



Georgia Downtown Association Annual Retreat

FINAL REPORT

Mara Shaw, Facilitator

January 18, 2023

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Canton City Hall

110 Academy Street

Canton, Georgia 30114

Attendees

Board Members: President Jeffrey Fowler, Vice-President Emily Hopkins, Past-President April Norton, Mathew Hill, Quaijuan Willis, Velinda Hardy, Taylor Smith, Tonya Parker, Abigail Strickland, Abbey McLaren, Kendrick Ward, Jason Ford, Ricky Clark

Staff Members: Renée Coakley, Cindy Eidson, Sadie Krawczyk, Sharon Collins

Partners: John VanBrunt, Ellen Hill, Elizabeth Elliot, Leigh Burns, Jessica Worthington

8:00 am – 9:00 am Breakfast

9:00 am Welcome and Call to Order

- GDA President Welcome
- Introductions

9:15 am Certified Downtown Professional Program Update

**9:30 am Identification and Discussion of Organization Policy
Revisions/Development (*Assign to Committees during Discussion*)**

- Association Operations
 - Calendar/Timeline – want to make sure the board is not forgetting anything. Do any of the timelines need to be changed. The board was pleased to see that the conference registration will start in May. There was additional discussion about meetings during the conference and post-conference wrap up meetings. It was proposed that the board meet the last day of the conference for a conference wrap up meeting.
 - Newsletter Discussion – the social media posts and association emails work very well, compared to the newsletter. LinkedIn is even better for the organization. The Membership and Marketing Committee will discuss it during the afternoon work.
 - Board Meetings – it was suggested that the board meetings be rotated among the communities of the members. There would be an opportunity to share about the community, as well as conduct the business of the association. The July meeting for the board should be in the conference host city in order to assist in final details leading up to the conference. The board will plan out the meeting calendar from here and the host cities.
 - Conference Evaluation – it will be available by QR code in the mobile app and will go out at the very end of the conference. This was also added to the timeline task list. The board might consider some type of prize for completion of the post conference survey.
 - Committee/Board Responsibilities – there are certain association tasks that need to be handled by board members and some that need to be assigned to committees.
 - Committee structure – the board will consider adding membership to the committees from the association membership. This will open it up to the general membership and provide an opportunity to identify and support new leadership. The average committee size is five to seven people. The committee chairs and members will identify potential candidates and inviting them to participate in their committees. It is important for new board members to review the committees and what they do to determine which committee would allow them the greatest opportunity to use their expertise to support the work of the association. The work plan needs to be updated to make sure the Conference Committee is a separate committee outside of the Education and Training Committee. The Nominating Committee and the Internal Operations Committee should be comprised of just

board members since it is directly to the responsibilities of the board on behalf of the association. The new Policy and Procedure Committee will develop a plan for the new structure of the committees and how to increase additional membership from the association.

- Policy & Procedure – there needs to be detailed work on how the board conducts the business of the association. This will be assigned to the By-laws Committee and it will be renamed the Policy and Procedure Committee. Then the by-law work in the future will be part of the work of this committee. The issues are voting, attendance, wording in the by-laws about the specific parameters of the board seats in each of the DCA regions, choosing committee members, how often the committees meet and how members are selected, Roberts Rules of Order, voting procedures, and in-person/virtual/hybrid meetings.
- Membership Services/Partnerships/Legacy Members – The Membership and Marketing Committee needs to review the membership levels in detail and bring a plan back to the board. This needs to focus on new partner organizations and emeritus members. The Georgia Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (GaCVBs) is one of the associations that wants to partner with the Georgia Downtown Association. The important question is who to target and how they are recruited as a partner. The Georgia Chamber might be another partner association. The Committee needs to specifically work on the naming and defining all of the organizational and individual levels, as well as the monetary amount to be charged for each level. The two issues are addressing the Partner Organizations and the Membership levels. Regarding membership, there is still a question of organization versus individual memberships. It was the general consensus that the Committee needs to address organization and individual membership levels, and not one versus the other. This is a great opportunity to grow the membership and support of the association.
- Advertising Budget – the advertising budget and policy development regarding where to advertise will be assigned to the Policy and Procedure Committee. They need to work with the Membership and Marketing Committee to determine the annual budget amount. The consensus that the advertising budget should focus more on using social media as the platform for the most effective advertising. The GMA Cities Connect Tuesday calls would be a great opportunity to promote the work of GDA. All of the specific tasks that Renee performs in this area needs to be in the plan and policy for the association.

