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REVITALIZING DOWNTOWN: A STRATEGIC SOCIAL MEDIA FRAMEWORK FOR GO DOWNTOWN, INC.

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INTRODUCTION

In many cities, a historic downtown lies at the heart, yet, it's often overlooked, neglected, and in dire need of revitalization. This neglect isn't without consequence; deserted downtowns can become associated with high crime rates, abandonment, and a loss of community. However, revitalizing downtown areas has been a hot topic among developers and scholars in the United States. It's seen as a way to breathe new life into these areas, making them hubs of bustling activity once again.

Downtown Gainesville is in urgent need of revitalization and a new image. Recognizing this need, Go Downtown, Inc. was founded in November 2023, by downtown business owners. Spearheaded by Mike Palmer, the founder of Gainesville's rock climbing gym, The Knot, this group comprises of other business owners in downtown Gainesville. Their aim is to streamline communication, plan community events, and revitalize the image of downtown.

With the goal of engaging the community through events in collaboration with other downtown businesses, Go Downtown, Inc. recognized the importance of a digital presence. In the age of digital media, a strong brand and social media presence are crucial for public interest groups like Go Downtown, Inc. Leveraging the power of social media, Go Downtown, Inc. can effectively promote its mission.

Through creative content and marketing tools on Instagram, Go Downtown, Inc. has the capacity to reach broad audiences. This will help to curate public interest in downtown, support local businesses, and encourage people to visit the historic area, ensuring a thriving economy and culture for downtown.

The project presented is applying the principles of social media mobilization, social media accounts were created to serve as catalysts in amplifying Go Downtown Inc.'s initiative. This project involved formulating a comprehensive social media strategy, including survey research, logo development, brand development, and the creation and implementation of a social media content across Facebook and Instagram.

Keywords: social media strategy, branding, municipalities.



SNAPSHOT OF SIMILAR ACCOUNTS

For the snapshot analysis, we identified five similar social media accounts relevant to Go Downtown: OnlyinGainesville, VisitGainesville, BestofGainesville, GainesvilleFla, and DTJax. These accounts were selected based on criteria such as relevance to Go Downtown's objectives, similarity in target audience demographics, and geographic location proximity. Data was collected from each of these accounts to gain insights into their content strategies, engagement tactics, and overall digital presence.

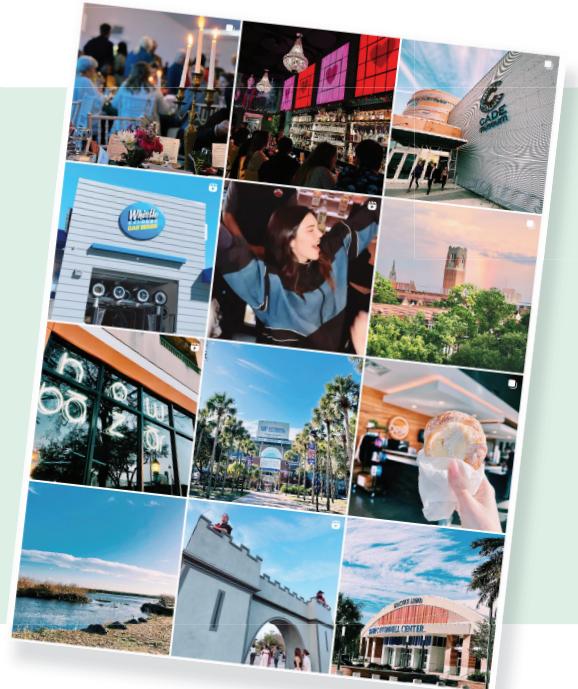
ONLYINGAINESVILLE

Followers: 35.8k

Posting Frequency: 3x/week

Post Content:

- Photos
- Reels
- University of Florida life
- Public events
- User contributions



Observations:

Onlyingainesville boasts vibrant pictures and stylized photography. They often post recap photos about events happening around town and promote local businesses. Onlyingainesville's tone mirrors the ambiance of the University of Florida, with 5 out of 14 observed posts focusing on UF, Gators, or student life. Visually their creative content consists evenly of reels and photo posts – they hardly post graphics and iconography. Whether it's a march for social justice, festival or other public event, Onlyingainesville will cover it. One unique technique Onlyingainesville employs is posting content contributed by individuals, forming an environment of user generated content. An example of this was a reel of Kendall Jenner, TV personality and model, at a Gainesville bar doing the gator chomp. They also engage their followers by posting polls and questions on their stories, creating a feedback loop and tailoring their content to their audience. They have 6 story highlights pinned to their profile titled: shops, drinks, eats, art, and parks. Their most liked post featured a reel of Kendall Jenner, with over 10,000 likes, showcasing their strategic use of celebrity presence to boost social media engagement.



