



Downtown Huntsville BIA  
BIA ANNUAL FIRESIDE CHAT  
2021 Street Activation Plan  
ZOOM: Thursday, January 14, 2021  
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

It is critical for the BIA to ensure the Downtown Huntsville customer base is looked after, and the Downtown is vibrant, considering the challenges that the Main Street construction project and COVID-19 are going to pose in 2021. This document is fluid, the execution of these initiatives will vary based on COVID-19 protocol and construction logistics. There will be a time when consumer confidence returns, and the BIA needs to be in a position to take full advantage of that. It is imperative to keep Downtown Huntsville top of mind. These ideas and proposals reflect the current situation, considering BIA surveys, and merchant feedback.

#### Beer Festival (May 22, 2021)

Background: Traditionally, the Beer Festival committee works together to create a May 2-4 celebration in River Mill Park to kick off the summer in Downtown Huntsville. The festival includes live music, food trucks and beer sampling. Due to COVID-19, the Beer Festival was canceled in 2020.

- Create a local beer/food/music experience that is COVID friendly
- Beer Trivia with HBR / Local Musical Component
- Packages for sale during May 2-4 -- include a pretzel, a flight of 4-6 mystery beers, guessing cards, napkins/gift, beerfest mug
  - Mystery flight - a beer from each brewery, and you have to identify each one correctly for a chance to win a prize
  - Target Local Breweries - LOB, Canvas, Sawmill, Muskoka Brewery, South River Brewing Co., Katalyst Brewing Co. -- same type of beer or best sellers
  - Engaging beer info cards and guessing cards can be in the package
- Restaurant Component - BIA restaurants could provide small samples of their takeaway menu items.

#### Midnight Madness (July 16, 2021)

Background: Midnight Madness is in its 44th year. This event originally started as a shopping event, for merchants to showcase their stores and specials at the beginning of summer. The BIA was directed in 2018 to create less of a shopping event and more of a celebration. In 2019, the BIA changed the communication, and marketed the event differently. The Huntsville Brewhouse hosted a beer garden, there was a dance floor with a DJ (no live music) and light shows throughout the night. Due to COVID-19, in 2020 the BIA cancelled the event and did a social campaign showcasing past years.

2021 Budget: \$3,000 (-\$2,000 from income such as vendor fees / sponsorship)

- Create a shop local campaign promoting the full weekend (would stores stay open late? Would construction allow for night shopping?)
- Midnight Madness Flyer for distribution (and electronically)
- Promote the flyer and/or 1-page joint business ad in newspaper

- Provide Midnight Madness vouchers (similar to what was done for 2020 GGW) or a significant social media campaign with giveaway (similar to what was done for the 2020/2021 3K Instagram Contest).

### Summer Sidewalk Sale (August 21, 2021)

Background: The Sidewalk Sale is in its 51st year. The Sidewalk Sale hosts the Green Street Challenge, where the BIA, Rugged Earth and volunteer's lay sod on Main Street to promote outdoor play. This event highlights the end of summer sales, with live music and outdoor games. Due to COVID-19, in 2020 the BIA canceled the event and did a social campaign showcasing past years.

2021 budget \$2,500 (-2,000 from income such as vendor fees / sponsorship)

- Create a weekend sales initiative similar to Midnight Madness - brand the weekend as the end of summer sale with an environmentally friendly twist.  
OR
- Reallocate the funds to other Streetscape initiatives (listed below) and only host one sales driven weekend during the summer.

### Macaroni Festival (September 11, 2021)

Background: The Macaroni Festival is in its 3rd year in Downtown Huntsville. The festival celebrates the Strano Pasta factory that was once in Downtown Huntsville. The BIA sells tickets on behalf of the Downtown restaurants, and the restaurants provide samples. In 2019 the BIA partnered with the inaugural Busker Festival and both festivals worked together to create an experience in Downtown Huntsville. In 2020 the BIA surveyed restaurants with ideas to alter the event due to COVID-19. Because of the current situation, BIA restaurants felt the need to focus their energy on other needs and bypass the festival altogether. The BIA did a social campaign showcasing past years.

2021 Budget: \$1,000 (-8,000 in ticket sales)

Based on the September timeline, a Macaroni Festival could be a viable plan. Ideas below are with COVID constraints.

- Enterers would purchase tickets online; 1 ticket would get you a portion of macaroni from each participating restaurant
- Orders would receive a score card with an engaging rating process (look, taste, cheesiness, etc.).
- Submissions on BIA website -- announce the winning restaurant and those who submitted their ratings could be entered for a chance to win a prize
- Incorporate a trivia card/info card on history of macaroni in Huntsville

### Tiny Tots Halloween Parade (October 30, 2021)

Background: Traditionally, families travel the street in a parade line to collect candy outside stores, in their customs. Afterwards, the Mill on Main hosts a lunch and movie. Due to COVID-19, in 2020 the BIA hosted their first Pumpkin Pop Up. Merchants were encouraged to decorate pumpkins for display during the day. Downtown Huntsville welcomed families anytime during the day to show off their customs, collect candy, and submit their favourite pumpkin for a chance to win a \$150 gift card to a business of their choice.

