trash pick-up, snow removal, cleaning, and special event support.
- The DDA should be better at telling the story of its successes and clarifying its charge to Downtown stakeholders and community members.
- The DDA should focus on the basics – cleaning, maintenance, and upkeep of certain public spaces, plus more beautification including streets and corridors beyond Saginaw Street.
- The DDA's relationship with the businesses Downtown is varied. There are opportunities to do more in-person engagement with business owners.

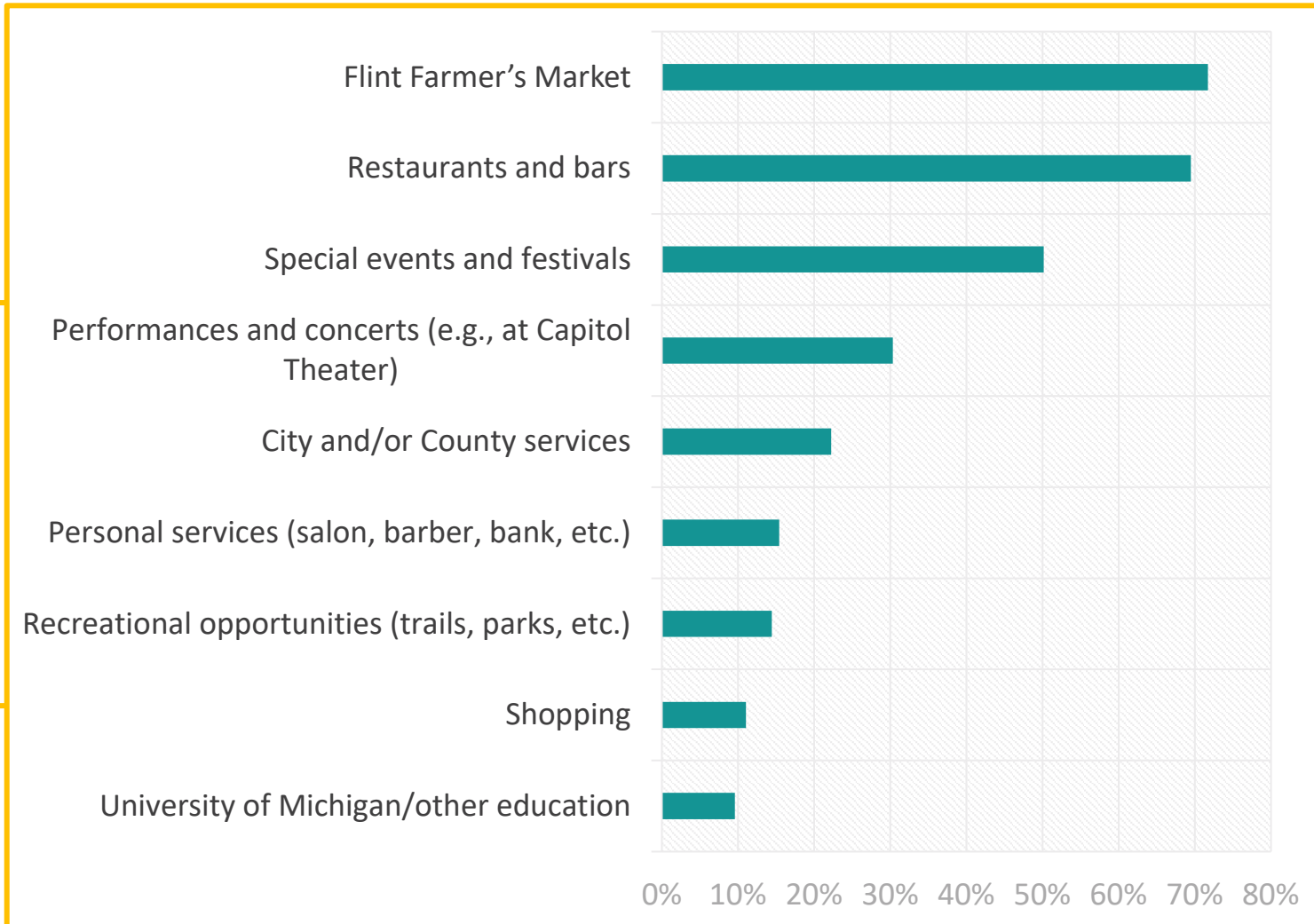
ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS SNAPSHOT

(Q1) “How often do you come Downtown?”

