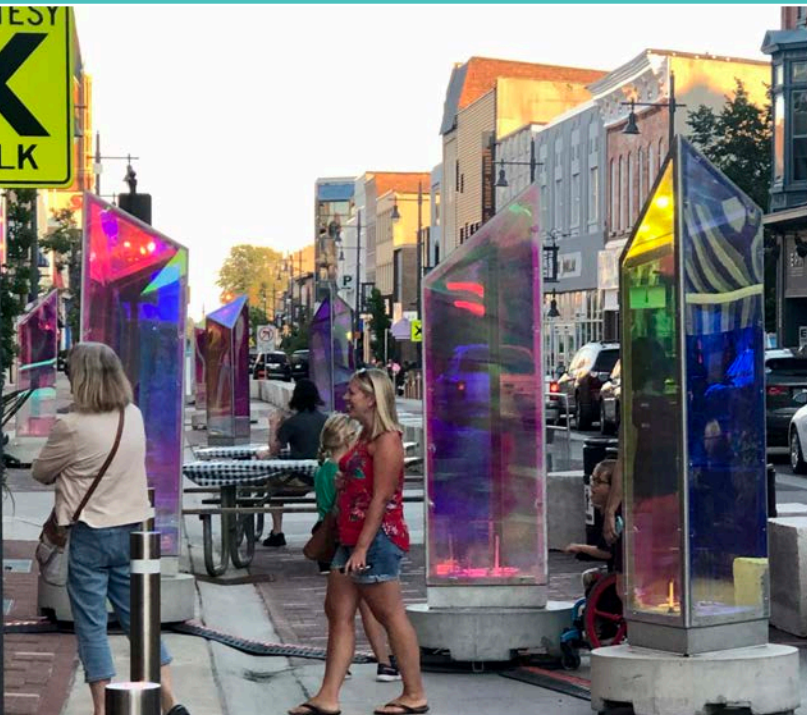




# 2020 *Annual Report*



The  
**DOWNTOWN  
DISTRICT 16**

**BELLEVILLE**

[downtownbelleville.ca](http://downtownbelleville.ca)



## Board of Directors

### Executive Officers

Chair: Kathryn Brown | Kate's Kitchen

Vice-Chair: Shawn Patriquin | They Integrated

Treasurer: Chad Guzewicz | Tire Wizard

Secretary: [OPEN]

### Directors

Rebecca Burlington | Flowers by Dustin

Maury Flunder | Property Owner\*

David Gilbert | Property Owner\*

Ken Harnden | Pinnacle Music

Sarah Hutchison | We Thrive\*

Stacey Kerr | Scalliwag Toys\*

Brandon Kull | The Empire Theatre

Lorne McDougall | McDougall Insurance

Emma Travis | Be Prepared

Ryan Williams | Ward 1 Councillor City of Belleville

### Staff

Marijo Cuerrier | Executive Director

Kelsey Moniz | Marketing & Media Officer

\*Pending City Council Approval

### Our Vision:

By 2023, Downtown Belleville will be the thriving centre of our community.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

Dwane Barratt | Barratt's Office Pro

Sandy Musson | Tri & Run Sports

Melanie Pujic | Capers Restaurant

Abraham Ramos Serratos | Chilangos

Tara VanDijk | Belleville Club

### OUTSTANDING IN THE DISTRICT

A big thank you to **Mark Turner** and **Kyle Hawkins Schulz** for their dedication to helping downtown Belleville thrive!

Thank you and happy retirement to **Constable Mark Hall** and **Constable Bill Madden!**



## *Our Purpose*

The Belleville Downtown District BIA exists to position downtown Belleville as a vibrant community.

## *Values*

1. Collaborative partnership
- 2 Forward Thinking
3. Being Accountable
4. Active 2-Way Communication
5. Passion to Succeed

## *Strategic Plan Objectives*

- 1** Change the public perception of downtown Belleville from lacklustre to vibrant.
- 2** Encourage new business investment to increase Downtown District commercial occupancy rate and create more Downtown activity.
- 3** Ignite current downtown investors (property and business owners) to become champions for a vital downtown.
- 4** Improve the Downtown customer experience and make Downtown Belleville the place where people want to meet.

To read the full Strategic Plan visit [downtownbelleville.ca/strategicplan](https://downtownbelleville.ca/strategicplan)

We have made great strides towards  
our four strategic plan objectives  
over the past year.

## *Message from the Chair*

As 2020 draws to a close, it is an especially important time to thank everyone for the extraordinary effort and community spirit seen throughout the Downtown District. KUDOS!

In January and February, we were weathering the “shoulder” season – a time when we expect traffic to be a little less and we focus our attention on planning for the remainder of the year. As businesses, we looked for new opportunities. As a BIA we had mapped out our plans for 2020 – planning our major events and applying for grants that would allow us to continue to extend our reach. Then “wham”!

What makes me especially proud of the Downtown District? We could have stayed home and worried about how long it would last and what was to come. Instead, **we pivoted and introduced the Online Marketplace** – the brainchild of Marijo and Kelsey. A showpiece that put Belleville's Downtown District on the radar of every BIA in Ontario, across Canada and in many parts of the USA.

