

DOWNTOWN SYKESVILLE CONNECTION

Strategic Plan — 2026–2030

Mission

The Downtown Sykesville Connection preserves, promotes, and enhances the character, history, and vibrancy of Downtown Sykesville. Through equitable placemaking, economic resilience, arts activation, sustainability, and partnerships, we cultivate a welcoming Main Street for residents, businesses, and visitors — today and for future generations.

Transformation Strategy — Next Phase

We continue to anchor our work in the Main Street Four Points — Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization — while evolving our four themes:

Get Wowed — Experience & Accessibility

Create unforgettable experiences through arts, culture, creative reuse, and universal access — attracting visitors while deepening local pride.

Get Together — Partnership & Capacity

Grow organizational capacity, formalize partnerships, and leverage shared investments that benefit the whole district.

Get Engaged — Belonging & Leadership

Strengthen community leadership pipelines, youth engagement, and volunteer structures — building a culture of ownership.

Get Green — Sustainable Future

Model environmental stewardship, expand green infrastructure, and help businesses and residents adopt sustainable practices.

(Aligned with Keep Sykesville Beautiful strategy)

STRATEGIC GOALS (2026–2030)

GOAL 1: Build Organizational Capacity for Long-Term Stability

Why: DSC has grown rapidly - programming, real estate involvement, and reputation have outpaced staffing. To sustain excellence, we must expand internal capacity.

Objectives

Hire one full-time position (operations/administration or development - to be refined through budgeting).

Establish a multi-year staffing plan aligned with revenues and workload.

Create a formal internship and fellowship pipeline (with local colleges, high schools, and national service programs).

Strengthen succession planning and governance systems.

Key Actions

Develop funding blend (grants, Town support, property revenue).

Update job descriptions, onboarding, and performance metrics.

Create an internship program handbook and annual placements.

Maintain Standards for Excellence benchmarks (secure certification)

Measures of Success

Staff satisfaction + retention

Reduced burnout metrics

Increased grant yield and administrative efficiency

Documented intern contributions and career outcomes

GOAL 2: Strengthen Strategic Partnership with the Town of Sykesville

Why: DSC and the Town function best when planning is aligned, communication is structured, and shared innovation is intentional - not reactive.

Objectives

Establish an annual joint planning retreat (Town + DSC + partners).

Formalize shared project pipelines (infrastructure, arts, economic development).

Collaborate on transportation, access, and trail connectivity — including exploration of shuttle/trolley models already researched in earlier strategy documents.

Key Actions

Shared capital priorities list

Co-authored grant strategies

Data sharing agreements (foot traffic, impact, business needs)

Measures

Co-funded projects completed each year

Reduced duplication of efforts

Higher community satisfaction with communication and transparency

GOAL 3: Explore Property Management as a Mission-Driven Revenue Strategy

Why: DSC has proven ability to steward spaces in ways that shape Main Street's future - while generating sustainable income.

This work should support:

preservation

placemaking

affordability balance

mission-aligned tenants

earned revenue stability

Objectives

Conduct feasibility assessment and governance/legal review.

Identify candidate properties (commercial and residential, where appropriate).

Define ethical rental framework (not speculative - mission guided).

Develop a financial reserves model tied to maintenance + risk protection.

Key Actions

Pilot management of one additional property (beyond current involvement).

Create transparent leasing criteria prioritizing local, creative, community-benefit businesses.

Integrate façade and rehabilitation programs.

Align with Comp Plan implementation where appropriate (as discussed previously

DSC-Strategic-Plan-FY22-26 Final).

Measures

Net positive earned revenue

Retention of desired businesses

Reduced vacancy turnover instability

Public trust remains high

GOAL 4: Cultivate Innovative Programming that Drives Year-Round Foot Traffic

Why: Consumer behavior continues shifting toward experiential retail - current work plan already leans strongly in this direction.

Objectives

Layer more cultural programming (heritage, technology, music, craft, food, storytelling) beyond events.

Deepen youth involvement, volunteer pods, and community-led components.

Maintain accessibility features across events.

Key Actions

Business-clustered themed packages

Expanded off-season activation

ASL interpretation and inclusion tools (already modeled in current work plan)

Co-curated programming with schools, arts orgs, and nonprofits

Measures

Attendance + business revenue lift

Merchant satisfaction surveys

Increased demographic participation diversity

GOAL 5: Lead Sykesville Toward a Greener, More Resilient Main Street

Why: Sustainability strengthens health, business longevity, and resilience - and DSC is already recognized for leadership here.

Objectives

Reduce single-use waste across events.

Expand green infrastructure — solar benches, hydration stations, recycling systems (consistent with prior green strategies DSC-Strategic-Plan-FY22-26 final).

Support businesses in adopting environmentally responsible practices.

Key Actions

Green Vendor Guidelines

Community garden activation & partnerships

Explore compost and collection programs

Measures

Reduction in trash tonnage per event

Participation in “Green Business Pledge”

Number of grants awarded for environmental upgrades

Implementation + Timeline

2026–2027 — Foundation

Staffing expansion

Partnership MOU with Town

Property management feasibility study

Internship system launched

2027–2028 — Pilot & Scale

First property management pilot

Expanded cultural programming

Business engagement strategy refresh

2029–2030 — Consolidate & Measure

Evaluate revenue stability

Long-term plan for property stewardship

District expansion review (if appropriate)

Operational Priorities Requiring Continuous Attention:

- Increase and stabilize organizational revenue
- Broaden and deepen sponsor and partnership relationships
- Maintain DSC's role as a one-stop support center for Main Street businesses