

## 2021 Annual Report

Downtown Frankfort, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit established to foster a vibrant historic downtown by facilitating improved infrastructure, aesthetics and building integrity; encourage a progressive business environment; and to promote quality arts, cultural and community activities.

### *President's Message, Rene' True*

As we reflect on 2021, downtown Frankfort came back to life after the very challenging pandemic year of 2020. Although we are still dealing with the effects of Covid-19, DFI was able to host several outdoor events in 2021 giving the community some semblance of normality. As you read through the many accomplishments of DFI in 2021, it is good to remember that this was done with only one full-time employee, with the help of dozens of volunteers. Without the thousands of volunteer hours, DFI could not accomplish the items listed in this annual report. Here's to hoping for an even stronger and more vibrant downtown for 2022 under the leadership of DFI Executive Director – Kaylah Smith and with an assist from dedicated volunteers.

### *Downtown Master Plan*

DFI continues to assist the City of Frankfort in implementing the Downtown Master Plan.

Although the city is responsible for overall plan implementation, DFI plays key roles in providing outside feedback



and input on various plan components. DFI assisted the city to receive the APA Award in Frankfort Arts Master Plan. DFI was the non-profit partner for this NEA grant. The city could not have applied without a non-profit partner. DFI helped with giving the city suggestions for prioritizing plan implementation; serving on the committee to select the River Walk consultant & providing ongoing feedback to the consultants; continued implementation of the Bourbon Tourism strategies in the plan; assisting the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist Commission and participating in feedback sessions with the consultant for the public arts component of the master plan. Going forward, DFI hopes to continue playing a role in seeing the Master Plan strategies and initiatives become reality.

## Parcels B&C TIF Support

The DFI Board feels that the development of Parcels B & C represents the largest economic impact in a generation, that could benefit Downtown Frankfort and the community. The DFI Board still supports the development of Parcels B & C.

## DFI Events

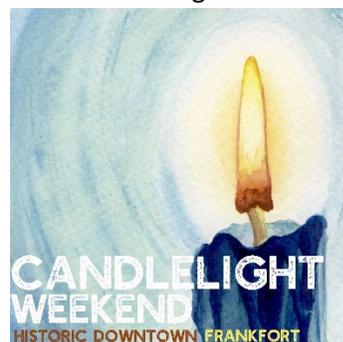
DFI kicked off their event season with the Summer Concert Series. The first concert began on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and the last concert ended on September 9<sup>th</sup>. WesBanco remained the title



sponsor for the series. Investors Heritage was also a sponsor for the series. Hulette's Printing Company provided DFI with free print posters

advertising the concert dates. This event could not be possible without our amazing sponsors. We thank each of them deeply.

DFI played the lead role as administrative, fundraising, and supportive planning for the 41<sup>st</sup> annual Candlelight event that kicks off the



holiday shopping season. Commonwealth Credit Union remained the title sponsor. CCU also provided this year's event with an ice-skating rink

located in the Farmer's Market. DFI brought back the carriage rides which is always a fan favorite. The carriage rides were sponsored by Harrod Brothers Funeral Home. KSU played an important role in this year's event by providing a sponsorship, volunteers, and face painting for all children. DFI provided Disney characters (Elsa and Olaf) who walked around each night greeting and taking pictures with families. Various merchants participated this year and had their own specials happening in their stores/restaurants. Kentucky Historical Society provided many activities, including the illuminations exhibit.

DFI's major fundraising event of the year, VIP Rare & Collectable Bourbon Auction, was held on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. DFI combined the auction with Bourbon on the Banks Festival. The total raised for Downtown Frankfort, Inc. (DFI) from bottles



donated by Buffalo Trace is \$9,350. This is huge for our small nonprofit that works on supporting development, tourism, and quality of life in downtown

Frankfort. This includes direct work in cooperation with the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist Commission on bourbon tourism. The overall auction netted \$14,710 for DFI, but the auction would not be the draw that it is without the support of Buffalo Trace. The donated bottles made this year's auction the biggest yet with 37 auction items sold in one night.

