

GUIDING THEMES

Based upon stakeholder input and the planning team's review of background documents and professional observations, the team identified the following Guiding Themes around which to organize the recommendations to achieve the vision for downtown.

Theme 1 – Marketing the District: Cultivating Downtown's Identity to Residents, Visitors and Investors

Theme 2 – Navigating the District: Building a Pedestrian-Friendly, Multi-Modal Downtown

Theme 3 – Connecting the District: Creating a Comfortable, Cohesive and Attractive Downtown

Theme 4 – Living in the District: Establishing Downtown as a Place for Professionals to Live and Work

Theme 5 – Managing the District: Fostering a Safe and Appealing Downtown

Themes 1, 2 and 3 are focused on design and physical improvements and comprise Phase I of the master planning effort. Themes 4 and 5 are focused on downtown uses, development and community sustainability and comprise Phase II of the master planning effort.

THEME 1 – MARKETING THE DISTRICT: CULTIVATING DOWNTOWN'S IDENTITY TO RESIDENTS, VISITORS AND INVESTORS

Overview

As described earlier, downtown State College has many of the aspects of a quintessential college town. Few college towns in America can boast such a distinct delineation between "town" and "gown." Furthermore, downtown State College is a large district that contains within it sub-districts with their own distinct personalities ranging from the distinctive appearance of College Avenue to the "funky" nature of Calder Way.

Unfortunately, downtown State College has lacked a cohesive identity for itself that reflects its unique role in the Borough, the State and the Nation. The district has a tremendous opportunity to better-sustain its downtown by selling its assets, dispelling misperceptions, attracting investment and providing a platform for existing stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, residential opportunities and offices to "sell" downtown as a truly one-of-a-kind place.

In addition to this large collection of assets, downtown State College has few peers that are doing an effective job of this (particularly among Big Ten college towns). This offers

The existing downtown brands from State College and from its peer communities reflect a varying level of success in terms of effectively communicating their identities. Downtown State College has the opportunity to set itself above other communities with the development of a cohesive marketing strategy that includes a re-imagined brand.



the State College community a chance to jump ahead of the curve with a cohesive marketing strategy to convey the character. Several peer communities in Pennsylvania are doing an effective job of marketing their downtowns, which presents an opportunity for State College to carve out its own unique niche.

Brand Elements

A community brand is more than a logo or a tagline; it is a promise a place makes to its people. Unlike companies that have centralized control of their brand message, communities must have an identity system that is compelling enough to convince residents, stakeholders and decision makers to “buy into” this identity. This is no small task.

At the end of the day, however, State College should establish its own brand values that it will use to guide these constituent groups to believe in and adopt the system. For State College the brand values are as follows:

- **Downtown is a college town.** While this may seem obvious, some may want to “tamp down” the college town identity. This would be a major tactical error. On the whole, college towns are viewed as idyllic places that are rich with memories and full of life.
- **Downtown is a place for all:** Local residents/families, regional residents/families, visitors, students, alumni, faculty/staff and entrepreneurs. This is an imperative value that will require ongoing marketing work and continued messaging. It is easy to cede downtown State College to the large student population, but any look at downtown during the morning, day and early evening reveals that the district is being used by a variety of groups. The late evening perception of downtown must not permeate the entire vision of the district.
- **Downtown adds value for and is an important complement to Penn State University.** All too often, Universities for all the right reasons concentrate solely on the offerings of the University itself. Penn State has a significant stake in the vibrancy of downtown and can leverage the strength of the district when marketing

to students, faculty and staff. Moreover, Penn State can help downtown reinforce its image as a multi-dimensional destination. There is a strong history of this between the two partners that should continue to thrive.

- **Downtown is a collection of special places.** These places can be a special corner where people meet, a long running business or restaurant, a gathering spot—however informal—art, culture and even an alley such as Calder Way, which is among the more unique streets in Pennsylvania. These special places contribute to character of place and the creation of memories.
- **Downtown is vibrant and full of life.** Many downtowns continue to struggle to attract people. Malls and commercial centers have sprawled out from many communities and have displaced downtowns as the central shopping districts. While a shift in retail stores has happened in State College and the Centre Region, downtown State College remains as vibrant now as it has ever been, which is a tremendous asset.
- **Downtown is where memories are made.** College downtowns play a special role in the lives of students, alumni, faculty and fans. While some may dispute this, the great memories of University life are seldom a study hall in the library or a lecture in a classroom. They are memories of young people exploring their first taste of independence. Downtown State College should work hard to cultivate positive memories of downtown that will stay with people for the rest of their lives. Alumni, visitors and residents can develop and experience these memories as well.



