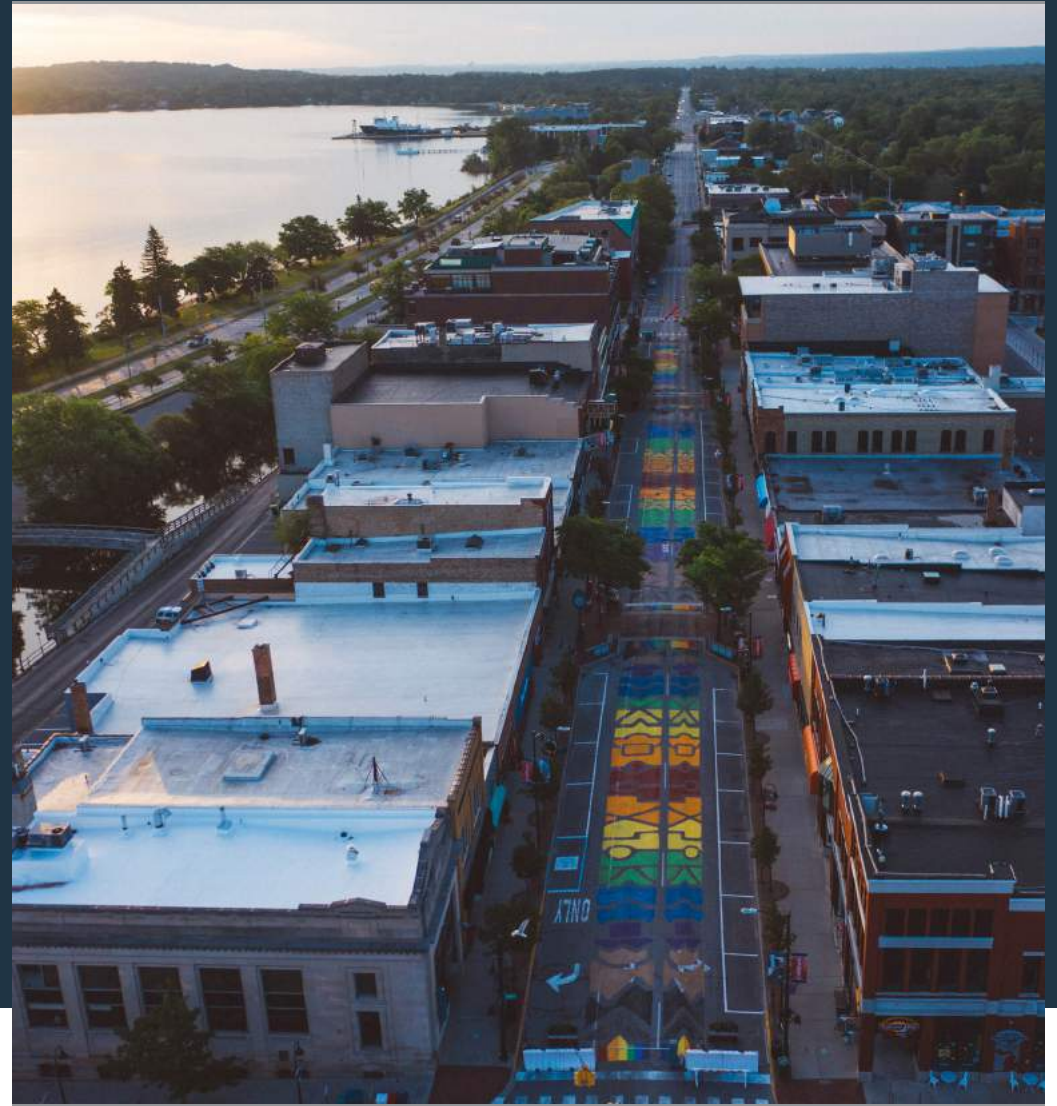




Traverse City
Downtown
Development
Authority



2020

ANNUAL REPORT



Welcome



With the COVID-19 pandemic defining 2020 for all of us, Downtown Traverse City has shown great resilience, fortitude and optimism. Not only have we come together to fight the pandemic, we have pivoted to new programs, reexamined the use of our built environment and found new ways to support businesses - all while continuing to look toward the future to ensure that our Downtown remains the economic engine for the region.