- 44% are daily visitors

(Q2) “What most often brings you Downtown? [Select up to three]”

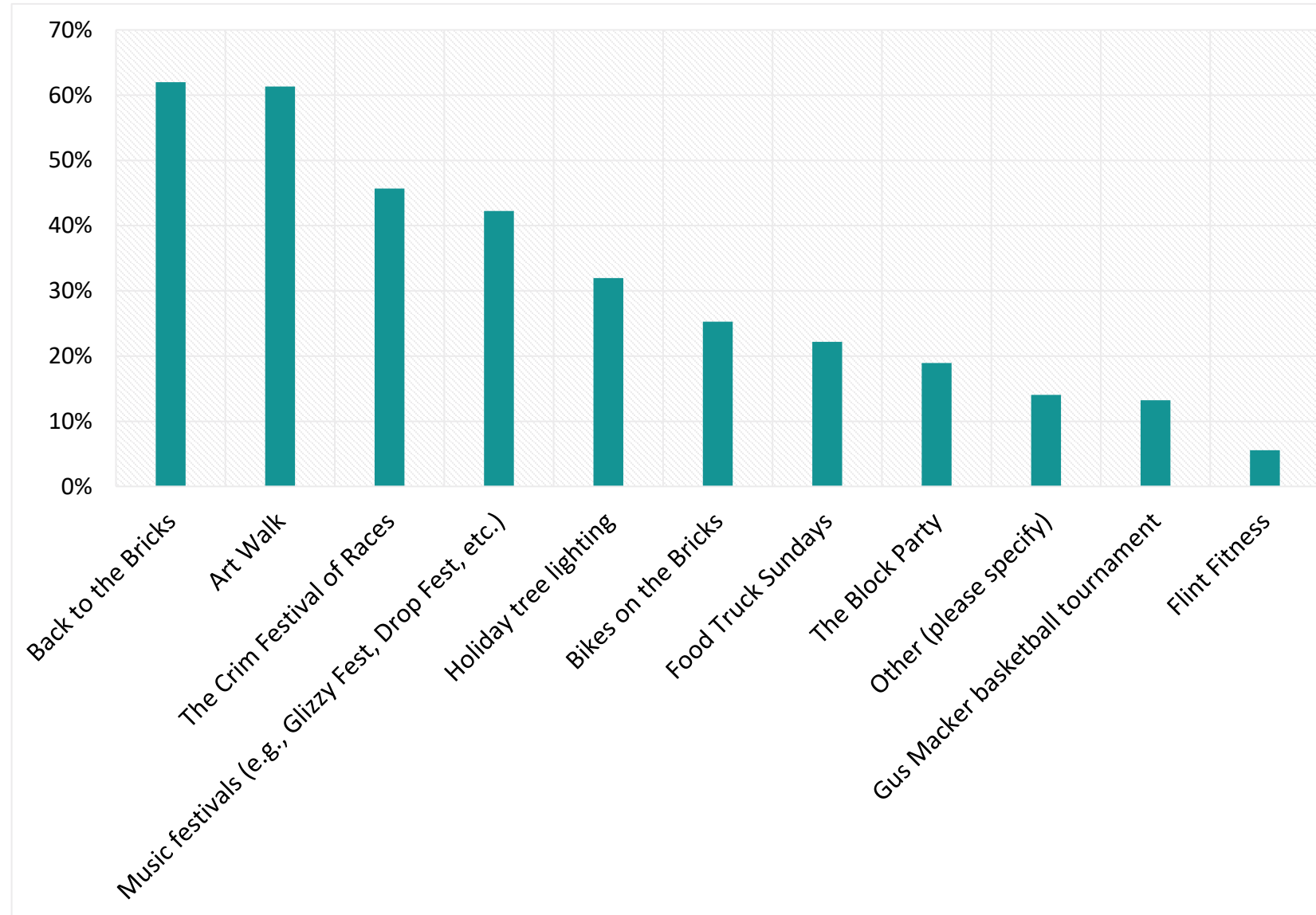
- The Flint Farmers Market (72%)
- Restaurants & Bars (69%)
- Special events and festivals (50%)



ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS SNAPSHOT

(Q3) “Which events do you attend? [Select all that apply]”

- Back to the Bricks (62%)
- Art Walk (61%)
- Write-in answers included: jazz festivals, Flint Pride, Alley Fest, Night Market, and events at Buckham Gallery



ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS SNAPSHOT

(Q4) “Do you think the following characteristics of Downtown Flint have become better or worse in the past five years?”

