

DOWNTOWN WORCESTER

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

FY26

Annual Report

Downtown Worcester

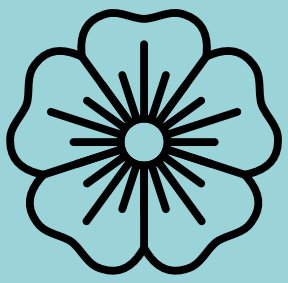

Downtown
Worcester

Our year at a glance...

3.34M

visits to Downtown – up 7.4% from FY25





126

hanging flower baskets + 54 planters installed & maintained by the BID throughout Downtown



78

acres of Downtown Worcester cared for and supported daily by the investment of the BID's property owner members



10

Community Meetings hosted at locations across Downtown

13.7k+

social media followers on Instagram, Facebook & LinkedIn





Over 22 tons

of trash removed from streets & sidewalks in our district boundaries

250+

graffiti tags removed from public & private property

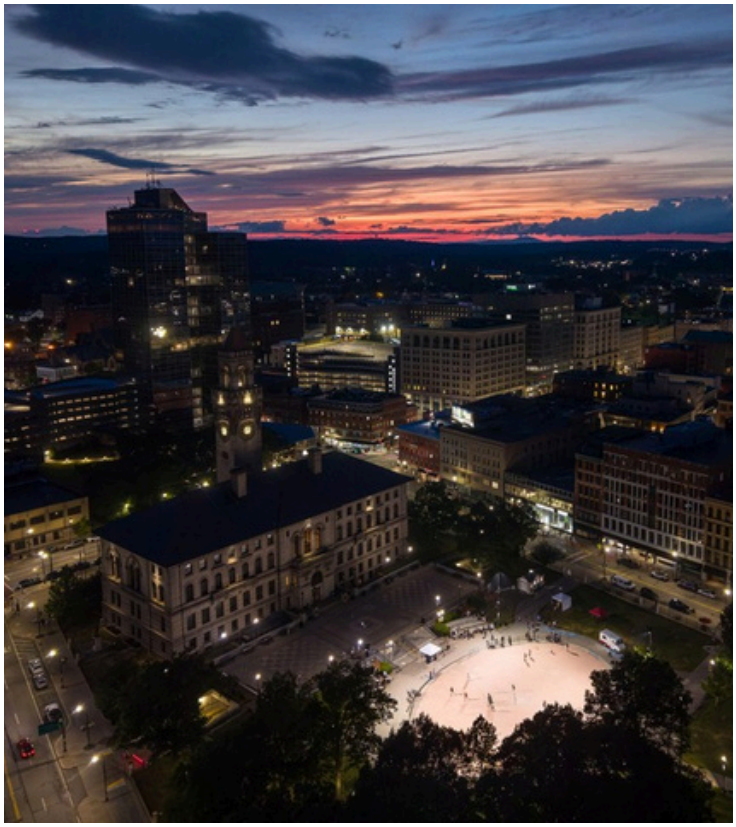


About the Downtown Worcester BID

The Downtown Worcester BID is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed in 2018. We represent over 100 property owners in 78 acres of Downtown Worcester, Massachusetts, and we are all about making Downtown Worcester better.

This is a community effort. We bring together local property owners, businesses, residents, organizations, and the City of Worcester to create a vibrant, welcoming, and economically and culturally thriving downtown for all.

Our work is centered on four key focus areas: Cleaning, Safety & Hospitality; Cultural Placemaking & Beautification; Marketing & Public Relations; and Advocacy & Policy.



Our Mission

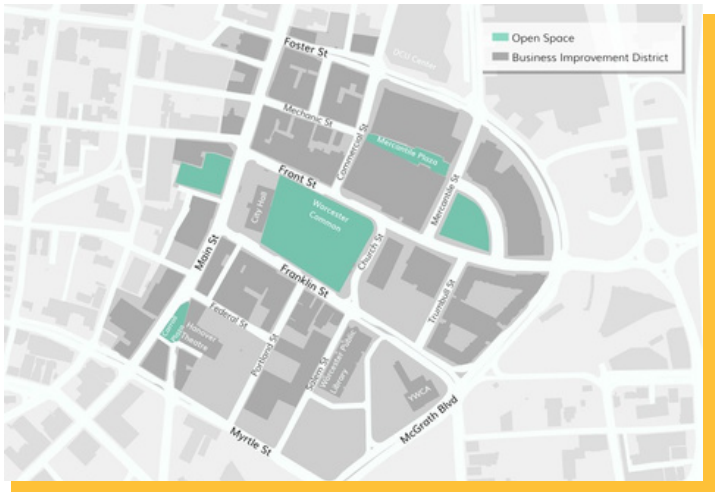
We're on a mission to make Downtown Worcester better for everyone.

