THANK YOU!

Angie Lokotz  
John Wolters  
6th Avenue Business District Board and General Members

2802 6th Avenue  
Tacoma, WA 98406

Dear Angie, John, 6ABD Board Members, and General Members,

We want to thank you all for working with us throughout this semester. When we started this project, we didn’t know what we would be looking into. We were wide eyed, ready for information, and primed for research. Your reception of our ongoing consultancy services and willingness to meet and work with us on different topics has been so instrumental to our ability to provide your organization with what we hope will be an effective report.

Through a myriad of meetings with City of Tacoma representatives, board meetings, client meetings, team sessions, and long hours in the library, we have compiled a final report that we believe to be the best representation of what we’ve dug into over the course of the last four months. We’ve worked hard to collaborate with one another and to provide you all with the best portfolio of strategic initiatives possible. The importance of 6th Avenue to the community has always been readily apparent to us, but this project has shown us the true gravity of impact that 6th could have on the City of Tacoma.

This project has been an invaluable learning experience for all three of us and we will carry the knowledge we have gained this semester through the rest of our lives. We ask that you read this report with an open mind. We feel confident in the options we’ve presented and we’re excited for you all to read them. We want to wish you all the best of luck, and that 6th Avenue may experience the success and prosperity we know you all to be so passionate about.

With high hopes and warm regards,

Sincerely,  
Edrick Wang, Nicholas Setting, and David Teskey

University of Puget Sound - Strategic Management and Consulting 2018
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our first exercise as a team was spent walking up and down 6th Avenue on a chilly early morning. We directly observed and evaluated conditions of the built environment, during which a situational picture began to emerge. From crumbling and uneven sidewalks, to high amounts of littering, to homeless individuals actively following us down the Avenue, we were compelled to develop an evolved strategy that might address the entirety of issues plaguing the Ave, not just low impacting singularities.

Through the first client meetings with our contacts John Wolters and Angie Lokotz, we established their perceptions of the built environment issues and goals of the 6th Avenue Business District (6ABD). Following those meetings we designed and emailed an online survey for the 6ABD’s members to help us identify what they believed were the biggest issues along 6th Avenue and within the business district. Our team also generated and emailed out a separate online survey designed to analyze the organizational health of the 6ABD’s Board and leadership. While both surveys received extremely low response rates from the recipients, we still gained some understanding of the current atmosphere surrounding the 6ABD. Our team then conducted interviews with various city government officials/representatives, business owners, university students, and 6ABD Board members. The purpose of these interviews was to
obtain a multi-faceted understanding of the 6ABD’s relationship with the community as a whole. One of our team members also attended Board meetings to hear discussions occurring within the leadership of the 6ABD, as well as to meet and speak with the Board members themselves about our ideas for possible proposed initiatives. Throughout our discovery process, frequently recurring critical factors and barriers to implementation began to present themselves. At the core of these elements were the relationships within the internal and external environments and their declination over time. This demonstrated a greater need for the built environment than any individual improvement could remedy. These included a lack of engagement with core business and property owners in the 6ABD corridor, suboptimal organizational health of the 6ABD’s leadership, and a relationship with the City of Tacoma that found many individuals on both sides disenfranchised.

A holistic strategy seemed necessary in order to impact development and long-term sustainability of the built environment. After extensive research and collaboration, our team was able to brainstorm measures that we believe will help to address or redress many of the issues surrounding the built environment, as well as measures for overcoming numerous barriers to implementation created by poor relationships. These measures span various levels of difficulty and time to repair and develop relationships with businesses and property owners, to help reduce current barriers facing built environment planning and implementation, and to improve the overall community outreach.

The first initiative proposes shifting the current 6ABD mission and values to better clarify and unify the direction of the 6ABD. This will position the 6ABD towards fostering ideal business development and property owner collaboration and cooperation, as well as internalize and focus future efforts towards the main initiative of eventually establishing a 6th Avenue Business Improvement Area (BIA).

Next, our initiatives propose the installation of public art along the 6ABD. These include murals and sculptures designed to improve the overall attractiveness of 6th Avenue, create interaction and social media attention for developing business, and provide an avenue of approach for developing property and business owner relationships to promote buy-in on the future establishment of a BIA.

The overall and final initiative suggests improvement of property and business owner buy-in to establish a 6th Avenue Business Improvement Area. A BIA proposes a greater financial resource for developing and improving upon the issues affecting the built environment, development, and implementation. These issues include poor cooperation, crime, litter, graffiti, and homelessness. BIA’s serve not only to reduce these key issues, but also increase property values, development, and business revenue along 6th Avenue.
**Problem Statement**

Declining engagement and relationships within the community have adversely impacted the overall built environment of the 6th Avenue Business District. Lack of business and property owner buy-in, a deficient relationship with the City of Tacoma, and suboptimal organizational health present themselves as the underlying critical factors affecting any implementation or development of the current built environment. The key question then becomes, “what can the 6ABD do to redress those factors and holistically improve community relationships, encourage engagement and development of the built environment, and better position the 6ABD for the long-term objective of enacting a Business Improvement Area?”

