Memorandum

Date:	September 3, 2026
To:	Buchanan Downtown Development Authority
From:	Tony McGhee
Subject:	**Discussion of Potential Marketing and Community Growth Alliance Spending**

Background

The purpose of this memo is to set the stage for a discussion at the DDA's September 9, 2026 Board meeting regarding two related strategic opportunities:

1. Whether and how the DDA wants to participate in forming a Community Growth Alliance (CGA) with the Chamber of Commerce, City and other interested community partners, including a projected $20,000 annual DDA contribution toward a full-time staff position; and,

2. How much the DDA wants to dedicate to downtown marketing and what it wants that investment to accomplish, so staff can work with Destination by Design, the preferred firm identified through the DDA's proposal and interview process, to develop a prioritized scope of work and associated costs.

The goal is not to finalize every detail at the September meeting. Rather, the Board should establish enough direction on priorities, desired outcomes and spending parameters for staff to develop actionable structures, scopes and budgets for Board consideration later this fall.

Budget

Following is the adopted DDA budget for FY26/27 which runs from July 1st through June 30th.

FY2026/27 Budget Area	Budget
Administration & Record Keeping	$6,500
Marketing Plan	$45,000
Signage	$42,500
Wayfinding	$42,500

FY2026/27 Budget Area	Budget
Downtown Beautification	$25,000
Farmers' Market	$10,850
Tin Shop Theater	$13,250
Parks Mill	$11,900
Events	$30,000
Total Expenditures	**$227,500**

The discussion for the Board should focus on how the Board wants to allocate its resources between organizational capacity through the CGA and direct downtown marketing activities.

Community Growth Alliance Discussion
The Community Growth Alliance discussed at the Board's August would bring together the DDA, Chamber of Commerce, City and other interested organizations around a more coordinated approach to community and economic development.

A central component under consideration is hiring a full-time staff person whose work could provide capacity for the Alliance and its participating organizations. The preliminary estimate is that the DDA's share would be approximately $20,000 (out of an optional $100,000) annually, with the balance supported by other participating partners.

Before staff proceeds further, the DDA Board should determine:

- Does the Board support the DDA participating in the CGA concept?
- Does the Board support a DDA contribution of approximately $20,000 annually?
- What does the DDA expect to receive in return for that investment?
- What functions should the shared staff position perform that benefit the DDA?
- What level of accountability, reporting and measurable outcomes does the DDA `want?
- Should the $20,000 be considered an annual commitment, subject to annual budget approval?
- What other partners and funding commitments should be secured before the DDA commits its funds?

This conversation is particularly important because the CGA contribution represents a longer-term organizational investment as an initial three year commitment would be the initial likely structure, while the DDA's marketing budget represents resources that can be used for more immediate activities.

Marketing Investment and Destination by Design

The second half of the discussion should focus on what the DDA wants its marketing investment to accomplish. The DDA previously solicited proposals and conducted interviews for marketing/destination-related services. Destination by Design was identified as the preferred firm. Before staff negotiates a final scope and contract, however, the Board needs to provide direction about the desired deliverables, priorities and overall budget.

The Board should consider the following question, the DDA is going to invest in marketing, what are the highest-priority outcomes and deliverables it wants that investment to produce?

Potential areas could include, depending on the Board's priorities:

- Downtown brand positioning and messaging
- Marketing strategy and annual marketing plan
- Digital and social media strategy
- Website/content development
- Visitor attraction and destination marketing
- Photography/video/content creation
- Regional tourism partnerships
- Downtown business communications
- Measurement, analytics and reporting

The objective should be to avoid simply purchasing a collection of marketing activities. Instead, based on Board input and direction, staff should work with Destination by Design to establish a prioritized scope that connects activities to outcomes and fits within a Board-established budget.

Budget Options

The September discussion provides an opportunity to look at the CGA and marketing decisions together rather than as two independent initiatives with some different options presented below to serve as the basis for the discussion during the meeting.

Option A — Treat the CGA contribution as a marketing expense

Commit $20,000 of the existing $45,000 Marketing Plan budget to the CGA and direct Destination by Design to develop a marketing program within the remaining approximately $25,000.

Option B — Preserve a larger direct marketing budget
Identify another funding source within the DDA's existing budget for some or all of the $20,000 CGA contribution, allowing the DDA to retain more of its $45,000 marketing allocation.

Option C — Reallocate or amend the budget
Establish the Board's desired CGA and marketing commitments first, then amend the FY2026/27 budget to reflect those priorities.

The Board does not necessarily need to decide the precise accounting treatment at the September meeting. It does need to establish the level of spending it is comfortable committing to each priority so staff can develop a realistic plan.

Proposed Work Plan and Timeline
The objective would be to move from general interest to an actionable structure and budget by the December 8, 2026 Board meeting, a roadmap to accomplish this is as follows. These are initially recommended steps that can be amended and adjusted based on how the Boards decides how it wants to proceed on the CGA and marketing items discussed at their August meeting.

<u>September 9: Board Direction</u>
Primary objective: Establish priorities and spending parameters.
The Board discusses:

- CGA concept and $20,000 projected annual DDA contribution
- Desired role of shared staff
- Amount available for direct marketing
- Priority marketing outcomes
- Desired Destination by Design deliverables
- Overall spending parameters
- Whether budget amendment authority may be necessary

<u>Mid-September: Staff Develops Framework</u>
Staff would translate the Board's direction into a preliminary framework covering:

- CGA participation and proposed DDA role

- Preliminary staffing responsibilities
- Proposed partner responsibilities
- Marketing objectives
- Prioritized Destination by Design deliverables
- Preliminary budgets for each component
- Potential funding sources/reallocations

Staff would then engage Destination by Design based upon the Board's priorities.

<u>Late September / October: Destination by Design Scope Development</u>

Staff and Destination by Design would work through the proposed services and establish:

1. What should be delivered
2. What should be delivered first
3. What can be deferred
4. What the deliverables will cost
5. What can realistically be accomplished within the DDA's budget
6. What work should be coordinated with the future CGA staff position

This is an important step because the Board should ultimately be considering a prioritized strategy and scope, rather than an open-ended list of marketing services.

<u>October Board Meeting: Progress Review</u>

Staff reports back to the Board with:

- CGA development status
- Partner participation and proposed structure
- Proposed responsibilities for the shared staff position
- Destination by Design scope discussions
- Preliminary marketing priorities
- Preliminary costs
- Remaining budget considerations

The Board can refine priorities before staff moves toward final negotiations.

<u>November: Finalize Proposed Structure and Budget</u>

Staff works toward agreement on:

- CGA structure and partner commitments
- DDA's proposed $20,000 annual contribution
- Staffing role and accountability
- Destination by Design scope
- Prioritized marketing deliverables

- Marketing budget
- Overall FY2026/27 funding plan
- Any necessary budget amendment

Staff returns to the Board with a package that clearly identifies what the DDA is buying, what it expects to accomplish and what it will cost.

December 8: Board Consideration and Action

The goal is to have the following ready for Board consideration:

Community Growth Alliance

- Proposed organizational structure
- Participating partners
- Requirements of other partners to be in place before DDA releases funding
- Staffing model
- DDA financial commitment
- Responsibilities and deliverables
- Accountability/reporting structure

Marketing

- Destination by Design scope of work
- Prioritized deliverables
- Proposed contract/fee
- Marketing strategy/framework
- Relationship between Destination by Design's work and CGA staffing

Budget

- Recommended FY2026/27 allocations
- Any proposed budget amendment
- Amount committed to CGA staffing
- Amount committed to direct marketing
- Remaining funds available for other DDA priorities