



Community Investment Plan (CIP) 2021-2023

SECTION 1: Community or constituency to be served by the organization

The Downtown Taunton Foundation (DTF) is a place-based nonprofit Community Development Corporation (CDC) serving the economically disadvantaged geographic area of Downtown Taunton, Massachusetts. Specifically, our organization's service area is defined by the boundaries of the Taunton Business Improvement District, a Business Improvement District (BID) established in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40O in 2010.

The City of Taunton is a Massachusetts Gateway municipality with a diverse population of 55,000 residents. Downtown Taunton represents our City's highest concentration of lower-income residents, with 71.2% of households in the area categorized as low- to moderate-income according to 2009 U.S. Census data. Please see **Attachment A: DTF Service Area Map**.

SECTION 2: Involvement of community residents and stakeholders

The elements of this Community Investment Plan (CIP) will be presented at the DTF 2020 Annual Meeting, held on January 22, 2020, via zoom due to the current pandemic. The event is held jointly with the Annual Meeting of the nonprofit Taunton Business Improvement District, Inc. and was attended by over 40 area residents, businesspeople, property owners, artists, and City government representatives.

A draft of this CIP has been distributed to the DTF Board of Directors for review and comment on January 17th and will be officially adopted at the meeting of the DTF Board of Directors on January 27, 2021. See **Attachment B: DTF Board of Directors List as of January 2021**.

In implementing and monitoring this CIP, residents and stakeholders will be engaged as follows:

- ***Engagement: Organizational Leadership***

DTF's Board of Directors is the governing body of our organization. The Board meets each month. The DTF Board includes Downtown residents, business owners, artists, community leaders, and representatives of nonprofit organizations serving the neighborhood. As stated in our corporate by-laws, at least one-third of the Directors are members or representatives of the low-income community.

- ***Engagement: Real Estate Development***

DTF's affordable housing, commercial, and mixed-use real estate development projects are initiated and overseen by our representative Board of Directors. We also work in close relationship with Taunton's Office of Economic and Community Development to ensure that our development initiatives support and complement the City of Taunton's overall economic development and Downtown revitalization goals and strategies.

- ***Engagement: Economic Development***

Downtown residents and small businesses are the primary planners, facilitators, and beneficiaries of DTF's economic development activities. DTF offers arts and cultural events throughout the year to promote the social and economic development of the neighborhood. These events include the *Sweetheart Stroll* in February, *Taunton Creates!* arts festival each May, *Summer Concert Series* and the *Liberty and Union Arts & History Festival* each October, *Small Business Saturday* in November as well as our partnership with the City of Taunton to host the annual *Lighting of the Green and Lights On Festival* each December. Volunteer committees made up of DTF Board members and other interested community members coordinate these events with support from DTF staff. Our Small Business Technical Assistance Programs are targeted to address the specific needs of the Downtown business community.

SECTION 3: Plan goals

DTF's goals, and the goals of this CIP, are the physical, social, and economic revitalization of Downtown Taunton, specifically of the area identified as the Taunton Business Improvement District, through cultural and educational programming, historic preservation, the expansion of economic opportunities for low- to moderate-income persons, and the provision of decent housing affordable to low- to moderate-income persons.

Achieving these goals will create economic opportunity and improve quality of life for Downtown's low- to moderate-income residents. The entire community will benefit from a revitalized Downtown which is more vibrant, viable, convenient, attractive, and safe.

SECTION 4: Activities to be undertaken 2020-2023

Activities: Real Estate Development

DTF engages in physical development projects, including residential and commercial real estate development, with the goals of promoting Downtown Taunton's economic development, historic preservation, and neighborhood revitalization, and of creating affordable, convenient, pedestrian-friendly housing opportunities. Projects in the pipeline for 2020-2023 include:

- **15 School Street**

In early 2013 DTF purchased, with the support of an Attorney General HomeCorps Partnership Grant and City of Taunton Community Development Block Grant funds, this foreclosed and blighted former nightclub and rooming house. Renovation of the building for first-floor commercial re-use, with two second-floor affordable apartments, was completed in March 2014, with occupancy of the two apartments in spring 2014. The 1st floor commercial space has been leased and now houses Acadia Seafood and Bar. The owner of the restaurant leases the space from DTF, and is scheduled to purchase the property at the end of 2020.

- **Baron Lofts Apartments**

In 2018 DTF was approached by another local non-profit that was unable to maintain its real estate portfolio. They were referred to the Downtown Taunton Foundation. Together with our local community bank we will be forming a real estate partnership to acquire the building, which consists of 6 residential units, 3 of which are LMI.

