

ANNUAL REPORT

2020





FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Downtown Bellingham Partnership began 2020 with high hopes about all the great work we were ready to do and the amazing events we were going to put on. It was also going to be our anniversary year and we were excited about celebrating 20 years of championing and supporting Downtown Bellingham. We barely got lift off when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and we realized early on that 2020 would be a year like no other – even though we weren't sure what that meant for our community and our organization.

Within the first months of the crisis, we advocated at the city, county, state, and national levels for more support for local businesses. We worked on several programs to support businesses downtown, including our Green Cone program and getting businesses COVID-19 safety and health related posters to help them convey critical information to their customers. We created and implemented a survey of downtown businesses to gauge the impact of the pandemic and launched our BStrong campaign in the early months, as well, ensuring businesses had our posters and getting a BStrong banner hung on Holly Street to garner strength and solidarity within the downtown community.

Throughout the summer months we continued to act as a clearinghouse for vital pandemic related information – from alerts about funding opportunities to best practices for reopening. Unable to produce our events due to the Governor's Safe Start mandates, we rallied to do a Virtual Downtown Sounds, which raised some funds for our organization as well as our valuable live music venues and local musicians. We worked with the City to help create an open street concept, Holly Plaza, allowing businesses to expand their footprints into the street and parking spaces. We assisted other businesses in expanding as well, offering support with permitting and navigating other requirements.

Internally, we grappled with a loss of income from our events and the reality that we had hard choices to make as far as our own budget, specifically with payroll, and opted to cut back on hours for staff just when we felt we were needed most. Gratefully, several grant and loan opportunities arose that we took advantage of and we were able to bring staff back to more hours.

The pandemic forced us to take on new roles and conduct business in ways we had not done before. We added responsibilities to existing job descriptions and began to work remotely, using Zoom for our meetings and using masks and social distancing when interfacing with businesses in person.

We adapted, we regrouped, and in the end, we stepped up and met the challenge head-on with confidence. And even though the crisis is ongoing, when we reflect on the year, we can say that despite all that was negative, we emerged more assured of our worth to the downtown neighborhood and proud that we were able to give support to our struggling business community when they needed it most.



Alice Clark
Executive Director
Downtown Bellingham Partnership

WHO WE ARE



OUR MISSION

The Downtown Bellingham Partnership is a nonprofit that champions the health and vitality of our community through inspiring commerce, culture, and celebration. We do this through community events and programs, business support and retention, enhancing the public realm, advocacy, and promotion of the district.

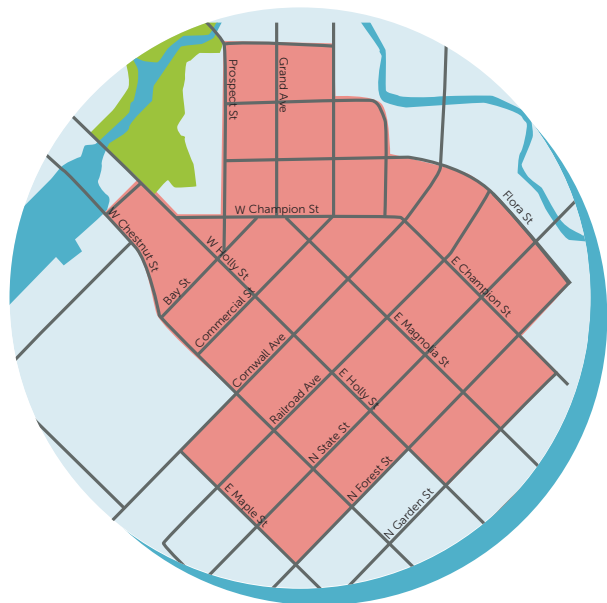
THE VISION

Our vision for Downtown Bellingham is that it's a destination where people from all walks of life can experience a wealth of opportunities to work, shop, learn, and play while enjoying the social and artistic vibrancy of Bellingham.

GET IN TOUCH

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SERVICE AREA



@DowntownBellinghamWA



@DowntownBellinghamPartnership



@downtownbham



2020 HIGHLIGHTS



BSTRONG Campaign

We created posters, a banner over Holly Street, and an online toolkit to promote resilience and unity in the face of national and local struggles. As the primary champion of the district, the Partnership continues to build a vital sense of camaraderie and community through these initiatives that all businesses have expressed an appreciation for.



Green Cone Program

In collaboration with the City of Bellingham and the Fairhaven District, the Partnership rallied to supply large, BStrong green traffic cones to businesses to indicate they are open for business and where to park for take-out and curb-side delivery.



Business Support

We increased communications of emails and newsletters with COVID-19 related resources, funding opportunities, and public safety information. We also shared other partner resources like webinars, recovery planning documents, and other forms of support.



