

MOMENTUM



**DOWNTOWN
LAFAYETTE**

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

2019 was a transformative year for Downtown Lafayette, one I am certain will mark the beginning of a new decade of progress in the heart of Acadiana. Our organization has undergone exciting changes since my appointment as the CEO of the Downtown Development

Authority (DDA) and Downtown Lafayette Unlimited (DLU) in October of 2018, and Downtown has grown stronger as a district and community. I am excited to share our progress with you.

The year kicked off with the hiring of the first-ever director of DLU Maureen Dugas Foster.

Together, we hit the ground running by reinvigorating DLU's membership and programming efforts. We created the Downtown Lunch & Learn series to keep our members and other Downtown stakeholders engaged with pressing issues we face, and I'm proud to say that our membership nearly doubled in size over the course of 2019. We also worked to increase the quality of our events—improving long-time favorites like Downtown Alive! and the Rooftop Crawfish Boil, and establishing new traditions like the Sno-Ball Festival and Merry & Bright Christmas, which brought thousands of visitors to Downtown to enjoy the food, music, art, and nightlife that permeates throughout our district.

DDA initiated the Façade Improvement Program which led to the installation of nearly 20 awnings and seven unique storefront renovations in 2019. Improvement projects ranged from new paint jobs and murals, to full-fledged transformations like the one at Rêve Coffee Roasters. We also partnered with the owners of Rock 'n' Bowl de Lafayette to install 40 self-watering hanging baskets along Jefferson Street, bringing seasonal pops of color to the streetscape. We hope that these projects will emphasize the power that small, incremental improvements can have on an entire district and inspire property owners to make their own investments.

Over the course of 2019, the word “momentum” continued to pop up when people would talk about Downtown Lafayette. It's easy to see why. In 2019, 14 new businesses opened; 2 parklets were constructed and activated; 190 residential units were under construction or in planning phases; DDA and DLU hosted more than 60 events with over 100,000 people in attendance; DLU added 100 new members; and Downtown was featured in upwards of 150 new stories.

The efforts of our team in 2019 were centered around bringing new energy and a sense of pride to the center of Lafayette. We hope you felt it. We thank those who live, invest, work, shop, and visit Downtown for contributing to our area's success. We look forward to continuing the momentum in 2020!



Anita R. Bernard

CEO, DOWNTOWN LAFAYETTE



DOWNTOWN LEADERSHIP

2019 DDA BOARD

Miles Matt – *Chairman*
 Lisa Thomas – *Secretary/Treasurer*
 Mike Delcambre
 Ross Fontenot
 Jim Keaty
 Gus Rezende
 Greg Walls



Dedicated to the memory of

**STEVEN
MATT**

JULY 9, 1987 - APRIL 14, 2019

“Downtown is where it’s at!”

Steven was a devoted advocate of Downtown Lafayette. His love for the “live, work, play” atmosphere of the district was a part of his daily life.



2019 BY THE NUMBERS

14
BUSINESSES OPENED IN 2019

60+
EVENTS HOSTED BY DLU

4
RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES
IN DEVELOPMENT

13
FACADE IMPROVEMENT
PROJECTS

106
NUMBER OF NEW MEMBERS

150+
NEWS STORIES
ON DOWNTOWN

2019 DLU BOARD

Jason Matt – *President*
 David D'Aquin – *President-Elect*
 Julie Chauvin – *Secretary/Treasurer*
 Matthew Thibodeaux
 Nic Walts
 Michael LeBlanc
 Rev. Max Zehner
 Cindi Axtell
 Jonathan Barber
 Philippe Callais
 Eric Crozier
 Kyle Gideon
 Jared Guilliot
 Lisette Henderson
 Amy Jones
 Will LaBar
 Blake Lagneaux
 Mike Munzing
 Alex Prochaska
 Brad Ridge
 Luke Sonnier
 C.B. Talley
 Missy Theriot



Groundbreaking of Vermilion Lofts and Buchanan Heights

These two developments were the first major residential projects to break ground Downtown Lafayette in over a decade.

New awnings at Central Pizza & Bar and a fresh paint job at the Lagniappe Records/Rukus building were the first **Facade Improvement Projects** to be completed with assistance from DDA.

Rental Scooter Wars

Though the infamous Bird and Lime scooters technically landed Downtown in December of 2018, they became the talk of the town through the month of January and were put on hiatus by the council at the end of the month.

DDA releases toolkit to help potential businesses navigate the **Conditional Use Permit Process** for bar and nightlife establishments in the district.



