

RIVER DISTRICT ALLIANCE



2015 - 2016 ANNUAL SUMMARY



The Voice of Downtown Fort Myers

MESSAGE FROM THE RDA

2015-2016 IN REVIEW

The 2015-2016 year was marked with successes within the historic downtown Fort Myers River District. New businesses continued to open, existing establishments saw strong sales throughout the year, and downtown's growth as a destination is apparent.

As the merchant's organization, it was an exciting year for the RDA. As we evolve with downtown, the Board of Directors underwent a series of strategic planning & working group sessions that aided in laying the roadmap for the upcoming years. Enthusiastically looking to the future, the board wasted no time in implementing the first steps of this roadmap.

2015-2016 Board of Directors

- Kevin Boyd - American Legion, President
- Pam Lemmerman - The Connection, Vice President
- Sharon Brotherton - ShaBro Alternative Office Solutions, Treasurer
- Daniele Schultz - Crowne Valet, Secretary
- Candice Cocco - Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau
- Merry Coffman - Pure Florida
- Claudia Goode - ACT Gallery
- Patsy French - The Butterfly Estates
- July Grippo - City of Palms Realty
- Jason Kohn - Downtown House of Pizza
- Rene' Miville - The Franklin Shops

Jared Beck, Administrator



HIGHLIGHTS:

The 2015-2016 year saw great things for the RDA, all focused on growing the River District at a must-do destination in Southwest Florida.

Pet Walk Begins:

The RDA launched its newest event, Pet Walk in the spring 2016. Recognizing the increasing number of visitors bringing pets to the River District, the continued popularity of pet themed events at Bell Tower, Coconut Point, and other local attractions, and to further provide opportunity for residents to have a low key no cost social experience, Pet Walk was launched. Growing in popularity, this event brings pet related vendors & services, and pet friendly games.

RDA Website:

To better service RDA businesses and followers, the RDA completed a year long effort to launch a new website. The redesigned site is a tremendous improvement over the previous site, and has been designed to adapt to various audiences, whether marketing to the general public or to become a business focussed site. As the RDA continues to expand its role in marketing the River District, this was a much needed improvement.

Get Down. Here.:

Working to unify the various RDA events and help further build the River District as a "go to" destination, the RDA board of directors participated in a multi-month planning session, including the visioning of a new marketing effort. The result, "Get Down. Here" has been developed, integrated into all RDA collateral, and has been a huge success to date. All events produced by the RDA are in line with this campaign, which also furthers the branding of downtown.



Friday Night Series:

Continuing to brand the River District as a destination, the RDA now hosts free family friendly events on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Friday of the month, October through May. Pet Walk added the fourth Friday event during the spring of 2016, and it is anticipated that as it, and Mystery Walk grow, they will continue throughout the year. This further supported the Get Down. Here. campaign.

Creative Arts Market Forms:

The growth of retail within the downtown core has created greater opportunity for the River District to become a viable shopping area for many items. In furthering the success of retail, and in support of business in general, the RDA developed a Creative Arts Program. As a multi-weekend event in November and December, a new funding source was accessed to create a larger marketing campaign, promote downtown during the holiday shopping season., and create partnerships with hoteliers within Lee County to encourage overnight visitors. This includes out of area marketing.

Promotional Partnerships:

Working hard to grow recognition as a destination, the RDA has become involved with and formed partnerships with various cross promotional partners, including VISIT Florida, the Greater Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce, and the Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce.

Partner Program:

Increasing value to participant businesses, the RDA has rebranded in keeping with Get Down, here. and relaunched the Partner Program Guide. Both a map and member businesses directory, this provides an advertising opportunity for businesses and represents the collateral and branding undertaken by the RDA.

The RDA Creates Broad-Based & Meaningful Impacts in Our Community

- Hosts 50+ Community Events Annually
- Encourages Visitation of 200,000+ Annually
- Generates 4.4 Million in Direct Economic Impact
- Receives 4,200+ Volunteer Hours



RIVER DISTRICT EVENTS

OVERVIEW:

Known largely for the events offered, the RDA provides more free and family friendly events throughout the year than any other merchants organization in the state of Florida based on our research. With an average of just over one event per week, there really is always something to do or plan for in the River District!

EVENTS & NUMBERS:

ART WALK: held on the First Friday monthly, rain or shine, this event invites visitors to explore downtown galleries, shops, restaurants and attractions at their leisure while also perusing local artists setup on the streets. Estimated Annual Attendance: 36,000



BIKE NIGHT: held four times annually, thousands of motorcycles line the streets of core downtown. Live bands, specialty vendors, and great community spirit fill the event area. Estimated Annual Attendance: 24,000



CAR CRUISE-IN: held on the fourth Saturday, October through May, hundreds of cars from classic to just cool line downtown streets with a DJ playing great sounds to enjoy. Estimated Annual Attendance: 20,000



DOWNTOWN COUNTDOWN: there's no better place to end one year and start another than downtown. Thousands enjoy multiple stages of live music, junior balloon drop, midnight downtown countdown & ball drop, and fireworks over the river. Estimated Annual Attendance: 20,000



FREEDOM FEST: one of the premier July 4th celebrations in Southwest Florida, downtown packs full of visitors to enjoy great sounds from live bands, a variety of family friendly activities, and experience the spectacular half hour long fireworks show over the river! Estimated Annual Attendance: 15,000 - 20,000



RIVER DISTRICT HOLIDAYS: an annual celebration to light the downtown tree and kick-off the holiday season. Traditionally anchored by the Mayor and guests arriving by carriage to the light the downtown tree and followed by the gigantic wreath at the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center. Although the 2015 was hampered by a rainstorm and rescheduling, downtown showed the festive part!