Our goal is to enhance the district's beauty, boost positive sentiment, and celebrate what makes Downtown unique. We dream up new experiences and events; make sure our streets and sidewalks are clean, safe, and friendly; infuse more energy and life into our neighborhood; and help make Downtown a place where people want to live, work, and visit.

Together, we are reimagining Downtown as the economic and cultural hub of Worcester and reigniting the love for the heart of our city.

Our Boundaries

Our district is bounded by Main Street, Myrtle Street, Foster Street, and McGrath Boulevard. The areas in dark grey on the map below represent the properties within the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District.



Stay up-to-date on Downtown Worcester!

Scan the QR code to sign up for our monthly Downtown Digest newsletter. We'll send you once-a-month emails with Downtown events, special offers, news, giveaways, and more.

Dear Friends & Partners,

We're thrilled to reflect on the past year and share the next chapter of Downtown Worcester, a neighborhood that continues to evolve into a vibrant destination for culture, creativity, and community. This is a place where businesses grow, people put down roots, and new experiences give you more reasons to visit, explore, and return time and again.

Downtown Worcester is experiencing positive momentum, with increased activity, new business investment, residential growth, and expanded programming that continue to strengthen Downtown as a destination to live, work, visit, and invest.

This year, that progress was visible everywhere you looked. With the addition of new businesses like Alma Gaúcha Prime Brazilian Steakhouse, Vivienne Coastal Mediterranean and VUE Cocktail Lounge, Rio Viejo, August Coffee, Her Zen Studio, and others, alongside the kickoff of the Game On Worcester FIFA World Cup watch party series, the expanded Out to Lunch Festival and Farmers' Market, and the sparkling Festival of Lights, there has been plenty to celebrate all year.

You can truly feel the buzz Downtown.

Here at the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District (BID), we take our role as stewards of Downtown seriously. In all our work, we aim to create the conditions in which our property owner members, businesses, residents, and visitors can flourish. Our largest investment continues to be our year-round Ambassador Program, which helps keep the district clean, safe, and inviting. Their work, alongside our Cultural Placemaking and Beautification initiatives, helps set the stage for further business growth, economic development, and continued investment in Downtown Worcester.

The BID staff helps make all of this possible. Their professionalism, creativity, and dedication to our mission can be seen in everything we do. From coordinating events and supporting the Ambassadors to promoting new businesses and the many reasons to love our neighborhood – we are Downtown's biggest fans.

As you explore our FY26 Annual Report, you'll see how the BID continues to build a Downtown that's not only vibrant today, but ready for tomorrow. We invite you to dive in, celebrate what we've accomplished together, and look forward to what's next for Downtown Worcester.

With gratitude,





Julian Wade
Board Chair

Katelyn O'Brien
Executive Director


Work in Progress
CAUTION
AMBASSADORS
AT WORK
Downtown
Worcester

Keeping Downtown Clean, Welcoming & Connected

At the heart of the Downtown Worcester BID's daily Cleaning, Safety & Hospitality work is our Ambassador team. In partnership with Streetplus, the crew helps maintain clean public spaces, support local businesses, assist residents and visitors, and respond to the everyday details that shape people's experience of the district.

Cleaning & Public Realm Maintenance

Our Downtown Worcester Ambassadors keep the district clean and welcoming through daily litter removal, graffiti cleanup, sidewalk cleaning, and routine public-space maintenance.

During FY26, our Ambassadors logged more than 11,700 hours of service.

This year the BID also invested in a branded Downtown Worcester truck for the Ambassador team. This upgrade gives the crew a more efficient way to move throughout the district, respond to needs, and deliver services, strengthening our ability to support Downtown.



Safety, Hospitality & Business Support

Our Ambassadors are a visible, approachable presence Downtown, assisting residents and visitors, checking in with businesses, connecting people with resources, and identifying concerns for follow-up.

This year they completed over 5,700 business checks and provided 800 services to the public, while also helping address quality-of-life concerns throughout the district.



Snow Operations

The BID's snow operations help keep Downtown's sidewalks and public spaces accessible during and after winter weather. The BID's services supplement property and business owners' snow removal efforts throughout the winter.

During FY26, our Ambassadors cleared more than 2,100 curb cuts and applied over 16,000 pounds of ice melt, helping maintain safe pedestrian access. During periods of heavy snow accumulation, we partnered with Perrone Landscaping for additional large-scale snow removal in the district.