The graph below reflects the amount of total 6ABD members compared to the amount of 6ABD core business/property members over time, where “core” members are defined as business/property owners who fall within the boundaries of the 6ABD itself.
The graph below reflects the relationship between the percentages of total 6ABD membership that can be considered a core business, and the total core businesses along 6th Ave that are active members of the 6ABD. Please note that the yellow and blue lines are simply trend lines provided for reference.
Portfolio of Initiatives

The Portfolio of Initiatives is designed to help organizations visualize and plan initiatives that they identify as likely yielding a high-reward and needing both time and research to implement. By familiarizing themselves with each initiative and the pertinent time frame for execution, leaders and followers alike are able to see what initiatives lay before them within the next year, or on the long-term planning horizon. In this case, our team has identified that focusing the 6ABD mission and values is an initiative that is both familiar to the 6ABD and can be undertaken within one to three years, whereas the creation of the 6th Ave BIA would be a more uncertain or unfamiliar initiative to be planned and executed in the next five to seven years.

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Clarification and Alignment of the 6ABD Mission and Values

On the 6ABD website the current mission statement reads, “Sixth Avenue Business District serves our members through organized collaborative efforts to promote our sustainable vibrant community footprint.” In addition, the vision statement reads, “Sixth Avenue Business District is the FUN destination to Live, Work, Eat, and Play thus empowering businesses and residents to prosper.” During interviews, these statements were seen as vague, meaningless, and/or unreflective of the current environment. A short-term task of low difficulty that the Board can start with is the clarification and unification of these tenets. Gary Kirk and Beth Nolan Shabnam of James Madison University articulate the importance of a quality mission statement for nonprofit organizations in a study that measured the performance of different organizations with varying mission statement qualities. “The findings indicated that mission statements with a more focused geographic scope were associated with lower overhead ratios. In contrast, mission statements that identified more target client groups were associated with larger one-year increases in contribution.” In the 6ABD’s case, the relevant “client groups” who must be targeted to increase contribution consist of potential core members who are currently uninvolved in the 6ABD. Through a more unified mission and values system inclusive of both business and property owners, the 6ABD would better position itself to increase core membership and mobilize existing members towards greater long-term goals.

An online survey sent out by the University of Puget Sound consulting team to the 6ABD’s Board members asked questions to help us gain a better understanding of the organizational health, including perceptions surrounding the current mission and value statements of the 6ABD. Unfortunately, even after attempts to follow up with the Board members regarding this 5- to 8-minute survey, only four responses were received after three weeks. This level of response - as well as our three unmet requests of financial records - are indicators of lacking engagement or communication levels within the 6ABD to implement substantial organizational policy. There seems to be strikingly low property owner engagement, few accountability measures, and a lack of clarity in expectations within the Board according to responses that were received. A Board member also expressed concerns regarding “staying on track” during meetings and in following up on delegated efforts.

When we prompted Board members to rate their level of agreement with the statement, “Reviews of 6ABD performance lead to corrective, follow-up actions”, the responses spanned widely from “strongly agree” to “disagree”. Noticeable disconnects appear present between

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3 Ibid.
overall enthusiasm, member loyalty, and competitive responsiveness in differing member opinions on each subject. One respondent points to a highly negative perception of the 6ABD among many business owners. The respondent further asserts this perception as “lead[ing] to poor membership and participation,” and that “even with improvements by the recent board, it is a challenge to inform and persuade business to actively get involved with the district or its activities.” Another respondent cited the mission statement as too ambiguous, “which makes it difficult to align our strategy to our mission.” Without the support from a majority of businesses and property owners within the 6ABD, the Board encounters could experience extreme difficulty passing policies or implementing productive actions, and could risk further alienation of already disgruntled members in the 6th Ave community. This is more reason for the 6ABD Board to engage property owners towards gaining commitment and buy-in on the potential for growth and benefits of a Business Improvement Area.

To encourage a creative district with holistic development we believe that further decisions made by the Board should be inclusive of both business and property owner input in order to better facilitate greater future buy-in, cooperation, and collaboration. A key start to this would be to create a Mission and Values statement that accurately reflects those values.

**Opportunity Through Public Art: Murals and Sculptures on 6th**

Being an urban strip socially regarded as hip and destination heavy, 6th Avenue carries an eclectic vibe. The variety of shops and niche businesses along the Ave make it colorful and visually diverse. Through careful research it appears that the implementation of murals in

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certain locations along the Ave could potentially increase foot traffic and attractiveness, all while aligning with the City of Tacoma’s current widespread efforts to capitalize on the city’s artistic reputation. Being large pieces of art, murals would tie into the existing artistic and hipster reception of 6th Avenue. Artistic pieces not only improve the attractiveness of a public space, but they’ve also been linked to impressive increases in surrounding business performance and product sales. This mechanism through which art positively affects surrounding products is articulated in a recent study conducted by Zachary Estes, Luisa Brotto, and Bruno Busacca of Bocconi University in Italy. Their findings indicated that “the mere presence of art endows products with an image of luxury, which in turn improves evaluations of the associated products.”

