

THE MAGNIFICENT MILE[®] ASSOCIATION

MICHIGAN AVENUE DISTRICT | CHICAGO

North Michigan Avenue SSA 76

Tuesday, February 24, 2026, 3 PM

625 North Michigan Avenue, 6th Floor Conference Room

Agenda

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Meeting was called to order by Stephanie Knight at 3:03 pm.

In attendance:

- a. Commissioners Stephanie Knight, Julie Cameron, Savas Er (virtual), John Harder (virtual)
- b. TMMA Staff: Kimberly Bares, Liz Gilbert, Austin Faison, Glenn White, Ellen Farrar
- c. Other: Nichole Benolken (virtual), Gail Spreen

2. Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- a. The minutes were approved. SK motioned, JC 2nd.

3. Safety and Security Reports

- a. Glenn White gave a security update on the district. He noted the following metrics concerning the SSA security contract in 2025: total number of hours: 1664 hours; 72 incidents; 2488 business checks.
- b. GW said that numbers are holding down and relatively constant. There is a small increase in activity during warmer temperatures.
- c. JC inquired about the recent Safety and Security meeting.

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4. Review of Financials

a. 2025 recap

- i. Vote on 2025 budget submission to City (held for March meeting)

b. 2026 measurements and focus areas

- i. Two disbursements of funds from the City of Chicago.
- ii. KB asked about larger spends and committing the budget. There is an expectation to spend down (or allocate) the SSA funds by the end of the year.
- iii. A new Letter of Credit will be needed to start the Business Improvement District operations, because the money from the SSA cannot rollover to that entity. The LOC will be tied to TMMA.

5. Marketing Updates

a. Presentation from VP of Sales and Marketing Liz Gilbert

- i. LG walked through her marketing plan (memo is attached to the minutes).
- ii. LG then presented Taylor Swift installation metrics. 775,708 cranks; 46% YOY increase in pedestrian count; 1.5M social media impressions; 3M+ influencer and fan amplification reach; 300+ organic tags and mentions. Big success all around.
- iii. Gail Spreen asked about the IPW investment.

1. KB talked about the continued justification in TMMA's participation in

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IPW.

2. Nichole Benolken stressed the importance of being present and that it's a longer-term investment. She thanked the SSA for their support.

iv. JC asked about the specific plans within the marketing buckets in the memo.

LG noted that she will return at a future meeting to discuss the plans in further detail.

b. Presentation from Producer of Lights Festival Ellen Farrar

i. EF made a Lights Festival presentation (memo is attached)

ii. SK asked when artists commit. EF explained that it is starting now.

iii. SE thinks that the SSA should give more than \$150k and that the SSA should be focused on how to make it better. SE then asked about the total budget. EF said that it ranges between \$1.5-1.8 million.

iv. SE asked if we could take over the lighting of all the trees on North Michigan Avenue.

1. NB thinks that the funds could be used on other items, since the tree lighting effort is already happening.

6. Old Business

a. Focus category memo (attached)

i. KB explained that we are trending towards less investment in security

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services, because we have developed relationships that are helping us improve the feeling of safety within the district.

7. New Business

- i. Officer votes.
 1. JC confirmed as Chair.
 2. John Harder confirmed as Treasurer.
- ii. KB requested the consideration of additional commissioners.
 1. Representatives from Starbucks, Chicago360, and Centennial will be contacted about serving.
- iii. IDA conferences
 1. Madison, WI – regional meeting – May
 2. Toronto, Ontario – IDA Annual Meeting – September

8. Public Comment

- a. GS asked about Levi's new location (663 N Michigan). And the Gap location (700 N Michigan)
- b. GS asked about the SSA commissioners joining the Public Way Committee on a walk to determine any small issues in the district that the SSA could help alleviate.

9. Adjourn

- a. JC motion. JH 2nd. 4:20pm

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SSA 76 District Marketing Plan

Calendar Year 2026 Allocation: \$190,000

Objective

Ensure The Magnificent Mile[®] remains visible, competitive, and digitally strong through sustained marketing visibility, strengthened digital infrastructure, tourism alignment, and strategic flexibility.

