



PRESS RELEASE

A Second Welcoming Streets Steward Joins Downtown Belleville

Belleville, Ontario, January 9, 2023 - The Downtown District Business Improvement Area (BIA) is growing their Welcoming Streets Program with the addition of a second Welcoming Streets Steward, Nik McEwen. Nik is excited to come back to his hometown after living in Ottawa for four years. He has a Bachelor's Degree of Behavioural Psychology from St. Lawrence College and has experience as a Housing Based Case Manager supporting individuals experiencing chronic homelessness by offering community-based care.

As a Welcoming Streets Steward, Nik will act as a bridge between local business owners and street-involved individuals by responding to situations downtown that don't require police involvement, create relationships with vulnerable people on our streets and recommend available services.

"I am excited to be a part of the downtown district, a team that is committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive downtown community." says Nik McEwen, Welcoming Streets Steward.

Sara Behring, Welcoming Streets Program Coordinator, will work closely with Nik to ensure a smooth onboarding as he begins establishing new relationships within the downtown community while maintaining those that were previously established when the program began in June 2021.

"I am beyond excited to welcome Nik to the Welcoming Streets team. Nik's educational background and front-line experience supporting and connecting with the community's most vulnerable will prove to be invaluable when conducting direct outreach downtown" says Sara. "Be sure to say hello to Nik as he takes the time to connect with downtown stakeholders and community members this week."

Luisa Sorrentino, Executive Director of the BIA and Sara Behring were instrumental in pushing the Welcoming Streets Program forward and advocating for a second steward. On

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November 28th, 2022 Luisa presented to council and received funding in the amount of \$140,000 from the City of Belleville to support the program in 2023.

“I am thankful to the City for recognizing the importance of this program and the life-changing impact it has on individuals and stakeholders in the district.” Says Luisa Sorrentino, “We continue to work with all the service agencies in the community to not only improve lives, but to elevate the profile of the Downtown District.”

This award-winning program will continue to change the perception of safety and elevate the Downtown District.

The addition of a new Welcoming Streets Steward will improve the downtown customer experience and make Downtown Belleville the place where people want to meet. There has been a demand for a Steward to be available on the weekends so Nik will be working Tuesday to Saturday.

For more information please contact:

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