

# Strategic Plan



## Traverse City Downtown Development Authority

**2019 – 2024**

Approved by DDA: November 22, 2019



November, 2019

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are pleased to present the Traverse City Downtown Development Authority's (TCDDA) Strategic Plan covering 2019 - 2024 period. This Plan establishes the mission, vision, values and strategic direction of the Traverse City Downtown Development Authority (TCDDA).

We hope you agree that great things await Downtown Traverse City, a downtown unlike any other.

Sincerely,

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Leah Bagdon-McCallum, Chair

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Gabe Schneider, Vice-Chair

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Scott Hardy, Treasurer

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Steve Constantin, Secretary

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Jim Carruthers, Mayor

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Collette Champagne

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Debbie Hershey

\_\_\_\_\_  
T. Michael Jackson

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Peter Kirkwood

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Jeff Joubran

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Steve Nance

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Richard Lewis

## Purpose

Traverse City's downtown is unlike all others. It a regional driver of economic development, a four-season feast for culinary aficionados, a palette of choices for shoppers and a place to live, work and play for all. It is also located along the beautiful shore of Lake Michigan, the fresh-water centerpiece of the Great Lakes.

The acclaim for downtown, the expectations of a global destination and the need to sustain a balanced and economically sustainable community create a substantial responsibility and challenge for those charged with developing and governing the City. An important part of that load is shouldered by the Traverse City Downtown Development Authority (TCDDA).

This is the TCDDA's Strategic Plan for the 2019-2024 period. It is a declaration of our work, established through our mission, vision, and shared values and articulated through a series of inter-connected goals and actions steps. Progress toward achieving the mission, goals and action steps will be assessed to quantify and report progress and ensure that the Plan is updated as conditions evolve.

The TCDDA, through its Board and staff, welcome ideas and input from all interests. Input may be provided at meetings of the TCDDA Board, by mail or email or by direct contact with the TCDDA CEO or Board members. Contact information for the TCDDA and more information about the organization is available at [www.dda.downtowntc.com](http://www.dda.downtowntc.com).

Figure 1 delineates the downtown district that is the primary focus of the TCDDA and this Strategic Plan.

**Figure 1 - TCDDA District**



## Mission

To create, support and promote critical infrastructure and other improvements that enhance the downtown experience, promote business growth, serve as a catalyst for private investment and contribute to the year-round vitality and unique sense-of-place of downtown Traverse City.

## Vision

Serve as the regional hub for commerce, culture, arts and entrepreneurship. By 2030, downtown Traverse City will make needed infrastructure and institutional investments that provide for added business, residential, and retail capacity in the downtown. These investments will attract new private investment and create jobs.

To achieve this vision, the TCDDA will work to meet the following benchmarks.

- Increase public parking capacity while reducing surface parking needs.
- Decrease vacant land by 30%.
- Be home to at least two 500 person companies.
- Increase public/green space by 10%.
- Increase the quality/rating of our sidewalks/roads.
- Decrease incidents of unlawfulness by 50%.
- Attract \$200 million in new investment in the downtown district.
- Increase public art installations.
- Increase workforce housing stock in the downtown district.
- Continue to manage and maintain critical infrastructure investments.
- Increase connectivity and enhance the relationship with the Boardman River.

## Values

The **Values** of TCDDA Board guide Board decisions, processes and operations. The Values, along with the Mission and Vision serve as “filters” for decision making. The Board Values are:

- Long-term **Sustainability** of the TCDDA and the Downtown District.
- **Inclusivity** and **collaboration** in developing and implementing this Strategic Plan.
- An **economically healthy** and vital TCDDA and Downtown District.
- **Transparency** in the TCDDA’s strategies, priorities and plans for Downtown.

