



## PRESS RELEASE

### Welcoming Streets Initiative Recognized with Provincial Award

Belleville, Ontario, April 26, 2022 - The Downtown District Business Improvement Association (BIA) is pleased to announce that the Welcoming Streets Initiative, is the recipient of the 2022 **Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA)** Achievement Award in the category of Advocacy and Policy.

The award recognizes BIAs who have exhibited leadership in advocacy, innovation, government relations, stakeholder/community engagement, addressing social issues like homelessness and crime, equity, and inclusion and legislative changes.

The award was presented to Downtown District BIA Executive Director, Luisa Sorrentino, at the OBIAA Conference in Niagara Falls yesterday (April 25).

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.

"I am so honored to accept this award on behalf of the Belleville Downtown District," said Luisa Sorrentino, Downtown District BIA Executive Director. "We are so grateful to the OBIAA and the judges for acknowledging the incredible work of Sara Behring and the impact that the Welcoming Streets Initiative has had in the Downtown District. I would also like to thank Hastings County for their continued financial support of Welcoming Streets."

"It's an amazing feeling knowing that Welcoming Streets is being recognized for its efforts in supporting our community's most vulnerable individuals. As incredible as being recognized in the category of Advocacy and Policy is, it is important to acknowledge the significant challenges individuals with lived and living experience go through on a daily basis. I hope this recognition continues to raise awareness for those who may be struggling; demonstrating the need to continue projects such as Welcoming Streets as a way to build an inclusive community where everyone feels supported and heard," said Sara Behring, Welcoming Streets Steward. "It's been a pleasure working alongside the Downtown Belleville District BIA's Executive Director Luisa Sorrentino, the board of directors, Hastings County, local businesses, and community organizations, as each of these partnerships have influenced what Welcoming Streets is today. I hope to see Welcoming Streets and similar outreach programs develop and evolve in not only our community, but in others as well."

#### **For more information please contact:**

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