



# *2017 Annual Report*

Downtown Frankfort, Inc. (DFI) has been focusing on revitalizing our historic downtown for over 30 years. A 501c3 organization, DFI is funded by the City of Frankfort, Franklin County Fiscal Court, and from event sponsorship and private donations. Areas of particular interest include historic preservation, economic development, special events, marketing & promotions.

In 2018, the Board will be focused on initiating changes in the organizational structure of DFI to better answer the needs of the changing landscape of downtown Frankfort.

Following are some of the highlights of 2017:

## *Downtown Redevelopment Strategies*

June – October: We worked with Barry Alberts of City Visions, subcontractor of AMEC, EPA/Brownfield consultant, to identify under-utilized downtown buildings to determine which buildings have the most potential for redevelopment. The criteria included location, marketability, cooperative ownership, previous redevelopment efforts and catalytic potential. We assisted Barry in conducting one on one meetings with 10 owners of empty buildings.

Four buildings were recommended for short term actions: 311 St. Clair/Marcus Building; 245 West Main/Mason Hogue; 316 Wapping Street/Good Shepherd School; 302 High Street/Dr. Rush Building; and 111 Capital Avenue, former Frankfort Lumber site. Further suggestions included

improvement of welcome signage at Wilkinson and Broadway, improvement of signage to parking garages, and making St. Clair Street, from Main Street to Broadway, two-way. Recommendations also included a list of long term strategies for the City to consider.

## *Capital Plaza Community Engagement Committee*

In May, William Landrum, Secretary of Finance for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, announced the State's plans to demolish the Capital Plaza Tower, Fountain Place and the Convention Center in 2018. He announced plans for a State Office building to house 1500 workers and a parking garage to be built on the Tower footprint. Secretary Landrum invited the City and County to engage the public for input about what citizens would like to see on the remaining acreage and vicinity.

The State has offered to put out an RFP on behalf of the City and the County, hire a developer to recreate that area, and deed that acreage to the developer so that it goes back on the tax rolls for Frankfort and Franklin County. Since this monumental announcement, a team was assembled by the City and County to hire a consultant firm with a nationally recognized, successful track record of projects of this magnitude. The team consists of City and County officials and staff, a City Commissioner, a County Magistrate, representatives of the Kentucky Capital Development Corporation, the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist & Convention Commission, Downtown Frankfort, Inc., and a citizen representative. Nine national consultants submitted proposals, four were selected to interview, and the result was the selection of City Visions of Louisville. The community engagement process will begin in early 2018.

### **Downtown Frankfort, Inc.**

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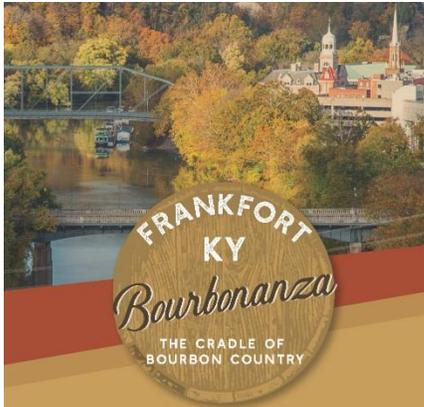
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# Building Inventory

Volunteers and staff completed collection of data on all empty buildings downtown. The site is up but not yet live, as there is still some more data to collect and input. We are currently asking partners to review the site and give suggestions for making it more user friendly. This project has been conducted by DFI staff, volunteers, Geomechanique, local GIS experts, and the DFI Design Committee.



## A Focus on Bourbon

**Bourbonanza** – It took nearly a year of planning and hundreds of volunteer hours but well worth it, as we created a wildly successful event. Over 330 people attended the Friday night event, representing five states. Saturday’s street fair was held simultaneously to the PRIDE fest on the Old Capitol Lawn and resulted in a colorful and fun event that included live music, food and refreshments for everyone. Our Saturday tasting room was visited by hundreds of revelers with 100 purchased tickets and many folks returning from the Friday night event. We partnered with nine local distillers, three breweries and one winery, which helped strengthen our relationship with those businesses in the spirit’s industry.

We created a multi-faceted website and consistent graphics with the help of a local firm, collaborated with a local social media consultant for daily activity on Facebook, and placed print ads in Louisville, Lexington, and Ohio thanks to our unprecedented close partnership with the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist & Convention Commission. We were thrilled with the press we received in *The State Journal*, *Insider Louisville*, and the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

We know that this event is helping our local citizens to truly see the specialness of living in the “Cradle of Bourbon Country”, where 15 distilleries are within a 20-mile radius of Frankfort. Additionally, this event and a deeper commitment to our Bourbon history and future is causing quite the buzz in Bourbon world across the country, which we know will result in increased Bourbon tourism in our future.



