



# 2021 *Annual Report*





## Board of Directors

### Executive Officers

Chair: Kathryn Brown | Kate's Kitchen Shop  
Vice-Chair: Shawn Patriquin | They Integrated  
Treasurer: Lorne McDougall | McDougall Insurance  
Secretary: Sarah Hutchison | We Thrive

### Directors

Rebecca Burlington | Flowers by Dustin  
Maury Flunder | Property Owner  
David Gilbert | Property Owner  
Chad Guziewicz | Tire Wizard, Rentify, Moveogo  
Stacey Kerr | Scalliwag Toys  
Emma Travis | Be Prepared  
Tyler Allsopp | City of Belleville Council Appointee

### Staff

Luisa Sorrentino | Executive Director  
Tiffany Spencer | Marketing & Media Officer  
(*Maternity leave for Kelsey Moniz*)  
Sara Behring | Welcoming Streets Steward

### Our Vision:

By 2025, Downtown Belleville  
will be the thriving centre of our  
community.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

Ken Harnden | Pinnacle Music  
Ryan Williams | Ward 1 Councillor City  
of Belleville  
Brandon Kull | The Empire Theatre

### OUTSTANDING IN THE DISTRICT

A big thank you to **The City of  
Belleville, Bay of Quinte Regional  
Marketing Board, Belleville Chamber  
of Commerce and Restoration  
Services Inc.** for their dedication to  
helping Downtown Belleville thrive!



## *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 Two-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*

It's hard to imagine we are reaching the end of 2021 – another 'pandemic year' that has challenged us all in ways we never imagined. But here we are and that is due to our collective efforts. Well done, Downtown District!

2021 has seen many successes, tempered by unexpected challenges. From December 2020 to June 2021, we experienced two lockdowns that seemed to go on forever. Those lockdowns caused many of us to not only pivot but to pirouette. Our creativity in things like the second season of Al Fresco, an expanded Enchanted and the Online Marketplace brought new visitors to the District and we responded with amazing resilience.

This year, the Downtown District proudly accepted two prestigious awards from the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA). What makes these provincial awards extra special is they are selected by our peers from over 300 BIAs across Ontario. Who knew in 2018 when we said 'It's not what it is... it's what we can become' that our Downtown would achieve provincial recognition in three short years? For that, you all need to take a bow. Despite everything the pandemic has and will throw our way, like the Phoenix – we rose.

Equally, we need to acknowledge the challenges we have experienced this past year and how we responded. One of the effects of the pandemic is an increase in the number of vulnerable individuals throughout our city and it was evident in the Downtown District. We know this has not been easy. So, introducing the Welcoming Streets initiative - with the support of Hastings County, our partners from social service agencies and Belleville Police Services - was a timely solution. I encourage everyone to review the results from our first three months of Welcoming Streets (on Page 16) and celebrate the positive results we are seeing. This societal issue isn't unique to Belleville, but the Downtown District is making positive contributions to our community as a whole.

As we turn our attention to our busiest season of the year, I encourage each of our member organizations to be proud of what YOU have accomplished, what WE have accomplished! Let us celebrate that we are being recognized as a genuine tourism destination.

Our best days are ahead. It is happening! Let us enjoy being a part of it, together!

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





# Highlights

**78%**

Occupancy rate of street level businesses



**201**

Total number of active businesses

**6,920**

Highest weekly pedestrian count in 2021



**Visitors & Residents**  
rated Downtown Belleville

**8.4**

on a scale of 0-10  
(Based on 638 respondents)

**\$250,000+**

Received in grants and in-kind services in 2021



**10**

Estimated # of graffiti removal instances in 2021 paid by Tax Levy

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

- 1** Public Perception
- 2** Safety/Security
- 3** Parking
- 4** Vacant Commercial Spaces



**85+**

direct calls responded to from membership asking for assistance and support by Welcoming Streets Steward



# *Snap Shot* OF THE DISTRICT

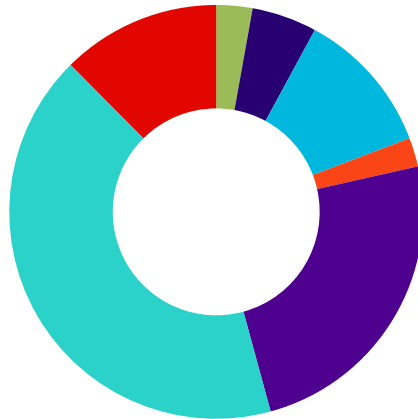
This section uses data and facts to  
illustrate the landscape and opportunities  
for Downtown Belleville.