Left: The scene at the annual Arts Festival embodies many of the brand elements important to State College: a vibrant public experience that is open to all people and an exemplification of the positive relationship between the Borough and Penn State University.

The Downtown State College Brand Statement

Shape the best times of your life in Downtown State College.

As one of the nation's iconic college towns, it is here where young adults get their first taste of independence, it is here where lifelong friendships are formed, and it is here where generations of former students come back time and again to experience the energy, the memories, and the spirit of a town and university connected.

Reconnect with the best times of your life in Downtown State College.

It is home to Central Pennsylvania's largest collection of independent, locally owned shops and restaurants. It is here that independent booksellers, unique boutiques, and specialty shops thrive mere blocks from historic neighborhoods. It is here where the region comes to enjoy our international cuisine, fine dining, and casual fare in a dynamic walk-able setting.

Create the best times of your life in Downtown State College.

Creativity and culture thrive in our theatres, library, and public art. It is here where each summer Arts Fest transforms downtown into one of the nation's most recognized events for art, film, music, and literature. It is here that young professionals share ideas that will evolve into the businesses of the future.

Discover the best times of your life in Downtown State College.

Families from across the region come here for a day of exploration. It is here that our library hosts activities that enrich our community. It is here that our museums give children the chance to explore, learn, and imagine. It is here that we gather for events to celebrate the vibrant life that the Centre Region has to offer.

Live the best times of your life in Downtown State College.

Our downtown is a place where people gather and we invite you to be a part of it.
Make time for your family.
Make time for your friends.
Make time for yourself.

The best times of your life. **Downtown State College.**



Brand Attributes

Unlike brand values, brand attributes are more “technical” in nature. They are the tools that the graphic artist uses to construct the tools to market the community. For downtown State College the brand attributes are as follows:

- **Typefaces:** The typefaces for State College create a balance of a strong, bold and assertive sans serif typeface with a more clean and traditional serif typeface. Together these allow downtown State College a set of typeface tools that can be applied in different ways.
- **Colors:** A palette of four core colors that are strong, but not completely primary colors, are used in the brand system. They include shades of blue, red, yellow/orange and green. In addition, the color palette includes a number of minor colors for variety.
- **Logo:** Eschewing the typical “logo,” the system for State College’s downtown uses a collection of square blocks that connote the rigidity of the downtown street grid coupled with traditional typefaces and colors. Some uses employ a “banner” design that harkens to college life.
- **Tagline:** The tagline for State College is rich in meaning, using a simple message to convey different things to different audiences. The local resident, regional neighbor, unaffiliated visitor, Penn State alumnus and current student will each find in the tagline a special meaning.

To explain the tagline, the planning and design team has prepared what is referred to as a brand statement for Downtown State College. This statement is designed so that audiences can use it altogether in rare occasions where a summary of all that downtown offers is warranted or it can be pieced apart to market a particular aspect of downtown. The brand statement components can form the core of an ad campaign for the district.

For downtown State College, the brand statement is organized around the platform of “*The Best Times of Your Life.*” This is a platform round which many messages can be built.

Recommendations

For the recommendations listed below, the primary implementation partners (the organizations that takes the lead in implementation) are bolded and other potential supporting partners appear unbolded.

1-A: Brand Statement and Tagline

Adopt the Brand Statement and Tagline.

Implementation: Downtown Improvement District

A brand statement is different from a mission statement. A brand statement is an explanation of a place that should resonate with local residents (most importantly), visitors and investors. The brand statement for Downtown State College explains its history, its present and its outlook on the future. Downtown Improvement District and the Borough of State College should adopt the State College downtown brand statement, tagline and logo system as its new identity. These partners should work to incorporate this image into organizational values, marketing efforts and other opportunities for internal/external users to easily view, access and interact with.

