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Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

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CLEAN AND SAFE

Downtown embraces traditional safety ambassador approach

For a time, the Anchorage Downtown Partnership took an unusually active role in dealing with public safety issues in downtown Anchorage, AK (est. pop. 287,145).

In 2016, the Anchorage Downtown Partnership launched a program known as Safety First. In collaboration with the Anchorage Community Development Authority, the Downtown Partnership operated a hotline that took calls about problems downtown and then dispatched safety ambassadors.

Merchants, property owners, and residents reported such issues as disorderly behavior, graffiti, panhandling, public drinking and drug use, along with issues around trash cleanup.

At first glance, the program seemed like an assertive approach to public safety. Issues that were too minor to merit a 911 call could be handled by a trained security guard, the thinking went.

In practice, though, Anchorage's program proved problematic.

(Continued on page 3)

PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

As natural disasters continue, leaders search for solutions

From wildfires to hurricanes to tornadoes, downtowns are feeling the effects of extreme weather events. In downtown Atlanta, a flash flood in September inundated streets, swamped cars, and forced the Georgia Aquarium to close.

In another example, flash floods in Leominster, MA (est. pop. 43,478), damaged downtown businesses and city roads.

Summer flooding in downtown Burlington, VT (est. pop. 44,703),

and Montpelier, VT (est. pop. 7,966), damaged many buildings and forced some businesses to close for weeks or months. Bear Pond Books in Burlington lost its computers and inventory, and the store had to shut down for two months as it rebuilt.

Many historic downtowns were built on the banks of streams and rivers — in other words, in flood plains. Mitigating flood risk requires such long-term projects as dredging

(Continued on page 8)

Transition to smart-parking not always easy

As downtowns upgrade parking systems, they experience both greater efficiencies and technological growing pains

Coin-operated parking meters are going the way of telegraphs, typewriters, and payphones. Downtowns nationwide have scrambled to replace old-fashioned parking meters with kiosks and apps that centralize payment collection.

“People don’t have 20 minutes to figure out an app.”

The new digital systems allow for more secure payment methods, and they speed the process of issuing tickets.

But the evolution isn’t always welcomed by motorists. If you park in more than one downtown, you almost certainly must navigate multiple parking apps, each of which requires the driver to input credit card information and license plate number.

Meanwhile, the fast pace of technological change means that parking systems that might have seemed state of the art five or 10 years ago aren’t so up-to-date now.

Here’s how cities across North America are upgrading their meter systems:

In Columbus, OH (est. pop. 908,372), the City Council has invested \$500,000 in a marketing campaign aimed at teaching motorists how to pay for on-street parking. An app and kiosks have mostly replaced parking meters downtown and throughout the city.

Hunter Marketing collaborated with Park Columbus to coach motorists on how to use the new system. As a result, Columbus has one of the highest app adoption rates in the nation, and parking complaints on social media are down, the *Columbus Dis-*

patch reports.

In Redding, CA (est. pop. 92,896), the city has struggled to address gripes about the reliability of its parking kiosks and app. One restaurant worker told the *Redding Searchlight* in September that the kiosk near her eatery routinely malfunctions.

“People come in and they ask for my help, and I try and help them get on the app. But people don’t have 20 minutes to figure out an app when they’re on a one-hour lunch. They just don’t,” the employee said.

Another gripe: In some areas with weak cell service, motorists can’t get the app to work. Redding has addressed the complaints by boosting the number of monthly parking permits available to downtown employees and to students at a downtown college campus.

In Pensacola, FL (est. pop. 53,845), the city removed traditional parking meters several years ago. Motorists can still pay with currency or coins at kiosks located along the street or at city lots. To pay, motorists must enter a license plate number and then insert bills, coins, or a credit card.

Motorists can use the ParkPensacola app, or they can use a text-to-pay feature that lets parkers pay without downloading an app or creating an account. Motorists must find the “pay-by-text” sign or sticker displayed at the parking location, text the number posted with the parking zone, then click the secure link to pay for parking.

In Asheville, NC (est. pop. 93,782), the city has struggled to stay on top of tech trends. In 2018, Asheville installed hundreds of smart meters produced by IPS Group, only to discover that the meters’ batteries had limited life — and that replacing worn-out batteries was witheringly expensive.

