



Downtown Tulsa Partnership

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In Winter 2023, Downtown Tulsa Partnership (DTP) expanded the DDOW campaign launched in Winter 2022 to better connect and market existing downtown attractions, as well as encourage new holiday initiatives to benefit downtown visitors, residents, workers and businesses. Previously Downtown holiday attractions operated in silos without coordination.

In November DTP hosted a kick-off event that invited DDOW partners to publicly announce their upcoming holiday activations. The event was attended by Tulsa's major news outlets, as well as social media influencers, resulting in positive news coverage and online buzz. The kick-off also launched DowntownDaysofWonder.com, featuring a calendar of Downtown holiday events and other curated content.

In the public realm, DTP added street tree lighting, snowflake decorations and DDOW-branded banners and Mega Brutes. DTP also launched two pilots: the Jingle Bus, a free, festive shuttle to physically connect downtown holiday attractions; and Shop Downtown, a program that incentivized holiday shopping at downtown retailers. Although driving participation in these new initiatives was a challenge, DTP did so through a robust marketing strategy that utilized our e-newsletter to 3,000+ stakeholders, unpaid and sponsored posts on our social media platforms, earned media coverage and flyers shared with downtown businesses.

DTP also continued Pop-Up Downtown, a program that matches emerging BIPOC entrepreneurs with ground-floor level vacancies during the holiday season. A grant allowed us to deepen the program's Winter 2023 impact on six local minority-owned businesses and provide support through merchandising and marketing consultation services. The campaign highlighted these shops and all shopping offered in downtown.

INNOVATION

Sprinkled throughout Downtown Tulsa's 1.4 square miles, holiday attractions include an outdoor ice-skating rink, lights and activities at Downtown parks, a lights-on music event on Tulsa's historic Black Wall Street, shows at the city's performing arts center, the Tulsa Christmas Parade and outdoor igloos at a downtown brewery.

DTP sought to bridge the physical distance between these existing holiday activities while creating a new experience: the Downtown Tulsa Jingle Bus. DTP had the bus interior decorated in a "Candyland" theme and wrapped the outside to complement the DDOW campaign. Holiday music played on the sound system in the heated bus, which offered respite from Tulsa's cold winter temperatures. For convenience, the Jingle Bus utilized a GPS link to track the bus in real time along its route using a smartphone.

For seven weeks in Winter 2023, free Jingle Bus service was provided Thursday and Friday evening, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoon. Temporary bus stops were created using downtown street pole banners, and the bus route was shared across DTP's digital platforms, as well as on physical maps provided to DDOW partners and other downtown businesses. DTP promoted this innovative downtown holiday experience through the DDOW site, earned media coverage and social media advertising.

Tulsa has no downtown circulator through its public transit service, so the Jingle Bus temporarily filled this need. The Jingle Bus reduced vehicle pollution downtown by allowing riders to park once and ride-share from attraction to attraction, downtown restaurants and bars, etc.

OUTCOME

Approximately 10,000 users visited the DDOW website, a 99% increase over the previous year and the positive media coverage earned during the DDOW campaign had a publicity value of approximately \$150K.

The Jingle Bus pilot welcomed 200 riders, less than anticipated. A post-pilot survey shows that riders primarily used the Jingle Bus as a fun holiday activity, rather than a convenient mode of transportation. Since operator data shows that most of our riders were picked up and/or dropped off at one of three major holiday attractions, there is some interest among these partners in a truncated service connecting these three locations in the future.

In its first year, the Shop Downtown program saw 1,020 shoppers who spent well over \$25K at 26 downtown establishments. Pop-Up downtown entrepreneurs reported over \$22K in revenue among their six shops alone, and two participants are staying in their shops under private agreements with property management. According to a post-program survey, all participants reported gaining valuable experience and understanding of the Downtown retail market, as well as exposure to new customers.

Campaign feedback from DDOW partners was overwhelmingly positive with requests to expand collaboration in Winter 2024. Moreover, individual attractions broke several records. For example, Arvest Winterfest's ice rink saw the largest attendance yet at their Breakfast with Santa events; the Tulsa Performing Arts Center and Welltown Brewery's Iglootown both reported record-breaking ticket sales this holiday season; and the Tulsa Christmas Parade had over 100 entries, the largest participation in the parade's 97-year history.

EXECUTION

DTP started planning DDOW's Winter 2023 campaign in Summer 2023. Preparations included working with a private operator to pilot a downtown shuttle loop during the First Friday Art Crawl from September to November in the Tulsa Arts District. This shuttle pilot eventually transformed into the Jingle Bus, growing from one service day per month to four per week. A survey of First Friday shuttle riders informed DTP of the Jingle Bus season; for example, survey feedback led DTP to make bus stop signage more visible.

DTP also hosted meetings with DDOW partners to understand their plans and needs for the coming season. DTP worked closely with our web developer to ready the DDOW website for launch and kept the site updated with holiday events in Downtown through mid-January. DTP also curated Downtown holiday experiences through a DDOW blog and shared this content through our social media platforms and weekly e-newsletter. Topics included holiday catering options from downtown restaurants, holiday shopping ideas and a guide to Downtown lights and décor.