Budget Overview

Digital Marketing and Influencer Partnerships: \$80,000

Website Upgrades and Development: \$38,000

AI Optimization and Performance Tools: \$17,000

IPW International Marketplace Participation: \$20,000

Choose Chicago Programming Alignment: \$15,000

Visitor Center Poster Creative and Installation: \$5,000

Flexible Allocation: \$15,000

Total: \$190,000

Strategic Approach and Performance Benchmarks

Digital Marketing and Influencer Partnerships: \$80,000

Within the Digital Marketing allocation, greater emphasis will be placed on structured influencer engagement and content creation, with paid social used more strategically for amplification rather than continuous boosted campaigns. This approach prioritizes high-quality, experience-driven

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content that can extend organic reach, strengthen cultural relevance, and be repurposed across district channels. Paid advertising will be deployed to scale high-performing content and support key seasonal initiatives, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and tied to measurable outcomes.

2025 Baseline

3.8 million social media impressions

141,000 total followers

47,000 Instagram

93,000 Facebook

2,330 TikTok

2026 Performance Goals

Increase total social impressions by 15 to 20 percent

Grow total follower base by at least 10 percent

Increase engagement during seasonal activations

Expand influencer reach and content repurposing

Website Modernization: \$38,000

The website is the district's central digital hub and primary conversion platform. The current site uses hard-coded landing pages layered on HubSpot, with a separate third-party member listing system via MemberClicks. This structure limits flexibility, slows updates, and restricts optimization

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opportunities.

This allocation supports a formal evaluation of whether to invest in a full website overhaul or transition to a new platform. The goal is to create a more efficient, scalable, and performance-driven digital foundation that better supports district programming, search visibility, mobile usability, and analytics tracking.

2025 Baseline

473,000 website visits

1 million page views

Strategic Priorities

Assess current platform limitations and long-term viability

Improve mobile performance and site speed

Strengthen SEO structure and search visibility

Streamline integration between listings, events, and marketing campaigns

Enhance analytics to better track user behavior and referral traffic

2026 Performance Goals

Increase website visits by 10 to 15 percent

Increase page views and time on site

Improve click-through traffic to corridor businesses

Strengthen the performance of seasonal and event-specific landing pages

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AI Optimization and Performance Tools: \$17,000

This allocation supports the integration of AI-driven tools to strengthen search performance, improve content efficiency, enhance campaign optimization, and advance reporting capabilities.

These tools enable more precise keyword targeting, a stronger SEO structure, automated content tagging, improved audience segmentation, and clearer performance measurement.

The objective is to increase efficiency, strengthen digital performance, and ensure marketing investments are continuously optimized based on measurable data.

Strategic Priorities

Strengthen SEO performance through advanced keyword analysis and content optimization

Improve content tagging and digital asset organization to increase discoverability

Enhance audience segmentation and targeting capabilities

Advance reporting tools to provide clearer performance insights

Support faster campaign adjustments based on real-time data

2026 Performance Goals

Increase organic traffic share year over year

Improve search visibility for priority district terms

Improve engagement rates across paid campaigns

Strengthen reporting clarity and optimization cycles

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Industry Representation and Global Positioning

IPW International Marketplace Participation: \$20,000

In 2025, SSA support enabled The Magnificent Mile[®] to participate in IPW, including hosting Mag Mile Monday and engaging in the official trade marketplace. These efforts positioned the district directly in front of international tour operators, media, and travel buyers.

This presence should not be a one-time effort. As the most visited and hotel-dense district in Chicago, The Magnificent Mile[®] plays a central role in the city's visitor economy. Continued participation ensures the corridor maintains visibility within global travel conversations while partnering with and supporting Choose Chicago's broader tourism strategy.

Performance Indicators

Trade appointments and market representation

Follow-up engagement and documented outcomes

Post-event reporting and next steps

Choose Chicago Programming Alignment: \$15,000

Supports collaboration with citywide tourism initiatives and ensures the district remains integrated into broader Chicago programming efforts.

