

ANNUAL REPORT · YEAR IN REVIEW

DIA

Annual

Report

2025

**A year of momentum: new programs launched,
downtown activated, retail recruited, and our community
strengthened — together.**

WHO WE ARE

Building a Vibrant, Inclusive Downtown

The Ithaca Downtown Business Improvement District, Inc., dba the Downtown Ithaca Alliance (DIA) is the nonprofit organization charged with promoting Downtown Ithaca as a place to live, invest, grow a business, and visit regularly. Established in 1997, DIA works to enhance the quality of life for Downtown stakeholders through Clean, Green and Welcoming services within the 22 block Business Improvement District (BID).



2025 BY THE NUMBERS

4.73M

VISITS TO BID AREA
616,000 unique visitors

1.22M

VISITS TO THE COMMONS
316,000 unique visitors

2+ hrs

AVERAGE VISIT TIME



OUR VISION

Downtown Ithaca is the economic, social, and cultural heart of the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County. We envision Downtown as a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community where people live, work, explore, and connect — home to banks, businesses, public offices, shops, restaurants, arts, and events. Downtown Ithaca serves residents, college communities, and visitors alike.

OUR MISSION

The Downtown Ithaca Alliance works to enhance and improve Ithaca's urban core. We work in partnership with state and local governments, retailers, developers, property owners and other organizations and neighbors to nurture Downtown Ithaca as a place where commerce and community engagement come together to create a vibrant and welcoming environment.

OUR FOUR PILLARS

Clean, Green & Welcoming — Ambassador services, public space maintenance, place-making

Economic Development — Business recruitment & retention, mini-grants, retail strategy, property development.

Events & Activations — Festivals, concerts, seasonal programming, merchant initiatives.

Advocacy & Communications — Government & non-profit partnerships, grants, coordinated marketing

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

A Year of Progress & Purpose

2025 was a year defined by momentum. From launching the Beginnings Summer Concert Series under a new identity, to completing our long-awaited Downtown Retail Strategy, to celebrating the 50th Anniversary of The Commons Downtown Ithaca demonstrated its enduring vitality.

We strengthened our advocacy partnerships with the City, advanced the Community Outreach Worker Program, awarded 31 retail mini-grants, and welcomed a reimagined Employee Appreciation Program for Downtown workers. Our team grew with new talent and expanded responsibilities a reflection of the organization's growing capacity and ambition.

None of this happens without our board, our sponsors, our community partners, and the businesses and property owners who invest in Downtown every day. Thank you for your continued support.



"Downtown Ithaca is not standing still. Every event, every grant, every new retailer represents our collective commitment to a vibrant, welcoming, and thriving Downtown core!"

NAN ROHRER, CEO · DOWNTOWN ITHACA ALLIANCE

2025 DIA TEAM

Nan Rohrer Chief Executive Officer	Corrie Root Chief Operating Officer
Chad Smith Public Space Ops Director	Zoe Zrini Project Manager
Adam Kokoni Media Manager & Graphic Designer	Taylor Callis Administrative Assistant
Kristen Gregg Social Media Coordinator	Tonika Jones Office Coordinator
Tim Mavros Ambassador	Rob Sarluca Ambassador
Tyrone Lee Ambassador	Tim Davis Ambassador
Christopher Thomas Ambassador	

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

2025 was a year of well-earned growth for the DIA team. Corrie Root was promoted to Chief Operating Officer, and Zoe Zrini stepped into the role of Project Manager, expanding her focus into economic development, grant management, and retail recruitment. Tyrone Lee was elevated to full-time Ambassador, reflecting our ongoing commitment to Downtown's daily care. And in early 2026, Zoha Khan joined as Activations & Events Coordinator, bringing fresh energy and dedicated focus to the programming that keeps Downtown Ithaca vibrant.

