



IDA Award Category: Events and Programming

Project Title: **Downtown Topeka Hosted Events**

Organization Name: **Downtown Topeka, Inc. (DTI)**

Annual Operating Budget: **\$450,000**

Challenge:

In 2012 Downtown Topeka, Inc. established a goal to make downtown the entertainment center of the community. Prior to then, downtown was the location for the community's Christmas and St. Patrick parades and an occasional pub crawl and people would say "there is nothing to do."

Solution:

Downtown Topeka began creating events to attract a broad range of targeted demographics to rediscover and enjoy Topeka's downtown. Today the DTI, is host to over 30+ events scheduled throughout the year in Downtown Topeka. The goal was also to make a-majority-of the events Free to the public, this was accomplished through Business Improvement District funding and DTI sponsorship development.

Downtown Topeka, Inc. began creating monthly concerts on Thursday nights on a street adjacent to the State capitol. Weekly brown bag concerts where added from May through August entertaining downtowners during the lunch hour. Interest grew, and The Capital City Jazz and Food Truck Festival was created bringing some of the Midwest's top jazz artists onto the stage in the middle of Kansas Avenue.

The importance of quality of place gained greater understanding toward improving the quality of life for those who live, work and play in downtown Topeka. So, DTI then created one of the area's top 5K run/walks traversing over two urban bridges, called The Bridge2Bridge 5K. Followed by the creation of the Tower and Tough Tower Runs, the only sanctioned event by the International Tower Running Association in Kansas.

Attracting a whole other demographic to the mix, DTI added a car show called Cruisin' The Capitol, with hundreds of vehicles, thousands of spectators and a burn out lane in front of the Kansas State House.

Touch-A-Truck event was created to allows kids and their parents to examine cranes, bulldozers, trucks, police cars, fire engines and more to help celebrate Labor Day each year. Over 15,000 attended in 2017.

DTI, created the area's largest Craft Beer Festival with over 160 different craft beers from breweries across the country and is now considered one of the largest Brew Festival in the Midwest.

Other family favorite events include The Downtown Candy Crawl hosted by DTI and downtown businesses and sponsors to bring the excitement of Halloween and trick or treating to families to enjoy is a safe and fun environment downtown. Along with, Movies on the Capitol Lawn series, free movie nights under the stars and on blankets on the Statehouse lawn.

A new event was added in 2017 – The DTI Loft Tour in response to more people inquiring about living downtown and viewing urban living space.

Results:

More organizations throughout the community are now hosting their events downtown and for 2018 it is estimated over 40 will take place in the heart of downtown. These efforts have not gone unnoticed by developers, businesses, governmental leadership, the community, new partnerships and award recognition.

Today:

Today, Topeka is experiencing amazing economic growth through increased business development and by the community rediscovering the energy and vitality of downtown Topeka.