2017 Downtown Tempe Authority Stakeholder Analysis
Executive Summary

Downtown Tempe Authority (DTA) conducted this research project to learn more about the changing downtown marketplace and to identify business development opportunities. In addition, we wanted to solicit stakeholder feedback on the performance of DTA to guide our work in fulfilling our mission, vision, and goals as an Enhanced Services District.

The project established baseline data that will be used to determine metrics and benchmarks for the work of our organization as well as to identify ways we can better serve our stakeholders. The information gathered provides insight into how the downtown stakeholders view the downtown district, their preferences, and insights. Data collection included the use of surveys and focus groups and focused on five primary areas:

- Clean & Safe
- Parking
- Business Improvement/Development
- Downtown Improvements & Top Challenges
- Feedback on DTA Performance
The Big Picture

People who spend time in downtown Tempe like the look and feel of the district and are excited about the growth of the area. They stated that “all of the things there are to do here” and walkability are the greatest strengths. The sentiment is that there is more work here to be done on safety, traffic and parking issues. Additionally, the consensus is there needs to be more shopping options. Below are high-level responses in each of the focus areas. More details follow.

Clean & Safe

Consumer stakeholders (residents, workers and college students) feel safe downtown during the day, while only half of the business stakeholders (merchants and property owners) do. At night, 40% of the consumer stakeholders feel safe, while only 30% of the business stakeholders do. Homeless and transients in the district present an area for concern for all stakeholders. Consumer stakeholders indicate it makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable with the majority saying the homeless/transient presence on the street impacts how often they visit district businesses.

Traffic & Parking

Access to major roads and freeways makes downtown a good location to work and live, but the traffic getting here during certain times of the work day, even though the distance is short, is a major headache for residents and workers. Very few stakeholders feel there is ample or convenient parking downtown and the word ‘hassle’ was used frequently to describe parking in the district.

Business Improvement/Development

With the exception of college students, few consumer stakeholders feel the downtown businesses sell products and services they want. Almost half of college students surveyed are content with business offerings. 76% of the business stakeholders feel downtown Tempe is an excellent place to own property or own a business.
Downtown Improvement & Top Challenges

Residents and workers would like to see continued sidewalk & street improvements, more general lighting, trash receptacles and exterior landscaping and flowers. Property owners and merchants would like to see more public art, pedestrian wayfinding, streetscape improvements and exterior landscaping and flowers. Stakeholders reported they would like to see more entertainment options & venues, public parking, bike/walking trails and for Tempe Beach Park to be developed as a community asset. According to business stakeholders, the greatest issues facing downtown include homeless/vagrants/public safety, insufficient & inaccessible parking and traffic on surface streets. Consumer stakeholders respond the homeless population, lack of diverse retail, traffic and safety are big disadvantages to living or working downtown.

Feedback on DTA Performance

Responding to the question, what can DTA do to enhance downtown, the business stakeholders (merchants and property owners) indicated that DTA should promote downtown as a destination, solve the homeless issue, provide security in dark places and behind buildings, provide more parking, promote a better retail mix, produce or encourage more events and more art. To serve property owners and merchants specifically, respondents said DTA should promote downtown as a destination, improve perceptions of safety, provide better wayfinding for parking, promote downtown as more than a college town and continue improving the streetscape, keeping it clean and well maintained.
Methodology

The 2017 Downtown Tempe Stakeholder Analysis was conducted from June 5 – September 1, 2017. The goal of the Stakeholder Analysis was to understand the characteristics, perceptions, preferences and behaviors of downtown stakeholders including:

- Business-oriented stakeholders: property owners and merchants
- Consumer-oriented stakeholders: the workers, residents, visitors and college students.

The analysis should not be construed as a comprehensive demographic or scientific analysis of Downtown Tempe.

Downtown Tempe Authority is an Enhanced Services District consisting of less than ½ a square mile. The geographic boundaries of the district are University Blvd., College Avenue, Farmer Avenue and Tempe Town Lake. Before starting the online survey or participating in a focus group, all respondents were asked to confirm their understanding of the boundaries of the district by viewing a map and to base all of their answers on this specific area.

556 people responded to the 2017 DTA Stakeholder Surveys
The analysis included two methods of data collection from stakeholders: online surveys and focus groups.