"We're excited to be at the forefront of starting to build residential in Downtown, so people are not just playing down here and working down here, but they can live down here too."

-Stephen Ortego

Architect and developer of Vermilion Lofts

JANUARY



Downtown's first parklet was installed at Central Pizza & Bar, activating Jefferson Street in a new way.

Waitr Day brought hundreds of people Downtown to celebrate the technology company moving its offices to Jefferson Street.

Maureen Dugas Foster hired as first-ever Director of DLU
Maureen's role was established to focus on improving Downtown Lafayette's programming and membership efforts.

The Downtown Lunch & Learn series kicked off with a discussion on solutions to sewage capacity and other utility projects by LUS interim-director Jeffery Stewart.



MARCH

DTA! kicked off the Spring season with a homecoming show by Lafayette-native indie rockers, **GIVERS**.

Buchanan Garage RFP issued After closing due to structural concerns, the site of the Buchanan Street garage was opened for proposals from developers.

At the **Leadership Exchange trip to Greenville** Downtown CEO Anita Begnaud joined civic and business leaders for a canvassing trip to Greenville, SC—a city that pulled itself up from the threat of economic failure through public-private partnerships concentrating on revitalizing the urban core.

Downtown's second Lunch & Learn focused on Downtown as a creative and cultural district, discussing how businesses and artists can collaborate to take advantage of the unique pool of talent in the Acadiana area.

The Downtown Rooftop

Crawfish Boil broke attendance records with more than 800 Downtown supporters in attendance.

Festival International de

Louisiane brought over 300,000 visitors to Downtown for a weekend of free music from across the globe.

The first Downtown Meet-Up

was held at Tsunami Lounge. Guest speakers Jaci Russo and Michelle Ezell entertained attendees with stories of their careers as business owners in Downtown.

LEDA announced its purchase of the former Karma Nightclub building to be converted to new offices and a business incubator for Opportunity Machine.

New business news: Handy Stop announced plans to open a new grocery market in Downtown. Pavy Art + Design Studio opened on Festival International weekend.



Carpe Diem! Café & Wine Bar's ribbon cutting was held to celebrate the completion of renovations by the cafe's new owners, Liz and Andrew Payne.

Streetscape Improvement: Fresh crosswalk lines were painted on Jefferson Street and throughout the district.

A packed concert featuring The Revivalists brought thousands of young concert-goers Downtown for **the first-ever Downtown Rising.**

New business news: MANE Salon opened on Jefferson Street and celebrated with a ribbon cutting during ArtWalk.

MAY



the REVIVALISTS

"I grew up going to my grandmother's house in Downtown. For me, it's been exciting to see the rebuilding of a community – much like the one my mom has described from her childhood. Now that we live Downtown, I get to provide that feeling to my husband and our kids in the same places I first experienced it. I'm so excited to watch this community grow from our front porch."

–Maggi Bienvenu

Maggi and her husband Rusty were the first to join DLU at the Family Membership level.



The new façade at Tula Tacos + Amigos was one of 13 projects to be supported in 2019 by DDA's **Façade Improvement Grant Program**.

JUNE

New business news: Tula Tacos + Amigos opened as the newest hot spot for unique tacos and drinks on Jefferson Street.

June began with a **torrential downpour** that flooded the Jefferson Street underpass along with a number of Downtown businesses. This flooding launched a community conversation about the need for improved drainage infrastructure in the district.

Lafayette's UDC received a **prestigious urban planning award for its Downtown code** from the Form-Based Codes Institute at Smart Growth America. The Downtown code was a result of cooperation between DDA and LCG using DDA's Downtown Action Plan as a guide.

Four proposals were submitted for the **Buchanan Garage RFP** with a range of plans from simply repairing the garage to converting almost the entire block to a mixed use development with an expanded garage, a hotel, apartments, and retail space.

Local developers and representatives from DDA and LEDA met with representatives of LNECD to discuss the potential **redevelopment of the historic Evangeline Hotel building**.



The **Downtown Lunch & Learn on Accessibility** brought together DLU members and LCG engineers to discuss plans to create friendlier streets and sidewalks for pedestrians and disabled citizens in Downtown Lafayette.

As part of a partnership with Rock'n' Bowl de Lafayette, DDA installed **40 new hanging flower baskets** along Jefferson Street.

New business news: Scratch kitchen opened, providing a permanent location for Lafayette's favorite farm-to-table food truck.

The **Buchanan Heights Post Groundbreaking** and **Vermilion Lofts Topping Out Party** gave Downtown stakeholders an inside look at the progress on two major residential developments in the district.