AMBASSADORS

Our Ambassador team is the face of Downtown Ithaca —present every day, in every season, making sure the BID is clean, safe, and welcoming for everyone who visits, works, or lives here. Ambassadors also play an integral role at every DIA event. Without their dedication on the ground, we simply couldn't deliver the scale and quality of programming that makes Downtown Ithaca thrive. Beyond events, Ambassadors provide daily sidewalk cleaning, litter and graffiti reporting, visitor assistance, tree pit maintenance, planter care, and seasonal beautification throughout the 22-square-block BID. They are our eyes and ears on the ground, real-time, every day, keeping Downtown safe, beautiful, and welcoming for all.

EVENTS & ACTIVATIONS

Bringing Downtown to Life

CHILI COOK-OFF

The 27th Annual Downtown Ithaca Chili Cook-Off on March 1st was one for the record books, drawing the highest attendance in the event's history to the Commons. Over 40 vendors served up meat, vegetarian, vegan, and chili-inspired creations, with Taverna Banfi at the Statler Hotel defending its Best Meat Chili crown and Moosewood reclaiming the top vegetarian/vegan spot. First-time challengers Chili McChiliface stole the crowd's heart and took home the People's Choice Award. As the DIA's signature fundraiser, the Cook-Off helps keep Downtown programming free and accessible for the entire community all year long.

VISIONS SIDEWALK SHOWCASE

The Sidewalk Showcase brought free street-level performances to the west end of the Commons throughout the summer and fall, featuring 11 performers including Lilypad Puppet Theatre, Shekinah Williams -Goddess, Taksim, the Juggling Club at Cornell, and the GIAC Jumpers. Proudly presented by title sponsor Visions Federal Credit Union.

BEGINNINGS SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

Now in its 11th year, the Beginnings Summer Concert Series brought free live music to the Bernie Milton Pavilion every Thursday from June through September — 12 weeks, 27 performers, and genres spanning funk, soul, folk, hip-hop, reggae, and rock. Proudly presented by Beginnings Credit Union, the series drew over 10,000 attendees and continued its tradition as one of Downtown Ithaca's most beloved summer destinations.

APPLE HARVEST FESTIVAL

The Apple Harvest Festival returned September 26–28, drawing just under 50,000 attendees across three days. New this year: extended Friday hours from 12–8pm, the first-ever incorporation of our Welcome Students event into the festival, a Friday night concert with Jimkata, and a brand new Family Fun Zone at the Press Bay parking lot, making 2025 one of the most expansive Apple Harvest Festivals yet.

CAYUGA HEALTH HALLOWEEN DOWNTOWN

Downtown Ithaca got festive on October 24th with trick-or-treating and a crowd-pleasing dog costume contest on the Bernie Milton Pavilion. Families, kids, and four-legged friends in costume filled the Commons for an afternoon of Halloween fun — a lighthearted community tradition that brings out the best of Downtown's welcoming spirit.

WINTER HOLIDAY BASH

The Winter Holiday Bash on December 6th was pure Downtown magic — Santa made a show-stopping rappelling entrance that had the crowd cheering, followed by an afternoon of photos, music, and joyful community connection. As evening fell, the Silent Disco brought neighbors and friends together for one last festive celebration under the lights of the Commons.

THE COMMONS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

2025 marked a milestone worth celebrating — the 50th Anniversary of the Ithaca Commons. Throughout the summer and fall, DIA honored the history, the community, and the remarkable businesses that have called Downtown home for decades. At the final summer concert, we recognized legacy businesses spanning 32 to 121 years. The celebration featured live music, free ice cream from Purity Ice Cream, and a community singing of Happy Birthday to Downtown. Our social media campaign reached over 51,000 people and brought in 12 community stories. Here's to 50 more!

Downtown Ithaca Alliance · 2025 Annual Report



YEAR-ROUND ACTIVATIONS

Egg Hunt - Downtown Ithaca was hopping April 14-20 as people of all ages scoured the BID for hidden eggs tucked throughout their favorite Downtown businesses.

