



**Downtown  
Atlanta Inc.**

## **LEADERSHIP PROFILE**

**President & Chief Executive Officer**

**Downtown Atlanta Inc.**

**Atlanta, GA**

# Executive Summary

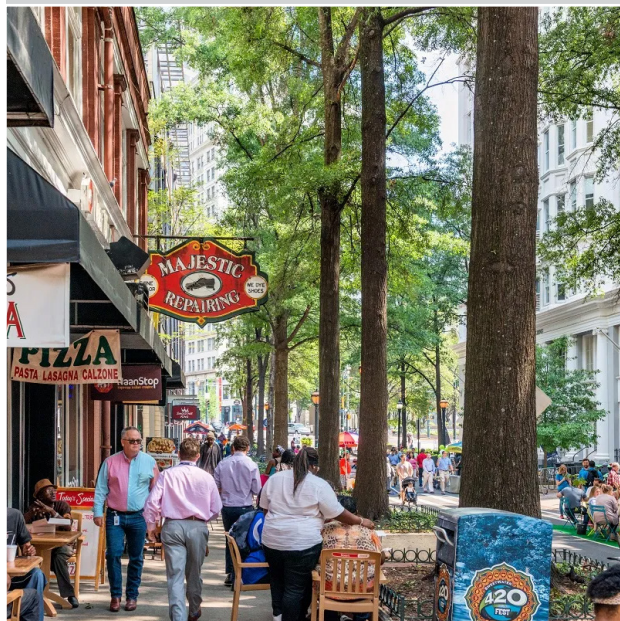
Downtown Atlanta is not simply a neighborhood, a business district or a collection of major assets. It is the front door of the region, the civic center of Georgia's capital city, the stage on which Atlanta introduces itself to the world and the place where much of the city's civic and commercial life began.

At this extraordinary moment, [Downtown Atlanta Inc.](#) seeks a Chief Executive Officer who can help define what the next generation of Downtown Atlanta will become.

This is a leadership opportunity of unusual scale and significance. Downtown is experiencing real momentum and catalytic investment. It is also confronting the realities facing many major urban centers: changing office patterns, public safety and quality-of-life concerns, visible homelessness, aging infrastructure, inactive ground floors, fragmented street life and the need to make downtown feel safe, active, livable and welcoming every day.

The next CEO must hold both truths at once: the promise and the urgency, the progress and the pressure, the global visibility and the street-level experience. This is not a maintenance role. It is a mandate to lead.

DAI seeks a strategist, convener, advocate, diplomat, resource builder, steward and civic champion. The successful candidate will inherit a platform with deep history, experienced staff, engaged board leadership, important public and private relationships, and a legacy of major civic impact. The charge now is to honor that legacy without being bound by it; to translate civic aspiration into action; and to inspire property owners, corporate leaders, elected officials, public agencies, philanthropic partners, neighborhood voices and anchor institutions to commit financial resources, political capital and operational support to a focused Downtown agenda.



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## About Downtown Atlanta Inc.

Downtown Atlanta Inc. is the new public-facing identity for two established organizations, Central Atlanta Progress and Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, and their related civic and place-based efforts. Together, these entities serve as the chief advocate, convener, steward and champion for Downtown Atlanta.

- **Central Atlanta Progress** (CAP) traces its roots to the mid-20th century as one of Atlanta's most important private-sector civic leadership organizations. It convenes business, property, institutional and community leaders around the future of Downtown and advocates for policies, investments, partnerships and projects that strengthen the heart of the city.
- **Atlanta Downtown Improvement District** (ADID) was founded by CAP in the 1990s to provide enhanced services within the Downtown Atlanta Community Improvement District. Funded primarily through property assessments, ADID supports the daily experience of Downtown through ambassador teams, public safety partnerships, supportive services, public-space maintenance, transportation and capital projects, arts and activation, research, planning and related programs.

The recent rebrand to Downtown Atlanta Inc. signals alignment, focus and renewed ambition.

DAI's work is organized around four broad priorities:

- **A vibrant neighborhood:** advancing economic development, supporting new businesses, strengthening retail, encouraging residential growth and helping Downtown function as a full-service urban community.

- **Safer, smarter infrastructure:** improving streets, sidewalks, bridges, transit interfaces, mobility, lighting, safety and capital projects that make Downtown easier and more welcoming to navigate.
- **Cultivating champions:** convening and mobilizing business, civic, public, philanthropic, institutional and community partners around a stronger Downtown.
- **A beloved public realm:** creating a cleaner, safer, more active, more beautiful, more creative and more humane street-level experience.

