

Imagine the Possibilities – How to Prepare

Updated January 2023

How to Prepare: Imagine the Possibilities Tour (IPT)

1. Outline your Concept.

Tours typically include a combination of properties that are for sale and or lease along with some that are vacant and not for sale or lease. However, you can adapt the tour in several ways based on your city's needs. Here are some themes that previous cities used.

Entrepreneurs – Focus on showcasing lease spaces and small business resources. Create networking opportunities for existing business owners to talk with those interested in opening a business downtown.

Lofts and Upper Floor Residential – Showcase buildings with completed lofts and those with potential for the same.

Developer-Specific – Invite a small group of real estate developers to take a guided tour with brokers and economic development staff.

Vacant Spaces to Vibrant Places – Do you have vacant buildings, but nothing for sale or lease? Post large sticky notes outside the building and ask the public how they would reimagine the space. Collect contact information for serious inquiries and deliver that information to the property owner after the event. Be sure to share this information in a timely manner to maintain momentum for interest and demand.

Pop-Up – Do more than IPT by hosting a pop-up during the tour. Staging spaces will generate both community excitement and build investor confidence. Communities that have experience with IPT may have the bandwidth to do this.

2. Pick a date and time.

For 2023, our IPT events will be held exclusively during the months of May and October. Participating cities can select their own date/time within the designated months. Depending on your community, events can be hosted on weekdays or weekends, during the day or at night. When do you typically get the best crowds downtown? What time of day shows your district at its best? As always, be sure to check your local event calendars and make sure you don't have conflicts with events and holidays such as Mother's Day, Halloween, and graduation. We do recommend that you avoid Sunday morning.



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3. Select and map properties.

If your inventory is updated, you can source all the properties from your DowntownTX.org profile. You also can contact your local property owners and realtors who represent vacant properties that are currently for lease or sale.

What about those vacant properties that aren't for lease or sale? Ask owners if you can place an "Imagine the Possibilities" sign outside the building. Be sure to clarify on your map which properties are open to the public, and which are not. We always recommend consulting owners prior to including them on your tour.

Consider asking long-standing successful business owners to participate in the tour, so attendees can hear firsthand about running a business downtown. Place a sign outside their business or denote on the map "visit with a successful business owner."



Do you have a lot of multi-story buildings that you would like to see more residential development? Why not showcase a completed apartment, so attendees can see the potential of a reimaged space. Like the name of the event, imagine the possibilities in your downtown and determine how to best showcase them to potential investors, residents, and entrepreneurs.

DowntownTX.org has a filter embedded that allows you to mark the properties that are part of your IPT. At right is a clip of a property filter from Laredo's inventory. You can use this feature to print building inventories and then easily hand these out to event attendees.

Address Number	201		
Street	N	Convent	N Ave
City / State / Zip	Laredo	TX	78040
County	Webb		
Local Incentives	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Imagine the Possibilities	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	

4. Determine partners, participants, and budget.

Potential partners for your Main Street program are your economic development corporation, local historic preservation groups, or the board of realtors. Property owners and realtors are key volunteers to have present during the tour. They serve as hosts, are familiar with the properties, and can answer diverse questions.

It depends on the concept for your tour, but generally you'll want to invite the following to attend your tour: development partners, small business organizations, municipal planning departments, fire marshal, and building inspectors. Brainstorm with your partners who else to invite.

Also, consider if you want the tour to be guided or self-guided. Some of the most successful tours provided the option of a guided tour by the Main Street manager or economic development directors. Regardless of tour type, you will need a pool of willing and able volunteers to help the public move through your tour. Make sure you have more volunteers than you think you need.

Questions? Contact Maximilian Hall, Special Projects Coordinator, 512-463-7466 or maximilian.hall@thc.texas.gov

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The cost to host an event like this is minimal; consider costs like refreshments, printing, marketing/PR, and signage beyond what the THC will provide. When considering your target audiences, determine the best media outlets to advertise your event and budget accordingly.

5. Determine tour path and schedule.

Your promotional material should indicate a starting point for your tour. Secure a central meeting location downtown that is accessible and easily identified. Typically, this is a come-and-go event, lasting approximately three hours. Make sure to have a sign-in sheet so you can follow up with everyone that attends.

Consider if you want to schedule an official welcome or short presentation. If you decide to have opening comments, make that time clear on all your promotional materials. At your starting location, distribute maps with marked locations that can help attendees navigate your tour. Tour stops can be marked with balloons or signage, so they are easily visible to attendees. If you have 5-10 properties like this, you have ample properties for this event.

We recommend providing refreshments at your starting location or along the tour stops.

6. Organize what resources will be available.

We encourage you to set up a table at your starting point or along the tour path that has information available on local incentives, business opportunities, the DowntownTX.org details etc. You can use the automatically generated IPT filter for properties in DowntownTX.org so that people can view the information on their phones, but you should also print a map of your available properties and specification sheets on each property to be available to hand out during the event.

Anyone who is involved in the downtown development process in your community or provides resources to small businesses should have representation. Encourage them to bring business cards and any information they have that they can distribute to attendees. This is an informal gathering, so they do not necessarily need vendor or booth spaces. However, check with partners to see how they intend to participate, and you can help them participate.

7. Promote It.

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) urges you to promote IPT early and often. Be sure to promote the event to your local chamber, board of realtors, media outlets, and social media. The participating cities will be included in THC's statewide marketing efforts including email, social media, and targeted press releases.

In addition, the THC will be providing support to each participating city. This will include:

- A PDF file for annual tour poster tailored to your city
- PDF files of printable property markers and signs
- Balloons
- Press release template
- Social media graphics