## Stakeholders

The success of the TCDDA and, more importantly, of Traverse City's downtown, will depend on partnership and collaboration and the unification of stakeholders around priorities and plans for the community. Stakeholders include but are not limited to:

Property Owners	Northwestern Michigan College
Downtown businesses	Munson Medical Center
Visitors	Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians
Downtown and neighborhood residents	Mich. Dept. of Natural Resources
Developers	Mich. Economic Development Corporation
Nonprofit organizations	Great Lakes Fisheries Commission
City of Traverse City Government	Rotary Charities of Traverse City
Neighboring/regional townships, villages	Networks Northwest
Grand Traverse County	Grand Traverse Area Community Foundation
TraverseConnect	Neighborhood Organizations
Venture North	
Traverse City Tourism	

## How is the TCDDA Funded?

It's important for all stakeholders to understand how the TCDDA is funded to carry out its mission. The Downtown Development Act, Act 197 of 1975, provides several different ways that DDA's can partner with municipalities, property owners and developers to finance public improvements in a defined downtown area. These include:

- Levying up to two (2) mills on DDA property owners.
- Special assessments on property within the DDA.
- Tax Increment Financing, also known as TIF.

Under TIF, a specific area or district within the DDA is defined, a development plan is adopted, and the incremental property tax revenues are captured within that district to be used to finance public improvements needed to carry out the development plan. Revenues through TIF may be the sole source of financing for these public projects or they may be used in combination with other financing or funding sources.

The statutory goal of TIF, created by the DDA Act, is to help cities correct and prevent deterioration of downtown business districts, encourage historic preservation and promote economic growth in the designated downtown area. Since many downtowns are the oldest areas in a city, providing and upgrading infrastructure is essential for downtown prosperity. The DDA statute provides for the use of TIF, setting up a mechanism for partnerships with other benefitting taxing units who also have a stake in the health of downtown, ensuring funds are used for needed public improvements. Public investment is a catalyst for private investment creating the tax revenue to pay for the public improvements. When a TIF district is created, its current taxable value is established and that is the value base for the duration

of the TIF's existence. The taxable value base is also the value base for all taxing units that contribute to TIF. As long as the TIF District exists, the City continues to receive revenues normally generated by this taxable value base, dependent upon the annual millage rate adopted by the City. After the TIF district is established, revenues generated from the difference between the new annual taxable value and the value base are placed into the TIF Fund and use for public improvements identified in the TIF development plan.

As an example, some of the public projects include:

- Streetscapes
- Parking Garages (Old Town and Hardy)
- River Bank Stabilization
- Riverwalks
- Utility Relocation
- Pedestrian Bridges
- Housing
- Bridge Repair and Maintenance
- Open Space Improvements
- Multi-modal transportation options
- On-going Maintenance

## Areas of Focus

Over the course of this plan the TCDDA will focus on the following six areas.

### 1. Real Estate & Placemaking

- A. Extend TIF 97.
- B. Establish process to identify and acquire properties for reuse and redevelopment.
- C. Finalize the Unified Plan for the Boardman River while complimenting the Union St. Dam work.
- D. Establish design standards and guidelines for new development in the downtown district.
- E. Explore opportunities to develop workforce housing within Downtown Traverse City.
- F. Explore opportunities to incorporate stormwater management.
- G. Identify process to move forward with the Farmers Market and Civic Square.

### 2. Mobility - Parking & Transportation

- A. Ensure that parking infrastructure and parking programs support the vision and mission of the TCDDA, as well as the needs of businesses, organizations and events.
- B. Construct a West End Parking Deck, with extension of TIF 97.
- C. Continue to explore options for alternative modes of transportation.
- D. Provide leadership for regional commuting strategy.

### 3. Business Recruitment & Retention

- A. Develop Responsive Retail Program, which includes the retention and protection of existing businesses.

- B. Recruit two major employer into downtown Traverse City.
- C. Expand Redevelopment Ready Certification and attain true development readiness.
- D. Assess all the commercial properties within the downtown district.

#### 4. Leadership

- A. Establish experience and qualification criteria for TCDDA Board representation.
- B. Implement a Board Development Program to ensure Board capacity.
- C. Continue to educate staff and board on emerging trends and best practices.
- D. Create capacity to seek grants or other funding to support implementation of strategic plan.
- E. Continue to incorporate the 8<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor into core DDA activities.
- F. Develop Revenue Diversification.

#### 5. Marketing & Promotion

- A. Clearly delineate the marketing and communications of the DDA, DTCA and the new NOBO District
- B. Create a comprehensive Communication Plan for the DDA.
- C. Develop Marketing for the DDA.
- D. Determine if added processes are needed to assess the costs/benefits of promotional events and programs.

