City of Coral Springs CRA
Innovate. Unplug. Unwind
2018 FRA Roy F. Kenzie Awards

DOWNTOWN
CORAL
SPRINGS

100-word description

Innovate. Unplug. Unwind was a weekend full of new ideas, art, great food, and entertainment difficult to find elsewhere. Each of the three events had a different theme with the overall objective of promoting Downtown Coral Springs as a gathering place that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship. From start-ups and entrepreneurs (known as "Creators") pitching their innovative products and ideas to live art and music leaving people with their jaws wide open. The experience and emotions presented that weekend ensured that everyone left with a diverse but similar perception of the new innovative Downtown that Coral Springs has begun to create.

Innovation

Innovation has been a key element to the Coral Springs CRA as the Downtown area steadily grows. This weekend focused on bringing start-ups, entrepreneurs, and artists (referred to as "Creators") to the City to showcase new creative products and ideas. Innovate. Unplug. Unwind. goal was to:

- Cultivate relationships between Creators, Angel Investors and residents.
- Raise a sense of community within the emergent downtown.
- Display the City as a place that encourages and supports innovation.
- Show Creators that Downtown Coral Springs would be a great place for them to live and open their business.
- Utilize the success of the event to attract an Incubator to the CRA.

In 2018, the first ever Innovate. Unplug. Unwind was hosted in the CRA/ Downtown Coral Springs. The event included entertainment and installations from more than 100 artist and vendors as well as 12 entrepreneurs whom were showcasing their ideas throughout the weekend for an audience of about 3,500. During the planning phase, the CRA built strong relationships with incubators that helped promote the application for Creators to pitch their ideas/products. These relationships not only helped with the promotion of the event but it also led to discussions about the possibility of opening an Incubator/Co-Working Space in the CRA.

Helping the Creators was one of the most important components of this three-day event series. On Friday the Creators were given the opportunity to pitch their idea/product to four judges, who were all Angel investors and serial entrepreneurs. The judges not only selected their favorite to win one of the prizes but they also had exposure to potential investment opportunities. The pitch was also on Facebook Live so people could watch the Creators from home. Most of the Creators' pitched ideas related to new technology but some had innovative product ideas, such as unique spray bottles, biodegradable utensils and a lot more. One of the Creators was an artist that showcased a unique series of Hand Embellished Fluid Paintings bringing two different styles of work together, abstract and realism, to create one cohesive body of work.

On Saturday, the event opened with an informative, thought-provoking, and inspirational Ted Talk style from Mike O'Donnell about the Five Drivers of Entrepreneurial Success: for start-ups and the communities that support them. In addition, each Creator was given a booth to showcase their idea/product to the public. The event attendees would go to each booth and learn about the products and once they visited each booth they would go to the City's booth and use an iPad to vote for their favorite idea. This is how we determined the "Crowd's Favorite" winner. While the Creators showcased, the attendees were also unplugging by listening to great music and enjoying live art.

Community Impact

Innovate. Unplug. Unwind was the first event held in the "Lawn", which is a beautiful open area next to the brand new City Hall building. **Innovate Downtown** was Friday night and it featured a "Shark Tank" concept with 12 Creators pitching their innovative ideas to the judges. **Unplugged** was Saturday night and it was tailored to those 21+ with live art, bands, local craft beer, food trucks and oversized games. **Savor the Notes** was Sunday morning, closing the weekend, with yoga, Jazz and brunch. The three events helped improve the economic, social, design, cultural assets of the community by:

- Increasing the visibility of current local businesses
- Helping local start-ups and entrepreneurs with exposure and funding.
- Attracting approximately 3,500 people from the community as well as communities nearby to the Downtown area and gave them all a great opportunity to socialize.
- Hosting prestigious judges and fostered great networking opportunities.
- Exposing talented artist with interactive live art. The attendees were given the opportunity to see what endowed artists are in the area.
- Promoting the brand new "Downtown Interactive Icon" that was installed on the City Hall's Lawn. The 12' tall by 12' wide Sculptor was inspired by the City and Downtown/CRA logos and the arching shape encourages visitors to walk under the sun to take photos. During Innovate. Unplug. Unwind we utilized the sculpture as a photo booth.
- Inspiring community wellness by offering free Sunday Morning Yoga.

Funding

Financing for Innovate. Unplug. Unwind. Came from different sources:
- CRA TIF
- City of Coral Springs
- Sponsorship
    - JM Lexus
    - Blue Stream Communications

The Community Redevelopment Agency funded $15,000 and the City of Coral Springs funded approximately $21,700 for this weekend event. Our sponsors, JM Lexus and Blue Stream Communications, each provided $2,500 which was given to the two winners of Innovate Downtown. The City also received a small amount of in-kind assistances. The total three day event cost was approximately $40,000.