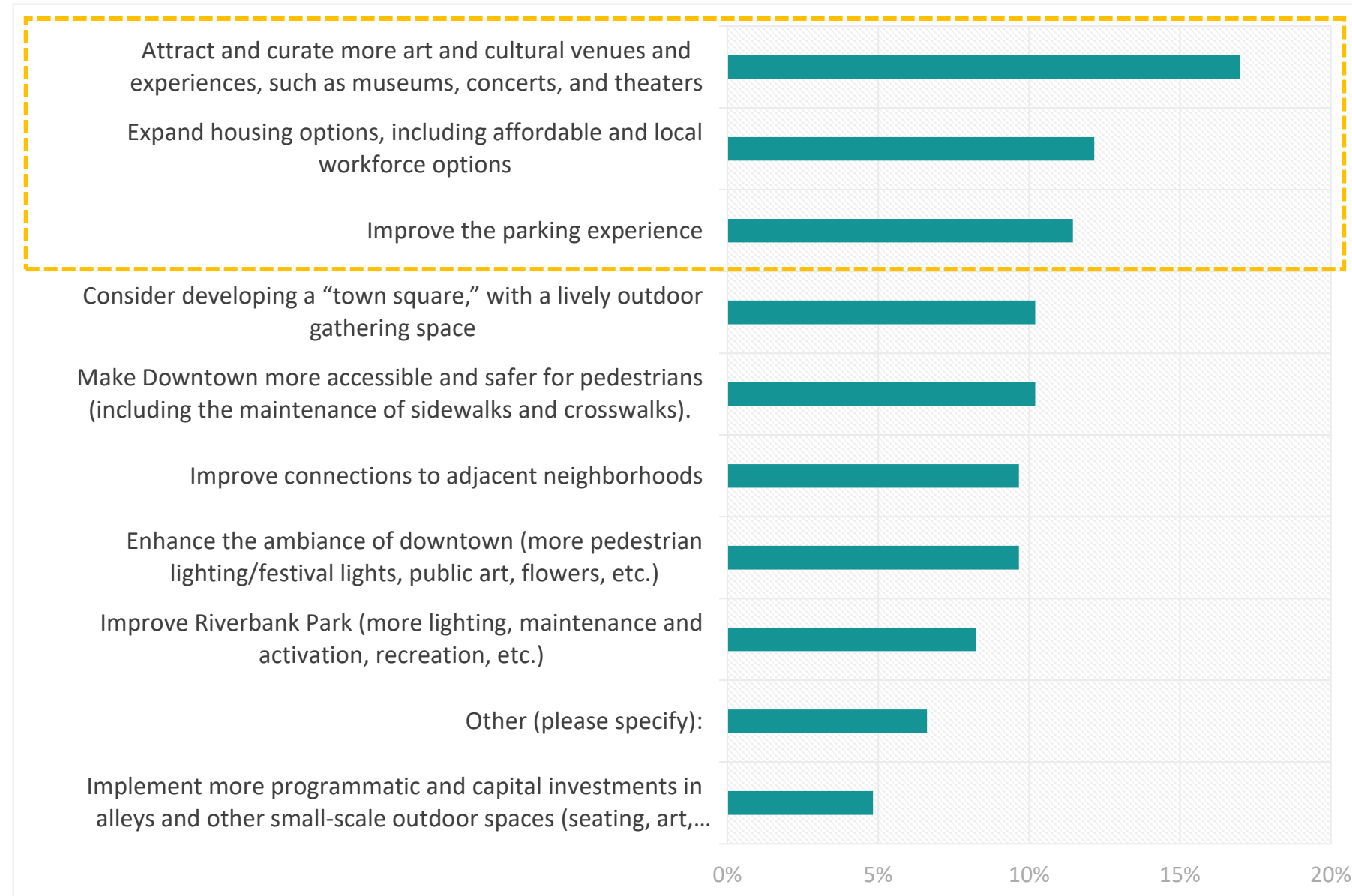
	Much Better	Slightly Better	No Change	Slightly Worse	Much Worse
General appearance, including landscaping and beautification	43%	41%	10%	4%	3%
Arts and cultural activities	34%	45%	17%	4%	0%
Cleanliness (e.g., sidewalks, litter removal, snow removal)	34%	38%	19%	6%	3%
Variety and quality of restaurants	27%	40%	23%	8%	1%
Parks and open space	22%	37%	35%	5%	2%
Public safety	18%	37%	31%	9%	5%
Pedestrian & bicycle friendliness	17%	36%	39%	7%	2%
Housing options	16%	41%	30%	9%	5%
Nightlife	14%	33%	35%	14%	4%
Retail and shopping options	12%	35%	36%	12%	4%
Economic activity and job opportunities	11%	38%	37%	11%	3%
Parking availability	10%	21%	40%	17%	12%

