



Community Investment Plan (CIP) 2014-2016

SECTION 1: Community or constituency to be served by the organization

The Downtown Taunton Foundation (DTF) is a place-based nonprofit Community Development Corporation (CDC) serving the economically disadvantaged geographic area of Downtown Taunton, Massachusetts. Specifically, our organization's service area is defined by the boundaries of the Taunton Business Improvement District, a Business Improvement District (BID) established in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 400 in 2010.

The City of Taunton is a Massachusetts Gateway municipality with a diverse population of 55,000 residents. Downtown Taunton represents our City's highest concentration of lower-income residents, with 71.2% of households in the area categorized as low- to moderate-income according to 2009 U.S. Census data. Please see **Attachment A: DTF Service Area Map**.

SECTION 2: Involvement of community residents and stakeholders

The elements of this Community Investment Plan (CIP) were presented at the DTF 2013 Annual Meeting, held on October 2, 2013 at the Trescott Street Gallery in Downtown Taunton. The event was held jointly with the Annual Meeting of the nonprofit Taunton Business Improvement District, Inc. and was attended by over 40 area residents, business people, property owners, artists, and City government representatives.

A draft of this CIP was distributed to the DTF Board of Directors for review and comment on December 23, 2013, and was officially adopted at a meeting of the DTF Board of Directors on January 9, 2014. See **Attachment B: DTF Board of Directors List as of January 2014** and **Attachment C: DTF January 9, 2014 Board Meeting Agenda and Minutes**.

In implementing and monitoring this CIP, residents and stakeholders will be engaged as follows:

- **Engagement: Organizational Leadership**

DTF's Board of Directors is the governing body of our organization. The Board meets as a whole at least four times per calendar year, and Board committees meet at least three times per calendar year. The DTF Board includes Downtown residents, business owners, artists, community leaders, and representatives of nonprofit organizations serving the neighborhood. As stated in our corporate by-laws, at least one-third of the Directors are members or representatives of the low-income community.

- **Engagement: Real Estate Development**

DTF's affordable housing, commercial, and mixed-use real estate development projects are initiated and overseen by our representative Board of Directors. We also work in close relationship with Taunton's Office of Economic and Community Development to ensure that our development initiatives support and complement the City of Taunton's overall economic development and Downtown revitalization goals and strategies.

- **Engagement: Economic Development**

Downtown residents and small businesses are the primary planners, facilitators, and beneficiaries of DTF's economic development activities. DTF offers arts and cultural events throughout the year to promote the social and economic development of the neighborhood. These events include the *Taunton Creates!* arts festival each May and the *Liberty and Union Arts & History Festival* each October. Volunteer committees made up of DTF Board members and other interested community members coordinate these events with support from DTF staff. Our Small Business Technical Assistance Programs are targeted to address the specific needs of the Downtown business community.

SECTION 3: Plan goals

DTF's goals, and the goals of this CIP, are the physical, social, and economic revitalization of Downtown Taunton, specifically of the area identified as the Taunton Business Improvement District, through cultural and educational programming, historic preservation, the expansion of economic opportunities for low- to moderate-income persons, and the provision of decent housing affordable to low- to moderate-income persons.

Achieving these goals will create economic opportunity and improve quality of life for Downtown's low- to moderate-income residents. The entire community will benefit from a revitalized Downtown which is more vibrant, viable, convenient, attractive, and safe.

SECTION 4: Activities to be undertaken 2014-2016

Activities: Real Estate Development

DTF engages in physical development projects, including residential and commercial real estate development, with the goals of promoting Downtown Taunton's economic development, historic preservation, and neighborhood revitalization, and of creating affordable, convenient, pedestrian-friendly housing opportunities. Projects in the pipeline for 2014-2016 include:

- **15 School Street**

In early 2013 DTF purchased, with the support of an Attorney General HomeCorps Partnership Grant and City of Taunton Community Development Block Grant funds, this foreclosed and blighted former nightclub and rooming house. Renovation of the building for first-floor commercial re-use, with two second-floor affordable apartments, is expected to be completed by January 2014, with occupancy by spring 2014.

- **First District Courthouse, 11 Court Street**

DTF is currently under a purchase and sale agreement with the Bristol County Commissioners to acquire Downtown's former First District Courthouse, an historic 19th century building vacated by the County in 2010. DTF's plans are to rehabilitate the structure, including adding an elevator for accessibility. We will then market the first floor as commercial space and create a community-oriented arts and events center on the second floor. Historic tax credit applications to support this project were submitted in May 2013, and a small capital campaign was initiated in October 2013.