Activities: Economic Development

DTF's economic development programs are focused on supporting and strengthening small and emerging businesses in the Downtown Taunton neighborhood, creating job opportunities, and fostering a vibrant community in which people of diverse backgrounds can live, work, and visit.

- **Arts and Cultural Programming**

As part of DTF's comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization, the organization hosts a year-round series of arts and cultural programs in the Downtown neighborhood that highlight the area's history, public spaces, artists, arts organizations, and businesses. Local residents, artists, and businesspeople are involved in all aspects of planning and facilitating these programs, which have a positive impact on the area's economic development and the neighborhood's sense of place and community pride.

- **Small Business Technical Assistance**

DTF will provide professional workshops for Downtown small businesses focusing on marketing, permitting processes, social media, and other technical assistance programs. DTF staff members regularly provide Downtown business owners – or those interested in investing in Downtown – with informal education and outreach, including assisting businesses in applying for funds through the Rent Rebate Program and City's Downtown Façade Grant Program. We also host one-on-one meetings between the various City Departments (Board of Health, OECD, City Planner, Building Department) and any potential new business owner to guide them as they begin the process of starting a business Downtown.

SECTION 5: How success will be measured and/or evaluated

Evaluation: Real Estate Development

DTF's real estate development projects will be evaluated by their success in meeting the specific project timelines, budgets, and other benchmarks established by the DTF Board of Directors. Specifically, the criteria for success for the pipeline projects listed above are:

- **Next Real Estate Development** project identified by the end of 2020, with construction begun in 2021.

Evaluation: Economic Development

DTF's economic development strategy combines small business technical assistance with arts and cultural programming and arts space development. Funded in large part by a multi-year commitment from a local community bank as well as grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, these programs each have specific targeted levels of artist, audience, and business participation. DTF staff will be responsible for tracking these indicators with the goal of quantifiable increased impact over time. The continued decrease in the vacancy rate in

Downtown and increase in quality, affordable housing stock will be a strong measure of our success.

SECTION 6: Collaborative efforts to support implementation

The Downtown Taunton Foundation's CIP is supported by the following collaborators:

- **Taunton Business Improvement District, Inc.**

The DTF's partnership with the Taunton Business Improvement District increases DTF's organizational capacity by sharing staff and office space, collaborating on marketing and outreach, and providing complementary Downtown revitalization programs including enhanced maintenance, beautification, marketing, and public safety services.

- **City of Taunton**

The City of Taunton's Office of Economic and Community Development has allocated Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to support DTF's eligible community development projects in the past, and we hope to continue this relationship in the future. The OECD and supports DTF's small business assistance and neighborhood revitalization goals through its own ongoing Rent Rebate Program.

- **Arts and Cultural Partners**

Several community partners actively collaborate to plan and implement DTF-initiated arts and cultural programs, including the Arts Collaborative of Taunton, Old Colony History Museum, Taunton Area Chamber of Commerce, Taunton Art Association, and the Trescott Street Gallery. In turn, the DTF actively participates in other community groups' and agencies' arts and cultural initiatives,

SECTION 7: Integration of activities; consistency with community strategy/vision

This CIP supports and builds upon the strategy and vision articulated in existing community development plans, including the development of the city's **Master Plan** in 2018, a joint effort of Taunton's Office of Economic and Community Development and the City of Taunton. The study was funded by a Mass Development grant. DTF Executive Director and several Board Members were part of the Strategic Plan Committee.

This CIP's strategy for the integration of the arts and culture into community development is outlined in each application to the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Grants Program to support "Downtown Taunton Creates", a collaborative program involving 16 community and government partner organizations.

Both the real estate development and economic development activities outlined in this CIP are also described in the **Taunton Business Improvement District's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan**.

SECTION 8: Financing strategy

DTF will implement the CIP using a variety of financing strategies, including:

- **Massachusetts Cultural Council**

DTF continues to apply for and receive various grants available to us from the MCC.

Winter Places Grant – funding provided by the Barr Foundation

DTF is in the process of utilizing a \$25,000 award from the Winter Places placemaking grant opportunity. These funds will be utilized to purchase equipment and items to help us better utilize our outdoor space within our target area.

- **Individual Donations, Corporation Sponsorships, and Bank Foundation Grants**

DTF conducts an annual membership drive for individual donations, solicits corporate sponsors for our arts and cultural events, and seeks grants from local and regional banks that have a commitment to community development in order to support our mission.

- **Construction and Mortgage Loans**

DTF is experienced in applying for and managing loans necessary to finance major real estate projects. We regularly partner with Taunton-based bank Bristol County Savings Bank to finance our community development projects.

- **Community Investment Tax Credits**

The DTF was awarded \$50,000 in CITC in 2017. We will apply for another allocation of these credits to leverage the funding listed above. Funds received through this program

will assist with our next potential real estate development project as well as program support.