As this applies to the 6ABD, one can reasonably consider the businesses along 6th Ave to be the “products” in this scenario. A more favorable perception of these businesses will aid 6th Avenue in pursuing existing goals.

A number of blank walls on the sides of business along 6th Avenue provide perfect canvasses to build momentum for the 6ABD and the community (see image above). The introduction of more murals along 6th Avenue would resonate with the City of Tacoma’s “5-year strategic plan [to] build on Tacoma’s vision and values for a creative, cohesive community and flourishing arts and cultural sector.” Additionally, the implementation of a currently popular angel wing

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mural, would provide a location for people to promote 6th Avenue on social media by posing between the wings for photos (see below for further information regarding this wing mural proposition). The ideal locations for a wing mural can be found in alleys and even several storefronts of 6th Ave. The modern prominence of social media provides immediate means of marketing and publicity for individuals and businesses alike, as well as a logical approach to cultivating further community engagement that would improve perceptions of 6th Avenue as an attractive and artistic center of the community. This will enable active individuals on social media to use 6th Avenue as a photo destination - strategically increasing 6th Ave’s publicity through indirect marketing by visitors.

Public art programs like the Global Angel Wings Projects (started in 2012 in Los Angeles, California) can help to provide a sense of an artistic district, provide walkers with an incentive to embrace or utilize their urban surroundings, and build a connection between Tacoma’s 6th Avenue and the rest of the world. Murals by their very nature help to bridge gaps between socio-economic classes by placing themselves in public areas where anyone can appreciate, critique, or discuss their interpretations of the art. A study by the International Journal of Art & Design Education states that “murals are particularly visually captivating forms of public art due to their size and accessibility. Mural images also capture public attention and provoke viewers to explore layers of meaning and find hidden stories.” In addition, public art programs can engage at-risk youth by encouraging and incorporating them into the painting process. A viable

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start would be to reconnect with the students of Jason Lee Middle School in the painting design and execution process. Several murals on 6th Ave were painted by Jason Lee Middle School students some years back when the collaborative relationship between the 6ABD and the middle school was still active. Muralists and scholars alike have documented the potential of mural programs and argue that they are effective in their impacts on the psyche of local residents and are good first steps “to achieve sustainable momentum toward the ideals of community development.” By re-engaging with Jason Lee Middle School this measure would not only spawn their interest in actively participating with local businesses but would also provide them a means to make 6th Avenue truly feel like their own community.

Murals incite community engagement and interaction with the physical environment - something that 6th Ave could definitely benefit from. According to Dante Comparetto of the Worcester Cultural Commission, "public art can make strangers talk, children ask questions, and calm a hurried life. It enhances the quality of life by encouraging a heightened sense of place

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15 Maura, 13.
16 Maura, 23.
and by introducing people to works of art that can touch them.\textsuperscript{17} This type of holistic engagement is extremely helpful for improving the perceived level of community standards as well as the values adopted by those communities simultaneously. To help assert the claim that murals have the innate ability to individually engage their audiences, the same study by the aforementioned International Journal of Art & Design Education also notes an interesting case where the completion of a mural “signified a symbolic transformation that galvanized people in a way that introduced greater openness to and acceptance of people of various backgrounds.”\textsuperscript{18} These examples demonstrate the importance in not just physical benefits towards the built environment of communities that murals can provide, but also the psychological uplifting of local residents to become more inclusive in their celebration of diversity.

Another supportive example of the ways in which public art can actually engage and interact with their audiences is the piece titled Time Transit by Kim Morgan, a mixed-media installation on an operational city bus in Regina, Saskatchewan, which invited passengers to co-produce the art via text messages. Photos of passengers were taken and deleted within 24 hours, but the text messages were recorded for analysis. Results demonstrated that passengers discussed everything from current events and inter-community rivalry to witty jokes and beautiful pieces of poetry. As the case iterates, this art installation “put members of the public in novel situations, enticing them to constitute new publics.”\textsuperscript{19} Finally, a case analysis of Arizona cities and towns which tracked the development, operation, and promotion of public art programs found that they can be used to market a city and attract tourists to provide “civic pride and engagement”, as well as to “create healthy cities by encouraging people to be outdoors and to revitalize rundown areas.”\textsuperscript{20} These various examples stemming from a multitude of sources clearly lay out the case for why public art programs would be beneficial towards not only the 6ABD’s built environment, but also their holistic community engagement to improve the quality of life for their local residents and businesses.

The benefits of murals being painted along the 6ABD extend beyond the cultivation of an artistic district. Murals and urban art pieces alike actually deter graffiti\textsuperscript{21} - a prominent issue

\textsuperscript{18} Kang.
facing 6th Avenue. Less graffiti will enhance perception and attractiveness with the general public, which will aid in promoting the desired walkability of 6th Avenue. While murals do not directly prevent graffiti from occurring, they do decrease the volume of graffiti on the wall containing the mural as well as the surrounding businesses. Social perceptions of attractiveness are fragmented when it comes to the reception of graffiti being either ugly or an urban form of expression, however the positive reception of graffiti remains dominant in younger demographics according to a study conducted by the Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology. The ability to retain graffiti as an art form along certain specific portions of 6th Avenue (take the graffiti door on our cover, for example) allows for a mix between clean buildings as a result of mural introduction and expressive urban art as a form of graffiti in a controlled manner.