Performance Indicators

Participation in citywide campaigns

Cross-promotional opportunities

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District visibility within major citywide initiatives

Visitor Center Poster Placement: \$5,000

JC Decaux donates the high-visibility poster space at the Visitor Center located at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Chicago Avenue. This allocation covers creative development and installation. The poster is refreshed at least five times annually to align with seasonal programming and district initiatives.

This placement provides consistent brand visibility at a primary visitor entry point and reinforces The Magnificent Mile[®] within Chicago's tourism infrastructure.

Marketing Contingency: \$15,000

Reserved to provide flexibility during the fiscal year to support high-performing campaigns, emerging opportunities, or unanticipated marketing needs. This allocation allows adjustments without disrupting core programming or requiring budget reallocation.

Summary

This \$190,000 investment balances sustained visibility, digital modernization, tourism alignment, and strategic flexibility. It builds on measurable 2025 performance benchmarks and establishes clear goals for growth in 2026.

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A Holiday Spectacle Like No Other!

Saturday, November 21, 2026

For 34 unforgettable years, generations of families from throughout Chicagoland and the Midwest have lined Chicago's Magnificent Mile to experience the joy of America's premier holiday parade, **The Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival**. Celebrating a milestone 35th anniversary, the Lights Festival **kicks-off the holiday season on Saturday, November 21, 2026**. This is the largest consumer event produced by The Magnificent Mile Association.

Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse from Walt Disney World Resort® lead a parade of fabulous floats, giant helium balloons, exciting marching bands, celebrities, musical performances, Santa Claus and more— as we illuminate more than one million lights on 200 trees along The Magnificent Mile to kick-off the holiday season for the United States in Chicago!



WINTRUST
THE MAGNIFICENT MILE
Lights Festival

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Request for Support



- Thank you for your support in 2025
- We respectfully request a renewal of support of \$150,000 in 2026 to support talent recruitment, syndication, security operations, and production costs that will directly increase the value of the event production
- Value to the SSA of this annual event
 - Economic Impact: Drives significant foot traffic and consumer spending to Michigan Avenue retailers, hotels, restaurants and attractions.
 - Visitor Attraction: Nearly 34% of attendees are out-of-state visitors, bringing tourism dollars directly to district businesses
 - Brand Promotion and Elevation: Positions The Magnificent Mile as a premier destination through earned media, social media, local ABC 7 Chicago broadcast and national syndication reaching millions of viewers
 - Holiday Shopping Catalyst: Launches the holiday retail season with great energy and consumer engagement

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Economic Highlights

1,092,000+*

Local viewers (in-person and tune-ins)

29,450

overnight attendees

950,000

parade attendees (not including indoor viewers)*

\$2,122,731

generated in tax for the City of Chicago

31,916

pedestrian count
Lights Festival Lane

\$2,256,235

generated in tax for the State of Illinois

\$23,175,516

in attendee spending

22,858

jobs supported

\$43,559,320

in business sales

20,757

room nights

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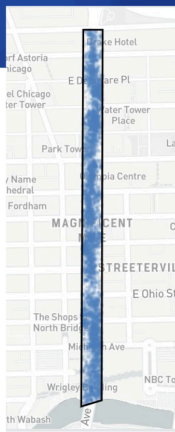


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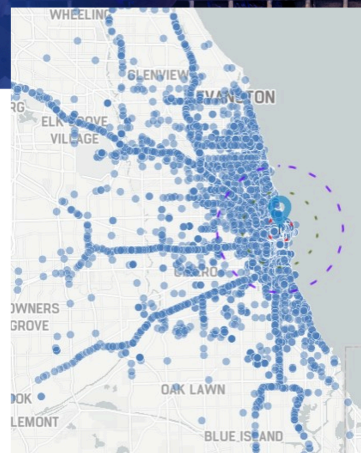
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Visitation Heatmap



