



Making the Grade:

4 Tips to Enhance Your College Town's Experience

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College and university towns carry a certain personality and panache about them. As a city leader you know there are huge opportunities for your college town, but many times less than ideal town and gown relations or territorialism can get in the way.

In this ebook we provide tips for community and economic developers in college towns to take ownership over their community image and brand, how to capitalize on the power of the local college or university, and how to create a more vibrant downtown all through partnership with the university leadership.



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Improving Town & Gown Relations



TIP 1:

Improving Town & Gown Relations

Rotating leadership within city government and university administration can lead to sometimes disconnected visions and programs of work within “town and gown.” But prioritizing regular communication and working together to support each other’s goals will ultimately lead to growth on both fronts.

CONSIDER THIS

Communication is tough and doesn’t always happen naturally. Consider organizing a monthly community roundtable to include city, county, university, and business community leadership. And like it or not, students have a tremendous amount of buying power and can take Downtowns from failing to thriving quickly with loyal support. Involving the Student Government President can round out these regular sessions of no-agenda communication, where visions and challenges are shared, and joint solutions are developed.



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Ride for the Brand

TIP 2:

Ride for the Brand

Most colleges have a well-known and easily identifiable brand and prioritize developing a unique image for their institution. But oftentimes, communities fall short of promoting their own unique assets and character.

Through streamlined, well-implemented branding and an aggressive, geofencing-based marketing strategy, college towns are uniquely positioned to reach alumni, parents of students, and likely visitors and promote the opportunities and experiences that await them in their Downtown.

CONSIDER THIS

Consider planning events Downtown that strategically enhance and extend the gameday experience for athletic colleges, such as a special shopping and brunch event on Sundays of home football game weekends, or Downtown arts festivals that coincide with spring jamborees and home baseball tournaments. These tactics not only increase the opportunity for economic impact in the Downtown, but they highlight the best of your Downtown to new visitors that will likely come again during a non-peak season.



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Focus on Connectivity and Walkability

TIP 3:

Focus on Connectivity and Walkability

Have you ever been to a college or university and left realizing you never even knew there was a Downtown nearby? It happens more often than not, and many times, it's because of a lack of visible connectivity.

Not every Downtown is positioned adjacent to its local college or university, but every Downtown can prioritize sidewalks, bike paths, and trails that connect one to the other. Does the college or university have a transit system? Consider partnering to expand the system to include a Downtown route.

CONSIDER THIS

Through proper wayfinding signage, that incorporates your community's brand, visitors and guests of the college or university can easily be pointed from the campus to Downtown and various points of interest. Be sure to include signage for public parking lots as well. Tell your visitors where you want them to go and direct visitors through your most sightly corridors to enhance their experience every time.



Want us to evaluate the walkability of your Downtown?

[Click here](#) for a free Walkability Analysis.

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Upgrade Your Streetscape & Visitor Amenities

TIP 4:

Upgrade Your Streetscape & Visitor Amenities

You've successfully promoted your Downtown through strategic and aggressive branding, and you've provided a physical pathway to get college and university students and visitors Downtown. Now it's time to focus on their experience Downtown.

Streetscape elements such as landscaping, lighting, seating, public art, outdoor dining, greenspaces, and even public wi-fi and charging stations create a memorable experience and will position your Downtown as a true destination.

CONSIDER THIS

As more and more consumers now own smartphones and basic city services such as parking kiosks require access to the internet, innovative Downtowns are now offering free public wi-fi in certain areas of their Downtown. This allows both visitors and residents to more fully engage with their online community, which enhances their experience and also continues to promote your Downtown brand. Whether it's using Facebook to check in at their favorite restaurant or Instagramming the perfect selfie in front of a Downtown mural, connection is king and winning Downtowns are at the forefront of providing this technology to its visitors.



Want to hear even more tips to improve your grade as a college town?

Schedule a meeting with us.



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