The organization has an experienced staff of approximately 100. Its operating model is unusually complex, as DAI is simultaneously a civic membership organization, a community improvement district, a public-private partnership and an operational services platform. It is also an advocate, convener and implementation partner.

DAI has a budget of about \$10 million and operating reserves of approximately \$4 million. Revenue streams include CAP membership dues, ADID property assessments, grants, sponsorships, program revenue and investment income. At its best, DAI is the table where Atlanta’s public, private, civic, institutional and philanthropic leaders come together to shape the future of the city center.

## A Planned Leadership Transition

Downtown Atlanta Inc. is entering a carefully coordinated transition. After more than two decades of distinguished leadership, incumbent CEO A.J. Robinson has announced plans to conclude his tenure in 2026.

The next CEO will inherit a powerful legacy. During Robinson’s tenure, DAI and its component organizations helped steward major civic and economic development initiatives, maintain



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Downtown Atlanta is at an inflection point. The decisions made in the next several years will shape the region's economic competitiveness, civic identity, public realm and urban future for decades.

Downtown's relevance through periods of disruption, and position the organization as an essential convener and advocate for the city center.

The next leader will be expected to honor that legacy while bringing fresh vision, new urgency and the leadership capacity required for Downtown's next chapter.

## Why Downtown, Why Now

Downtown Atlanta is at an inflection point. The decisions made in the next several years will shape the region's economic competitiveness, civic identity, public realm and urban future for decades.

The scale of current and planned investment is extraordinary. Major catalytic projects are underway or advancing, including [The Stitch](#)<sup>1</sup>, [Centennial Yards](#), [South Downtown](#), Georgia State University's [campus transformation](#), [Georgia-Pacific's redevelopment](#), hotel renovations and openings, new entertainment venues, public-realm improvements and adaptive-reuse opportunities. The [2026 FIFA World Cup](#) and [Super Bowl LXII](#) in 2028 are not simply visibility moments; they are deadlines and proof points. The larger question is how Downtown converts this period of attention, investment and civic focus into sustained transformation.

The Stitch must not be merely a park, but a generational reconnection of neighborhoods and public space. Centennial Yards must not be merely a development, but a driver of new residential, commercial, cultural and entertainment vitality. South Downtown must not be merely a historic redevelopment district, but a powerful signal that Downtown can be creative, inclusive, entrepreneurial and alive at street level.

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<sup>1</sup> Atlanta Downtown Stitch became a separate nonprofit in 2025. Its CEO reports to the CEO of DAI.

- Office-market disruption has placed real pressure on major buildings, property values and the tax base.
- Too many ground floors remain inactive, vacant or disconnected from the pedestrian experience.
- Concentrated homelessness and the clustering of shelters and outreach services Downtown create both human and operational complexity.
- Perceptions of safety and disorder often lag the hard data that show dramatic progress in key categories of crime.
- Corporate leadership and investment have shifted over time, requiring a new case for why Downtown matters to companies across the region.
- Downtown remains physically fragmented by highways, rail, grade changes, superblocks, parking lots, blank walls and underperforming spaces.

Long-standing civic institutions are proud of Downtown, but they do not yet share a sufficiently clear, coordinated and compelling vision for what comes next. That is the space the next CEO of Downtown Atlanta Inc. must help own.

The next CEO must think at city scale and act with block-by-block urgency. Downtown needs a bold long-term vision and a practical short-term action plan. It needs renewed confidence and visible progress. It needs a leader who can help Atlanta see its center not as a problem to manage, but as an asset to protect and enhance.



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# The Mandate

Reporting to and working closely with the boards of CAP and ADID, the CEO will serve as chief strategist, convener, advocate, manager, spokesperson, resource builder and civic champion for Downtown Atlanta Inc. The CEO's core charge is to make Downtown stronger, safer, more vibrant, more investable, more livable and more aligned around a shared future.

## ***Make Downtown cleaner, safer and more welcoming every day.***

Downtown's future will be determined not only by billion-dollar projects but by daily experience. A resident walking to dinner, a student leaving class, a visitor arriving for a convention, a worker returning to the office, a CEO considering whether to keep a company Downtown - each is making a judgment about the future of the city. Clean, safe and welcoming services are foundational, not peripheral, to Downtown's overall vision.

## ***Build a unified public-private agenda for Downtown.***

Downtown's challenges are too complex for any one organization, jurisdiction, developer, institution or public agency to solve alone. The CEO must make DAI the place where strategy becomes alignment and alignment becomes action; in short, where partners commit resources, not merely applause.