In the first few months of 2020, we were excited to host some of our most popular and successful events like the Downtown Chili Cook Off and Traverse City Restaurant Week. However with the pandemic upon us in March, we quickly pivoted from our normally scheduled events and daily operations to focus on the establishment of the Buy Local, Give Local and Giving Thanks Through Giving Meals programs, directly benefiting frontline workers, local businesses and the many employees who make our Downtown the incredible place that it is.


We have also found that the pandemic has given us an opportunity to look at our assets and consider new ways of utilizing our streets, sidewalks and built environment to better support a sense of place. The opening of Front Street to pedestrian only traffic was designed as a way to ensure the viability of our businesses and the safety of our Downtown employees and visitors and we are pleased to report that it was a success with business owners, employees, community members and visitors also praising this new use of an old asset.

We continue to look toward the future, knowing that we will move through and past this pandemic and what our downtown looks like on the other side will be determined by our actions now. We have invested in the work of Traverse Connect to support business recruitment and retention efforts and guide our economic development work. We have watched as new buildings have been built and renovated. We have also watched businesses relocate or open for the first time, all examples of how our downtown continues to be the resilient heart of northern Michigan and a destination where many will continue to work, live and play.

Now into 2021, the DDA remains committed to our Downtown community. Please join us in fostering a Downtown that attracts and retains vibrant, talented citizens that will keep Traverse City, and its economy, strong for generations to come.

See you Downtown!


Jean Derenzy
CEO, Traverse City DDA


Gabe Schneider
Board Chair, Traverse City
DDA

COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to Downtown Traverse City. However, the DDA quickly pivoted and has continued to respond—working to help our small businesses stay open and create a safe and welcoming environment for people to come Downtown. The DDA, along with business owners, city staff, and community stakeholders worked diligently to keep Downtown safe, sustainable and economically healthy in 2020.

These pages highlight the many responses the DDA made to help our Downtown and our community.

Established the Buy Local Give Local Fund. Funds were used to purchase merchandise from 100 Downtown businesses, putting much needed money into the hands of Downtown merchants that were forced to limit services or close. The items purchased were then donated to the Munson Healthcare Foundation, TCAPS, The Goodwill Inn & Street Outreach, and Traverse Bay Children's Advocacy Center. **TOTAL RAISED: \$60,775**

Created a Digital Farmers Market. A new website was developed to allow people to order and pick up fresh produce and other products while the physical market remained closed.

Implementation of Curbside Parking. Designated 29 curbside parking spaces throughout Downtown to allow for easy pick-up of merchandise and to-go orders.

Created a Recovery Team. Established a team of trusted business owners and professionals to help answer questions related to staffing, accounting, safety protocols, reopening plans and navigating state and federal financial programs.

Ongoing Communication. Sent daily/weekly emails to Downtown stakeholders on COVID updates, new safety protocols, executive orders, resources, and financial grants/programs. Maintained a running list of modified business operations/services (e.g., take-out, time of operation, etc.).

Secured MEDC Grant. Secured a **\$52,000 Match on Main** grant to provide financial aid to 19 Downtown salons, spas and fitness studios that temporarily closed due to the Executive Order.

Implementation of "Stay Safe to Stay Open." Placed "stay safe to stay open" signage and window decals throughout Downtown and deployed this message on social media outlets.

Created Additional Outdoor Seating. Partnered with area non-profits to place five parklets on streets throughout Downtown. These parklets included seating and areas to safely gather. They also served as entertainment zones, as the Traverse Symphony Orchestra performed a concert from the Cherry Republic Parklet.





GIVING THANKS THROUGH GIVING MEALS

Raised \$6,310 to provide 631 meals from eight Downtown restaurants to six local organizations, directly supporting our local dining establishments while also feeding those in need and on the frontlines. Organizations served: Traverse City Health Department, Addiction Treatment Services, Goodwill Inn, Munson Medical Center, Women's Resource Center, and Northwest Michigan Supportive Housing.

NEW SIGNAGE

Placed new "outside the blocks" signage/banners throughout Downtown to encourage shopping throughout the entire Downtown district.



OUTDOOR RESTAURANT SEATING

Worked to amend the existing zoning ordinance to allow dining establishments to place seating on the street. This provided an opportunity for restaurants to expand their capacity and stay open. 21 restaurants utilized the sidewalk or street cafes.

ART OUTSIDE THE BLOCKS

Created an "art walk" throughout Downtown to encourage visitors throughout the entire Downtown district. Eight local nonprofits created art pieces that were placed at various businesses throughout the district with markings on the street leading to each location.



