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Downtown Arlington Management Corp. unveils five-year plan

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It's a vision for downtown Arlington that doesn't include cars circling for parking or people just passing though on the way to the entertainment district.

What the Downtown Arlington Management Corp.'s vision does include is public art, an urban library and pedestrian-friendly streets. The corporation's newly released 2013-18 strategic action plan also pushes the idea that downtown needs to be not only a destination but also a place that people of all ages call home.

"We have to change this attitude where cars are more important than people, and we absolutely need a place where young professionals, people graduating from UTA, can and want to live right out of college" said Tony Rutigliano, president and CEO of the corporation. "How do we create an opportunity for this urban lifestyle?"

The plan will help the organization's board focus on measurable goals that can be achieved with the help of community input and policymakers, he said. It's all about consensus building, he added.

The plan is meant to build on the city's 2004 downtown master plan and includes a 0.7-square-mile area.

"The intent is not for this plan to be just a pretty, articulate document. It's really an action document that I can take and move forward," Rutigliano said.

Actions to be completed in the next two to three years include working with the University of Texas at Arlington to promote public art: Building walls could become canvases for artists to create murals of Arlington's history or whatever the artist envisions will help make the city vibrant.

The management corporation has also identified a private partner to work with to expand Wi-Fi coverage at the Levitt Pavilion for those who want to take a lunch break on the lawn, Rutigliano said.

Other topics of focus include the potential to build a new Central Library and Abram street reconstruction.

The 63,000-square-foot Arlington Central Library is 40 years old and in need of a \$30 million renovation or brand new \$42 million building.

Structural engineers said the building is sound, but library staffers feel the building is too small and too outdated to meet present and future needs, said District 5 Councilwoman Lana Wolff.

Wolff said the city will need to make a decision in the next fiscal year about what to do with the building. Funding could come from the city's next bond package, which could go before voters as soon as November 2014.

Rutigliano said the ultimate goal is to forge a public-private partnership with a developer for a mixed-use library with retail and business space.

The library receives "about 300,000-and-some-odd visits a year," he said. "It's huge in terms of bringing people downtown."

More information

Online

Explore the plan at www.slideshare.net/slides/how/embed_code/26176034.

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Meanwhile, the City Council was to vote Tuesday on a \$187,000 study to help determine whether Abram Street should be reduced from five to four lanes to accommodate pedestrians.

Terry Bertrand, the corporation's board chairman, said the city needs to ensure that traffic moves easily along the thoroughfare while still making it more appealing for motorists to stop and get out to shop downtown.

"We have the opportunity of a lifetime in getting Abram Street right. It has become our Main Street. It needs to have a Main Street feel to it," Bertrand said.

The corporation is a nonprofit community development organization focused on improving downtown.

Staff writer Susan Schrock contributed to this report.

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