#### 6. Partnership & Collaboration

- A. Continue to work closely with city and regional economic development agencies and stakeholders to support and retain existing business and recruit new business and development opportunities.
- B. Continue to communicate with regional entities about the role of the DDA in city-wide and regional economic development activities.

## Goals and Action Steps

### 1. Real Estate & Placemaking

- A. **Goal:** Extend TIF 97.  
Action Step 1. Develop a strategic campaign and plan to extend TIF 97, including the following components: a communications plan; marketing materials; presentations, fact sheet and talking points.  
Action Step 2. Work with neighborhoods and stakeholders to implement the strategic campaign and plan and recruit supporters to participate.  
Action Step 3. Continue to meet with taxing authorities, neighborhoods and stakeholders to discuss the benefit of TIF 97.
- B. **Goal:** Establish process to identify and acquire properties for reuse and redevelopment.  
Action Step 1. Complete a process to inventory and identify key properties for acquisition and reuse or redevelopment.

Action Step 2. Identify internal or external capacities and expertise needed to carry out the inventory and potentially find new funding to support the process.

- C. Goal:** Finalize the Unified Plan for the Boardman River while complimenting the Union Street Dam work.

Action Step 1. Continue to support the planning efforts of the Lower Boardman Leadership Team, including extensive civic engagement activities.

Action Step 2. Continue to research and apply for external funding sources to provide needed intelligence and background information about potential physical limitations and opportunities along the Lower Boardman corridor.

Action Step 3. Continue to work with the City of Traverse City and the Fishery Commission to support and compliment the planning efforts of the Unified Plan and the Union Street Dam.

- D. Goal:** Establish design standards and guidelines for new development in the downtown district.

Action Step 1. Work with the planning commission to amend zoning ordinance language about design standards.

Action Step 2. Meet with developers and property owners to discuss goals of the zoning amendments.

- E. Goal:** Explore opportunities to develop workforce housing within Downtown Traverse City.

Action Step 1. Work with Housing North, MEDC and other stakeholders to create innovative approaches to provide for workforce housing in downtown Traverse City.

- F. Goal:** Explore opportunities to incorporate stormwater management.

Action Step 1. Utilize the AECOM stormwater report to guide and make strategic infrastructure improvements.

- G. Goal:** Identify process to move forward with the Farmers Market and Civic Square.

Action Step 1. Continue to examine the feasibility of site locations for the Farmers Market and Civic Square.

Action Step 2. Develop a strategic plan to implement the development of a refined Farmers Market and new Civic Square.

## **2. Mobility – Parking and Transportation**

- A. Goal:** Ensure that parking infrastructure and parking programs support the vision and mission of the TCDDA, as well as the needs of businesses, organizations and events.

Action Step 1. Update definitive parking strategy and develop parking business plan using results of Transportation Demand Management Study.

Action Step 2. Continue to explore opportunities to eliminate surface parking lots, if feasible, especially along the Boardman River.

- B. Goal:** Construct a West End Parking Deck.



Action Step 1. Secure extension of TIF 97.

Action Step 2. Continue to use the results of the TIF 97 Ad Hoc Committee Final Report and Financial Analysis as the foundation for moving forward with a West End Parking Deck.

Action Step 3. Continue to facilitate civic engagement around the need for a West End Parking Deck.

- C. **Goal:** Continue to explore options for alternative modes of transportation.

Action Step 1. Work with regional stakeholders, BATA, Groundworks, Norte and TART to set guidelines and regulatory standards for alternative modes transportation.

- D. **Goal:** Provide leadership for regional commuting strategy.

Action Step 1. Continue to work with BATA to expand the use of the Destination Downtown Program and the Bayline.

### 3. Business Recruitment and Retention

- A. **Goal:** Develop Responsive Retail Program, which includes the retention and protection of existing businesses.

Action Step 1. Develop an Action Plan, in collaboration with downtown Traverse City stakeholders, to address key issues and opportunities facing Traverse City's downtown retail base and how the DDA will respond.

Action Step 2. Develop a comprehensive retail factbook and dash-board.

- B. **Goal:** Recruit two major employer's into downtown Traverse City.

Action Step 1. Work with local and regional economic development stakeholders to determine where existing business may be looking to expand and develop materials that will aid in the recruitment of major employers.

- C. **Goal:** Expand Redevelopment Ready Certification and attain true development readiness.