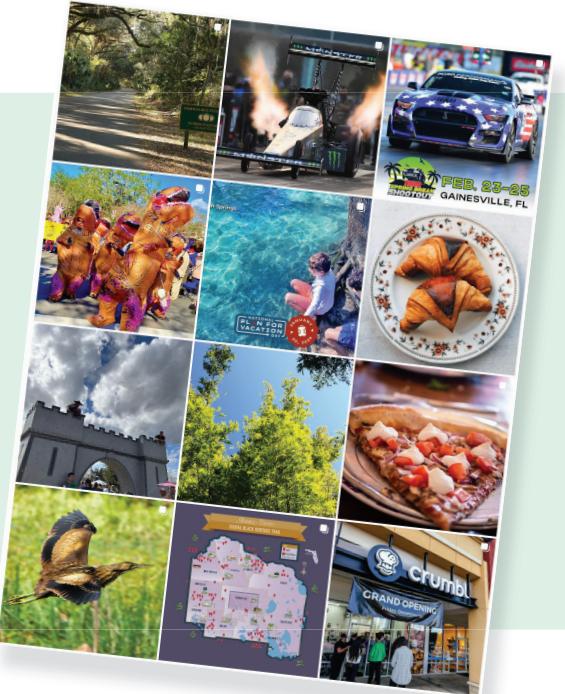
VISITGAINESVILLE

Followers: 16.8k

Posting Frequency: 1x/week

Post Content:

- Photos of food
- some graphics
- Public events
- national holidays



Observations:

Visitgainesville has a lot of content revolved around a national holiday like National croissant day, national pizza day, ect. They don't post too many reels compared to other accounts. All this is centralized around visit Gainesville's website which houses many resources and holds an event calendar. In their stories they share other posts and tags them using the type feature in stories - providing an extra highlighting towards those accounts.

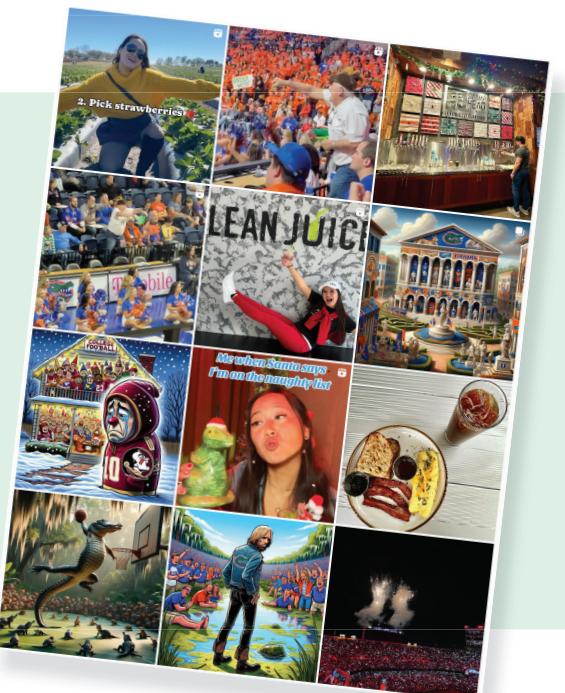
BESTOFGAINESVILLE

Followers: 39.5k

Posting Frequency: 5x/month

Post Content:

- Use of influencer
- Use of Ai art
- photos
- Sporting events



Observations:

Bestofgainesville's Instagram aims to promote shops and restaurants, proving info, discount codes and often using a food influencer who lives in Gainesville. They share AI-generated art unique to Gainesville, such as an alligator dunking a basketball or a Roman Empire painting adorned with Gator paraphernalia.

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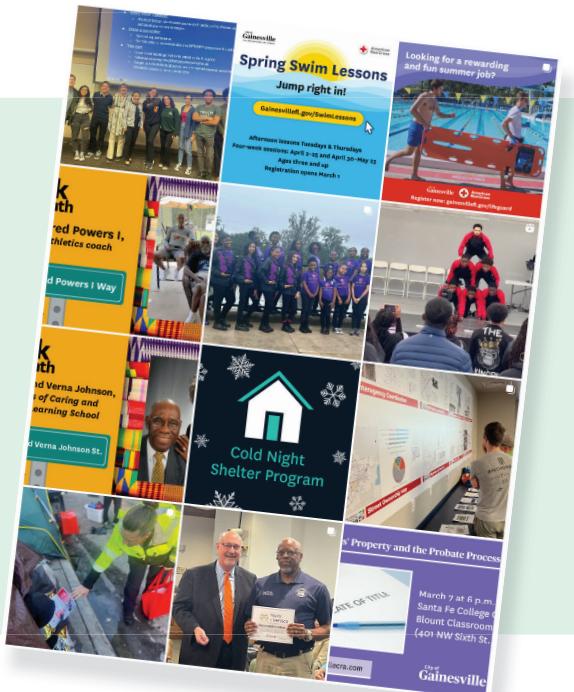
GAINESVILLEFLA

Followers: 5k

Posting Frequency: 1x/week

Post Content:

- Graphics
- Informing
- Public events



Observations:

Gainesvilleflorida's Instagram has little engagement compared to the other accounts observed. They are informative on their account and often post graphics with text. Whether its informing about shelters for the homeless or a call for an opening position, Gainesvilleflorida will create a post for it. They received a spike in engagement when they posted about the city police removing homeless people from downtown Gainesville – causing a divisive response.

