

RDP Response to Councilmember Edwards questions regarding BIDs

1. What are the specific benefits the BID is providing to businesses?

Benefits in a business-license based BID are based on the goals of the organization and what can be provided financially. They can be direct benefits such as advertising or security; indirect benefits such as advocacy, events to bring visitors, or improving the downtown physical environment. They can also be intangible benefits such as making downtown more attractive to work and live in.

This differs from a property-based BID where benefits are based on a formula tied directly to an assessment on property footage or value and incorporated within a management plan.

RDP as the Downtown BID manager provides benefits in its six areas of focus; parking activities, beautification, public events, music in public places, promotion of business activities, and security. It also provides other benefits as circumstances arise.

2. How do we know the attendant benefits have been achieved?

The achieved benefits are shown as deliverables in the specified areas.

Promotion of Business Activities:

Direct benefit – RDP promotes downtown, downtown businesses, and downtown attractions and offerings through print media, electronic media, and other communications and marketing methods. Marketing includes ads, website, Facebook and Instagram pages plus Constant Contact event updates.

Direct benefit – RDP produces a monthly newsletter in print and online to communicate items of interest and importance, and to help build business capacity.

Direct benefit – RDP produces a Pocket and Dining Guide that lists all downtown shops and most services, and information on downtown restaurants by category. The guide is provided to businesses, hotels, and other locations and can also be downloaded from the website. The Downtown Riverside Historic Walking Guide is a companion piece.

Direct benefit – RDP offers and co-promotes workshops and seminars of interest and information to businesses. RDP also works with other organizations to promote downtown businesses.

Direct benefit – RDP sends out a welcome package to all new businesses and announces them in the BID bulletin. The welcome package includes copies of all printed materials including the organization's annual calendar, "What's Up with RDP", and Annual Report.

Security:

Direct benefit – RDP Ambassadors patrol the downtown BID area from 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Saturday. They assist with moving transients along and other problems encountered by downtown businesses.

Direct benefit – Recognizing the need for extra security during the pandemic, RDP funded additional external safety patrols. RDP spent \$168,337 on such patrols during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2021, and allocated an additional \$67,160 for the remainder of calendar 2021. Continuing the external patrols will be dependent on funding.

Indirect benefit – RDP monitors security issues through a committee, distributes updates, and holds workshops as necessary.

Downtown Events / Music in Public Places:

Indirect benefit – RDP produces and sponsors events that bring visitors and business patrons to downtown.

Indirect benefit – RDP promotes downtown events through various media including a monthly calendar of events and an event guide, encouraging visits to downtown.

Beautification:

Indirect benefit – RDP has funded outdoor murals, assisted in repairing a historic pergola, and purchased cleaning equipment for the City to use. Recently RDP removed Ficus trees that were damaging sidewalks and replaced them with Goldenrain trees. RDP also improved the three alleys between Main and Orange from Mission Inn to 10th with new lighting and public art. The alley adjacent to The Mark will be considered for lighting and public art in 2022.

Parking:

Direct benefit - To assist visitors in navigating downtown, RDP partners with the City on a downtown directory map available online.

Indirect benefit – RDP advocates on issues such as the potential loss of 325 parking spaces from the downtown parking inventory by the sale of garages 1 and 2, and the need to increase evening parking rates to improve security.

3. How are the staff and activities responding to emerging needs, and 4. How are these needs identified?

The needs of businesses in the Downtown BID can change as downtown changes, with certain sectors becoming more or less prominent. Or they can emerge in response to environmental changes such as the COVID-19 and variant pandemic. The RDP Board is reflective of downtown businesses and sectors, and along with staff, can identify and respond to those emerging needs. In addition, businesses contact RDP directly with concerns, issues, and specific requests that can evolve into goals and benefits.

For example, RDP redirected its resources and dipped deep into its reserve funds to make business and patron security a top priority during the pandemic. This was driven by concerns from businesses to RDP staff and Board about increasing issues caused by transients, particularly in the flex dining spaces in the Downtown Entertainment District and in business properties within the broader BID area.

RDP also identified a source for disposable masks, and thanks to the County, was able to supply businesses with masks as needed.

5. What are the strategic goals of the BID, and how is progress tracked over time?

RDP's assessment of and response to those emerging needs is reflected in its activities short-term and its goals longer term.

To achieve the vision of Downtown Riverside as a regional destination for business and service industries that is recognized for its quality of cultural life and urban living opportunities, RDP promotes, represents, and manages a supportive environment.

RDP current goals are to promote downtown Riverside as a destination, enhance RDP's influence and activities with downtown stakeholders, and promote Riverside as a regional economic, cultural, and residential center. Progress has been tracked by effectiveness of advertising, name recognition of RDP, and event attendance.

With respect to future goals, RDP is in the process of preparing a strategic plan to cover 2022 through 2026. The process is expected to be completed by the end of 2021 with implementation starting January 2022. Some initial findings include RDP increasing its advocacy efforts and outreach to businesses, as well as adding new programs such as 'clean and safe' efforts. Providing those efforts will require RDP to find new sources of funding.