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# **DOWNTOWN BARRIE BIA 2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

**AWARD WINNING!**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello everyone! I am proud to represent the Downtown Barrie BIA Board of Management as the Chair with the support of a fantastic Board of Directors. 2024 was another exciting year for downtown Barrie! We are continuing to see more people coming back downtown to enjoy festivals, events and activities. Our new and improved Open Air Dunlop incorporated some great themed events like the first annual Butter Tart Festival and the Classic Car Show - these two events attracted close to 100,000 visitors combined, and we had many more! We are working closely with our partners including the City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie, Barrie Police and more to ensure we have a collaborative focus on our historic Downtown - the centre of our city. We are looking forward to building on this momentum and bringing more people together in the Downtown to support our local businesses.

**Steve Ricalis**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2024 was another year of building upon our journey forward. Our events portfolio returned a record attendance for the year - well over 250,000 unique visits to the Downtown area. We have been continuing to build on our operating model to fully leverage our four pillars as event facilitators, area marketers, public realm investors and policy & partner influencers to ensure we are moving forward as an organization. With the occupancy of Lakhouse and soon to be Debut condos, we are seeing more people living downtown and supporting our local businesses. That being said, the socio-economic environment is still with its challenges, there are more organizational partnerships working together to address these challenges and move our entire community forward. New businesses are continuing to open, entertaining events are bringing people together and with the implementation of a brand new Downtown Barrie Gift Card program the Downtown Barrie BIA is supporting our businesses and at the same time making it easier for our community to support our businesses.

**Craig Stevens**



### BIA Board Members

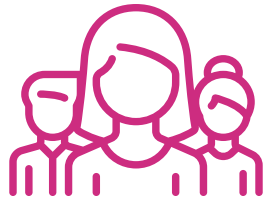
- Steve Ricalis, Chair
- Chris Gerrard, Secretary Treasurer
- Allison Oakes
- Heather Kennedy
- Christina Mancuso
- Richard Tremblay
- Craig Strachan
- Craig Nixon, Councillor
- Janet Kemp, Ex Officio Past Chair

### BIA Staff Members

- Craig Stevens**  
Executive Director
- Stacey Zubczyk**  
Operations Manager
- Cam Stamper**  
Creative Development Coordinator

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# Event Facilitator

## Why are events important?

New visits to the Downtown have the opportunity to bring new business to the Downtown. Promoting the Downtown area through visitor experience is a key priority for BIAs and hosting events is a way for Downtowns to really show off all they have to offer. Events have the power to make visitors realize that the Downtown area is a place they want to be. As an event facilitator, it is the BIA's responsibility to bring these Downtown events to life. With creative flair, BIAs identify target audiences, implement events for these audiences, support event brands, help devise event concepts and can organize technical aspects.

Additionally, BIAs help spread the word through social media, strategic marketing and by reaching out to local media outlets. Event attendance is a good way to measure the ability of the BIA to draw visitors to the Downtown area.

Core to visitor experience is the ability to generate a sense of strong cultural community building; facilitating events to draw people to the area creates a sense that a Downtown is worth visiting.

*The return on investment (ROI) of the events portfolio is the total number of visitors to the Downtown - 250,000+.*

## ~\$139,815 INVESTMENT



Having a variety of large and small events in themes that showcase our downtown in all its diversity helps create a vibrant city centre for our community to share with friends and family.'

Andrea Chiodo - Flying Monkeys



# Festivals, Events & Activities



OVER \$15 MILLION IN ECONOMIC IMPACT

300,000+ TOTAL ANNUAL VISITS

## Return on Investment

Acting as an event facilitator, the Downtown Barrie (BIA) witnessed a drastic increase in attendance in the 2025 events portfolio as a result of refocusing our Open Air Dunlop with specific event themes. All the events combined brought together over 250,000 people to the downtown and we are looking to build upon this number.

The Downtown Barrie BIA events portfolio consists of the following core events. The Hot Cocoa Trail in partnership with the City of Barrie Winterfest. Open Air Dunlop that converts our new Main Street into a pedestrian friendly streetscape full of activities and entertainment. Open Air Dunlop was enhanced with the following partnerships and themed event days including the Barrie Air Show in partnership with the City of Barrie and Base Borden, Canada Day Celebrations, Butter Tart Festival, Classic Car Show and Eats on the Streets Food Festival. Open Air Live Music that focused on bringing free award winning music to the community in partnership with Open Air Dunlop and Lawnchair Luminata in partnership with the Barrie Film Festival that brings film to the outdoors.