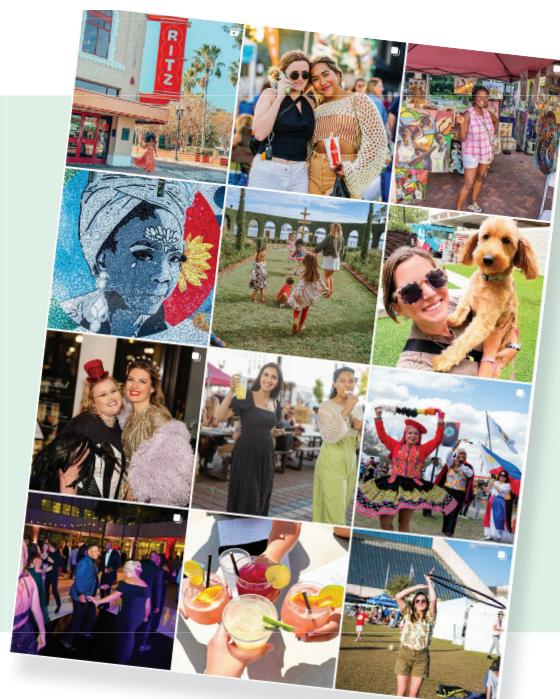
DTJAX

Followers: 48.7k

Posting Frequency: 1x/day

Post Content:

- people in frame
- bright concert posters
- art centric
- adult focused



Observations:

Dtjax boasts good use of photography that is visually pleasing, often photos of people and lifestyle. They promote businesses, like bars and restaurants through creative content. They promote social events in downtown Jacksonville like concerts and galas.

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SURVEY

A survey comprising of various question styles, including Likert scale questions, was distributed via email to subscribers on Go Downtown's email list. Out of 59 subscribers, 22 individuals participated in the survey, representing a response rate of approximately 37%. Notably, around 46% of these respondents are business owners downtown, affirming the relevance and validity of this study. The following results highlight the significant findings from this survey.

The Likert scale used in the survey ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 representing 'Not important' and 5 representing 'Very important'. The distribution can be seen in figure 1 and figure 2.

