



## 2023-26 Strategic Plan

The Birmingham Shopping District (BSD) held a Strategic Planning meeting on Feb 6, 2023, with Board and committee members, as well as local businesses and City staff, to brainstorm and chart the next three-to-five-year strategy for Downtown Birmingham. The strategic plan is informed not only by those in attendance at the meeting, but also from a survey sent out prior to the meeting and individual conversations with key stakeholders. The Board and Committee members then met on April 4, 2023, in a work session to finalize the following draft plan.

### Vision

Downtown Birmingham will be vibrant day and night with a variety and balance of friendly and world-class businesses in a well-maintained environment with signature events and activities growing the regional draw and local frequency.

### Mission of the BSD

The BSD mission is to plan, promote and support a vibrant Downtown Birmingham experience for the community and visitors by engaging and leading a convergence of thriving businesses, property owners and residents.

### Core Values

The fundamental beliefs and driving forces behind what the BSD does and will do is to assure that the BSD is:

- Acting for the Collective Interest
- Engaging its stakeholders
- Sustainable
- Bringing a return on investment

Other qualities and traits the BSD holds in high regard are:

- Diversity
- Image
- Communication
- Welcoming
- Accessible

### Description of Downtown Birmingham

Downtown Birmingham is an upscale, walkable, vibrant and quality environment.

Other descriptors:

Family-friendly	Trendy
Balanced mix	Clean
Premiere	Unique
	Active
	Bustling
	Charming

### SWOT Analysis

Economic Factor	Strengths/Market Changes	Challenges/Needs
National Retailers	National retailers bring strength and sustainability to the district by increasing the trade area and regional draw.	National retailers can weaken the unique character of a community. Repositioning marketing initiatives to attract regional tourism is needed and it could be challenging to engage national retailers in local marketing initiatives.
High Occupancy Rates	High occupancy rates increase overall sales for the district, increases safety and showcases a strong economy. Shift towards retention grows.	High occupancy rates sometimes can create a stagnant environment and lack excitement of what's new to come, as well as increase rental rates of remaining vacancies.
Office Sector	Birmingham still has a strong upper floor office sector. Occupancy is at 88% (better than the national average of 84%) and there is room for growth.	The pandemic has shifted office user habits causing an impact on daytime business and services.

<b>Economic Factor</b>	<b>Strengths/Market Changes</b>	<b>Challenges/Needs</b>
South Old Woodward Construction	Construction is complete and roadway/access is now open after a year-long construction process. Walkability is greatly improved, as is continuity of amenities. Opportunity to showcase new businesses in the area, and reacquaint consumers with those who've been there.	<p>Modifications to the roadway will temporarily cause frustration with the changes as consumers and businesses adjust to the new traffic flow.</p> <p>Providing for BSD services like snow removal, holiday lighting and floral installations will increase and will require the BSD to balance services across the district.</p>
Downtown Brand Distinction	Both the City and BSD have launched a new brand ID and the basic visual elements of it that are consistent between the two.	Further brand development is needed for developing the persona and voice of the BSD, as well as building out all the marketing materials moving forward.
Old Guard/New Guard	Historical and institutional knowledge is a good thing, and it is a critical factor to growth. As are fresh perspectives and open minds. The BSD has both.	While this is an issue in every community, it doesn't need to be a stalling point. Utilize that historical knowledge to your benefit, while being open to market shifts, fresh ideas, new players and energy.
Outdoor Recreation Tourism & Commerce	One of the largest growing segments during the pandemic and continues.	Leverage and connect the natural landscape, assets and trails to grow tourism, shopping and dining.