## Business Categories

- Arts 3%
- Entertainment 6%
- Food & Beverage 11.4%
- Residential 2%
- Retail 22.9%
- Services 41.3%
- Wellness 13.4%



**57%**  
of our businesses are  
experience based

### 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 57% of our membership and are the face of our Downtown as well as the tourism arm of the District. Services are 41% 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

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



## Occupancy Rates

**201** Active Businesses

**176** Street Level Units

**138** Occupied (Street Level)

**38** Vacant



### OF THE 38 VACANT PROPERTIES:

**18** are chronically vacant

**12** are under renovation

**8** are tenant-ready



As we work together with the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) to build a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that is customized to suit Ontario's Downtown BIAs, we envision being able to access numbers that are based on each building's address within the next couple of years. In the meantime, these numbers are gathered by staff through a walking audit, with observations and insights resulting from our relationships with building owners.

In 2021, much like 2020, we witnessed an interest in property and investment, including but not limited to purchases from investors from outside our region. Staff finalized an investor Recruitment Package and the perception of the Downtown District is shifting.



# Welcome

## NEW MEMBERS

This year we welcomed 19 new businesses Downtown and 2 new property owners.

Burger Revolution  
County Boys Renovations Inc.  
Dr. Jim's Computer Repair  
Equilibria Wellness  
Evermind Belleville  
Fokus Coworking  
H2O Getaways  
Harley G's  
Haus + Hom  
Kita Beauty Lounge  
Sativa Bliss  
Shannon Neely Financial  
Signarama/Fully Promoted  
The Sweet Retreat

Three Hills Engineering Ltd.  
Tiger Chicken and Ribs  
Tropical Blends Cafe  
U Whitening  
Venue 1906

## New Property Ownership

261 Front Street (Liberty Entertainment)  
232 Front Street (Building Life)  
402 Front Street (Maury Flunder)

# Farewell

## RETIREMENTS AND CLOSURES

We said farewell to 1 business this year and wish them all well in their next endeavour.

Crepe Escape

## IN MEMORIAM

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

Maurice Rollins

Sheila Harris



# Pedestrian Counts

## FOOT TRAFFIC

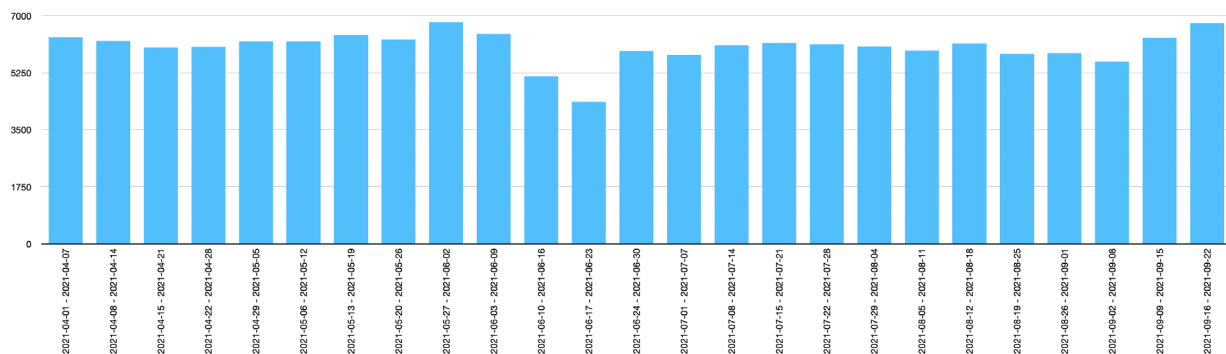
In the Spring, the Province announced its investment through the Rural Economic Development (RED) Program supporting public Wi-Fi downtown, covering nearly one-third of the cost. This is a project funded in partnership by the Downtown District, Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board and City of Belleville.

In April 2021, the public Wi-Fi was installed, which also gives us access to a system of pedestrian analytics that is more accurate than we've ever had.