Implementation of Murals - What's Needed?

Cooperation from the property owners and the existing business is legally necessary for a mural to be painted. Additionally, the allocation of funds towards artistic labor will be necessary. The Tacoma Murals Program connects artists and communities through partnerships with the Neighborhood Business District Program, which the 6ABD belongs to. While the application for 2018 has closed, it would be beneficial for the 6ABD to apply for the Tacoma Murals Program once it reopens. Implementing murals along 6th Avenue will provide the 6ABD an opportunity to network with property owners and business owners in the short term. This would allow for the 6ABD to build beneficial relationships with potential members prior to approaching long-term initiatives outright. Contacting Jason Lee Middle School and attempting to revitalize the arts program that once connected middle schoolers to artistic initiatives along 6th Avenue would be a great place to start. Additionally, a narrative has already been opened between the 6ABD, our consultancy team, and professor and artist Michael Johnson with the University of Puget Sound. Professor Johnson has expressed sincere interest in collaborating with the 6ABD regarding public art construction and implementation strategies. This is a relationship that could be quite beneficial towards the 6ABD’s efforts if leveraged correctly.

One of the most effective means of pursuing mural implementation along 6th Avenue would be to contact Urban Artworks. Based in Seattle, Urban Artworks has worked closely with the

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24 "Tacoma Murals Project."


Tacoma Murals Program in the past, which indicates their familiarity with the Tacoma area. Contacting this organization should be done as soon as possible. A second organization to reach out to is Spaceworks Tacoma. Spaceworks provides stipends for muralists and artists who wish to help revitalize and reconnect communities with their urban settings.²⁷ Signing up to be notified of when Spaceworks will be accepting applications for “streetside artscapes” would be a valuable step for a 6ABD to take. Additionally, contacting the businesses and property owners behind the blank walls to be targeted should be done simultaneously. These property owners should be approached with an attempt to convey the potential benefits of public art for their properties. Marion Roberts and Chris Marsh of the University of Westminster describe the implications of a research study aimed to unpack the benefits of public art for commercial property in an academic journal. They state, “On the basis of the results outlined, it is recommended that investors should give recognition to the indirect benefits which public art may offer to commercial office schemes: in a tenant-led market dominated by choice, such benefits include enhanced status and profile which may contribute to minimizing vacancies and thereby reducing risk.”²⁸ This information would be beneficial to introduce to property owners when convincing and coordinating the implementation of murals and public art alike.

These primary steps should be taken before Art on the Avenue, and preferably sooner. Seeing that planning the art piece itself and the allocation of funds may consume a considerable amount of time, getting ahead in the process would be very beneficial. Secondly, the 6ABD must initiate contact with a local artist either through the aforementioned organizations or by private scouting. This artist must agree to a proposed compensation if they are unwilling to donate their services. Finally, the property and business owners must see eye-to-eye with the artist and must cooperate with them to come to a mutual decision regarding the content of the artwork. Once the conceptual planning and financial allocation has taken place, a painting date should be set and executed. Regular maintenance will undoubtedly need to be addressed if the mural does get tagged, for which the 6ABD should help determine the primary responsibility holder. Our recommendation for the primary responsibility holder is the property owner of each mural site. Coordination should occur between the property owner and business owner regarding delegated maintenance duties in the event that the mural gets tagged with graffiti.

The initial contact steps should begin with community organizations almost immediately, especially Jason Lee Middle School and the University of Puget Sound, given the assumption that during the summertime contact may be interrupted due to a break in the academic school year. Following 3 to 6 months of initial relationship development with suggested organizations

and stakeholders, planning should proceed to determine the installation of a least one mural by the close of 2018, with plans in place for two or more murals the following year. The 6ABD should aim for three or more murals each subsequent year after that, until space availability prohibits further implementation or a BIA is established. This will assist in cultivating a continued momentum of action for the 6ABD and would ideally cause businesses to be more aware of the efforts of the organization. To track progress and measure action taken towards achieving this immediate goal, Board leadership should regularly check in with individuals who have taken the responsibility of contacting property and business owners, and who have contacted the aforementioned organizations, similar organizations, or artists themselves.29 Monthly updates should be requested by the leadership of the 6ABD of the individuals undertaking the responsibility of reaching out to property and business owners to whom the proposed murals would pertain in order to ensure timely execution of this initiative.

**Sculptures Along the Ave**

**The Value of Sculptures...**

Another initiative that our team proposes is the implementation of sculptures along the 6ABD corridor. This initiative is medium to high difficulty, with a mid- to long-term timeline of execution. Referring back to the strength of artistic communities and their perceived benefits mentioned on page 11 of this report, sculptures (much like murals) can also be used to attract foot traffic through the use of social media and posting photos of the installments online by local residents and tourists alike.30,31 People regularly interact with sculptures, and frequently use them as photo opportunities.32 Some sculptures, such as the Fremont Troll in Seattle, attract visitors both regionally and nationally.33 These same visitors share photos and reviews across a variety of social media and review platforms, performing indirect marketing that enhances the attractiveness and desire for visitors to the Ave.34 These eye-catching works of art pose tremendous potential for improving the desired walkability and perception of the 6ABD. There is also the possibility that through the development and installment of sculptures, new lighting optimal for increased nighttime visibility may be additionally implemented, which would also help contribute to our auxiliary measure of increasing overall lighting and security.

