

STAFF REPORT

City of Lancaster

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DATE: January 27, 2015

TO: Mayor Parris and City Council Members

FROM: Kelvin Tainatongo, Assistant to the City Manager
Chenin Dow, Management Analyst I

SUBJECT: **Approval of the Annual Report for the Downtown Lancaster Property and Business Improvement District**

Recommendation:

Approve the Downtown Lancaster Property and Business Improvement District (PBID) Annual Report for 2014, submitted by the BLVD Association.

Fiscal Impact:

None.

Background:

In July 2013, with the overwhelming support of more than 73% of downtown property owners, the Lancaster City Council established the Downtown Lancaster PBID. This marked the transition of The BLVD Association, an organization of downtown merchants founded in 1989, from a Parking and Business Improvement District (BID) which generated approximately \$25,000 annually for promotion of the downtown area to a Property and Business Improvement District (PBID) which generates more than \$260,000 annually.

These funds are utilized by the BLVD Association to create a more vibrant downtown and help its member businesses thrive. Funds are allocated in three major categories: Clean & Safe, Marketing and Promotions, and Administration & Advocacy. Throughout 2014, the BLVD Association and its newly elected Board of Directors set up the new PBID and launched a wide range of new initiatives to further the success of the award-winning downtown area. These activities, which are described in-depth in the attached 2014 Annual Report, are summarized below.

The BLVD Association's Clean & Safe Committee identified two major areas on which to focus in 2014: maintenance and security. The downtown district's needs in these two areas are being addressed via the services of Desert Haven Enterprises and the newly-created "BLVD Patrol."

In early 2014, the Association engaged the services of local nonprofit Desert Haven Enterprises to conduct cleanup and beautification efforts throughout the downtown district. Two Desert Haven crews, dubbed “Clean Teams,” work daily Monday through Friday to ensure the general cleanliness and aesthetic appeal of the BLVD. Services include removing trash and debris, assisting with landscaping, sweeping, cleaning street furniture, and more. Teams work on Lancaster Boulevard as well as all side streets throughout the BLVD district. These services augment the City of Lancaster’s previously existing maintenance services on the BLVD.

In addition, the Association has contracted with member business Security Defenders to launch the BLVD Patrol, a private security and ambassador program for the downtown district. The BLVD Patrol serves to not only augment the security of the BLVD, but also to act as customer ambassadors who can assist patrons as they frequent downtown destinations. As crime statistics and member feedback alike illustrate that the BLVD is already a very safe area, the BLVD Patrol focuses on minor quality-of-life issues and customer engagement.

The Association’s substantially increased budget permitted the organization to engage in significantly expanded marketing and promotions efforts in 2014. The Association contracted with a variety of local agencies to attract patrons to the downtown district, with advertising encompassing newspaper, direct mail, radio, billboards, television, and social media. In addition, the Association worked with AV Web Designs to completely redesign the Association website, www.theblvdlancaster.com.

In addition to its advertising efforts, the Association organized and/or participated in more than a dozen different special events to attract patrons downtown. The organization continued to support the City of Lancaster’s events, including Celebrate America on the BLVD, the Streets of Lancaster Grand Prix, the BooLVD Halloween and Harvest Festival, A Magical BLVD Christmas, and the weekly Farmers’ Markets. The Association also continued its own regular events, hosting the Wedding on the BLVD, BLVD Gifts of Health & Beauty, and the Music of the Season Choral Showcase.

2014 also marked the launch of several new events. The Association partnered with the City’s Lancaster Museum of Art & History (MOAH) to organize the monthly “Art Walk.” Held in conjunction with the Farmers’ Market during the warmer months, this event transforms the BLVD into a walking museum/art gallery by showcasing and selling the works of local artists in businesses throughout the downtown district. This event aims to attract new patrons downtown while supporting the local art community.

In November, the Association held its first-ever Small Business Saturday event. To capitalize on the national campaign organized by American Express, the Association organized a street fair-style event on the BeX Patio. The festivities featured displays illustrating the goods and services available at businesses throughout the downtown district, a raffle for gift certificates from dozens of different downtown businesses, giveaways to the first 250 shoppers, and special one-day-only lunch menus at downtown restaurants for just \$5.

Throughout late November and December, the Association hosted its inaugural Santa's Village. Held at the historic Western Hotel Museum, this new event featured photos with Santa, as well as a different holiday-themed movie each night. Santa's Village operated every Friday and Saturday from Small Business Saturday through Christmas, with movies ranging from classic favorites like *A Christmas Story* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* to newer hits such as *Elf* and *Frozen*. Approximately 200 families had photos taken throughout the six-night event, with still more attending to view the movies. In all, an estimated 2,000 people visited Santa's Village during its inaugural year.

The Association also launched its first comprehensive, downtown-wide gift certificate program just in time for the 2014 holiday season. Valid at more than 30 participating downtown businesses, gift certificates can be purchased in person at Aven's Fine Home Furnishings or online at www.theblvdlancaster.com/gift.

The third component of the PBID budget and governance is Administration & Advocacy. This category encompasses the administration of Clean & Safe and Marketing & Promotions programs, as well as community involvement and representation.

Once established, one of the PBID's first tasks was to hire a full-time Executive Director to manage the day-to-day operations of the Association and work with Board Members to implement the programs and initiatives of the Clean & Safe and Marketing & Promotions Committees. A recruitment was conducted in early 2014, with the selected candidate hired in May.

No change is proposed to the Management District Plan adopted by the Council in July 2013; all assessment amounts will remain the same.

Attachment:

The BLVD Association 2014 Annual Report