- In 2021, dependent on COVID restrictions, continue with one of the ideas presented above.

### Girlfriends Getaway (November 12-14, 2021)

Background: GGW has changed and evolved over the years. The BIA has continued to support and work with the changes throughout the years. In 2019 the BIA worked closely with Deerhurst and Paradigm Events to ensure Downtown was a destination, with marketing initiatives, downtown dollar giveaways, coupon booklets, shuttle services etc. In 2020, due to COVID-19 the BIA promoted a shop local weekend. The BIA hosted various contests on local media outlets to win GGW branded vouchers to be spent during the weekend.

Voucher Details:

- 126 vouchers to Deerhurst Resort – 79 vouchers (\$1,580) were redeemed at 21 stores. The BIA and Deerhurst split this investment (\$790 each).
- 250 vouchers were given to all local media outlets to host giveaway contests - 201 vouchers (\$4020) were redeemed at 29 stores.
- BIA expense: \$4810 (direct investment into BIA members).

2021 Budget: \$6,000

- Incorporate an outdoor market -- brand and decorate this as a Christmas / Craft Market (could be longer than one weekend)
- Vendor fee for non-BIA members
- Distribute GGW vouchers (like 2020) or host a significant social media campaign with giveaway.

### Customer Appreciation Crawl (November 25, 2021)

Background: The Customer Appreciation Crawl is in its 6th year. This is an evening for BIA merchants to show their appreciation, as a group. The BIA organizes a crawl for participating stores (who offer a minimum discount of 20% for retail and 10% for restaurants, stores must stay open until 9pm, and donate a gift valued between \$25-\$50). If customers go to the selected number of stores and receive a stamp, they are entered into winning a gift basket brought to you by the participating stores. In 2020, due to COVID-19, the BIA planned a shop local campaign over the weekend which incorporated Black Friday sales as well. The BIA had arranged a ballot system with purchase for your chance to win a prize. Due to COVID-19 and the feedback received from GGW, the BIA cancelled their component of this event, and encouraged merchants to do what they felt comfortable doing.

- In 2021, dependent on COVID restrictions, continue with one of the ideas presented above.

### **BIA Additional Streetscape Initiatives**

2021 Budget: \$10,000 (BIA Streetscape Enhancement Reserve)

#### Streetscape Voucher Program (Streetscape Dollars)

2021 Budget: \$20,000 (2021 HMATA funds, pending approval)

- The BIA is working with Explorers Edge to create an exclusive Downtown Huntsville voucher program, similar to Explorers Edge Fuel & Fun and Cottage Country Spirit.
- Example: 800 packages of 5 vouchers at \$5.00 each (\$25.00)
- Distribution: Local? Tourist? Would have to work with the HMATA board regarding this, as their criteria is ultimately heads in beds, and we are requesting to use their BIA allotted funds for this initiative.

This depends on COVID. Are we attracting tourism? Regardless, this initiative needs to happen in order to support the Downtown merchants during Streetscape, therefore a locally targeted campaign may need to occur.

- Timeline: June-July (push this out to July - August may be advantageous based on COVID?)

- The BIA has applied for \$5,000 with the Rural Economic Development Program (RED) to assist with admin logistics, branding, artwork etc.
- Funding streams for vouchers are limited, the BIA is looking into possible partnerships (additional HMATA funds, RTO12/Explorers Edge/" \$5,000 Sponsorship" from local businesses) to increase this budget. Suggestions are welcomed.

#### Downtown Streetscape Coupon Booklet

- Length of Booklet/Coupons: June-September?
- Number of Copies: (electronic version?)
- Distribution Strategy: Local? Tourism - HMATA support?

#### Shuttle Service

Objection of the shuttle service is to ensure retail capacity in the Downtown core during Streetscape.

- The BIA is working on a cost comparison analysis for both a tourism boat/bus shuttle service. The BIA currently has no funds allocated to this initiative. Due to the high cost and lack of grant funding available, the BIA recommends efforts are focused on working with the Huntsville Transit and/or local taxi companies to create a shuttle service for Downtown employees only. This would free parking for retail.
- The BIA would work with business owners to create an incentive for employees to park further away and take the shuttle if necessary - promote / enhance the Healthy Huntsville initiative.

#### Personal Shopping Experience (Delivery Service)

Objection of this shopping experience is to alleviate construction frustration, allowing for customers to receive downtown products easier.