Summer Sidewalk Sale - From July 31 to August 3, our Summer Sidewalk Sale and Sustainable Saturday brought the district to life with incredible deals, eco-friendly finds, and so much community energy.

Shop Small Saturday - Downtown Ithaca showed up BIG for Shop Small Saturday! On November 29, our community came together to celebrate and support the local businesses that make our Downtown so special.

Holiday Window Competition - A record-breaking 140 voters cast their ballots in the 2025 Holiday Window Display Competition. Judges' Choice honors went to Home Green Home (1st), Mansour Jewelers (2nd), and The Brain Shoppe (3rd) — while JEMaginations captured the hearts of the public, taking home the Popular Vote award.

Downtown Holiday Tote Bag - The Downtown Ithaca Holiday Tote Bag returned in 2025 as a true community creation. Local artists and community members submitted original designs. The result is a one-of-a-kind keepsake that captures the spirit of Downtown Ithaca during the holiday season.

Comfort Food Trail - Warming the winter months, the Downtown Ithaca Comfort Food Trail invited residents and visitors to explore the district's rich culinary scene. Participants made their way through a curated selection of local restaurants, sampling the hearty, soul-satisfying dishes that make Downtown Ithaca a true dining destination — one delicious stop at a time.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening Downtown's Retail & Business Ecosystem

RETAIL MINI GRANT

The 2025 Retail Mini-Grant program — funded through a City of Ithaca ARPA grant — expanded to cover three categories and drew a strong response from Downtown businesses.

Marketing Grants: Awardees completed a professional marketing assessment before accessing funds for advertising, marketing, or e-commerce support.

Cross-Promotion Grants — Collaborative business partnerships. Awardees teamed up to co-host events or co-promote businesses.

Physical Improvements — Awardees were granted up to \$10,000 per award for storefront and business enhancements.



NEW BUSINESSES IN THE BID

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Art & Found | Lotus Wellness |
| Artisan Cove | Mis Wu Waxing Salon |
| Bookies Sports Bar & Lounge | |
| Fall Creek Atelier | Old Steel - Bicycle Repair & Recyclery |
| | Rosie's Cafe & Parlor |

DRI GRANT UPDATE

Downtown Revitalization Initiative

The City submitted the DRI application to New York State with the DIA's CEO serving on the Steering Committee. April 23, 2026 the City of Ithaca was awarded the New York State DRI Grant in the amount of \$10M.

CORNELL PARTNERSHIP

CORNELL GOOGLE COLLABORATION

A Cornell systems design class completed work on three Downtown projects: **Google Street View** — completed street-level images of Commons & Creekwalk; **Business accuracy** updated info, photos, and links for Downtown businesses; **Planter inventory** — recommendations for vinyl wraps with sponsorship potential.

VACANCY ACTIVATION

WINDOW ART ACTIVATION

The DIA completed a ground floor vacancy inventory and activated first-floor vacant spaces with artwork installations in collaboration with Michael Sampson, operator of Gallery Nights, improving streetscape vitality and keeping Downtown vibrant while spaces await ground floor occupancy.



OPERATIONS

Clean, Green & Welcoming

PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

Ambassadors: In response to growing community need, the DIA increased Ambassador hours, expanded special project work, and invested in tools and resources to help the team work more efficiently across the BID. From daily sidewalk cleaning and graffiti removal to visitor assistance and event support, our Ambassadors are the consistent, visible presence that keeps Downtown Ithaca clean, safe, and welcoming every day.

Street Planters: In partnership with the City and led by Cornell Cooperative Extension, Hammerstone constructed new planters for Cayuga and State Street, adding beauty and vibrancy to two of Downtown's most-traveled corridors, with additional installations planned for spring 2026.