So the city has begun replacing those meters with devices produced by MacKay, the *Asheville Citizen Times* reports. The new meters include the option to pay via coins, debit cards, credit cards, or the Passport Parking app. Instructions for paying via the app are



now located on the back of the meter, so that drivers can see the information while sitting in their cars and not have to brave rain or snow while figuring out the system.

In Red Deer, Alberta (est. pop. 100,844), the city became the latest Canadian municipality to select HotSpot as its parking system. HotSpot provides familiar features, such as paying for and extending a parking session from a mobile device and getting an alert that a session is about to expire.

HotSpot also has some novel features. For instance, it refunds the unused portion of a paid session, and it lets motorists pay parking tickets from a mobile device. HotSpot is developing a real-time map that will let drivers find open spots, Red Deer reports on its website.

In Corvallis, OR (est. pop. 59,407), the city is making do with obsolete meters. Park-

ing workers use outdated software and hand-write vehicle logs. They even transport coins collected from meters to banks outside Corvallis because local banks will not accept the bags of change, the *Corvallis Gazette-Times* reports. The city is poised to spend about \$400,000 to upgrade to a modern meter system.

And in Dubuque, IA (est. pop. 59,379), the city is planning to invest \$2.4 million in a new parking system over the next two years. On the bright side, parking revenue tops \$2.6 million, the *Telegraph Herald* reports.

In January, a consulting firm presented the city with an analysis that Dubuque's parking technology is antiquated and underused. A new system would include license plate readers and the options to pay with coins, credit cards, a mobile app, or text-to-pay. **DIX**

Downtown embraces traditional safety ambassador approach

— Continued from page 1

Ambassadors routinely responded to situations better handled by police or social service providers.

That blind spot became clear during the pandemic, when the Downtown Partnership's safety ambassadors increasingly were sent into situations they were not equipped to handle.

"I began to really recognize we were in over our head because we were responding to something that was so much bigger than we could address," Amanda Moser, the former director of the Anchorage Downtown Partnership, told the *Anchorage Daily News*. "Our team is not law enforcement and we're not social service providers."

Another unintended consequence of Safety First: The program diverted calls away from the usual emergency and non-emergency dispatch lines. That left a big gap in the dispatch call data that the Anchorage Police Department uses to assess safety needs in the area.

Safety First responded to nearly 12,000 calls in 2019, the *Daily News* reported. None of those calls were included in Anchorage Police Department dispatch data.

Given those issues, the Anchorage Downtown Partnership shut down its Safety First program on January 1, 2022. Since then, the organization has adopted a more traditional approach to downtown safety.

Radhika Krishna, the current executive director of the Downtown Partnership, says downtown ambassadors have moved away from providing security and focus on alerting the experts. Now, the uniformed ambassadors respond to minor incidents and direct more urgent matters to 311 or 911.



“Many calls were going to us that should have been going to the police department,” Krishna tells *Downtown Idea Exchange*. “Our mission and reason for being is to provide supplemental services, not primary services. We are really proud of the work

“Our mission and reason for being is to provide supplemental services, not primary services.”

we’re doing now. We’re going back to being the eyes and ears of downtown.”

The shift in approach means that the work of safety ambassadors is more in line with their skills and training, Krishna says.

While she wasn’t with the organization during the Safety First program, she fears the initiative fell outside the boundaries of “mission fit.” And that turned the job into a morale-sapping grind for safety ambassadors.

Homelessness also a problem

The shift in approach for downtown ambassadors comes as a large homeless encampment near downtown has elicited a

number of complaints from residents and business owners.

“Like many cities across the Western U.S., we’re in a moment of high need,” Krishna says. “Social service programs are frayed. Homelessness is rising.”

In September, the Anchorage Assembly committed an extra \$220,000 to temporarily improve public safety and public health in camps occupied by hundreds of unhoused people.

Assembly Chair Chris Constant tells Alaska Public Media that the goal for police is to keep order through mid-October, when the city’s emergency shelter plan for the winter is expected to go into effect.

“It’s a disorderly environment and it’s outside of what any reasonable person would call a legitimate community space,” he said. “At this time, we would prefer order on the balance of scales to chaos.”

Contact: Radhika Krishna, [Anchorage Downtown Partnership](#), 907-279-5658. **DIX**

CLEAN AND SAFE

Mix of downtown tenants creates trash challenges

Downtown leaders everywhere aim to create vibrant, round-the-clock communities. But success on that front comes with an unwelcome side effect — a downtown filled with housing, restaurants, office spaces, and entertainment venues creates a lot of garbage.