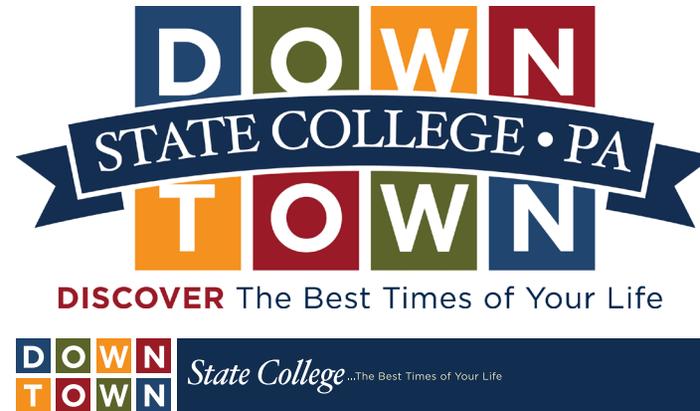
1-B: Brand Committee

Convene a Committee of Downtown Improvement District and other partners tasked with deploying the brand system.

Implementation: Downtown Improvement District, Downtown Businesses

Partner groups such as the Borough, Penn State University and the Central Pennsylvania CVB could be excellent allies for this effort. This group should ensure that all efforts for incorporating the new brand are coordinated, explore funding options for implementation and strategize on the role and responsibilities for each group in fostering the brand message in the community. A partnership in this effort is critical; however, the lion's share of the responsibility for deploying the brand for downtown will vest with a committee of Downtown Improvement District and its partners. Committee partners may include representatives of the Central Pennsylvania Convention and Visitors Bureau,

downtown business owners and/or Downtown Improvement District members with a strong sense of community branding and graphic design sensibilities, a representative from PSU and a representative from the Borough. A brand style guide is attached as part of Appendix C to this report. It provides guidance on proper usage of the identity system, color specifications in RGB, CMYK and Pantone, a copyright release allowing the client to modify and use the system as needs evolve and a simple licensing agreement should Downtown Improvement District wish to allow products with the logo to be developed and sold in local establishments. Finally, a complete file system with all logos, ad templates, typefaces and support graphics is included as part of the deliverables for this master plan effort.





The brand identities for downtown State College, the destination (opposite page) and Downtown Improvement District, the organization (above) are distinct, yet integrated through the use of like type faces and color blocks.

A redesigned downtown State College website (top right) illustrates how the logos can be applied.



Above: The existing Borough logo.

1-C: Brand Launch Event

Host a brand “launch event” to celebrate the new downtown brand identity for the community and, more importantly, downtown.

Implementation: Downtown Improvement District

This event can take many forms including a specific party/reception, coordination with an existing event, cooperation to showcase merchant offerings, or even a community-wide celebration to showcase the final downtown master plan. Work the Borough, DID members, community groups and volunteers to organize and coordinate a launch event within six months of adoption. Many communities have taken the ad samples, such as those shown on the following pages and enlarged them into posters to profile the brand campaign.

1-D: Downtown Improvement District Brand Identity

Complete a redesign of Downtown Improvement District letterhead, business cards and web page.

Implementation: Downtown Improvement District

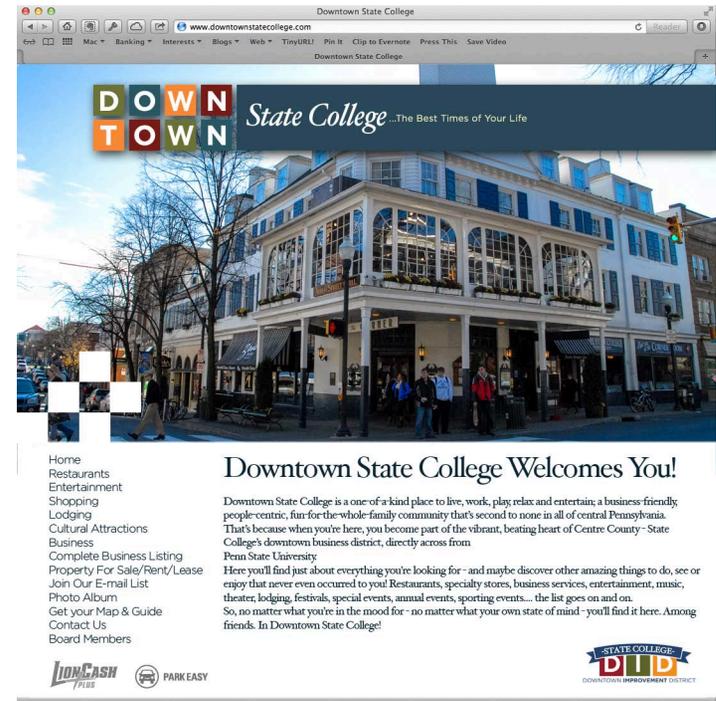
The brand identity for the destination (downtown) and the organization (Downtown Improvement District) are complementary brands that have different uses. Downtown Improvement District should consider reinforcing the newly branded downtown by updating the Downtown Improvement District (DID) identity system, including the new logo for letterhead and business cards. The color blocks become ways to reinforce the connection between the organization and the destination and the unique role that Downtown Improvement District plays. Ultimately, a new web page design should also reflect that identity system.

