

## Downtown Improvement Recommendations

### FOR THE MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON DOWNTOWN

Scenic Jacksonville's mission is to enhance the character and beauty of Jacksonville's natural and built environment. We care deeply about downtown Jacksonville and seek to be a positive force in its revitalization efforts.

We recently conducted a brief survey of our supporters to get their input on tangible, short term recommendations for the Mayor's Task Force on Downtown Improvements. Seventy people participated and their results came in along the following six themes.

Importantly, while long term efforts currently underway or in the planning stages hold much promise for downtown, we do not need to wait to make a positive impact.

#### 1. Utilize our public riverfront land.

- "Everything is better at the Riverfront"
- Fund and incent DT Jax and other cultural, recreational or entertainment entities to do a lot more as far as activities and events at the riverfront – encouraging use of any and all available public lands, temporary or not - The Landing lawn, the City Courthouse and Metropolitan Park, Friendship Fountain. (Don't wait for whatever is decided for these properties.)
- Expand on the DT Jax events such as the Jams Concerts, BBQ Fest, Sip N Stroll.
- Experiment with pop up or scheduled cultural or recreational activities – speaker's corners, small theatre productions, a cornhole tournament, ping pong, pickleball, yoga.
- Do more to support the Tuk'n tours, historical tours, River Taxi tours and now scooter tours. Invite Food Trucks and provide portlets.
- *TO SPUR MORE EVENT PRODUCTIONS:* Streamline the process for permitting and holding events. Consider umbrella insurance for non-profits hosting events on public lands. Current process is cumbersome and acts as a deterrent.

#### 2. Enhance the Riverwalk.

- Design and construct more inviting places to stop and enjoy the river, with shade and beautiful landscaping.
- Fix the shoreline where Irma deposited blocks of concrete bulkhead, pipes, or other unsightly remnants.
- Fully fund the Riverwalk expansion from the Berkman to Metropolitan Park. Widen or create multiple paths to separate scooter/bicyclists from walkers and strollers.

**3. Make our streets more pedestrian friendly, safe, and inviting.**

- Create a focused area that looks like Main Street, Greenville SC on at least four downtown blocks. This will include well maintained, beautiful landscaping, large planters, warm but bright enough lighting, benches/street furniture, and art. Large shade trees, awnings, umbrellas.
- Shade emphasis with awnings, umbrellas and large street trees planted with proper tree wells.
- More art and creative lighting to create the friendly ambiance.

**4. Trial pedestrian only streets; cordon off one lane of existing streets.**

- Make some streets pedestrian-only streets and/or narrow the streets by taking one lane to make them for pedestrian, bikes, scooter riders, as well as outdoor seating. Include the Main Street bridge in such a trial.
- Temporary barriers can allow for experimentation to include well maintained beautiful planters.
- Pilot Car Free Sunday afternoons
- Choose long a looped route so that strollers, scooters, bicyclists and walkers can make a loop. Restaurants can put seating out in the streets, food trucks and encourage all retailers to be open during this time and set up their wares outside.
- Bogota, Colombia has become internationally renowned for its Ciclovía. Cambridge, MA, does this on Sundays during the summer on Memorial Drive along the Charles river. Central Park used to close their streets during weekends, and has now implemented it for every day.

**5. Boating, kayaking, crew, paddle boarding, sailing, water taxi**

- Fix the docking areas at the Landing and along the original Metropolitan Park
- Water events and activities – regattas, paddleboard, sailing
- Create a dedicated water taxi route between Friendship Fountain and the Landing so that every 10 minutes there will be a taxi to easily cross and frequent restaurants or activities on either side.
- Provide insurance to corporate boat docks to open up for public use.

**6. Fix the basics: Sidewalks, trash, lighting, litter control.**

- Immediately repair sidewalks, streetlights, frequent and disciplined litter control.
- Replace or install functional and attractive trash receptacles with separate recycling bins.
- Update city ordinances to address panhandling, public defecation, littering and other behaviors that discourage people from spending time downtown.

## LONG TERM PRIORITIES

- Design and art in everything we do.
- Continued support of Historic Preservation.
- Two-way streets with road diets.
- Green infrastructure and native landscaping incorporated into every new project.
- Large street trees and ample tree wells to accommodate growth.
- Wider and/or multiple public trailways and paths to accommodate biking, scooters and walkers.
- Keep the public riverfront open for the public; renovate and expand downtown parks and green space with new larger buildings to set back behind Bay or Water Streets. Low rise smaller restaurants, retail or cultural buildings may be considered within the park settings.

## Photo Examples

Well maintained planters with creative art provide a friendly inviting street experience



Michigan Avenue, Chicago

Design everything with art, creativity and functionality



Downtown Columbus, Ohio

Make streetscapes comfortable, spacious and inviting for people. Use functional and smart fixtures such as these all-in-one street sign, light, parking directions, traffic lights.



Main Street, Greenville, SC

**Support and fund activities on public land along the riverfront. Combine with flexible outdoor seating and enjoyment of the river.**



**Armature Works, Tampa Riverwalk**

**Design and shade add to the experience of the Riverwalk.**



**Along the Tampa Riverwalk**

**Do the Basics – making us greener and more sustainable**



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**Submitted to Mayor Lenny Curry's Office**

**March 25, 2021**