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS SNAPSHOT

(Q7) “Of the physical improvements listed in the prior question, which ONE action will be MOST important?”

Top three responses:

- Attract and curate more art and cultural venues and experiences
- Expand housing options
- Improve the parking experience

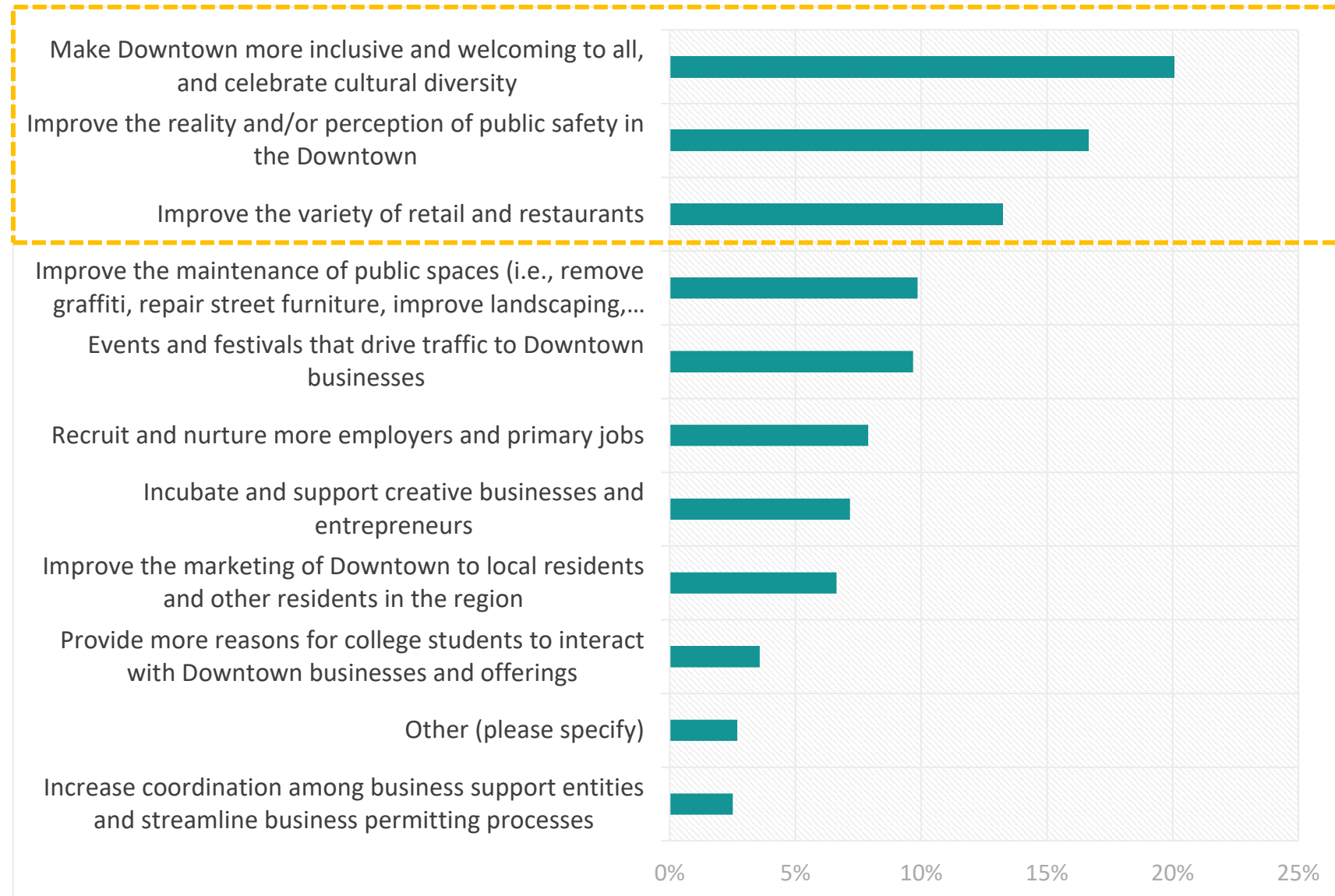


ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS SNAPSHOT

(Q9) “Of the programs and services listed in question 8, which ONE action will be MOST important?”

Top three responses

- Make Downtown more inclusive and welcoming to all, and celebrate cultural diversity
- Improve the reality and/or perception of safety
- Improve the variety of retail and restaurants



KEY MARKET ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

- Retail gaps: affordable household goods and services (grocery, pharmacy, etc.)
- Market demand for casual dining options w/ broader appeal
- Opportunities to adapt and create more flexible and co-working office spaces
- Significant market opportunity to build a critical mass of new, attainable, housing units to accommodate a range of incomes and lifestyles
- New cultural + entertainment assets and local live music niche are key strengths to build upon
- A balance of commercial, residential, and civic uses is critical for Downtown moving forward