1-E: State College Borough Brand Identity

Consider a redesign of Borough logo and branding materials.

Implementation: Borough of State College

The image to the left is the current logo used by State College Borough. The existing logo is dated and does not reflect the professional nature of the Borough. It also does not carry the strength to stand next to peer communities



in Pennsylvania or next to Penn State’s academic logo. The borough should consider a design that is bolder, that connects better with peer organizations, and that conveys both the sophistication and hometown comfort that the community endeavors to portray. The branding effort explored ways to simplify the logo for easier usage by illustrating an icon that reflected on the community’s commitment to education both as the home of a major University and as a community committed to its local schools. While the scope of this master plan does not include a redesign of the borough’s logo; the borough should consider a modified design. First steps should include a visioning session among Borough elected officials, agencies, boards and commissions to determine what community values to portray in the brand identity and professional assistance in developing a series of options to explore.

1-F: Brand Extension for Events

Develop brand extension to existing and new events and activities and begin designing or redesigning their logos.

Implementation: Downtown Improvement District, Downtown Businesses

Downtown State College has a number of excellent festivals and events throughout the year that play an important role in energizing downtown. Another step in the branding process is “brand extension” to events and activities, such as farmers markets, annual festivals and new events to be developed. Similar to the recommendation to establish a brand committee, an events committee might also be developed to coordinate and/or help facilitate special events and ensure that the brand is extended to these events. The brand extension should use certain elements of the brand (color, font, etc.) to create a consistent image among different groups and a connection to downtown. All facets of the brand extension could also be phased in over time as existing materials run low and budgets allow.

Working with the staff of the Borough of State College and through some ideas from other communities, the following list of events and event logos have been designed.

Some of the events below are already underway. Additional events should be explored by a partnership between Downtown State College, the Borough, and other non-profits to ensure that supporting these events is do-able with existing staff, funding, and marketing techniques. Some events such as the “Twilight on the Town” event are much more retail oriented and could be handled by a committee of merchants interested in marketing this event together. A recommendation for analyzing events is included later in this report.

Lunch n’ Learn: Conceived by the Borough, Lunch and Learn is a series of casual sessions where borough staff or other experts can share information about Borough policies (such as landlord requirements, sustainability initiatives, etc.), gather feedback from constituents and present concepts and ideas for future initiatives. This event helps the Borough

improve its outreach to citizens who tend to be engaged in the community but do not generally attend public hearings or formal Borough activities for sharing ideas. While these events are typically held in the Municipal Building lobby, they could be held outside in the park or at a downtown venue.

Lunch Break: Small, regularly scheduled events are critical in making downtown a place where all people feel comfortable. “Lunch Break” is conceived as a simple music performance series at lunch time in Friedman Park in the warm months to attract residents, workers and others to enjoy downtown. The venue for these events might evolve from the park to other locations or circulate through downtown to allow citizens and visitors to experience different parts of the district. In particular, holding some of these events on the Old Main Lawn or within some of the campus gathering spaces proposed along College Avenue (described under Theme #3), would be a way to improve the town-gown relationship through programming. Other venues could include the Allen Street Promenade or Heister Street Promenade as described in Theme #3. These events could be paired with local food vendors who might rotate monthly. This is done in Columbus, MS during their Noon Tune events where local restaurants sign up to be the featured vendor for each week’s event. The events could also coincide with the Friday Downtown Farmers Market.



Left: Allen Street as seen from Beaver Avenue during First Night State College.

