



**PRESS RELEASE**

**Welcoming Streets Receives Funding Boost from  
Hastings County**

**Belleville, Ontario, February 7, 2022** - The Downtown Belleville Business Improvement Area (BIA) in partnership with Hastings County, is excited to announce the extension of the Welcoming Streets Initiative in Downtown Belleville.

Launched in June of 2021, the BIA's Welcoming Streets Initiative has assisted vulnerable individuals in the area, and created a more collaborative and safe environment by addressing concerns identified by business owners and the public.

"Hastings County is pleased to continue our support of the Welcoming Streets Initiative in downtown Belleville," stated Warden Phillips. "Working with the Downtown District of Belleville helps ensure that the downtown core is safe and inclusive for all businesses, visitors, and the vulnerable people in need of assistance. The program nurtures positive relationships between business owners and vulnerable individuals to ensure they are supported and connected to the resources they need."

Welcoming Streets Steward, Sara Behring, has been Downtown daily, offering direct support and has engaged in approximately 300 unique situations downtown as a way to support businesses and individuals in need. Behring has fostered relationships with over 60 individuals as a way to assist them in connecting them to local social services.

"I am beyond excited that the Welcoming Streets Initiative has been extended. Over these last eight months I have had the pleasure of being able to foster strong relationships with local businesses and those in need," said Sara Behring, Welcoming Streets Steward. "It is through these relationships and an understanding of personal experiences, that we've been able to connect several individuals to local services and



have assisted businesses in a way that has led to more positive interactions toward individuals who may be seeking assistance. I look forward to having the opportunity to further create a vibrant and inclusive Downtown.”

The program, modelled after the Guelph BIA’s Welcoming Streets Initiative, has also been adopted in Oshawa and Brampton.

“Welcoming Streets is one of many collaborations between Hastings County and local community partners responding to the needs of vulnerable persons in our communities. The innovative Welcoming Streets Initiative puts a Steward in the downtown core, who can help direct to services such as food, shelter, clothing, and assist during times of stress and conflict,” stated Community and Human Services Committee Chair, Bonnie Adams. “Having a visible and accessible point of contact downtown for businesses and the public will help address concerns quickly and build empathy towards the individuals in need.”

The additional funding will ensure continued improvement of the downtown customer experience and make Downtown Belleville the place where people want to meet. While also providing resources, support and connection for the most vulnerable in our community.

“I am very excited and appreciative of Hastings County and their continued financial support for this Initiative which is making a difference to our community and the vulnerable population it serves,” said Luisa Sorrentino, Executive Director of the Downtown Belleville Business Improvement Association.

-30-

**For more information please contact:**

Caitlin Lavoie,, Media & Marketing Officer (*Maternity leave for Kelsey Moniz*)

e-mail: [hello@downtownbelleville.ca](mailto:hello@downtownbelleville.ca)

Phone: 613-968-2242

Visit **DOWNTOWNBELLEVILLE.CA**