SECTION 9: History, track record, and sustainable development

DTF History and Track Record

Founded in 2011, the Downtown Taunton Foundation has already demonstrated a strong track record of initiating and administering community development programs that have a positive impact on the Downtown Taunton neighborhood. Successes to date include:

- DTF partnered with the Taunton Business Improvement District and The Neighborhood Corporation on the development of the Baron Lofts, a vacant warehouse that was transformed in 2012 into six, one-bedroom loft apartments (including three affordable units), a community art gallery, and office space. Funding sources included Bristol County Savings Bank, MHIC, and the Greater Attleboro Taunton HOME Consortium. The DTF now owns this property in partnership with Bristol County Savings Bank.
- DTF purchased, at auction, a foreclosure property at 15 School Street in the Downtown and has rehabilitated the project as first-floor commercial space with two affordable apartments on the second floor. Funding leveraged included an Attorney General HomeCorps Grant, City of Taunton Community Development Block Grant funds, and a construction loan from Bristol County Savings Bank.
- Since our founding, DTF has initiated and coordinated Downtown arts and cultural programs, including the *Downtown Sweetheart Stroll*, the *Taunton Creates!* public arts festival, held each spring on Taunton Green, *Summer Concert Series*, *Fall Fest Block Party*, the *Liberty and Union Arts and History Festival* each fall and the largest Christmas festival in the area, *Lights On*, in December. In addition, DTF has managed the *Trescott Street Gallery*, a volunteer-led community art gallery, since its opening in October 2012. The TSG has emerged as a vibrant art space, with eight exhibits per year, a series of art classes, as well as several other community-based events held throughout the year.

CIP Consistency with Sustainable Development Principles

DTF's goals and activities as outlined in this CIP directly address several of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Sustainable Development Principles. Specifically:

- DTF's Downtown Taunton real estate development projects are all examples of the reuse of existing structures and infrastructure, and several protect historic resources.
- DTF's current and planned real estate development projects, individually and, support a pedestrian-friendly Downtown that offers a healthy mix of residential, commercial, cultural, educational, and health/social service uses.
- DTF's housing development expands opportunities for people of all abilities, income levels, and household types, and has included in the past – and will continue to include in the future – affordable, handicapped-accessible, and multi-family housing options.



0 125 250 Feet

Attachment B: DTF Board of Directors List as of January 2021

NAME	AFFILIATION(S)	ADDRESS (TAUNTON)	LOW-MOD INCOME REPRESENTATION
Richard Shafer	Taunton Development Corporation, Shafer Development Services	47 Devenport Street	
Greta Ferreira	Taunton Resident; Co-Owner, Studio 27 Print & Design Group	8 Trescott Street	business owner/resident LMI neighborhood
Phillip Duarte	Taunton Resident	61 Winthrop St #2r	resident of LMI neighborhood
Michael Ferreira	Taunton Resident; Former Asst. Director of OECD	North Walker St	
Mary Wasylek	Taunton Resident; Chief of Staff, Sen. Marc Pacheco's office	345 W. Britannia Street	representative of LMI neighborhood
Ida Tome	Taunton Resident, affiliated with District Center for Arts, Downtown		
Lisa Lassiter	Vice President, Bristol County Savings Bank	35 Broadway	representative of LMI organization business owner and resident in LMI neighborhood
Steve Rogers	Board Member, Taunton BID, co-owner, Studio 27 Flowers	8 Trescott Street	
Carol Doherty	Taunton School Committee, Silver City Meetinghouse radio show, Taunton Community Gardens, State Representative	147 Highland Street	
Michael Wedge	Taunton Resident; Owner, Open Doors Yoga; Clerk, Clerk - Taunton BID	20 Cedar Street	resident of LMI neighborhood

THE NEED: Downtown Taunton is challenged by a high commercial vacancy rate, low-quality housing stock, a struggling retail climate, and a persistently negative public image. Through engaging cultural events, innovative public art projects, real estate development, thoughtful arts space development, and collaborative marketing efforts, **Downtown Taunton Creates** aims to strengthen downtown Taunton's small businesses, increase the visibility of local artists and cultural organizations, and promote a positive image of downtown Taunton as a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

INPUTS

event planning, partner outreach, and marketing by DTF's professional staff
ideas and talents of local artists and cultural organizations
sales/promotions by downtown businesses organized to coincide with arts events
engagement with the community through social media
financial support from local foundations and corporate sponsors
collaborative support of City mayor's office, police department, and park & rec