## Downtown Marketing Plan

DFI had a vision and goal in mind to increase the marketing effort to bring in more tourists to our downtown area. Our first action was to create a strategic plan. First, we started with in-house items. DFI updated our website with better

pictures from the talented, Dr. Gene Burch, updated tabs to make it more user friendly and provided more detailed information. We increased our followers on Facebook by creating more consistent posts, sharing more merchant content, creating board member highlight posts, and business spotlight posts. Next, we pushed for a marketing sponsor. DFI wanted to be more visible in print ads, such as the State Journal and Newcomer's Guide to advertise about upcoming events and promoting activities to do in downtown. CCU became our bronze sponsor and because of their sponsorship we were able to purchase



additional print ads. DFI didn't want to stop there. We wanted to really showoff our downtown and invite visitors to eat, shop, and explore in historic downtown Frankfort. We were able to work with Lamar Advertising Company of Lexington to secure a billboard right by Buffalo Trace. Our dream became reality when Community Trust Bank agreed to become our billboard sponsor. DFI had the billboard up inviting visitors to explore our downtown during the busiest time of the summer, April-May, and July-August.

### *Downtown Festival Lights*

Downtown Frankfort, Inc. extensively worked toward a downtown revitalization project, which included getting outside festival lights strung across St. Clair. This project was very important to us because we feel this would benefit Downtown Frankfort in more than one way. It would not only create an ambience feel but would draw in tourist. When we have more

tourist then our downtown merchants thrive, and so does our overall community.

Our first step was to receive the City of Frankfort's permission. We created a proposal which included our vision on how the lights will hang, receive building owner's permission, secure a sponsor, and use the sponsorship to purchase the lights. Frankfort Plant Board agreed to become our Downtown Festival Lights sponsor! We cannot thank them enough. This project has been a community effort. We have teamed up with the City of Frankfort and their Public Works department on finalizing and completing this project. We hope to see the lights up beginning of 2022.



### *Entertainment Destination Center (EDC)*

Downtown Frankfort, Inc. is proud to have played an integral role in seeing the Frankfort's new Entertainment Destination Center to fruition. Five years ago, DFI recognized that Frankfort was not fully taking advantage of bourbon tourism trends. In fact, Frankfort had no strategy at all for bourbon tourism. To address the issue, DFI formed the Bourbon Strategies Committee to develop strategies to encourage the bourbon tourist to spend their dollars in downtown Frankfort. The DFI Bourbon Strategies Committee efforts were later validated by the Downtown Master Plan, which included bourbon tourism as a major focus for downtown. Through the dedicated work of the DFI Bourbon Strategies Committee, many bourbon related initiatives were developed, such as: the bourbon destination pole at the corner of St. Clair and Main Streets, the bourbon walking history tours, the Capital City Museum bourbon exhibit, and the establishment of the Frankfort Bourbon Society.

Through the DFI Bourbon Strategies Committee, DFI led the charge to establish an Entertainment Destination Center (EDC) in downtown Frankfort. DFI with our partners, the Kentucky Capital Development Corporation, and the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist Commission, encouraged the city to apply and implement an Entertainment Destination Center for downtown.

An EDC is an ABC license held by the City of Frankfort that allows permitted downtown restaurants and bars to serve open-container alcoholic beverages to-go. Patrons are allowed to purchase drinks to-go in specially designated cups and walk with them in Downtown Frankfort during designated times. On June 25<sup>th</sup>,



the Frankfort Bourbon Society and Bourbon on the Banks sponsored the entertainment for the grand opening of the MIX District. The City of

Frankfort implemented this event. DFI currently assists the city with storing the MIX cups in DFI's office and distributing the cups out when participating restaurants have paid and need more.

### *DFI Board Happenings*

DFI had two new openings for board members. The DFI board agreed to have a representative from WesBanco. The two new board members are Deirdre Calvert and Diane Strong. Also, the board voted on 2022 Executive Committee: Anna Beth Bobbitt, President; John Senter, Vice President; Jack Kennedy, Secretary; Karl Lawrence, Treasurer.

### *4P Agreement*

For the past several months, the staff and Boards of Directors from the four local entities involved with business development, local events, tourism, and economic development have met to discuss strategic objectives and goals to pursue our common goals and reduce duplication of efforts. The entities include the Frankfort Area Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Frankfort Inc, the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist Commission, and the Kentucky Capital Development Corporation (4P). The 4P team had identified the following list of common objectives and has committed to work together to support and achieve these goals. Continue support and momentum for growth and development of downtown, revisit and implement existing City approved plans, support activities that promote Frankfort/Franklin County as "Open for Business" and consistently oppose those activities that do not and participate in the Comprehensive Plan process. The 4P team drafted a letter of agreement and sent to all local and county officials.

### *Note from Executive Director*

I officially have one full year in the books now! This year has been very challenging and rewarding for me at the same time. I have made wonderful friendships and partnerships in our community. I will take 2021 as a learning year and make 2022 the best year yet. I have a lot of plans and personal goals set for myself and our downtown. I hope to become more visible and to let everyone know my office door is always open. Cheers to year #2!

Kaylah Smith, Executive Director.

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