

Where There's A Will There's A Way

Property owners within the boundaries of the Pensacola Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) but not within the narrowly defined boundaries of the downtown district now have a process by which their properties can potentially receive the same services, opportunities, and benefits as those provided to owners and businesses within the established downtown district. Through a recent action by the Pensacola Downtown Improvement Board (DIB), the ability for groups of property owners to contract for essentially the full offering of DIB services was established subject to the following criteria and limitations:

- the contracting group must consist of more than one property,
- the contracting group of properties must be contiguous to each other,
- the contracting group need not be contiguous to the existing downtown district,
- the contracting group of properties must be located within the CRA,
- the cost of the contracted services shall be equal to the equivalent of two mills of ad valorem taxation per contracting property per year, and
- the maximum term for any contract for services shall be three years.

This new arrangement for closer collaboration is available to any contiguous group of property owners within the CRA that desire to pursue it regardless of the land use occurring on the property. Even tax-exempt properties outside of the established downtown district may contract for downtown district services under this new process.

Already, groups of property owners surrounding the downtown district are exploring this new contract option as a means of pooling resources, coordinating efforts, and maximizing their exposure. Hopefully in the near future, activities occurring outside of the very gerrymanded downtown district, but still within the area most Pensacolians consider to be downtown, will be included in the downtown calendar of events. More vacant properties seeking new owners or tenants will be marketed and shown to prospects seeking a downtown location. More retailers and restaurateurs will be able to take advantage of the cooperative advertising campaigns managed by the DIB. The Downtown Retail Strategy will treat more close-by businesses as part of the downtown cluster instead of the competition. The placement of flower baskets, flags, and holiday decorations will expand. More near-by businesses will have access to the extensive market research conducted by the DIB. Traffic and circulation issues impacting areas around the existing downtown district will be tackled. More businesses and their employees will gain access to the DIB buying groups for products and services. Additional city center development opportunities will be marketed. More businesses and attractions will be included in the marketing publications and directories promoting downtown. More nearby property owners will have the ability to actively participate in shaping the future direction of downtown and the impact of agreed upon programs and activities on their properties. When such positive activities begin to occur, the overall

image and long-term success of Downtown Pensacola – and the businesses located here – can only be enhanced.

It's up to the individual property owners inside the CRA but outside of the downtown district to determine if they want to pursue this new collaboration option. The DIB is not selling this concept. To the contrary, interested property owners must contact the DIB to start a dialogue about a possible contract for services. The DIB has merely responded to a need and a series of requests for help from surrounding property owners that consider themselves to be downtown – even if their property address is outside the established downtown district. Jurisdictional lines may remain unchanged but the image of downtown and what it has to offer could soon get a lot larger.

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