Bike Rack Restoration: All 12 of the BID's artistic bike racks were scraped, sanded, and restored by the original artist before being reinstalled by the DIA and City Commons Crew. These racks are more than functional, they reflect Downtown Ithaca's commitment to being a welcoming, bike-friendly destination for riders of all kinds.

Tree Trimming: DIA Ambassadors worked alongside City Forestry to trim trees throughout the Commons, improving camera sightlines, enhancing lighting, and ensuring storefronts remain visible and inviting to passersby.

Tree Pit Maintenance: DIA Ambassadors weeded and mulched all tree pits throughout the District, keeping Downtown's streetscape clean, healthy, and visually welcoming from block to block.

Daily BID Maintenance: From weeding the BID and cleaning graffiti, street gutters, to watering planters and clearing debris, DIA Ambassadors are on the ground every day ensuring the BID remains clean, safe, and welcoming. These behind-the-scenes efforts are the foundation of a Downtown that residents, businesses, and visitors are proud to call their own.

Dog Waste Stations: New dog waste stations were installed throughout the Commons as part of our ongoing partnership with the City, making it easier for pet owners to keep Downtown clean and enjoyable for everyone.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH WORKER PROGRAM

The Community Outreach Worker Program (COWP) remains a cornerstone of DIA's commitment to a safe, welcoming downtown. In 2025, DIA advocated strongly for enhanced hours and staffing.

DIA provided ongoing support: sharing messaging, purchasing snacks and water for clients, and providing Downtown gift cards for client needs. **REACH Medical** is the selected contractor going into 2026.

ADVOCACY

City Partnership & Action

CITY-DIA COLLABORATION

A productive year of City-DIA engagement produced a formal "Quick Wins" framework with the City of Ithaca. Three issue areas guided joint efforts:

Vacant Storefronts

Joint vacancy inventory completed (DIA lead); storefront activation plan developed; artwork installations in first-floor vacancies underway.

Trash, Litter & Maintenance

Dog waste stations installed; garage maintenance and cleaning standards and role assignments established as shared responsibility between City and DIA.

Perception of Safety

Ithaca Police Department has stepped up enforcement on the Commons; joint walk-arounds conducted with IPD and DIA staff; SeeClickFix used to identify and address lighting, graffiti, and infrastructure issues.

SEECCLICKFIX

COMMUNITY REPORTING TOOL

DIA championed use of the SeeClickFix app/website to report Downtown Ithaca Commons issues — from non-functioning lights to dog waste — as part of agreed Quick Wins with the City. Categories cover all aspects of public space quality, and the platform serves as a key tool for holding responsible parties accountable for timely resolution.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Ongoing negotiations between the DIA and the City of Ithaca moved toward an "evergreen" MOU format, supported by a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) addendum to address specific operational needs. The DIA prepared draft language and shared SOP examples with the City; a response was still pending as of year-end.

CITY OF ITHACA RETAIL STUDY & STRATEGY

STRATEGIC KEY THEMES

Together, the City of Ithaca and the DIA worked with MJB Consultant to complete the Retail Study and Strategy. Downtown Ithaca as a distinctive **shopping destination** for arts, crafts, and vintage; a growing **food & beverage hub**; The Commons as a **Central Social Place** with programming and informal entertainment; a focus on makers, independents, and unique concepts that can't be found anywhere else.

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Telling Downtown's Story

WE ARE DOWNTOWN VIDEO SERIES

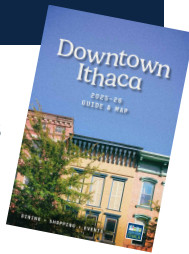
Launched in 2025, the "We Are Downtown" video series quickly became a signature content program — featuring Downtown business owners, community members, and stakeholders sharing their stories. By December, 12 episodes had been released with more in production. *'We Are Downtown' series gives our community a real voice — authentic, local, and compelling stories that remind people why Downtown Ithaca matters.*" DIA

FEATURED GUESTS

Kate D · Wendy G · Laura L · Jan N · Megan O · Yen O · Greta P · Nan R · Ben S · Lisa S · Joe T · Terrance V ·
If you'd like to be interviewed, contact Kristen at socialmedia@downtownithaca.com.

