



P.U.M.A.

January 12, 2009

Cathy Coleman
President & CEO
Downtown Norfolk Council
201 Granby Street, Suite 101
Norfolk, VA 23510-1818

Dear Cathy:

On behalf of Progressive Urban Management Associates, I am pleased to forward the attached results from the Norfolk Downtown Improvement District (DID) survey that our firm recently completed. As part of the process to renew the DID, the survey sought input on existing DID services and priorities for the future from a variety of downtown stakeholders. 179 individuals responded to the survey, representing a broad cross-section of downtown employees, residents, property owners, businesses and civic organizations.

In general, survey respondents give high marks for both the state of downtown and the services financed by the DID. Highlights include:

- Respondents are generally pleased with the recent evolution of Downtown. Most favorable improvements are the appearance of downtown, overall vitality and cleanliness.
- Concerns with downtown safety linger, and while respondents find that downtown safety has improved, it has improved less than other characteristics of the downtown environment.
- The services financed by the DID are rated very favorably by respondents – overall an “A-minus” on a standard grading scale. Norfolk’s DID rates higher satisfaction with its stakeholders than other comparable improvement districts throughout the nation.
- The most positive existing DID services are public safety, cleaning and communications.
- The DID communicates best with its core constituents, commercial property owners and businesses. There is room for improvement with residents.
- Respondents are very clear on their priorities for the future – the DID should place more emphasis on public safety and business development in its next iteration. Business development is highly favored by commercial and residential property owners. Other types of respondents place more value on public safety.
- Despite the prospect of a severe national economic recession, the survey suggests that stakeholders will strongly support continuation of the DID.

This survey confirms our initial outside impressions of the Norfolk DID – your stakeholders are aware and appreciative of DID services, and there is strong evidence of support for the continuation of these services. Certainly the prudent financial management and high levels of accountability practiced by the DID (Norfolk is one of a select group of business improvement districts to lower its assessment rate over its ten year life) have contributed to the high level of stakeholder confidence that is reflected in the survey.

Overall this is very good news for you, your board of directors and other civic leaders that are involved in supporting and managing the DID.

Please contact me at 303-628-5554 or brad@pumaworldhq.com if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

M. Bradley Segal
President

Norfolk Downtown Improvement District (DID) Survey

Satisfaction with Existing Services and Future Priorities

(Prepared by Progressive Urban Management Associates, Inc.)

Overview

Since 1999, the Downtown Norfolk Council has managed the 48-block Downtown Norfolk Improvement District (DID). The DID collects a special assessment on downtown properties that is used to finance a variety of services that aim to make downtown safer, cleaner and vital. By city ordinance, the DID is set to be renewed in 2009. As part of the renewal process, the Downtown Norfolk Council contracted with Progressive Urban Management Associates, Inc., to design and compile a downtown stakeholder survey in the first half of December 2008. The survey sought input on existing services and priorities for the future. The survey was undertaken during a time in which national anxiety over a deepening economic recession was growing. The online survey was distributed through a variety of channels to downtown property owners, businesses, employees, residents and other stakeholders.

Profile of Respondents

179 individuals responded to the survey, a majority identifying themselves as downtown employees. Other top respondents included residential property owners and business owners. Many respondents claimed multiple identities, resulting in a total response rate that exceeds 100%.

Type of Respondent	% of Total
Downtown Employee	56.0%
Downtown Residential Property Owner	21.4%
Downtown Business Owner	17.6%
Charitable/Non-Profit	14.5%
Downtown Commercial Property Owner	12.6%
Government	6.9%
Downtown Residential Renter	5.7%

An additional 15.7% identified themselves as "other", with most being employees or residents in nearby areas (Ghent was identified by several respondents).

Satisfaction with State of Downtown and Existing Services

The first part of the survey aimed to determine stakeholder satisfaction with the state of downtown Norfolk and the services funded by the DID. The first question sought opinions on improvements in downtown over the past five years. Generally, respondents found that downtown has improved by many measures.

Do you think that the following characteristics of Downtown have become better or worse in the past 5 years?

Characteristic	% replied "Much Better"	% replied "Slightly Better"
Appearance of Downtown	66.5%	25.6%
Overall Vitality	60.9%	29.3%
Cleanliness	59.1%	31.3%
General Appearance of Public Spaces	50.6%	36.4%
Visitor Activity	40.7%	41.8%
Safety	38.5%	39.7%

Cross-tabulation of responses by type of respondent reveals slightly different perceptions on the improvement of downtown.

- Improvement in the appearance of downtown is rated lower by commercial property owners.
- Improvement in cleanliness, safety and visitor activity is rated lower by residential property owners.
- Improvement in overall vitality and appearance of public spaces is relatively consistent among all respondents, with the exception of government respondents rating appearance of public spaces slightly lower.

The second question probed both familiarity and satisfaction with the DID's services. Overall, DID services appear to be visible and positively viewed by the respondents.