Curated bottles of Pappy Van Winkle 23-year-old bourbon and other rare bourbons will be auctioned at Bourbonanza. Spotted Sirens on Friday night in Frankfort. Other bourbons include a Weber collection, Knott Creek bottles, and Four Roses limited editions. - Herald-Leader

RESTAURANT NEWS & REVIEWS

Pappy, other rare whiskeys to be auctioned at Bourbonanza

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PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BLAYNE FOR THE

**Bourbon Strategies Committee** – This group originated from the DFI “Economic Revitalization Committee”. This separate entity was formed to focus solely on all things Bourbon in Frankfort. Their main goal is to grow better connections with the local Bourbon distilleries and raise the level of awareness locally and nationally of the significance of this industry to Frankfort. With the boom in Bourbon related tourism over the past several years, Frankfort is perfectly positioned to attract more tourism to the area. We know that we are coming to this a bit late, compared to nearby cities like Bardstown, Lexington and Louisville, so we’ve had to increase our efforts to make sure that we are on the map as a must-see, must experience location for the Bourbon traveler.

In 2017 this committee made great strides. Initially, they created a “**Bourbon Resolution**” and saw its successful approval by the City Commission and Fiscal Court. This document helps lay the groundwork for attracting new businesses in the spirit’s industry. Secondly, they formed the first “**Frankfort Bourbon Society**” and within five months attracted 115 members. They are currently hosting monthly events at local venues and are averaging 50-75 attendees. Their tasting event at Kentucky Gentleman



Cigars in February 2018 will include members from the Lexington and Louisville Societies. In the future they plan to host other events with neighboring societies to strengthen those partnerships.

This committee has also been crafting the “**Kentucky Distilled Experience**”, a local version of the Bourbon Trail. This venture highlights a variety of unique activities that will add to the bourbon tourist’s experience of Frankfort. While currently a visitor might visit Buffalo Trace and move on, this experience engages the visitor to make Frankfort their home base. Here they can enjoy bourbon-themed shops, bars serving local spirits, a visit to a bourbon exhibit at the Capital City Museum (due to open in April 2018), and a trolley tour featuring historic sites related to the bourbon industry. Buffalo Trace has already signed on to contribute to the “top shelf” membership level, which will help draw area businesses to participate as well. The Experience will roll out in early Spring 2018.

## Events

Our 2017 event schedule was, as usual, filled with loads of activities. Following are the list of events and sponsors:

**Governor’s Derby Day Downtown** – Although this event is organized by the Governor’s office, DFI participates in planning and communicates with local businesses to keep them apprised of the schedule of events. We also oversee the Jim Beam Stage, where live music is featured for this event.



**ArtWalk** – KECU sponsored three events this year. One more is scheduled on April 27, 2018 and then it was agreed that planning would begin to re-create it into more of a larger art event – perhaps an art festival. While this event has seen some success in the past 7 years and drawn attention to the growing arts community downtown, we believe that it can grow a larger, regional audience if we build a well-organized, juried event.



**Summer Concert Series** – United Bank continued to be the signature partner for this successful music series that brings thousands of people to downtown every other Friday night. The series could not happen without a team of partners and in-kind services provided by City Parks and Recreation, City Emergency Services, Frankfort Police Department, the Convention Center, Frankfort Plant Board, and *The State Journal*. In 2018, we are planning to seek out additional funds to help support this event.

**Bourbonanza** – This is the event that we believe has the most promise of growing into a signature event for Frankfort that could draw visitors from all over the country. As such, we know that it will be a main source of income to DFI’s organization over the next several years. In 2017, Independence Bank was the main sponsor. We learned that much more support is needed in order to grow this event. So, we are currently creating a multi-level sponsorship structure that will engage businesses at various levels of support for the 2018 event. We are also partnering with other bourbon-



related events in town to cross promote these happenings in Frankfort. Additionally, there is discussion of adding a craft beer and national distillers gathering in Frankfort over the next couple of years.

**Candlelight** – Commonwealth Credit Union has sponsored this holiday themed event that has been a community favorite for many years. Additional 2017 sponsors included Bojangles, Citizens Commerce, Accurate Printing and Kentucky Farm Bureau. What began over 30 years ago as a one-night event, has grown into a four-day celebration that includes carriage rides, RJ Corman Polar Express train (with 800 attendees!), holiday shopping specials, visits with Santa and friends, live music at area churches and venues, kid’s pajama party and Polar Express event at The Grand Theatre (200+ attendees!), and food and beverage treats at area restaurants, cafes, and bars. In 2018, we’ve set the date for the first weekend in November, well in advance, so that we can capitalize on regional marketing dollars invested by the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist & Convention Commission.

# Marketing

Our marketing efforts in 2017 included, but weren't limited to the following activities:

- Weekly print ad in *The State Journal* focusing on events and attractions
- Weekly email BLAST reaching 1400+ people
- Weekly updates on the DFI website
- Travel writers visit hosted by the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist & Convention Commission
- Miles media video hosted by the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist & Convention Commission
- Kentucky State University Homecoming “Ham and Jam” breakfast hosted by the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist & Convention Commission
- Kentucky Retailers Association – video snippet on downtown businesses
- Live remote with Lee Cruse from LEX 18, a Lexington television station, featuring our Candlelight event
- Studio segment at WKYT, a Lexington television station, featuring our Candlelight event
- Presentation to Kentucky State University class about DFI and downtown happenings

• DFI had incredible success focusing our social media efforts to promote Bourbonanza in 2017. We reached 31,118 users from our Bourbonanza Facebook page.