<b>Economic Factor</b>	<b>Strengths/Market Changes</b>	<b>Challenges/Needs</b>
E-Commerce	Steadily grows each year. Holiday online sales nationally was 21.6%, which is a 25% increase from just three years ago.	1/3 of small businesses don't offer e-commerce. Typically entrepreneurs lack the capacity to maintain a strong online presence and compete with national and regional retailers. Providing training, tools and collaborations to get more local entrepreneurs online is needed, while continuing to emphasize the in-store customer experience as a Unique Selling Proposition (USP).
Competition	Birmingham offers retail like no other downtown in the region, and quite frankly, the state. It's centrally located in Oakland County and is often cited as the place other downtowns look up to. It also provides hotel accommodations for travelers for tourism opportunities similar to that of other destination-driven communities like Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, Traverse City, Petoskey.	Somerset, Downtown Detroit, Rochester, Royal Oak/Ferndale, Northville/Plymouth are all fierce competitors for some of the same audiences. They have continued to grow and excel in certain markets that perhaps Birmingham could tap. Continue to refine the retail and restaurant diversification mix. Create events and promotions that are quintessentially Birmingham.

<b>Economic Factor</b>	<b>Strengths/Market Changes</b>	<b>Challenges/Needs</b>
Market Audience & Frequency	Affluent, in-style, tech savvy and connected consumers that seek variety.	<p>They love healthy foods, physical activity, home décor, arts and entertainment, wine and coffee, personal care, SUVs and extensive travel.</p> <p>Promotion of the BSD niche retailers and restaurants is needed. Continue to grow BSD online advertising and connectivity to support brand awareness and foot traffic.</p>
Volunteer Organization	Strong core base of volunteers that are dedicated to the BSD.	Expand the net to include a diverse representation throughout the district and community and grow the next-gen of volunteers. More hands make light work.
Inflation	Rising costs of products and workforce have definitely had a toll on local businesses and the organization.	The recent renewal of the BSD assessment helps the BSD maintain services, but reassessing all areas to retain the high quality will be needed. Business hours and product availability will continue to fluctuate, and the BSD must remain flexible as the economy changes.

## **Key Issues & Needs**

The BSD identified the following key issues and needs for Downtown Birmingham and the BSD organization.

### Priorities:

- Business Mix
  - Local vs. National
  - Price points/Luxury dominance
  - Oversaturation of specific products and services
- Accessibility
  - Quick Parking Options
  - Connected Districts
  - Wayfinding
  - Crossing Woodward
- Business & Resident Engagement
  - Participation
  - Communication
  - Collaborations
  - Relationships
- Sustaining Board & Committees
  - Adequate Budget
  - Staff Capacity