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DOWNTOWN FLINT



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DOWNTOWN FLINT

1. Make Downtown Flint inclusive and welcoming to all.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DOWNTOWN FLINT

2. Position Downtown Flint as a hub for entertainment, culture, and the arts.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DOWNTOWN FLINT

3. Invest in entrepreneurs and create opportunities for next generation ownership.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DOWNTOWN FLINT

4. Future capital investments in the riverfront, housing, and public spaces are needed to elevate Downtown's quality of life and economy.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DOWNTOWN FLINT

5. Effective collaboration is critical in order to catalyze economic growth and the next generation of Downtown Flint.



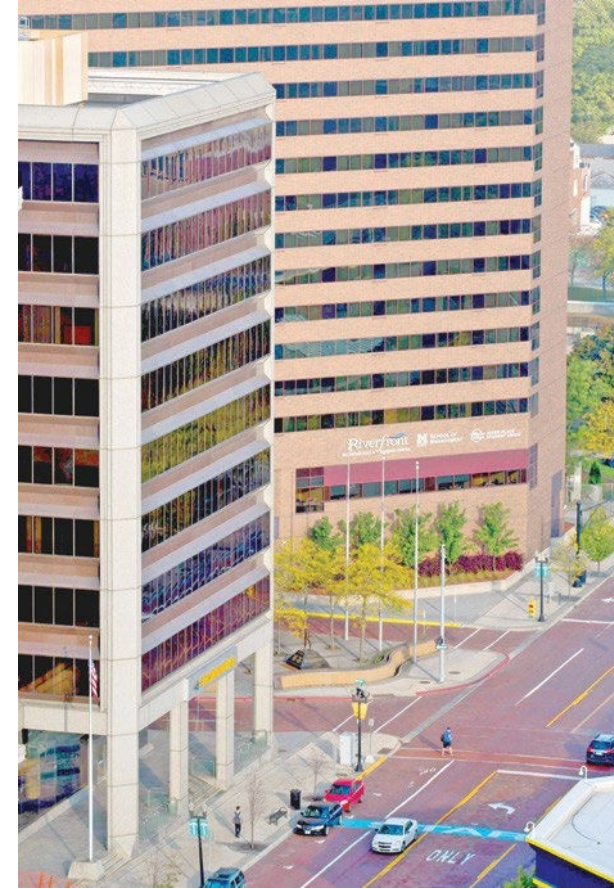
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DDA



NEAR-TERM DDA RECOMMENDATIONS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE NEXT 18 MONTHS

1. Double down on cleaning, maintenance, beautification, and management of the parking experience.
2. (Re)establish internal systems and policies, and clarify/codify partner agreements to improve accountability.
3. Prepare for change, beginning with DDA board leadership.