- Marketing Plan – there needs to be funds allocated to purchase merchandise to give away to promote membership opportunities. The issue of the association booth needs to be addressed and confirmation of what conferences the association will attend with the booth. This needs to be presented and approved at the February 2023 meeting. The plan needs to address marketing of the association and membership. Additionally, there should be specific advertising in the actual conference budget. Currently, there is \$3,500 in the conference contingency budget for marketing and promotion of the annual conference. The Committee needs to see all of the revenue line items and amounts that have specific dollars for marketing and advertising.
- Booth schedule – planning needs to begin in October to determine all of the conferences for the following year in which the booth will be part of the exhibits. At that time, the board needs to seek volunteers to work in the booth at the scheduled conferences.
- Other
 - There was brief discussion about creating a GDA Hall of Fame and having an annual induction ceremony at the yearly conference.
 - There should be a brief presentation on the Annual Work Plan accomplishments during the General Membership meeting at the annual conference. The association could also provide a one-page year in review in the annual renewal of dues notification.
 - New board member orientation – the annual retreat should include the orientation session for new board members with a specific agenda. The entire board should attend. Day one would be the board orientation, overall board retreat planning, and city tour. The first day will end with a dinner. The second day would then be the committee work of the board.

12:00 pm Lunch Break

1:00 pm Review the 2022 Work Plan – Progress Reports and 2023 Work Plan Development

- **Nominations Committee** – Members: April Norton (Chair), Mathew Hill (co-chair), Ellen Hill, Sadie Krawczyk
 - No report

- **Executive (Internal Operations) Committee** – Members: Jeffrey Fowler (Chair), April Norton (Co-Chair), Emily Hopkins, Aundi Lesley
 - Board meetings/in city (Annual)
 - D + O insurance (check renewal) (Annual)
 - Annual review contract- July (Annual)
 - GMA/GOA
 - Budget Review (Nov) (Annual)
 - Scholarship review (monthly)
 - Welcome letter from President to New Managers or Downtown Professionals (monthly)
 - Calendar review per meeting (monthly)
 - In-person workplan review (bi-monthly)

- **Education and Training Committee (Curriculum)** – Members: Jeffrey Fowler (Chair), (co-chair to be determined), Quaijuan Willis, Kendrick Ward, Elizabeth Elliot, Cindy Eidson, Sadie Krawczyk
 - No report

- **Membership and Marketing Committee** – Members: Abigail Strickland (Chair), Tonya Parker(co-chair), Abbey McLaren, Elizabeth Elliot, Sadie Krawczyk, Aundi Lesley, Danny
 - Membership levels
 - Define/cost
 - Partners/cost/policy/benefits
 - Advertising
 - Social media
 - Budget
 - Annual booth calendar
 - Board rep
 - Co-chair: Tonya
 - EDGE scholarship/CDP
 - Organization's membership
 - Contract
 - Tiered membership
 - New member discount?
 - Preferred vendor? #?
 - Corporate vs partner
 - Invited only partner
 - Not on app
 - Legacy/student/individual