Then mid-May arrived and we slowly re-opened. We cleaned and sanitized. We established new protocols as guided by our Health Unit and Provincial regulations and yes, we worried about whether people would actually return. Again we pivoted. **With the support of our City Council, City staff, Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing and our many members within the District, we created *Al Fresco***. and the pièce de résistance - Prismatica. 25 spinning illuminated prisms that attracted people to come and enjoy art & light for every age, in a safe and socially distanced manner.

Despite the difficult times we experienced, and may experience again, we learned valuable lessons. Taking risks has its benefits – who would have thought Downtown Belleville would see its pedestrian **traffic at its highest level in recent years** (and during a pandemic)? Focusing on a few key days of the week actually allowed us to grow visitors every day of the week. Taking it outdoors and working together attracted visitors looking for a way to be a part of it. Extended activities that are engaging can be as impactful as any single day event – in fact, perhaps even more so.

Now we turn our attention to the holiday season. This year will be different. But based on what I've seen, heard and experienced throughout 2020, I believe we have the right BIA team in place to support you. I believe we have investors (both businesses and building owners) who will work together to make the best of the situation. I believe we've largely convinced our local residents and families **there are loads of reasons to be a part of the Belleville Downtown District**.

Here's to 2021!

**- Kathryn Brown, Kate's Kitchen**

## Highlights

76%

## Occupancy rate of street level businesses



177

Total number of  
active businesses

7,701

Highest weekly  
pedestrian count in 2020



## Visitors & Residents rated downtown Belleville

## 8.3

on a scale of 0-10  
(Based on 765 respondents)

*\$112,000+*

Received in grants and  
in-kind services in 2020



40

Estimated # of graffiti  
removal instances in 2020  
paid by Tax Levy

## Top 4 Areas of Improvement: Based on member survey

- 1 Public Perception
- 2 Safety/Security
- 3 Parking
- 4 Increase foot traffic



+900

Total orders on the Marketplace



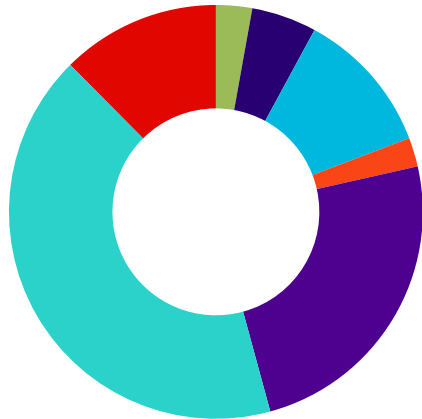
# *Snap Shot* OF THE DISTRICT

This section uses data and facts to  
illustrate the landscape and opportunities  
for downtown Belleville.



## Business Categories

- Arts 3%
- Entertainment 5%
- Food & Beverage 11%
- Residential 2%
- Retail 24%
- Services 42%
- Wellness 13%



# 56%

Of our businesses are  
experienced based

### BUSINESS OWNERSHIP



### BUSINESS GROUPS

The Downtown District membership is made up of two distinct groups. Services (doctors, lawyers, insurance, social services, B2B, wealth management, accountants, real estate) and experiential offerings (retail, food & beverage, arts, wellness and entertainment). Experiential offerings are approximately 56% of our membership and are the face of our downtown as well as the tourism arm of the District. Services are 44% of our membership and their employees are regular customers of experiential offerings.

The forward-facing message on our social channels highlight the experiential aspect of the downtown District. This includes 'investing in the lifestyle' by choosing to live and work here.

### DIVERSE MIX OF BUSINESSES

- 16 Patios
- 5 Salons/Barbers
- 7 Cafes
- 4 Banks
- 3 Bike Shops
- 1 Pet Store
- 4 Spas
- 2 Flower Shops
- 6 Art Galleries
- & more!*



## Occupancy Rates



### ACCURACY OF INFORMATION

In spite of the pandemic, we have seen a marked increase in property investment in 2020. This includes property purchase from investors outside of our region, from members of the BIA or local business owners, and business investment in the improvement of current businesses in the downtown core.

With our new CRM, these numbers are more accurate in this years annual report as compared to last year, which may make it look like not much has changed or in some cases the numbers are going the wrong way - but we can assure you that investment in the downtown District is alive and well.

**177** Active Businesses

**176** Street Level Units

**135** Occupied (Street Level)

**41** Vacant

**76%**

Occupancy rate of street level businesses

**11**

Street level properties are tenant-ready

### OF THE 41 VACANT PROPERTIES:

**20** are chronically vacant

**10** are under renovation

**11** are tenant-ready



### PROSPECTS

We had 11 solid prospects approach the BIA in 2020 looking for property or lease availability. Six prospects from both 2019 and 2020 are now members of the downtown District.

Last year we saw 60% of the prospective businesses looking for restaurant space. The tenant-ready properties are not currently restaurant-ready. This is an opportunity to renovate properties for the type of businesses interested in moving into the District.



## Welcome

### NEW MEMBERS

This year we welcome 20 new businesses downtown and 6 new property owners.