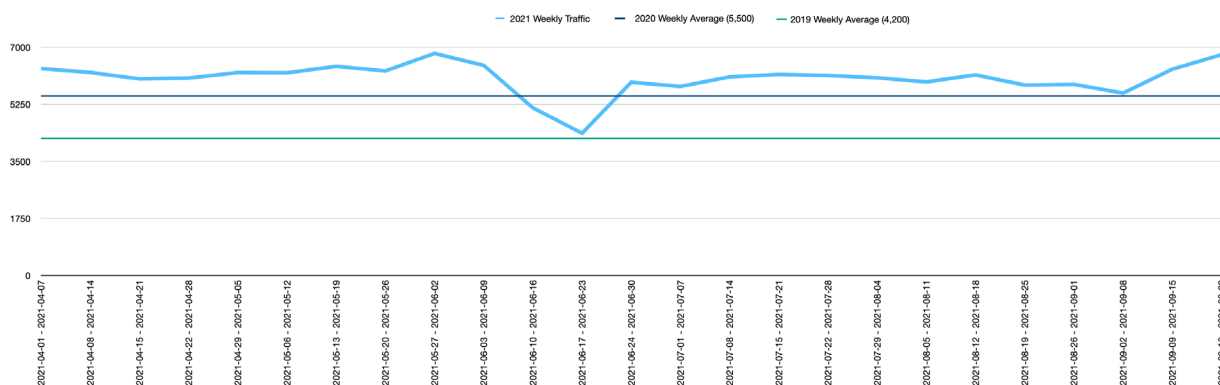
5,816

Average weekly individual visitors since the system implementation.

## 2021 WEEKLY TRAFFIC (April - September)



## WEEKLY TRAFFIC COMPARISONS (2019-2021)



## SUMMARY

With this new system of analytics, we will be able to inform strategic planning, events and marketing efforts going forward. This anonymous data being collected includes street traffic, unique visitors, average linger time and visitor return percentage.



## Al Fresco Summer

For the second year in a row, we encouraged visitors to do it **Al Fresco** with a focus on outdoor dining, shopping and activities.

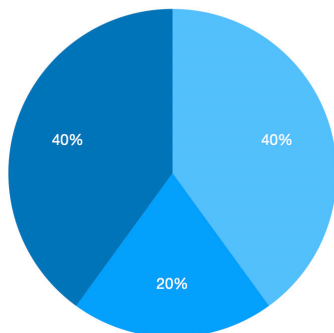
We had so many exciting initiatives between June and September including:

- 8 Tete-a-tetes painted by local artists
- 3 parklets to extend patios
- 1 lane of the street closed with only North bound traffic
- 5 LED light installations
- 2 Painted Pianos for public playing
- Giant branded Adirondack chair
- Free Games on Front every week
- Live music every Friday
- Breakfast Club Saturdays
- Tête-à-tête Thursdays
- Limited edition Al Fresco t-shirts designed by a local artist
- 6 street markets with artisan vendors

We saw our highest pedestrian counts in recent years with **weekly counts surpassing 6,000 visitors.**

### Members indicated their change in foot traffic and sales compared to 2019:

● Increased ● Stayed the same ● Decreased



**60%**

of respondents had increased or similar foot traffic and sales compared to 2019.



**66,000+**  
individual visitors from  
June-September

### MEDIA COVERAGE

Al Fresco once again received positive coverage across Ontario:

- Weekly blogs on Al Fresco happenings received a total of 753 pageviews
- Influencers from Toronto documented the festivities on their own platforms
- Global News Kingston and Peterborough TV
- Bay of Quinte, Blog BOQ and Discover Belleville coverage

Our Al Fresco growth continues with increases compared to 2019, despite the pandemic challenges.

## Digital Presence

### SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2021, we have increased our followers both on Instagram and Facebook, continuing momentum from 2020. Visitors are wanting to 'be a part of it' and are frequently sharing their photos and experiences Downtown. Our feeds contain a blend of on the street, event, blog and business promotion content to keep our audiences engaged and informed.



