



'ROUND DOWNTOWN

2010

a quarterly newsletter

AUTUMN ISSUE

GoDowntownBaltimore.com

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clean, green & beautiful

GROWING DOWNTOWN GREEN SPACE

There are dozens of reports, economic studies, and testimonials about the benefits of having well-maintained parks and green space – benefits that go beyond mere attractiveness. Read through the information and you'll find that proximity to green space increases property value, worker productivity, and customer foot traffic for retailers. It also decreases energy costs, water runoff, and even bad behavior.

With so much to gain for the Downtown community, it's no secret that The Partnership has dramatically increased the amount of green space in the Downtown Management Authority district. But, you might be surprised at just how much we're doing. Below, is a quick rundown of our current efforts and what lies in store.

- Each year, The Partnership plants and maintains more than 300 flower pots throughout Downtown. Many of these are updated seasonally so there is always something attractive and colorful, even in the depths of winter.
- The Partnership is the driving force behind the multi-year, multi-million dollar revitalization of Pratt Street and several streetscape improvement projects throughout Downtown. Working with the City and private property owners, these projects are improving Downtown's landscaping, tree canopy, streets, sidewalks, lighting, and overall pedestrian experience. Improvements were made to Saratoga Street last year, and similar work is being planned for Saint Paul Street and Bath Street (near Mercy Hospital) and to Lexington Street (between Liberty Street and Park Avenue). As a result of our efforts over the past decade, the streetscapes on most of Downtown's major thoroughfares have either been improved or are scheduled for improvements in the near future.
- In addition to making capital improvements to Downtown's major parks, including Center Plaza, Hopkins Plaza, and Preston Gardens, we maintain these parks and dozens of smaller areas. That includes



PHOTO: Green Team member in Center Plaza

daily tending of the grounds and seasonal work such as mulching and seeding.

- To better maintain parks, flower pots, and medians, a few years ago we created the Green Team - a squad of horticulturists and groundskeepers who look after all of Downtown's green space. These teams also look after Downtown's street trees.
- As part of the Green Team, we provide Park Stewards to Center and Hopkins plazas. And, this past summer, we hired one for Preston Gardens as well. You'll find them there each weekday, working full-time to keep up with the grounds, pick up litter, and set up tables and chairs during lunchtime.
- To supplement the work of the Green Team, we contract with Civic Works, an AmeriCorps organization. The team provides extra manpower during the growing season and gives six young people work and an educational award to help them with college or graduate school.
- We have been upgrading Preston Gardens and are about to begin making major capital

improvements to the park. Since we took over management of the park this summer, we've improved the lawn and flower beds, and we've engaged contractors in a structural engineering and soil analysis - both of which are needed before we make repairs to the elaborate walls, staircases, and fountains in the park. In the future, we'll also have an irrigation system installed.

- With so much daily work happening, we haven't lost sight of the big picture, or the important role that green space will play in Downtown's future. This year, we awarded a contract to create a Downtown Open Space Plan to the Baltimore landscape architecture and design firm, Mahan Rykiel Associates. We commissioned the plan, in conjunction with the Department of Planning and the Baltimore Development Corporation, to more strategically enhance existing parks, recommend new open space opportunities, and identify ways to unify these spaces into a more comprehensive and interconnected network of parks.

study details downtown's economic importance to baltimore economy

As a complement to our annual *State of Downtown Baltimore Report*, The Partnership has released *Downtown Baltimore: Its Impact on the City Economy*, a study that provides new data about the significant contributions Downtown businesses, employees, and residents make to the Baltimore and regional economies.

Among the report's key findings:

- Downtown is just 3.8% of Baltimore's total area, but it provides 27% of all jobs in Baltimore city.
- Downtown businesses generate an estimated \$7.7 billion in employee compensation.
- Approximately 40,000 people live Downtown and pay \$64 million in income taxes to Baltimore city, roughly 24% of Baltimore's total.
- Downtown businesses provide 30% of Baltimore's total economic output.

"The data in this report shows why Downtown Baltimore is the city's single most important economic resource, not just in terms of direct economic output, but as a place where Baltimore citizens earn an

income and make their home," said Downtown Partnership of Baltimore President, Kirby Fowler.

"From a regional perspective, Downtown Baltimore is more than a cultural hub or visitor destination – it's a major source of jobs and tax revenue for the counties that surround Baltimore, and for the State as well," Fowler said.

We hope this new data will place Downtown Baltimore into a more appropriate context for the sake of public policy and economic development by better informing processes related to planning, zoning, tax policy, and the allocation of municipal resources.