Bazaar Artisan market  
 Bewitched Beauty Studio  
 Big Al's Food Truck  
 Blush Hair Studio  
 Boudoir Babe Squad  
 Christopher Gentile Photography  
 Crepe Escape  
 DedEye Axe Throwing  
 Eighty Twenty Studio  
 Envy Spa  
 Export Bar & Grill  
 Get in the Loop  
 Indra Grocery  
 Kimberley Mohan Law

Obi's Kitchen  
 Quinte Cell Phone & Tablet Repair  
 Sativa Bliss  
 Signarama  
 Strong Bros  
 Wings Theatre

#### New Property Ownership

253-251 Front St.  
 402 Front St.  
 Victoria Baptist Church, 34 Victoria Ave  
 112 Front St.  
 190 Front St.  
 257 Front St.

## Farewell

### RETIREMENTS AND CLOSURES

We said farewell to 11 business this year and wish them all well in their next endeavour.

Artists & Artisans  
 Bourbon & Bean  
 Briar Patch  
 Cafe E  
 Canadian Resumes  
 Earl & Angelos

Hurley Law  
 JMP Performing Arts Academy  
 Modern Cafe  
 Pinnacle Music Studios  
 Stuff  
 Tri and Run Sports

### IN MEMORIAM

A special acknowledgement of members of our community that we lost this year:

Pat Culhane, Belleville City Councillor  
 Dr. Leslie Keating  
 Mark Rollins  
 Andrew Tripp, Fuel Your Fire

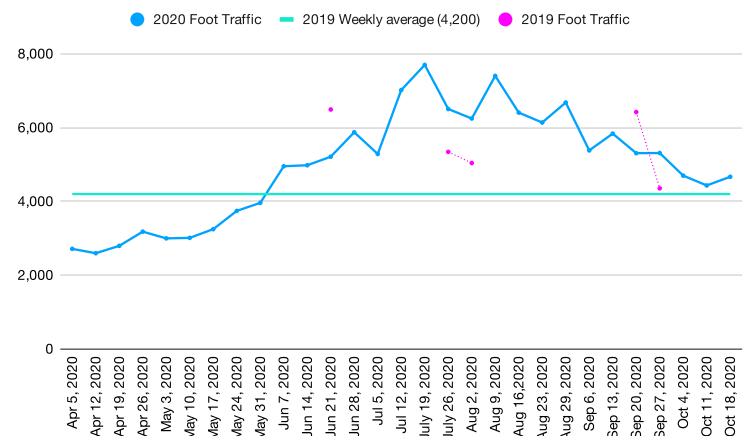
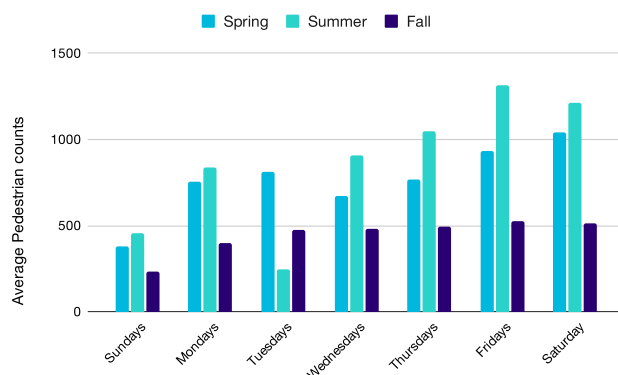
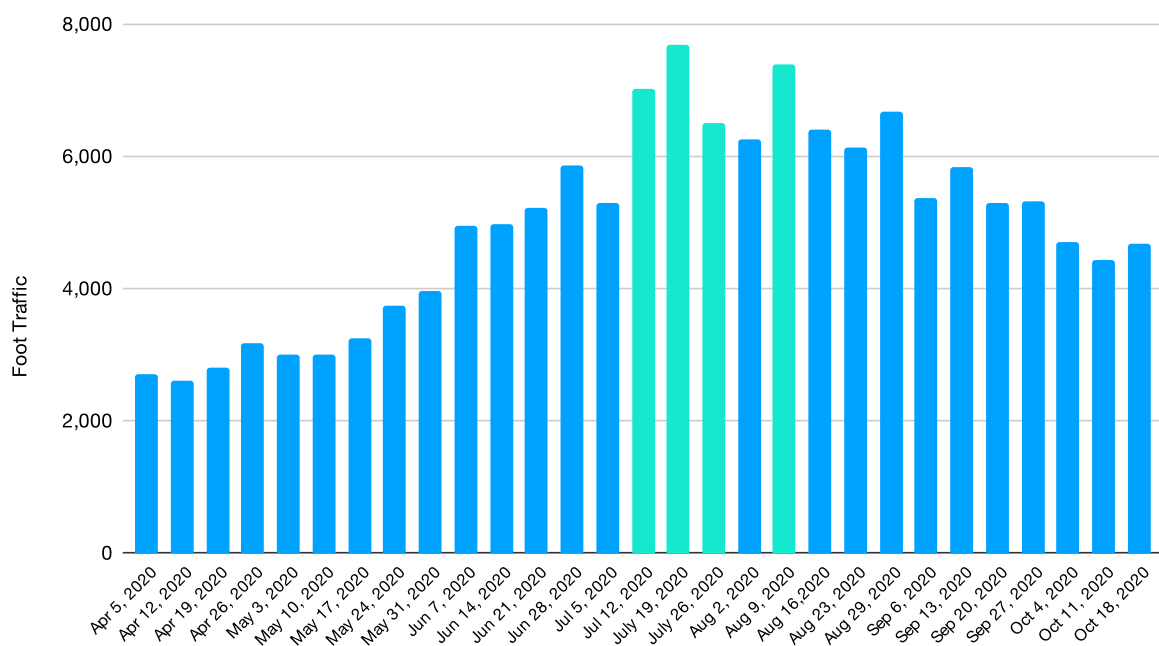
# Pedestrian Counts

## FOOT TRAFFIC

This year we were fortunate to have a pedestrian counter up from April through to the end of the year. This has allowed us to track the numbers consistently and also to better understand our visitors behaviour. The pedestrian counter is located just south of Gourmet Diem on Front street to give us a consistent snapshot of foot traffic. While it is not a complete picture of the entire downtown, it allows us to measure week over week progress.

