

Economic Development Comments

The Economic Development and Culture office works closely with the BIA on several initiatives geared to encouraging and incenting visitation to the Downtown. From key marketing and advertising projects to shared funding of initiatives and efforts to remove barriers to success, our joint goal is the betterment of the Downtown, and in turn, the success of its entrepreneurs. Over the past year for example, the Economic Development office has implemented numerous initiatives to support its downtown businesses. The completion of two digitalization projects geared to BIA ventures resulted in grants to 43 downtown Orangeville businesses totaling \$107,500. These efforts were complemented by the BIA's Shop Downtown campaign and online store of participating BIA ventures. The Economic Development office also introduced a series of Scavenger Hunts designed to highlight downtown arts and culture features and promote safe visitation to local shops and restaurants. These experiences have been well-received and are highly popular with the public. Other examples of initiatives undertaken to support downtown merchants have included free online workshops and events, the implementation of an intensified buy-local initiative, the creation and launch of a video promoting take out dining, and the establishment of a public gathering space at 112 Broadway (seating components to be installed pending eased Covid restrictions). The Economic Development office is also in the process of launching Driftscape, a mobile app that will showcase the Town's collection of public art and historic elements. Interactive, self-guided tours supported with augmented reality functionality will help users safely experience these assets. This tool will help strengthen and extend visitation to the community and specifically - the Downtown.

Regardless of when the reconstruction of Broadway occurs, there are a number of initiatives that could be introduced by the Economic Development and Culture office in partnership with the BIA to help offset the construction impact and to incent visitation to the area. While the Economic Development office has not budgeted for the Broadway reconstruction project specifically, within its existing operating budget the office could collaborate with the BIA to provide administrative, promotional, and some financial support to initiatives undertaken. The availability of BIA funding to support initiatives undertaken will need to be considered. Opportunities could include:

Electronic/portable signage - Signage at the gateways to Downtown promoting the area as open for business and advising of any special events/incentives occurring could help to encourage continued visitation during the construction period (temporary relief from existing Sign By-law may be required).

Increased promotion of the Shop Downtown website - For individuals who are not physically able to navigate the construction, opportunities exist to make online purchases from participating Downtown businesses and increased promotion of this opportunity would be undertaken.

Alleviate parking concerns - Eliminating transit fares for downtown routes during construction may encourage patrons to continue visiting downtown and allow them to avoid any hassles associated with potential parking limitations. If buses were available, a direct shuttle service from an off-site location during busier times could provide another option.

Incent spending - Promotion of the BIA Downtown Dollars Program – \$5 coupons distributed to downtown visitors at the Farmers' Market and/or other events could be expanded with coupons redeemed to the business from the BIA.

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The introduction of contests could also encourage customers to spend at downtown businesses for a chance to win additional dollars towards future purchases. Submission of photos of downtown purchases or receipts totaling a certain amount could be used as ways to enter a draw to win a Downtown store voucher in a larger amount (eg. \$250-\$500). One draw could be made weekly each week during construction. Offering additional dollars to top up existing spend (eg. buy a gift card for \$75 and get topped up \$100) is another way to increase dollars spent.

Establishment of a comprehensive Downtown Orangeville Gift Card Program with a Visa based point-of-sale foundation would be recommended for future implementation (2022). The pre-paid gift card business has grown significantly in recent years and consumers are accustomed to using them. There is also growing interest in having these cards available to support local businesses. Replacing paper-based options with recyclable cards and implementing such a program provides greater customer experience and saves administrative time. These pre-paid card programs also encourage overspending, driving additional revenue to participating merchants. While a more complex and expensive system to set up initially, uptake by consumers is also much greater. The Economic Development office would be interested in pursuing this option in partnership with the BIA for a Spring 2022 launch.

Experience based incentives - Continuation and expansion of the Town's popular Scavenger Hunt program – downtown focused hunts, with an emphasis on store fronts within the downtown core can help to entice visitation to and patronage of area businesses.

Depending on Covid regulations in place, the introduction of live music/street performances on Broadway in the non-construction areas could stimulate visitation to the downtown as well. Staff/BIA are currently examining options for live music over the summer and fall as restrictions permit, along with insurance items that would need to be addressed.

Incent repeat visitation - Passport programs can be used to encourage patrons to continue visiting downtown. By tracking/submitted their visits to downtown businesses, patrons can be entered to win gift cards/prizes.

Enhance communication - Establishing an accessible and current tracking system will ensure patrons and businesses know exactly when and where construction is happening. Clear and direct communication will help manage expectations for all impacted parties. The Town could also publish an online tracking tool to ensure that the public can easily find current information about the impacted areas and options for parking.