Problem Solving

The City and the CRA wanted to attract more start-ups and entrepreneurs and also attract an incubator/co-working space to open in Downtown Coral Springs. However, bringing an incubator to a suburban City with a Downtown that is still in the early stages of redevelopment is very challenging. Having this event helped showcase the City to start-ups and it also helped build relationships with creators, angel investors, and incubator operators. Since the completion of the event, we have had a number of positive meetings with incubator and co-working space prospects.

The idea of the event emerged in 2015 when one of the CRA Board Members learned about the largest Crowdfunding Festival in the world, One Spark in Downtown Jacksonville and how the event ignited the start-up community in that area. The CRA began to identify options for a crowdfunding event in Downtown Coral Springs as a way to create entrepreneurial opportunities in the City. After extensive research, the CRA engaged Crowdly and entered into an initial agreement for the development of a feasibility assessment for conducting a crowdfunding event in Downtown. As a result of the work performed by Crowdly during the feasibility study, the CRA and the City approved the tri-party agreement with Crowdly to assist with obtaining sponsorships and Creators, providing the crowdfunding technology, and managing the event.

The initial name of the event was "Springboard FL". Planning began early 2016 and fundraising began shortly after. As part of the contract with Crowdly, they had to raise at least $25,000 in sponsorships. Because Crowdly was not able to reach that amount, the City and CRA decided to cancel the agreement and take on a smaller scale in house event and grow it organically. While the crowdfunding portion had to be eliminated, the goal of the event remained the same, which was to help start-ups and showcase the Downtown as a place that fosters innovation.

From a regional event to a smaller local event yet still including a TED Talk and the inspiration of "Shark Tank", the City and the CRA began to plan Innovate. Unplug. Unwind. As part of the planning effort, staff formed a small committee to carefully select the 12 most innovative Creators out of the 33 applicants. By inviting a diverse background of top notch investors as judges, this exposed the 12 selected Creators to potential investment in their product.
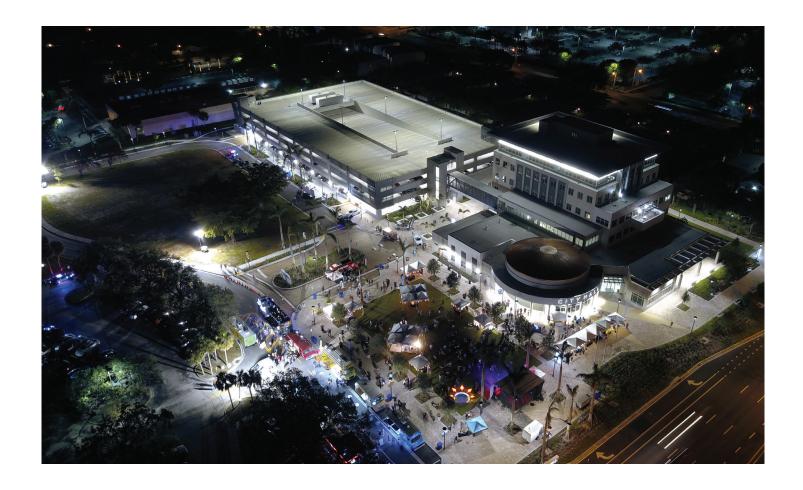
Applicability to Other Communities

Organic Growth: Understanding the community and knowing that what may work for one City may not work for another City on the same scale. Allowing growth to happen organically.

Innovation: Allowing assorted products to be shown during the event demonstrates the City is open to innovative creations as well as open to new and diverse ways of approaching business, art, music and food.

Open Minds: Coming up with out-of-the-box event concepts that engages the community and helps solve a problem.

Marketing Entrepreneurs: Showcasing innovative creators and exposing them to Angel investors allowed the entrepreneurs to market themselves and build relationships with the community and investors.

Flexibility: Knowing that everything is not under our control. A sudden torrential downpour occurred on Friday and though we expected to have the event outdoors, we quickly reacted and shifted the evening's agenda. The event was moved indoors and we produced a live Facebook stream for people to watch from anywhere.

Other Things to Tell the Judges

This was the first ever three day event that the City of Coral Springs and the CRA held. The goal was to promote innovation and entrepreneurship by exposing Creators to investors to help them grow and in the long term help the local economy. This event brought together people with different interests: music, art, technology, food and business. The four judges were extremely impressed by the quality of the Creators and encouraged the CRA to continue growing this event. One of the judges Frank Nemanic, an experienced angel investor and serial entrepreneur posted on his LinkedIn "So amazed at how many good ideas there were... even better than most startup events. Great job on picking these companies. Impressive!"

It is also important to note that due to extreme stormy condition on Friday evening, the event had to be relocated indoors. Even though the CRA encountered a hindrance we kept moving forward. A live Facebook stream took place while the Creators presented their products to the judges. Then, instead of having the Creators showcase their products on Friday, as it was planned, the Creators showcased on Saturday in conjunction with Unplugged. This way, the audience was able to grasp more information about each idea/product and decide which innovative idea was their favorite. Finally, the audience would vote at the CRA booth via an iPad voting system.

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