



## MEMO

To: Jaime Matthews, Business Services Manager  
From: Joey Robison, Executive Assistant  
Subject: Executive Summary of Downtown Summit Held October 21, 2013  
Date: November 6, 2013

### Summary

#### Going Well

1. Tourism
2. Focus on local and independent businesses and variety of restaurants
3. Entertainment and places, like parks and historic buildings
4. Implementation of the development guidelines from the Downtown Master Plan

#### Areas for improvement

1. Cleanliness of sidewalks and trash cans, and City's response time to cleanliness issues
2. Public Safety- increase in APD levels
3. Sidewalk repair/accessibility
4. Affordable housing
5. Diversity

### Introduction

The City of Asheville held a Downtown Summit to provide an opportunity for downtown business owners, residents, and advocates to express their views on what is going well downtown and where improvements are needed. The summit was well attended, with 46 people signed in (two of those were staff) and an estimated 60 community participants. Attendees were divided into 4 groups, and each group was facilitated by City staff. After the group generated a list, individuals had the opportunity to rank their top two concerns.

### Going Well

The groups saw many things that were going well downtown. The state of tourism, focus on local and independent businesses, and good variety of restaurants were viewed positively. The groups also highlighted other downtown successes, including the Civic Center, downtown events, street performers, preservation of historic buildings, and open spaces like Pack Square and Pritchard Park. It was noted that implementation of the development guidelines from the Downtown Master Plan was also going well.

### **Areas for Improvement**

#### **(mentioned by more than one group or ranked a top priority by multiple individuals)**

One of the group's greatest issues of concern was the cleanliness of downtown sidewalks. All four groups mentioned sidewalk or related cleanliness issues at least once, and eleven individuals ranked it as one of their two top priorities. Issues of particular concern included the City response time to clean-up requests (such as trash), cigarette butts, and dog waste. The cleanliness and maintenance of city trash cans, recycling, and newspaper racks were also mentioned by multiple people. Other specific shared concerns were graffiti downtown (listed by three of the four groups) and maintenance of City property (including weeding and mowing).

Safety was also identified as a top priority. Three groups raised a concern about Asheville Police Department staffing levels. Safety in some areas, crime, aggressive/transient homeless persons, and harassment of homeless/transient persons were also of concern to more than one person.

Safety of the physical environment was also discussed. Two groups listed sidewalk accessibility and repair as a concern, with four individuals ranking it as one of their top two priorities. Bikers that don't follow traffic rules were also a shared concern.

Providing affordable housing (noted by two groups and ranked as a top priority by four individuals) was a concern for many, as was efforts to increase diversity downtown. Housing chronic homeless, creating more opportunities for multimodal transportation, and preserving Triangle Park were other shared priorities. Green space on both the south side and west side was a concern for two groups.

Other concerns mentioned by multiple groups or ranked highly by more than one person included noise, nudity, the Handi Park/Flying Frog property (and the desire to have a park there), the negative side of "Beer City," and the hope for another attempt at the Business Improvement District (but with lower administrative costs).

### **Conclusion**

City Manager Gary Jackson ended the summit by sharing progress on some of the long-standing downtown concerns, such as a plan to purchase new garbage/recycling containers with dog waste bags and a cigarette butt receptacle and updated police department procedures for handling homelessness. The information gathered at the Downtown Summit will help the City of Asheville continue to address downtown issues.