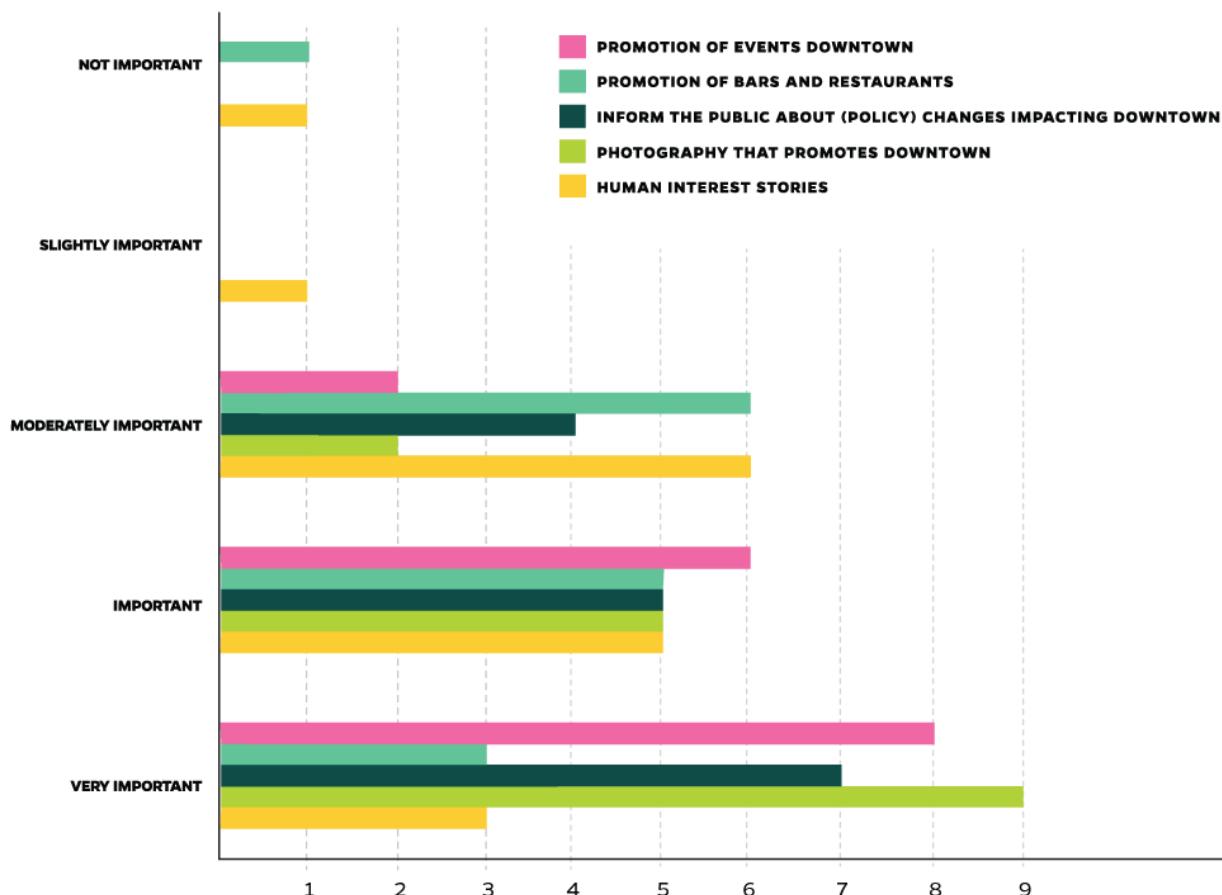


Figure 1: Distribution of responses for question 4, which asked participants to rank the following social content themes from very important to not important. Participants were instructed to consider what the Go Downtown brand should promote to an external audience. The Likert scale ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 representing 'Very important' and 5 representing 'Not important.'

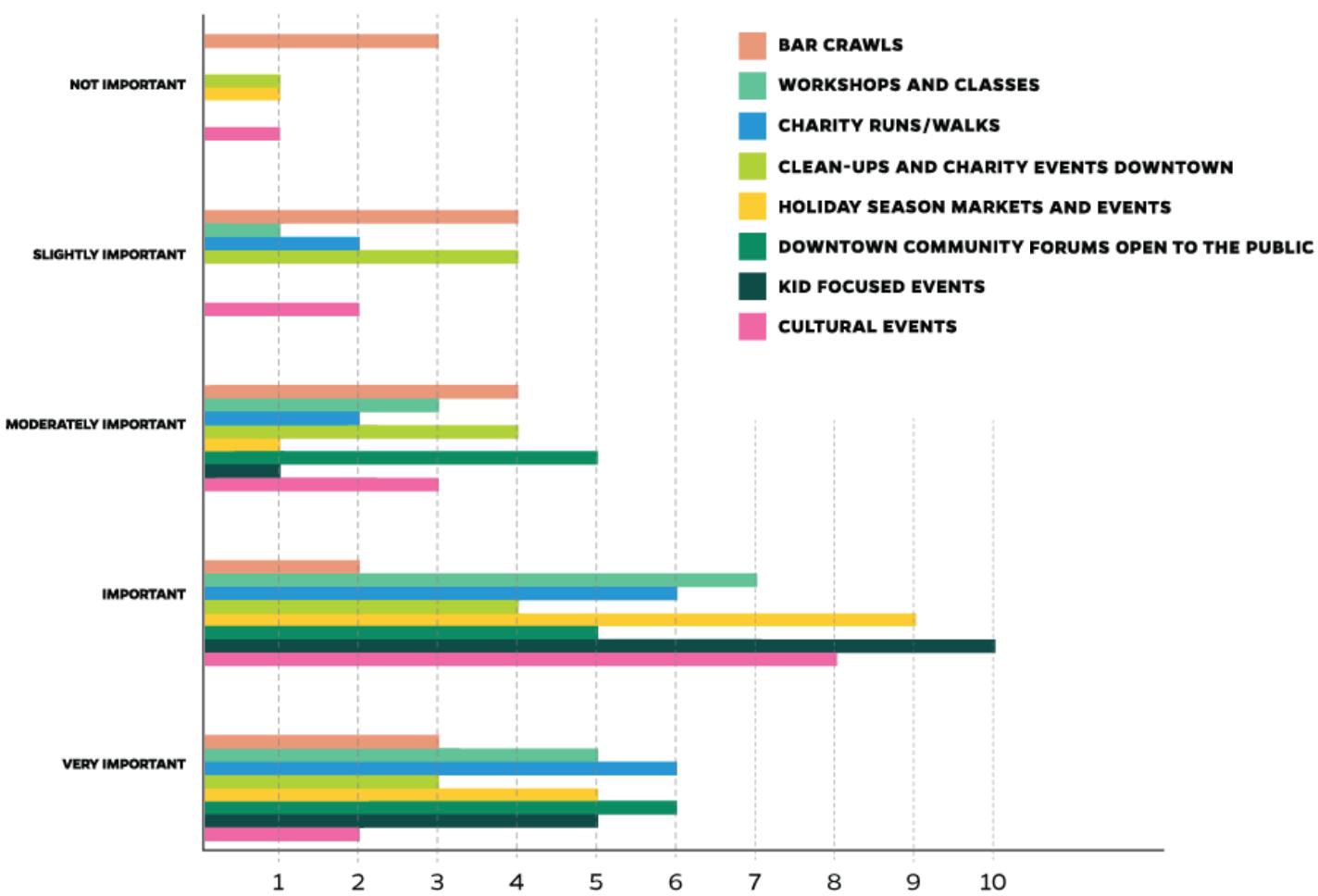


Figure 2: Distribution of responses for question 6, where participants were asked to rank various event themes from very important to not important. The question aimed to identify the types of events that respondents are interested in seeing Go Downtown plan. Participants used a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating 'Very important' and 5 indicating 'Not important'.