- **15 Winthrop Street**

In November 2013, DTF – in partnership with The Neighborhood Corporation (TNC), another local CDC – was awarded receivership through the state Attorney General's office of this troubled former bar and boarding house. DTF and TNC are collaborating to clean up the site and transform 15 Winthrop Street into five units of apartment housing, including one handicapped accessible unit on the first floor.

- **Union Block, Main Street**

DTF is engaged with a team of community partners on plans to sustainably redevelop this historic block of connected Main Street buildings, which are currently threatened by deterioration and persistent vacancies. Plans are to revitalize the traditional storefronts on the first floor for use by small businesses, with a new Workforce Training Center anchor tenant to utilize the interior and rear of the block's first floor. The second and third floors will be transformed into 30-plus affordable and market-rate apartments.

Activities: Economic Development

DTF's economic development programs are focused on supporting and strengthening small and emerging businesses in the Downtown Taunton neighborhood, creating job opportunities, and fostering a vibrant community in which people of diverse backgrounds can live, work, and visit.

- **Arts and Cultural Programming**

As part of DTF's comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization, the organization hosts a year-round series of arts and cultural programs in the Downtown neighborhood that highlight the area's history, public spaces, artists, arts organizations, and businesses. Local residents, artists, and business people are involved in all aspects of planning and facilitating these programs, which have a positive impact on the area's economic development and the neighborhood's sense of place and community pride.

- **Small Business Technical Assistance**

Starting in spring 2014, DTF will provide professional Best Retail Practices (BRP) workshops, one-on-one consultations, and retail mini-grants to Downtown businesses. In addition to this formal small business technical assistance program, DTF staff members regularly provide Downtown business owners – or those interested in investing in Downtown – with informal education and outreach, including assisting businesses in applying for funds through the City's Downtown Façade Grant Program.

SECTION 5: How success will be measured and/or evaluated

Evaluation: Real Estate Development

DTF's real estate development projects will be evaluated by their success in meeting the specific project timelines, budgets, and other benchmarks established by the DTF Board of Directors. Specifically, the criteria for success for the pipeline projects listed above are:

- **15 School Street** – construction completed and full occupancy by spring 2014.
- **First District Courthouse** – capital campaign completed and financing in place by summer 2014; construction completed by the end of calendar year 2016.
- **15 Winthrop Street** – financing in place and construction begun by the end of 2014.
- **Union Block** – development team, funding strategy, and project timeline established by the end of 2014, with construction begun by the end of 2016.

Evaluation: Economic Development

DTF's economic development strategy combines small business technical assistance with arts and cultural programming and arts space development. Funded in large part by a two-year Adams Arts grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, these programs each have specific

targeted levels of artist, audience, and business participation. DTF staff will be responsible for tracking these indicators with the goal of quantifiable increased impact over time. Please see **Attachment D: “Downtown Taunton Creates” Logic Model**, which was submitted as part of DTF’s FY 2014-15 Adams Arts grant application, for details on the criteria for success established for DTF’s economic development programs.

SECTION 6: Collaborative efforts to support implementation

The Downtown Taunton Foundation’s CIP is supported by the following collaborators:

- **Taunton Business Improvement District, Inc.**
The DTF’s partnership with the Taunton Business Improvement District increases DTF’s organizational capacity by sharing staff and office space, collaborating on marketing and outreach, and providing complementary Downtown revitalization programs including enhanced maintenance, beautification, marketing, and public safety services.
- **The Neighborhood Corporation**
A regional CDC with strong community organizing and real estate development experience, The Neighborhood Corporation has formed a 50/50 partnership with the DTF on the receivership of 15 Winthrop Street in Downtown Taunton, bringing the expertise and resources of both organizations to this important revitalization project.
- **City of Taunton**
The City of Taunton’s Office of Economic and Community Development has allocated Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to support DTF’s eligible community development projects in the past, and we hope to continue this relationship in the future. The OECD and supports DTF’s small business assistance and neighborhood revitalization goals through its own ongoing Downtown Façade Grant Program.
- **Arts and Cultural Partners**
Several community partners actively collaborate to plan and implement DTF-initiated arts and cultural programs, including the Arts Collaborative of Taunton, Old Colony Historical Society, Taunton Area Chamber of Commerce, Taunton Art Association, and the Trescott Street Gallery. In turn, the DTF actively participates in other community groups’ and agencies’ arts and cultural initiatives, such as the City of Taunton Mayor’s Office’s annual *Lighting of the Green* downtown holiday celebration, for which DTF provides outreach and planning, volunteer coordination, and marketing assistance.

