



# STRATEGIC PLAN

Draft: October 8, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

Downtown Lansing Inc. (DLI) is a lot of things. It is a Master Level Michigan Main Street community. It is the PSD, responsible for nurturing the health and well-being of Michigan's capital city. It is a community builder, a grassroots organizer, and a cheerleader. It is a sometimes-scapegoat, a sometimes-innovator, a sometimes-crisis-avertter.

And, as of 2021, it is the organization who is, per bylaws and city ordinance, the responsible party for bringing our Downtown back from the brink of a global pandemic that has simultaneously devastated cultures and communities and opened a Pandora's jar of "what-if."

What if things never go back to normal?

What if we could do anything we wanted?

What if our community and culture need something different from us?

What if we don't succeed?

## OUR ASSESSMENT

DLI does quite a few things incredibly well. If one were to focus on our dedication to the National Main Street Four-Point Approach™ by all accounts, DLI is a leader. Well formed committees of grassroots volunteers, enthusiastic leaders and innovators who are each holding up a critical part of the overarching mission, and strong leadership and systems. These elements are, undisputedly, highly functioning and in little need of strategic re-thinking or heavy management. In short, the organization should keep doing what it is doing.

Yet in a post-pandemic crisis, it is clear that this organization needs to focus on **Main Street Plus** — moving beyond the traditional Main Street roles to ensure the sustainability and viability of our district, our businesses, and our city as a whole.

This means DLI, with the support of its partners and stakeholders, must focus strategic planning on a deep involvement in, and leadership of, development efforts and policy changes that will allow Downtown to not only rebound from the recent pandemic, but leapfrog beyond our previous position.

## TO, THROUGH, AND THERE

The trifecta of healthy placemaking: attracting those who come "to" a place as a destination; those who pass "through" it on their way to something else; and those who live "there."



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In a reality where the district's major employer has reduced its footprint dramatically, our only viable option is diversification. That means innovative solutions for filling vacancies, finding new space for residential living, and pulling the bandaid off delicate issues such as parking.

We firmly believe the “there” market is critical. Higher residential saturation (those who live “there”) demands more human amenities. We need a lot of “theres” there in order to build and sustain these amenities — which also happen to include the vibrant cultural aspects that snag the “tos” and the “throughs.”

In short, we need to build for residents. It's the only way to ensure downtown is literally “alive after five.” And to do so means we must make bold moves. We must step beyond our Main Street efforts, and we must do the data- and policy-driven work that will ensure not only viability, but success.

## GATHERING A TEAM

We should not do this alone. DLI should enlist partners who bring great expertise and resources to the table. We understand that many parties have a vested interest in Downtown's success. DLI must identify the appropriate parties to facilitate and support our efforts. We must ensure that outside efforts align with one another, work successfully in tandem, and respect the needs of those who make their livelihoods and homes within our borders.

## A SENSE OF URGENCY

The following is a set of four high-level strategies, with their immediate actionable items articulated. Work must start at once — there is no time to waste in our current recovery environment.

These strategies should be reviewed for progress monthly, becoming a prominent focus for Board activity and discussion.

Success—a reinvented Downtown Lansing — will take innovative thinking and doing, a sense of utter urgency, and meticulous, relentless follow-through. It will take the most creative “what-if” thinking we have to give, and it will take consistent progress toward one overarching goal — making Michigan's Downtown the best it can possibly be.



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## ABOUT THIS PLAN

This is a living, working document. Following the Strategic Doing model, it will be updated regularly to reflect and accommodate the ever-changing environment in Downtown Lansing.

## 2021 Strategies

Strategy	Actionable First Step	Budget	Key Stakeholders	Timeline/Updates
Establish 2,000 new residential units ("rooftops") within DLI's borders.	Complete a Residential Target Market Analysis	\$30,000	Cathleen, Strategic Planning Committee, MEDC	Funding secured through MEDC. Analysis outline in progress.
Reduce commercial vacancy rates from approx 30% to 10% or less.	Proactively targeting property owners and business owners 1:1 to discuss opportunities for effective development or redevelopment.	time, human resources	Julie, Jen, Christine/EV Committee	Ongoing, with measurable quarterly progress and success achieved by 2025.
Front fill and upfill parking lots.	Identify public and private lots for reinvention; begin outreach, develop a steering committee.	time, human resources	Cathleen, JT, Brian McGrain	Immediately begin planning; outreach to property owners to begin third quarter 2022.
Pursue necessary policy changes at all levels of government, allowing us to achieve these results efficiently and effectively.	Enact policy school for Board members, ensuring each member is fully versed in the laws, policies, and ordinances that shape our district.	time, human resources	DLI Executive Board, Cathleen	Ongoing, with monthly policy topics addressed at each board meeting.



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Increase organizational capacity.	Increase staffing to a goal of five full-time members, with the first position focused on marketing.	\$50,000 / year / position	DLI Board, Cathleen	Marketing position approved by board and candidate secured.
Develop and implement a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan.	Complete a DEI self-assessment to ascertain existing position.	time, human resources	Strategic Planning Committee	Complete self-assessment by December 2021
Fund critical programs to address vacancies and provide small business support:  Middle Village Retail Innovation Center (MVRIC)  Small Business Support Fund (SBSF)  Interior Rehab Revolving Loan Fund (IRLF)  Rent/Mortgage Support Fund (RMLF)  Downtown Revitalization & Development Fund (DRDC)	Secure 5 years of funding for each targeted program.	\$300,000 annually  MVRIC = \$50k  SBSF = \$80k  IRLF = \$80k  RMSF = \$40k  DRDC = \$50k	Cathleen, executive committee	Ongoing #FromTheGround Up sponsor development