

City of Stamford

**Stamford Downtown Special Services District**

FY 2021

BOR Fiscal Committee  
Budget Presentation





# Introduction

**Mission:** The Stamford Downtown Special Services District (Stamford Downtown) manages, enhances and promotes the Downtown experience.

Programs	Services Provided
<p>Critical &amp; Mandated (including those that are the subject of FY21 City Operating Budget request)</p>	<p>Stamford Downtown serves as the Business Improvement District for the City of Stamford's central business district. In that role, Stamford Downtown supplements municipal services to ensure downtown is an inviting, attractive setting.</p> <p>Stamford Downtown deploys an Ambassador Program to welcome, and serve as a source of information to, visitors, residents and the workforce while working to connect those in-need with available social services. Stamford Downtown also provides Environmental Maintenance to clean the curb line each day while also power washing, removing graffiti and completing special projects such as painting fire hydrants and documenting physical conditions.</p> <p>Stamford Downtown also produces brand events such as <i>Wednesday Nite Live</i> and <i>Arts + Crafts on Bedford</i> to draw visitors and consumers to downtown, activate the downtown streetscape and position downtown as the regional center for culture and entertainment.</p>



# Department Management

## Key Program/Department Challenges

Because of the importance of the **Ambassadors** to the downtown, Stamford Downtown has more than doubled its financial commitment to this program. Concurrently, the city's financial participation remains below its pre-2009 levels. Costs continue to increase due to:

Stamford Downtown anticipates basic salary increases of 2% to 3% by our contractor as well as increases of equipment and facility costs. A shifting of 20% of Ambassador hours to programmed patrols of multiple municipal parks including Latham, Columbus and Heritage Park at Old Town Hall. The reallocation has proven fruitful in these locations, but will require backfilling of coverage in the more visible sections of the downtown, and any further reduction of staff would diminish service level below minimum acceptable standards. The public now expects and relies upon the Downtown Ambassadors and considers them to be a community asset.

The **Wednesday Nite Live** format appeals to patrons who do not ordinarily come to Alive@Five but prefer a different music genre. In 2020 we anticipate a line-up that will equal or surpass the 2019 success and continue to build upon the economic and cultural development of our downtown. But talent that drives attendance comes an ever increasing cost.

The 2019 **Arts & Crafts on Bedford** event garnered its largest audience to date with an estimated 40,000 attendees. The show has become a regional destination for shoppers as well as the crafters themselves. Many of the arts & crafts vendors who exhibit rank the show as their best for sales volume and one of the best organized shows in the region. Reports from Bedford Street merchants indicated a 150% increase in restaurant business during the show. We project similar economic benefits for the 2020 show.

## Budget Scenarios

The 2020/2021 Operating Budget has not yet been created; however, based on a comprehensive program review, no substantial changes are anticipated at this time. Stamford Downtown's current projection is for the 2020/2021 budget to be funded at a level of increase between 3% and 6%, compared to the 2019/2020 Operating Budget. When Stamford Downtown was established, the city committed to no reduction of its provision of services and the support of added services through the BID. Over the ensuing years, public sector services were reduced; where necessary, these functions were taken over by Stamford Downtown. The assumption of these responsibilities requires an offsetting level of city financial support.



# ***This is what is coming***

## ***Major changes planned for the department***

Stamford Downtown's long-time leader, Sandy Goldstein, has retired and David Kooris has assumed the role of President of the organization. Mr. Kooris is in the midst of reviewing all operations and program costs in an effort to identify management efficiencies and cost savings. Stamford Downtown's FY2021 budget will reflect the recommended cost savings.

Stamford Downtown will attempt to hold spending level on core services such as its Ambassador, environmental maintenance and landscape beautification programs. Doing so may require offsetting cost reduction to other key initiatives.