

*Gladstone*  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

# DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN

January 2026



## DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN

The Gladstone Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has developed this Downtown Action Plan to guide investments, programs, and infrastructure improvements that enhance the vibrancy, economic vitality, and overall experience of Downtown Gladstone.

This plan integrates the objectives outlined in the Gladstone Master Plan (2024) and TIF Plan (2020) to create a cohesive citywide vision. It ensures DDA initiatives advance broader goals such as community engagement, historic preservation, walkable streets, and economic development.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Vibrancy & Engagement:** Encourage a lively downtown that attracts residents and visitors, enhancing social and economic activity.
- **Partnership & Collaboration:** Coordinate projects with city departments, local businesses, and community organizations.
- **Preservation & Identity:** Celebrate Gladstone’s history and waterfront character while integrating modern amenities.
- **Sustainability & Measurable Impact:** Prioritize projects that yield long-term benefits and trackable outcomes.



# NEAR-TERM PRIORITIES (0 - 24 Months)

## BUSINESS ASSOCIATION FACILITATION

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### Objective:

Assist in forming a Downtown Business Association to encourage collaboration, joint promotions, and information sharing among business owners.

### Why It's Important:

A strong business community is the foundation of a thriving downtown. While the DDA focuses on infrastructure, investment, and public space improvements, a business association provides the social and economic connectivity that brings those spaces to life. It gives local merchants and service providers a unified voice and a direct role in shaping the downtown experience.



### Establishing a Business Association Would:

- **Encourage Collaboration:** Business owners can share ideas, pool resources, and coordinate efforts on issues like events, marketing, and customer engagement.
- **Enhance Communication:** Creates a consistent channel between business owners, the DDA, and City Hall, which ensures downtown decisions reflect on-the-ground perspectives.
- **Foster a Sense of Community:** Builds camaraderie among business owners who often face similar challenges, transforming competitors into collaborators.
- **Strengthen Promotion and Branding:** Collective marketing campaigns, such as “Shop Local” weekends, scavenger hunts, or themed events, are far more effective when coordinated as a group.
- **Support Economic Resilience:** A connected network of business owners can respond faster to change, share resources, and help new entrepreneurs integrate into the district.

### City Partners:

Economic Development Corporation

## "THE DEPOT" FOOD TRUCK LOT

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**Objective:** Partner with local community members, the Historic Committee, and the railroad to create a permanent food truck lot featuring utility hook-ups, fencing, and a pavilion inspired by the historic Gladstone Railroad Depot.

**Why It's Important:** Downtown spaces thrive when they offer destinations that draw people together. A food truck lot provides a flexible, low-barrier way to activate underused property while enhancing the vibrancy of downtown. It offers not just dining options, but also a community gathering space that encourages social interaction, pedestrian traffic, and economic activity for surrounding businesses.

By incorporating design elements inspired by the historic railroad depot, the project:

- **Celebrates Gladstone's History:** Preserves and showcases local heritage, connecting residents and visitors to the city's identity.
- **Supports Local Entrepreneurs:** Food trucks offer small-business opportunities, allowing local chefs and vendors to test ideas and reach a wider audience.

**City Partners:** Parks & Recreation Department

## DOWNTOWN STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS

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**Objective:** Conduct a downtown inventory and replace or install benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles to create a cohesive streetscape with long-lasting, durable infrastructure.

**Why It's Important:** Downtown public amenities are a critical part of creating an attractive, welcoming environment that encourages residents and visitors to linger, explore, and engage with local businesses. Coordinating benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles ensures a consistent visual identity and improves the overall aesthetic of the district.

### Design & Operational Benefits:

- **Cohesive Look:** Selecting products that complement each other creates a visually unified streetscape and reinforces downtown branding.
- **Durability & Longevity:** Choosing long-lasting, high-quality materials reduces replacement costs and ensures amenities maintain their appeal over time.
- **Operational Efficiency:** New trash receptacles can be emptied mechanically by the garbage truck, eliminating the need for staff to handle trash directly. This reduces labor requirements, lowers liability, and enhances safety.

**City Partners:** Parks & Recreation Department

## DOWNTOWN PARKING LOT ENHANCEMENTS

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**Objective:** Improve accessibility and aesthetics in downtown parking lots with better signage and a curb cut at the Laundromat lot.

**Why It's Important:** Clear, safe, and convenient parking is critical to encourage visits to downtown businesses. Upgrades make parking more intuitive and safer for pedestrians, reducing barriers to commerce.

**City Partners:** Public Works Department



## PERMANENT CHRISTMAS TREE

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**Objective:** Install a permanent downtown Christmas tree with power access for lighting and events.

**Why It's Important:** A permanent Christmas tree provides a visual anchor for the downtown district, enhancing the sense of place and fostering annual traditions. It creates a central location for holiday events, performances, and family gatherings, increasing downtown foot traffic during the winter season.

### Staff & Sustainability Benefits:

**Reduced Staff Burden:** A permanent tree eliminates the yearly process of sourcing, cutting down, transporting, and installing a live tree, saving staff significant time and labor.