**32%**  
Increase in  
Instagram Followers  
(From 5,607 to 7,405)

**35%**  
Increase in  
Facebook Followers  
(From 5,980 to 8,072)



@DowntownBelleville



@BellevilleDowntownDistrict

### DIGITAL MAIN STREET

- **35** Businesses received the **\$2,500 digital transformation grant** providing **\$87,500 in marketing dollars** infused into Downtown by grants from the Government of Ontario.
- **\$5,500** grant received to extend one of the two Digital Squad Members to support businesses improve digital literacy and apply for the digital transformation grant. This was an extension from the \$20,000 grant received in 2020.
- **\$10,000** grant received for photography for 18 businesses and a **\$10,000** grant received for videography for 12 businesses.

**\$105,000+**  
in grants from  
the Government  
through DMS





# Grants

## A YEAR OF GRANTS

In 2021, the BIA applied for numerous grants that were available for marketing and event activations. This year's total grant funding came to \$251,850.

Grants include:

**\$70,000** from Hastings County to support our Welcoming Streets Program and Welcoming Streets Steward.

**\$72,790** from the City of Belleville to support AI Fresco and branded billboards, including in-kind services for the AI Fresco Road Closure and trough placement for the parklets.

**\$5,085** from the Regional Tourism Ontario 9 (RTO9).

**\$18,181** from Digital Main Street to extend the contract of one part-time Digital Squad Member to help businesses improve digital literacy and apply for the digital transformation grant.

**\$20,781** from the Rural Economic Development (RED) fund for our tête-à-tête chair sets and giant Adirondack chair.

**\$30,000** from the Bay of Quinte Regional Tourism Board for the AI Fresco and Enchanted marketing.

**\$24,513** from the Reconnect Grant for Enchanted marketing and installations.

**\$10,500** in sponsorships for the tête-à-tête chair sets.

**\$250,000+**

Received in  
grant and in-kind  
services in 2021



## Façade Improvement Program

### FUNDING TRADITION

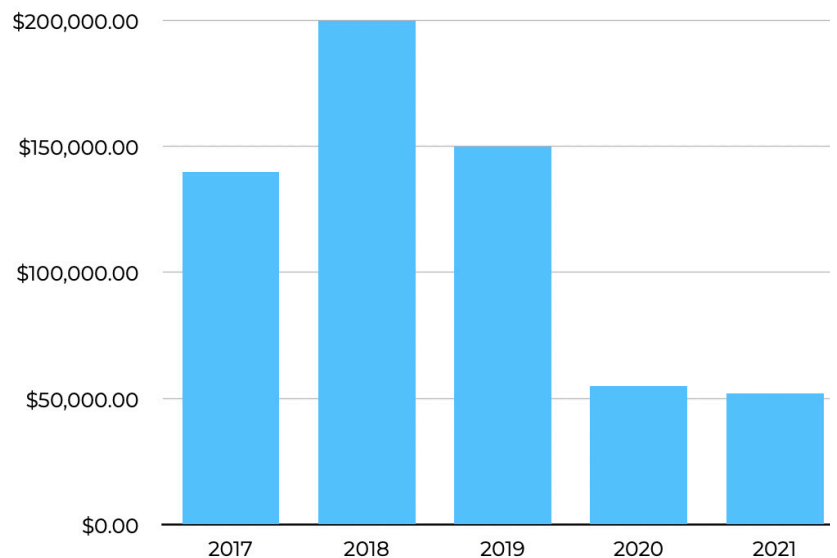
We are fortunate to have many property owners that have the vision and tenacity to breathe new life into our historic Downtown, restoring buildings to their original glory.

The Façade Improvement Program is one of several ways our property owners can access Municipal funds to assist with the cost of restoration.

Details can be found in the City of Belleville's Community Improvement Plan, addressing the Downtown and affordable housing.

**\$52,000+**  
Granted from the  
city for façade  
improvements in 2021

**\$598,000+**  
Granted from the City  
of Belleville for façade  
improvements over the  
past 5 years





## Safety & Security Initiatives

We work closely with Belleville Police Services 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 Community Service and Mental Health Officers, **Constable Menna** and **Constable Gervais** and Belleville Police Services for their ongoing support in implementing our new Welcoming Streets initiative and directly supporting our member businesses.

20+

Members  
currently have  
Agent Status  
with Belleville  
Police Services

### 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. To opt-in to the No Trespass list, contact our Welcoming Streets Steward at [welcome@downtownbelleville.ca](mailto:welcome@downtownbelleville.ca).