DOWNTOWN ANNUAL GUIDE

The 2025–26 Guide launched to strong distribution demand, the 15,000 copies were fully distributed. The digital version is updated regularly to reflect business changes. Distributed throughout Downtown, Wegman's, GreenStar, Cornell, and other tourist locations around Tompkins County and Finger Lakes region.



DOWNTOWN HOLIDAY GUIDE



The 2025 Holiday Guide featured a new design with curated gift ideas, available in print and digitally. Advertising was robust and distribution reached all major touchpoints across the community.

EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION PROGRAM

Re-launched with a sponsorship from Tompkins Financial, this program offers Downtown employees monthly events and giveaways on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, along with ongoing merchant promotions throughout the District. Sponsorship funds are reinvested directly into the BID, used to pay participating retailers and restaurateurs for the giveaway items, supporting Downtown businesses while rewarding the people who work here. Participation has grown steadily each month since launch.



DOWNTOWN GIFT CARDS

With nearly 100 participating businesses and over 900 gift cards sold in 2025, the Downtown Ithaca Gift Card program is one of the most powerful tools in our promotional toolkit. Following extensive in-person outreach, we refreshed the participating merchant list and created a users' guide to support businesses. Gift cards are woven throughout DIA programs — awarded as prizes, distributed at events, and used to connect people with everything Downtown has to offer.

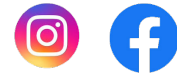


DIGITAL PRESENCE

GOOGLE STREET VIEW COMMONS & CREEKWALK

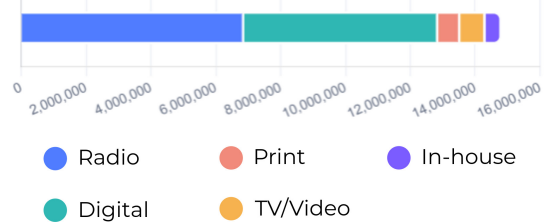
Street-level imagery now covers The Commons and Creekwalk — areas inaccessible to Google cars — thanks to the Cornell/Google collaboration. Business listings also updated with accurate info and quality photos.

2025 SOCIALS



	Instagram	Facebook
Reach	105.5K	644K
Interactions	9.1K	11.8K
Views	487.5K	1.1M
Profile Visits	11.9K	24.7K
New Followers	1.6K	1.1K

2025 ADVERTISING IMPRESSIONS



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Statement of Activity

2024 numbers are audited. 2025 numbers are unaudited. 2025 audited numbers will be released later this year.

REVENUE

CATEGORY	2024	2025
BID Revenue	\$811,099	\$954,645
Events & Sponsors	\$242,483	\$279,339
Grants	\$191,012	\$186,825
Contracts	\$156,023	\$153,447
Marketing	\$32,139	\$24,300
Admin/Office Ops	\$8,424	\$16,587
Donations	\$7,050	\$7,500
Total Revenue	\$1,448,230	\$1,622,643

GOVERNANCE

2025 Board of Directors

The DIA is governed by a board of 23 directors across four membership classes: Class A property owners, Class B commercial tenants, Class C municipal representatives appointed by the Mayor, City, Common Council, and Tompkins County, and one Class D BID resident. 4 additional ex officio nonvoting seats are held by the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, TC3, Cornell University, and Ithaca College.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

John Guttridge Board Chair	Amy Cohen
Megan Vidler Vice Chair	Fred Schoeps
Laura Larson Treasurer	Lisa Swayze
Teri Tarshus Secretary	Ben Sandberg