### Other Related Priorities:

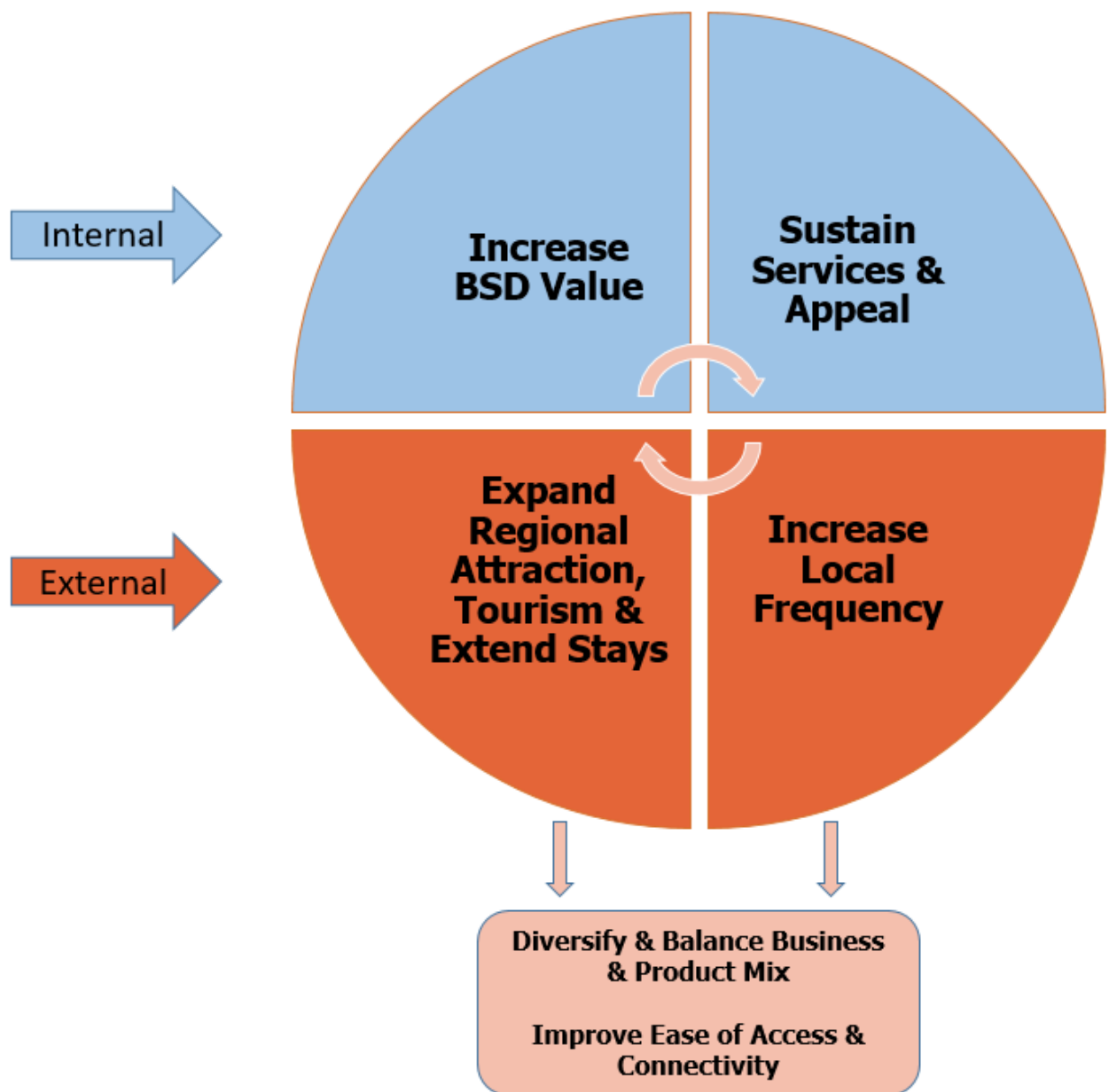
- Compelling Events
- Maintaining Quality
- Increasing Frequency
- Broad/Regional Appeal
- Office Occupancy/Hybrids
- Connectivity to Downtown Residents
- Upkeep of Buildings
- Sign Compliance
- E-Commerce
- Economy/Inflation

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The BSD's focus is to **grow the economy by broadening the appeal of Downtown Birmingham that attracts and retains businesses and residents**. It will do this through business recruitment and retention, marketing and promotion of the district, and maintaining and enhancing the downtown environment. For the next 3-5 years, the BSD will focus on the following goals and objectives to achieve this.



Structurally, the BSD has prioritized these goals into two tracks, including external and internal goals, and identified that two external goals not only stand on their own, but are integral in achieving two of the highest external goal priorities.





Objectives were identified that the committees will continue to develop an action plan of tasks to meet the goals. In essence, goals are “why”, objectives are the “what” and tasks are the “how”. Below provides the detail on how the BSD will achieve these goals and objectives.

## **EXTERNAL GOALS**

- **EXTERNAL GOAL 1: Increase Local Frequency** (All Committees)
  - OBJECTIVE: Grow brand loyalty of the district and businesses
    - TASK: Increase local business awareness and patronage of new businesses and long-time favorites through targeted marketing and wayfinding
    - TASK: Market businesses that offer frequent purchase and quick-serve products
    - TASK: Distinguish the downtown brand voice and persona that is quintessentially Birmingham
    - TASK: Create and support community collaborations to build repeat customers and connections with neighborhoods (Integral to Goal: Sustain Services & Appeal)
  - OBJECTIVE: Meet market/product consumer demands with business mix to capture sales leakage (See Sub-Goals Below: Diversify and Balance Business and Product Mix)
    - TASK: Recruit retail businesses that will appeal to office workers and residents to drive daily foot traffic, and reduce risk of oversaturation of business types
  - OBJECTIVE: Make it easy and engaging for consumers– from getting here to patronizing businesses (See Sub-Goals Below: Improve Ease of Access and Connectivity)
    - TASK: Advocate, educate and engage businesses to collaborate in promoting consistent hours of operation
  
