

State College



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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www.downtownstatecollege.com
downtown@downtownstatecollege.com



Greetings

Happy New Year,

As we reflect on 2023 and look ahead to the opportunities of the coming year, the Downtown State College Improvement District (DSICD) staff remains hyper focused on executing the vision and goals laid out in our 5-year strategic plan. These objectives and tactics contribute to a thriving downtown through community engagement, partner development, physical improvements, marketing, and diversified economic development programs.

We continue to produce events and support initiatives that drive visitation and a vibrant downtown. New in 2023, based on feedback from our annual community survey, we introduced Sips & Sounds Downtown - an outdoor food and beverage event that spanned the 200 block of Allen Street. The success of this event, along with participants feedback, energizes us as we finetune and grow the event in the coming years.

Overcoming challenges and finding creative solutions are vital to our success when partnerships and collaborations are at the forefront. Sharing our vision with local leaders opens doors to opportunities that might be missed in solo efforts, as we establish our organization as a trusted resource for our constituents. Collaborating closely with the borough on the Calder Way infrastructure project, we've implemented an enhanced communication plan, ensuring our members are well-informed about the project's progress on a daily basis.

Expanding our partner network and keeping economic vitality in focus, we journeyed to Charlottesville and Blacksburg, Virginia, last spring to delve into comparable communities. Meaningful exchanges with peers in their Main Street organizations provided valuable insights, inspiring us to act. Now, we're set on enhancing downtown wayfinding and beautification projects. The exploration continues with visits to Ann Arbor and East Lansing, Michigan in 2024.

This year promises to be dynamic with increased collaboration. We're teaming up with the borough of State College to revamp the Downtown Master Plan and joining forces with the Redevelopment Authority to activate commercial vacancies and foster a diverse business mix in our district. We will launch a small business grant program early in the year to encourage facade and interior improvements that leave a lasting impact on our downtown.

As always, we encourage you to get involved with our organization. Committee seats are available and open to individuals with a vision for the future of Downtown State College. Email us for more information at downtown@downtownstatecollege.com.

Best wishes,

Lee Anne Jeffries
Executive Director

Sharon Herlocher
Chairman of the Board

STAFF



Lee Anne Jeffries
Executive Director



Joseph Quinn (JQ)
Events & Operations
Specialist

Rae Stefaniak
Administrative Assistant

Damian Cabrera
Clean Team

Joe Bellehumeur
Clean Team

Denny Barnhart
Clean Team



Mission

MISSION STATEMENT

The Downtown State College Improvement District (DSCID) is dedicated to creating and promoting Downtown State College as a welcoming and vibrant destination for all. We develop community events, programs and initiatives; we advance physical improvements, creative placemaking and clean inviting streetscapes; we are a trusted resource for our constituents.

VISION

- Further the economic position of downtown through grants, sponsorships and other funding sources.
- Support investment in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure through collaboration with government partners as we continue to make advances toward a people-centric downtown.
- Pursue programs that enhance the downtown customer experience by addressing pain points in parking, access to active transportation and improvement in trash/recycling.
- Connect downtown with our extensive outdoor recreation and events by developing partners and identifying common goals.
- Assist in implementing experiential improvements including wayfinding, accent lighting and public art.
- Strengthen relationships with key strategic partners including Penn State, the Borough of State College, Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, Chamber of Business & Industry of Centre County, Centre County, and the state through regular and proactive communication.
- Showcase downtown's growing Cultural Arts District through promotion and collaboration with leaders in the field.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Board of Directors:

Sharon Herlocher, Chair
Jonathan Friedman, Vice-Chair
Al Pringle, Secretary
Chris McKee, Treasurer
Brian Cohen
Ezra Nanes
Curtis Shulman
Gary Brandeis
Charima Young/Julian Morales
Jill Rosenfield, Chairman Assistant
Lindsay Jones, ex-officio RAC Committee Chair

Retail Advisory Committee (RAC):

Lindsay Jones, Chair
Erica Quinn
John Peterson
Sara Court
Jessica Wargo
Vivian Black
Abbey Caldwell
Joe Mazzarella
Lee Anne Jeffries
Joseph Quinn (JQ)

Finance Committee:

Romulus Comly, Chair
Chris McKee
Al Pringle
Dwight Miller
Tom Minichiello
Gary Brandeis

Get Involved ...