### Initiative #2: Agent Status

Completing an Agent Status form confers upon the Belleville Police Services the same authority as the property and/or business owner(s), namely the authority to prohibit entry to the premises/property and/or remove any person who is prohibited entry. Agent Status gives Belleville Police Services the ability to proactively patrol premises/properties without receiving a formal complaint by its owner(s).

### 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 Welcoming Streets

The Welcoming Streets Program is accessible to all members, employees and visitors of the Downtown District as a way to establish relationships, navigate social service systems, educate, and provide crisis intervention support to vulnerable community members. Our Welcoming Streets Steward is available during business hours, Monday to Friday and can be reached at 905-933-3755. For more detailed information about the program, contact [welcome@downtownbelleville.ca](mailto:welcome@downtownbelleville.ca).

### Initiative #5: 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 emergency situation or an illegal interaction. **Please call 911 when this happens.**



## Welcoming Streets Program

We are furthering our promise to create welcoming streets in the Downtown District with the addition of our new outreach worker in June 2021. As the Welcoming Streets Steward, Sara Behring responds to situations Downtown that don't require police involvement, creating relationships with vulnerable people on our streets and recommending available services.

The program, modelled after the Guelph BIA's Welcoming Streets Initiative, supports street-involved individuals and supports our local businesses simultaneously. By addressing concerns identified by business owners and the public, Sara is helping to build capacity among Downtown businesses to be better equipped to handle concerns and build empathy towards the individuals.

Since June, Sara has been Downtown daily, offering direct outreach to members and visitors by establishing relationships and offering resources. She has engaged in multiple interactions with members and visitors that have been valuable in further creating a vibrant Downtown.



**Sara Behring**  
**Welcoming Streets Steward**

905-933-3755

Monday-Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm  
(occasional Saturdays)

**85+**

direct calls responded to  
from membership asking  
for assistance and support

**150+**

interactions with those in need allowing for more  
opportunities for rapport building and referrals

**30+**

meetings with community partners, including  
Belleville Police Services, to further promote an  
integrative approach to supporting the community

**40**

interactions that would  
have otherwise been  
addressed by Belleville  
Police Services, were  
addressed by Sara

**53%**

estimated decrease in  
Mental Health Act related  
calls to BPS from January-  
August 2021

**72%**

estimated decrease in Preventing Breach of Peace  
related calls to BPS from January-August 2021.

# *Survey Results*

## KEY FINDINGS

The data presented in this section is collected  
from surveys that were conducted in  
September and October of 2021.



# Visitor & Resident Survey Results

## RESEARCH METHOD

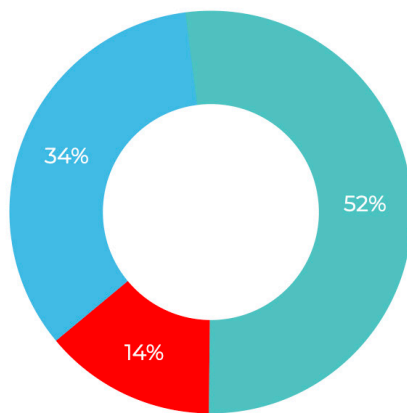
In the month of September, a Visitor and Resident survey was distributed by email, through social media and through printed postcards placed in retail and restaurant businesses throughout Downtown. The results presented here are based on **638 respondents**.

Visitors & Residents  
rated Downtown

**8.4**

on a scale of 0-10

● Promoters ● Detractors ● Passives



## RECOMMENDING DOWNTOWN

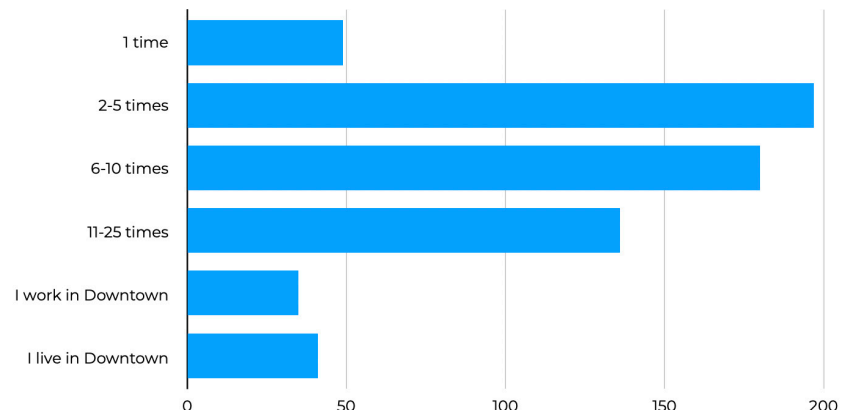
We asked the respondents how likely they are to recommend Downtown Belleville as a place to visit on a scale of 0 to 10. 52% of respondents answered 9 or 10. Only 13.9% of the respondents answered 0 to 6, a decrease from last year.