Visitor Pathing



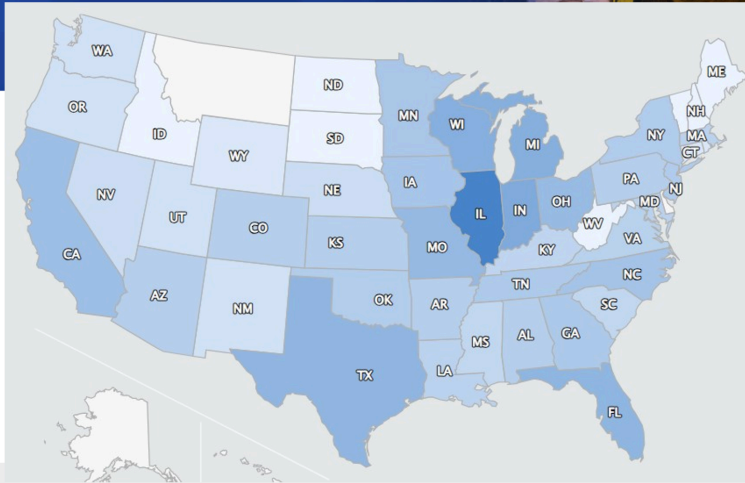
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Visitor Origin Points



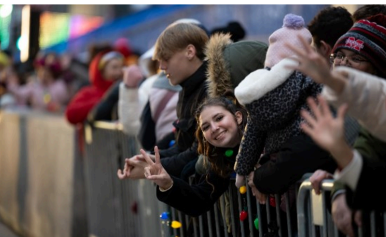
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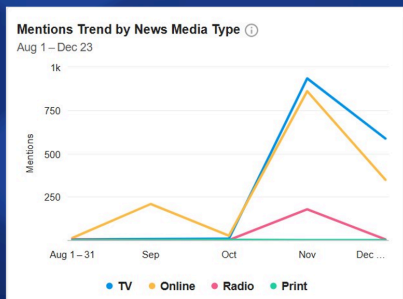
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Earned Media

August– November, 2025

- Audience summary: **3,382,767,516**
- Total media value: **\$31,558,895**
- 4,211 total TV, online, radio and print mentions including Good Morning America segment on 11/22/25

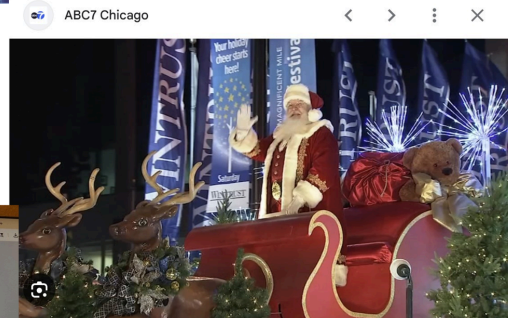
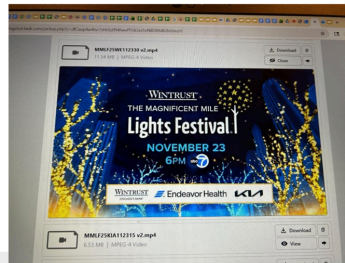


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ABC 7 Promos

- Tune-ins with Wintrust logo and tagline
- Timing: 11/10/24
- **301 promos with impressions of 13,932,816 households in the Chicagoland viewing area**
- 665.7 HHR
- Value to come



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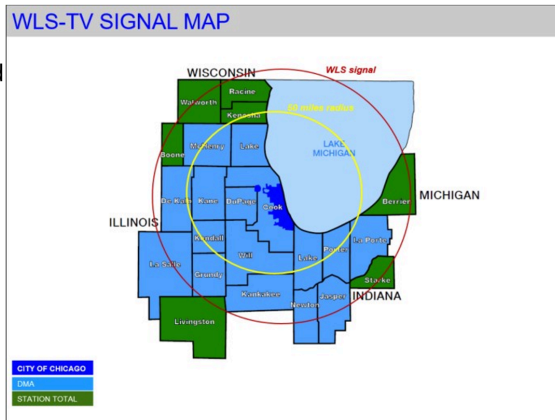
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ABC 7 Broadcast Ratings & Syndication