After analyzing the survey results, our focus was on identifying the social media content themes deemed most important for Go Downtown. “Photography that promotes downtown” emerged with the highest mean score of 4.44, closely followed by “Promotion of events downtown” with a mean score of 4.38. Based on these findings, we recommend that Go Downtown prioritizes these two aspects in their social media content.

The survey also provided insights into the events that Go Downtown should focus on. Through analysis of both the mean and standard deviation, we found that “Cultural” events had the highest mean score of 5.1 on the Likert scale, indicating their significant importance. Following closely behind was “Holiday Season Events and Markets” with a mean score of 4.94. “Bar Crawls” had the lowest mean of 3.19.



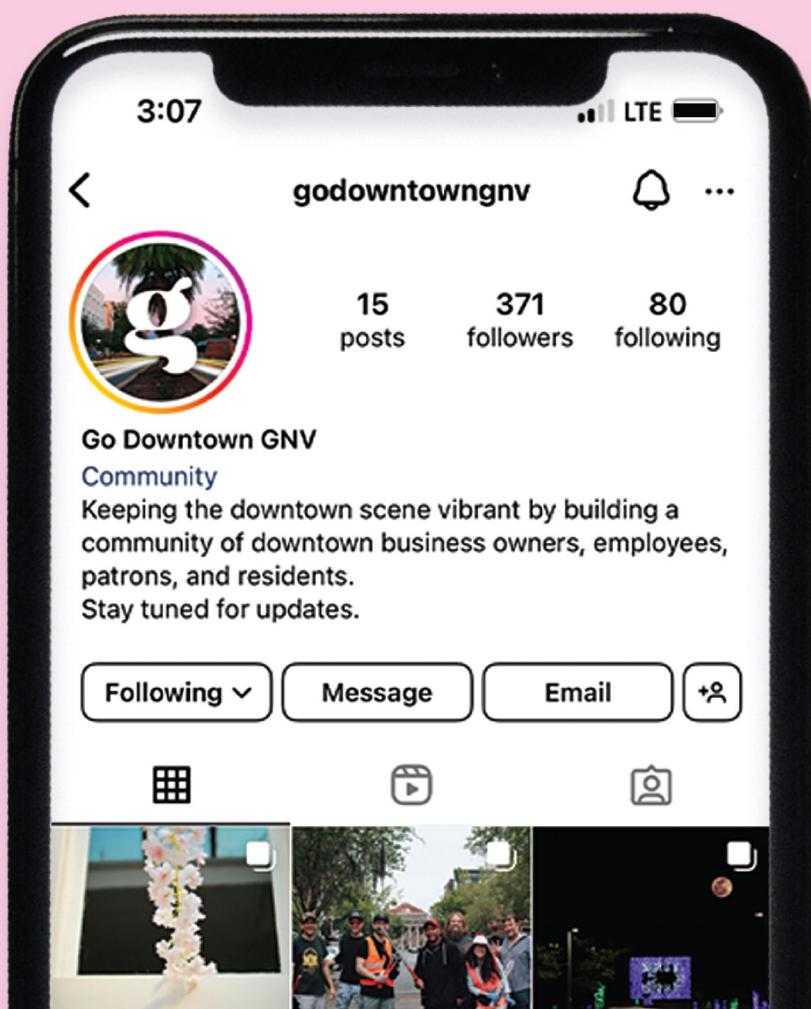
Additionally, qualitative insights were taken from the open-ended survey questions. These free responses provided more context to the perceptions and preferences of survey respondents. Notably, several respondents expressed concerns about homelessness downtown, which emerged across multiple open-ended questions. Responses related to homelessness concern downtown were particularly prevalent in questions 3 ('Additional ideas and/or comments about Go Downtown social media'), 7 ('What are Downtown's weaknesses?'), 9 ('What are Downtown's threats?'), 10 ('Which three words initially come to mind when you think about Downtown?'), and 11 ('What visual elements come to mind when you think of Downtown?'). These qualitative responses offer valuable context alongside the quantitative data to help understand community concerns regarding downtown.

Similarly, the word 'History' was repeatedly mentioned and emerged in questions 6 ('What are Downtown's strengths?'), 10 ('Which three words initially come to mind when you think about Downtown?'), and 11 ('What visual elements come to mind when you think of Downtown?'). This common sentiment suggests a strong interest in the historical aspects of downtown among respondents, which Go Downtown can capitalize on when planning events and content.

