IDA + CDA Place Matters

Long Beach, CA

March 10-12, 2026

INSPIRED LEADERS
SHAPING CITIES

CALIFORNIA
DOWNTOWN
ASSOCIATION

DOWNTOWN
LONG BEACH
ALLIANCE

The Art of Managing Your Board

Wednesday, March 11 | 3:45pm – 5:00pm

Speakers:

Kris Larson, AICP, LPM, President & CEO, Downtown Houston+ (Houston, TX)

Rena Leddy, LPM, Vice President, Urban Place Consulting Group, Long Beach, CA

Bri Maughan, Executive Director, Fisherman's Wharf Community Benefit District, San Francisco, CA

Board Roles & Responsibilities

Source: BoardSource

What Are The Primary Roles Of The Board?

Direction:
The Board guards the purpose of the organization and steers it in the right direction. Stays on track. Avoid “mission creep”. Don’t go “with the wind”.

Oversight:
The Board monitors the finances, activities, the health, and the ethical behavior of the organization.

Resources:
The Board ensures that the organization is well-equipped to fulfill its purpose, has adequate finances, capable staff and an esteemed reputation. (Adhere to MDP)

Specific Responsibilities

Oversight

Board: Health & Success of the Organization

- Sets Policies
- Monitors Legal Requirements
- Hires CEO

CEO: Programs & Administration

- Manages daily operations
- Hires, manages staff
- Sets Operational policies and responsibilities

Planning & Evaluation

Board: Strategic Framework for Organization

- Adopts an overall strategic framework
- Evaluates CEO & determines compensation

CEO: Strategic & Operational Plans

- Implements the strategic plan
- Leads staff in implementation of programs aligned with strategic plans
- Implement staff performance evaluations and sets compensation

Finances

Board: Fiduciary Duty

- Sets overall fiscal policies and ensures appropriate internal controls
- Approves the annual budget
- Monitors financial reports
- Hires auditor and reviews audit

CEO: Financial Management

- Prepares annual budget with financial staff
- Provides regular financial statements
- Handles the daily financial operations
- Defines financial policies and procedures for transactions.

Primary Role of CEO/ED

CEO Reports to the Board. Board delegates the day to day to the CEO.
CEO maintains regular contact with the Board, particularly the Chair.

Note: CEO is the main conduit between Board and Staff, Board should not direct any staff individually. Board committees are a way for staff to support and work directly with board members

Primary Role of Staff

Staff helps the CEO implement the directives of the Board
Staff “experts” in the day to day

Note: Staff should not go to the Board/Board Chair directly UNLESS staff suspects the CEO is engaged in illegal or unethical behavior

Primary Role of Board

The Board’s duties center on strategic framing and oversight roles.
The CEO makes things happen.

Building Your Board / “Nominations” Committee

- Often led / chaired by Board Past Chair – but CEO should play a pro-active, service-oriented role
  - *You get to choose your bosses!*
- Balance bylaw requirements for service with broader goals of representation
- Clarify expectations:
  Attendance, committee participation, supporting events, advocacy
- Be thorough! Way harder to remove / retire a Board member once they are in place
- Review every candidate against the lens of one day being the Board Chair – one of them will!
- 12-month process – always be looking for great board candidates

Building Your Board / “Nominations” Committee

If appointed –

- Make the appointing party’s job easy – send a slate of great options!

If elected –

- Encourage great stakeholders to run (*every candidate needs a nudge*)

Onboarding
New Board Members

WELCOME

- President & Executive Director welcome memo
- Executive Director & new member coffee/lunch

TRAINING

Organizational Governing Documents

- Board Purpose & Role
- Board Code of Ethics & Rules of Conduct
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Board & Committee Structures
- Management Plan
- City Contract
- Bylaws
- Articles of Incorporation
- Strategic Plan
- Financial Policies & Procedures
- Other Applicable Agreements & Licenses

