



Main Street Newmarket BIA Strategic Planning

November 12, 2020

Tell Your Epic Story

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Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the Main Street Newmarket BIA Board of Directors met to hold the first of two sessions to map out the key priorities and lay the foundation to develop the next Strategic Plan. Two days later, the Ontario Government announced shutdown measures to address COVID-19.

As a result of the ongoing pandemic, the second session of the Strategic Plan was put on hold. In September, the Board of Directors decided to begin the process of completing the Strategic Plan virtually.

With the guidance of Rob Dale, a facilitator at Rhapsody Strategies, we decided to explore a short-term strategy to assist our members who are coping with a range of COVID-19 related challenges. We held virtual meetings on November 4th & 11th, 2020 to develop a strategy for our membership.

Our Values

Beginning with the March 11, 2020 session, we explored the core values that we felt were important to our membership.

These values are:

- **Neighbourly.** We want our visitors to experience a “neighbour”- type feeling. It's more than just a community, it's a neighbourhood where you can enjoy and experience a sense of family and belonging.
- **Innovative.** We want people to be pleasantly surprised when they visit Main Street. We commit to being creative in how we promote the Street.
- **Diverse / Inclusive.** Main Street isn't just one thing. We have a variety of shops and restaurants serving a wide range of people.
- **Purposeful.** We want to be deliberate in all that we do on Main Street. Rather than just do what we've done before, we want every experience and every decision to have a clear purpose.

Dynamics Shaping the district

While there are some long-term dynamics that must be addressed in a future Strategic Plan, we wanted to focus our attention on some of the dynamics that have been introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We explored a significant number of issues and were able to summarize them into three main areas:

- There are fewer people visiting Main Street right now.
- Most of our members are experiencing a drop in revenue.
- Our visitors have a number of safety concerns related to COVID-19.

Short-term Activities

To be clear, our focus during these sessions was on short-term strategies and tactics. What could we do *right now* to support our membership?

The Board of Directors settled on the following outcomes:

1. Create an online presence that tells the story of our members. Using social media, video, online store, etc., we will create an online experience that celebrates the neighbours of Main Street. We want people to see the people behind the businesses that are on our street.
2. Be creative in how we can celebrate the annual Tree Lighting event. We will not be able to do this in person in 2020, so we will create a virtual experience leading up to the tree lighting ceremony that highlights the local businesses.
3. Create a holiday experience for those who do visit our street. Support local businesses with holiday decorations so that our street stands out for those who want to get into the holiday spirit.
4. Develop a partnership plan for local businesses to participate in. This plan will encourage visitors to shop at multiple locations on Main Street. An example of the partnership plan may be that when a visitor shops at one location, they get a discount at local restaurant.
5. Launch an online community for the BIA members. This would be a regularly scheduled virtual meeting where members can come together and find strength in one another. Best practices, creative ideas, solutions to challenges will all be explored together.

Conclusion

The goal of the Board of Directors is to do what we can to support our membership during a season that none of us has experienced before. We recognize the importance of creating a long-term Strategic Plan for Main Street, and that will happen.

However, at this time, we believe that the focus should be on short-term strategies that will help our members survive the next three to six months. As we move out from under COVID-19, we will return to explore long-term strategies.