- See map for **ABC 7 Local Market Coverage**
- Three local airings of ABC 7's broadcast (11/23, 12/7 and 12/14) [Watch now \(LINK\) on demand](#) on ABC7chicago.com for the longer format performance. 11/23 broadcast had a 35% increase in viewership.
- Syndication in **98.8% of the US (and twice in Toronto)** now through 12/31
- **198 syndicated markets** total via ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX affiliates – see [LINK](#) to all markets and airtimes
- **At least 99 (up from 83 in 2024) markets airing the telecast more than once** some as many as four times



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Radio

October – November, 2025



- **WGN Radio** 
- **50x (:30) and 50x (:15) recorded parade spots on-air + simul-stream**
- **10x Live (:30) to air between 6a– 7p**
- **Minimum of 145,000 impressions on :15 promos running on out-of-market WGN Radio stream**



- **93.9 Lite fm** 
- **Radio spot example**
- **80x (:30) recorded parade spots**

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EVENTS

Chicago Shines Bright at the 34th Annual Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival

By Kathleen O'Brien
November 22nd, 2025 | 10:00 PM CST
Updated: Nov 8, 2025 | 10:00 PM CST

SHARE

Get ready for the most magical day of the year! The Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival returns Saturday, November 22, transforming Michigan Avenue into a spectacular celebration of creativity, community, and holiday spirit.

This beloved Chicago tradition kicks off at 11 am with Lights Festival Lane in Pioneer Court, 401 N Michigan Avenue, featuring free family-friendly activities and live performances. Chicago's own Plain White T's will headline a free acoustic concert at 1 pm, while Justin Roberts and the Not Ready for Naptime Players open the stage at 11 am. The Leo High School Boys Choir—fresh from their America's Got Talent run—performs at 2 pm.

At 5:30 pm, the parade steps off from Oak Street, featuring Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse from Walt Disney World Resort leading a dazzling procession down Michigan Avenue. Watch for beloved Disney characters including Goody, Stitch in a Santa costume, Woody and Buzz Lightyear, and Anna and Elsa aboard stunning floats. The parade also showcases giant helium balloons, top marching bands from across the country, and musical performances including Chicago favorites DJ White Shadow, The Plain White T's, Leo High School Boys Choir and Uniting Voices, along with American synth-soul group Club Nouveau.



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WGN Radio Insider

WGN Radio
November 10, 2025
The most magical time of the year in Chicago starts with The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival on November 22nd!



WGN Radio
Chicago Shines Bright at the 34th Annual Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival
Get ready for the most magical day of the year! The Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival returns...
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Metra Creative– Citywide Stations & Trains

Billboards, train and vestibule cards, station signage and more!

- **200 interior Metra car cards and vestibule cards** on all eleven Metra lines for four weeks leading up to the festival
- **On-board messaging** on all eleven Metra lines reminding riders of event date for week leading up to the festival
- **Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival billboard across 49 locations** delivering 2M impressions
- **Metra TriNet (station) signage** at all stations, 2x a minute, 2,800 per day for four weeks
- **Social media** post on Facebook and Instagram with reach of 2,235,645



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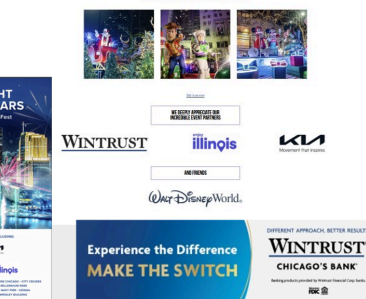
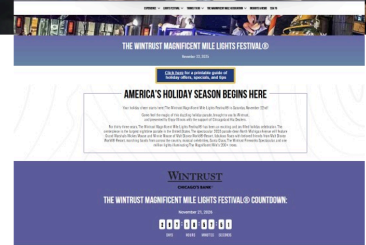
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www.themagnificentmile.com

2025 Editions

- 272,742 website pageviews of event content
- 24,089 holiday guide downloads
- 8.8% conversion rate



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City Information Panels & Wintrust Billboards

Live Dates: November 3- November 23



- Live 11/3 through 11/23
- 420,554 plays
(source: City of Chicago)
- Total 90-94 Digital Billboard:
3,880,192 inbound and outbound impressions



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Social Media Results

November 2025



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The 2025 social media campaign successfully generated significant awareness and engagement for The Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival, reaching hundreds of thousands of viewers and driving strong interaction across our digital platforms.