Grant Involvement

We were actively involved in the advocacy for and disbursement of over \$3 million federal, state, and local grant funds for Downtown Bellingham businesses. Grants included the Whatcom Restart Grant, Bellingham Food and Beverage Grant, and other CARES Act related sources.



Marketing the District

Via downtownbellingham.com and social media accounts we promoted a positive, vibrant city center that highlights small, independent business and showcases our cultural resources. We put extra emphasis on promoting business adaptations including online sales, curbside pick-up, and take out options. In addition, we featured a map on our site of downtown businesses as well as a downtown marketplace.



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Public Realm Enhancements

A small team of landscapers worked to plant and maintain flower beds and above ground planters with a focus on our neighborhood's retail core. Seasonal flower baskets were added throughout the district as well. The Commercial Street alley mural was completed in May, bringing a sense of vitality and excitement to a downtown in the midst of economic recovery.



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Business Engagement

We organized and engaged downtown businesses through industry specific virtual meetings to help attendees learn from county and city officials, and experts in various fields to brainstorm solutions to problems created by COVID related restrictions. We hosted virtual Town Halls with state and local officials on important issues such as government COVID response, police reform, equity, and homelessness.



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Partnering with Others

We met regularly with other economic development organizations and collaborated with them to more effectively navigate pandemic response and recovery efforts. We co-created a marketing program supporting all county-wide businesses through the Think Local First Gift Card. In addition, we had representation on several community committees including the Lighthouse Mission's Good Neighbor Forum, the Whatcom Housing Alliance, and the Whatcom Health Department's Employer Support task force.



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Limited Events Raised Funds for Music Venues

Events, virtual or live, connect residents and businesses and promote a sense of community. In 2020 a virtual version of our annual summer concert series, Downtown Sounds, was leveraged to fundraise for a music venue support fund to assist Bellingham's irreplaceable cultural resources.



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Outdoor Seating Expansions

We helped with these expansions onto sidewalks, parking spaces, and even full lane closures on streets. Since Phase 2 of the Governors Safe Start Program limits seating capacity for restaurants, these expansions were the only way to generate the income needed for many restaurants to make ends meet. DBP staff played a critical role in navigating the permit process, organizing blocks to tackle challenges, and providing on-site logistics.

THE NUMBERS



126
New Business Licenses



232
New Employees in
Downtown Bellingham



\$4,860,120
Private Investment Dollars

130,000
Facebook Reach

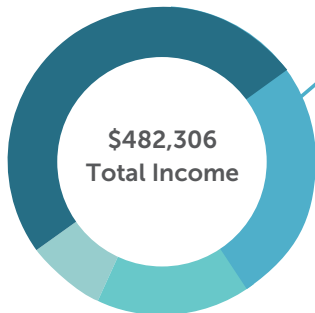
40,000
Instagram Reach

2,750
Newsletter Subscribers

38,000
Website Visits

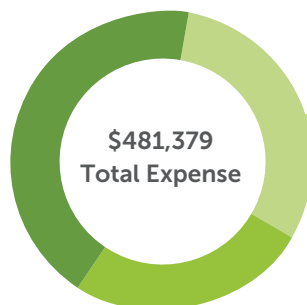
716
Total Volunteer Hours

2020 FINANCIALS



Income

\$255,396 - City Contracts
\$147,080 - Donations
\$51,059 - Events & Sponsorship
\$28,770 - Grants



Expense

\$184,684 - Programs & Events
\$174,870 - Admin & Management
\$121,825 - Landscape & Beautification

PARTNERSHIPS

Thank you to our 2020 supporters!



The Shakedown
RAM Construction
Peoples Bank
Avenue Bread and Deli
Woods Coffee
Freeland & Associates
Community Food Co-op
Bay City Supply

RMC Architects
Tony's Coffees and Teas, Inc
ModSock
Barron Smith Daugert PLLC
Wander Brewing
Sandalwood Salon & Spa
Sheryl Russell
Columbia State Bank

Samuel's Furniture
Jeff Braimes
Thousand Acre Cider House
James Nelson
Erika Lautenbach
Ken Taylor

NEWLY OPENED BUSINESSES IN 2020

All That Jazz
Artivem Mead
Bar 542
Bellingham Axe
Carnal
Evolve Espresso & Provisions
Geheim Gallery

Good to Go Meat Pies
Juxt Taphouse
K-Pop Chicken
Locus
Lopez Family Mexican Restaurant
Lorikeet
Miraculous Braidz & Beauty

Neko Cat Cafe
RxLOVE
Seven Spice
Snowy River
Storia Cucina



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Diskin Young

Treasurer
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Nicole Staron
Kristen Winn

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Executive Director
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Program Director
Lindsey Payne Johnstone

Retail Advocate
Jennifer Walters

Operations Manager
Melissa Sorinsin

Marketing Manager
Calista Klein

Landscaping Lead
Kenny Austin



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