SECTION 7: Integration of activities; consistency with community strategy/vision

This CIP supports and builds upon the strategy and vision articulated in existing community development plans, including the **2009 Downtown Taunton Development Study**, a joint effort of Taunton’s Office of Economic and Community Development and the UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative. The study was funded by a MA DHCD Gateway Action Grant.

This CIP’s strategy for the integration of the arts and culture into community development was outlined in June 2013 in an application to the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s Adams Arts Program to support “Downtown Taunton Creates”, a collaborative program involving 16 community and government partner organizations.

Both the real estate development and economic development activities outlined in this CIP are also described in the **Taunton Business Improvement District’s 2014-2018 Strategic Plan**.

SECTION 8: Financing strategy

DTF will implement the CIP using a variety of financing strategies, including:

- **Attorney General HomeCorps Partnership Grant**
DTF was awarded a multi-year HomeCorps Partnership Grant in 2012. These funds are now being used to support housing creation at 15 School Street and 15 Winthrop Street.
- **Massachusetts Cultural Council Adams Arts Program**
DTF was awarded a grant of \$23,250 for FY2014 and \$24,000 in FY2015 from the MCC to support arts and cultural, marketing, and small business technical assistance programs.
- **Massachusetts Cultural Council Cultural Facilities Fund**
DTF received a planning and technical assistance grant from the MCC’s Cultural Facilities Fund in 2013 to support the rehabilitation of the First District Courthouse. We plan to apply for a capital grant from this fund in 2014 to fund implementation of the project.
- **Individual Donations, Corporation Sponsorships, and Bank Foundation Grants**
DTF conducts an annual membership drive for individual donations, solicits corporate sponsors for our arts and cultural events, and seeks grants from local and regional banks that have a commitment to community development in order to support our mission.
- **Construction and Mortgage Loans**
DTF is experienced in applying for and managing loans necessary to finance major real estate projects. In particular, we regularly partner with Taunton-based bank Bristol County Savings Bank to finance our community development projects.

SECTION 9: History, track record, and sustainable development

DTF History and Track Record

Founded in 2011, the Downtown Taunton Foundation has already demonstrated a strong track record of initiating and administering community development programs that have a positive impact on the Downtown Taunton neighborhood. Successes to date include:

- DTF partnered with the Taunton Business Improvement District and The Neighborhood Corporation on the development of the Baron Lofts, a vacant warehouse that was transformed in 2012 into six, one-bedroom loft apartments (including three affordable units), a community art gallery, and office space. Funding sources included Bristol County Savings Bank, MHIC, and the Greater Attleboro Taunton HOME Consortium.
- DTF purchased, at auction, a foreclosure property at 15 School Street in the Downtown and is currently in the process of rehabilitating the project as first-floor commercial space with two affordable apartments on the second floor. Funding leveraged included an Attorney General HomeCorps Grant, City of Taunton Community Development Block Grant funds, and a construction loan from Bristol County Savings Bank.
- Since our founding, DTF has initiated and coordinated Downtown arts and cultural programs, including the *Taunton Creates!* public arts festival, held each spring on Taunton Green (2011, 2012 and 2013), and the *Liberty and Union Arts and History Festival* each fall (2011, 2012 and 2013). In addition, DTF has managed the Trescott Street Gallery, a volunteer-led community art gallery, since its opening in October 2012.

Please see **Attachment E: Press Coverage of DTF Projects and Programs**.

CIP Consistency with Sustainable Development Principles

DTF's goals and activities as outlined in this CIP directly address several of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Sustainable Development Principles. Specifically:

- DTF's Downtown Taunton real estate development projects are all examples of the reuse of existing structures and infrastructure, and several protect historic resources.
- DTF's current and planned real estate development projects, individually and as a whole, support a pedestrian-friendly Downtown that offers a healthy mix of residential, commercial, cultural, educational, and health/social service uses.
- DTF's housing development expands opportunities for people of all abilities, income levels, and household types, and has included in the past – and will continue to include in the future – affordable, handicapped-accessible, and multi-family housing options.