- Logistics include a central pick-up location outside of Downtown Huntsville with a pickup time (once a week for 2 hours). Orders / payment will be done with stores. Advertise a cut off time/date, allowing for stores to fill orders. Unreceived orders will be returned to stores. Stores will deal with returns. Trying on clothing, must visit stores.
- BIA merchant's websites / social media online marketing needs to be extensive.
- Marketing kits would be available for businesses to use.
- The BIA is looking into Door Dash / Uber Eats to assist with food delivery, as few restaurants Downtown offer a delivery service.
- Staffing and logistics will require additional research if deemed a priority.

#### 2021/2022 Skating Rink and Outdoor Winter Experiences

2021 Budget: \$15,000

Background: This winter, the BIA board made the difficult decision to cancel the skating rink Downtown due to COVID-19. The BIA, Huntsville Festival of the Arts (HFA), Chamber and the HMATA Board are working together on a \$700,000 lighting installation in Downtown Huntsville & Muskoka Heritage Place. The BIA is working with HFA on an ice sculpture experience in River Mill Park.

- BIA led winter enhancement initiatives: sleigh rides, fire pits, taffy on snow etc.
- The BIA plans to move ahead with the skating rink Downtown for 2021/2022 (\$10,000 initiative - rely on \$5,000 in business sponsorship) - increase size and features such as, music, skating apparatus etc.

#### Remote BIA Outdoor Market

- Would you be willing to execute a remote storefront?
- COVID friendly
- Location: Rivermill Park? Lions Lookout? High Street?

- Date:
- Time:

### Wellness Event / Challenge

Background: During COVID-19, the Events and Promotions Committee felt the need to brand an initiative around wellness (targeting the importance of mental health). The BIA hosted a 2-month Wellness Challenge - complete the different challenges (set out by the BIA merchants), and share a photo on social media for your chance to win a prize. Feedback: more promotion needed, and clearer directions for the participant.

- Create more formal community wide events throughout the summer
  - Yoga on the dock
  - Picture Yourself Well Initiatives
  - Outdoor Pilates
  - Muskoka Mvmt Initiatives
  - Paddle Boarding Outing
  - Forest Bathing
  - Spa treatments
  - Restaurant Participation: have a symbol beside a menu item indicating it is part of the wellness challenge
  - Retail Participation: an item in the store that promotes wellness
- Develop a contest similar to 2020, but create a point system with stamp cards / stamp for each activity for a chance to win a grand prize

### Touch A Truck Event

- Work with the Construction Company and the Town to create a safe “celebrate / educate construction event”
- Location: Main St. / Rivermill Park
- Date: Saturday, August 7 2021 or later due to COVID?
- Difficult to execute virtually if COVID restrictions are in place.

### Weekly Musicians

- Work with HBR / Busker Festival to hosts Buskers Downtown
- Date: Every Saturday
- Location: Fluid in Downtown based on Streetscape schedule and other initiatives

### Mural Painting

2021 Budget: \$3,000 (BIA Mural Reserve) + \$20,000 (pending Rural Economic Development Program)

- Work with HFA for ongoing mural painting: initiatives similar to the 2020 canoes, mural on the side of Record Shoppe (Empire Lot), mural on the side of BeaverTails, redo Group of Seven Murals?

### Decorating Main Street

- Continuation of the Muskoka Chair Initiative (Contest: take a selfie in all Muskoka Chairs to win a prize)
- Continuation of seasonal decorations with existing and new community partners
  - Santa and Mrs. Claus - 2-year initiative, remarkably successful - 2nd year was altered to ensure the initiative was successful and enjoyable with COVID protocol. Santa is booked for next season!

### Advertising

2021 Budget: \$30,500

Background: In previous years, the BIA has not built out full year marketing plans with appropriate media outlets. Based on the feedback from last year's Fireside Chat, the BIA has worked with local media outlets to target the Muskoka Region by building a yearly 2021 marketing plan with associated budgets.

- The ads can be updated as needed, when needed.

Hunters Bay Radio: \$7,000

Country 102: \$10,000

Moose FM: \$8,000

- Create packages for businesses to assist with advertising on the radio during Streetscape. 10 businesses, over 2 weeks, 30 slots/week (= a subsidized cost for each business) - include "We're Diggin' Downtown" in their messaging to create a consistent Downtown Huntsville voice.

Forester: \$2,500 (not a yearly plan - the BIA will work with the Forester on a need-by-need basis)

- Create joint business partnership ads (similar to what was done in 2020) to enhance this budget.

Doppler: \$2,000

Paid Facebook / Instagram: \$1,000

- BIA led weekly LIVE construction updates
- Significant social media giveaway contests (similar to the recent 3k Instagram contest)
- Facebook page exclusive for BIA members (please join) for live updates / shareable information

#### Streetscape Photography Documentation

2021 Budget: \$4,000

Background: The BIA feels it is important to not only document the progress, but to highlight and create excitement about what the future of Main Street will look like.

- Time lapse photography
- Videography
- Engaging future artistic renderings

**Spring 2022** -----> Downtown Huntsville Street Party - celebrate the completion of the construction project (and COVID-19)!