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30 Dana.
within the 6ABD. These increases to perceptions of safety and security will help to develop a stronger relationship with the University of Puget Sound. Many students in our surveys noted safety and security concerns on the Ave at night. Students stated that their perceptions of safety walking up and down the Ave would greatly improve if more lighting was introduced.

The creation of sculptures on the Ave may also help induce slower vehicular traffic speeds, as many drivers naturally slow down to glance at sculptures. Furthermore, sculptures can help to improve the social offerings of the built environment, which would in turn elevate the feelings of attachment that local residents and businesses owners feel towards 6th Avenue itself. The Knight Foundation “Soul of the Community” initiative surveyed some 43,000 people in 43 cities and found that the “aesthetics of a place – its art, parks, and green spaces,” ranked higher than education, safety, and the local economy as a “driver of attachment.” This study determined that communities and their residents found value in physical statement pieces, which gave them a sense of identity and holistic inclusion, thus leading to higher rates of satisfaction and perceived quality of life. These factors helped to fuel our team’s decision to identify public art works, like sculptures, as another viable initiative to build momentum towards larger projects geared in the direction of improving the overall built environment of the 6ABD through improved community and stakeholder buy-in.

Implementation of Sculptures...

A collaborative effort towards improving and leveraging relationships with the University of Puget Sound should begin almost immediately between the City of Tacoma, business owners, and property owners within the 6ABD. Professor and artist Michael Johnson has expressed interest in developing and facilitating the implementation of sculpture work along the Ave. John Hickey, Executive Director of Community Engagement and Associate Vice President for Business Services at the University of Puget Sound would also be instrumental in developing programs with the university for collaboration and perhaps partnering with certain services of theirs. 6th Avenue is the gateway for all students, staff, and guests arriving at the University of Puget Sound; therefore it is in the best interest of the university to see healthy development of

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36 University of Puget Sound students, campus interviews (6), April 7th, 2018.
40 Maura, 5.
41 Michael.
the external built environment to ensure the best impression possible for incoming campus traffic. The 6ABD and this committee should spend 2 to 4 months researching, contacting, and discussing this initiative with all involved members to identify the most optimal locations for sculptures to be installed on 6th Avenue, as well as costs or processes available to obtain any necessary permits required to implement planned sculptures in certain areas.

Within one year following the brainstorming period, the 6ABD should identify at least one or two artists, preferably from within the community, to commission. The planned works should tie back into the 6th Avenue community, so as to aesthetically incorporate public art into the built environment in a natural way. For example, outside of Legendary Donuts there could be a medium-to-large sized brass donut sculpture or statue, or perhaps an artistic coffee mug protruding from the side of BlueBeard Coffee. These works should also seek to incorporate the spirit of 6th Avenue, as in they should match the general atmosphere provided by the built environment and the various businesses that inhabit it. The 6ABD should monitor the engagement of local residents with public art projects through measures such as social media presence and the usage of 6th Avenue-related hashtags to gauge public perception and acceptance of these sculptures.43

Once the 6ABD has recruited the necessary support from the City of Tacoma and the approval from business and property owners, it can begin to apply for grants and funding for projects. 6ABD members should be updated on project progress and encouraged to assist with the program in whatever ways they can. The previously listed that involved parties (University of Puget Sound, City of Tacoma, 6ABD Ambassadors, business and property owners) could unite to form a committee consisting of two or three respective party representatives that would handle drafting contracts, researching funding and grants, and the implementation of pieces. As with the murals initiative, the system of measurement would include regular monthly email-based accountability requests of the aforementioned tasks (delegated to Board members or general members who express legitimate interest) from Board leadership in order to ensure operational efficiency. The goal of this initiative would be to install a new sculpture every two years.

**6th Avenue Business Improvement Area (6 Ave BIA)**

*Please note*

The majority of existing BIA research refers to such an organization between private and public sectors as a Business Improvement District (BID). For the sake of relevance and fluidity of

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these references, please understand that a BIA and a BID are the same - the only difference being their names.

In the beginning of our consultation, initial evidence was unsupportive of a need to establish a 6th Ave BIA. After pursuing options to redress the numerous issues negatively affecting the built environment along with increasing insight to barriers and objections of implementation and development, the necessary holistic development of community relationships working towards a unified long-term objective of becoming a 6th Ave BIA were clear. This initiative requires improving and increasing relationships with property owners who will incur a tax assessment against their properties. To be established, a BIA requires a minimum of between 50-60% support from property owners.  

