



ORGANIZATION

Involves Creating a Strong Foundation
For a Sustainable Revitalization Effort,
Including Cultivating Partnerships,
Community Involvement, and
Resources for the District

Selecting Your Board of Directors

Is your Board Diverse?

Having a diverse Board of Directors goes beyond race, ethnicity and gender; it's looking at many factors. Consider the following when nominating/selecting new board members:

- Do you have representation from key downtown stakeholders or; enough mix of property/business owners such as retail, restaurant, small, mid-size, & large business owners; non-profits/governmental represented?
- Consider then a 1/3 rule of thumb for selection: 1/3 property owners; 1/3 business owners (representative of small-large owners)& 1/3 non-profit/governmental.
- Consider selecting those who are not serving on numerous committees and boards who might not have the time but;
- Do consider board members who have (or are) served on one of your standing downtown committees, who have served as valuable volunteers for your organization or have served on community boards/committees in the past;
- Strive for balance in all including gender & ethnicity. Consider the overall make-up of your board and avoid having too many from the same firm/corporation or same type of business.
- Do you have the "talent" where you need it? Someone who is good at fundraising, marketing/promotions, networking.

Share the Mission/Vision:

Make sure you are sharing the mission/vision with the potential board member and; that he/she is understanding of this mission/vision and willing to advocate for your Downtown organization.

Balance the board with people of action with those who may lend credence/prestige.

- Consider selecting someone whose name lends credence/prestige. While they may not serve up drinks at a function, they may be strong advocates for your mission/vision in other public/private realms.

"Pay to Play"

Serving on the board should be an honor, both for the organization and for the individual serving. In some downtowns where a BID/MSD is in place many board members are already paying through this special tax as property and/or business owners, but if not you should determine if board members should contribute annually and what that amount should be. If they believe in the organization's mission/vision then contributing should not be an issue. Consider the following:

- Only those who pay the MSD/BID tax or their appointed representatives shall serve on the board or;
- If there is no MSD/BID require that all board members must be current on their dues (*if there is no membership/dues system in place, consider establishing one)
- Require board members to fundraise for the organization. Challenge them to help raise funding/seek and get sponsorships for various programming/projects. (Even if there is a MSD/BID in place.) Make fundraising an annual event culminating with the annual organizational and/or community meeting. **Recognize** those who give in some way.
- Approach board members with asking them to contribute their time, talent & financial contribution.
- Another form of "pay to play" is requiring a board member to serve on a committee first.

Selecting Your Board of Directors pg. 2

Finally: when selecting board members consider your future leaders. These “10 Thoughts about Leadership” from author Jon Gordon could be a good way to think about current and future leadership:

1. **People follow the leader first and the leader’s vision second:** it doesn’t matter if the leader shares a powerful vision, if the leader is not someone who people will follow the vision will never be realized. As a leader, who you are makes a difference. The most important message you can share is yourself.
2. **Trust is the force that connects people to the leader and his/her vision:** Without trust there is a huge gap between the leader and the vision. Without trust people will stay “off the bus” (*or the board*). However if people trust the leader they will hop on the bus/*board with the leader and help move the bus/organization forward toward the vision.*
3. **Leadership is not just about what you do but what you can inspire, encourage and empower others to do.**
4. **A leader brings out the best within others by sharing the best within themselves.**
5. **Just because you’re driving the bus (or serving as board chair) doesn’t mean you have the right to run people over:** Abraham Lincoln said “*Most anyone can stand adversity, but to test a man’s character give him power.*” When you help them grow they’ll help you grow.
6. **“Rules without Relationship Leads to Rebellion”, Andy Stanley.** You can have all the rules you want, but if you don’t invest in your people and develop a relationship with them they will rebel. It’s all about relationships.
7. **Lead with optimism, enthusiasm and positive energy, guard against pessimism and weed out negativity.**
8. **Great leaders know they don’t have all the answers.** Rather they build a team of people who either know the answers or will find them.
9. **Leaders inspire and teach their people to focus on solutions, not complaints.**
10. **Great leaders know that success is a process not a destination.** As a leader focus on your people and process, not the outcome. Success is the by product of great leadership, teamwork, focus, commitment and execution of the fundamentals.

****Above information coalesced from National Main St. Center, professional NC Main Street directors & author Jon Gordon, “10 Thoughts about Leadership”**



This document was created to assist designated NC Main Street Communities and any other community that would like to develop best practices for downtown economic development.