OPENED FRONT STREET TO PEDESTRIANS ONLY

Closed two blocks of Front Street to provide an opportunity for people to safely social distance while enjoying Downtown. Worked with community non-profits to add colorful paint and parklets to attract people and became the hotspot for selfies.

HANDWASHING STATIONS

Placed 12 hand-washing stations throughout Downtown to provide and encourage proper sanitization.



STATE STREET CONVERSION

Worked with city staff to change portions of State Street from a one-way to a two-way street to help alleviate traffic congestion and encourage pedestrian activity.

DOWNTOWN RELIEF FUND

In partnership with the DTCA and Venture North, the DDA created the Downtown Relief Fund to provide pivotal grant dollars to Downtown businesses in need of financial support as a direct result of the pandemic. Funds have been raised from private donors, the DTCA (Shop your Community Days match), and the Downtown Holiday Auction. The first grants were awarded in mid-January, 2021, with additional rounds to follow.

DDA BOARD 2020

Leah Bagdon-McCallum *Chair*

Gabe Schneider *Vice-Chair*

Steve Constantin *Treasurer*

Debbie Hershey *Secretary*

Jim Carruthers *Mayor*

Coco Champagne

Scott Hardy

T. Michael Jackson

Jeff Joubran

Pete Kirkwood

Richard Lewis

Steve Nance

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The DDA is proud to work with numerous community partners:

DTCA • Venture North • Traverse City Tourism • Norte • TART • BATA • SEEDS • Rotary Charities • National Cherry Festival • Traverse Connect • Taste the Local Difference • Traverse City Light and Power • Lake Effect • Consumers Energy • DTE • Regional Community Foundation • United Way of Northwest Michigan • Traverse City Film Festival • Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities • Britten Studios • Michigan Economic Development Corporation • 9&10 News • Serra Automotive • Midwestern Broadcasting • Bay Area Recycling for Charities • Cherry Republic • Hotel Indigo • Cintas • C.H. Robinson • Pepsi Beverages Company • Northwest Michigan Arts & Culture Network • Arts for All • Michigan Legacy Art Park • Up North Pride • Great Lakes Wine & Spirits • Hotel Indigo • MSU Master Gardeners



Arts Community Reimagined

Like small businesses, Traverse City's "Arts Scene" was also greatly impacted by the pandemic. Our Downtown Art Houses quickly came up with some well executed responses:

COH

Traverse City Area Public Schools, the **City Opera House**, and Newton's Road partnered to put on a series of shows that were available to students across the Grand Traverse region in late summer of 2020. "Live from the Opera House: It's Storytime!" broadcast each Wednesday at 9 a.m. Host Ben Whiting introduced viewers to 15 special guests over the series who read a book to the community.

OTP

As theatres closed across the nation, our local community theatre, the **Old Town Playhouse**, moved their volunteers and art to their adjacent parking lot! With over 20 shows ranging from musical reviews of cancelled shows, play readings, and variety shows, this inventive pivot provided our community with some bright spots of theatre during this year.

HART

Higher Art Gallery started doing Facebook gallery tours and boosted up their e-commerce business.

CTAC

Crooked Tree Arts Center of Traverse City began online classes and digital programming.



Small Business in Action

Arguably no one has been hit harder by the pandemic than our local small businesses. From restaurants to toy stores, merchants were tasked with developing unique ways to stay afloat during the shutdown. These pages highlight some of the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative approaches our merchants implemented.



MAMA LU'S

Mama Lu's shifted from to-go dining only, to a Downtown Supermarket, to in-person dining indoor and outdoors with limited capacity, and then back to to-go only (as of print date due to MDHHS order).

"There is never a guarantee when you go into business, especially a restaurant (80% of us go out of business before we reach 5 years), so pandemic or not, we are constantly faced with circumstances that require us to adapt. The pandemic was just a massive version of our every day "think out of the box" mindset. As an entrepreneur, you must be prepared to pivot, get creative, and find solutions because if you don't, you will fail. With this pandemic, we really just tried to be proactive in constantly asking ourselves the same question we've asked ourselves every day since opening... what do our guests (internal and external) need and want? And then we find a way to make it happen."

-Adrienne Brunette, owner of Mama Lu's

TOY HARBOR

Toy Harbor used various forms of technology to aid in sales.

