

An introduction of you and your business

- I own the Lazy Tulip Café, located in the west end of our downtown which has been open for seven years now.

What do you believe is the biggest opportunity for Downtown Barrie?

I believe that our biggest opportunity is the revitalization of the west end of our downtown and with this comes addressing such issues as safety, beautification, promotion and the opioid crisis. ~~Most of us have seen Toronto neighbourhoods evolve into hip & trendy areas like Parkdale, Ossington and Leslieville, for example.~~ We have a lot of great businesses doing some amazing things and I feel we need to give them more of a voice.

I would also like to suggest that we explore having a west end specific festival like, for example, a maple syrup festival on Maple Avenue? And in regards to Promenade Days I would like to see a stronger presence all the way to Mary street. There needs to be something that is an "anchor" that will draw people all the way from Bayfield to Mary. Perhaps we have a designated block that is only for artists? And/or incorporate a farmer's market with more of a focus on quality goods.

I would like to touch on the topic of the opioid crisis that is affecting our entire downtown, however, businesses & residents between Maple Avenue and High Street have been hit hard. The sooner we can help find solutions as a community the better for us all. We need immediate short term solutions as the long term solutions are being addressed.

I found an article in the Globe & Mail that talks about how some BIA's in Canada are handling the opioid crisis and providing tools & education to help street front businesses.

(<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/bi-as-are-doing/how-canada-is-turning-business-owners-into-advocates/article37166193/>)

- Leading the country in innovation is the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone, which employs an eight-member community homelessness assistance team that walks the streets connecting people with social services, as well as a 25-member community watch team that keeps an eye out for people who are potentially in trouble. In Toronto, the Downtown Yonge BIA has developed and distributed guides which provide information on and directions to shelters and resource centres. In Vancouver, the Hastings Crossing BIA offers its member businesses de-escalation training.
- "If someone comes into your store and is being erratic or demanding something they shouldn't be getting, causing customers to feel uncomfortable, instead of saying, 'I'll call the police,' you can learn their name, help them calm down, give them a few more options than just scaring them out.
- Then there's just basic awareness and empathy. Not all employees will be comfortable using Narcan kits, but training in de-escalation as well learning about the causes of addiction can go a long way.
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- These are some of the tools we can use to help our downtown and show compassion to those who are in need.

What change would you like see made in Downtown Barrie?

Downtown Barrie branding – On Wikipedia we are known as "The Gateway to Cottage Country" and I feel that we need to tap into that more. How can we make people feel like they have officially hit cottage country when they get to our downtown. I like the idea of what the Collingwood BIA is doing with the painted Muskoka chairs. What else can we do to capture the essence of cottage country? That's what I think we should explore.

I would also like to take a look at how our current signage & wayfinding reflects our downtown on the water. Currently our signage colours are teal, mustard, black, lavender & olive green and when I first moved here I always found them to be oddly reflective of Halloween. By focusing on our Downtown on the Water or Gateway to Cottage country and rebranding with more vibrant colours and tapping into something that make us unique is something I feel we should explore. We have a lot of creativity on this board so I'm excited to see where this could go.

Festivals – As a restaurant owner I would like to take a look at how some of these events are actually helping our downtown businesses. I would like to look at traffic congestion. How are these events affecting the surrounding businesses? Are they pulling new people downtown that actually return or are they just coming for the event/parade/Ribfest and heading straight out, never to return? Are they contributing or taking away from the downtown businesses? I know for a fact that most restaurants experience a loss of business during these types of events. Perhaps retail benefits from these types of events? This is something I'm curious about.

#BarrieHappy – I would like to see us explore more projects that are positive and unify our entire downtown. In 2014 many of the downtown businesses came together to become #BarrieHappy. Thanks to Chad & Craig we were able to do something that brought a positive light & energy to our downtown. This is something we need to do more of. I know that we have a recording of the song "Downtown" by local musician Courtney Dubois just waiting for us to do something with so I would like to pursue another project in this nature.