**The Value of a 6th Ave BIA**

BIAs serve to help specific areas or districts in need of economic development, urban revitalization, and public services. As organizations that bridge the disconnect between private and public sectors, BIAs tax the property owners within the confines of the determined boundaries as a means to allocate funds towards the problems facing the specific area. BIAs have been proven to be very effective and valuable in spurring economic development in certain business districts. According to the Furman Center, The Economist magazine describes BIAs as potentially “the best hope for getting parts of America’s cash-strapped cities working again,” and that “Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have generated a great deal of excitement among city governments and urban policymakers around the world.” In due time, the potential benefits of a BIA would effectively cover the problems that 6th Avenue is currently facing.

**Property Values and Business Revenue...**

BIAs have been proven to increase property values and business revenue. In the *Journal of Economic and Economic Education Research* Sandra Grunwell and Inhyuck ‘Steve’ Ha of

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Western Carolina University highlighted a study conducted by city officials intended to examine the potential benefits of a BIA for a business district. These authors mention that “Findings from the economic analysis revealed that a BID would be of value in enhancing retail sales growth and increasing property values.” Further research from this study indicates that “Across the world, a business improvement district is likely to devote itself to the advancement of the BID area’s economy; provide services and improvements to boost business and property value; include a management entity to run the BID; and collect revenues through assessment-based, annual mandatory tax on the properties within the BID boundary (Houstoun, Jr., 2005).” When it comes to business revenue and success, “The services provided and programs implemented by a business improvement district are all intended to boost the business within the district.” These potential benefits appear to be in direct favor of 6th Avenue.

Crime...

Regarding crime reduction, BIAs again appear be a very viable solution. In an article published through the *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, Lorlene M. Hoyt - a Ph.D. professor at Tufts University - articulates the benefits a BIA can bring when it comes to crime by stating, “Results show that lower property crime rates differentiate commercial areas with BID organizations from those without BIDs and that the lower rates are not matched by higher crime in surrounding blocks.” These results came from a study from the City of Philadelphia. Further research reiterates the effectiveness of crime reduction through BIAs, and even asserts the accompanying benefits of reduced crime resulting in less city government financial expenditures. This finding came from Philip J. Cook and John MacDonald of Duke University in *The Economic Journal*, and is expressed as, “Crime reduction in the BID areas has been accompanied by a reduction in arrests, suggesting further savings.” As a recurring interest that has been expressed to us, reducing crime along 6th Avenue appears to be inevitably viable through a BIA.

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49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.


If organized effectively, BIAs can effectively reduce homelessness - an issue that is mutually agreed upon as plaguing 6th Avenue. This was an aim of the recently approved BIA for the Ballard business district of Seattle. Real Change News covered this aim and stated “[Ballard’s BIA] promises financial support for mental health and homeless services.” Randy Lippert of the University of Windsor, Canada mentions the direct aim of BIAs to reduce homelessness from the targeted areas in an article from the *European Urban and Regional Studies* journal by stating, “BIDs seek to exclude obstacles, which include ‘panhandlers’ and the homeless, from public spaces. Yet, other barriers are placed into relief by a proliferating ‘clean and safe’ rationality and are deemed to interfere with consumption conduct and pedestrian flow. These include BID members engaged in moralized enterprises. Some BIDs are deploying CCTV surveillance arrangements and interactive ‘ambassadors’ consistent with ‘clean and safe’, whereas others avoid these modes and rely upon and lobby for public sources.” With the correct organization of deemed BIA efforts, homelessness along 6th Avenue could be dramatically reduced.

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Graffiti, Litter, and Cleanliness...

6ABD Board members have regularly expressed their desire to reduce graffiti and litter along 6th Avenue. Fortunately, the most directly applicable BIA to 6th Avenue’s situation is the Downtown Tacoma BIA. The website of the Downtown Tacoma BIA states the implications of graffiti:

“Graffiti is the type of crime that when ignored promotes more graffiti and other crimes. The broken windows analogy, articulated by crime consultant George Kelling suggests that a broken window leads to more broken windows, garbage, graffiti and a general disdain for an area, creating an atmosphere conducive to further criminal behavior. Taking a proactive approach to graffiti now will help to reduce crime and the perception of criminal activity in downtown Tacoma in the long run. It is crucial to remove graffiti as soon as it appears and it’s the law. In 1999 the Tacoma City Council passed an ordinance (No. 26395) making graffiti illegal in Tacoma. The ordinance calls out specific enforcement actions for compliance by the property owner or graffiti vandal.”  

Furthermore, the Downtown Tacoma BIA has publicized their success in helping to reduce litter and graffiti within the confines of their district in their 2016 - 2017 Tacoma Downtown BIA Annual Report. They report having removed 32.24 tons of debris and 1,259 graffiti tags in the

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These metrics demonstrate the high effectiveness of a local and directly applicable BIA. If organized efficiently, BIAs can dramatically improve the cleanliness of a business district.

**BIA Implementation: Setting the 6ABD up For Success**

Despite this initiative being a difficult and long-term recommendation, the eventual enactment of the 6th Ave BIA would provide valuable financial and community resources. Within the proposed 6th Ave BIA we predict that there will be a resulting boost in financial resources, an increase in long-term community support, the sustainability of property and business owner buy-in, a reduction in homelessness, crime, graffiti, litter, and a matching support from the City of Tacoma both politically and financially. These factors will dramatically influence or improve numerous current and possible future issues surrounding improvements and maintenance of the built environment, as well as enhance the value and quality of life along 6th Avenue for all stakeholders within the community.

