

Downtown Fresno Partnership changes leaders temporarily

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By George Hostetter

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Left to right, Mathr de Leon, Michael Cruz, Kate Borders and Matt Ploy pose as part of a group gathered on the Fulton Mall which was promoting the Catacomb Party 2013.

MARK CROSSE — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

Downtown Fresno Partnership is losing its leader, but a well-known downtown champion will step in temporarily.

Kate Borders, the nonprofit's chief executive for the past two-and-a-half years, is leaving to become president/executive director of a similar organization in Tempe, Ariz.

Borders said Craig Scharton, owner of Peeve's Public House on Fulton Mall, will take over until a nationwide search finds her replacement. Scharton, a former City Council member, was Mayor Ashley Swearengin's downtown revitalization czar until he resigned last year to open the restaurant.

Borders said her last day with the Partnership is Wednesday. Scharton will take over on Thursday, she said.

The Partnership "won't miss a beat," Borders said.

Borders said she will be the head of Downtown Tempe Community, a private organization that teams with the city of Tempe to promote the Mill Avenue District. Tempe is home to Arizona State University. The Mill Avenue District is the city's pedestrian-friendly downtown.

The new job was "hard to turn down, as much as I love being here," Borders said Monday afternoon at Downtown Fresno Partnership's Fulton Mall office.

Jeff Becker, chairman of the Partnership's board, said its members are heartbroken to see Borders go.

"But we fully support Kate in moving on and bettering her career," Becker said. "She's welcome back to our organization any time."

Brent Weiner, head of Proctor's Jewelers on the Mall and a past Partnership board chairman, said Borders "did an incredible job."

Swearengin said Borders taught Fresnans how to enjoy downtown again. Swearengin pointed to events such as the Christmas parade, the ice-skating rink and a farmers market on Kern Street.

"We are grateful for her contributions to Fresno's revitalization and will continue all the great work she started," Swearengin said.

Downtown Fresno Partnership is the property-based business improvement district started in 2010 to promote downtown growth and activities. The organization's 2014 budget is nearly \$1.3 million. About half comes from assessments paid by property-owners in the district.

Borders joined the partnership in mid-2011. She had been executive director of the East Town Association in Milwaukee, a nonprofit serving the downtown business district.

Borders on Monday said she is proud to have helped build a strong foundation for the Partnership. She's also pleased that the City Council recently voted to open Fulton Corridor to vehicular traffic, something the Partnership viewed as key to downtown's rebirth.

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