"Toy Harbor adjusted to meet the needs of customers in 2020 by offering phone, text, email, FaceTime and personalized shopping experiences. We assembled gift baskets based on the age and specific interests of the child for Easter and other holidays, as well as birthdays. Toy Harbor offered curbside or delivery options. We continue to provide these services for customers that are unable or uncomfortable shopping in person. We also adjusted hours of operation and staffing to offset the decreased sales volume."

- Amanda Walton, owner of Toy Harbor



BRILLIANT BOOKS

Brilliant Books used their e-commerce knowledge and took it to the next level.

"For Brilliant Books, the transition from in-person retail to total lock-down to strictly regulated in-store shopping was made easier by a robust e-commerce platform and shipping infrastructure. This has been in place since the store opened in 2007 and has expanded and adapted as necessary in the time since. Our greatest aid in encouraging customers to shop small when shopping online for books was a daily email update. Added to these factors was the store's existing subscription service, Brilliant Books Monthly, which is currently enjoying its best year to date. The subscription has seen high levels of new subscribers and renewals across all age levels."

- Peter Makin, owner of Brilliant Books



HIGHER ART GALLERY

Higher Art Gallery started doing Facebook gallery tours and boosted up their e-commerce business.

"Hart (Higher Art Gallery) is a labor of love, & it is worth fighting to keep alive. Having some extra time now to build & grow our E-Commerce presence has been received enthusiastically by our clients who feel more comfortable viewing art from home. It has definitely paid off & is something we will continue to do even when life returns to normal. In the end, all the changes we made improved the gallery overall, pandemic or not. We tried to be proactive in constantly asking ourselves the same question we've asked ourselves every day since opening: what do our guests need and want? Then we find a way to make it happen."

- Shanny Brooke, owner of Higher Art Gallery



THE DISH CAFE

The Dish Cafe transformed the alley adjacent to their restaurant for outdoor dining.

"Being an owner operated business really gave us the opportunity to try many new things throughout this pandemic to see what 'sticks'. Our biggest success was turning our pothole-parking spots next to the building into extra outdoor seating complete with an extended outdoor service area permit from the MLCC. We plan on investing money to make this area permanent because it worked so well. We feel fortunate to have so much support from our customers, neighbors and our community and it's leaders"

Arts Commission

Despite not being able to meet, the Traverse City Arts Commission was able to install two public art pieces over the summer. The sculpture at Hull Park and mural near the Farmers Market add new life and color to ordinarily blank canvasses and contribute to the community's thriving arts scene and sense-of-place.



"PERTAINING TO WIND & WATER"

Daniel Roache

"Pertaining to Wind and Water," an art piece by Daniel Roache was installed on the Hull Park Boathouse structure. The large and colorful sculpture was funded directly by Denise Bowman, to honor the memory of her late brother.



"UNTITLED"

Em Randall

A mural from local artist Em Randall was painted on the side of the Birdhouse (next to Lot T near the Farmers Market). Miss Randall was the winner of the Pitch Night contest, held by the Arts Commission in March of 2020.

Farmers Market

ONLINE FARMERS MARKET

With the start of their Farmers Market season aligning with the start of the pandemic, creativity was a must! In collaboration with SEEDS and Taste the Local Difference, the DDA invested in a new website and logistics system to ensure access to local produce! An online ordering system was developed to allow people to order and pick up fresh produce and other products while the physical market remained closed.

The Online Farmers Market Yielded the following:

- Value of Sales this Year: \$164,750
- Vendors Served: 49
- Number of Customers Registered: 2860
- Value of Food purchased online with Food Assistance: \$10,000

With the success of the online market, in particular when the physical market wasn't an option, an online winter market was born.



IN PERSON MARKET

Although the start to the in-person market was delayed, we still had an excellent turnout. With nearly 100 vendors throughout the season, our market was a great way to support the local agricultural community. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted new layouts with more social distancing and mask requirements that we plan on continuing in the 2021 season.

\$36,688
in food assistance programs

"The Sara Hardy Farmers Market online played a vital role in the success of our farm in Summer 2020. The online market consistently had comparable sales to the in-person Wednesday market. This allowed us to save a significant amount in labor costs by not attending Wednesday, while distributing produce to our community.

In addition, we're thrilled to have a online Winter market now and think it will grow to become a significant source of sales and a new way to reach customers in the Winter months without having to attend a Saturday market year-round.

An online farmers market offers convenience to the customer and helps the grower expand their market. A win, win for everyone!"