- **EXTERNAL GOAL 2: Expand Regional Attraction, Tourism and Extend Stays** (Special Events and Marketing/Advertising Committees)
  - OBJECTIVE: Stand out in the crowd of other communities by re-evaluating events and promotions to support the needs and market demand, ie:
    - a signature event that leverages Birmingham’s appeal, businesses and assets
    - Adult event(s) that connect businesses
    - Incentivize patrons as opposed to discount-oriented promotions
  - OBJECTIVE: Leverage and market the downtown’s broad appeal, shopping, dining and assets to regional areas
    - TASK: Package day-trip and weekend destination activities by connecting assets
    - TASK: Create promotions that market niche shops
    - TASK: Solidify brand message to incorporate in all communications
    - TASK: Utilize social media influencers
  - OBJECTIVE: Diversify and Balance Business and Product Mix (See Sub-Goals Below)
  - OBJECTIVE: Improve Ease of Access and Connectivity (See Sub-Goals Below)

- **EXTERNAL GOAL 3 & SUB-GOAL A: Diversify and Balance Business and Product Mix within Districts and Downtown-wide** (Business Development and Marketing/Advertising Committees)
  - OBJECTIVE: Identify, promote and recruit recommended businesses and products needed in the downtown
    - TASK: Analyze tenant mix and district balance across price points, product types and depth.
    - TASK: Recruit businesses that will appeal to office workers and residents to drive daily foot traffic, and reduce risk of oversaturation of business types, ie: quick lunches/fast casual
    - TASK: Increase awareness and brand loyalty of business mix through target marketing and wayfinding.
    - TASK: Build landlord relationships to influence recruitment of appropriate mix.
  - OBJECTIVE: Retain and recruit small businesses with incentives, education and resources for property owners, brokers and businesses.
    - TASK: Encourage second floor locations with flexible zoning and market rates.
    - TASK: Provide landlords and brokers with recruitment materials and data
  - OBJECTIVE: Increase awareness of the business start-up process and serve as a liaison to guide entrepreneurs through the process.
    - TASK: Provide a welcome packet to new businesses.
    - TASK: Create a start-up process flier and web landing page
  
- **EXTERNAL GOAL 4 & SUB-GOAL B: Improve Ease of Access and Connectivity** (Maintenance/Capital Improvement, Marketing/Advertising and Special Events Committees)
  - OBJECTIVE: Advocate and collaborate on balancing short and long-term parking needs
    - TASK: Help create and advocate for a curbside management plan with quick parking options, package pick-up areas, alley access and flexible parking for office and service workers.
    - TASK: Educate on shared parking value.
  - OBJECTIVE: Guide consumers to downtown and businesses by identifying and connecting districts, assets and recreation
    - TASK: Inform, create, and support implementing a wayfinding plan
    - TASK: Promote districts, assets and recreation in marketing materials and initiatives
  - OBJECTIVE: Enhance and balance pedestrian and district connections for consumers, residents and businesses across and within districts and along Woodward Avenue:
    - TASK: Enhance the placemaking of alleys and pedestrian connectors
    - TASK: Emphasize district identities as part of the BSD brand with communications and marketing
    - TASK: Identify streetscape amenities, wayfinding, physical identifiers and pedestrian improvements needed
    - TASK: Communicate and market to residents both in and outside of districts
    - TASK: Host district events and promotions, and extend existing promotions to districts.
    - TASK: Assess needs of maintenance programs and services by district

