



Downtown
Improvement
District

The Minneapolis Big Build

The mission of the Mpls Downtown Improvement District (DID) is to help create a clean, green and vibrant downtown. Annually we track our progress with a perception survey of downtown workers, residents and visitors. For years most of the results had been stable however the 2015 and 2016 surveys showed significant decreases in the perception of downtown Minneapolis cleanliness. The #1 reason was construction.

A team which included the mpls downtown council, Meet Minneapolis and the Mpls Downtown Improvement District understood that the significant investment in building downtown was a positive barometer of the vibrancy of the city, however the frustrations caused by the ongoing construction was obvious. In addition to the many stadium, office and residential buildings being built, several public realm projects were happening at the same time. These included two major street renovations which impacted downtown traffic as well as Nicollet Mall, which has been Minneapolis' civic main street for more than 100 years. People come to work, eat and shop year round on Nicollet and it is the first impression many visitors get of the entire metro area. Nicollet is a pedestrian and bus corridor only and provides key connections to many downtown points of interest including the Mississippi River, the Minneapolis Convention Center, several stadiums and more. It is also home to three fortune 500 companies, hundreds of small businesses and 140,000 workers.

Our team realized that a more proactive approach to telling the story about the \$2 billion worth of public and private investment downtown was needed. Led by the Downtown Improvement District, the team developed a POV about the investment called "**The Minneapolis Big Build.**" The campaign kicked off with www.MplsBuild.com which communicated the details of the projects, their benefit to downtown and expected completion date. One of the elements of the website was an interactive map where people could click on the specific project they were interested in. The map was also translated to signage and displayed on construction barriers and skid signs in the project areas. The campaign also included rack cards that were available at the visitor center and in brochure stands. One of the most well received elements, were Big Build stress-relievers shaped like construction cones, that were handed at the many events DID attended downtown.

In addition to the overall Big Build focus, we developed signs for specific public realm projects that let people know the benefits and the estimated date of completion. We organized an activation at the mpls downtown council's annual holiday event, Holidazzle, where we communicated the Big Build projects with the public and offered the opportunity to win prizes, including Big Build Bucks for food and the popular stress cones. There was a lot of interest and positive feedback.

As mentioned above, one of the biggest headaches for the downtown audience was the construction on Nicollet Mall which started with underground utility work in 2015 and was not scheduled for completion until the end of 2017. The team felt we needed a specific focused message about Nicollet.

The Nicollet campaign developed in partnership with GdB Agency, attempted to relate to the frustration of the downtown workers, residents and visitors by acknowledging these feelings. It was built around an idea from the Mary Tyler Moore show from the 70's that was set in Minneapolis. Utilizing a photo of the sculpture of Mary Tyler Moore that has been a fixture on Nicollet for many years, we adapted her theme song and used "We're going to make it after all" referring to Nicollet construction. Following several other "tongue in cheek" ads about the overall construction, we decided to take the opportunity to create interest and excitement about the many new features on Nicollet including over 240 new trees, 1500 + LED lights, artwork, movable seating and gathering spots. All used the tone of, "we know this feels like it is taking a long time but trust us, it will be worth it when it's finished"

The creative was primarily displayed on outdoor billboards, large-scale window clings and construction barriers along Nicollet. The window clings and construction barrier ads were timed to coincide to the new features being installed. To add excitement to the tree planting mid- Summer, we handed out 300 birch and serviceberry seedling over lunch time to people on Nicollet. This was incredibly well received.

Overall results were positive as we received TV, magazine and newspaper coverage of the campaign. We were talked about in social media and overall the feedback was encouraging. Most importantly to us, the perceptions of cleanliness has turned around and the campaign had some impact on that. Construction fell from the #1 cleanliness concern in 2016 to the #3 in 2017. The overall perception of cleanliness downtown has increased in 2017 and the anecdotal survey feedback related to construction was far more positive compared to a year prior.

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