In cities small and large, downtown leaders are wrestling with garbage issues. In Knoxville, TN (est. pop. 192,657), the city has boosted trash pickup as the amount of refuse has ballooned. And New York City has made a number of adjustments, including limiting the hours during which residents and business owners may put trash on sidewalks.

Knoxville has experienced an increase in garbage that has coincided with an economic boom and a shift in business occupancy downtown.

Over the past decade, the number of downtown restaurants and bars has increased dramatically. And while that’s good news for the vibrancy of downtown, it’s also a fact of life that restaurants and bars simply churn out more waste than financial firms and law offices.

Downtown Knoxville businesses now produce more than 4 million pounds of trash each year. In recent years, the city has ramped up trash collection. Garbage trucks once visited downtown just four days a week. Now, refuse routes run daily, with two pickups on Fridays and Saturdays, the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* reports.

But more trash service alone won’t solve the problem. So the Knoxville City Council approved \$52,200 to pay a consultant for a plan to handle downtown trash more effectively.

The downtown area is home to some 500 refuse bins, including 330 carts for garbage and 175 for recycling, according to the city.

In addition to being housed in corrals, trash carts are located adjacent to buildings, and in alleys. Some are located in alcoves and “storage cages,” according to the city, and some businesses without much food waste simply pile trash bags at the curb.

Knoxville is looking to more advanced solutions, such as in-ground dumpsters and fenced-off compactors.

The city has been working on a deal to buy a downtown parking lot that could house a trash compactor. But Knoxville is looking for longer-term solutions as well.

Garbage means rats

In New York City, the problem is similar, but on a larger scale. Plastic trash bags often line curbs, providing an open invitation to rats. This spring, the city appointed its first-ever “rat czar.”

“Rat mitigation is more than a quality-of-life issue for New Yorkers,” Kathleen Corradi, the city’s director of rodent mitigation said in a news conference. “Rats are a symptom of systemic issues, including sanitation, health, housing, and economic justice.”

New York City paid consulting firm McKinsey \$1.6 million for a trash study. That study concluded that nearly 90 percent of city streets could accommodate containerized garbage

bins. But that upgrade would require a new fleet of trucks and more frequent pickups in some places, McKinsey said.

Part of New York City’s trash solution is “containerization” — a more rodent-proof way of storing refuse until garbage trucks pick-up. But citywide containerization could require replacing about 150,000 parking spaces — 10 percent of the city’s residential total — with new bins shared by multiple buildings.

Containerization would require a new fleet of automated, side-loading trucks to remove trash from the new bins. The city-funded study said such an initiative would require at least three years and “significant capital investments.”

The city is tackling trash on other fronts, too. By 2024, the city aims to roll out a long-delayed program focusing on waste generated by businesses. That initiative divides the city into 20 “commercial waste zones” served by private hauling companies.

And since April 1, the city has required residential buildings to put out garbage bags later in the day to reduce the amount of time that trash beckons to rats. **DIX**



ATTRACTION

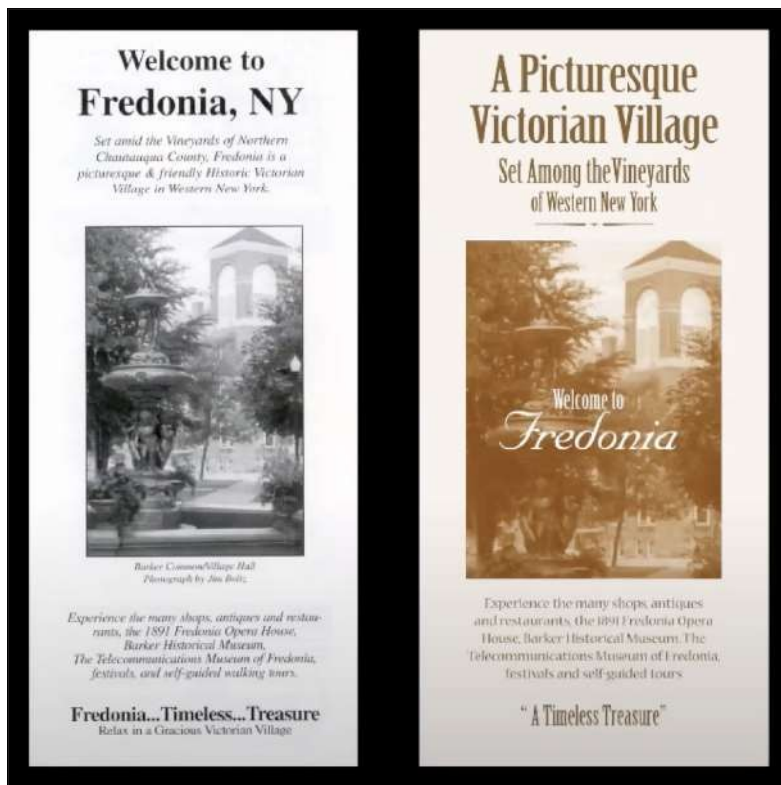
When marketing downtown as a destination, avoid these common mistakes

