

Summerville DREAM

2018/19 Operations Plan

In late Summer/Fall of 2017, Summerville DREAM engaged the residents of Summerville in a series of visioning meetings to get input on their desires for the future of downtown Summerville. In addition to the data gathered from these meetings, we examined data regarding our population, our retail market, and projections for future population growth in the area. As a result, Summerville DREAM has developed a set of community transformation strategies and specific focus areas for our work over the 18-month period from January 2018 – June 2019. What follows is a matrix that shows how these transformation strategies and focus areas intersect; beyond that, an operations plan with specific goals, strategies, metrics, and tasks for our four Main Street committees: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.

The Matrix

| Strategic Plan Elements | Transformation Strategy: Residents | Transformation Strategy: Specialty Retail & Dining | Transformation Strategy: Convenience Goods & Services |
|---|--|---|--|
| Specific Focus Area: Economic Engagement | Increase residents' engagement in the downtown district through effective management of the retail market, ensuring that needs, desires, and experiential preferences are addressed. | Maintain or increase the availability of desired specialty retail and dining opportunities in the downtown district through effective recruitment of new businesses and retention and expansion of existing businesses. | Maintain or increase the availability of desired convenience goods and services in the downtown district through effective recruitment of new businesses and retention and expansion of existing businesses. |
| Specific Focus Area: Branding & Market Definition | Strengthen residents' perceptions of downtown Summerville as the hub of economic and other activity through the implementation of a coordinated branding campaign. Specific elements of the campaign will focus on building awareness of the availability of and access to specialty retail and dining opportunities, as well as convenience goods and services. The intent of the branding campaign will be to solidify resident perceptions and keep downtown Summerville "top of mind" for residents. | | |
| Specific Focus Area: Walkability | Enhance overall downtown walkability for residents by working with partners to address the need for sidewalk repairs, additional lighting, and crosswalk safety, and integrating walkability into downtown events. | Improve resident and visitor access to specialty retail and dining opportunities in downtown by advocating for (and enhancing when possible) the factors influencing walkability and public safety. | Improve resident and visitor access to convenience goods and services in downtown by advocating for (and enhancing when possible) the factors influencing walkability and public safety. |

The Work

Specific Focus Area: Economic Engagement

Goal

Increase economic engagement in the downtown district

Strategies

- Build greater resident engagement through “Shop Local” campaigns supported by advertising and both one-time and recurring events (Role: DOER)
- Strengthen property owners’ engagement by sharing information about the long-term vision for downtown Summerville and encouraging them to play an active role in its achievement (Role: DOER)
- Engage existing business owners by looking for expansion opportunities within downtown Summerville (Role: DOER)
- Use downtown’s brand identity and market niche to recruit new businesses into downtown (Role: DOER)
- Through targeted recruitment activity, increase the number of retail specialty stores and dining options in downtown, with specific emphasis on the types of businesses identified in the 2010 retail market study. (Role: DOER)
- Increase availability of convenience goods and services throughout the downtown district through targeted recruitment and expansion efforts. (Role: DOER)
- Partner with the Town of Summerville to expand Summerville DREAM’s official role in economic development in the downtown district to include business recruitment and property development (Role: DOER, ADVOCATE)
- Encourage the development of residential infill opportunities in downtown through increased density and mixed-use buildings (Role: ADVOCATE)
- Promote the development of a multi-purpose building within the downtown district’s footprint (Role: ADVOCATE)
- Develop a business/entrepreneurship pipeline through the use of strategies such as co-working (Role: DOER, ADVOCATE)
- Preserve and extend the historic feel and character of downtown by continuing the B.I.G. IDEA Façade Improvement Program (Role: DOER)

Metric(s)

- 5% increase in sales tax receipts in FY2018
- Successful recruitment of 5 new businesses and expansion of 3 existing businesses
- 80% of business owners and property owners surveyed report that perceptions of downtown economic climate improved or remained high