## INTERNAL GOALS

- **INTERNAL GOAL 1: Increase BSD Value (All Committees)**
  - OBJECTIVE: Increase Business and Resident Engagement & Collaborations
    - TASK: Foster community collaborations across businesses, organizations and residents.
    - TASK: Create coalitions, advisory, focus groups and education forums by business industry, district and residential areas
    - TASK: Communicate with residents to grow engagement and address needs
    - TASK: Recognize that the BSD also serves as a residential neighborhood
  - OBJECTIVE: Promote and showcase the role of the BSD by celebrating successes and the return on investment
    - TASK: Establish, track and measure Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for meeting goals
    - TASK: Incorporate statistics and stories in communications
    - TASK: Build relationships with businesses and property owners
  - OBJECTIVE: Grow the business economy by supporting existing businesses with resources and education
    - TASK: Increase attendance at merchants meetings by hosting them at ideal times, motivating locations and providing focused content.
    - TASK: Serve as an ombudsman for small businesses to streamline business start-up and permit process
    - TASK: Develop a recommendation for streamlining the business start-up process and BSD data collection
  - OBJECTIVE: Balance services and marketing amongst the district (Goal 2)
    - TASK: Recognize business milestones and district businesses
    - TASK: Reassess holiday lighting across district
- **INTERNAL GOAL 2: Sustain Services & Appeal (All Committees)**
  - OBJECTIVE: Recruit and retain a balanced mix of Board and Committee members consisting of businesses, property owners and residents.
    - TASK: Assess needs and gaps
    - TASK: Provide Board training
  - OBJECTIVE: Balance budget, staffing needs and workload
    - TASK: Create action plans for projects and programs
    - TASK: Develop a five-year plan for the allocation of existing funds and fund balance
    - TASK: Assess staff needs and develop a staffing plan

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### ECONOMIC

- Benchmarks Established
- Increased Business, Property Owner and Resident Engagement for stronger relationships
- Retail Occupancy
- Local vs. National Retailers Mix
- Second Floor Uses Diversified & Occupied
- Business Start-Up Process Awareness & Materials
- Recruitment Incentives Utilized
- Increase in Visitor Length of Stay
- Increase in Visits/Frequency
- Trade Market Area Reach & Penetration
- Business Retention

#### Current benchmarks include:

- 96% Main Floor/Retail Occupancy
- 89% Upper Floor Occupancy
- 75/25% Local vs. National Mix
- 2-hour Stays
- 7 million Visitors

#### The Board will need to define benchmarks for:

- Business, Property Owner & Resident Engagement
- The Potential Number of Recruitment Incentives Distributed
- Business Start-up Materials & Awareness
- Business Retention

### PHYSICAL

- Reduced complaints regarding parking, delivery and pick-up accessibility
- Curbside management plan
- Balance of services and marketing to South Old Woodward, Triangle & North Old Woodward
- Wayfinding
- Safer Crossing Woodward at all Crossings
- Pedestrian Foot Traffic Increase in District Areas
- Alley Improvements

#### Current benchmarks include:

- Parking Reports
- 7 million Visitors

#### Define benchmarks for:

- Pedestrian/Vehicle Accidents
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvements, ie: Timing of Lights/Median Improvements
- Balance of Services to Districts
- Curbside Management Plan & Implementation
- Wayfinding Plan & Implementation
- Alley Concepts & Implementation

## **SOCIAL**

- Increase in Social Media followers and engagement
- Social Media Influencers Supporting BSD Messaging
- Increase in Website Unique Visitors and Time on Page(s)
- Business and Community Collaborations
- Events and Promotions that Connect Assets

### Current benchmarks include:

- 569,371 Social Reach
- 17,790 Followers
- 120,392 Web Visits

### Define benchmarks for:

- Social Engagement
- Reach and Number of Social Influencers Sharing and Supporting BSD Messaging
- Number of Business and Community Collaborations
- Number of Event & Promotional Connections
- Web Time Average

## **ORGANIZATIONAL**

- Full, Active and Diversified Board and Committees
- Balanced Budget
- Staffing/Workload Balance

### Current benchmarks:

- 11 of 12 Voting Board Members + 1 Emeritus Member
- 25 of up to 38 Committee Members

### Define benchmarks for:

- Cross-section of Board & Committee Members
- Annual and Three-Year Budget
- Which Items Need Action Plans
- Staffing Plan
- Which Services That Need to be Sustained