Following the campaign, DTP debriefed with the DDOW partners again. The organization has already made plans to incorporate their feedback, which includes increasing opportunities for cross-promotion during the busiest part of the DDOW season.

REPRESENTATION

DDOW partners representing the major Downtown Tulsa holiday attractions were comprised of seven community organizations, ranging from our performing arts center to our largest entertainment venue to nonprofit organizations that support the downtown Christmas parade and private park management. Approximately 20 representatives were included in DDOW planning; those involved included Black, Latine, Indigenous and Caucasian individuals.

DTP's small team of six led and funded the DDOW campaign by managing the campaign branding and website and planning and executing the campaign kick-off event. DTP also launched and managed the Jingle Bus and Shop Downtown initiatives.

To further its mission of inclusivity, DTP emphasizes support of Downtown Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District, which was the site of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre that destroyed Tulsa's Black community and the prominent business district known as Black Wall Street. DTP played an instrumental role in the Greenwood District's first holiday lights-on event by donating traffic control equipment and funding street tree lighting for the season. Event organizers were included among DDOW partners.

The Jingle Bus route intentionally included the Greenwood District among its stops to promote visitors to the area; in fact, three Black-owned businesses sponsored the bus, receiving logo visibility on the bus exterior.

REPLICATION

A downtown-wide holiday campaign led by the downtown organization(s) is certainly replicable and scalable based on the size of a downtown and its number of holiday attractions and events. A key component of DDOW is building and maintaining relationships with Downtown Tulsa partners. DTP does this by providing opportunities to collaborate, communicating well in advance and seeking to understand partner needs, as well as the needs of downtown audiences in general.

Moreover, DTP's strategy incorporates a centralized digital campaign featuring distinct branding and media outreach. This aspect of the model facilitates a cohesive promotional effort that can effectively aggregate and highlight various holiday activities and attractions across the downtown area capable of magnifying impact and providing a downtown-wide experience for consumers. Such a digital campaign can serve as a versatile template for other downtown organizations, allowing them to tailor the branding and media components to fit their unique local identity and audience. As the cohesive branding is deployed every year it strengthens the overall visibility of the campaign, ensuring a downtown or other urban place becomes synonymous with the holidays.

COMPLEXITY/SIMPLICITY

Funding continues to be the greatest need for the small UPMO in its third year of operation, and the DTP staff works hard to maintain efficacy within a minimal budget. While the team recognizes that the winter holiday season provides an opportunity for significant impact in downtown Tulsa, activations get expensive quickly, so there must balance impact with realistic funding capacity. In addition to seeking additional opportunities for grant funding, DTP looks forward to growing DDOW sponsorship in Winter 2024.

One of the added complexities of delivering a highly visible and impactful holiday campaign is the size of Downtown Tulsa, which DTP manages: 1.4 square miles containing 29 linear miles of street frontage. Partnerships and collaborations across the eight varied districts of Downtown Tulsa were critical to amplifying the impact and reach of the DDOW campaign. By partnering with other groups dedicated to activations in their individual districts, DTP were able to leverage shared capacity and targeted funding to connect different holiday-themed activities under one shared DDOW digital and physical marketing campaign.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<https://www.downtowndaysof wonder.com>

[Pop-Up Downtown Interview with Emily Scott and CNOTE Wilson](#) — News You Can Use with Charles and Damali of World Won Development, KBOB 89.9 FM, January 10, 2024

["Downtown Tulsa Partnership Helps Entrepreneurs Through Pop-Up Shops"](#) — KOTV, December 28, 2023

["Tulsa Pop-Up Shops Feature Minority Business Owners"](#) — KJRH, December 19, 2023

["Six New Pop-Up Shops in Downtown Tulsa Welcoming Shoppers Through Mid-January"](#) — FOX 23, December 19, 2023

["Families Can Explore Downtown Tulsa with Free Augmented Reality Experience"](#) — FOX 23, December 14, 2023

["Free Holiday-Themed Bus Bringing People to Festive Attractions in Downtown Tulsa"](#) — FOX 23, December 11, 2023

["2023 Gift Guide"](#) — Oklahoma Eagle, December 8-14, 2023

["Pop By Pop-Ups: Program Provides Affordable Rents to Local Business Owners"](#) — TulsaPeople, December 2023

["New Jingle Bus Takes People on Jolly Ride Through Downtown Tulsa"](#) — KOTV, November 22, 2023

["Pop-Ups Opening Soon Downtown"](#) — KTUL, November 16, 2023

["Downtown Days of Wonder Returns for 2023"](#) — TulsaKids Magazine, November 6, 2023

["Downtown Days of Wonder Promotes Multiple Holiday Attractions in Downtown Tulsa"](#) — Tulsa World, November 3, 2023

["Downtown Tulsa Partnership Announces Plans for Downtown Days of Wonder"](#) — KTUL, News Channel 8, November 2, 2023