The City of Worcester
OUT TO LUNCH
FESTIVAL AND FARMERS' MARKET
Downtown Worcester

Making Downtown a Destination

The Downtown Worcester BID invests in the experiences, public spaces, and seasonal traditions that make Downtown a destination. From signature festivals and outdoor entertainment to floral displays and winter lighting, our focus on Cultural Placemaking and Beautification gives people more reasons to visit, spend time, and connect here.

Out to Lunch Festival & Farmers' Market

Out to Lunch is one of Downtown's signature summer events. Presented in partnership with the City of Worcester, the 10-week series on the Worcester Common Oval combines live music, food trucks, a growing farmers' market, and opportunities to discover local businesses and community organizations.

During FY26, Out to Lunch welcomed more than 9,400 attendees, averaging more than 1,000 attendees per event.

Building on a $100,000 Urban Agenda Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts awarded in FY25, the BID increased its investment in entertainment and event production, strengthened marketing and staffing, and created more opportunities for local farmers, food vendors, artists, and makers. With support from Mass General Brigham Health Plan, we also offered a SNAP Match program, helping make fresh, locally grown food more affordable and accessible to SNAP recipients.

Special programming throughout the season celebrated the diversity of our community. On July 23, 2025, we partnered with the City's Accessibility Advisory Commission to honor Disability Pride Month and the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our August 6 National Farmers' Market Week celebration highlighted local agriculture and the importance of access to fresh food.







Movies on the Common

Movies on the Common offers another way to experience Downtown after the workday, transforming the Worcester Common into an outdoor gathering place for free community movie nights. The series, produced in partnership with the City of Worcester, invites residents, families, and visitors to enjoy films together in the heart of the city while encouraging more activity in Downtown's public spaces in the evening hours.

In FY26, we hosted four screenings, featuring family-friendly flicks like *Inside Out 2* and blockbusters like *Wicked*. We welcomed an average of nearly 500 attendees per event.





Game On Worcester

The BID teamed up with the City of Worcester, Discover Central Massachusetts, Massachusetts Organization of African Descendants (MOAD), Massachusetts Youth Soccer, and 4Life Entertainment to launch Game On Worcester, a series of FIFA World Cup watch parties celebrating the global game and Worcester's diversity. The BID contributed logistical and marketing support, helping bring the community together around a shared sporting experience and adding another reason to gather Downtown.

More than 3,300 visitors attended the inaugural watch party on June 13, 2026, featuring Brazil vs. Morocco and Haiti vs. Scotland matches.

Support for Events Across Downtown

Throughout the year, the BID supports events led by other organizers, businesses, non-profits, cultural organizations, and community partners, helping make the district a destination for a wider range of experiences. The BID provides complimentary Ambassador assistance and equipment from our Event Kit, as well as logistical coordination and guidance, and marketing and promotional support.

In FY26, the BID supported Downtown events and activities including roller skating nights on the Worcester Common Oval, the Pride Worcester Festival, WICN's Jazz+ Live concert, the Worcester Public Library's Block Party, and more.











Festival of Lights & Winter Lighting Installations

Each winter, the BID partners with the City of Worcester to bring large-scale lighting installations to Worcester Common for the Festival of Lights. The season kicks off with the annual tree-lighting celebration in December (nearly 3,000 people attended in 2025!). Installations then remain on display through the end of February.

FY26 featured some of our strongest pieces yet, including “Waves” and “Kinetic Perspective,” by Spain-based artist Juan Fuentes, and “Allium,” an interactive piece by Everything Good Studios.

The BID also illuminates street trees throughout the district, bringing warmth and visual interest to Downtown during the darkest months.

To help people explore Downtown’s distinctive lighting, the BID hosted two Holiday Lights Photo Walks led by photographers Jaime Flores and Josh Wingell. These free, guided walks turned the installations into an experience, encouraging participants to explore Downtown on foot to capture their own photos, giving them another reason to visit during winter evenings. We also stopped at the Cocktail Garden & Kitchen for hot cocoa and beverages, connecting attendees with a welcoming Downtown business.

Building on the main Festival of Lights event, we also introduced smaller seasonal activations throughout the winter, including regular glow-in-the-dark pop-ups and live ice sculpture carving at the Oval Ice Skating Rink, and a snowman making competition at CitySquare Park.





Flower Program

The BID's flower program is one of our most-loved beautification initiatives, bringing color to streets and public spaces spring through fall. Each season, hanging flower baskets and planters installed throughout the district help make Downtown more inviting. These seasonal investments create a consistent, cared-for appearance and complement the businesses, public spaces, and pedestrian activity that make Downtown distinctive.

The BID also partnered with Bemis Farms Nursery to host our third annual Downtown in Bloom Flower Giveaway in May. This event kicked off the season by distributing 500 free potted flowers and plants at CitySquare Park. It's a popular (and cost-effective) marketing activation that brings Downtown residents and workers out of their offices and homes, draws attention to the flowers, and creates a great photo op for attendees and media alike.