How would you rate the following services provided by the DID?

Service	% replied "Very Good"	% replied "Good"
Public Safety & Hospitality	53.2%	39.9%
Cleaning of Public Spaces	48.0%	44.5%
Communications	46.5%	40.1%
Marketing	39.5%	44.8%
Place Making (trash cans, planters, etc.)	36.8%	47.4%
Business Development	24.3%	46.2%

Cross-tabulation of responses revealed slightly different levels of satisfaction with DID services.

- Cleaning of public spaces was rated higher by businesses, residential property owners, non-profits and government.
- Marketing and business development was rated higher by business owners.
- Communications was rated *significantly higher* by commercial property and business owners.
- Place making was rated slightly lower by downtown employees.
- Ratings for public safety and hospitality services were relatively consistent among all respondent types.

Overall, respondents rate the DID very highly, giving the effort an "A-minus" on a standard A to F grading scale. Our experience with similar surveys throughout the nation finds that most improvement districts rate about a "B". Notably, not one respondent gave the DID a failing grade, and only one respondent indicated dissatisfaction with a "D".

Overall, how would you grade the efforts of the DID?

Grade	% of All Respondents
A – Services are excellent and I'm very satisfied	34.7%
B – Services are good but there is room for improvement	57.2%
C – Services are fair and there is much room for improvement	6.4%
D – Services are poor and I am dissatisfied	0.6%
F – Services are very poor and the DID has been a failure	0.0%
I – Incomplete – I don't know if services are good or poor.	1.2%

Cross-tabulations revealed slightly higher grades from downtown business owners.

Future Priorities

The remainder of the survey sought to obtain stakeholder priorities for the future of the DID.

Vision for the Future: Respondents were asked to list three words to describe their vision for Downtown Norfolk five years into the future. 155 respondents completed this open-response question. The most frequent descriptions for the future of Downtown included:

- Vibrant
- Safe
- Growing

Less frequent, yet notably repetitive responses included *busy, progressive, light rail* and *fun*.

The survey then inquired on whether existing DID services should be delivered with more emphasis or less emphasis in the future. Respondents indicated that business development, public safety and marketing services should receive more emphasis.

Of the following services currently provided by the DID, do you feel more or less emphasis should be allocated to each to achieve your vision for downtown?

Existing DID Service	% responding "More Emphasis"	% responding "Stay the Same"
Business Development	77.0%	19.3%
Public Safety & Hospitality	57.9%	40.9%
Marketing	55.6%	42.6%
Cleaning of Public Spaces	42.9%	57.1%
Place Making (trash cans, planters, etc.)	40.1%	57.4%
Communications	34.8%	64.0%

Cross-tabulations revealed slight variations in priority among the different types of respondents:

- Commercial property owners were more inclined to have public safety services remain the same.
- Downtown business owners wanted more emphasis on place making.
- Non-profit respondents wanted more emphasis on cleaning of public spaces.
- Support for the remaining services was generally consistent among all respondent types.

Respondents were then asked to choose one DID service that is most valuable. Public safety and business development were most valued by more than 75% of respondents.

We acknowledge that this is a difficult economic climate and priorities need to be chosen. Given that we must use our limited resources most effectively, which one of our services is most valuable to you as we move forward?

One Service Most Valued	% of All Respondents
Public Safety	44.9%
Business Development	29.7%
Marketing	8.2%
Hospitality	5.1%
Cleaning of Public Spaces	5.1%
Place Making (trash cans, planters, etc.)	5.1%
Communication	1.9%

Cross-tabulations revealed significant differences for the service most valued among types of respondents:

- Commercial property owners most value business development (57.9%). This service is also most valued by residential property owners (40.0%).
- Non-profits (52.4%), downtown employees (46.4%), downtown business owners (42.9%) and government respondents (36.4%) most value public safety.

The survey concluded by offering an open-response question seeking ideas on additional services that should be provided. 56 individuals responded, with the most frequent response being "none" and several suggestions for improved management of downtown parking.

Conclusions

- Respondents are generally pleased with the recent evolution of Downtown. Most favorable improvements are the appearance of downtown, overall vitality and cleanliness.
- Concerns with downtown safety linger, and while respondents find that downtown safety has improved, it has improved less than other characteristics of the downtown environment.
- The services financed by the downtown improvement district (DID) are rated very favorably by respondents. Norfolk's DID rates higher satisfaction with its stakeholders than other comparable improvement districts throughout the nation.
- The most positive existing DID services are public safety, cleaning and communications.
- The DID communicates best with its core constituents, commercial property owners and businesses. There is room for improvement with residents.
- Respondents are very clear on their priorities for the future – the DID should place more emphasis on public safety and business development in its next iteration. Business development is highly favored by commercial and residential property owners. Other types of respondents place more value on public safety.
- Despite the prospect of a severe national economic recession, the survey suggests that stakeholders will strongly support continuation of the DID.

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