## ***Protect and grow Downtown's economic base.***

The CEO must bring urgency to office retention and adaptation, hotel and tourism activity, retail and small-business vitality, residential growth, anchor institutions and public investment. This leader must speak fluently about Downtown's value proposition, the fiscal risk of a weakened city center and the investments required to protect and expand it.

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## **Lead a serious regional response to homelessness.**

A large population of unhoused people is one of Downtown Atlanta's most urgent and complex challenges. Downtown cannot address it alone, and it cannot be solved through enforcement, displacement or fragmented efforts. The CEO must help mobilize city, county, state, nonprofit, philanthropic, healthcare, faith-based and suburban partners in ways that serve both people in need and the city.

## **Turn major projects into a connected, livable, walkable urban core.**

The CEO will not control every project shaping Downtown. That is precisely why the role matters. This leader must connect projects, interpret them, advocate for them, challenge them when necessary, and help ensure that their combined impact is greater than the sum of their parts.

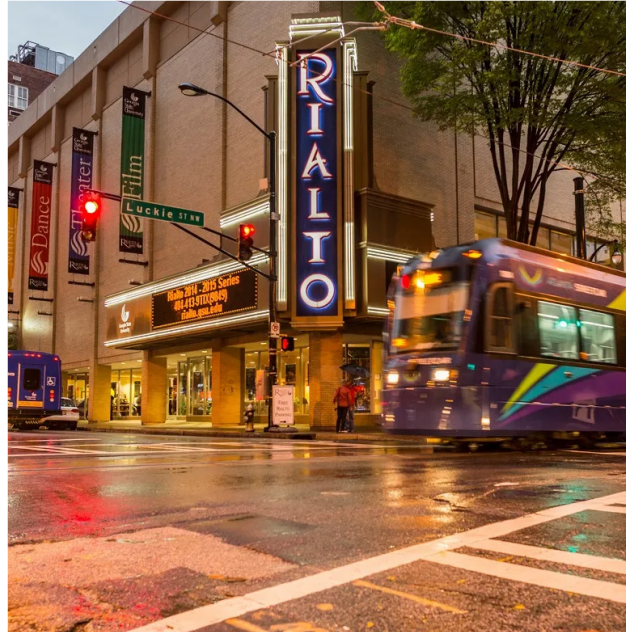
## **Attract the resources required to match the ambition.**

DAI's ambitions will exceed its existing budget. The CEO must be an effective resource builder, capable of attracting corporate, philanthropic, public-sector and institutional support; structuring partnerships; and converting civic urgency into funded action.

## **The Early Priorities**

The CEO's agenda will be shaped with DAI's boards, staff and stakeholders, but several early priorities are clear:

- **Align the CAP and ADID boards around a focused Downtown agenda.** Through consultation with a wide base of relevant parties, the CEO should test assumptions, clarify priorities, build trust and establish the few issues that matter most and the role DAI is uniquely positioned to play.



This leader must connect projects, interpret them, advocate for them, challenge them when necessary, and help ensure that their combined impact is greater than the sum of their parts.



The CEO should ensure that the organization has the structure, talent, financial discipline, communications capacity and operational accountability required for the work ahead.

- **Launch a visible clean, safe and welcoming action plan for priority corridors.** Downtown stakeholders need regular evidence that conditions are improving. Early work should identify visible priorities with project owners, timelines, funding paths and metrics: targeted corridors, public spaces, storefront activation, lighting, safety partnerships, supportive-services interventions, cleaning and maintenance, and major-event readiness.
- **Build a regional strategy around homelessness and street-level quality of life.** The CEO must help lead a more candid regional conversation and help develop a plan of action that addresses the concentration of services Downtown, the case for decentralization and housing pathways, and the importance of coordinated outreach, case management, reunification, crisis response, sanitation, enforcement and public-space management.
- **Reframe Downtown's economic case.** The CEO must make a stronger, more current case for Downtown as essential to Atlanta's future - economically, fiscally, culturally and competitively - and carry that case to corporate, civic and public-sector leaders across the region.
- **Strengthen membership, communications and resource development.** DAI's refreshed brand provides an opportunity to engage a broader set of champions, clarify the value proposition for members, re-energize corporate and property-owner participation, elevate data and storytelling, and grow the resources available for priority work.
- **Clarify DAI's internal structure, talent needs, metrics and accountability systems.** DAI is a small business with large ambitions and major public responsibilities. The CEO should ensure that the organization has the structure, talent,

financial discipline, communications capacity and operational accountability required for the work ahead.