Pursuing a 6th Ave BIA will require serious and diligent engagement by the current 6ABD, with a mission and vision focusing equally on relationship development with business and property owners, as well as a positive shift in the current negative mindsets surrounding the 6ABD’s working relationship with the City of Tacoma.

Each of the recommended initiatives we set forth are designed and specifically chosen to increase awareness and support for establishing a 6th Ave BIA. However, these initiatives serve only as entry points for promoting and acquiring property owner buy-in. The following are suggested steps for further development and increased support of a proposed 6th Ave BIA over the course of 3 to 4 years.

**Working With the City of Tacoma...**

First and foremost, while the development of a BIA presents as a complex, lengthy, and costly endeavor, the City of Tacoma has expressed interest in supporting BIA development through City cooperation and resources. The City has offered to provide consultation services from a City of Seattle BIA expert, to potentially match private funds raised from a BIA with city

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57 “Benefits of Business...”
58 “Maintenance.”
59 Carol Wolfe (Community and Economic Development, City of Tacoma) Interview with Nick Setting. April 9, 2018, " If the SABD is interested in getting the facts of what a BIA can do, and how it is established, we will get an expert from the City of Seattle to help them identify what a BIA does and how to establish one based on their priorities."
funds, and the possible decrease of initial costs of for establishing a BIA. As part of the proposed shift from a currently negative mindset affecting the development of the built environment and a gesture of goodwill towards aligning 6ABD’s vision and direction for future development with the City of Tacoma’s endorsement of establishing BIAs, the 6ABD should draft and present a request to the City of Tacoma for the city to provide a consultation with a BIA expert from the City of Seattle. This consultation will aid in understanding the proposed value of a BIA, further development and/or amendment of the current plan, regarding "what a BIA can do, and how it is established... what a BIA does, and how to establish one based on [6ABD] priorities." All members of the 6ABD Board should make an effort to be present. Any presentation materials, along with a brief summary, should be presented to absent Board members, 6ABD general members in-person, and on the 6ABD website for potential future members and any interested community stakeholders. To ensure support and buy-in from a majority of members within the 6ABD and to assist in the promotion and development during other initiatives, this process should be started immediately following the Board’s unification and realignment of the mission and values initiative.

Preparing for Outreach...

The aforementioned consultation(s) will provide insights and lay the groundwork for an initial plan of the 6th Ave BIA’s organizational structure, priorities, and capabilities. Throughout the development, feedback from business owners and property owners should be solicited at all stages, including the finalization of the 6th Ave BIA planning. This will allow flexibility to ensure community support from all stakeholders while maintaining the core principles of the mission and vision of the 6ABD. In order to ensure this support, a compiled list of property owners should be generated, along with an accounting log of each solicitation, the type (electronic or personal), including any feedback received. It should be noted that some ownership information may not be immediately available. The Office of Environment Remediation for New York City suggests utilizing state departments such as the Washington Secretary of State’s

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60 Ibid, "the City is very interested in matching public and private investment, in the code it supports targeting infrastructure funding to areas that have BIAs."
62 Carol.
64 Carol, "The city is very supportive of BIAs because it gives them local control and the ability to set their own priorities."
65 Ibid.
66 "Engaging Public Agencies."
corporation and charity filing system, as well as working with local banks, mortgage brokers, and real estate brokers for obtaining property owner information and possible introductions.

**Outreach Approach...**

A strong emphasis should be placed on conveying to property and business owners the relevance and importance of 6ABD membership and the positive impacts a BIA will bring to 6th Avenue. In an article titled The 8 Essential Membership Marketing Ideas Behind Successful Campaigns, Jeff Ryan mentions that “Relevance should be the primary goal of your membership engagement strategies. Everything else (including response and donation levels) can only happen if the message is interesting enough to open and the reader is sticking around for the story.” Through diligent efforts, the 6ABD should convey this relevant value when navigating the outreach strategy.

A research article titled Strategic Group Membership and Nonprofit Organization Performance by Dan Marlin, William J. Ritchie, and Scott W. Geiger of Case Western Reserve University examines a study conducted in an attempt to report on the most effective non-profit organization strategies. “This study analyzed the resource characteristics of a sample of university foundations and identified five distinct strategic groups. We found significant performance differences among them. Specifically, the group that focused most heavily on fundraising activities had the highest financial performance. Also performing well was the group with the highest ratio of contributions to total revenues combined with the highest level of slack.” In the case of the 6ABD, the main fundraising activities pertinent to organizational success and the implementation of a BIA involve outreach to stakeholders as a means to improve membership and congruency of buy-in. This directly supports the pursuit of a BIA.