NEAR-TERM DDA RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority Actions with Urgency

- Hire a parking management consultant to assess best alternatives and assist with drafting an RFP
- Develop a base level of services agreement with the City of Flint
- Rebrand the DDA – consider name change
- Board leadership evolution
- Debt relief – pay off EV loan; parking system improvement bonds
- More to come...?

NEAR-TERM DDA RECOMMENDATIONS

CLARIFYING & COMMUNICATING THE DDA'S PURPOSE

Defining the Mission & Scope

- A. Develop a concise mission and statement of purpose.

Draft mission statement:

“The mission of the City of Flint Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is to **foster a Downtown that is welcoming, attractive, and vibrant**. The DDA will meet this mission by managing the parking experience, providing enhanced maintenance of sidewalks and public spaces, facilitating activation through events and programming, and collaborating with partners to promote economic development and make strategic investments in capital improvements that promote public benefits.”

NEAR-TERM DDA RECOMMENDATIONS

Communicating the DDA's Purpose

- A. Ensure that Downtown businesses and stakeholders are kept updated and informed of DDA projects, events, and activities.
- B. Improve public understanding of the DDA's responsibilities and accomplishments through online communication methods.

Note: detailed actions and tactics are provided in the draft strategic plan



NEAR-TERM DDA RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPROVE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICES

Parking Management

- A. Explore alternative parking system models to implement starting in mid-2024.
- B. In the interim, pursue minor adjustments to improve the parking experience.
- C. Hire a parking management consultant.



NEAR-TERM DDA RECOMMENDATIONS

Cleaning, Maintenance, Beautification, and Safety

- A. Establish a formal base level of services agreement with the City of Flint.
- B. Establish clean & safe performance standards.
- C. Prioritize cleaning, maintenance, and security improvements to parking lots and garages based on an audit of existing conditions.
- D. Implement cleaning & organization protocols for the DDA maintenance garage.



NEAR-TERM DDA RECOMMENDATIONS

Events and Activation

- A. Improve the event permitting and public notification processes.
- B. Develop a consistent and transparent fee schedule and guidelines for special events.
- C. Guide special event applicants through the application process to execute events that are complementary to the Downtown experience and economy.
- D. For DDA-sponsored events: focus on a manageable number of events per year to host and organize.
- E. Consider working with Downtown partners to provide more permanent event infrastructure in public spaces, to help remove barriers to activating spaces.

YEARS 2-5: ADDITIONAL SERVICE CONSIDERATIONS

BUSINESS SUPPORT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- A. Provide business support services that are complementary to existing economic development and entrepreneurship initiatives.
- B. Work directly with Downtown partners to improve marketing and promotions efforts.
- C. Support Black ownership of Downtown businesses and properties.

ADVOCACY & PLANNING

- A. Work with Downtown partners to champion economic vitality and investments in transformational projects including housing, civic amenities, and infrastructure.

ORGANIZATIONAL & FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

NEAR-TERM STAFFING AND FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration

- A. Ensure the organization is adequately staffed in the near-term.
- B. Add grant writing capacity within the organization and through contracts.
- C. Formalize agreements and processes with the City of Flint to ensure that TIF payment is accurately and fairly applied.
- D. Improve internal systems, including documentation and reporting.

ORGANIZATIONAL & FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

Boards & Committees

- A. Recruit new board and committee members, with a particular focus on a diversity of race/ethnicity, age, gender, and lived experiences.
- B. Take active measures to recruit board members that represent all major institutional stakeholders including the University of Michigan-Flint, Downtown churches, etc.

Funding

- A. Proactively explore ways to diversify funding sources for services, including grants and charitable contributions.

ORGANIZATIONAL & FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

LONGER-TERM ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Consider a Business Improvement District (DID) or Downtown Improvement District model to diversify funding and broaden functionality.
- B. Consider adding a 501(c)3 non-profit affiliate to diversify funding opportunities.

Evaluating best practices from Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor, and other DDAs

NEXT STEPS

- Finalize near-term work plan with staff management team
- Refine short- and long-term recommendations
- Prepare strategic plan final draft and executive summary



OVERALL IMPRESSIONS



- **Green Light:** I like most of it; it is on the right track
- **Yellow Light:** I like some of it but I have some reservations
- **Red Light:** I have major concerns; it is not on the right track

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

