

The *Downtown Action Plan (the Plan)* is the guide for creating the Downtown that is desired by all. It contains the vision and objectives that guided the development of the *Plan*. Nineteen action steps, and their associated responsible agencies and timelines, are presented in a logical order. The *Plan* was developed by the JEDC with the assistance of more than 100 local professionals and community leaders, as well as, the efforts of staff and consultants.



This overview provides a snapshot of the *Downtown Action Plan*, the road map for achieving Jacksonville’s vision for a revitalized Downtown. For a complete copy of the *Downtown Action Plan*, contact the JEDC at 630-1858 or download a copy at www.jaxdevelopment.org.

Vision: Downtown is *the* place to be

Objectives:

- 1. To Improve Walkability**
- 2. To Make Downtown a Destination**
- 3. To Make Downtown a Neighborhood**
- 4. To Ensure a Framework for Sustainable Success**

Action Steps:

1. Enhance the Level of Service for “Clean and Safe” Programs

A fundamental step in building an exceptional Downtown is ensuring that it is clean and safe. This action step includes: expanding communication and cooperation between agencies charged with keeping Downtown clean and safe, such as DVI, JSO and the city’s Public Works Department, as well as, refocusing efforts for maximum effectiveness in an urban environment. In order to make Downtown a better neighborhood and to increase its attractiveness as a regional destination, challenges such as vagrancy, litter pick-up and perceptions of safety must be addressed.



2. Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Streetscape Plan

Beautiful, vibrant, well-lit and safe streets are an important part of creating a welcoming Downtown. This action step has a profound effect on the walkability and attractiveness of Downtown. This will create a more viable setting to attract additional residential, commercial and retail developments. Jacksonville’s streets still lack consistency in elements such as defined pedestrian crossings, illuminated buildings, well-lit sidewalks, increased shade canopies, engaging public art, enhanced quality and placement of street furniture and fixtures, and landscaping. The recently completed Main Street hardscaping and landscaping project and the proposed Bay Street Phase II project are examples of this step in action.

3. Convert One-Way to Two-Way Streets

Traffic moves swifter down one-way streets than two-way streets. Faster moving traffic causes pedestrians to have a decreased sense of safety and causes many businesses along the street to be overlooked by would-be customers, thus reducing the location's sales potential. Two-way conversions will help slow Downtown traffic and will make Downtown driving less intimidating to visitors. Visitors have cited their confusion with navigating the urban core as a primary reason for not patronizing Downtown businesses or venues. Streets scheduled for conversion include Bay, Laura, Julia, Pearl and Independent.

4. Create a Riverwalk Enhancement Plan

The Riverwalk is one of the best ways to enjoy Downtown Jacksonville's greatest asset: the St. Johns River. Continuing to develop a world-class, accessible public Riverwalk will provide a diverse and high-quality setting for residential, retail, entertainment, cultural and recreational experiences. The Riverwalk Enhancement Plan will be comprised of three major components: maintenance, expansion and making the Riverwalk more interesting. Maintenance includes: conducting structural assessments, remediation and repair where needed. Riverwalk expansion will connect more of the Downtown waterfront on the North and South banks. Expansion plans will also encompass additional access points from Downtown streets to attract more users. Enhanced activities and amenities on the Riverwalk such as events, art, lighting, special boats, vendors, interpretive displays and exercise stations will make the Riverwalk more interesting and user-friendly.

5. Improve Downtown Connectivity by an Enhanced Trolley System and Complementary Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System

A frequent and reliable trolley system serving stops throughout Downtown, along with a complementary BRT system serving the outer suburbs, will efficiently move people throughout Downtown. Trolleys should also be used to connect Downtown and the surrounding inner core neighborhoods of Brooklyn, Riverside/Avondale, Springfield, San Marco, and East Jacksonville.

6. Enhance Event Programming

Both small and large-scale events are needed Downtown, as well as better coordination between them. Special events are an opportunity to change perceptions about Downtown, drive business to Downtown merchants and make Downtown the most exciting neighborhood. There should be something occurring every day Downtown. There should be a diversity of events so they appeal to every member of the community.

7. Improve Wayfarer Signage

In order to make navigating Downtown more user-friendly and less intimidating, wayfarer signage needs to be improved, especially for destination and parking identification. Existing sign locations are correct though some have information that is either illegible or incorrect. Additional wayfarer signage locations should be proposed by the JEDC. Great destinations are easy to navigate and an improved wayfarer signage program will make Downtown Jacksonville more accessible to all.

8. Refine Approval Process and Create a One-Stop Shop Approach

The JEDC has had several successes related to this action step to allow the JEDC to be the central agency with authority on Downtown development. These successes include the creation of the Transportation Concurrency Exception Area (TCEA), the Downtown Zoning Overlay and the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB). These actions have shortened the timeline for development Downtown and have consolidated development authority into the JEDC.

9. Promote Workforce Housing

An urgent need of the Downtown community is to provide housing that addresses the price point of wage earners that comprise the majority of the Downtown workforce. By creating a critical mass of Downtown residents in addition to increased access to the river and the development of an attractive and safe environment, the area will continue to develop as a healthy and vibrant Downtown. The JEDC, working with the city's Housing and Neighborhoods Department, has created new developer-based programs such as the Residential Recapture Enhanced Value (REV) Grant program for for-sale and for-rent housing, loan programs, expedited permitting and public-private partnerships.