5,500

Average weekly foot traffic count since reopening after lockdown



## SUMMARY

This summer we saw a notable increase in pedestrian traffic over last year despite COVID. We also saw an increase in weekend traffic demonstrating that downtown Belleville is becoming a tourist destination.

# Tax Levy

## INVESTING IN DOWNTOWN

Below are approximate figures for the Downtown District BIA Tax Levy that property owners within our boundaries are responsible to pay annually to the City of Belleville. The levy is used as the primary financial support for the day-to-day operation of the BIA in order to position downtown Belleville as a vibrant community.

2020 was an interesting year, to say the least! Here at the BIA we had a number of events and promotions lined up and were looking forward to a year of growth and change in the downtown District. March came, and with it, a global pandemic. Nevertheless, we learned to pivot, pivot and pivot. Each day seemed to bring with it a new challenge. But somehow, in the midst of it all, we saw a glimpse of what a thriving community looks like.

Together with proactive members, the City of Belleville, community partners like the Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board and the Chamber of Commerce and funds from a number of grants we were able to secure, we managed to create a unique destination for locals and visitors from nearby communities seeing record pedestrian counts. Having an active, creative BIA (Board, staff, members), supported by the tax levy is the foundation of this success story. Imagine what we can achieve outside of a pandemic!

40

Estimated # of graffiti removal instances in 2020. (Decreased from 160 in 2019)

Assessment Value	2020 BDIA Tax Rate	2020 Annual BDIA Levy (Sample)	2020 BDIA Monthly Expense (Sample)	2021 Proposed BDIA Monthly Tax Levy (Sample)
\$450,000	0.56477%	2,541	\$212	\$212
\$359,000	0.56477%	2,028	\$169	\$169
\$313,000	0.56477%	1,768	\$147	\$147
\$213,000	0.56477%	1,203	\$100	\$100
\$170,000	0.56477%	960	\$80	\$80

# Al Fresco Summer

This summer instead of having single day events that lasted only 3 or 4 hours, we shifted to experiences that lasted weeks to ensure a safer experience for businesses and visitors. **Al Fresco** was the theme of the summer with the focus on outdoor dining, shopping and activities.

With the support of the City of Belleville and an Ontario grant, we created an outdoor experience like never before with an outdoor art and light installation called **Prismatica!** This installation lived downtown on Front street for 4 weeks (July 17 - August 16) and drew visitors from all over. We saw our highest pedestrian counts in recent years with **weekly counts surpassing 6,000 visitors.**

While the pandemic forced us to rethink events in the downtown District it also revealed a better formula to increase traffic over a longer period of time rather than just for a few hours. We will continue to use this model going forward, offering seasonally themed events over a number of weeks.



**7,701**  
Highest weekly pedestrian count during Prismatic

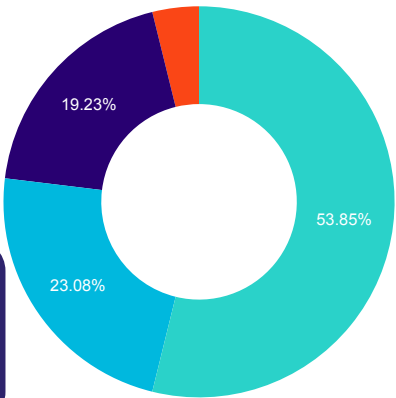
## MEDIA COVERAGE

Al Fresco put Downtown Belleville on the local tourist map! We received positive coverage across Ontario:

- Tourism Industry Association of Ontario newsletter
- South Eastern Ontario post + story series
- Attractions ON story share
- OBIAA Newsletter mention
- Bay of Quinte, Blog BOQ and Discover Belleville coverage

## Members indicated their overall satisfaction for the Al Fresco experience:

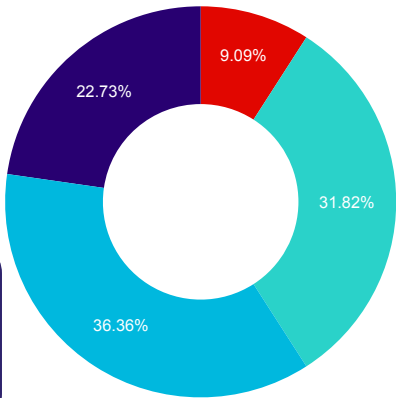
- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied



**77%**  
Of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the Al Fresco experience

## Members indicated their preference for street closures again next summer:

- No street closure
- One way street closure (like this year but with additional street parking)
- Full 2 lane street closure
- Weekends only full street closure (Thursday - Saturday)



**90%**  
Of respondents are in favour of some form of street closure next year



## Digital Presence

### SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2020 we increased our followers both on Instagram and Facebook dramatically. Visitors are frequently sharing positive downtown experiences featuring unique architecture, fashion and lifestyle. Our feeds are lifestyle-focused rather than promotions and sales, helping to highlight the positive aspects of our micro-urban community. People want to 'be a part of it!'.