- Thank you/welcome email
 - Social policy
 - Scholarship
- **Policy and Procedure Committee** – Members: Mathew Hill (chair), Emily Hopkins (co-chair), Cindy Eidson
 - In-person board meetings
 - Host at board members' cities- coordinated by GDA staff with PP committee
 - Rotate North & Macon-South
 - PP committee develops list and staff arranges details
 - Policy for nominating committee to have diverse representation from state without mandating seats for DCA districts
 - Update website to only list communities of board members rather than DCA regions
 - Update bylaws for experience qualifications for board members
 - Update bylaws with attendance policy
 - Create procedure for violation of attendance policy and board member agreement form
 - Attend board orientation
 - Board meeting policies
 - Voting procedures/ballot format
 - Robert's Rules of Orders
 - (Virtual attendance already covered by bylaws)
 - Committee policy
 - Formalize conference committee
 - Non-board members intake process and qualifications
 - Evaluate new committee structure in 2024/review committees annually
 - Review bylaws annually and update
 - Membership ideas by policies and procedures
 - Founder's Circle
 - People who founded GDA in 1998
 - Free membership-no benefits
 - Legacy Membership
 - New name for retired (\$50)
 - Organization/Community Member
 - Evaluate current membership income and create levels to at least sustain current income with goal to excel

- Corporate Membership – profit vs non-profit
- Partner Membership – profit vs nonprofit
- **Conference Committee** – Members: Velinda Hardy (chair), Quaijuan Willis(co-chair), Leigh Burns, Sharon Collins, Emily Hopkins
 - Review all \$ amounts for 2024 conference
 - Jeffrey to create info video (on GDA website) for Silent Auction
 - Create promo video for upcoming conference (Jeffrey and Velinda)
 - Target additional sponsors – Leigh will draft letter
 - Canton DDA Board to assist with Silent Auction collection of items at conference
 - Velinda and Sharon working on transportation from lodging to conference sites
 - Committee to have monthly meetings to discuss conference – logistics, etc.
 - Renee will send survey to committee for dates/times to meet
- **Legislative Committee** – Members: Taylor Smith (chair), Jason Ford (co-chair), Ricky Clark, Abbey McLaren, Kendrick Ward, Sadie Krawczyk
 - Legislative letter with Rack Card – contact information?
 - GMA LPC Weekly calls and Gold Dome email
 - Quarterly membership updates
 - GDA – Day at the Capital – Tie in “City Day-GMA”
 - Organize prior- “face time” with legislators
 - Legislative invites to GDA conference
 - Update on session progress
 - Downtown advocacy: website promotion
 - RZ Continuance- extensions – map modification
 - RLF – Housing – Historic?
 - Design Services – engineering/architect/landscape
 - Entertainment districts
 - DDA Law

(Add the 2022 report as an appendix)

3:30 pm January 18, 2023, Board Meeting

4:00 pm Adjournment

Appendix

2022 Planning Retreat Transcription

I. By-laws

- Create new By-law Committee with Ricky Clark as Chair
- Members will include Ellen Hill, Mathew Hill, Christian Hamilton, and Chris Higdon if needed for historical context
- Provide process for board input at the beginning of the effort.
- All comments are to be submitted to Ricky Clark by February 22, 2022
- Committee will provide all comments back to the board members in preparation for the March 22, 2022 meeting
- Board will discuss proposed revisions and act at the March 22, 2022, meeting
- Preliminary issues:
 - Review Emily Davenport's notes
 - Membership
 - General wording and inconsistent language
 - Executive Committee and terms
 - Roles of the Executive Committee
 - Last update was completed in 2017
 - How to define ex-officio board members and adhere to it

II. Georgia Downtown Association Contract with the Georgia Municipal Association

- Term of the agreement is March 1 – February 28 for each year
- Review of contract by Board of Directors and recommendations submitted to Ellen Hill by April 1, 2022
- Meeting will be held with GMA attorney and staff to review and revise contract language for next contract period starting March 1, 2023.
- All future contracts will be reviewed annually.