Local & State Laws

- San Francisco Sunshine Act
- San Francisco Administrative Codes, applicable codes outlined in City Contract
- Brown Act
- California Public Records Act

SAMPLE COMMITTEE CHARTER

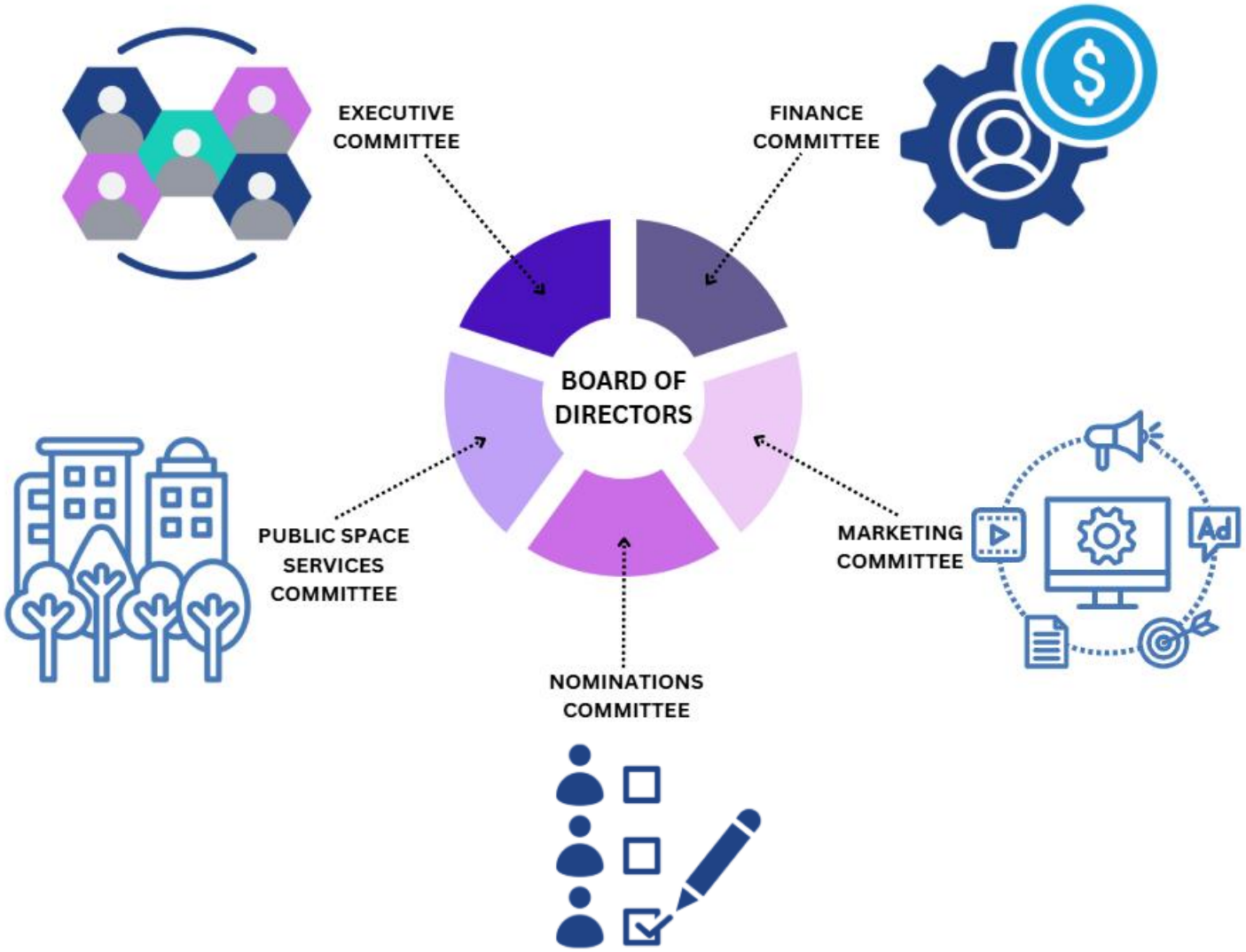
Defines a committee's purpose, objectives, responsibilities, authority, and operational parameters