**110%**  
Increase in  
Instagram Followers  
(From 2,665 to 5,607)

**31%**  
Increase in  
Facebook Followers  
(From 4,567 to 5,980)



@downtownbelleville



@BellevilleDowntownDistrict

### DIGITAL MAIN STREET

- **20+** Businesses received the **\$2,500 digital transformation grant** providing **\$50,000+ in marketing dollars** infused into downtown by grants from the Government of Ontario.
- **\$20,000** grant received to hire two Digital Squad Members to support businesses improve digital literacy and apply for the digital transformation grant.
- Downtown Belleville BIA and members **received \$70,000+ in digital grants** at the time of this annual report, an increase of \$37,500 over last year.

**\$70,000+**  
In grants from  
the Government  
through DMS



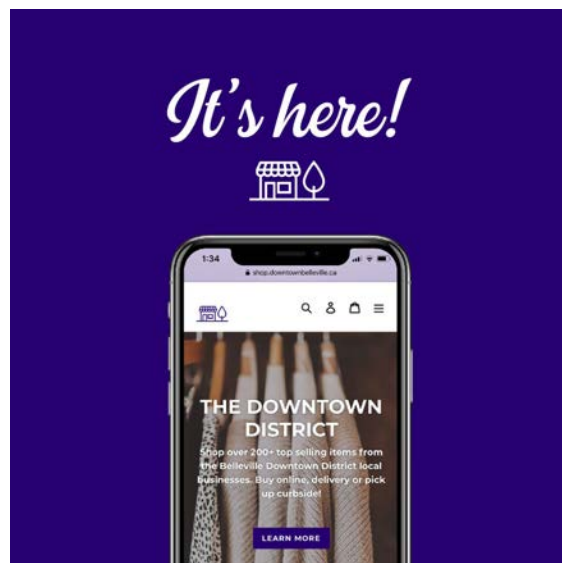
## Online Marketplace

### ABOUT THE MARKETPLACE

The global pandemic accelerated the BIA's plans for an online collective marketplace. As soon as the provincial shut down was announced the BIA Staff worked tirelessly for four weeks creating and launching an online Marketplace with member support.

The Downtown District Marketplace launched April 17, 2020 with 20 downtown businesses and over 500 products. By the summer the Marketplace grew to 40 businesses and over 1000 products available.

This initiative was funded by the BIA with no additional costs to members. The platform enabled members to focus on their business and the new regulations required to open safely.



**+\$60K**  
Total sales

**+900**  
Total orders

**+40K**  
Online sessions

### VIRTUAL EVENTS

The Marketplace hosted 2 virtual shopping events this year to promote shopping locally online.

### NATIONAL COVERAGE

Downtown Belleville received national media coverage on Retail Insider and OBIAA's webinar Marijo and Kelsey were invited to speak (virtually) at the University of Waterloo's Economic Development Program and the Economic Development Association of Canada *COVID-19 Retail Solutions* webinar with over 250 attendees nationwide. This has enhanced the reputation of our community and positioned downtown Belleville as an industry leader. Numerous BIAs across Canada (and some from the USA) have reached out to inquire about creating their own Marketplace solution for their members.





# Grants

## A YEAR OF GRANTS

In 2020, the BIA applied for numerous grants that were available for marketing, events and banner signage. This year's total grant funding came to \$112,275.

Grants include:

**\$51,485** from the City of Belleville to support Al Fresco, Prismatica, and branded Billboards

**\$27,000** in-kind from the City of Belleville for the Al Fresco Road Closure and trough placement for the parklets

**\$7,500** from the Regional Tourism Ontario 9 (RTO9) for the Parklet Artists, Al Fresco marketing and Enchanted promotion

**\$20,000** from Digital Main Street to hire two part-time Digital Squad Members to help businesses improve digital literacy and apply for the digital transformation grant