The 15-page complementary report is available for free download on Downtown Partnership's website, www.GoDowntownBaltimore.com.







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reigniting a community

SARATOGA STREET AND PARK AVENUE

The area near Saratoga Avenue and Park Avenue may be one of Downtown's best-kept secrets. Unlike the bustle around Lexington Market, the Saratoga Street corridor is relatively quiet. But, venture up there, and you'll find excellent architecture and a wide array of independent shops as well as offices and residences in converted buildings.

More than 50 businesses are concentrated between the 100 Block and 400 Blocks of Saratoga Street, and the 200 and 400 blocks of Park Avenue. They make up a diverse set – from law firms to shoe repair stores, barbershops to fabric shops, churches to clothing stores, delis to nail salons.

"This area has history and character," Dimensions in Music President and CEO Larry Jeter says. "It doesn't compare to an area full of chain stores. There's great customer service and more of a sense of community here."

With little fanfare, businesses and property owners have been working hard to reclaim an area that had seen its share of vacancies, and suffered from an old, poorly maintained streetscape.

"Appearance plays a huge role in the way outsiders perceive an area," Downtown Partnership President Kirby Fowler says. "If it doesn't look friendly or inviting, people don't want to go there. If people don't want to go there, it doesn't look friendly and inviting. It's a dangerous cycle."

Working with partners like the City and the Market Center Merchants Association, Downtown Partnership has been helping improve the Saratoga Street corridor in a variety of ways. In addition to our ongoing services, such as cleaning and greening, we've been behind streetscape and façade improvements that help lure tenants, customers, and residents, and that increase the amount of street-level activity.

Recently, The Maryland Art Place announced plans to return to its original home on the City's west side. The nonprofit art center located at Power Plant Live will relocate to 218 W. Saratoga Street in January. Executives with the nonprofit say the move will help energize the city's growing west side.

While more and more businesses are moving into the area, several of them – like Dimensions in Music at 233 Park Avenue – have called the area home for



PHOTOS: Larry Jeter who owns Dimensions in Music (above); Saratoga streetscape (left)

decades. Despite the struggles they've faced over the years – or perhaps because of them – these retailers remain fiercely loyal to their surroundings.

Other neighborhood stalwarts include the row of Chinese restaurants and dim sum parlors that occupy the 200 and 400 blocks of Park Avenue – an area that has long served as Baltimore's unofficial Chinatown.

Meanwhile, thanks to new funding from the City and State, Downtown Partnership has increased grants for the Façade Improvement Program and expects to allocate \$450,000 in grant money through 2011 – more than twice as much as last year.

We've also just unveiled OPERATION: Storefront, a new program that will connect available first-floor building space with creative people who will bring that space back to life. Successful applicants to our RFP will be awarded grant money of up to \$10,000 for costs associated with occupying currently unused space and operating that space, even if only on a temporary basis.

"We already have the building blocks for success here: loyal and supportive retailers, a great community, and streets that are looking better and better each day," Fowler said. "Now it's time to capitalize on those strengths and move forward in our efforts to create an even stronger Saratoga corridor."

retail update

BALTIMORE RETAIL WEEK SELLS SHOPPERS ON DOWNTOWN

This spring, Downtown Baltimore celebrated the end of tax season with a little unofficial tax-free shopping. Nearly 60 Downtown retailers offered discounts of six percent or more during Baltimore Retail Week, held April 16-25. The widely popular seven days of spending marked our first-ever citywide shopping event.

With the support of Downtown Partnership, retail marketing firm Epps Consulting organized Baltimore Retail Week to help build awareness of Downtown's unique stores. And the promotion worked.

After the event, shoppers said the promotion convinced them to visit a retailer they would not have otherwise, and cited three major advantages of shopping Downtown: unique retailers, stores within walking distance, and the opportunity to support locally-owned businesses.

More than fifty Baltimore retailers, from Mt. Vernon to Canton,

Hampden to Harbor East, participated. They ranged from independently-owned boutiques to nationally-recognized chains and specialize in everything from clothing, jewelry, books and gifts, to home-décor.

Ninety-three percent of the businesses said they would take part in the promotion again. One summed up the value of the promotion, saying that the Retail Week discounts give shoppers "the edge to buy."

DOWNTOWN SHOPPERS WANT MORE OPTIONS

Downtown's retail base has grown significantly in the past few years but it still has a way to go before we have enough stores to meet the needs of area residents.

We recently conducted an online survey that asked Downtown residents and employees about their shopping habits. More than 730 people took the survey and their responses provide a barometer of Baltimore's current retail climate and will be used to guide Downtown Partnership's future retail attraction efforts.