The DSCID continually seeks new committee and board members. If you would like to learn more about these roles, email Lee Anne at leeanne@downtownstatecollege.com.



Events & Marketing

EVENTS

The DSCID hosted the first Sips & Sounds on June 30, featuring craft beverages, local music, and delicious food on Allen Street's 200 block. Thanks to Happy Valley Adventure Bureau funding, entry was free, with raffles and \$10 downtown restaurant tokens for attendees. The event marked the start of summer in State College, aligning with Ironman 70.3 Happy Valley and Central PA 4th Fest.



As our events evolve, we refine our approach to better align with community preferences. Signature events, like First Fridays, consistently attract growing attendance, reflecting increased resonance with our audience. Business participation is on the rise, offering exposure to new patrons. Interested business owners are encouraged to reach out and learn how to get involved with our events and initiatives.



Our contributions to the planning committees of State College Pride and Happy Valley Latin Fest, have propelled their success. Both events celebrated their third anniversary in 2023, drawing hundreds downtown and fostering a vibrant and inclusive community atmosphere.



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Working with the Downtown Improvement District has been beneficial on many levels. As a nonprofit the support of the DSCID during the planning and implementing of State College Pride was crucial to its success and growth. When our organization was able to open our physical location recently Lee Anne and the DSCID again stepped up to support us and help promote the services we offer to the community. Having access to the DSCID and the work they do to promote inclusivity and help the growth of our community has a lasting impact.

--Cat Cook she/her, Executive Director, Centre LGBT+

MARKETING

DOWNTOWN GIFT CARD PROGRAM:

The downtown gift card program is a powerful catalyst for boosting local businesses. In 2023, total gift card sales soared to \$121,897, marking a robust 4.5% surge from 2022. Notably, every cent from card purchases directly supports participating downtown businesses. Under the guidance of current DSCID leadership, program sales have consistently flourished, witnessing a remarkable 68% leap since 2018.



WE VALIDATE PARKING

Check inside for details.



MERCHANT VALIDATED PARKING (MVP) PROGRAM:

Downtown parking remains a top concern for visitors, but our MVP initiative, in collaboration with the Borough of State College and participating businesses, has shown continuous improvement. Thanks to dedicated leadership, our focus in 2024 shifts to educating the public about maximizing validations and showcasing the ease of parking with the right information. In 2023, a whopping \$43,000 worth of downtown parking validations were claimed, showing the true value of this program!

The Love for Local buy one get one gift card campaign was reenergized in 2023. This marketing initiative has quickly become a major contributor to our annual gift card revenue, with funds directly benefitting the downtown business community!



PROFESSIONAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

- By entrusting social media marketing, ad placement, and graphic design tasks to external experts, we've liberated our team to dedicate their energy to cultivating innovative programming and spearheading forward-thinking strategies.
- Having harnessed the power of Placer AI, an online visitation platform, for an entire year, we've honed our advertising precision by targeting our most frequent visitors. This critical data allows us to leverage event sponsors, while sharing quarterly foot traffic reports with our constituents. This invaluable information not only bolsters our downtown community but also lays the foundation for a thriving economy in our district. Contact us to request digital copies of 2023 reporting.



To boost our signature events, we brought in video creator Spark Pixel to produce short, engaging promo videos. These visuals, showcased on YouTube under "Downtown State College," will amplify our outreach across various platforms including paid advertising, social media features and website enhancements, fostering wider event attendance. The highlight of this work is our vibrant feature video on the DSCID website—promoted to attract new businesses to downtown State College. With the upbeat vibe of "always a good day" in Happy Valley, it's a recruitment powerhouse!

CHECK
IT
OUT





Partnerships & Initiatives

DSCID ORGANIZATIONAL WORK

DSCID MISSION AND VISION:

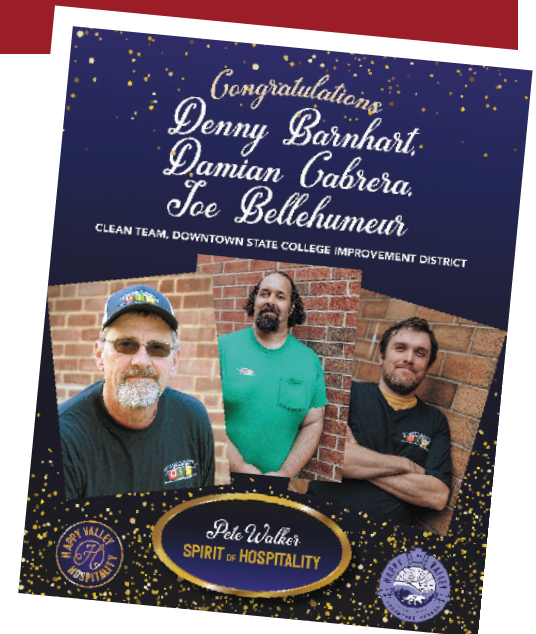
In the midst of our organizational evolution, the DSCID board, convening during an early-year retreat, meticulously crafted an updated mission and vision in harmony with our strategic plan. This refined mission resonates with our daily efforts, while the vision highlights our aspirations for the organization's future. The new mission and vision can be found on Page 2 of this report.

CLEAN TEAM:

Annual cleaning numbers:

Food Spills: 11,391	Dog Poop: 359
Glass: 4,063	Human Poop: 9
Vomit: 528	50 Gallon Trash Cans: 838

In November, the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau held its annual Happy Valley Hospitality Awards, recognizing outstanding contributions. Delightfully, the DSCID Clean Team—comprising Damian Cabrera, Joe Bellehumeur, and Denny Barnhart—shined, securing the prestigious Pete Walker Spirit of Hospitality Award. Their dedication reflects the core values of our organization, fostering pride in their service to the community and honors the awards namesake.



CONSTITUENT SUPPORT AND CELEBRATIONS:

- Lee Anne's weekly Business Updates remain an invaluable resource for the district, offering insights into the latest downtown events, construction alerts, opportunities to engage in DSCID initiatives, and beyond. Start receiving these updates by emailing downtown@downtownstatecollege.com.
- Downtown business happy hour events have proven valuable to our constituents. During these quarterly networking events, we explored arts & economic development, and unveiled the Calder Way infrastructure project. We thank our happy hour hosts 3 Dots, Doggies, The Tavern, and Antifragile Brewing Co.! What topics would you like to see covered in 2024? Let us know in our year-end survey or email us at downtown@downtownstatecollege.com.
- Listening to your valuable feedback, we introduced MuniPay; an online payment platform for assessments, supplementing the old-school hard check method. Embracing the convenience, many of you hopped on board, and we're happy to announce that this streamlined option is here to stay. Information on how to use this platform can be found on your annual invoice.

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The Downtown Improvement District is a critical changemaker. They knit together our local businesses, government, and community members, making downtown State College a vibrant place to call home, whether for your life, your workday, or your weekend. 3 Dots is so grateful for this forward-thinking partner!

-- Erica Quinn, Executive Director, 3 Dots Downtown

PARTNERS & COLLABORATIONS

In March, we honored the Wonder Women of Hospitality with the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau and 3 Dots Downtown. The mixer, spiced up by DJ Elbow Knee Knee, showcased delicious delights courtesy of Webster's wonder woman, Elaine Meder-Wilgus and recognized five outstanding women, representing downtown food and beverage establishments:

- **Ady Martínez:** Owner, Juana's
- **Ellen Braun:** Manager, Chumley's
- **Becky Burger:** General Manager, Allen Street Grill
- **Kristina Goldhorn:** Server, The Corner Room
- **Hunter Porcana:** Brewer Assistant, Antifragile Brewing Co.



The debut of Ironman 70.3 Happy Valley drew nearly 6,000 visitors to State College for an exhilarating weekend in early July. DSCID staff collaborated closely with the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau in the event planning phase, orchestrating a warm welcome for athletes, their families, and Ironman employees. A key initiative involved linking local businesses with the Ironman website, IM LOCAL, where they could showcase deals or send messages of support to the athletes. This program is set to expand, shining a spotlight on our local businesses in the upcoming two years as this signature event returns to Happy Valley.

BOROUGH ENGAGEMENT:

In the last year, we collaborated closely with the borough to propel the Calder Way infrastructure project, a key element of the Downtown Master Plan. Recognizing the project's magnitude, the borough wisely appointed a dedicated PR representative, Elton Hayes, in July. Since then, Hayes has proven to be an invaluable partner, ensuring seamless communication with impacted downtown merchants and property owners. Construction kicked off on January 2, 2024. To stay informed on this work:

- Visit <https://bit.ly/CalderWay> for the latest information about Phase 1.
- Contact Elton Hayes, Borough Calder Way PR, directly at ehayes@statecollegepa.us or 814-308-4329 for any questions or inquiries.

