

2023



ANNUAL REPORT

**DOWNTOWN FLORENCE
MAIN STREET PROGRAM**



JANUARY-DECEMBER 2023

2023 Summary

As 2023 closed on another banner year for Downtown Florence, we wanted to share some of the projects and accomplishments we are most proud of over the past twelve months. Most notable in 2023 was our **Great American Main Street Award**, which would not have been possible without the incredible work of our local investors, volunteers, merchants, event and program sponsors, elected officials, and community at-large over the last two decades. Florence's receipt of this award was only the second time the award has come to South Carolina—the first was Greenville in 2003. We also celebrated district milestones—the 10th anniversary of Hotel Florence's opening, the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Downtown Florence's public art program, the 100th season of the Florence Little Theatre, 75th season of the Florence Symphony Orchestra, and Main Street South Carolina's 40th anniversary.

Events and programs were strong with record attendance at the SC Pecan Music and Food Festival, the debut of **Downtown Fright Fest** in October, record attendance at Downtown Christmas Magic, and a week-long economic impact of over \$358,000 during Downtown Restaurant Week. In total, the Downtown Office team produced and supported over 20 events in the district attracting over 85,000 people downtown.

In 2023, **five new businesses** opened and two business expanded their operations, adding an estimated 51 net new full and part time jobs to the district. Districtwide, \$1,089,675.65 was invested into projects by the private sector and \$255,860.27 by the public sector for over \$1.2M in reinvestment overall.

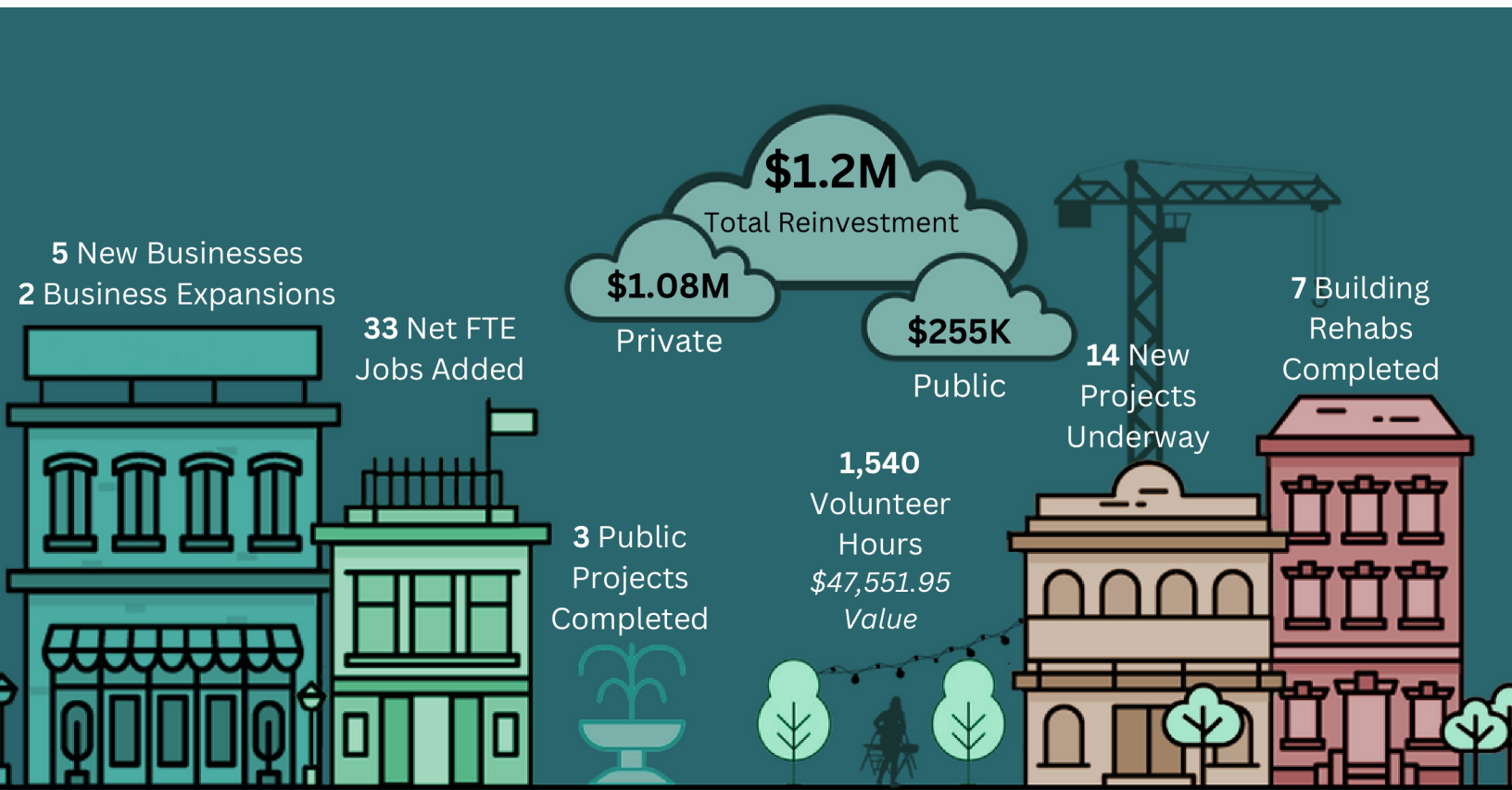
Organizationally, **361 volunteers donated 1,540 hours** of their time to Florence Downtown Development Corp.'s programs and events—that's a value of \$47,551.95! Local corporations and businesses supported events and programs with over \$119,000 in sponsorships in 2023. The organization also adopted a new Downtown Master Plan, which sets the stage for the next decade of growth and development downtown. This plan will be used to guide programs, events, and services of the Downtown Florence Main Street program. In February, we piloted the new Main Street America Accreditation standards—the first program in the state to challenge these new requirements and earn reaccreditation!