- Bailey Samp and John Dindia, Lakeview Hill Farm

Private Investment & Growth

\$50 MILL
in new investments



5,000+
downtown employees



470+
existing
downtown
residential
units



2020 Projects & Grants



Lower Boardman The DDA, in cooperation with a community-led Leadership Team, continues to make progress on a comprehensive plan for the 1.6 miles of Boardman River that meanders through Downtown. The leadership team has worked to complete a thorough inventory and understanding of the current conditions of the river corridor. They have also identified (through extensive civic engagement) guiding values and a general vision for the future of the river. The leadership team has developed preliminary recommendations around zoning regulations, the land use, public access, capital improvements, and habitat management. The plan is anticipated to be completed by the summer of 2021. It includes several transformative projects that will help Downtown better engage and celebrate the Boardman as a beautiful and natural asset to our region.



Civic Square The DDA was awarded a \$1,000,000 grant from Rotary Charities and a \$2,000,000 State appropriation to plan for a Civic Square in Downtown Traverse City. This year, the DDA reached an agreement with TCF Bank to locate the Civic Square on their parcel on the corner of Union and State Streets.



New Businesses

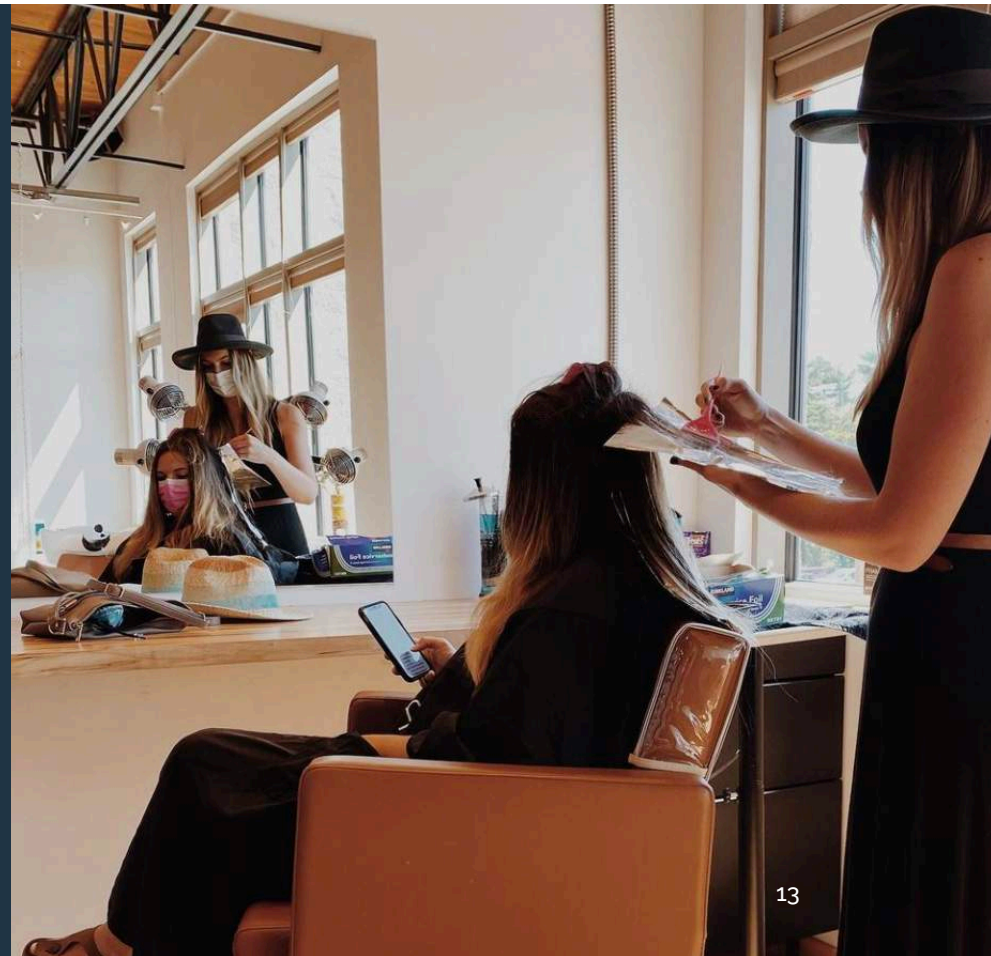
Starting a new business can be challenging under the best circumstances. But, opening a new business in the midst of a pandemic adds all sorts of additional challenges. Downtown Traverse City is proud to welcome the following businesses who bravely opened their doors in 2020.