Marketing a downtown effectively requires research, strategic thinking, community-wide soul-searching, and solid implementation.

The payoff of all this work can be felt everywhere from more effective business

recruitment to stronger tourism and more meaningful events.

It’s a hard task, says Roger Brooks, head of Destination Development Association. He sees some common mistakes that downtown leaders make over and over again.



The most common misstep: “We all want to be all things to all people,” says Brooks, “but if you want to succeed, you can’t do that.”

Brooks points to the case of one small city that came up with a narrow focus and catchy marketing slogan, then sabotaged a successful strategy by making its pitch overly broad.

In 2010, marketers in Devon, Alberta,

Canada (est. pop. 6,578), had a brainstorm. The small city branded itself as Bike Town Alberta. The idea was to capitalize on the city’s 18 miles of paved bike trails.

In its early years, the campaign was a clear winner. Devon began to attract cyclists for races and casual rides. Devon’s campaign was so successful that the city won a \$25,000 grant to design and develop a mountain bike park.

Devon also launched a clever ad campaign that used the tagline “Grab life by the handlebars.” So far, so good — Brooks lauds the initial marketing effort for building a clear identity around a town that otherwise would have been overlooked.

But somewhere along the way, Devon’s marketers got more ambitious. They broadened the pitch from “Grab life by the handlebars” to “Grab life.” The idea was that Devon could appeal not just to cyclists but to everyone — and a successful marketing campaign soon fizzled.

“‘Grab life’ — I don’t even know what that means,” Brooks says.

Devon had forgotten the cardinal rule of destination marketing, which is to focus on what makes a locale truly unique.

In some cases, it makes sense to broaden a brand, Brooks says. For instance, a destination in the Mountain West wanted to stress its appeal to birders, but Brooks suggested focusing the message instead on photography. Birds could be the subject of the photos, but photography appeals to a broader audience and has a longer season.

Once you’ve identified what makes your community unique, shout about it. Brooks likes to compare ads created by various destinations, and he sees a troubling trend among the pieces. Nearly every one puts the name of the city or town in prominent type, but scarcely mentions what makes the destination unique.

In a [recent video](#), he points to a brochure for Fredonia, NY (est. pop. 10,018). The original version of the marketing piece led with the phrase “Welcome to Fredonia, NY.” Brooks redesigned the brochure so that the most prominent phrase was, “A Picturesque Victorian Village.”

Rules for branding your downtown

As you pitch your downtown to visitors, you should be sure all marketing materials follow these rules, says Roger Brooks of Destination Development Association:

- **Differentiate yourself.** “Something for everyone” is not a unique pitch.
- **Evoke an emotional response.** Madison Avenue uses this tactic to perfection, and you should follow suit.
- **Tell visitors why they should visit.** Simply listing names of attractions does nothing to make you stand out.
- **Be memorable.** Use imagery that is dramatic and enticing.

His idea: A traveler scanning a rack of brochures is looking for something eye-catching, and only the top few inches of the marketing piece are visible. To most people in a hotel lobby or visitor information center, the name of a small municipality is meaningless. But an appealing description has a much better chance of being noticed.

“You only have three seconds to pull some-

body in,” Brooks says. In every marketing piece he has redesigned, Brooks moved the name of the city to the bottom. The idea is to emphasize the experience, to appeal to emotion, and to downplay the text that conveys basic information.