Lastly, the Downtown Florence team contributed 122.5 hours of technical assistance to other Main Street programs and small businesses inside the district. Program leadership also led sessions at the National Main Street Conference, North Carolina Main Street Conference, South Carolina Council of Governments Conference, the Municipal Association of SC's MEO Training, MSSC's Quarterly Training, and MASC's Annual Conference sharing best practices, program information, and training.

As we look ahead to 2024, we have plans to further enhance downtown through strategic partnerships, meaningful projects, special events, and the provision of services that enhance our entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Main Street Stats Snapshot

JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2023



Honors & Awards

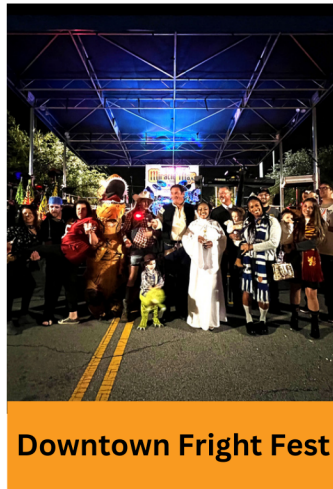
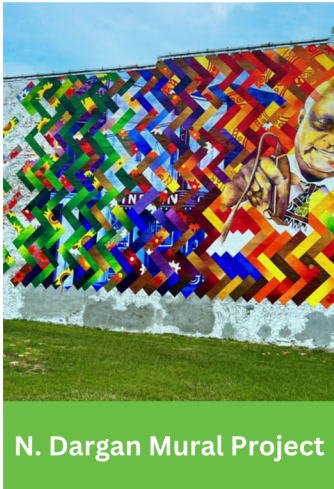
- **2023 Great American Main Street Award** (Main Street America)
- **2023 Main Street SC Inspiration Award - Outstanding Promotion** for Downtown Florence Restaurant Week, 2022
- **2023 Main Street SC Inspiration Award - Outstanding Partnership** for partnership with FMU's Kelley Center for Economic Development

Welcome New Businesses!

- **Italy's Kloset** (376 W. Evans St.) *Women and Children's Clothing*
- **Barringer General Store** (138 W. Evans St.) *Retail Gifts*
- **TK's Clothing** (190 N. Dargan St.) *Upscale Urban Clothing*
- **135 Seafood Bar & Grill** (135 N. Dargan St.) *Restaurant*
- **The Post and Courier-Pee Dee** (201 W. Evans Street) *Newspaper and Media*

Project and Program Highlights

JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2023



As an Accredited Main Street Community, Downtown Florence's Main Street Program follows the Main Street Approach™, made up of four focus areas, **Design**, **Promotion**, **Economic Vitality**, and **Organization**. This preservation-based economic development model is practiced by a network of over 1,200 communities nationwide.

ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES

- Adopted new 10-year Downtown Master Plan, Downtown 2030
- Won the Great American Main Street Award
- Cultivated new volunteers
- Welcomed a new Downtown Coordinator
- Piloted new MSA Accreditation Standards
- Won two Main Street SC Inspiration Awards
- Received National Endowment for the Arts Grant for the Mural Project
- Provided 122.5 hours of technical service
- Welcomed one new FDDC board member
- Secured over \$119,000 in sponsorships for events and programs
- Established new partnership with FMU Occupational Therapy Program for accessibility related projects downtown
- Staff earned Main Street SC scholarship to attend MSA's Community Transformation Workshop

PROJECT URBAN SQUARE UPDATE

In 2023, we broke ground on the first phase of Project Urban Square in the 300 block of W. Evans Street. The City of Florence's new parking deck (Phase 1) is 75% complete as of December 31 and site and utility work is underway for the new market-rate apartment complex, which will start vertical construction in 2024. This apartment complex will add 105 housing units to the Main Street Program's district.





ECONOMIC VITALITY ACTIVITIES

- Welcomed 5 new businesses into the district
- Two buildings in the district sold to new owners
- 14 new projects began and are in various development stages
- 7 building rehabilitations were completed
- Bid the Carolina Theatre project
- Transferred 127 W. Evans Street to developer team
- Supported Main Street SC's new WeShopSC initiative with 9 downtown business participants at the directory level
- Assisted two businesses with website design and three businesses with social media training

DESIGN ACTIVITIES

- Partnered with the Florence County Museum for their Downtown Museum Walk project enhancing walkability
- Completed the N. Dargan Street Mural Project at 218 N. Dargan Street
- Added new avenue banners celebrating Downtown Florence's GAMSA win
- Participated in National Preservation Month with social media campaign

PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

- Executed over 20 downtown events in 2023 including our new event, Downtown Fright Fest
- Saw record-breaking attendance at the SC Pecan Music and Food Festival (over 50,000 attendees!)
- Downtown Restaurant Week saw an estimated economic impact of over \$358,000.
- Program featured in MASC's Uptown Magazine, on the MASC Podcast, and in a MAESTRO case study
- Team leadership spoke at six conferences and hosted 5 Main Street communities in Downtown Florence
- Program recognized at the SC State House
- Led four national webinars for Main Street America, MAESTRO Community Manager, and the Community Development Finance Institution.



MAIN STREET DISTRICT STATS



1.2 million visits

305K unique visitors
 4.08 frequency
 Increase of 1.01% YoY
 Increase of 5.2% Yo2Y
 Increase of 38.8% Yo3Y



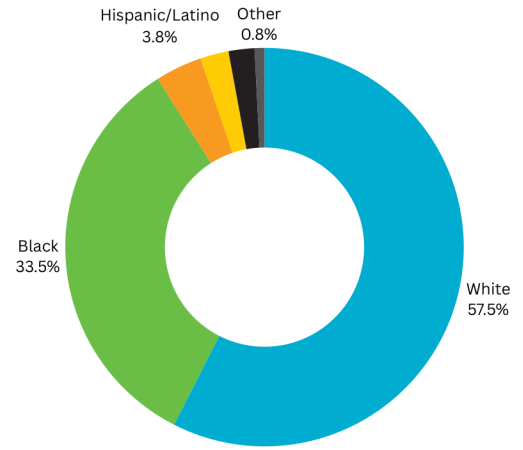
Average Dwell Time: 147 Min.

Downtown's busiest daily times were 11am-2pm (24.8%) and 5-8p (30.7%)



85,870 Event Attendees

21 Events



Visitor Demographics

JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2023



Media Reach

Social Media Reach: 2.06M
 Traditional Media: 1.17M
 Social Followers: 57,960
 (3 Facebook pages, 1 Instagram)

The Downtown Florence Main Street Program is a partnership between Florence Downtown Development Corp., a quasi-public 501c3 non-profit organization and the City of Florence. The program is led by a team of two staff and eleven board members and supported by standing committees and volunteers.

The program is nationally recognized as a model for preservation-based economic development and is an Accredited Member of Main Street America and Main Street South Carolina.

2023 FDDC Board

Dr. L. Fred Carter, Board Chairman
Ken Jackson, Vice Chairman
Brian Falcone, Treasurer
Dr. Calvin Robinson, Board Member
Ed Love, Board Member
Starlee Alexander, Board Member

Teresa Anderson, Board Member
Carl Humphries, Board Member
Tim Norwood, Board Member
Randy Osterman, Board Member
Mayor Teresa Myers Ervin, Board Member

Staff: Hannah L. Davis, Development Manager
Austin Watters, Development Coordinator

