



DOWNTOWN HERITAGE PERTH

2020 Annual Report

2020 has been an unprecedented year. New and established events were set aside due to provincial health regulations. This year we have had to develop new ways to draw locals and visitors alike to our downtown. During the year, our Coordinator has met weekly with Perth Tourism to share ideas, costs and promotions. These have included the Share Your Passion for Perth Campaign, Weekend Entertainment in Perth, Patio's in Perth, and other initiatives. We were also a proud co-sponsor of Perth's Honour Our Veterans Banner Program.

The Board has worked co-operatively with the Town of Perth in developing effective ways to support our businesses. The Town continues to provide administrative support by providing office space as well as accounting support, including the ongoing sale of our BIA Gift certificates. The BIA has requested that Perth Tourism also have the gift certificates available to sell on weekends and Kari will be setting that up next week. The Town has supported our businesses with free parking in downtown lots and four-hour parking on the streets until the end of 2020. The Town has supported retail businesses by waiving fees for sandwich boards and sidewalk sales in front of their business and reduced the cost of restaurant patio leases to \$1.00, which helped to establish over 20 patios in the downtown this summer.

The Economic Recovery Task Force (ERTF) for Perth has been hard at work and has met several times. Judy and Kari sit on this committee which is comprised of Tourism, Chamber, Town staff, businesses owners and 3 Town Councillors. The committee will be releasing its recommendations to Council in the coming weeks. A sub-committee of the (ERTF) held two meetings for restaurants, and another restaurant meeting is booked for November. With the patios closing due to colder weather, the committee moved quickly to support the restaurants. The Town of Perth is covering the registration fees for any Perth restaurant that wants to join Valley Eats and will provide a dedicated parking spot after 5 p.m. for customers picking up take out. The ongoing costs to take part in Valley Eats will be paid by the restaurants. The Towns support for patios and leases that were introduced in 2020, will continue through 2021. Going forward the committee is discussing several ideas for retail and other ways to support our businesses.

During late 2019 the Digital Main Street Program helped our businesses use social media, enhance their skills and increase their digital profile to expand their businesses. The launch of the first Digital main Street initiative saw 41 businesses receiving \$2,500 grants to increase their social media capabilities. Our engagement for the Digital Street program was 48% and the provincial BIA considered an engagement rate of 30%, to be highly successful. The launch of the second Digital main street program is now underway, and information can be found on our BIA business forum page and each month in the BIA newsletter. Toby James from Cat's Cove Communications will be reaching out to your business to book a one on one appointment around your schedule.

With the Covid-19 restrictions now in place, the BIA office is open two days a week (Wed and Thurs.), while Kari works from home on the other three days. This will be reviewed at the end of the year. While communication has been a challenge, our monthly newsletter continues to be filled with important information for our businesses, as does our Facebook group page and website. This year our website saw the addition of 3 new pages that promoted our restaurant and retail outlets, as well as current information on federal and provincial guidelines, business grants, as well as support and educational opportunities. A new website will be launched in 2021. Last week the BIA launched "Chat with Kari", a bi-weekly open zoom call in the evening, from 7-8 PM, for any business to log in and ask questions or share ideas. We recognized that sometimes it is difficult to find the time to chat when your business is open, therefore we are providing a new option. The next zoom call is Wed. Oct 28th at 7 PM. Watch for the graphic and the link on our Facebook forum page.

In 2021 we will explore new initiatives to beautify our downtown during the winter months, as several downtown trees will be removed due to disease. The beautification of the alleyways and the renovation of the Wilson St. parking lot will also remain a priority next year. As always, we will continue to work closely with the Town of Perth and advocate for our businesses. We thank the Town of Perth for their continued efforts to support Perth businesses.