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPLEMENTATION



SOCIAL LOGO





DATES

Holidays and calendar celebrations significantly influenced the content we produced and promoted, a strategy shown by Visit Gainesville's social media, as revealed in our analysis. Earth Day prompted the creation of a post, aligning with numerous downtown events themed around Earth Day. Following initial empirical research, Visit Gainesville's website was scanned for all events associated with Earth Day. Subsequently, a promotional post for each event, accompanied by its respective graphic, was crafted, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Similarly, we created a lively post for National Burrito Day to promote Boca Fiesta, an early adopter of the Go Downtown Inc. Our post featured a photo of their signature burrito, as shown in Figure 4., accompanied by two tequila shots, showcasing their Thursday specials.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography showcasing downtown scored high in our survey, leading to the posting of photography-centric content, exemplified by Figure 5.

RECAPS

Recap posts of events, as depicted in Figure 6, was another focal point of our social media content strategy, highlighting the promotion of various events downtown such as family-friendly gatherings like the Hoggetowne Medieval Faire at Depot Park, cultural events like fashion shows, and free professional events like "Create Now Gainesville," an event hosted by Adobe in Downtown Gainesville.



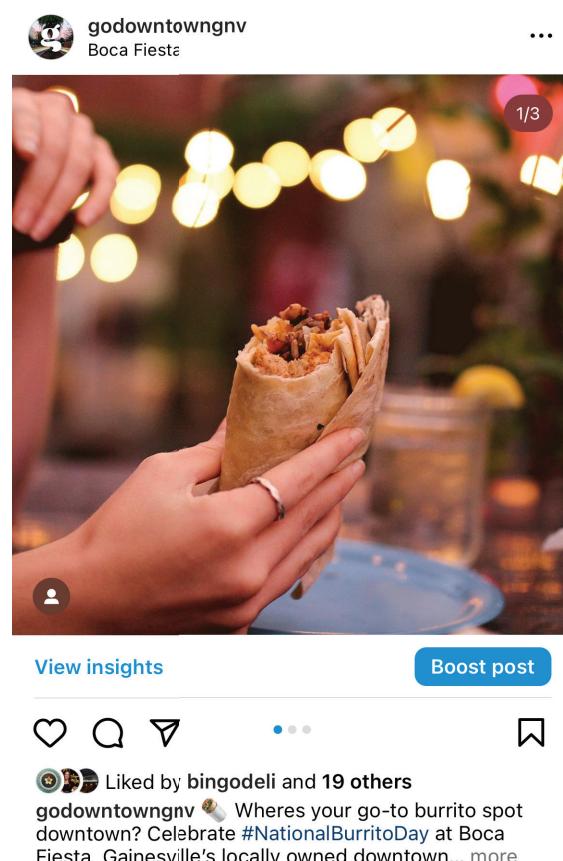


Figure 3: Earth Day post shared on Facebook highlighting five events about earth day downtown, posted on April 7th and an Instagram post celebrating National Burrito Day at Boca Fiesta, posted on April 4th.



Figure 4: Photos of the full moon and loquats shared on Instagram, using photography to showcase downtown.



Figure 5: Photos shared on Instagram from the “Create Now Gainesville” event and Hoggetowne Medieval Faire showcasing a recap type of post.



SOCIAL MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS

Based off the culmination of the qualitative data presented we suggest that Go Downtown do the following for their communications strategy.

RECOMENDATIONS

In addition to representing the initiatives of Go Downtown Inc., the social media account will also embody the essence of Downtown in its entirety, showcasing its imagery, events, businesses, and vibrant atmosphere. The goal is to inspire excitement among people in Gainesville and the surrounding areas about Downtown Gainesville.

Utilize social media to cross promote businesses downtown. Using Instagram stories to share businesses posts and using the @ symbols is a good tactic to enhance their visibility and foster community, as demonstrated in Figure 7.

Increasing the frequency of stories and short reels can significantly broaden our reach. Additionally, leveraging free marketing tools on Instagram such as trending audio, calendar reminders, and the collaboration feature will further boost our reach.

Creating story highlights is a great way to showcase the content beyond the 24-hour limit of regular Instagram stories. By categorizing highlights into themes like “dine,” “drink,” “play,” and “art,” Go Downtown can make it easier for your followers to view content they’re interested in, see Figure 8.

Continue leveraging high-quality photography to redefine the image of downtown and share it across social media platforms. By collaborating with local photographers, Go Downtown can fulfill its mission of spotlighting and supporting local artists.

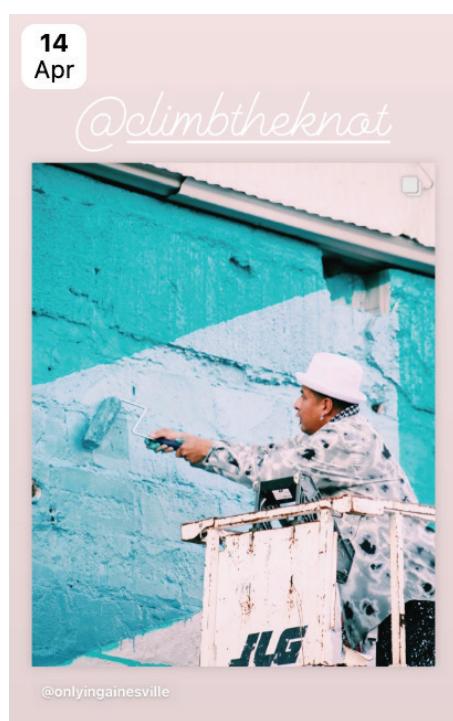


Figure 7: Instagram stories of posts that was shared about The Knot.