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

## Visitors from outside of Belleville:

Trenton  
Brighton  
Prince Edward County  
Kingston  
Montreal  
Toronto  
New Brunswick

## 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. 74% of respondents stated their chances of recommending Downtown as a place to visit as 8 or higher.



# Member Survey Results

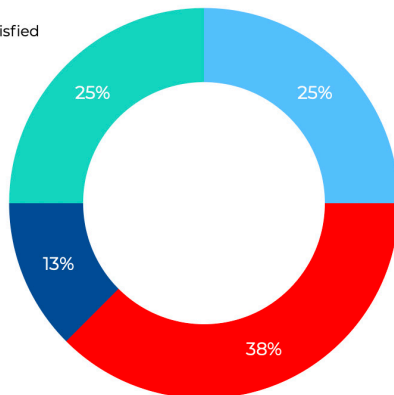
## RESEARCH METHOD

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 **19 business owners and 8 property owners** that participated in the survey. This is one more participant than 2020, but we hope to increase the participation next year to ensure the integrity of our data. Thank you to those who participated.

## Property Owner Results

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

● Very Satisfied  
 ● Satisfied  
 ● Neither satisfied or dissatisfied  
 ● Dissatisfied  
 ● Very Dissatisfied



**63%**

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:**

Property Owners  
rated Downtown

**6 out of 10**



## Top 4 Areas of Improvement

(In order of priority ranked by property owners)

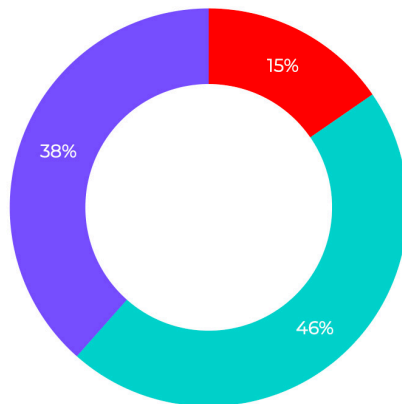
- 1 Parking
- 2 Safety/Security
- 3 Increase in Foot Traffic
- 4 Public Perception



## Business Owner Results

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

● Significantly declined  
● Declined  
● Remains Stable  
● Improved  
● Significantly improved



**84%**

Of business owners describe the climate of Downtown as improved or remaining stable.

### Top 4 Areas of Improvement

(In order of priority ranked by business owners)

- 1 Public Perception
- 2 Safety/Security
- 3 Parking
- 4 Vacant Commercial Spaces

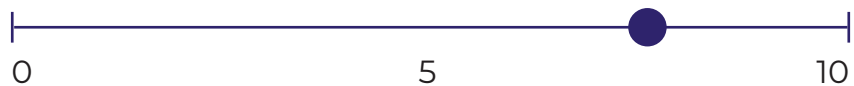


The likelihood of recommending Downtown Belleville as a place to open a business:

Business Owners  
rated Downtown

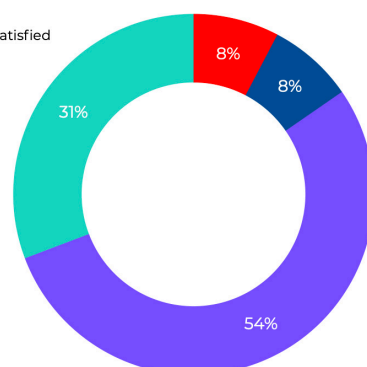
**8 out of 10**

(increase from 7 in 2020)



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

● Very dissatisfied  
● Dissatisfied  
● Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
● Satisfied  
● Very satisfied



**85%**

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

(increase of 8% from 2020)

## Recognized by Provincial Awards

In 2021, the Downtown District was the recipient of **two awards** from the **Ontario Business Improvement Area Association** (OBIAA) for the Downtown Belleville Rebrand and Enchanted Holiday Night Market in 2020.