Importantly, it also gives us a chance to share more about the private investment of the BID's property owner members that makes them possible. It's a simple, tangible way to celebrate more of what makes Downtown unique, build community goodwill, and help more people understand the BID's impact.




Free
Flowers

Telling Downtown's Stories

The BID's Marketing and Public Relations efforts raise Downtown's profile and strengthen its connection with residents, workers, and visitors. By highlighting local businesses, promoting events and experiences, and celebrating the people and organizations making a difference, we showcase what makes the neighborhood unique.







Marketing & Communications

The BID takes a data-informed approach to marketing. We currently prioritize reaching those who live and work in and around Downtown, and strategically target broader audiences. Through social media, email, our website, and partnerships with local media and content creators, we promote Downtown businesses, events, and experiences while maximizing our marketing investments.

In FY26, our Facebook and Instagram content generated more than 1.75 million views, with over 85% coming from non-followers. Engagement increased 315% over FY25.

Our Downtown Digest and Downtown Insider newsletters keep residents, visitors, and stakeholders informed and connected. Email subscribers grew 19.4% in FY26, with an average open rate of 44%.

Paid promotion included social media advertising for key events and regional tourism marketing through Discover Central Massachusetts, featuring Downtown attractions and events in publications like its new Family Fun Guide.

Public Relations

Through media outreach, interviews, and appearances, the BID brings Downtown stories to local and regional audiences. We've secured coverage in outlets including the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, *Worcester Business Journal (WBJ)*, *MassLive*, *Spectrum News 1*, and others. The BID also has a monthly presence on the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce's "Voice of Business" segment with Hank Stolz on *Radio Worcester*.

The BID regularly works to shine a spotlight on Downtown's people and businesses. In FY26, we celebrated Operations Manager Miguel Fernandez-Nazario's inclusion in *WBJ*'s "40 Under Forty" list and Harlowe, Program Director Victoria Mariano's dog, earning a spot on its "Top Dog" list. Harlowe's recognition also gave us an opportunity to highlight Downtown as a dog-friendly neighborhood.

Bringing Downtown to the Table

A thriving Downtown depends on strong relationships, communication, and collaboration. In our Advocacy and Policy work, the Downtown Worcester BID connects property owners, businesses, residents, community organizations, and public officials to share information, elevate local priorities, and help shape the future of our city center.

Advancing Shared Priorities

Strong relationships with government leaders, community partners, and peer organizations help the BID represent Downtown Worcester's interests and contribute to conversations shaping its future. Through ongoing engagement with city and state officials, the BID works to ensure Downtown perspectives are considered on issues ranging from economic development and housing to public safety and public health.



Arts and culture are also essential to Downtown's identity and vitality. Through engagement with the Worcester Cultural Coalition and participation in Creative Sector Advocacy Day on Beacon Hill, we contributed to broader conversations about supporting the creative sector in FY26.

Through the Massachusetts BIDs Association, we collaborated with peer organizations across the Commonwealth to share ideas, address common challenges, and collectively advocate with state leaders on issues affecting downtowns and business improvement districts.

During FY26, we also welcomed a delegation from Downtown Portland to Worcester, participated in a New England BIDs summit, and attended the International Downtown Association (IDA) Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. These opportunities connect Worcester to a broader network of downtown organizations, fostering collaboration and bringing new perspectives and ideas to our work.

Connecting Our Community

Through our monthly Downtown Worcester Community Meetings, the BID creates regular opportunities for stakeholders to connect, hear from local businesses and organizations, and discuss issues affecting the district. These gatherings help strengthen relationships, surface shared priorities, and keep the community connected and informed.

During FY26, we hosted meetings from September through June at 10 different locations, welcoming approximately 300 attendees.



Our Team









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Victoria Mariano, Program Director
Siobhan Davis, Administrative Coordinator
Miguel Fernandez-Nazario, Operations Manager (Streetplus)

FY26 Sponsors & Funders

Thank you to all the sponsors and funders who generously contributed to our organization's work to make Downtown Worcester shine more brightly this year:

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WIN Waste Innovations
Worcester Arts Council
Worcester Central Kids Calendar
Worcester Idea Lab

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. We're grateful to all our sponsors, funders, and partners for their generous support and apologize for any inadvertent errors or omissions.


OUT TO LUNCH
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Downtown Worcester

Photography: Mike Hendrickson, Jaime Flores, Josh Wingell, Erika Sidor & City of Worcester

Data Note: Visitation, foot traffic, and event attendance estimates in this report are based on Placer.ai location analytics.