OUTPUTS

Year 1	Year 2
Fall Block Party highlighting local artists and eateries - September 2021 Liberty and Union Arts & History Festival and Downtown Tavern Tour - October 2021 Lighting of the Green City of Taunton annual holiday celebration - December 2021 Summer Concert Series - Local musicians perform on historic Taunton Green, Downtown Sweetheart Stroll Combined with a themed exhibit at the Gallery, highlighting the Taunton Creates! hands-on, all-ages arts festival on Taunton Green - May 2021	Fall Block Party highlighting local artists and eateries - September 2022 Liberty and Union Arts & History Festival and Downtown Tavern Tour - October 2022 Lighting of the Green City of Taunton annual holiday celebration - December 2022 Summer Concert Series - Local musicians perform on historic Taunton Green, Downtown Sweetheart Stroll Combined with a themed exhibit at the Gallery, highlighting Taunton Creates! hands-on, all-ages arts festival throughout Downtown- May 2022

OUTCOMES

Year 1	Year 2	Long-term
>20 artists/cultural organizations and >200 attendees participating	>30 artists/cultural organizations and >500 attendees participating	increased visibility for local artists and retailers; improved public perception of
>40 artists/cultural organizations and >600 attendees participating	>50 artists/cultural organizations and >1000 attendees participating	increased public perception of Taunton as an historic site worth visiting; increases civic
>100 artists/cultural organizations and >10,000 attendees participating	>100 artists/cultural organizations and >15,000 attendees participating	Taunton strengthens its century-old identity as a regional holiday destination
3 concerts on the Green >500 attendees	5 concerts on the Green >1000 attendees	concerts provide a sense of community pride as residents attend the series.
>30 artists/Downtown Retailers and >100 attendees participating	>40 artists/downtown retailers and >200 attendees participating	boost in holiday sales for downtown businesses; improved perception of
>50 artists/cultural organizations and >350 attendees participating	>100 artists/cultural organizations and >500 attendees participating	increased visibility for local artists; greater public access to, and interest in, the arts

project planning, fundraising, and marketing by DTF's professional staff
ideas and talents of local artists in a variety of disciplines

ACTION & PUBLIC ART	
Holiday Storefront Window Displays - November/December 2021 Creation of public art installation Downtown	Holiday Storefront Window Displays - November/December 2022 Creation of public art installation Downtown

>5 vacant and tenanted storefronts are beautified for the 2015 holiday season	>10 vacant and tenanted storefronts are beautified for the 2016 holiday season	reduction in vacancy rate as downtown is perceived as more viable and attractive
1 mural or stationary art installation is added to Downtown	3 mural of stationary art installation is added to Downtown	downtown businesses experience boost in sales as pedestrian activity increases

support of building owners interested in improving downtown's image

BEAUTIFICATION		
Downtown Flower Planters	Downtown Flower Planters	Downtown Flower Planters
Planters throughout Downtown are planted 4 season	Planters throughout Downtown are planted 4 season	Planters throughout Downtown are planted 4 season

50 planters are filled seasononly located throughout Downtown	60 planters are filled seasonally, as well as 25 hanging planters	creation of Main Street focal points
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DOWNTOWN TAUNTON CREATES - LOGIC MODEL

INPUTS

input gathered by DTF through surveys of local artists and cultural organizations
planning assistance from City government and waiver of permit fees by City agencies

development and distribution of marketing materials by DTF's staff
information on community events provided by artists and organizations, sales and

OUTPUTS

Year 1	Year 2
year-round exhibits and educational programming at DTF's Trescott Street Gallery	year-round exhibits and educational programming at DTF's Trescott Street Gallery
real estate project identified and affordable housing availability increased	real estate project identified and affordable housing availability increased

Real Estate Projects & ARTS SPACE	
Downtown Developments	Downtown Developments
business & arts e-news distributed 6x/year	business & arts e-news distributed 12x/year
10 partners submit community arts events to DTF-hosted online calendar	20 partners submit community arts events to DTF-hosted online calendar

OUTCOMES

Year 1	Year 2	Long-term
>\$2,500 in revenue from art sales and classes earned by Gallery artists	>\$2,500 in revenue from art sales and classes earned by Gallery artists	success of downtown's first art gallery spurs additional creative businesses
Acquisition of Baron Lofts apartments is finalized	Secure mixed use real estate project	sustainable real estate development projects that combat vacancies and blight while

Real Estate Projects & ARTS SPACE	
Downtown Developments	Downtown Developments
e-news sent to mailing list of 1000 emails with >40% open rate	e-news sent to mailing list of 1500 emails with >45% open rate
downtowntaunton.org website receives >1000 hits on average each month	downtowntaunton.org website receives >1500 hits on average each month
	DTF e-news becomes major marketing vehicle for downtown business and arts
	downtowntaunton.org site becomes primary outlet for info on downtown arts scene