



ATLANTA ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT: A NEW MEDIA & ACTIVATION DISTRICT FOR DOWNTOWN

ABOUT ATLANTA ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

The Atlanta Arts & Entertainment District (AAED) is a neighborhood activation and economic development project for Downtown Atlanta. AAED fuses new outdoor media, local art, and advertising and funds cultural and public space programming in the city's core. By creating light, vitality, and activity, AAED authentically reflects the vibrancy of Atlanta as a whole. The District is managed by the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (ADID) and self-funds its management and programming through revenue sharing agreements with media companies within the District.

SPEAKING POINTS

AAED is a fusion of art and advertising. This cultural innovation effort blends new outdoor media, local art, accent lighting, and digital and static signage to activate buildings and blank walls and infuse the Downtown neighborhood with light, art, and cultural programming.

As the physical and symbolic center of the city and the region, Downtown's newest vibrancy effort will redefine Atlanta's culture and brand.

Inspired by comparable efforts like the Denver Theatre District, this neighborhood activation and economic development project, powered by non-traditional signage and media, will leverage revenue garnered from outdoor advertising to fund community arts programming.

AAED will support commercial investment, enhance public spaces, elevate the aesthetic experience of Downtown, and stimulate economic, marketing, cultural arts, and tourism efforts in the area and in Atlanta at large.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is it?

At its core, the Atlanta Arts & Entertainment District is a neighborhood activation and economic development project for Downtown Atlanta that is powered by non-traditional outdoor media with the ultimate District goal of enlivening the core of the city through interactive, immersive and experimental arts and culture events and experiences.

The District creates new innovatively regulated advertising sign rights for private property owners that will power new public space programming in Downtown Atlanta. The outdoor media and programs will:

- Support Downtown as the preferred diverse and active market place for commerce and entertainment
- Create light, vitality and activity through multimedia signage and District-funded arts and culture programming
- Support commercial investment and enhance public gathering spaces
- Provide a marketing platform that helps make Atlanta a premier host city.

As the physical and symbolic center of the city and the region, Downtown must continue to grow and evolve. Digital signage and outdoor media, managed in a coordinated way, can play a significant role in supporting this desired activity and defining Atlanta's culture and brand.

What will the District do?

The Atlanta Arts & Entertainment District will:

- Permit new and upgraded outdoor advertising signs consistent with the goals and aesthetic guidelines of the Atlanta City Council adopted Sign Plan.
- Authentically reflect the vibrancy, diversity and creativity of the City as a whole by activating Downtown streets and public spaces by hosting events and programs using the enhanced signage as the venue and leveraging the talents of Atlanta’s diverse and thriving music, art and sports culture.
- Help overcome the public’s general perception that Downtown lacks “things to do,” is uninteresting, and is dark and unsafe by increasing nighttime activity through bright, programmed signs and art and entertainment special events that are supported and financed by the District.
- Stimulate currently blank walls on buildings and parking decks in Downtown utilizing innovative, creative, and engaging media techniques.
- Enable the delivery of a unified look and feel via a media “clean zone” to support large special events. Further, the new and coordinated media assets will be leveraged to position Atlanta as a premier location to host national and international events.
- Increase economic activity in Downtown—including real estate investment—by providing new revenue potential for projects that create interesting spaces with digital media components and things to do.

Where is the District?

The District geography is in the core of the center city, bounded generally to the west by Northside Drive; to the north by Ivan Allen Jr. Boulevard; to the east by Interstate 75/85 and Courtland Street; and to the south by Trinity Avenue. The District surrounds existing event destinations and public gathering places, including Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Centennial Olympic Park and Philips Arena, as well as other surrounding venues, hotels and restaurant locations. The District encompasses portions of the Downtown Atlanta, Castleberry Hill and Vine City neighborhoods.

How is the District regulated?

Atlanta City Council adopted legislation that established the District’s goals, location and aesthetic guidelines. This policy will guide the implementation and operations of the District’s sign permitting. In particular, a Sign Plan was adopted into the City of Atlanta Zoning Code Sign Ordinance that describes the supplemental types and amount of signage allowed in the District in order to:

- 1) Facilitate the creation and recognition of a unique arts and entertainment District that highlights Atlanta’s cultural attractions and supports Atlanta through tourism, economic development and City based branding;
- 2) Provide a higher standard of visual interest through quality sign design and artistic context by giving flexibility in the size, type and location of signs – and discouraging typical, standard ‘billboard’ outdoor signage - within the District in recognition of the economic development purpose that is best met by a managed process;
- 3) Establish the guiding principles of ensuring non-standard signage; media that is concentrated, assembled and mixed; and installations that are oriented to the street;
- 4) Ensure the aesthetic and architectural compatibility of signage with the building upon which the sign is to be displayed using building mass and orientation in the placement of the sign so as to define and place strong visual emphasis on the street and other important public open spaces; enliven building facades so as to add interest, scale and three-dimensional quality;
- 5) Generate light and activity Downtown while using a managed process to mitigate possible adverse impacts of large format sign installations on surrounding locations and structures;

- 6) Limit the total number of sign locations to a total of 25.

Who is involved?

The District is managed by the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, a community improvement district that provides governmental services on behalf of Downtown property owners as a private 501(c)(3) corporation. The District self-funds its management and programming through revenue sharing agreements with the media companies within the District.

An Advisory Council is in place, comprised of 14 individuals that represent the diversity of the residential, business, entertainment, and arts and culture community of the District.

Residential Representation

1. Zelda Jackson, Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association (at-large)
2. Tom Caggiano, Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association (south area)
3. Reverend John Lewis, Vine City Civic Association
4. Horacio Romero, Castleberry Hill Neighborhood Association

Arts and Culture Representation

5. Leslie Gordon, Georgia State University / Rialto Theater
6. David Hamilton, Praxis3

Media Representation

7. Sandy Jones, Mahalo Marketing
8. Patti Reeves, Reeves Marketing
9. Susan Fromm, Outfront Media
10. Brian Cohen, Pearl Media

Business and Tourism Representation

11. Kent Matlock, Matlock Advertising
12. Kristin Delahunt, Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau

Environmental Representation

13. Nikki Belmonte, Atlanta Audubon Society

How were new sign locations selected?

The Atlanta Downtown Improvement District solicited proposal applications from building owners, submitted in collaboration with their media company partner, who are located within the District. ADID evaluated and scored the conceptual proposals for compliance with the adopted Sign Plan. The evaluation process utilized a scoring matrix that quantified the two components of the Sign Plan criteria, including:

“Strategies for Success” or “Planning Criteria” interpreted and detailed as:

- Emphasizing priority locations including key pedestrian plazas and parks and important streets
- Supporting coordinated management of the District
- Furthering Economic Development goals of Downtown
- Acknowledging a desire to update existing nonconforming billboard signs
- Building Downtown’s cultural capital

“General Criteria for Sign Design” or “Design Criteria” interpreted and detailed as:

- Enhancing the host building’s architecture
- Emphasizing positively the public realm including streets, plazas and parks
- Innovating with signage design that considers the form and composition of the installation
- Going the extra mile to merge the out-of-home media with cultural experimentation

The highest scoring applications relative to these criteria were approved by the ADID Board of Directors to advance toward implementation.

What is the timeline for the District?

Now that an initial cohort of advancing sign proposals have been identified, work is underway to execute the necessary legal agreements and develop construction documents in order to seek building permits from the City of Atlanta. The building permit process and the subsequent sign fabrication and installation process will vary by location, but will advance throughout late 2018 and into early 2019. District programming and activation events are advance concurrently.