COMMITTEE	FINANCE
Advisory / Board	Advisory
Committee Chair	Treasurer of the Board (or in absentia Vice Chair). Elected by Full Board during annual meeting.
Committee Member Qualifications	Committee Chair must have a finance background and be a member of the Board for at least one year.
Member Term	1. First term: from start of committee through first full year to next annual meeting. 2. The outgoing Chair remains on committee for one year after their position ends.
Membership	This Finance Committee shall have 3-5 members comprised of board members of which a minimum of 50% must be board members. Task Forces may include members of the public.
Attendance	All board members may attend but may not vote.
Quorum	50% of committee members plus one member.
Public Participation	All committee meetings are open to the public. Members of the public may contribute during General Public Comment but may not vote.
Authority	1. Advisory only. This committee will make formal recommendations to the Executive Committee and/or Full Board. 2. Implementing Board or Board Committee decisions, under the supervision and control of the Board or Board Committee. 3. Add new committee members as needed.
Responsibility	The Finance Committee votes on items within the committee's authority and makes formal recommendations to the Executive Committee and/or full Board. 1. The Finance Committee works with Staff to prepare and recommend to the full Board for approval the following: a. Annual operating budget b. Financial policies and procedures c. Investment policies d. Quarterly financial statements e. Year-end financial statements and/or report within 30 days of the end of the fiscal year (June 30) f. Annual Independent Audit, due no later than October 31st to the Office of Economic Workforce Development, City and County of San Francisco
Meeting Frequency	1. The Committee will meet as often as necessary to accomplish its responsibilities. 2. The Committee will meet at a minimum of bi-monthly.
Meeting Agenda	1. The Executive Director or designated Staff is responsible for drafting the Committee Agenda. 2. The Agenda will be sent to the Committee Chair the week prior to the meeting for the Chair's input. 3. In compliance with the Brown Act, Staff is responsible for posting the Agenda to the website, submitting it to the SF Public Library, and sending a copy to the full Committee at least 72 hours prior to the start of the meeting.
Meeting Minutes	1. Staff is responsible for recording meeting minutes. 2. In compliance with the Brown Act, the Executive Director will send the draft meeting minutes to the full Committee within 72 hours of the meeting.

DECISION MAKING
Who Does What & How?

- **Full Board -** *Decisions = Actions!*
  - Responsibilities

- **Committees** - *Advisory!*
  - **Executive Committee** - *Advisory + Decisions*
    - Chair: President
    - Board Officers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary
  - **Finance Committee**
    - Chair: Treasurer
  - **Public Space Services Committee**
    - Chair: Executive Officer
  - **Marketing & Events Committee**
    - Chair: Executive Officer
  - **Nominations Committee**
    - Chair: Executive Officer
  - **Ad Hoc Committees** – *Specific Planning Only*
    - *Only* appointed for specific project/task
    - *Only* for a specific, short timeframe



Engaging Your Board

- Board behavior exists along a governance spectrum
- Too strong (left side): overly involved, micromanaging, inefficient use of time
- Too weak (right side): abdicates responsibility and authority
- **Goal: achieve a balanced approach: Effective oversight paired with forward-thinking leadership**

Working Board	Managing Board	Governing Board	Ratifying Board	Failing Board
No CEO or Acting CEO	Board assumes CEO needs help running org	Competent CEO and experienced staff that knows more than board	Hire a good CEO and stay out of his/her way	High board turnover
Small CU	Board involved in minutiae, manager of CEO	Clear division between Ops and Governance	Organization OK but board in decline	Financial soundness issues
Board doing job of CEO	Board assigns tasks to CEO	Focused on board work, concerned with values	Board approves what CEO brings	Strife and distrust among board and staff
Focus on day-to-day operations	Board hands on and proud of it	Operates on future/strategic level	Out of touch, complacent, delegating Gov.	Looking to the past, way behind staff
Short time horizon	Focus on admin-istration & Ops	Delegates Ops to CEO	Stale policies, little accountability	Not strategic, crippled by in-fighting
Primary role is operations	Primary role is making decisions	Primary role is setting policy and general direction	Primary role is supporting CEO, rubber stamping	Primary role of board is keeping perks