TOTAL CAMPAIGN PERFORMANCE

- **1,725,397** Total Reach Across All Platforms
- **1,770,021** Total Impressions
- **133,133** Total Engagement (likes, comments, shares, saves)
- **7.71%** Overall Engagement Rate
- **242+ Hours** Total Watch Time (10 days, 2 hours)

TOTAL REACH

1.73M

Across All Platforms

TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

1.77M

Content Views

TOTAL ENGAGEMENT

133K

Likes, Comments, Shares, Saves

ENGAGEMENT RATE

7.71%

Exceptional Performance

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Lights Festival Lane

Saturday, November 22, 2025

Live from 11 am-4 pm on Saturday, November 22 in Pioneer Court, 401 N Michigan Avenue with 31,916 attendees.

Daytime stage performances alongside a festive thoroughfare of booths include:

11 am Justin Roberts and the Not Ready for Naptime Players

12 noon The Rhythm Messengers

1 pm Plain White T's

2 pm Leo High School Choir

3 pm Voices of Liberty from EPCOT® at Walt Disney World® Resort

Plus three performances by *'Twas the Night Before...by Cirque du Soleil* at The Chicago Theater



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SSA #76 – Commissioner Update & Focus Matrix

Date: February 23, 2026

Prepared By: Austin Faison

Executive Snapshot

SSA #76 has formally transitioned from 2025 to 2026 operations. The Q4 report has been filed with the City of Chicago Planning Department. Planning is underway for spring and summer activations aligned with International Jazz Day, Tulips & Trumpets, America250, the World Cup, Bastille Day, and related programming.

- Notable Updates Since Last Meeting:
 - Taylor Swift-inspired installation at Pioneer Court
 - \$1.3M+ in SSA fund disbursements received from the City
 - Musical Note activation planned for Wrigley Building Plaza (International Jazz Day tie-in)
- Key Considerations:
 - 2025 → 2026 budget rollover
 - District Marketing identified as an increased priority area

2026 Focus Area Matrix

Focus Area	Recent Activity	Next Steps	Metrics / Data	Notes for Commissioners
Placemaking	NA	Explore enhanced visitor and credit card data integration	Visitor counts; spend data (TBD)	Data platform demo forthcoming
Marketing & Communications	Taylor Swift activation campaign performance	Tulips & Trumpets (March/April)	Social reach; engagement; impressions	2026 marketing framework discussion

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Security	Ongoing coordination; monthly reporting	Metric refinement discussion	SSA security reports (Google Drive)	Crime trends continue downward; align metrics with SSA scope
Wayfinding	Draft RFP completed (not yet issued)	Alder approval required for Jane Byrne & Pioneer signage	Implementation timeline (work done by end of summer)	Two park signs targeted before summer
Beautification	Power-washing RFP drafted	Publish RFP; maintain 2025 cadence	Service logs; before/after documentation	High public visibility impact
Leasing & Economic Conditions (Informational)	New: North Face, Mango	Coming: Chase, Leica, Uniqlo, Gap, Levi's (relocation), Coach (relocation)	Vacancy rate: 24.4% (costar)	Monitor first-floor retail trends

Items for Consideration

- First-floor retail trends
- Alignment of marketing investments with leasing conditions
- Clarifying the SSA's role relative to broader market forces

Closing Position

SSA #76 is executing the work approved by Commissioners, strengthening data capabilities, coordinating with partners, and positioning the district for more strategic investment in 2026.