**\$3,090** from the Regional Economic Development (RED) grant for the new summer banners and flags

**\$3,200** from the Bay of Quinte Regional Tourism Board for the Marketplace Launch and Enchanted marketing.

**\$112,000+**

Received in  
grant and in-kind  
services in 2020



## Facade Improvement Program

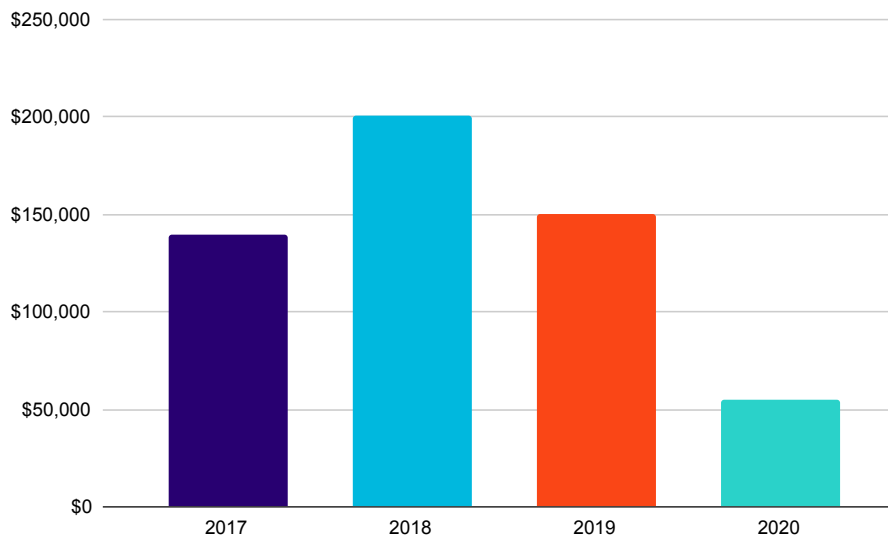
### FUNDING TRADITION

We are fortunate to have many property owners that have the vision and tenacity to breathe new life into our historic downtown, restoring buildings to their original glory.

The Facade Improvement Program is one way our property owners can access Municipal funds to assist with the cost of restoration. This year because of COVID the program was put on pause until September.

**\$55,000+**  
Granted from the city for façade improvements in 2020

**\$546,000+**  
Granted from the City of Belleville for façade improvements over the past 3 years





# Safety & Security Initiatives

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

We work closely with Belleville Police Services and social services agencies on strategies to increase the safety and security of our members, employees and visitors to the Downtown District. Our goal, as per our strategic plan, is to create a downtown where all people feel comfortable to meet, work, visit and enjoy entertainment.

Thank you to our Downtown District liaison, **Constable Mark Hall** who spearheaded the Safety & Security Initiative on our streets early in the year. This initiative, which includes a reporting protocol, and a smartphone app to track incidents in the downtown core, is actively used by many of our members to assist in helping to keep our streets safe and enjoyable.

37

Members currently  
opted-in to the no-  
trespass initiative

15

Members on the  
GroupMe messaging  
app

### Initiative #1: No Trespass

Our No Trespass Procedure has been modeled after No Trespass Policies that are being used successfully by the Quinte Mall and the Belleville Library. The adoption of a No Trespass Policy allows participating businesses to bar individuals who have engaged in inappropriate or threatening behaviour in one location from all properties that are listed on the 'No Trespass' list.

### Initiative #2: District Watch

Often when a business or property owner has an interaction such as shop lifting or graffiti there is no immediate or easy way to alert others to look out for the individual. Using a smartphone app called 'GroupMe' members can opt-into a group called 'District Watch'. This will allow members to share photos, videos and details of incidents to all 'District Watch' members in real time.

### Initiative #3: Witness Impact Statements

If you or your staff witness an unpleasant, disruptive or illegal interaction in the Downtown District it is important to document the event and submit it to the Belleville Police Services and to the Belleville Downtown District Office.

### Initiative #4: When to Call 911

We are a growing urban centre and as a result, there are instances when you or your staff may witness an unpleasant or disruptive behaviour or an illegal interaction. PLEASE CALL 911 WHEN THIS HAPPENS.

If you are not familiar with these initiatives, please review them in **Members Resources** on our website at: [downtownbelleville.ca/resources/safety-security/](https://downtownbelleville.ca/resources/safety-security/) (Member Password needed)

We are currently working on a second phase of safety and security that will be introduced in 2021.

# *Survey Results*

## KEY FINDINGS

The data presented in this section is collected  
from surveys that were conducted in  
September and October of 2020.



# Visitor & Resident Survey Results

## RESEARCH METHOD

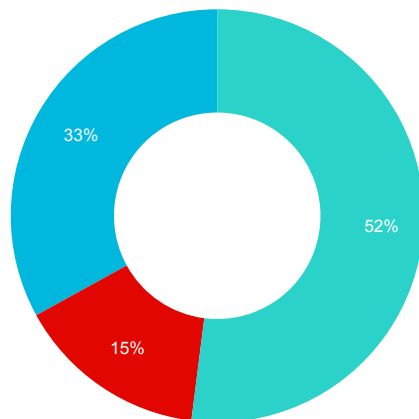
In the month of October a Visitor and Resident survey was distributed by email, through social media and through printed postcards placed in retail and restaurant businesses throughout downtown. The results presented here are based on the **765 respondents**.

Visitors & Residents  
rated downtown

**8.3**

on a scale of 0-10

● Promoters  
● Detractors  
● Passives



## RECOMMENDING DOWNTOWN

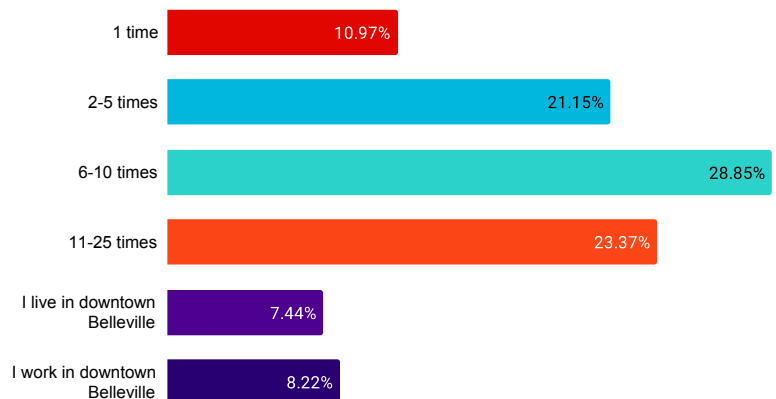
We asked the respondents how likely they are to recommend Downtown Belleville as a place to visit on a scale of 0 to 10. 52% of respondents answered 9 or 10. 15% of the respondents answered 0 to 6, a decrease from last year.