Facing a surge in demand for downtown parking during home football weekends, district employees encountered hurdles securing affordable spaces. Taking the issue to borough leadership, the DSCID collaborated to establish special employee parking options in 2023. This initiative provided downtown employees access to reserved spaces in the Beaver and Fraser garages, as well as a nearby surface lot, at no additional cost. Our ongoing collaboration with the borough aims for a more sustainable, long-term solution.

As the borough's Next Generation Safety and Mobility Plan gains momentum, the DSCID stays actively engaged, advocating for constituent participation and transparent communication at every step.



DO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE,
Visit Downtown



Partnerships and Initiatives



Staff Recognition!

Making change in a community requires the work of many and the DSCID team was recognized for our achievements at the inaugural Purple Dot Awards during 3 Dots TakeOver Town Soiree on December 19, 2023. The staff was awarded the Collaborative Community Award. We are proud of the work we do alongside creative partners like 3 Dots and will continue to strengthen key relationships in 2024.

As we intensify our commitment to forging strong partnerships, the DSCID has been a steadfast supporter of Penn State's Military Appreciation Week for years. This year, our collaboration with the Office of Veteran Affairs took shape in the veteran banner program. This program allowed locals to purchase banners honoring their military heroes, displayed proudly throughout downtown in November. Beyond honoring local veterans, this initiative contributed to Penn State's Military Student Fund, providing crucial financial support through scholarships. We anticipate the program's growth in the years ahead and look forward to ongoing collaboration with our partners at Penn State, as we fortify the alliance between town and gown.



Partnerships!



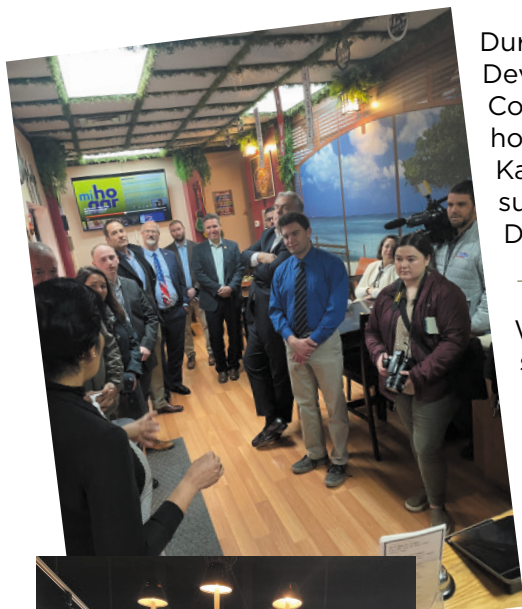
Community Art!

Following the success of last year's balloon yarn mural in Calder Way, JQ, backed by dedicated volunteers and partners, orchestrated a fresh public art venture at the Schlow Library's Readers Garden. Over 300 vibrant flowers were meticulously crafted by dozens of community members! With a town full of engaged and imaginative individuals, these projects are set to spread ongoing joy to those that pass by.





Economic Vitality



During Small Business Week, the PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED), along with Downtown State College, Centre County Commissioners, Mayor Ezra Nanes, State Rep Paul Takac, and local leaders, honored 5 outstanding businesses—Juana's, S'Hair-eng Styling Salon, Kitchen Kaboodle, Growing Tree Toys, and Chew Chew Bun. Business owners shared successes and challenges, and the DSCID anticipates collaborating with the DCED to enhance state support for downtown businesses.

We're dedicated to learning from similar college town improvement organizations. Starting in March, we visited leaders in Blacksburg (Virginia Tech) and Charlottesville (UVA), aiming to understand their strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Our focus includes business mix, placemaking, clean & safe programs, town & gown relations, and city/borough partnerships. We are excited to share our findings with you as we continue exploring in 2024.



In October, the DSCID hosted the PA Downtown Center (PDC) manager's meeting at Scholar State College. Breakout sessions at 3 Dots Downtown and Blue Brick Theatre, led by dynamic leaders, delved into the intersection of arts and economic development. DSCID staff's active participation in PDC conferences continues to bring fresh initiatives to State College, fostering growth and collaboration.