Wild Pages • Sea Bags • Lululemon Popup • Brasserie Amie • Hexenbelle • Harbor Springs Mattress Company • Adore Boutique • Black Candle Tattoo • West Side Beverage • Flying Noodle • Happy's Tacos • Movement in Action • Good People Hair Collective • Thirsty Fish (remodel) • Front St. Liquor • Gitche Crisp (expansion to Gitche Gumees) • Glenwood Custom Builders



Streetscapes The DDA, in cooperation with 4Front Credit Union, installed new streetscaping (pavers, crosswalks and light fixtures) and heated sidewalks along Pine Street.

Grants \$100,000 - Northern Michigan Regional Entity, *Healthy Drinking Culture Initiative* • \$400,000 - EGLE, *Environmental abatement for 401 East Front Street (Honor Bank)* • \$50,000 - MEDC: Match and Main Grant, *Provided mini-grants to over 50 Downtown salons and spas* • \$15,000 - Rotary Charities, *Lower Boardman Unified Plan Initiative*



Parking & Mobility

MANAGED SYSTEMS APPROACH

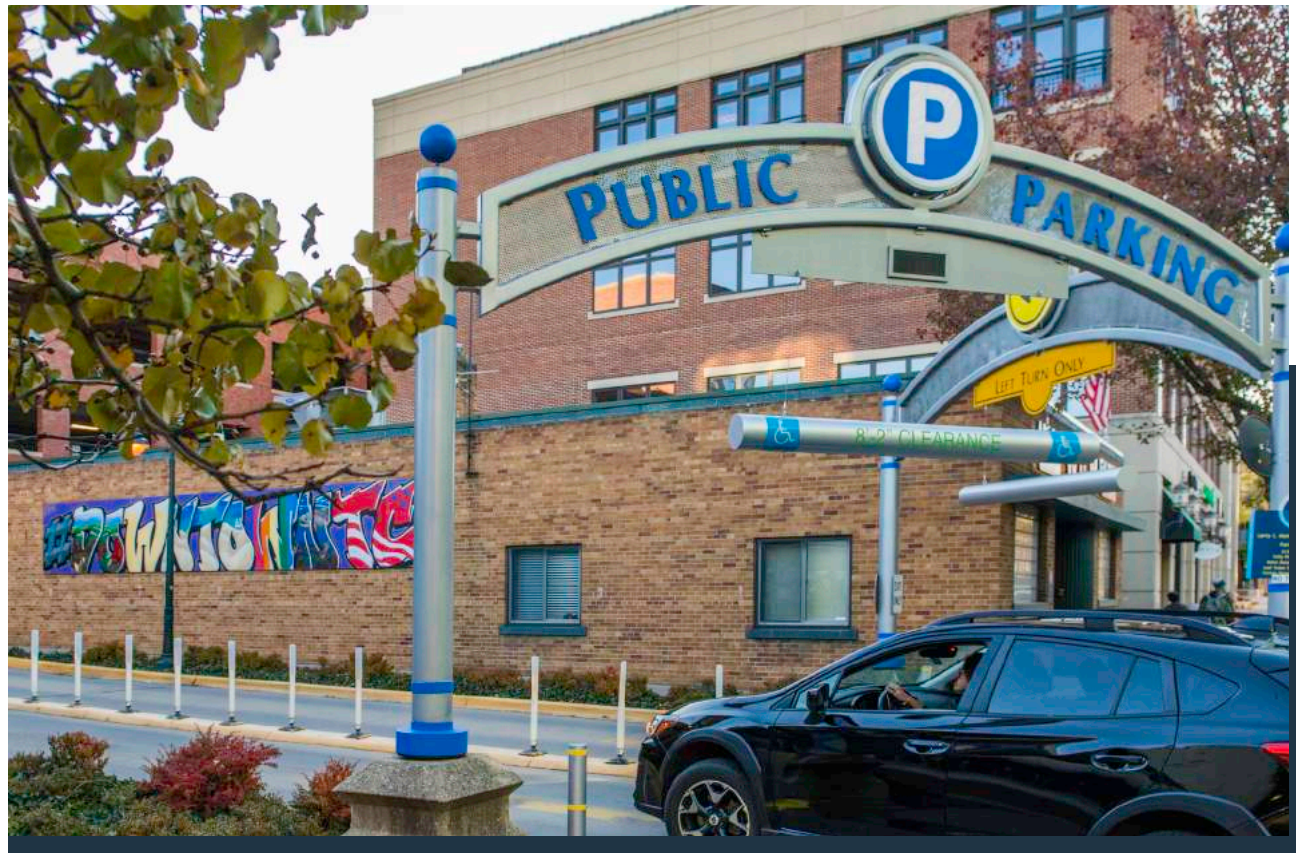
The DDA Parking Subcommittee focused on two Transportation Demand Management (TDM) objectives; develop parking zones based on demand, and implement performance based pricing. These objectives led into a shift to a Managed Parking Systems Approach. This new approach will monitor and track occupancy data, and use rates to shift demand to underutilized areas throughout the parking system. By shifting demand, we are able to increase turnover on blocks with storefront retail and increase parking availability for patrons. Rates for the zones increased on January 1, 2021 with additional rates to increase and decrease throughout the year based on demand patterns.



