



INSPIRED LEADERS  
SHAPING CITIES

IDA  
ADVISORY  
SERVICES

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA  
JUNE 2017

INTERNATIONAL DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION  
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## **Executive Summary:**

Downtown Huntington Beach is an authentic downtown with a rich history and heritage, strong physical infrastructure and cultural assets, a tightly-knit enthusiastic community, and an attractive and growing market for private investment. Downtown Huntington Beach is strongly positioned to have a flourishing downtown; however, the downtown has been stymied by negative perceptions, competition from surrounding retail markets and neighboring beach communities. The Huntington Beach Downtown Business Improvement District is uniquely positioned to leverage the assets of Downtown Huntington Beach – making downtown an attractive place to live, work, play, visit, and experience for residents, retailers, business owners, tourists and the like.

The IDA Advisory Panel worked with the steering committee, having representatives from the city and BID, to conduct interviews with downtown and downtown adjacent stakeholders. The 55+ interviews, background research, and analysis of downtown documentation informed the IDA Advisory Panel of the problems facing downtown and the recommendations that the Downtown BID will need to follow moving forward.

The BID should create, with buy-in and participation from stakeholders, a vision statement to guide the work of the BID and strategically address the needs, concerns, and growth of downtown. This vision statement should clearly articulate the measure of success for the downtown and role of the BID organization. A strategic plan will then establish the goals and objectives the BID must engage in, while articulating the roles and responsibilities that BID board members, BID staff and city officials must engage in necessary to accomplish said goals.

The governance structure of the BID should be streamlined to create efficiencies regarding BID leadership terms and bylaw modifications, unencumbered by city constraints, and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the management of the Huntington Beach Downtown BID.

All BID programs, improvements and subsequent marketing efforts should promote and reiterate the BID's work on behalf of its constituents and stakeholders. Improvements must be tracked and incorporated in all messaging campaigns. All events should be in-line with the vision of the BID.

With current revenue of over half a million dollars, the BID has grown in size and capacity. Hiring professional staff with leadership capabilities of resetting the management and direction of the BID is imperative. The panel believes an interim CEO to serve as a turn-around manager is needed and the right candidate will be experienced in downtown issues and the urban place management industry.

To help achieve these goals, HBDBID should utilize programs offered through a complimentary 6-month membership with the International Downtown Association and a discounted conference rate for all Huntington Beach Staff.

The IDA Advisory Panel recommends the following steps be taken to address the current conditions the Huntington Beach Downtown Business Improvement District is facing.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Immediate Recommendations (0-60 Days):**

- Proceed with renewal of the existing BID and election of BID board to maintain current services for the next year. Convene a town hall meeting to share findings of IDA Advisory Panel and help establish immediate trust for subsequent community visioning with increased transparency
- In addition to backfilling existing vacant manager position who will be responsible for carrying on day to day operations, BID board and city staff should work with the IDA Advisory Panel to secure an interim CEO with specific downtown management experience. The interim CEO will serve as the organizations turnaround manager<sup>i</sup>. Allocate up to \$100,000 for a one-year contract and empower the CEO to lead implementation of both the IDA Advisory Panel and the City Financial Commission recommendations as deemed appropriate. The position should be funded equally through BID and City resources and utilize a three to five person hiring committee with at least one representative from both the BID and the city
- Cancel the three-year term of Surf City Nights manager and change the contract to month-to-month allowing for future leadership flexibility
- Create a one-year BID workplan consisting of: continuing current services and events, board responsibilities, evaluating the Downtown Huntington Beach 2015-2016 Strategic Plan, establish policies to satisfy Brown Act

requirements, curating a social media and communications strategy, and establish a vision for Downtown Huntington Beach BID

**Short Term Recommendations (30-120 Days):**

- Review existing stakeholder' vision, master or community plans to align priorities with partner organizations and reflect on the political climate to bridge divides and marginalize negative attitudes
- Take Action (rather than call on the city to act): be hands on, nimble and quick to respond to issues affecting downtown. If the downtown will benefit from immediate, small and actionable adjustments, make them happen. Determine the specific improvements needed in the downtown to support the vision and serve the local businesses. (ex. Directory signage and wayfinding)
- Provide a goal statement and/or statement of purpose for each BID event and track all BID successes
- Develop and define the brand narrative, marketing, and communications strategy for HBDBID, inclusive of the vision for Downtown

**In Parallel: Task Force Recommendations: (30 - 270 Days):**

- Establish a Property Based Improvement District (PBID)
- Establish a Downtown Visioning Task Force (separate and distinct from the BID board) consisting of downtown businesses, property owners, hoteliers, and city to review current and alternative governance structures and organizational framework. The taskforce will review the recommendation to move forward with the formation of a PBID and make the necessary changes for downtown. As a nonpolitical entity, the taskforce, appointed by the City Manager, will be comprised of major property owners in downtown
- Create a Legacy Advisory Board for the PBID of long standing BID volunteers to ensure historical context and bridge political divides
- Develop a comprehensive business plan, organizational structure and long-term targets for capital resources needed to support a comprehensive vision of Downtown Huntington Beach to include current and future professional staff positions needed to implement a property based BID