## The Candidate

Downtown Atlanta Inc. seeks a civic leader of exceptional caliber. The successful candidate will bring the presence, judgment and credibility to lead in rooms with CEOs, elected officials, developers, university presidents, philanthropists, neighborhood leaders, agency heads, residents and small-business owners - and the humility and stamina to understand what is happening on the street.

This person will be a builder of coalitions and a driver of results. They will be politically sophisticated but not narrowly political; visionary but not abstract; diplomatic but not passive; optimistic but not naive. They will have the courage to say hard things clearly to City Hall, service providers, property owners, corporate leaders and sometimes the board, while maintaining the trust needed to move work forward.

The Board is open to a range of professional pathways. Direct experience leading a downtown improvement district or comparable civic organization would be valuable, but it is not required. More important is the demonstrated ability to lead through complexity, attract resources, build coalitions, manage talent, influence public policy, communicate persuasively, and translate big civic ideas into practical execution.

The ideal candidate will bring many of the following qualities and the record of impact to match:

- Bold civic imagination matched by practical operating discipline



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Downtown Atlanta Inc.'s next leader must embody what one stakeholder calls "patient urgency": the ability to move quickly where possible and persist where necessary, knowing that transformational civic work is measured in both daily improvements and generational change.

- Political sophistication and public-sector fluency
- Business credibility and economic development experience
- Operational respect for street-level work
- A humane and pragmatic approach to homelessness and public space
- Ability to raise capital, attract resources and structure partnerships
- Superb communications skills and comfort with public visibility
- Resilience, high energy, resilience, sound judgment and courage
- Deep commitment to Atlanta and belief in the importance of its center.

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### **Experience and qualifications**

While no single professional path is required, the strongest candidates are likely to bring significant senior leadership experience in one or more of the following areas:

- Civic or regional leadership organizations
- Downtown, business improvement district or place-management organizations
- Economic development, urban development or public-private partnership work
- Real estate, infrastructure, mobility, planning or public realm leadership

- Government, public administration or public agency leadership
- Major nonprofit, chamber, tourism, institutional or cross-sector leadership
- Complex organizations requiring board engagement, stakeholder alignment and public visibility

Candidates should demonstrate:

- Significant responsibility for staff, budget, strategy and external relationships
- Successful coalition-building across sectors
- Strong understanding of cities, downtowns, placemaking, economic development or related civic systems
- Comfort with governance, board relations, financial oversight and organizational management
- Exceptional communication, negotiation and relationship skills
- A record of advancing complex initiatives from idea to implementation
- Integrity, sound judgment, resilience and personal credibility

## Measures of Success

In the first several years, the CEO will be successful if Downtown Atlanta Inc. and its partners have:

- Strengthened confidence among employers, property owners, residents, students, visitors, public officials and investors
- Strengthened relationships with the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, the State of Georgia, MARTA, GDOT, major institutions, philanthropic partners, the business community and residents



Candidates should demonstrate a strong understanding of cities, downtowns, placemaking, economic development or related civic systems.



Atlanta is one of the nation's most dynamic and complicated civic environments: ambitious, creative, entrepreneurial, diverse and growing, yet still shaped by persistent inequity and regional fragmentation.

Improved cleanliness, safety and perception scores in targeted corridors and public spaces

- Reduced vacancy or increased activation in priority ground-floor corridors
- Advanced measurable progress on lighting, sidewalks, corridors, parks and public spaces
- Developed a coordinated regional homelessness strategy with named public, nonprofit, philanthropic and institutional partners
- Increased membership revenue, participation and private-sector engagement
- Attracted new corporate, philanthropic, public-sector or institutional resources for Downtown priorities
- Increased alignment among major catalytic projects and public realm priorities
- Built an internal organization with the talent, structure, metrics and accountability to deliver
- Positioned Downtown Atlanta as *the* indispensable civic, cultural and economic heart of the region

## About Atlanta

Atlanta is one of the nation's most dynamic and complicated civic environments: ambitious, creative, entrepreneurial, diverse and growing, yet still shaped by persistent inequity and regional fragmentation. It is a city where relationships matter, history matters and the ability to move across sectors matters a great deal.

Downtown is central to Atlanta's story and identity. It holds Atlanta's origins and many of its most visible civic assets. It is where visitors often form their first impression of the city; where major events are staged; where students study; where

residents seek an urban lifestyle; where public institutions serve the region; and where Atlanta's aspirations and challenges are most visible.

## Compensation and Location

Compensation will be competitive and commensurate with experience and the significance of the role. The CEO will be based in DAI's offices Downtown, with a strong expectation of visible and active engagement across the region.

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For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email

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or call **Sam Pettway, Crystal Stephens** or **Patti Kish** at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).

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