

2013-4 Downtown Bend Mid-Year Report

January 14, 2014

Dear Downtown Supporter,

We are just past the halfway point of our fiscal year of the current Economic Improvement District. The EID is a program of the independent, private nonprofit Downtown Bend Business Association and exists as the most equitable way to ensure that we all contribute to keeping downtown vibrant. For the past three years, the EID has collected an annual assessment of \$0.18 per square foot on all commercial leasable space in Downtown Bend. The most recent assessment of this current EID was applied in May 2013 and the assessment for 2014 will come to you in May. This funding helps achieve a scope of work to beautify, maintain, improve, and promote downtown. The EID has accomplished a great deal since our last report to you about six months ago, including:

Keeping Downtown Beautiful

Flowers-This year we had our most vibrant flower baskets ever. Aided by an earlier start in the greenhouse, the baskets were beautiful and visitors continue to appreciate them.

Cleaning and maintenance-One goal of the EID is to make downtown as welcoming as possible to visitors. Our friendly staff dressed in yellow EID vests along with several volunteer groups we've coordinated are out virtually every day cleaning the sidewalks, alleys, parking lots, and all public areas and infrastructure. We have had positive feedback about the cleanliness and will continue to stay on top of it.

Staff has also been making it easier to navigate downtown during every snow fall. We will continue to assist businesses by clearing snow from curb ramps, accessible parking stalls as well as creating a safe walking path along all sidewalks in the district during storm events.

Infrastructure-We have had several improvements to downtown this fiscal year. First, we worked with the City and were able to get the restrooms in the parking garage opened for the first time in two years. Secondly, we were able to get two abandoned phone booths removed from downtown. Finally, we parking signs were added downtown to better direct people to the parking garage.

Banners-Banners add a lot to the beautification of downtown as well as inform visitors about upcoming events. We hang about 20 different sets of messages annually to help promote downtown and community events displaying up to 100 banners at a time.

Holidays-As we take down the holiday décor this week, we look back on our most successful decorating season yet. We installed new larger Christmas wreaths this year, over 500 strands of lights, and most importantly, a new Christmas Tree planted in Drake Park. We forged a partnership with Bend Parks & Recreation District to get our new 22 foot Colorado Blue Spruce planted at the edge of Drake Park and Franklin Avenue at the top of Mirror Pond. Again we recruited volunteers and had a LOT of help from a community organization called The Tree of Humanity that did a bunch of heavy lifting to help decorate downtown. The Christmas Tree Lighting event held at the new tree was very successful as were the Visits With Santa we hosted on Wall Street throughout December. Unfortunately, due to extremely cold weather, we were forced to cancel the Bend Christmas Parade.

Promoting Downtown

Marketing-The DBBA has been working to market downtown via a variety of avenues over the past six months.

- We ran a holiday campaign on TV, print and web investing over \$5,000 to promote downtown.
- Our new TV campaign entitled "Dogs Wait" has been shown on local outlets with over \$10,000 of ad buys this year. Many businesses took advantage of the co-op advertising we arranged.
- On the internet, our website traffic surpassed 250,000 views in 2013 and our followers on Facebook are now approaching 17,000.
- The downtown brochures have been kept current and in stock at many downtown locations as well as places where visitors frequent.
- The outdoor directories were updated in October giving the most current information to our customers about the businesses downtown.
- The gift certificate program, Downtown Dollars, issued just over \$20,000 in 2013-a new record!

Partnering with Mt. Bachelor, we have been working on visitor promotions. The DBBA has been organizing promotions for about 50 ski clubs coming to experience Central Oregon this season. Our efforts have resulted in many of these 1,000+ to come spend money downtown.

We are also encouraged by our occupancy rate. This week we announced that our occupancy rate for the retail/restaurant sector has remained steady for the entirety of 2013 at 95%. This is new record for downtown and a very positive sign about the stability of business for that sector.

Events-The monthly First Friday Art Walk is a wonderful event for downtown. The DBBA have taken more ownership over the event promoting it across many different mediums. Participation has increased as each event sees about 3,000-5,000 people in attendance.

We coordinate with street festivals, parades and sports events that occur in downtown. While these activities increase exposure for downtown as well as foot traffic and sales for many businesses, they can present challenges for others. The DBBA is working with the City, event producers, and downtown stakeholders to strike a balance to ensure that downtown overall gains maximum benefit from these events.

Your Downtown Organization

The mission of the DBBA is to promote the economic vitality of Downtown Bend and work as an advocate for business. The staff works in earnest every day with the goal of improving downtown. Our work is very public and we welcome feedback on the direction of downtown.

Additional info about the DBBA and our programs is also available on our website: DowntownBend.org
Thank you for your cooperation and support of Downtown Bend.

Sincerely,



Chuck Arnold

Executive Director (541) 788-3628