Throughout our research we found many published works emphasizing the engagement of members and potential members as vital to the growth of an organization. Fidelity Charitable released a report titled What Makes an Effective Non-Profit in which the author mentions a primary focus of any non-profit organization should be to “Engage and seek stakeholders’ input in designing programs, including people who use its services, and serve its target community

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67 See https://www.sos.wa.gov/corps/.
70 Department for Communities and Local Government: London.
appropriately.\textsuperscript{71} Another publication supporting the need for stakeholder engagement is a specific Naylor Association Solutions article in which the author, Elsbeth Russell, mentions the importance of engaging existing and potential members. She states that “the first step associations need to take in growing membership is to identify the group they’re looking to recruit. From there, they need to identify which of their current members hold the most influence over this group.”\textsuperscript{72} These assertions, in conjunction with the title of the second article - Want More Members? Better Get to Know Them - indicates that the 6ABD should seek to recruit at least two people over the next year; who are ideally both property and business owners; who possess excellent social skills with an already developed network; who identify and embrace the mission, values, and long-term objective of forming a 6th Ave BIA; and who can serve as community ambassadors\textsuperscript{73} to promote and develop relationships with property and business owners both inside and outside the proposed area of the 6th Ave BIA. As ambassadors, their primary objective should be to develop and ensure support from these property owners, as well as reinforcing the effort, support, and understanding of the 6th Ave BIA’s proposed value to the development of the community, increasing the areas quality of life, and subsequently raising property and lease values.\textsuperscript{74} To assess the progress of property owner buy-in, bi-annual reviews by the Board should be conducted using a separate spreadsheet collectively available and maintained by the Ambassadors and the District Manager. This spreadsheet should contain property owner information, recorded dates of solicitation, any feedback given, and subsequent percentages of the current 6ABD property owner members with any indicated trends. Following that assessment, the 6ABD Board would deliver a “State of the BIA”-type address electronically to 6ABD Members, and publicly post an electronic copy onto their website.\textsuperscript{75}

**Final Steps...**

Once the 6ABD has adequately garnered 50-60% or more support from the proposed 6th Ave BIA property owners and the guidance and support of the City of Tacoma, the 6ABD will be appropriately positioned to move forward with drafting a proposal to petition the Tacoma City Council in an estimated 5 to 6 years. This strategy does not outline the proposed use plan for


the BIA once formed or how much revenue will it bring in. At this time there is not enough adequate information or support from property owners to remotely or appropriately address the proposed use of priorities and/or amount of revenue. Once a consultation has occurred with a BIA expert, they will be better apt to provide an accurate estimate of projected revenue.

As the 6ABD proceeds with the suggested initiatives and developing stakeholder relationships (and throughout the consultation as feedback and support is acquired), both priorities and the proposed assessment will be determined by the proposed members of the 6th Ave BIA. This holistic approach is designed to assist and support a more unified organizational direction and health, while also redressing currently deficient co-organizational and community relationships. Measurement of this initiative success will be relatively simple, and could be prompted with the following questions:

- Has the 6ABD acquired 50-60% of property owner support as well as community support from businesses and surrounding residents?
- Has the 6ABD successfully petitioned and established a 6th Ave BIA with the City of Tacoma?

While the second question requires no recurring evaluation, the first should be assessed annually to determine trends and growth rates, and to ensure activities and members are still unified and supportive of the overall objective. The 6ABD should aim for a minimum 10% increase in overall property owner commitment and/or buy-in to the 6ABD per year.

**Other Ideas...**

As we explored various options for developing the 6ABD area, numerous other ideas and suggestions were presented that are not included in our main proposal. While some of these ideas are not inclusive of the built environment, we have listed them here for the 6ABD to review and consider as other initiatives they may choose to investigate and pursue in the future.

- Street Artists / Music / Busking Event: During the summer months, the 6ABD can reach out to local artists and musicians to perform in a publicly designated area
- Introduce a hashtag or social media campaign
- Public use of chalk to draw on the sidewalk and promote the artistic personality of the area
- Using www.monday.com as a means to enforce internal accountability
- White Christmas lights on buildings and trees
- Santas on 6th: Wintertime Bar Crawl
CONCLUSION

While the main initiative is perhaps unexpected given the likely anticipation of recommendations for more immediate improvements to infrastructure, our team remains firm in the belief that the strategy and recommendations provided will have a greater medium- and long-term return on investment for the built environment and for the community as a whole. Each considered improvement, and each barrier or obstacle to implementation possessed common elements and themes.

Again, at the core of these elements, relationships within the internal and external environments and their declination over time demonstrated a greater need for the built environment than any individual improvement could remedy. Our team attempted to keep the initiatives simple, direct, and flexible for adaptation to any future changes that may adversely affect the implementation of the plan. This recommendation did not come lightly or easily. In fact, it would have been easier for the team to only pursue recommendations on more immediate tasks, such as simply introducing more murals and rebranding 6ABD as a creative district. However, we’ve projected those recommendations far less impactful. Additionally, it became apparent that these simple recommendations pose the same barriers that our proposed plan aims to reduce. By leveraging the smaller initiatives now and working hard to develop greater community buy-in, the 6ABD will be poised to better develop some of the built environment today, and capitalize on those initiatives for a higher return of the overall built environment tomorrow. We hope you strongly consider the merits of this plan and commit the 6ABD to a more successful future.
REFERENCES


"Overall Findings." Knight Foundation. https://knightfoundation.org/sotc/overall-findings/.


