

Downtown Springfield, Inc
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For Immediate Release

**Downtown Springfield, Inc. Announces Strategic Transformation:
Embracing Arts, Culture, and Entertainment to Revitalize the Heart of Springfield**

Springfield, IL - November 20, 2025: Downtown Springfield, Inc. (DSI), the leading nonprofit dedicated to the vitality of Springfield's urban core, is proud to announce a new chapter for the organization. Transitioning from a membership-based 501(c)(6) to a community-focused 501(c)(3) nonprofit, DSI is unveiling a transformative strategy centered on arts, culture, and entertainment as the cornerstone of downtown revitalization. The shift in non-profit status empowers the organization to serve the entire downtown, pursue grants and new partnerships, and offer tax-deductible giving for donors that continue to support DSI and the shared investment in downtown.

For over three decades, DSI has championed small businesses, beautified public spaces, and curated experiences that celebrate Springfield's unique character. Now, in response to evolving community needs and economic shifts, DSI is embracing a dynamic vision that positions downtown Springfield as a thriving Arts, Culture, and Entertainment (ACE) District – a proven model for urban renewal and inclusive growth.

A vision grounded in research and community, this strategic pivot draws on extensive research and planning, including the Downtown and Midland Medical District Master Plan, the Sangamon County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2021), and the R/UDAT Study (2002). These studies consistently highlight the potential of cultural investment to attract and retain talent, especially young professionals and creatives, its ability to stimulate small business growth through increased foot traffic and tourism, the benefits to enhance public safety and community pride via placemaking and activation, and the need to diversify the local economy by expanding beyond anchor employers in government and healthcare.

Downtown has changed and so has DSI. The organization's current programming and initiatives will continue as they already align with arts, culture, and entertainment. The transition does bring new initiatives that are directly tied to the activation of the Downtown Master Plan. These initiatives are being unveiled through a year-end appeal campaign and include the expansion of public art, year-round events, innovative experiences, bold beautification and wayfinding projects, and continued support for small businesses. These efforts align with national trends showing that ACE districts generate significant economic returns, often yielding \$3-\$6 in local spending for every \$1 invested in cultural programming.

DSI's transition is community-driven and inclusive. The organization is actively seeking input through public forums and an extensive communication campaign to ensure the ACE strategy reflects the aspirations of residents, businesses, and visitors alike. DSI invites all residents to be part of this transformation. Whether you're an artist, entrepreneur, neighbor, or visitor, downtown is your canvas – and the future is being painted now.

To learn more, support the transition, or get involved, visit <https://downtownspringfield.org/transition>.

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