Foodie Week: Downtown State College is a mecca for dining with a variety of restaurants that serve everything from sandwiches to ethnic cuisine. Many communities have explored a “restaurant week” where special prix fixe menus are offered at participating restaurants. Blacksburg, Virginia recently held its first restaurant week and the event was very well received by locals and the restaurant community. Indeed, the CVB recently launched its first “Happy Valley Culinary Week” which includes venues throughout the region. In addition to participating, Downtown Improvement District could use this event to promote its own culinary event, such as a “Foodie Week” or “Downtown Culinary Week”.

Garage Sale: This event targets several community goals. First, it would help familiarize people with the deck parking resources available in downtown. Second it would create a unique event where people could have a “garage sale” out of the trunks of their cars inside a parking garage. Ideally, this event would be during good weather on the top of the garage to take advantage of views to the surrounding mountains and be offered on a first-come first-serve basis.

The venue of the parking deck would offer flexibility to move to a covered level in the case of inclement weather. Local retailers could dovetail into the event with a sidewalk sale. Consideration might also be given to providing attendees with a two hour pre-paid parking pass for a future downtown visit.

Festival Season: The warmer months are a time for festivals in State College that could be part of an overall “festival season” brand system. The community brand could be incorporated into special festival banners that proclaim, “festival season underway” or coordinated with some of the branding that already occurs with existing festivals such as Appalachian Outdoor’s “Gear Fest” which generally seems to be the end of festival season. Other festivals to incorporate include Summers Best Music Fest, 4th Fest and Parade, Arts Fest, Borough Sustainability Fest, the Halloween Parade and many others.

Twilight on the Town: Unlike other events that happen in parks and public spaces downtown, this event would

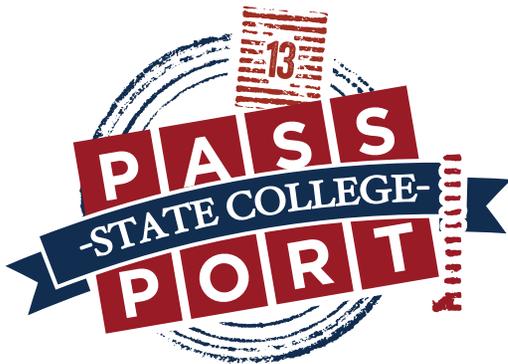


Right: The potential exists to extend the downtown brand to Borough-sponsored events and activities by incorporating common brand elements such as type faces and colors, for the Festival Season logo “State College” may be switched out with each event name.

happen in the shops of State College. It would be a monthly shopping event during which shops stay open later, to show that downtown is a great place to be in the hours between 5 and 9 PM, this can help residents “reclaim” and sustain downtown as a place for local families and residents during this event. It will be important to schedule this event for an evening of the week that is to remember such as first Thursday, or last Friday of the month and to allow the event to develop over time so that it “sticks” in customers’ minds and they automatically plan for it.

State College Passport: This event, conceived by staff at State College Borough, would be a way to re-introduce amenities in the community to local citizens and welcome newcomers. The free “passport” would be available at a variety of venues such as museums, historic walking tours, farmers markets, family destinations, etc. Each venue attended would provide a stamp in the passport. Some communities have offered a prize to a passport that has completed all of the stamps. This could be an opportunity for partnerships among downtown businesses to offer specials.

Downtown Successes: Many communities celebrate and promote their successes by holding events in conjunction with the completion of a new project. The Federal Hill neighborhood in Baltimore, MD hosted a music fest on the roof of a new parking garage as part of the grand opening of that structure. Another community held a “Rally in the Alley” to celebrate and call attention to new improvements to the alley. Throughout downtown State College there is an



opportunity to highlight a completed project with any of the existing or new events described above. For example, State College Bicycle Ambassadors could host events each time a new segment of the bike infrastructure is completed

1-G: Downtown Marketing Program

Deploy the Brand in an aggressive marketing program.

Implementation: Downtown Improvement District, Downtown Businesses

The following exhibits illustrate a variety of potential advertising concepts to launch the brand identity system. Early ads might focus on the overall character of downtown, dispelling myths about what downtown is perceived to be. Ads that focus on the convenience of parking, the variety of shopping and the ways to enjoy (and get to) downtown would set the image for the district and could be implemented in conjunction with changes. These ads could be used by numerous organizations, including PSU to include in student welcome materials

Later ads may concentrate on the tagline “The Best Times of Your Life.” An entire series of these ads could be tailored to specific audiences, could work with individual merchants who opt to use the system to market their business and



Downtown should employ a comprehensive marketing campaign that highlights its many assets and promotes the brand identity and tagline (opposite and current page).