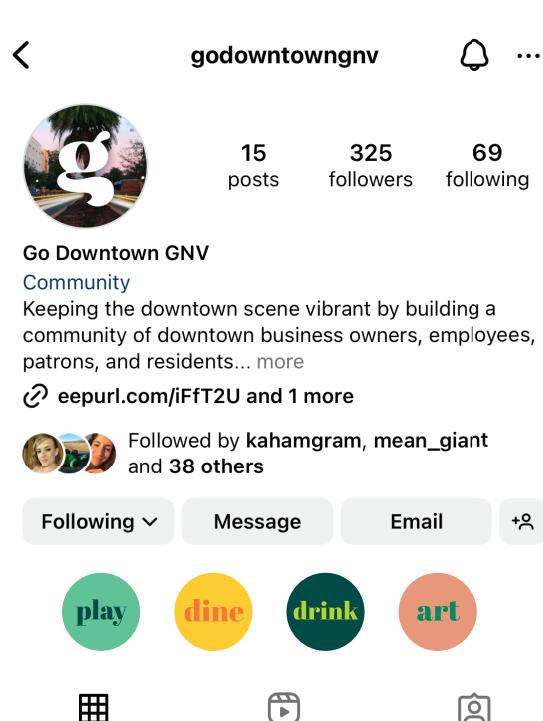


Figure 8: Story highlights on main Instagram profile.



LOGO

PRIMARY LOGO

Implementing a logo identifier is highly recommended for various marketing materials, including social media posts, posters, banners, and custom Go Downtown content.

Using two different font styles, this simple word mark was created. The lowercase “g” adds a sense of motion, effectively conveying movement, which is ideal for a call to action. The decision to omit “Inc.” from the word mark was strategic, enhancing the emotive style of the logo.



LOGO VARIATIONS



HORIZONTAL LOGO



MONOGRAM LOGO



BRAND COLORS

The primary and secondary color palettes draw inspiration from the greens of the environment. Bright pops of yellow, pink, lime, and orange reflect the sunsets, brick buildings, and nature, showcasing a versatile palette that avoids emulating blue or UF branding.



PRIMARY COLORS

LIME	SUNSET
CMYK 35, 0, 100, 0	CMYK 60, 0, 53, 0
AVOCADO	SUNBURST
CMYK 100, 26, 58, 56	CMYK 0, 66, 85, 0

PATTERNS



SECONDARY COLORS





IMAGERY

PHOTOGRAPHY

We gravitate towards imagery that captures genuine smiles, reflecting the vibrant energy of our community. From the lush greenery of urban parks to the endless blue skies, and tantalizing cuisine snapshots to the architectural charm, every image tells a story awaiting in Downtown. The use of bold graphics and vibrant colors enhances visibility, especially among a crowded downtown, where competition for attention is high. Eye-catching posters will effectively draw the gaze, encouraging them to stop and take notice of upcoming Go Downtown events.



GUIDELINES

BRAND GUIDELINES

The following brand guidelines are designed to ensure that Go Downtown, Inc. maintains a consistent, positive, and inclusive presence across all social media platforms. These guidelines will help to foster community engagement, support local businesses, and promote the vibrant culture of downtown Gainesville.

USE AN INCLUSIVE VOICE - Social media should sound inviting and inclusive. Go Downtowns social media should focus on Downtown business, organizations, events and groups. Encourage interaction and engagement from followers by commenting, following and engaging on the platform.



AVOID CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS - To maintain a welcoming and inclusive environment, Go Downtown, Inc. should avoid engaging in controversial topics. This includes steering clear of political content, polarizing issues, and any form of grandstanding. Avoid commenting, sharing or liking political events, policies, or debates to maintain a neutral stance.

IMAGERY GUIDELINES

The following imagery guidelines are designed to ensure positive representation for Go Downtown's brand. To convey a positive, welcoming, and vibrant image of downtown Gainesville, it is essential to use imagery that reflects these values. This includes focusing on cheerful, inclusive visuals and avoiding content that could be perceived as negative or divisive.

POSITIVE IMAGERY - Ensure all photos and visuals prominently feature people smiling and engaging in positive activities. Highlight moments of joy, community interaction, and celebration to foster a welcoming atmosphere. Avoid using images where individuals appear unhappy, disengaged, or in distress.

INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION - Use imagery that reflects the diversity of downtown Gainesville's community, including different ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Showcase inclusive events and activities that bring various community groups together.

AVOID POLITICAL CONTENT - Refrain from posting photos of political events, rallies, or protests. Ensure that all imagery remains neutral and does not imply endorsement of any political stance or movement.