- Increased number of retail specialty and dining options in downtown
- Increased availability of convenience goods and services in downtown
- Event attendance estimates exceed 50,000 per year, with 60% of attendees living in zip codes 29483, 29485, and 29486

Committee Task(s)

Economic Vitality

- Property owner engagement
- Retention/expansion of existing businesses
- Recruitment of new businesses
- Overall economic development role
- Promotion of residential infill and multi-purpose building

Design

- Façade improvement grant expansion

Promotion

- "Shop Local" campaign
- Events

Organization

- Volunteer recruitment
- Fundraising
- Assist with developing proposal to Town for economic development services

Specific Focus Area: Branding & Market Definition

Goal

Establish a clear, distinct brand identity and market niche for the downtown district of Summerville

Strategies

- Engage business owners, property owners, and strategic partners (e.g., Town of Summerville, Chamber of Commerce) to determine downtown Summerville's core brand and market niche (Role: CONVENER)
- Develop and implement a coordinated brand campaign to carry the message to residents to
 - build awareness
 - increase engagement
 - solidify positive perceptions (Role: DOER)
- Utilize the identified brand and market niche to recruit new businesses and retain/expand existing businesses (Role: DOER)

Metric(s)

- 80% of residents surveyed report that perceptions of downtown improved or remained high
- Successful recruitment of 5 new businesses and expansion of 3 existing businesses

Committee Task(s)

Economic Vitality

- Business retention, expansion, and recruitment

Design

- Use façade improvements and special projects to support the identified brand and niche

Promotion

- Convene partners and stakeholders for brand and niche identification
- Develop coordinated branding campaign

Organization

- Volunteer recruitment
- Fundraising

Goal

Improve downtown walkability for residents

Strategies

- Work with key partners, including the Town of Summerville, to identify and prioritize needed improvements to sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting (Role: ADVOCATE)
- Enhance access to dining, goods, and services by deploying tactical urbanism strategies to introduce new pedestrian and traffic patterns into both one-time and recurring events (Role: DOER, ADVOCATE)
- Implement wayfinding signage in conjunction with the Town of Summerville to augment the pedestrian experience and increase the sense of cohesiveness throughout the downtown district (Role: CREATOR, ADVOCATE)
- Advocate for needed investments in pedestrian infrastructure at all levels (Role: ADVOCATE)

Metric(s)

- Increase downtown Summerville's walkability score to 80 on a scale of 1-100 (current = 71)
- 80% positive response to tactical urbanism strategies as measured by event-based surveys

Committee Task(s)

Economic Vitality

- Identify and prioritize needed improvements
- Advocate for investments in pedestrian infrastructure

Design

- Wayfinding signage design/refinement
- Tactical urbanism strategy development

Promotion

- Tactical urbanism strategy deployment via events

Organization

- Volunteer recruitment
- Fundraising

Summary

Increased economic engagement. Coordinated branding and marketing. Improved walkability.

Summerville DREAM has a fantastic opportunity over the next 18 months to dramatically impact the overall economic health and long-term vitality of the downtown district through the implementation of this operations plan. Reflecting the integration of both objective and subjective data about our downtown, these goals and strategies represent a chance to “move the needle” on issues of real consequence for the businesses and residents who depend on a strong, thriving downtown. They also begin to address the needs and desires of the population that will be emerging in Summerville, both native and transplant, over the next decade or more—a critical consideration as we plan for the future of our town.

It will take tremendous work to implement the strategies and achieve the goals outlined in this plan; it will take significant resources as well. What is not stated specifically in this plan, but what is very much necessary, will be a functioning Organization committee that is dedicated to ensuring Summerville DREAM has the human and financial resources needed to accomplish the task.

In summary, this plan is ambitious but achievable. Our staff, board, and volunteers will commit their time, energy, and effort to bringing it to reality, while engaging our strategic partners at the Town of Summerville and the Greater Summerville/Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce. We believe downtown Summerville will be a better place as a result.