**The number of Promoters strongly outweighs the Detractors.**

## Visitors from outside of Belleville:

Trenton  
Kingston  
Toronto  
Ottawa  
Prince Edward County

## How often respondents visited downtown in the last 3 months:



## SUMMARY

The majority of respondents visited downtown Belleville over 5 times in the last 3 months. Compared to 2019 results, the likelihood of recommending downtown as a place to visit rose by 0.3. This shows the perception of downtown continuing to improve.

# Member Survey Results

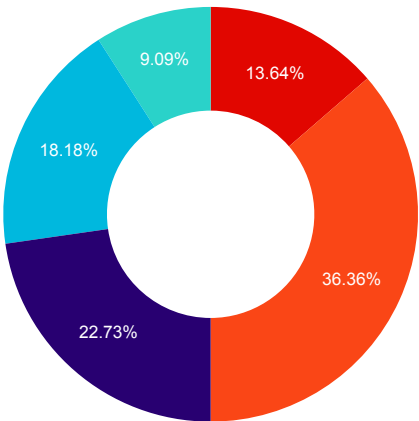
## RESEARCH METHOD

In the month of September we asked members to fill out the annual survey to collect quantitative data from the Business and Property Owners in downtown Belleville. There were a total of **18 business owners and 8 property owners** that participated in the survey. We hope to increase the participation next year to ensure the integrity of our data. Thank you to those who participated.

## Business Owner Results

Businesses described overall business climate of downtown in the past year:

- Significantly Declined
- Declined
- Remains Stable
- Improved
- Significantly Improved



**50%**  
Of business owners describe the climate of downtown as improved or significantly improved

## Top 4 Areas of Improvement

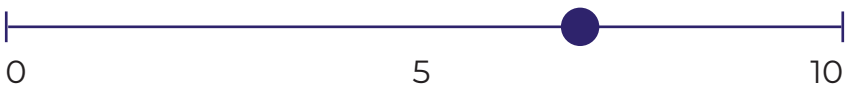
(In order of priority ranked by business owners)

- 1 Public Perception
- 2 Safety/Security
- 3 Parking
- 4 Increase foot traffic



The likelihood of recommending downtown Belleville as a place to open a business:

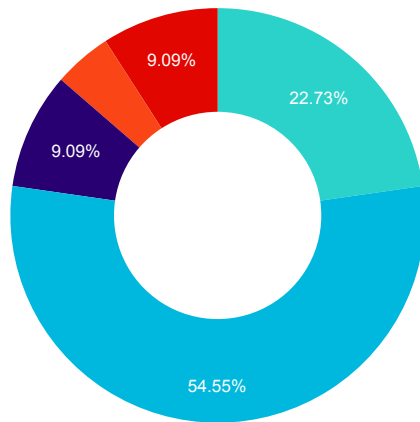
Business Owners  
rated downtown  
**7 out of 10**





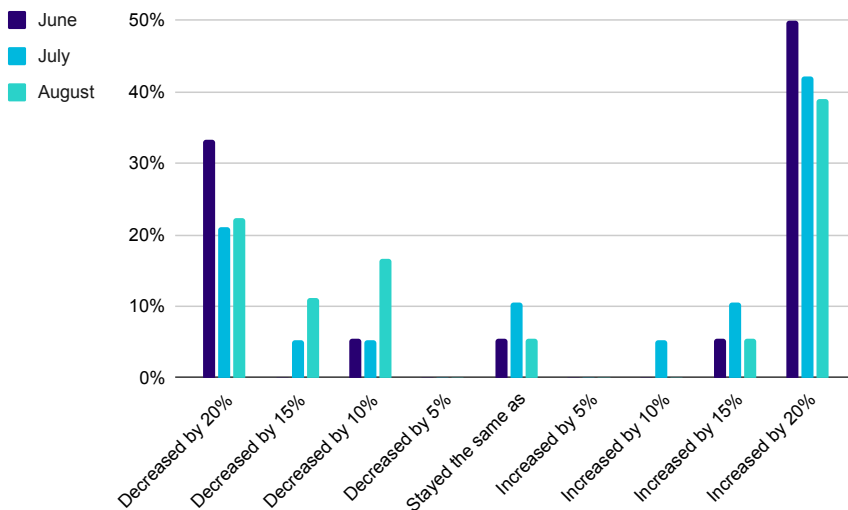
## Businesses indicated overall satisfaction with downtown Belleville as a place for business in the last 12 months:

Very satisfied  
 Satisfied  
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
 Dissatisfied  
 Very dissatisfied



# 77%

Of business owners are satisfied or very satisfied with downtown Belleville as a place for business