BOARD MEMBERS

Meryl Bursic	Robert Cantelmo
Greg Conard	Jennifer Demarest
Larry Hochberger	Elsa Hyde
Isaac Kain	Tom Knipe
Lisa Nicholas	Jodi LaPierre
Ducson Nguyen	Jan Norman
Greta Perl	Dennis Panagitsas
Callyn Pyhtila	Veronica Pillar
Phil Shay	Susan Riley
Bren VanEtten	Katie Stone
Dean Zervos	Danica Wilcox

EXPENSES

CATEGORY	2024	2025
Salaries	\$568,665	\$780,115
Operations	\$261,435	\$238,413
Events	\$272,784	\$261,858
Grants	\$148,670	\$197,649
Econ & Business Development	\$90,192	\$150,351
Marketing	\$62,349	\$71,251
Total Expenses	\$1,404,095	\$1,699,637

THANK YOU

Grantor & Sponsors

The Downtown Ithaca Alliance extends heartfelt thanks to our grantor's, sponsors, and trade partners. Your investment makes our work possible.

SPONSORS

Anchor Capital Management	Asteri Ithaca
Beginnings FCU	Belle's Barkery
Bousquet Holstein PLLC	Cayuga Climbs
Cayuga Health	Chemung Canal Trust Company
Cornell University	Coughlin & Gerhart
CSP Management	Fingerlakes Wealth Management
Fred & Margot Schoeps	Guthrie
Hancock Estabrook	HH Ithaca
Maguire Automotive	Monks on the Commons
Odyssey Bookstore	Sciarabba Walker
Tompkins Financial	Trade Design Build
Veterinary Care of Ithaca	Visions FCU
Warren Real Estate	Wegmans
	Zach Clark Insurance

2025 INVESTMENT GROWTH

Increased expenses in 2025 reflect deliberate investment: salaries grew to support a larger team, grants awarded increased to \$198K, and economic development spending nearly doubled to \$150K — reflecting our commitment to Downtown's long-term vitality.

BOARD AFFILIATED TRANSACTIONS:

- Amy Cohen (Circus Culture)**
\$4,000 COVID Recovery Grant
 - Elsa Hyde (Travis Hyde)**
\$58,731 Office rent & storage
 - Larry Hochberger (Ithaca Times)**
\$956 Advertising
 - Jodi LaPierre (Tompkins County Chamber/CVB)**
\$22,085 Wayfinding Project & membership dues
 - Greta Perl (Alphabet Soup)**
\$6,753 Retail Mini-Grant, Employee Appreciation Program & Fairy Fest
 - Phil Shay (Beginnings FCU)**
\$3,050 Performances
 - Lisa Swayze (Buffalo Street Books)**
\$4,000 COVID Recovery Grant
 - Teri Tarshus (Canopy by Hilton)**
\$1,683 Annual Meeting
 - Megan Vidler (Home Green Home)**
\$4,750 Window Competition & COVID Recovery Grant
- Amounts of \$500 or more paid by the DIA January 1 - December 31, 2025

TRADE PARTNERS

Cayuga Radio Group	Cinemapolis
Ithaca Guitar Works	Purity Ice Cream
Sound on Sound	Space Walk of the Fingerlakes
The Ithaca Voice	Vizella Radio Group
What's Hot Magazine	WSKG

GRANTOR

City of Ithaca	Google
Community Arts Partnership	TCAT (NYSERDA)
Community Foundation of Tompkins County	Tompkins County

Together, We Are Downtown

Every grant awarded, every concert held, every ribbon cut, every business opened — these are the results of a community that believes in Downtown Ithaca. Thank you to our board, sponsors, partners, businesses, and residents who make this work possible every day.

12SUMMER
CONCERTS**31**

MINI-GRANTS

15K

GUIDES DISTRIBUTED

50thCOMMONS
ANNIVERSARY**CONTACT**

171 E State Street (Center Ithaca)
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 277-8679
info@downtownithaca.com

ONLINE

www.downtownithaca.com
@downtownithaca