III. Internal Operations

- Investigate and secure Directors and Officers liability insurance for the Board of Directors
- Conduct orientation for all new board members
- Review board members roles and responsibilities annually
- Ensure all board members have a board notebook and contents by the February 2022 meeting

IV. Other Issues

- Review of membership categories, names, and definitions
- Ensure members are correctly assigned and paying the correct dues level

- Internal Operations Committee will start this process and then pass it to the Membership and Marketing Committee to push out any revisions to the GDA members about dues

V. Committee Chair and Co-chair Assignments

- Nominations Committee – Mathew Hill, Chair and Sadie Krawczyk, Co-chair
- Internal Operations Committee – Ellen Hill, Chair and Executive Committee
- Education and Training Committee – Jeffrey Fowler, Chair and Elizabeth Elliott, Co-chair (Monica Rentfrow and Sadie Krawczyk to serve on the Certified Downtown Professional sub-committee)
- Membership and Marketing Committee – April Norton, Chair and Aundi Lesley, Co-chair
- By-laws Committee – Ricky Clark, Chair
- Conference Committee – Emily Hopkins, Chair and Abigail Strickland, Co-chair
- Legislative Committee – Ricky Clark, Chair and Kendrick Ward, Co-chair

Legislative Committee

Legislative Chair: Taylor Smith Committee Members: Jason Ford (co-chair), Ricky Clark, Abbey McLaren, Kendrick Ward, Sadie Krawczyk					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Legislative letter with Rack Card	Sadie will work on finding a template letter for us to use. Goal is to have something to present at March Meeting. Send Letter w/ Rack Card & Save the Date for GDA Conference	Sadie	March Meeting		
GMA LPC Weekly calls, Gold Dome email, & Friday Focus Calls	Make sure all members are signed up for Gold Dome Emails & GMA Calls. Sadie reach out to Kendell	Jason & Kendrick	Annual		
Quarterly membership updates	Goal is to have 2023 Legislative Update for GDA Board at April Meeting. Shared with General Membership following	Team	April Meeting		
GDA – Day at the Capital – Tie in “City Day-GMA”	Coordinate with Cities United Mayor & Elected Officials to Capital. Sadie will coordinate w/ Kendell	Team	January 2024 (Fri 1/26 – Mon 1/29)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize prior- “face time” with legislators 	Contact Local Reps. Legislative Breakfast Target relevant “Committees”	Team	January 2024		
Legislative invites to GDA conference	Reps from in and around Canton? Offer chance to	Team	June		

GDA Mission: Connect communities and equip professionals through training and networking to strengthen and advocate for Georgia’s downtowns.

GDA Vision: A statewide network of thriving downtowns and equipped professionals that are recognized as Georgia’s most valuable economic engine.

	Speak?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on session progress 		See Membership Update	April Meeting		
Downtown advocacy: website promotion	Review GA Cities & GEDA Resource Pages for Template. Partner w/ GA Main Street for "Downtowns By The \$\$" Promotion: Downtown	Team	August		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Zone Continuance RLF Housing/Historic Design Services Entertainment Districts DDA Law 					

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Executive Committee (Internal Operations)

Executive Chair: Jeffrey Fowler Committee Members: April Norton (co-chair), Emily Hopkins, Aundi Lesley					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Board Meeting Locations	To be located in different citizens around Georgia.	Policy & Procedure Committee	March Meeting		
Annual review of contracts	Review the GDA/GMA Contract at least once per year.	Board of Directors	September Meeting		
D&O Insurance	Review the insurance policy once per year.	Board of Directors	April Meeting		
Budget Review	Review the budget for approval for the new year.	Board of Directors	November Meeting		
Scholarship Review	Scholarships are to be reviewed on a monthly basis.	Board of Directors	Monthly		
Welcome letter from President to New Managers or Downtown Professionals	Sent on a monthly basis.	President	Monthly		
Review Monthly Calendar	To ensure all items are being met.	Board of Directors	Monthly		
In-person Workplan Review	This document should be reviewed at every in-person meeting.	Board of Directors	Bi-Monthly		

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Marketing & Membership Committee

M&M Chair: Abigail Strickland Committee Members: Tonya Parker (co-chair), Abbey McLaren, Elizabeth Elliot, Sadie Krawczyk, Aundi Lesley, Danny Bivens					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Membership levels		Abigail Strickland/All			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define Levels Membership belongs to organization vs. individual Cost Preferred Vendor Friend of GDA 					
Partners		Policy/Procedures Committee			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define Invite Only 					
Advertising		Aundi Lesley			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Booth Calendar w/ Board Rep Social Media Budget 					
Edge Scholarship		Tonya Parker			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising Testimonials Legislative Letters? Presentation 					
CDP Advertising		Elizabeth Elliott			