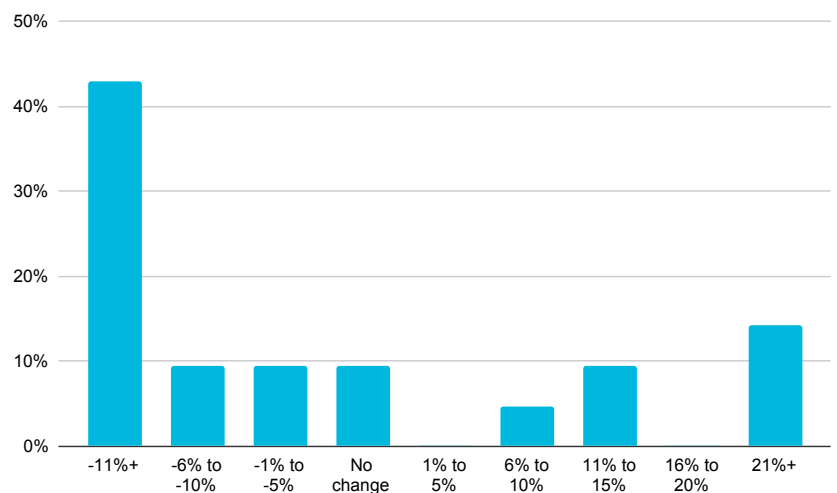


After Al Fresco, 23 members responded to a survey and indicated their comparison of sales in June, July and August 2020 to 2019.

- **50%** of respondents said they increased by at least 15% in June
- **58%** of respondents said they increased by at least 15% in July
- **50%** of respondents said their sales stayed the same or increased

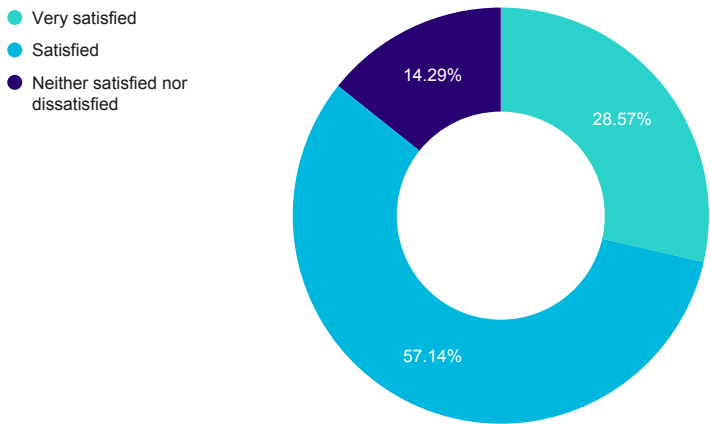
While summer months appeared strong, when looked at from a larger view (Jan-Oct), the profit numbers show a different picture, demonstrating the greater impact that COVID and the shutdown restrictions had for businesses downtown.

There are businesses that were able to maintain and grow sales but **over 60%** of respondents showed an overall decrease over 2019 for Jan-Oct.



# Property Owner Results

Property owners indicated their overall satisfaction with downtown Belleville as a place to invest in the last 12 months:



**86%**  
Of property owners are satisfied or very satisfied with downtown Belleville as a place to invest

The likelihood of recommending downtown Belleville as a place to invest in property:



## Top 4 Areas of Improvement

(In order of priority ranked by property owners)

- 1 Safety/Security
- 2 Public Perception
- Tied!* 3 Parking
- Tied!* 3 Beautification



“Do you want to find a friendly, peaceful small town with great leadership, a beautiful natural setting and abundant opportunity? Then let us tell you a secret—it’s Belleville Ontario.”

Downtown Belleville Property Owners  
Bruce M Firestone, PhD, Ottawa Senators founder, and  
Dawn MacMillan Firestone, coach, CPCC, ACC, ICF Ottawa president

## *A year in review*

### LOOKING BACK

2020 has been a year to remember for so many reasons. Here are the highlights of the accomplishments in the Downtown District:

- The implementation of the Safety & Security Initiatives
- Over 1,500 litres of soup were served between the 17 participating restaurants with 65% of visitors sampling 6 or more soups during this year's Savour the Chill
- Al Fresco success brought record pedestrian counts and evening and weekend traffic to our downtown streets
- Over \$112K in grants were received this year
- We increased our Digital Main Street service squad grant to \$20,000, \$10k over 2019
- Secured over \$50,000 and counting in grants for our downtown businesses through Digital Main Street
- The launch of an online Marketplace solution for members
- National media coverage placed Downtown Belleville in the spotlight
- WiFi installed on the main street thanks to Rural Economic Development funding and the City of Belleville
- We secured over 70 positive media articles in 2020
- We lost 11 businesses but we gained 19 businesses this year
- We had our first virtual AGM!



## *Looking ahead to 2021*

I think I can speak for everyone when I say I look forward to a vaccine for COVID-19. But we can never be sure so we will plan for a year of extended events similar to 2020 where additional features can easily be added should we see the end of the pandemic. We have 4 event periods lined up for 2021:

- February/March: Savour the Chill (different from past events)
- June/July/Aug: Al Fresco building on the success of 2020
- Sept/Oct: Music focused (Porchfest-like dependent on COVID).
- November/December: Enchanted 2021

The Safety & Security Initiative will be launching a pilot project to assist some of our vulnerable community members. We look forward to another successful year in the Downtown District.

*Be a  
Part of it*



[downtownbelleville.ca](http://downtownbelleville.ca)