EXCITING NEW ADDITIONS TO THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT IN 2023 INCLUDE LOCK BOUTIQUE, CENTRE LGBT+, GIUSEPPE'S PIZZA BY BROTHERS, TASTY K, CAMPUS STEAKS, CARTER'S TABLE, WEI HAIR SALON, PENN STATE HALAL GUYS, AND SMOKE WORLD, **MARKING A POSITIVE TREND AS FEWER BUSINESSES CLOSED POST-COVID, RESULTING IN FEWER VACANCIES.**

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The Downtown State College Improvement District's support has been instrumental for the continued success of the Happy Valley Latin Festival and Juana's Venezuelan Cuisine. We are extremely grateful to Lee Anne Jeffries for her dedication to helping us achieve our goals. Our partnership exemplifies the power of collaboration and demonstrates what can be achieved when individuals and organizations come together with a common purpose. We look forward to continuing our successful journey and achieving even greater milestones in the future. Thank you Lee Anne and DSCID!

--Ady Martínez, Owner Juana's & Founder Happy Valley Latin Festival





Looking Ahead in 2024

2024 PREVIEW

- Collaborating with the Borough's Redevelopment Authority, in response to their 2023 Downtown Business Attraction and Retention Strategy Report, we're committed to co-funding a pivotal new role within the DSCID. This strategic position, led by an experienced business advocate, will spearhead efforts to tackle commercial vacancies and diversify business mix, contributing to a vibrant and thriving local landscape.
- Recently announced, the 2024 DSCID Small Business Grant program will fund up to \$50,000 in facade enhancements and interior renovations. District constituents, in good standing with the DSCID, stand to reap individual rewards ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 for eligible capital improvement projects.
- In response to insights gathered from our Retail Advisory Committee, prioritizing downtown beautification has emerged as a key focus. Our proposed initiative involves strategically placing sidewalk planters throughout downtown. Professional contractors will service and maintain the new containers, ensuring a lasting enhancement of visual appeal.
- We anticipate the collaboration ahead as we join forces with partners from 3 Dots, the borough, and Penn State to bring to life a vibrant public art installation at the Calder Way construction site. Our aim is to ignite excitement, generating awareness for the project's overarching mission—to rejuvenate and beautify our shared corridor, ultimately enriching the entire district.
- In the upcoming year, the DSCID is set to weave a powerful DEI statement, recognizing the crucial role of cultivating a workplace that cherishes diversity, equity, and inclusion. By embracing a multitude of perspectives, we aim not only to foster a culture of innovation and creativity but to spark a dynamic synergy that propels us forward.



Financials

STATEMENT OF NET POSITION

ASSETS		2023
CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS		\$661,602
PREPAID EXPENSES		\$7,421
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE		\$7,229
NET CAPITAL ASSETS		\$58,910
TOTAL ASSETS		\$735,162
LIABILITIES		
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & ACCRUED EXPENSES		\$5,835
DEFERRED REVENUE		\$5,174
TOTAL LIABILITIES		\$11,009
NET POSITION		
INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS		\$58,910
RESTRICTED NET ASSETS		\$622,505
TOTAL NET POSITION		\$724,153

STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENSE

INCOME	
PROPERTY ASSESSMENTS	\$568,333.29
BOROUGH CONTRIBUTION	\$75,000
PENN STATE CONTRIBUTION	\$30,000
SPONSORSHIPS	\$5,000
GRANT REVENUE	\$58,000
INTEREST	\$30,097
OTHER INCOME	\$3,749
TOTAL REVENUE	\$770,179
EXPENSES	
MARKETING	\$286,523
CLEAN & GREEN	\$120,105
ADMINISTRATION & OPERATION	\$245,922
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$652,550

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET POSITION	\$735,162	(DECREASE)/INCREASE IN NET POSITION	\$117,629
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The DSCID receives an assessment from all properties within its boundaries. The audited financial statements on this page represent the consolidated finances of the Downtown State College Improvement District, Inc. in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States.

This report is based on the December 31, 2023 unaudited financial report. You may request an audited report when available by contacting the DSCID office.

DSCID is a non-profit Neighborhood Improvement District with over 350 participating businesses and 410 assessed properties, established in 2002 by ordinance of the Borough of State College in accordance with the laws of Pennsylvania. The District extends from Atherton Street to Sowers Street, College Avenue to Highland Alley.



Stay up to date on the latest downtown information by subscribing to our weekly Business Update - email downtown@downtownstatecollege.com to request access. Our monthly public e-newsletter is another way to stay in in the loop with downtown events and happenings. Check out the latest bulletin and join the mailing list here.