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teasers • Program Roll Out • Class Schedule Advertising 					
Email Templates	Thank you, Welcome, etc.	Abigail Strickland			

Education Committee

Education Chair: Jeffrey Fowler Committee Members: Elizabeth Elliot (co-chair), Qaijuan Willis, Cindy Eidson, Kendrick Ward, Sadie Krawczyk, Emily Hopkins					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Regional Meetups	5 meetups at each time	Renee Coakley	Spring & Fall		
Mentorship Program		Jeffrey Fowler	Monthly		
CDP Course Review		Education Committee	May		
CDP Implementation Plan		Education Committee	August		

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Policy & Procedure Committee

Education Chair: Matthew Hill Committee Members: Emily Hopkins (co-chair), Cindy Eidson					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
In-person board meetings	Host at board members' cities- coordinated by GDA Staff with PP Committee Rotate North & Macon-South PP committee develops list and staff arranges details	Mathew Hill	February Meeting		Complete
Policy for nominating committee to have diverse representation from state without mandating seats for DCA	Update website to only list communities of board members rather than DCA regions Update bylaws for experience qualifications for board members	Staff, Committee	May Meeting		
Update bylaws with attendance policy	Create procedure for violation of attendance policy and board member agreement form Attend board orientation	Committee	July Meeting	Bylaws changes need to be approved by the board and then approved by the membership	
Board meeting policies	Voting procedures/ballot format Robert's Rules of Orders (Virtual attendance already covered by bylaws)	Committee	May Meeting	Policy doesn't need membership approval	
Committee Policy	Formalize conference committee	Committee	July Meeting	Committees are named in bylaws – will	

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	Non-Board members intake process and qualifications Evaluate new committee structure in 2024/review committees annually			require membership approval	
Review bylaws annually and update	Committee recommendation for revision to membership types will be presented to the board	Committee	May Meeting		
Membership ideas by policies and procedures	Legacy Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Name for Retired (\$50) Founders Circle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who founded GDA in 1998 Free Membership- no benefits 	Committee	May Meeting		
Organization/Community Member	Evaluate current membership income and create levels to at least sustain current income with goal to excel			Corporate Membership – profit vs non-profit Partner Membership – Profit vs non-profit	

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Conference Committee

Education Chair: Velinda Hardy Committee Members: Quaijuan Willis (co-chair), Leigh Burns, Sharon Collins, Emily Hopkins					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
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Jeffrey to create info video (on GDA website) for Silent Auction					
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Velinda and Sharon working on transportation from lodging to conference sites					
Committee to have monthly meetings to discuss conference – logistics, etc.					
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Your Facilitator



Mara Shaw serves as the Associate Director for the Governmental Training, Education, and Development division at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. She also manages all leadership development and financial management training programs for more than 5,000 local and state government officials annually. She works with officials and staff from local and state government in managing and providing various professional and leadership development training programs in multiple state agencies and a variety of local government professionals associations in the state. Her primary areas of focus as the associate director are the evaluation of all educational programs and the development of public sector competency-based learning objectives and course curriculum. She has more than 25 years of experience in local government, primarily in the areas of administration, downtown and community development, code enforcement and local government planning. Mara is the founding President of the Georgia Downtown Association. Before joining the Institute of Government in 2013, Mara served as the assistant to the city manager with the City of Valdosta. She successfully completed the course of study as a Certified Main Street Manager through the National Trust Main Street Center in Washington, D.C., in 2000 and was named the 2005 Sen. Loyce Turner Outstanding Public Official by Valdosta State University and received the Department of Community Affairs Outstanding Leadership Award in 2006. Mara was honored with the Candle in the Dark award in 2014 for her government and community service by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Association. Mara was a 2020 recipient of the Walter Barnard Hill Award for Distinguished Achievement in Public Service and Outreach.



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