“We all want to be all things to all people.”

Contact: Roger Brooks, [Destination Development Association](#), 206-241-4770. **DIX**

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

City uses ARPA funds to restore historic buildings

As an economically challenged city, Toledo, OH (est. pop. 266,289), struggles to make use of long-vacant buildings.

To address that challenge, the city aims to expand two grant programs that incentivize property owners to bring their buildings up to code and get them back into productive use.

A city proposal calls for \$300,000 for the city’s “white box” program. The initiative offers matching grants of up to \$75,000 for owners who install fire safety equipment and who make first-floor spaces accessible to people with disabilities.

In 2022, Toledo distributed \$500,000 to seven white-box projects around the city, the *Toledo Blade* reports. The money came from the American Rescue Plan Act.

One recipient of white-box money was the Neighborhood Health Association of Toledo Inc. The money was used to refurbish a vacant building in the downtown Warehouse District.

The building will house a pharmacy, which is set to open in early 2024. There are no drugstores within two miles of the building.

The white-box program is breathing life into another long-dormant building

in downtown. The structure, a three-story, 19,000-square-foot building, dates to 1892. Future tenants include a bar and restaurant on the first floor and an office on the third floor.

While the building’s current owner paid just \$440,000 for the property in 2020, remodeling will cost about \$3 million, the *Blade* reported.

The Toledo Lucas County Port Authority helped with financing through a program to help make buildings more energy efficient, and the city of Toledo contributed a combined \$115,000 through its white-box and facade grant programs. **DIX**



As natural disasters continue, leaders search for solutions

— Continued from page 1

streams, restoring flood plains, and even building levees or dams.

“It’s a giant puzzle, but it’s solvable. It’s going to take a lot of work, a lot of money, and a lot of time,” Gov. Phil Scott told reporters after Vermont’s floods. “How do we store the water along the way to prevent the massive surge of water at one time?”

Newer buildings can be hardened against floods with such features as flood-resistant windows, or by filling in basements. But modifying historic buildings is much more difficult.

Downtown leaders looking for general advice can visit [Ready.gov](#), a page hosted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. But every downtown has unique topography, geography, and climate.

To prepare for a disaster in your downtown, Manuel Ochoa of Ochoa Urban Collective suggests these steps:

- **Seek out hazards.** Go on a research trip — lead a group, take photos, and run through [FEMA’s Risk Assessment Worksheet](#). Some common problem spots are:

- *Damaged or blocked storm drains.* These could quickly back up in a flash flood.
- *Dead tree limbs.* Damaged trunks or branches might have suffered from an accident, disease, or construction damage. In a windstorm, they can become projectiles.
- *Poorly maintained buildings.* Can you see loose bricks or stones caused by cracked or damaged mortar? What about rusted or damaged decorative building materials such as ironwork or cast iron?



Check for wood damaged by moisture or termites as well.

- *Rooftop objects.* While some potential hazards might be visible on a building’s cornice, other potential roof hazards might not be so apparent. Ask a maintenance worker or contractor to check for loose antennas, loose bolts from air conditioning units, or other material that can fly off a roof and cause damage.

- **Document every building downtown.**

As part of this exercise, photograph buildings from all sides including significant historic interiors wherever possible. You don’t have to do it all yourself — start an account on Google Photos or Apple Photos for business owners and volunteers to share and upload photos.

- **Beware of holes in insurance coverage.** Most businesses and property owners carry insurance. But do they have the right coverage? Every major flood reveals property owners who didn’t realize they were not covered. Owners of mortgaged buildings in flood zones are required to carry flood insurance, but it’s optional for others. Invite a local insurance agent to speak to downtown merchants about insurance coverage they should consider.

- **Meet your county emergency management director.** Learn about your state’s plan for a major disaster, how your county is getting ready for the next disaster, and what mitigation projects your local government is considering to make your community more resilient. Research how your county will help businesses recover should your commercial district experience a major disaster.

- **Host a business continuity meeting.** How many businesses in your district have a [business continuity plan](#)? Does your downtown have a business continuity plan? If you wrote a pandemic plan back in 2020, you might be able to adapt it to natural disasters.

Contact: Manuel Ochoa, [Ochoa Urban Collective](#), 202-413-6910. **DIX**

City's wage tax hampers post-pandemic rebound

Downtown leaders in Philadelphia have boosted safety patrols, hosted return-to-work events, handed out free coffee at transit stations, and spruced up Center City's sidewalk flowerbeds.