Online Surveys

A separate survey was used for each stakeholder group, each ranging from 21 to 28 questions and taking 12–15 minutes to complete. Surveys used the online platform SurveyMonkey (www.SurveyMonkey.com) and its proprietary survey design, implementation and analysis tools. A total of 556 stakeholders, 18 years of age or older, completed the surveys.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted for each stakeholder group with a total of 40 participants. Two additional stakeholder groups were included for the focus groups: Hospitality professionals from district hotels to gather preferences and perceptions of downtown visitors and Young Professionals to gather preferences and perceptions of the millennial worker. Each focus group lasted one hour and consisted of 7 – 12 people. The sessions were filmed and notes were taken to document responses. The discussion featured a downtown S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats), questions about the stakeholder’s perceptions and experiences and questions and feedback on the services that DTA provides for the district.

Outreach was conducted to promote the surveys and focus group participation via email and personal contact to property owners, residential and commercial property managers; major downtown employers, hotels and merchants, and ASU departments, student clubs and organizations. A chance to win a staycation in downtown Tempe for completing the survey was offered as an incentive for the online survey and lunch/snacks were provided to focus group participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
<th>Focus Group Participants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property Owners</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Residents</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Students</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Professionals</td>
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Survey & Focus Group Highlights

Clean & Safe

73% of the consumer stakeholders feel safe downtown during the day, while only 50% of the business stakeholders feel safe during the day. At night, 40% of the consumer stakeholders feel safe downtown while only 30% of the business stakeholders feel safe. Focus group participants, specifically the workers and residents, reported they ‘sometimes’ feel safe downtown and other times they don’t. Females, in particular, reported feeling unsafe, specifically after dark. Homeless and transients make them feel uncomfortable and unsafe. Residents commented that they don’t feel the ambassadors have adequate training or that community policing is as strong as it could be.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>College Students</th>
<th>Property Owners</th>
<th>Merchants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feel safe downtown at night</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel safe downtown during the day</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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Parking

12% of the consumer stakeholders feel there is plenty of convenient parking downtown and only 36% of the business stakeholders feel there is ample parking downtown. In focus groups, residents and workers stated that they would like to see the city validate parking for diners or that there should be more free parking, similar to Gilbert or Scottsdale. Workers commented that several of the large parking campuses, such as Centerpoint/Chase garage and Hayden Ferry perceive that only those employed there can park and that it’s not open to the public.
Business Improvement/Development

28% of the consumer stakeholders feel that the downtown businesses sell products and services they want to buy. In focus groups, residents and workers indicated they would like to see more variety of stores and adult-oriented shopping and dining. 46% of college students feel that businesses in downtown Tempe offer products and services they want. Six out of the eight workers in the focus group responded that they do not come downtown outside of work. 66% of the consumer stakeholders feel homeless/transients impact how often they visit businesses downtown.

When asked to identify specific store brands they wanted to see downtown, respondents most often named:

In addition, respondents also requested local boutique stores and ethnic format restaurants.

76% of the business stakeholders feel downtown Tempe is an excellent place to own property/own a business. Its proximity to ASU, central valley location and the culture of a university town keep it "hip and happening". Merchants in the focus group said the two main disadvantages to owning/operating a business downtown are parking (lack of, cost of) and the erratic/aggressive behavior of the transient population.
Downtown Improvements

Downtown improvements that are very important or important to residents and workers include sidewalk & street improvements (97%), general lighting (96%), trash receptacles (93%), and exterior landscaping & flowers (89%). Improvements marked as very important or important by property owners and merchants were public art (91%), pedestrian wayfinding (86%), streetscape improvements (86%) and exterior landscaping & flowers (71%).

Residents and workers responded that they would like to see the following community assets developed: entertainment options & venues, bike & walking trails, Tempe Beach Park and expanded public parking.

Top Challenges

For property owners and merchants alike, top issues facing downtown are homeless/vagrants/public safety, parking (cheaper/more accessible) and traffic. Property owners included continued ability to allow mixed-use and dense projects. Merchants indicated competitive markets in the valley are also a top concern.

Top challenges for merchants include lack of pedestrian traffic (93%), transient and panhandling (86%) and the seasonality of sales (85%). In the focus group, merchants reported summer is the most difficult due to lack of pedestrian traffic and they believe that the loss of large music events at Tempe Beach Park has been a big hit to their revenue.
The top challenges for property owners include transient/panhandling/homelessness (100%), the perception of safety, building maintenance/upkeep & construction (3-way tie, 88%) and traffic on surface streets and insufficient parking (tie, 75%).