Action Step 1. Work with the city to complete the Redevelopment Readiness Certification.

- E. **Goal:** Assess all the commercial properties within the downtown district.

Action Step 1. Identify and map commercial properties – noting their location/address, dimensions, amenities, owner and other important pedigree information.

Action Step 2. Work with a consultant to develop a market analysis of the retail and commercial market, noting potential opportunities and gaps.

Action Step 3. Develop a retail ambassador program that would assist with identifying retail and business needs, providing trainings and certifications, discussing best practices, and helping with job recruitment.

Action Step 4. Continue to work with downtown business owners and merchants to study needs and opportunities.

### 4. Leadership

- A. **Goal:** Establish experience and qualification criteria for TCDDA Board representation.

Action Step 1. Work with DDA subcommittees to determine experience and qualification criteria.

- B. Goal:** Implement a Board Development Program to ensure Board capacity.

Action Step 1. Hold an annual retreat (or meeting) to discuss short-term and long-term DDA activities and initiatives and determine the progress (and needed revisions) to this Strategic Plan.

- C. Goal:** Continue to educate staff and board on emerging trends and best practices.

Action Step 1. Provide opportunities for staff members and board members to attend conferences on topics related to downtowns and the initiatives outlined in the strategic plan.

Action Step 2. Invite experts and community stakeholders to present on topics related to initiatives outlined in the strategic plan at monthly board meetings.

- D. Goal:** Create capacity to seek grants or other funding to support implementation of strategic plan.

Action Step 1. Look at internal capacity for grant writing opportunities.

Action Step 2: Look at opportunities for diversification of revenue opportunities to fund projects.

- E. Goal:** Work to incorporate the 8<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor into core DDA activities.

Action Step 1. Continue to meet with the North Boardman Lake District Association to discuss DDA activities and their needs.

Action Step 2. Continue to seek redevelopment opportunities along the 8<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor.

Action Step 3. Explore if and how the DDA staff may work with the North Boardman Lake District Association on business promotion and marketing.

- F. Goal:** Develop Revenue Diversification.

Action Step 1. Identify opportunities for diversification by obtaining foundation and philanthropy opportunities.

Action Steps 2. Meet with model DDA's around the United States to explore alternative organizational and revenue models.

Action Step 3. Assess options, approaches and needs to create a fund development function of the TCDDA that identifies, secures, and manages public and private funding sources and take advantage of collaborative opportunities with local partners. This may also establish a process by which TCDDA entities could seek capital and other forms of financing from a variety of local business and philanthropic sources.

## 5. Marketing and Promotion

- A. Goal:** Clearly delineate the marketing and communications of the DDA, DTCA and the North Boardman Lake District (NOBO).  
Action Step 1. Work internally to set a direction for the operation and of marketing and communication for the DDA and the two business associations of DTCA and NOBO.
- B. Goal:** Create a comprehensive Communication Plan for the DDA.  
Action Step 1. Work to set communication goals and activities for the DDA.
- C. Goal:** Develop Marketing for the DDA.  
Action Step 1. Work with a branding and marketing firm to develop the “look and feel” framework for DDA marketing materials.  
Action Step 2. Work to incorporate the “look and feel” into existing marketing and promotion activities.
- D. Goal:** Determine if added processes are needed to assess the costs/benefits of promotional events and programs.  
Action Step 1. Meet with property owners and the DTCA to determine the need and desire for events and programs within the downtown.

## 6. Partnerships and Collaboration

- A. Goal:** Continue to work closely with city and regional economic development agencies and stakeholders to support and retain existing business and recruit new business and development opportunities.  
Action Step 1. Continue to meet with TraverseConnect, Venture North and others to discuss business development needs and resources.
- B. Goal:** Continue to communicate with regional entities about the role of the DDA in city-wide and regional economic development activities.  
Action Step 1. Regularly present on DDA activities and initiatives to regional jurisdictions, taxing entities and community stakeholders.
- C. Goal:** Use multiple channel’s of outreach to invite partnership and collaboration in on-going development and refinement of this Strategic Plan and in programs and activities to implement the Strategic plan.  
Action Step 1. Regularly communicate the DDA’s desire to partner and collaborate on programs and activities with local and regional stakeholders and the public.