"As an organization, we've done everything we can to reactivate," Paul Levy, chief executive officer of Center City District, told *The Wall Street Journal* this summer.

Even so, the city remains a laggard in bringing back downtown workers. As of early 2023, the number of non-resident workers in the West Market Office District was less than half of pre-pandemic levels, according to a [Center City District](#) analysis of data from Placer.ai.

In contrast to most cities, Philadelphia levies a tax on wages earned in the municipal limits. The city's wage tax dates to the Great Depression.

While the city has reduced the amount of the tax in recent decades, it's still on the books. Philadelphia's wage tax rate peaked at 4.96 percent in 1995, according to the Pew Charitable Trusts. It is now 3.75 percent for employed residents and 3.44 percent for nonresident workers in the city. In an obvious disincentive to commuting to work, suburban residents don't have to pay the tax if they work from home rather than from their employers' offices in the city.

The tax burden has contributed to Center City's slow comeback, many say. More than 317,000 people moved out of Philadelphia's urban core between March 2020 and June 2023, according to Moody's.

"Philadelphia's onerous tax burden discourages the presence of businesses that can create jobs," the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* editorial board wrote this year. **DIX**

"As an organization, we've done everything we can to reactivate."

PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Test run with pavement-cooling coating shows promise

As downtowns large and small struggle with heat-island effects, an experiment with solar-reflective pavement coatings is showing promise.

Last year, the City of Los Angeles chose the Pacoima neighborhood for a test of the concept. The city formed a partnership with GAF, a roofing manufacturer, to cover some 700,000 square feet of pavement with a heat-resistant coating.

Within a 10-block area, workers coated streets, a school playground, a basketball court, and two parking lots. The city chose that neighborhood because it's far from the

cooling breezes of the Pacific Ocean. Pacoima is in the San Fernando Valley, where summer-time temperatures routinely top 100 degrees.

"There's a lot of asphalt and lack of investment for tree canopies," Melanie Paola Torres, a community organizer with Pacoima Beautiful, told *The Wall Street Journal*. "Given the fact that we are in an industrial zone, that contributes to the urban heat-island effect."

The test project seems to be working. This summer, reporters from the website LAist visited Pacoima and collected temperature readings. They found that temperatures in the treated areas were 10 degrees cooler than in

parts of the neighborhood with traditional pavement.

GAF found similar results. The treated pavement was 10 degrees Fahrenheit cooler on sunny days, and the air temperature 6.5 feet above ground was an average of 1.5 degrees cooler on sunny days and as much as 3.5 degrees lower during periods of extreme heat.

In a surprise benefit, the neighborhood downwind from Pacoima also experienced a moderate cooling effect, *Smart Cities Dive* reported.

The next phase of the project calls for cool roof technologies across the Pacoima neighborhood. The city and GAF are expected to publish more results of the project in early 2024. **DIX**

ATTRACTION

Two-parking-space parklet still going strong after five years

The Rosslyn Business Improvement District in Arlington, VA (est. pop. 234,000), launched the first parklet in the Washington, DC, metro area back in 2018. Before the COVID-19 pandemic made parklets an international craze, the Rosslyn BID simply wanted to do something creative, and spur a reevaluation of how people use public space.

The parklet is modest. It takes up just two parking spaces at the corner of North Oak Street and Wilson Boulevard. The parklet includes tables, chairs, and plantings.

Five years later, it continues to serve as an informal gathering spot where people can relax and enjoy outdoor seating. The Rosslyn BID calls the mini-park a feature that

“promotes a rethinking of the usage of the public-right-of-way.”

In other words, the tables and chairs are more than just a whimsical feature in a bustling metro area. Rather, they’re an inspiration for citizens and leaders to consider the shape of the urban environment.

Even before the pandemic, the parklet trend was gaining momentum — some 150 parklets had opened nationally as of 2015. Then the concept exploded during the pandemic — an estimated 1,700 parklets sprang up as cities looked for ways to provide outdoor dining options.