Bus Shelters. The last bus shelter in the Downtown area has been installed on the southeast corner of Lake Avenue and Cass Street and will provide shelter from the elements for employees and visitors as they commute from Downtown.



New Meter District. In coordination with the street reconstruction of the 500 and 600 blocks of Randolph street, parking meters have been installed. These metrics will help ensure patron access to storefront retail as this area continues to grow.



SMU DataArts

Pub Club

Thrillist

Reader's Digest

Condé Nast Traveler

WalletHub

U.S. News

MSN Travel

Accolades

Most Vibrant Arts City

10 Best Social Distancing Travel Destinations In The USA

The Must-Visit Small Town in Every State

The Best Day Trips in Every State

The Prettiest Towns in the USA

2020's Best Beach Towns to Live In

Best Places to Visit in Michigan

The Most Charming Main Streets in America



84
walk score
85
bike score

Walk Score

90–100

Walker's Paradise | Daily errands do not require a car

70–89

Very Walkable | Most errands can be accomplished on foot

50–69

Somewhat Walkable | Some errands can be accomplished on foot

25–49

Car-Dependent | Most errands require a car

0–24

Car-Dependent | Almost all errands require a car

Bike Score

90–100

Biker's Paradise | Daily errands can be accomplished on a bike

70–89

Very Bikeable | Biking is convenient for most trips

50–69

Bikeable | Some bike infrastructure

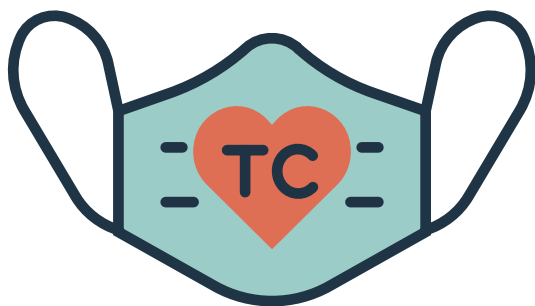
0–49

Somewhat Bikeable | Minimal bike infrastructure

Walkscore.com

DTCA & Events

It became apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic was going to continue to affect how events were to occur Downtown. The DDA and DTCA staff quickly put on their "thinking caps" to find ways to evolve some of the most loved events, so they could still be enjoyed in a safe and socially distanced manner.



SHOP YOUR COMMUNITY DAYS

Shop Your Community Day is traditionally held on the second Saturday each November. This year the DTCA altered it slightly by creating a three day version (ie. Shop Your Community Days). Participating Downtown merchants and restaurants donated 5% of their sales from November 12-14 to the shoppers charity of choice from one of 30 participating local nonprofits, **\$11,317** was raised. In addition to these funds, the DTCA also donated \$30,000 to the Downtown Relief Fund as part of Shop Your Community Days.

STREET SALE

The Annual Street Sale is always popular with merchants and shoppers alike. This year, we extended the day-long sale to a week and created both indoor and outdoor shopping. Pivoting to a weeklong event where people could shop with ease brought many people Downtown. Bargains were still found, merchants saw an increase in revenue, and social distancing measures were followed.



DOWNTOWN TREE LIGHTING

This year, we hosted the same Holiday cheer, but in a different way. Unable to close the street, we worked with 9&10 News—who will be opening a Downtown Traverse City location in 2021—to broadcast the tree lighting to homes all across the region, encouraging people to tune in with their loved ones at home to watch the tree lighting LIVE ala Dick Clark’s New Year’s Eve broadcasts. This event was made possible through a sponsorship from Serra Subaru of Traverse City.