More than half of the respondents are Baltimore residents, the rest work Downtown but don't live in the city. More than two-thirds feel that the amount of retail in Downtown is limited and, as a result, the vast majority of respondents, nearly 80%, do most of their shopping outside of Baltimore city.



Respondents are more likely to dine within Baltimore city and its Downtown more than they are in the surrounding counties. However, when it's time to buy clothing, furniture, or appliances, nearly 90% report that they shop outside the city.

When asked what additional types of retail they would like to see in Downtown, clothing stores were the most popular answer, followed by grocery stores, and furniture retailers. Respondents favor a mix of national and locally-owned retailers but, when asked to name specific stores they would like to have, respondents most often cited major chains such as Target and Trader Joes.

"It's no secret that Baltimore is underserved by retail," said Downtown Partnership of Baltimore president, Kirby Fowler. "This survey updates our existing data and helps us better identify specific retailers we'd like to attract Downtown."

In a 2007 study conducted by Downtown Partnership entitled Outlook 2012, 50% of the Downtown residents surveyed would stay Downtown if it had better shopping options.



TRANSPORTATION UPDATE: getting 'round downtown just got easier

This summer, Downtown commuters, residents, and visitors got two new ways to get where they need to go.

CHARM CITY CIRCULATOR - PURPLE ROUTE

In June, the Charm City Circulator's Purple Line began running north/south along the Charles Street corridor between Federal Hill and Penn Station.

As with the east/west Orange Line that began in January, the Purple Line is a free, convenient, and environmentally-friendly way to move throughout Downtown and Midtown neighborhoods. It connects riders with transit stops; links residential, business, and cultural destinations; and gives visitors a new way to get from the Inner Harbor into Mount Vernon.

Both lines have been well received. In August, ridership passed the 500,000 mark, well exceeding projections. And, we are pleased to join Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and the former Transportation Department Director, Al Foxx, as a recipient of The Daily Record's Innovator of the Year Award for our role in helping create the service.

BECOME A ZIPSTER

ZipCar, the popular car sharing company, also pulled into Downtown over the summer. The service appeals to residents and employees who need to take trips that transit can't accommodate, and it's particularly useful for companies as a replacement for fleet vehicles. It's just like having a car but without all the overhead expense and maintenance.

ZipCar works on a membership basis. Individuals or companies can join and will have access to different types of cars that are parked throughout Downtown.

Visit www.zipcar.com for more information about the service and its many benefits.



PHOTOS: Charm City Circulator's new purple line debuts; Boxes covered Zipcars in advance of the service's arrival in Downtown (bottom)



downtown dining

In addition to Baltimore Summer and Winter Restaurant Week, which we organize with Visit Baltimore, The Partnership does a lot to showcase Downtown's delicious dining options. We organize several food-related promotions throughout the year: events like happy hours, dining discounts, and lunchtime concerts. And, we promote restaurants through DineDowntownBaltimore.com, monthly emails, traditional advertising, and online marketing.

This summer, we tossed a few special ingredients into the mix: one is already a well-loved staple, one is quickly becoming a Baltimore tradition, and one is helping spread the word about the excellent dining opportunities Downtown.

BALTIMORE SUMMER RESTAURANT WEEK

Since it began five years ago, Baltimore Restaurant week is the first, the biggest, and most popular restaurant week in the region, and Summer 2010



was no exception. Once again, approximately 100 restaurants signed up for 10 days of fine dining at a discount.



PHOTO: Restaurant Week Kickoff Appetizer Challenge winner

And they were glad they did. Participating restaurants reported record crowds and dramatically increased business at a time of year when they would normally be slow. But the real winners were the guests who dined their way through Downtown, exploring fresh tastes from Harbor East to Mount Vernon and beyond.

For the second straight year, we held a Restaurant Week kickoff event in conjunction with Visit Baltimore and Harborplace and The Gallery. During "The First Course Appetizer Challenge," participating restaurants duked it out in front of a panel of celebrity judges to determine who makes the tastiest appetizers in town. More than 700 people came out to sample the dishes and vote for their favorites.

Congratulations to:

- People's Choice Winner: City Cafe
- Judges' Choice Winner: Langermann's
- Sustainability Award: Abacrombie Fine Foods

RESTAURANT WEEK GIVES BACK

This year, for every restaurant that participated in the Summer Restaurant Week, Downtown Partnership and Visit Baltimore donated \$50 to The Journey Home, a program we work closely with to help find permanent and supportive places for the homeless to live.