“2020 was a challenging year for every small business and in particular for the many independent businesses in Downtown,” says Kathryn Brown, BIA Chair and Owner of Kate’s Kitchen Shop. “It’s due to the dedication of our BIA Staff, Board of Directors and more importantly, our members, that with vision and fortitude, we can accomplish great things together.”

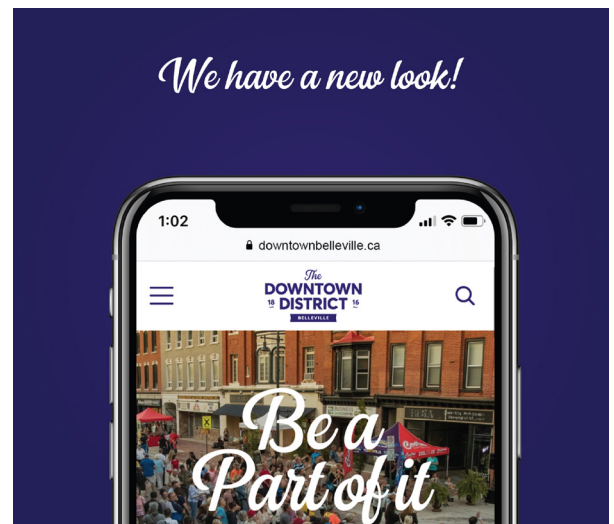


“I am so honored to accept these awards on behalf of the Belleville Downtown District,” says Sorrentino. “We are so grateful to OBIAA and the judges for acknowledging the incredible work done by Marijo, Kelsey and our Board of Directors. We look forward to building on this success in future years and establishing the Downtown District as a true tourism destination.”



The **Special Events and Promotions - Large** Award was presented for the Enchanted Holiday Night Market that exemplified innovation and creativity in the category. The OBIAA judges said they “loved seeing all the fun, creative ideas to engage the community with the downtown during a busy time of year, a nice celebration and collaboration with businesses.”

The **Marketing and Communications - Large** Award was presented for the Downtown Belleville Rebrand that exemplified innovation and creativity in the category. The OBIAA judges described the rebrand as “very nice, with a clean look.”





## *A year in review*

The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly made 2021 a peculiar year; however, despite the unprecedented challenges, we pivoted and have many accomplishments to celebrate, including:

- The Welcoming Streets Program funded by Hastings County and delivered by our Welcoming Streets Steward, Sara Behring. Sara offers direct outreach to members and visitors and in the first 3 months prevented more than 70 calls to Belleville Police Services for crisis intervention.
- Over \$200K in grants were received this year.
- The hiring of a new Executive Director, and Maternity Leave cover for our Marketing and Media Officer.
- Secured over 122 positive media articles, national and local TV and radio coverage.
- Established a new partnership with Ontario Parks to help visitors find Downtown Belleville while planning their Sandbanks, North Beach or Presqu'île trips.
- Another successful Al Fresco summer.
- First Diwali celebration Downtown in Market Square.
- A review of our Strategic Plan.
- Launching the new Associate Membership package to expand our Downtown community.
- Accepted two awards from the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA), one in the category of Special Events & Promotions for the *Enchanted Holiday Market* and one in the category of Marketing & Communications for the *Downtown Belleville Rebrand*.



## *Looking ahead to 2022*

Placemaking is a marathon, not a sprint. We are improving the visitor's experience day by day and continue to work towards making Downtown Belleville the place where people want to meet, dine and shop.

By building the community that people want to be a part of, and raising the vibrations, we are also attracting new investments, visitors and prosperity.

For 2022, while staying flexible to accommodate changes and looking for opportunities to execute new ideas, we will continue to expand and deliver our successful signature events:

- February/March - Savour the Chill
- June/July/August - Al Fresco
- September/October - Porchfest After Party
- November/December - Enchanted

While staff are planning, leading and executing daily operations at the BIA, and the board is providing direction through governance, we look to you, the members and stakeholders of the Downtown District to be the change that you wish for. We count on you to spread the good news, change the perception and be a champion for the District.

Together we can achieve incredible things, and I am so excited for the future of the District.

**- Luisa Sorrentino, Executive Director**



*This report and other Downtown Belleville materials are available online at*

**downtownbelleville.ca**

*Be a  
Part of it*



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