Engaging Your Board: 5 Suggestions / Strategies:

1. Pose one big, strategic question per meeting (e.g., "*What does success look like for our public realm five years from now?")*

- Board members are more engaged when they are invited to shape direction, not just receive updates.

2. Ask one Board member to serve as the discussion lead to spark ownership. ("What risks or opportunities should we anticipate in public safety in the next 12–24 months?")

- This reinforces that governance is about foresight, not oversight alone.

3. Schedule occasional walking tours or field briefings in the district, or invite members to observe a safety deployment, event activation, or maintenance shift.

- Seeing the work firsthand renews emotional investment and credibility.

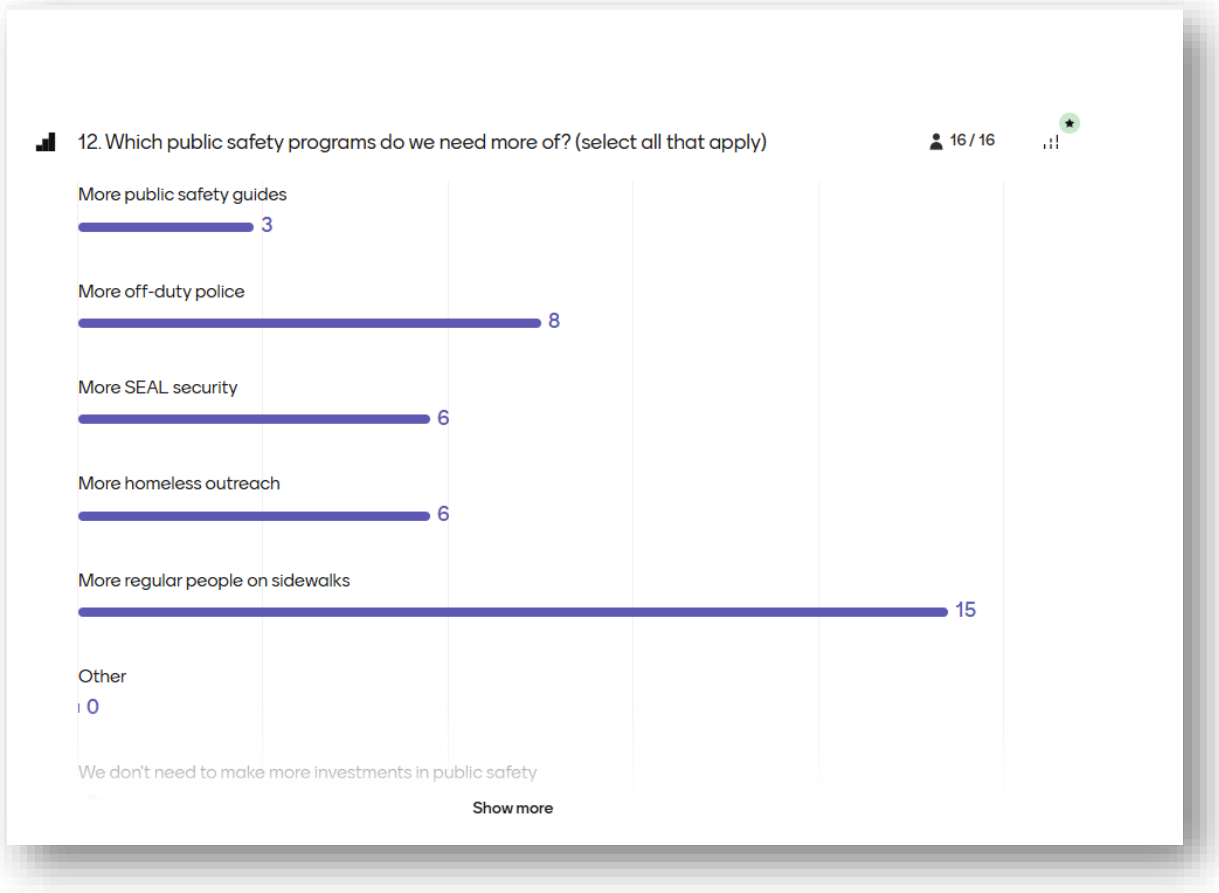
Engaging Your Board: 5 Suggestions / Strategies:

4. Provide actionable “asks”: introductions to a developer, attendance at a neighborhood event, or feedback from a property owner. Celebrate when Board members open doors or elevate the organization’s profile!

- This ties their service to tangible community leadership rather than meeting attendance.

5. Use tools, such as Mentimeter, to ensure all voices are heard.

- This provides a level-setting platform to more accurately gauge the perspective of the group rather than simply hearing from limited voices.



Executive Communications

Use Micro-Engagement Between Meetings

Light-touch engagement keeps members connected without burdening them

A brief monthly CEO note: “What we learned this month” and “What we’re watching.”

Make it two-way with occasional one-question polls (“*What’s your opinion about dockless scooters*?”).

Don’t underestimate the power of short calls with members to preview emerging issues.

- These actions signal that their perspective matters continuously, not just in Board meetings.

By Kristopher Larson, AICP, LPM Jan 1, 2025

Smart Brevity® count: 4 mins ... 996 words

It’s the New Year’s edition of *What’s Next*, the monthly digest that keeps board members, members, and key partners apprised of the aligned efforts of Downtown Houston+ (DTH+) and its affiliates.

In cities across the country, the turning of the new year is celebrated with a panoply of parades, fireworks, traditions, and the dropping of a crystal ball (NYC), an acorn (Raleigh), a potato (Boise) and even a giant pierogi (Whiting, IL).

These events present massive opportunities to gather, celebrate, imbibe, and pledge to do something better next year. Though now culturally ingrained, some of our most quintessential New Year’s traditions are steeped in legacies of economic development...and even blatant self-promotion.

Did you know? NYC’s infamous ball drop originated in the early 1900s by the then-owner of the *New York Times* to promote Times Square as the paper’s new corporate headquarters. Meanwhile, members of Pasadena, CA’s Valley Hunt Club devised their Tournament of Roses as a means to tell the world about their blossoming Southern California paradise.

Our thought bubble: Why doesn’t Houston have a large community celebration for the New Year?