LOCALLY GROWN INGREDIENTS STAR IN DINING SPECIALS

For the second year in a row, savory soft shell crab specials kicked off summer dining. In late May, 17 of the region's best restaurants participated in Soft Shell Crab Week and foodies from across Maryland came Downtown to savor our signature Chesapeake crustacean.

Soft Shell Crab Week spreads the word that Downtown Baltimore is a prime spot for seafood. It also satisfies the growing demand for food with locally grown, sustainable ingredients.

THE MEDIA SAYS MMMMM!

With dining, shopping, theatre, and entertainment venues nearby, Downtown restaurants are the perfect springboard to a night out on the town. That's why we recently decided to shine the spotlight on a few popular Downtown restaurants that are representative of the quality and diversity of Downtown's broader dining scene.

More than a dozen members of the local and regional media joined us for a culinary tour of The B&O American Brasserie, Red Maple, and Brewer's Art. At each stop, the chefs and bartenders provided a glimpse of the latest food trends and talked about what the Downtown Dining scene is all about: taste, style, individuality, local ingredients, and character.

For more information about Downtown Dining, visit DineDowntownBaltimore.com.



PHOTO: Office workers visit Downtown's farmer's market

economic development

2009 DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The *2009 Development Report*, a comprehensive review of commercial development in Downtown Baltimore, is now available for download at GoDowntownBaltimore.com.

Each year, we track and record data on all completed, under construction, and planned projects within a 1-mile radius of Pratt and Light streets. The projects include: office, residential, retail, institutional, hotel, cultural and public space, parking, mixed use, phased mixed use, and infrastructure developments.

For each project in the report, you'll find investment numbers, the amount of square-footage, the number of units, the number of hotel rooms, the number of parking spaces, and information on the architect and developer.

Despite setbacks from the national economic slowdown, more than \$536 million worth of development projects was delivered in 2009 with an additional \$4.3 billion in various stages of development through 2010 and beyond.



OPERATION: STOREFRONT

A new Downtown Partnership program called *OPERATION: Storefront* will connect available first-floor building space with creative entrepreneurs to bring empty spaces back to life. This fall, we put out a call for proposals and, in the coming months, will award grant money of up to \$10,000 to help people create pop-up stores, restaurants, or gallery space. The grants will help cover costs associated with occupying currently unused space and operating that space, even if only on a temporary basis.

"Shops, galleries, performance space, and restaurants pull people into an area and create street-level vibrancy," said Downtown Partnership of Baltimore president, Kirby Fowler.

"We have no idea what kinds of proposals may come in and that's exciting," Fowler said. "We kept the RFP open-ended to encourage creativity."

Nationwide, the popularity of pop-up stores and artist

collaboratives has grown, and there are examples of each in Downtown Baltimore. *OPERATION: Storefront* will further promote opportunities for these uses and provide budding entrepreneurs the time, guidance, and funding to turn their ideas into reality. In the process, empty spaces will become community resources.

A panel will review the entries and select those that represent the best use for any given site. Downtown Partnership staff will guide successful applicants through the build-out process by helping find the appropriate space and resources such as design or permitting assistance.

The RFPs are due November 22, 2010 and may be downloaded at GoDowntownBaltimore.com. Grants will be awarded only for projects within the 106-block Downtown Management Authority district.

PHOTOS: Operation Storefront hopes to get artists and retailers into available space Downtown



membership

PMS PARKING

At Downtown Partnership, we view space as a valuable commodity. Green spaces foster relaxation, open spaces encourage a sense of community, and empty spaces represent opportunities for creativity and growth.

Amsale Geletu, president of PMS Parking, Inc., is also a firm believer in the value of space. In fact, she built her life around Downtown spaces – parking spaces that is.

“Our dream was to start our own business,” Geletu says of the goal she shared with her late husband. “This is our dream come true.”

Years ago, Geletu emigrated from Ethiopia to study business in America. To help make ends meet, she worked as a cashier in a local garage. Today, she still works in the parking realm, but in a drastically different manner. She now manages 18,000 parking spaces, nearly a dozen Downtown garages, and employs more than 100 employees.

“I grew up knowing I wanted to own my own business, I just didn’t know it would be parking” Geletu says. “I knew the ins and outs of parking before branching out on my own. That’s why we’ve been so successful.”

Another trick to her success: seeing opportunity where others did not. In 1988, Geletu noticed that Downtown Baltimore’s Holiday Inn, despite its prime parking amenities, was allowing people to use its spaces for free.

After speaking with the hotel’s general manager, Geletu and PMS Parking had their first client. Twenty-two years later, PMS Parking continues to manage that same lot.

“We promised we would do an excellent job for them, that we would do a better job than they expected,” Geletu says. “We continue to exceed our client’s expectations every day.”