MUSIC WALK: held every third Friday, this event schedules approximately 10-12 musicians of varying sound and style to be located throughout the core downtown area. Streets within the event area are closed, and guests enjoy strolling the streets to live music, visiting shops, galleries, restaurants and attractions. Estimated Annual Attendance: 30,000



SATURDAY ART FAIR: downtown sidewalks are lined with specialty artists offering a diverse mix of wares monthly from fall through spring. Created to draw people downtown on Saturday mornings at a time when visitation was low, this event offered a great experience. With visitation no longer a Saturday challenge, this event has "retired" from the RDA. The spirit will continue in the Creative Arts Market to launch in the 2016-2017 year. Estimated Annual Attendance: 3,000



MYSTERY WALK: following the Friday night theme, Mystery Walk has evolved over the last year and is a fun "scavenger hunt" throughout the core downtown area, and is enjoying an increasing following. One part game, one part local history & trivia, and one part interface with numerous businesses, this event will continue to grow and expand. October through May. Estimated Annual Attendance: 6,000



PET WALK: rounding out the Friday night theme, Pet Walk was introduced in the spring of 2016 to provide a new event experience for both visitors, and also residents of the River District with four-legged friends. Specialty vendors and services, as well as pet friendly games make this an enjoyable evening. October through May. Estimated Annual Attendance: 1,800



ST. PATRICK'S DAY BLOCK PARTY: thousands join this annual event dressed in festive wear to spend the evening dancing to live bands throughout core downtown, enjoy specialty food and celebrate the tradition! Estimated Annual Attendance: 15,000



VETERANS DAY PARADE: started in 2014, the Veterans Day Parade is a growing success in the downtown area featuring local bands, vehicles of various types, and organizations. Committed to growing this event, the parade adds nostalgia and fun to the day. Annual Estimated Attendance: 1,500



Downtown Fort Myers River District



Eat. Drink. Shop. Admire. Explore. All Year Long.

EXPLORE THE CORE



www.fortmyersriverdistrictalliance.com

The key goal in the Get Down. Here. focusses on showcasing the unique and one-of-a-kind charm that is the historic downtown Fort Myers River District!



A key focus of the RDA this year has been development of a River District wide branding initiative. Well established, this is beginning a full rollout in advertising initiatives in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Hillsborough, and Pinellas Counties in addition to Southwest Florida and our global online followers.

LOOKING TOWARDS 2016-2017

The RDA has had great success in growing the overall events and activities downtown, in developing new partnerships, welcoming new members, establishing a branding campaign, and expanding its' ability to better serve businesses.

Events will continually strive to be improved, diversification of revenue sources will remain a priority, and growth in promoting and further establishing the River District as a premiere destination are key goals. The RDA board has continued and expanded our marketing contracts for the upcoming year, has refined the current sponsorship and revenue program, and will be hiring a permanent event coordinator this year, all anticipated to further these key goals. With much more to come, 2016-2017 looks to be another great year!

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

LOOKING CITYWIDE

- **\$4.4 MILLION**
Estimated Annual Economic Impact
- **124**
Estimated FTE Created
- **\$224,000**
Estimated Local Government Revenue

LOOKING COUNTYWIDE

- **\$5.1 MILLION**
Estimated Annual Economic Impact
- **131**
Estimated FTE Created
- **\$245,000**
Estimated Local Government Revenue



IMPACT COMPARISON

How Do We Compare? Fort Myers Evaluated with the 12 Florida Cities Closest in Size

City	CRA	MA	BID/ DID	# Events	Base Annual Budget	Membership Fee	Staff
Melbourne		X		+/- 15	\$200,000	\$100 - \$1,000+	1.5
Palm Coast	-	-	-	-	B	\$330	-
Deerfield Beach	X			+/- 14	\$480,000 without Staff	N/A	9
Boynton Beach	X			+/- 23	\$550,000	N/A	1 + (7)
Lauderhill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Weston	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FORT MYERS		X		+/- 50	\$225,000	\$50	.5
Daytona Beach			X	0	\$100,000		
Delray Beach			X		\$710,000	N/A	3
Homestead	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tamarac		X		-/0	-	-	-
Kissimmee		X		0	-	\$50	-
North Miami	X			0	-	-	-
Fort Myers Evaluated within Southwest Florida							
Naples 5th Ave South			X	+/- 12	\$360,000	N/A	2
Sarasota DMA		X		+/- 7	A	\$120	-

The table above represents the six communities closest in size both above and below Fort Myers. Cities in red have a Community Redevelopment Agency. The blue, green, or yellow box represents the organization type that produces community events; CRA, Merchant's Association, or a Business Improvement District.

■ Cities with Community Redevelopment Agencies X | Special Events Entity

A | Budget Not Yet Determined B | Managed by a Countywide Chamber of Commerce

CRA | Community Redevelopment Agency MA | Merchants Association BID | Business Improvement District

DID | Downtown Improvement District (Equivalent of BID)

DMA | Downtown Merchants Association DSA | Downtown Sarasota Alliance

This matrix has been developed based on review of organization websites, annual reports and budgets, and telephone conversations. It does not account for sponsorships, in-kind donations, volunteer hours or other areas of support. This is an informal review for general and approximate comparison purposes only. This information is not for reproduction or distribution. This information is intended to only compare CRAs, MAs, BIDs and DIDs, and does not include city recreation departments responsible for providing community special events.

For additional information or questions, please contact the River District Alliance (www.fortmyersriverdistrictalliance.com).



www.FortMyersRiverDistrictAlliance.com
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