SHOP LOCAL VIDEO

The DTCA, after having to cancel some favorite community events (including Ladies’ Night & Men’s Night) worked with Mane Content to create promotional videos of our Downtown. The video encouraged the community to shop and dine locally this Holiday season and to support a Downtown that supports this community.



SANTA VISITS NEIGHBORHOODS

Due to the pandemic, Santa Claus was unable to have children visit him at his Downtown house this past holiday season. However, we thought it was still important to still spread holiday cheer—this year more than ever. We partnered with the TC Fire Department to bring Santa to the kids. On four separate days in December, Santa rode through city neighborhoods on the antique fire engine, driven by volunteer off-duty firefighters. Santa stopped at schools and daycare facilities, waving and talking to the children, while the firefighters collected all of the letters the kids had written him. This provided a much needed morale boost to our Downtown community during a holiday season.

Social Media

In the spring of 2020 we began a partnership with Lake Effect—a local marketing firm—to assist in the management of our social media accounts. This collaboration has led to excellent growth for our accounts across both Facebook and Instagram.



DDA's Facebook

AUDIENCE NUMBERS

Total Fans: 1,576 Net Gain: +1,103

ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS

Total Engagements: 61,109
Net Gain: +50,828

DTCA's Facebook

AUDIENCE NUMBERS

Total Fans: 22,923 Net Gain: +2,034

ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS

Total Engagements: 114,820
Net Gain: +3,319

DTCA's Instagram

AUDIENCE NUMBERS

Total Fans: 29,588 Net Gain: +5,994

ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS

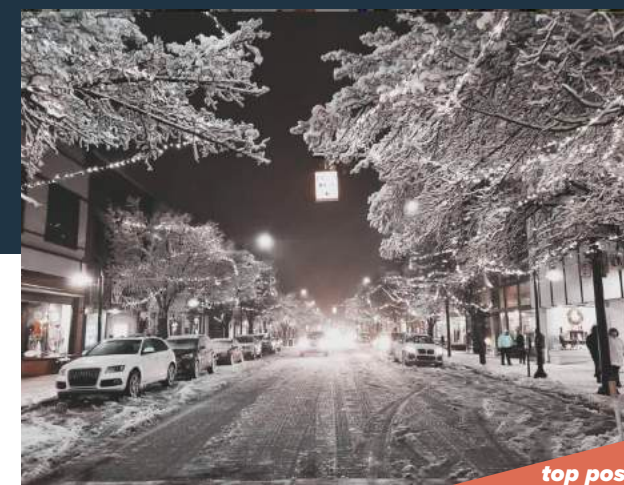
Total Engagements: 47,138
Net Gain: +25,599

THESE PARKING CHANGES GO INTO EFFECT JANUARY 1, 2021

- **Parking rate increases and changes**
- **New meter rate zones (Zones 1 & 2)**
Rate maps available at parking.downtowntc.com
- **Affordable alternatives**
 - The Bayline
 - Destination Downtown
 - Surface Lots
- **Changes to handicap parking protocol**
Visit parking.downtowntc.com/services/handicap to learn more
- **No longer offering same day discount for parking meter violations (Effective as of 12/01)**

For all up-to-date parking information please visit parking.downtowntc.com

top post



Gift Certificate Sales

2020 was a record setting year for the Downtown Gift Certificate program, with \$1,023,180 certificates sold. It is evident that our community saw the importance of shopping local during the pandemic and our Downtown businesses are grateful for the support. When a Downtown Gift Certificate is redeemed, that money immediately goes into the hands of the business, adding to much needed cash flow during COVID-19 and the subsequent MDHHS pause/shutdown.

OVER ONE MILLION DOLLARS

sold in downtown gift certificates



Consumers Our Town Program

\$40,000 of the \$1,023,180 can be linked directly to a generous 1 to 1 gift certificate match from the Consumers Energy "Our Town" program. Consumers donated \$20,000 worth of certificates that served as a match for purchasers. Thank you to Consumers Energy for recognizing the importance of shopping local and for your generous contribution.



STAY SAFE TO STAY OPEN

DDA MISSION:

Collaborate with all stakeholders to provide a world class downtown that is active, thriving, and inclusive. Through investments in sound, sustainable infrastructure and civic amenities, the DDA corrects and prevents deterioration in the Downtown District to encourage historic preservation, to create and implement development plans and to promote economic growth.

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