CNN recently featured PMS Parking in a segment entitled Living the Ethiopian-American Dream. The reporter referred to Geletu as “a success story whose tale has only just begun.”

PMS Parking is a City-certified women-owned and minority-owned business. For more information on PMS Parking, visit PMSParking.com. For more information on downtown Parking garages, visit our website.



PHOTO: Hannah Cox volunteering at Our Daily Bread

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF BALTIMORE – PROJECT SERVE

Through our many outreach programs, The Partnership sees, firsthand, the benefits of giving back to the community. And, we’re not alone. Catholic Charities has dozens of projects bringing help and hope to residents in Baltimore and around the world.

One project of particular benefit to our region is Project SERVE. It recruits AmeriCorps members for a year of service, living and working Downtown. Participants come from across the country – from different universities, experiences, and backgrounds – but they have one thing in common: the desire to give back.

Recruits get hands-on experience in community development and learn how to advocate for change, said Allison Stone, Project SERVE coordinator.

“Project SERVE brings in a group of young, talented people to Baltimore each year,” Stone says. “Their energy and enthusiasm provides new life to the program and to the city.”

riggs, counselman michaels & downes, inc.

A Year of Living Generously

Twenty-three-year-old Hannah Cox takes her volunteer work a step further than most. After graduating from Texas A & M University, the history and English major devoted herself to a year of service.

Through Project SERVE, Hannah came to Baltimore last year and began working at Our Daily Bread, feeding nearly eight hundred men, women, and children who would otherwise go hungry. Our Daily Bread is the largest free meal service in Maryland and it requires a lot of help to get the job done – 200 to 300 volunteers per week.

“It was eye-opening,” Cox said of her year of service which she completed in July. “It’s rewarding and challenging to see how things operate outside of college and outside of Texas.”

“Everyday there’s a new volunteer, a new guest, a new story, and a new situation,” Cox said. “It’s great to see how people change through volunteering in positive ways, and it’s inspiring to see the benefits we’re bringing the people we serve.”

Cox was one of five Project SERVE participants this year. They worked at the St. Vincent Center, Sarah’s House, Esperanza Center, My Sister’s Place Women’s Shelter, and Our Daily Bread, supporting Baltimore’s at-risk children, the homeless, foster care families, senior citizens, and recent immigrants.

Project SERVE directly aligns with Downtown Partnership’s biggest priorities: working to create a better Downtown, providing a helping hand to those who need it, and drawing people to Baltimore by showing them the opportunity our city holds.

A few weeks after Hannah Cox finished her year of service, a new crew of Project SERVE members moved into Downtown to begin their year-long odyssey in what will be the program’s thirteenth year.



RCM&D opened its doors on Redwood Street in Downtown Baltimore in 1885. 125 years later, with offices in Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond, the company has grown to become one of the country’s largest and most respected independent insurance, risk management, and employee benefits consulting firms.

“It’s only natural that from Baltimore roots, RCM&D has developed a global reach, managing risks around the corner, across the country, and in the far corners of the globe,” said Mark Counselman, RCM&D spokesperson.

“Baltimore gives us easy access to a global insurance marketplace.”

RCM&D has worked with Baltimore staples such as Johns Hopkins, the BSO, Alex Brown, Mercantile and Legg Mason, Phillips Seafood, Whiting Turner, and the Orioles. They’ve also worked with Downtown Partnership for several years.

“In our 125 years, we’ve been privileged to serve Baltimore’s foremost institutions,” Counselman said. “We’ve helped hundreds of small businesses and nonprofits get off the ground, hopefully establishing the next great institutions and generation of business leadership.”

When it’s not strengthening the Downtown business climate, RCM&D is raising money for local non-profits. Each year, the company holds a regatta fundraiser that has collected over \$350,000, and its staff contributes hours of volunteer time. Organizations helped by RCM&D include: the Downtown Sailing Center, the Y of Central Maryland, the Forbush School, the Baltimore City Fire Department, and Our Daily Bread.

Growing new businesses and helping the community have been part of RCM&D’s mission since its founding. Said Counselman, “The times have changed, but our core values – commitment to clients, employees and our city – remain timeless.”

PHOTO AT LEFT: RCM&D employees volunteer to help the community



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BECOME A FAN OF DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP

If you're looking for family events, delicious dining deals, happening happy hours, and anything else you might want to know about having fun in Downtown, then become a fan of The Partnership on Facebook.

Or, for insight into Downtown trends and news, follow Kirby Fowler on Twitter.

facebook **twitter**

Visit GoDowntownBaltimore.com to sign up. It's easy and informative.