10. Implement Innovative Parking Programs and Parking Management Initiatives

This action step strives to increase the occupancies and efficiencies at existing parking facilities, encourage shared parking, implement a new parking meter system that can accept multiple forms of payment and improve communications between parking operators, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority and the City of Jacksonville. This action step also involves creating a transportation management authority, which will work to inform visitors and businesses about alternative transportation and available parking options.

11. Update and Implement Stormwater Management Plan

An updated Stormwater Management Plan is required to address the need for peripheral retention ponds to better serve new development. The identification of sites for development of new ponds adjacent to Downtown will facilitate growth and redevelopment by eliminating costlier alternatives to stormwater management, such as underground vaulting. Proper stormwater management is key to continuing development momentum in Downtown.

12. Initiate a Downtown Marketing Strategy that Emphasizes Downtown Districts

Actions need to be taken to support one recognizable and distinct image, position and brand for Downtown Jacksonville that will showcase and strengthen the proposed Downtown districts. The marketing strategy should increase the appeal of Downtown as an entertainment, sporting, and retail destination and create a "buzz." Action steps should be taken to target several demographic segments in four key markets: residents in surrounding neighborhoods, Downtown residents, daytime employees, and visitors to Downtown's regional events and tourist attractions. The marketing strategy should be based on solid market intelligence and promote Downtown as a cohesive area made up of several distinct retail and residential districts.

13. Engage in Active, Targeted Retail Recruitment

This action step aims to increase success by creating a targeted plan for retail recruitment which will guide the location of retail and by developing opportunities for retailers to build off of existing surrounding assets. Dedicated leasing agents should be enlisted to assist in marketing available retail. This recommendation increases the cohesiveness of Downtown retail, improves the experience of potential new retailers and through appropriate tenant placement, will lead to more successful retailers.

14. Facilitate Brooklyn Redevelopment

Brooklyn will continue to emerge as a key entrance way into Downtown via not only Riverside and Park Streets, but also the new Department of Transportation interstate access ramps on Myrtle and Forest Streets. The Brooklyn area represents great promise as a transitional neighborhood between Riverside, Five Points and the core of Downtown. By complementing the strong employment center located along Riverside Avenue, the redevelopment of Brooklyn will allow for low and mid-rise mixed-use of retail and residential with true work force and affordable housing opportunities different than the high-rise options found in the urban core. The major components of this effort are ongoing city projects to remove infrastructure and environmental impediments to attracting private capital and redevelopment.

15. Develop and Enact a Master Plan for Metropolitan Park/Kids Kampus

The Metropolitan Park/Kids Kampus area is a prime waterfront venue for large events and has the potential to become Jacksonville's premier special events venue. Currently, Metropolitan Park is used almost exclusively for large ticketed events and is underutilized the remainder of the year. Kids Kampus is a popular destination for families and school groups, but lacks a connection to its surrounding uses. Neither of the two sections embrace the river, nor do they connect with surrounding uses or each



other very well. The use of the Metropolitan/Kids Kampus site can be improved by physically redeveloping the area, by allowing pedestrians and mariners to use the park during large events and redesigning the park so it embraces the waterfront.

16. Redevelop Friendship Fountain Area

The area home to the Friendship Fountain, the Museum of Science and History (MOSH), the Maritime Museum, and River City Brewing Company should be evaluated for redevelopment to allow this highly visible site along the river to be utilized at its highest and best use. The site is currently underutilized, not well connected to the Downtown and its overall development features are outdated. There is great potential for this area to become a Southbank Riverwalk attraction, that would draw many visitors and be a premiere public space. The city should solicit redevelopment opportunities that create these mandatory public uses and public spaces, while attracting private development that would provide a mix of uses that attract residents

17. Improve Connections from the Emerald Necklace to the River and Upland Activity Nodes

The vision for the Emerald Necklace is a connected, beautiful system of trails, active and passive open spaces that foster a greater sense of community Downtown and provide specific neighborhood recreation. The main components of implementing such a vision include: resolving environmental issues, creating logical and pedestrian friendly connections, linking the creeks and river, and providing programmed active elements along the trails.

18. Identify and Facilitate Large-Scale, Catalyst Projects

There are several steps that the JEDC can take to identify and facilitate large-scale catalyst projects such as demand-generating retail and entertainment developments, and residential developments. Two critical areas of short-term and long-term redevelopment respectively are the Jacksonville Landing and the City Hall Annex/courthouse site. It is anticipated that a phased approach sequencing from the redevelopment of the Jacksonville Landing and related near term development of the East Lot, eventually transitioning to the future reuse and redevelopment of the courthouse site, represents a rational redevelopment strategy.

19. Create More Marine Themed Activities and Improve Marine Linkages

In order to engage the riverfront to its fullest potential, marine themed activities and linkages throughout Downtown and on both banks of the river should be created. This includes public and private marinas, moorings, marine themed attractions, enhanced water taxis, a public pier and marketplaces. This will increase the popularity of Downtown with vacationing boaters, increase the amount of marine activity and make the riverfront (through the addition of the large boats and yachts) more aesthetically pleasing.