



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

June 13, 2017

Dear Board and Advisory Committee Members:

Following is a summary of the Partnership's activities since our last board meeting of March 23rd.

EVENTS:

1. **Books In Bloom**

The first annual Downtown Columbia Book Festival, Books in Bloom, had a successful launch on Sunday, June 11th. Our consultants, BrandLink, did a phenomenal job of securing great talent – writers, journalists and media talent – as well as programming other activities such as a poetry wall and a coloring wall. Our partners, The Howard County Library System, provided children's activities to complement the children's authors secured by BrandLink, and used the Book Festival to kick off their summer reading program. BrandLink estimates that at least 1000 people visited the Festival over the course of the 5 hour event.

As with all first efforts, there are lessons learned that will help us build on our initial success. We will dissect what worked and what didn't as we plan for next year's Books in Bloom.

Our "home team" of Vanessa Rodriguez, Nancy Tucker, Jamie Misotti, Jean Moon and Tim Singleton worked tirelessly with BrandLink on everything from PR and Communications to installing signage, setting up chairs, and tasting the gelato from Dolcizza.

I want to acknowledge the significant financial contribution of the Howard Hughes Corporation as presenting sponsor, and sponsorships from the Columbia Association, M&T Bank, Harkins Builders and Wells Associates.

1. **Discover Downtown 5K Race**

With Books in Bloom now "in the books" we are turning our attention to the 4th annual 5K race to be held on September 10th. We have engaged Corrigan Sports to organize the race and hope to increase last year's numbers by at least 100 racers.

2. **Holiday – Festive Fridays**

We will also begin to plan for our holiday event, "Festive Fridays," with the intent of having more robust programming over several days and/or weekends.

MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS:

1. **Branding: Logo and website.** Work is progressing on our branding initiative, with Gold Dog as our consultant. While we had hoped to launch a new website this month we are pushing the launch back to late summer/early fall. We are beginning the tedious task of populating the basic pages of a more robust website that will be found under a new URL: www.dtcpartnership.com.

You may recall Gold Dog's presentation on establishing the brand identity for the Downtown Columbia Partnership at our December board meeting. We have chosen a logo and a color palette that will visually communicate the goals and values of the Downtown Columbia Partnership. Vanessa will briefly explain.

2. **Social Media:** our social media platform will be expanded as we drive traffic to our new website, and use the website to increase interest in and activity on our social media. Books In Bloom is a good example of the synergy that can be created between websites and other social media when there is content and a strategy to generate interest in that content.

Followers on our website grew by over 5% since the promotion of Books in Bloom began, and posts promoting the event numbered around 50,000, a significant number. Instagram activity was also very robust during the event itself.

TRANSPORTATION – TDMP

The Partnership and Howard County staff continue to work with Wells & Associates to complete the TDMP. While the work is advancing there have been several components of the plan that have proven to be challenging and have delayed the completion of the work. We are committed to producing a final product that can be effectively implemented.

WALKABILITY

Several months ago we discussed the need to increase the “walkability” of Downtown Columbia as we evolve into a true urban center. This concept includes providing sidewalks that encourage pedestrian activity and help drive foot traffic to street-level retail, crosswalks with signage that create a safe environment and wayfinding signage to help pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles coexist and navigate around Downtown.

Joan Lancos offered to form a committee and has done some preliminary research. The committee – Joan, Mike Davis, Linda Wengel and myself – are meeting right after the board meeting and welcome anyone else who would like to participate to join us.

RECRUITMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The recruitment of a full-time Executive Director has taken longer than expected. Dave Feehan and Greg will elaborate.