The first-ever **Downtown Sno-Ball Festival** brought an estimated 8,000 people to Parc Sans Souci to celebrate South Louisiana's most beloved icy treat.

New business news: The Stand on Lee opened with the goal to provide a cozy and delicious source for late night food.

The **Downtown Safety Summit** featured a panel of local law enforcement representatives who discussed issues of safety—from nightlife to panhandling and homelessness—with DLU members and Downtown stakeholders.

“We’re excited to be a part of the transformation we’ve been documenting in downtown Lafayette.”

–**Kristen Askelson of The Acadiana Advocate** on their move into a new Downtown office space.



AUGUST

A new season of **Downtown Alive!** kicked off with first-ever presenting sponsor: Evangeline Maid.

Downtown Lafayette held **two political forums** for Lafayette's City & Parish Councils and Mayor-President candidates. These forums were broadcast by AOC and helped local voters to learn about the candidates views on the importance of the Downtown District to Lafayette's culture and economy.

Downtown Lafayette launched a new website with a revamped events calendar, new blog page, and enhanced development tools and resources, to better highlight the programming, news, and activities occurring regularly in the district.

DLU and DDA boards initiated a strategic planning process to gather feedback for a three year plan that will aid the two organizations in working together to represent and support Downtown's growth.



SEPTEMBER



Downtown celebrated a significant milestone by hosting ribbon cutting for a brand new playground, the “**Kiwanis Club of Acadiana Harmony Park**” at the Children’s Museum of Acadiana.

OCTOBER

Downtown tech and IT company, **Perficient announced plans to hire 70 new employees** at their Downtown Delivery Center on Jefferson Street.

The **Vermilion parking garage payment process** was updated to allow visitors to pay using credit cards. The garage had previously only accepted cash or checks.

New business news: Bougie Bar opened, offering a custom candle making experience for date nights and parties.

Dirk Guidry completed the **new mural at the Evangeline Maid bakery**. The mural celebrates a Downtown business with a 100-year history in Acadiana.

Construction fencing was installed at the Old Federal Courthouse, marking the start of work on the development that will convert the long vacant municipal building into a mixture of residential units and retail spaces.

DLU hosted a **Small Business Saturday** press conference and media campaign that brought attention to the many locally-owned small businesses in Downtown and their impact on the economy of Acadiana.

The **Halo Building** on Clinton Street finished their façade, aided by **DDA's Façade Improvement Program**. The building's new facade features a swirling mural by artist Brett Chigoy.

Lafayette General announced plans to reopen the **Lafayette Community Health Care Clinic** in Freetown. This clinic will be a valuable resource for the district, providing access to affordable healthcare for Downtown residents and neighboring areas.

NOVEMBER



Wayne Toups hosted the **Evangeline Maid Centennial Celebration** at Downtown Alive!—bringing the community together to celebrate a brand with a 100-year history in Acadiana.



Thanks to a considerable financial investment from the DLU board, Downtown's first-ever **Merry & Bright Christmas** filled the district with holiday cheer. The series of events featured businesses and organizations competing to decorate their storefronts and Christmas trees. The kick-off concert with Keith Frank and Pine Leaf Boys brought thousands to celebrate the lighting of the official Christmas Tree with Mayor-President Josh Guillory. Other events like the December ArtWalk, Miracle at Pamplona, and the Sonic Christmas parade helped to keep all of the district active throughout the holiday season.

The **Downtown Economic Development District** was approved by the City-Parish Council, paving the way to fund much-needed infrastructure improvements in Downtown.

"We feel it's in the interest of Downtown for us to step up," -**Rebekke Miller of LPTFA** whose board voted to fund construction of a new sewer lift station, which will make residential developments in the district possible.

Rêve and the former Steampress Cafe building on Jefferson completed renovations to their storefronts, funded in part by DDA's Façade Improvement Grant. Rêve used the opportunity to fully remodel their interior in addition to a new paint job and custom sign, as well as awnings and built in seating on the exterior of the café.

DECEMBER

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2020

FOCUS: DEVELOPMENT

Work with the EDD board, City Council, and LCG administration to fund catalyst infrastructure projects.

Support public and private development efforts.

Build a stronger business climate in the district.

FOCUS: EVENTS + PROGRAMMING

60+ events planned for 2020.

Better event production quality through partnerships with other organizations.

More networking opportunities for members.

Continued focus on family-friendly activities.

FOCUS: COMMUNITY

Growing Downtown as a neighborhood, as we celebrate the completion of a new wave of residential developments.

Advocate for the district's needs.

Strengthen connections with members.

Continue to inform followers with meaningful

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