Business Stakeholder Feedback on DTA Performance

What can DTA do to enhance downtown?

Merchants responded they would like DTA to promote downtown as a destination, solve the homeless issue, provide more parking, place lights in trees 365 days a year, build public restrooms, provide security behind buildings & in dark places and attract or produce more events in the district.

Property owners responded they would like to see DTA solve the homeless issue by working with state and city authorities, increase public safety in the district, promote a better mix of uses rather than just bars and restaurants (enhance tenant mix) and add more arts.

What can DTA do to better serve you?

Merchants responded DTA should promote downtown as a destination, provide more wayfinding signage for parking, work to influence more events to come downtown and to Tempe Beach Park, provide more & better parking, work to remove transients to make the perception of safety better, work on the connectivity of Mill to 7th Street, College Avenue and other areas of downtown. Focus group participants reported they want more events that bring people to the street and also voiced concern that 19% of our budget for Safety Patrol may not be enough. They are concerned about the violence on the street (aggressive panhandling, vandalism) and their questions demonstrate a belief that nothing is being done to aid the situation.

Property owners responded for DTA to "keep doing what you are doing" and promote downtown as more than a college town with good jobs and professionals. Additionally, there is a desire to have downtown Tempe get more involved in project approvals, solve/help with transient issues and perception of safety, welcome new tenants and get them involved with the community, put trash cans on College Avenue, and provide better streetscape and parking wayfinding.
Existing DTA resources that are most useful for merchants include weekly communication (85%), Safety Patrol Program (81%), and Clean Team (78%). Merchants responded the events with the highest impact on sales include Spring & Fall Tempe Festival of the Arts (52%), ASU athletic events (44%), music festivals/events at Tempe Beach Park (41%) and Halloween (40%).

Applying What We Learned

With these findings come new opportunities to refine our work

Here are some examples of how DTA is working to apply what we learned from this research to our programs and initiatives:

Reinforcing the Progress We’re Making to Keep Downtown Tempe Safe

We’re expanding our outreach efforts to our stakeholders to communicate the facts about our safety program, their impact on the district and how we coordinate our work with the Tempe Police Department. We’ll continue this engagement with street-level merchants and begin to engage the residents and office workers in a similar effort.

Communicating the Strategies & Tools That Actively Manage the District’s Growth

Our team is in the process of updating and expanding upon a collection of plans and actionable tools (Annual Report, Workplan & Budget, Pedestrian, Economic Impact & Retail Reports) that guide our work. This research helped us determine where to put our resources, and our 2018–19 work plan reflects the input of this document. We’ll keep the updates coming toward our progress and will continue to solicit feedback from our stakeholders.

Helping Attract More Feet to the Street

With the addition of new staff members devoted to event planning and production, we will continue the work to enhance our traditional events (Tempe Festival of the Arts, Fantasy of Lights Opening Night Parade & Boat Parade) as well as work to create and attract new events and placemaking activations that bring people to the district. Finally, we will continue to devote our resources toward marketing the district as a destination and promote the accessibility of parking. We will track the reach of those campaigns and report out regularly.
Next Steps

DTA will conduct a stakeholder analysis every two years with the next analysis scheduled for summer 2019. With the 2017 analysis as our baseline, we will survey and talk with district stakeholders to understand the downtown marketplace, identify business development opportunities and measure our progress as an Enhanced Services District. In 2019, we plan to add another stakeholder group to the mix: Tempe residents that do not live in the district. This will provide us with an additional perspective on our district and will help as we work to serve our stakeholders.

We would like to thank the 596 residents, workers, merchants, property owners and college students who took time to participate in this study.

Downtown Tempe Authority

We’re your dedicated team of dreamers and doers, buzz builders and business boomers and overall urban advocates who are leading the thrilling rise of Downtown Tempe. Since 1993, the award–winning Downtown Tempe Authority has been the private, non–profit organization that works in partnership with the City of Tempe to increase the value of Downtown Tempe through enhanced management, safety, marketing and promotional services on behalf of DTA members and other downtown stakeholders.

www.downtowntempe.com

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