Executive Communications

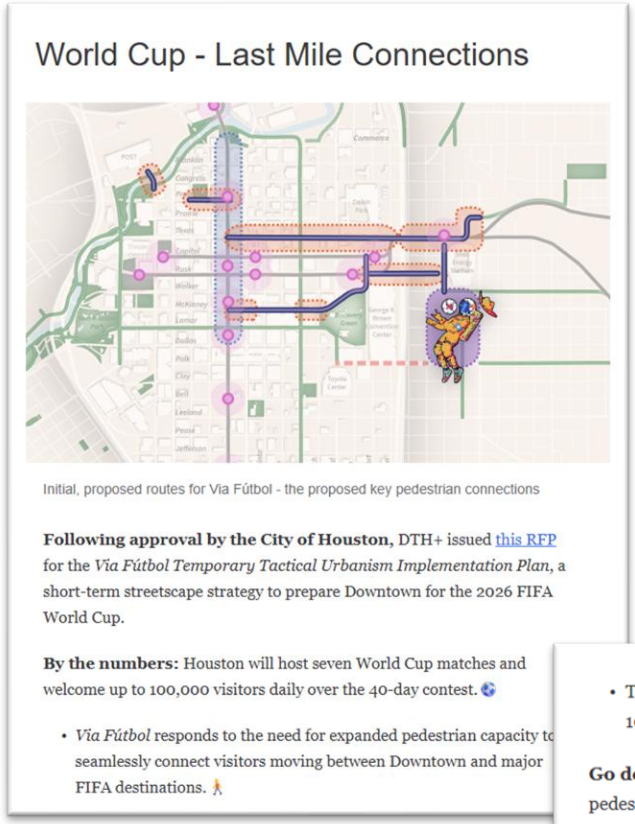
Case Study*: What's Next*

- Monthly executive communication – Began March 1, 2022. Blends education, transparency, and *in the know*.
- Set your watch! Sent @ 6:01 AM – First of every month
- Includes thought leadership & key project intel communicated at "C-Suite summary level"

Metrics:

- Distribution: 430 recipients (Board members, members, local leaders, partners, and public officials)
- Read rate: 2025 average of 75.33%
- 2025 avg. total reads: 1,124 per edition

"As usual, this piece was replete with great updates on several fronts. Of note are the extremely welcome news of return to the office surpassing 80%."



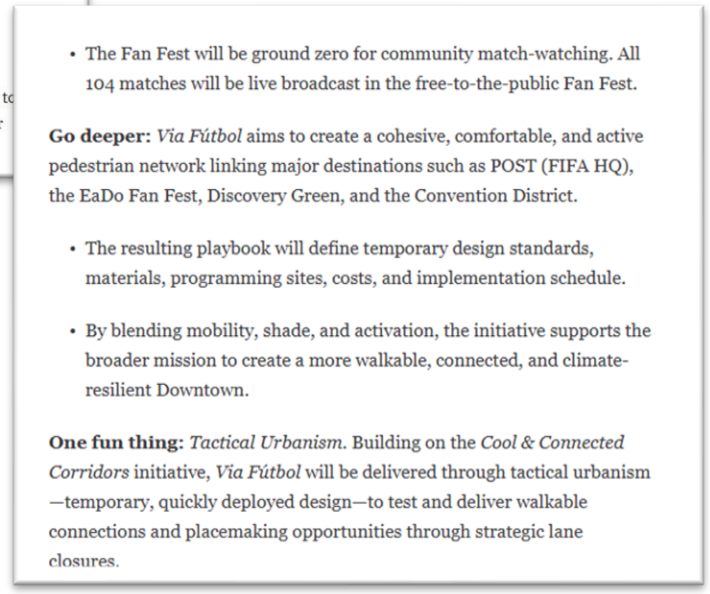
World Cup - Last Mile Connections

Initial, proposed routes for Via Fútbol - the proposed key pedestrian connections

Following approval by the City of Houston, DTH+ issued this RFP for the *Via Fútbol Temporary Tactical Urbanism Implementation Plan*, a short-term streetscape strategy to prepare Downtown for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

By the numbers: Houston will host seven World Cup matches and welcome up to 100,000 visitors daily over the 40-day contest.

- *Via Fútbol* responds to the need for expanded pedestrian capacity to seamlessly connect visitors moving between Downtown and major FIFA destinations.



- The Fan Fest will be ground zero for community match-watching. All 104 matches will be live broadcast in the free-to-the-public Fan Fest.

Go deeper: *Via Fútbol* aims to create a cohesive, comfortable, and active pedestrian network linking major destinations such as POST (FIFA HQ), the EaDo Fan Fest, Discovery Green, and the Convention District.

- The resulting playbook will define temporary design standards, materials, programming sites, costs, and implementation schedule.
- By blending mobility, shade, and activation, the initiative supports the broader mission to create a more walkable, connected, and climate-resilient Downtown.

One fun thing: *Tactical Urbanism*. Building on the *Cool & Connected Corridors* initiative, *Via Fútbol* will be delivered through tactical urbanism —temporary, quickly deployed design—to test and deliver walkable connections and placemaking opportunities through strategic lane closures.

Presenter Contact Information

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