Parklet regulation mostly was a free-for-all during the pandemic. But as the

pandemic receded, municipalities began to hold outdoor dining spaces to normal standards. In cities including San Francisco and Santa Monica, officials have begun enforcing codes around fire safety and accessibility, and collecting fees from private businesses using public rights of way. **DIX**



Idea Exchange

Creating a quiet zone

Community leaders in Pine Bluff, AR, would like to increase the number of people living downtown. One major deterrent is noise. Trains passing through the city sound their horns at several downtown railroad crossings. A newly formed exploratory committee will consider alternatives to horns such crossing gates and raised crossings, as well as costs and funding sources to create a downtown quiet zone.

The City of Clinton, IA, is further along in its work to create a quiet zone downtown. A news release from the city notes that it has taken four years of work with the Canadian Pacific Railroad, the Iowa Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration to establish a quiet zone.

The city invested nearly \$2 million in the project for removal of three crossings and upgraded safety improvements at all other public crossings. The Iowa DOT, Canadian Pacific Railroad, and Federal Highway Administration contributed approximately \$500,000 in grant money for the crossing improvements. A second phase of the project is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2024.

Oktoberfest is for everyone

Ruby the dachshund took first place in the annual Running of the Wieners at the 2023 Oktoberfest Zinzinnati in downtown Cincinnati, OH, proving

that Oktoberfest is about more than beers, brats, and Bavarian music.

At Woosterfest in downtown Wooster, OH, racing is also a highlight at the annual Oktoberfest celebration. Teams of two compete in the popular Beer Stein Race. The goal is to navigate an obstacle course while carrying steins of beer. The team to get the most beer over the finish line is the winner. The event attracts thousands from throughout northeast Ohio. In addition to the Beer Stein Race the festivities include free entertainment, food vendors, bier and winegarten, and activities for all ages.

And in Fort Worth, TX, the Oktoberfest Run Und Ride takes participants through the city for a 10k run, a 5k run, and an urban bike ride. All participants receive access to Fort Worth's Oktoberfest events featuring rides, live music, entertainment, shopping, games, food and beer.



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Incubator adds holiday pop-up

A popular business incubation program is expanding for the winter holidays. The Downtown Sacramento [CA] Partnership's Calling All Dreamers program is now in its 10th year. The program mentors entrepreneurs as they compete for a chance to open a downtown storefront and earn a business start-up package valued at \$100,000. To date a total of 15 businesses have opened through the program. The partnership notes that several quickly became "signature small businesses" downtown.

New for 2023, the partnership is adding a holiday pop-up store to the program. The 11 entrepreneurs taking part in this year's competition will all have the opportunity to showcase their products inside donated storefront space in a prime downtown location.

Uncared for spaces lead to safety concerns

Surface parking lots in Edmonton, Alberta Canada, have come under attack as the Downtown Edmonton Community League seeks to improve downtown safety.

"These unmaintained surface parking lots really make large swaths of our downtown neighborhoods unattractive" League president Cheryl Probert tells CBC Canada. "So you couple that with real and perceived social and safety concerns, and really, it's not enticing people to be out and about at street level."

Ambassador program fights negative perceptions

In an effort to improve safety, and the perception of safety, more ambassadors are patrolling downtown Louisville, KY. In September, Louisville Downtown Partnership doubled the number of ambassadors from 18 to 36. Ambassadors are involved in cleaning projects, regular check-ins with businesses and property owners, hospitality services, and escorting people within the downtown.

"It is critical for the health of the entire community that Downtown upholds the highest standard for safety," said Rebecca Fleischaker, executive director of LDP in a statement. "With only 4 percent of all crime reported in Louisville Metro occurring in downtown, perception of safety is out of balance with reality, and the expanded ambassador program will help enhance the experience of downtown visitors, workers, and residents."

The additional costs are funded by Louisville Tourism, Humana Inc., and Louisville Metro Government.



eBikes and skateboards banned

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Ventura, CA, temporarily closed five blocks of downtown to automobile traffic. The pilot project met with success and has been extended until 2024 when a decision will be made on the feasibility of a permanent street closure. For now, the ban on cars and trucks has been extended to cover skateboards, bicycles,

ebikes, and scooters.

As various forms of "wheeled transportation" have increased in popularity, so has concern for public safety due to "high-speed riding in the area," police Chief Darin Schindler said in a statement.

To remind riders of the new rules, the Ventura Police Department and Downtown Ventura Partners have installed signs that say: "Pedestrian Area Walk Your Wheels." **DIX**