**Long-Term Sustainability:** Avoiding the annual removal of a living tree reduces environmental impact and aligns with sustainable practices by preventing the waste of natural resources.

**City Partners:** Gladstone Electric Department & Public Works Department



# MID-TERM PRIORITIES (24 - 48 Months)

## DOWNTOWN MARKETING & BRANDING INITIATIVE

**Objective:** Develop promotional materials and a unified slogan (e.g., “Meet Me Downtown Gladstone”) that tie into the social district, Farmers Market, and events.

**Why It’s Important:** A cohesive brand strengthens downtown identity, encourages visitation, and increases awareness of local businesses and events. Marketing materials can unify messaging across social media, signage, and physical promotional items.

**Community Connection:** Provides a shared identity for residents and businesses, fostering pride and encouraging engagement in downtown experiences and events.



## DOWNTOWN PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

**Objective:** Install interactive art, murals, or signage that create “photo spots” and encourage social media engagement.

**Why It’s Important:** Photo-worthy attractions generate excitement and free publicity through social media, increasing tourism and local engagement. They highlight downtown identity while giving residents and visitors reasons to explore multiple streets and businesses.

**Community Connection:** Promotes local creativity, allows residents to take pride in unique downtown landmarks, and encourages family-friendly exploration of the area.



## DOWNTOWN SCAVENGER HUNT PROGRAM

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**Objective:** Create an ongoing scavenger hunt connecting businesses, with rewards redeemable at City Hall or participating merchants.

**Why It's Important:** Gamifying the downtown experience increases customer circulation, supports small businesses, and encourages repeat visits. It creates opportunities for creative promotions and collaboration among merchants.

**Community Connection:** Engages families, residents, and visitors in interactive downtown experiences that highlight local businesses, landmarks, and community culture.



## SMALL-SCALE FAÇADE GRANT FOR ARTWORK, MURALS, AND SIGNS

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**Objective:** Separate from our large façade grant program, implement a smaller grant program supporting small aesthetic improvements like murals, signage, and artwork.

**Why It's Important:** Visual improvements elevate downtown's appearance, reinforce a sense of identity, and attract visitors. Murals and signage can also celebrate local history, culture, or storytelling, strengthening Gladstone's unique character.

**Community Connection:** Empowers business owners and artists to contribute to downtown's vibrancy, fostering pride and community ownership of public spaces.



## CONTINUING COMMITMENTS & CORE OPERATIONS

The Gladstone Downtown Development Authority (DDA) maintains several cornerstone programs and partnerships that directly contribute to the long-term vitality, appearance, and success of the downtown district. These efforts reflect the DDA’s ongoing investment in creating a vibrant, inclusive, and economically resilient downtown, one that remains true to Gladstone’s character while evolving to meet modern needs.

### FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

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The DDA’s façade program continues to be one of its most impactful initiatives, directly supporting property owners in revitalizing their buildings and restoring architectural integrity. Beyond aesthetics, these improvements strengthen property values, reinforce historic character, and cultivate a cohesive downtown image that reflects Gladstone’s sense of place. The program’s success also demonstrates how public investment can leverage private dollars and stimulate broader redevelopment activity.

### FARMERS MARKET OPERATIONS

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The Gladstone Farmers Market serves as a cornerstone of community engagement and local entrepreneurship. Operated under the DDA, the market creates economic opportunity for growers and artisans, promotes healthy living, and activates the downtown square as a gathering space. By supporting live music and local food access programs, the market reflects the DDA’s commitment to both economic inclusion and social vibrancy.



## INFRASTRUCTURE & INTERDEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT

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Strong coordination with city departments, including Public Works, Parks & Recreation, and Planning & Zoning, allows the DDA to support the upkeep, safety, and functionality of core downtown infrastructure. From lighting and sidewalks to parking and public spaces, these partnerships ensures that the City of Gladstone and DDA priorities are aligned for maximum impact. Together, these efforts uphold downtown’s physical integrity and contribute to an accessible, pedestrian-friendly environment.

## NORTH SHORE DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION

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As the North Shore redevelopment project advances, the DDA plays a crucial advisory and facilitative role in ensuring that this emerging area complements and enhances the downtown core. By aligning investment, design, and infrastructure priorities, the DDA helps guide growth in a way that strengthens Gladstone’s overall economic ecosystem, connecting the waterfront, residential, and commercial components into one cohesive community vision.



## PROPERTY MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS

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The DDA remains committed to visible and ongoing improvements throughout the district. Routine maintenance, seasonal landscaping, and targeted clean-up of blighted areas help preserve public assets, enhance curb appeal, and ensure downtown remains an inviting destination for residents and visitors alike. A clean, well-maintained environment signals investment and pride, which are key ingredients for attracting both new businesses and private reinvestment.

Together, these ongoing commitments reflect the DDA’s role as both a facilitator and a steward of downtown vitality. The plan also maintains flexibility to embrace new opportunities as they arise, whether through grants, partnerships, or community-driven projects, all while remaining grounded in the guiding documents that shape Gladstone’s future: the City Master Plan, Downtown Development and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan, and Public Act 57 of 2018.