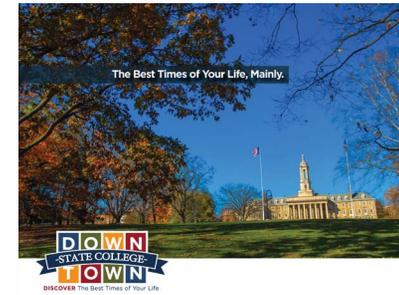
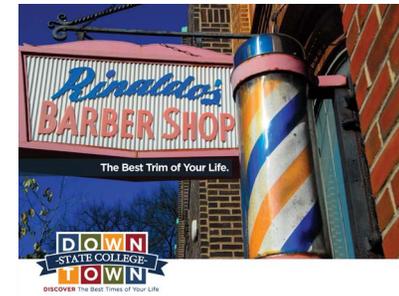
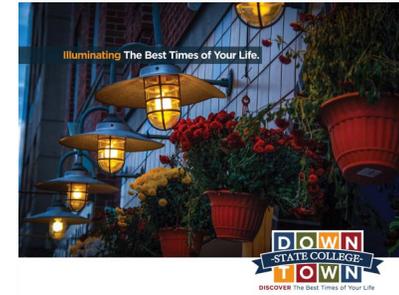
Where the Blue & White adds some

C O L O R



**D O W N
T O W N**

State College ...The Best Times of Your Life



downtown together, and still others could focus on visuals that show customer service, families and visitors. These ad concepts should serve as templates for ongoing creative deployment of a consistent marketing strategy for downtown State College. Finally, the brand might also be a part of promoting improvements that are taking place in downtown that may cause some temporary inconvenience.

Downtown Improvement District and its brand committee would initiate and oversee the marketing program. It should be available for use (provided all branding is used properly in accordance to the style guide) by any organization or business interested in promoting downtown.

1-H: Collateral Material

Continue rolling out the downtown brand with collateral material such as shopping bags, shirts and flags.

Implementation: Downtown Improvement District, Borough of State College, Downtown Businesses

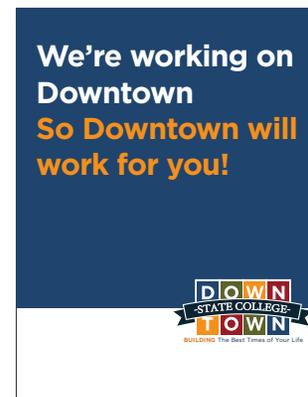
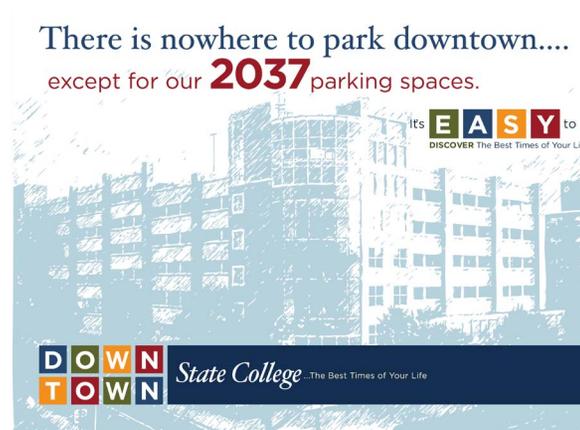
It isn't necessary to roll out all new brand designs right away. However, new products might be explored for a 2013 roll out such as window signs for stores and shopping bags, particularly ones that incorporate recycled plastics and other materials.. Later implementation might work with local businesses to develop their own merchandise with the brand alongside the Downtown Improvement District. These might include bike lights, tee shirts, mugs, pens, jump drives, "we're open" or "discover" flags to display at business entrances, etc.

1-I: Brand Evaluation

Re-evaluate the brand and update to keep it fresh.

Implementation: Downtown Improvement District

The brand committee should evaluate the brand every few years to explore ways to make sure the design is fresh, explore new ways to expand the identity system, and cultivate new marketing techniques. The world of marketing is changing rapidly, especially with new social media outlets. Therefore the brand will need to be adaptable to these changes.



The downtown State College brand should be deployed across all materials that market, promote and educate about downtown events, resources and improvements.



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