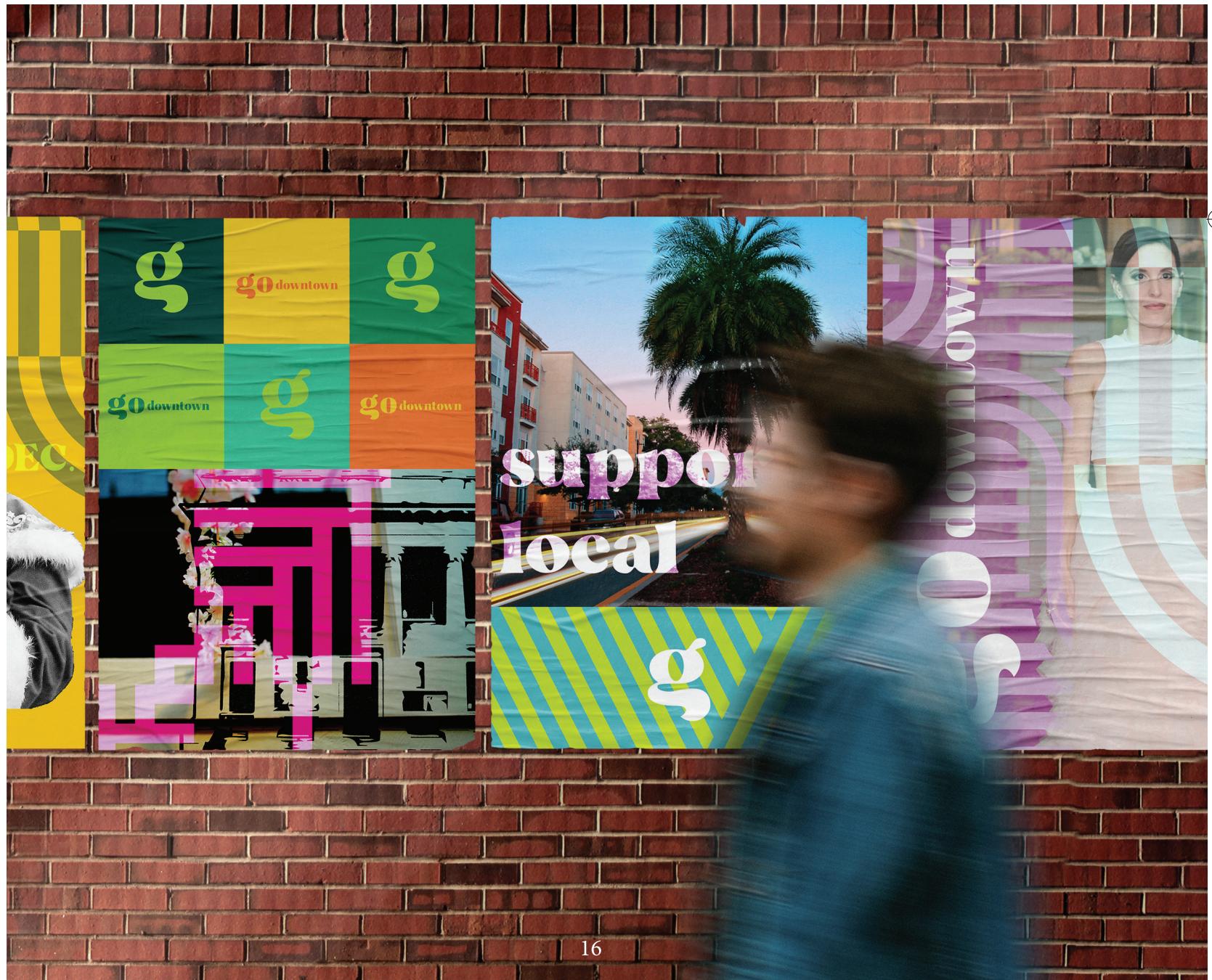




GRAPHIC DESIGN

Utilizing our logo, imagery, and color guidelines, Go Downtown aims to expand graphic design projects that enhance downtowns image to a vibrant hub. From large-scale environmental designs to smaller items like signage, wayfinding systems, and branded merchandise such as a Go Downtown Passport, we can amplify our brand through many ideas and print mediums.

We envision utilizing vacant real estate and blank wall space downtown to their fullest potential. Branded tents could enhance events and promote campaigns. Branded tents at events like the Last Friday Art Walk, new poster cases, featuring vibrant colored posters and showcasing local artists will further promote Go Downtowns vision in propelling campaigns that mobilize the public while suporting local artistry.







The Big Picture

The imagery and branding styles of Go Downtown have the potential to not only activate people but also provide downtown with a vibrant space, fulfilling one of Go Downtowns goals.

Banners can be hung from hotels, posters can be strategically placed, and light pole banners can also be utilized to enhance visibility and promotion, as seen here hung from the Hyatt Hotel IN Downtown, Gainesville.

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