New this summer was the Iced Cocoa Trail in August, a sister event to the winter Hot Cocoa Trail. Open Air Meridian that brings together the local community for smaller activations including Culture Days, Thanksgiving and Halloween during the shoulder season in Meridian Place. Our final event of the year is Noella Tree Lighting in partnership with the Barrie Chamber of Commerce Santa Claus Parade and the Barrie Rotary Club Festival of Trees that kicks off Barrie's festive season. These events focus on bringing many visitors to the downtown area with the intent of exploring the area in a family focused, friendly and safe environment.





A Look Forward ▶▶

# NEW EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING MERIDIAN PLACE

**Troubadour Festival** - return the long standing music festival under the Downtown Barrie banner and incorporate & showcase Downtown's street art scene and a new creative street performance.

**Lawnchair Luminata** Weekly outdoor movies - becoming a go-to mid week event for family and friends, a continued partnership with the Barrie Film Festival

**Open Air Live Music** - we are creating a distinct brand with the Open Air Live Music Series in order to capitalize on additional live music programming in Meridian Place beyond Open Air Dunlop and Meridian

**Open Air Dunlop** - build on the 2024 model of strong entertaining themes and partnerships with the goal of attracting over 250,000++ visitors for all events combined

**Open Air Meridian** - utilize Meridian Place within the shoulder seasons to build and test event concepts, new entertainment, attractions and activities and utilize complementary vendors to continue to grow the audience attendance

**Meridian Place Venue** - integrating & scheduling more events in partnership with the City of Barrie

## CELEBRATING LOCAL ARTS, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY THROUGH DOWNTOWN EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



# Area Marketer

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## Why is marketing the Downtown area important?

A BIA that promotes the Downtown area also promotes its businesses. This includes generating well thought out marketing campaigns utilizing all forms of media while remaining 'on brand.' The aim is to draw attention not only to the Downtown area, but all the businesses within it. The BIA uses a model that focuses on 3 key brand building categories:

- **'Brand Product Development'** - focusing on small but significant physical attributes.
- **'Brand Marketing'** - developing creative campaigns to reach the public.
- **'Brand Presentation'** - a direct communication program that connects to local influential networks, partners and organizations.

Using this model results in the BIA marketing the Downtown area as a vibrant space that people will want to visit, strengthening the sense of community and establishing the Downtown and its businesses as places people want to be.

*The Return on Investment (ROI) takes into consideration social engagement & population reach in combination with event facilitation and business interaction.*

## ~\$61,000 INVESTMENT

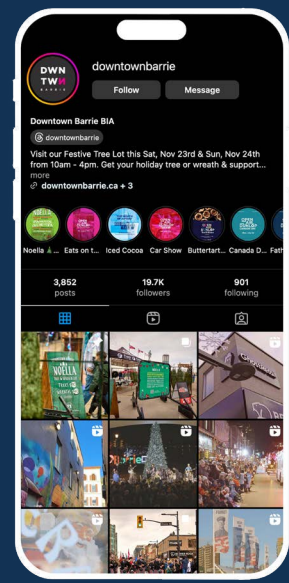




# A Look Forward


Utilizing our marketing model we will be further refining and focusing our marketing dollars, activities, and direction to get the best return on investment. A specific focus of bringing visitors to our website and connecting them to four calls to action: connect to a digital storefront, connect to a live event, sign up to the BIA newsletter, purchase a Downtown Barrie Gift Card.

## DIGITAL MARKETING 2024 STATS



 **Facebook**

| Followers   | Views        | New Followers |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>7.1K</b> | <b>62.9K</b> | <b>473</b>    |

 **Instagram**

| Followers    | Views       | New Followers |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>19.4K</b> | <b>1.1M</b> | <b>3,500</b>  |

 **X**

**Created New Profile**

| Newsletter   | Emails Sent     | Total Email Volume |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
|              | <b>211</b>      | <b>239,000</b>     |
| Subscribers  | New Subscribers | Open Rate          |
| <b>3,900</b> | <b>934</b>      | <b>46.6%</b>       |

| Ghost Retail | Video Plays  | Website Impressions | 30+ Press Releases                |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
|              | <b>2,077</b> | <b>35,000</b>       | <b>&gt;\$125k in Earned Media</b> |

“ We are continuing to build out our social media presence along with our digital and traditional marketing plan. We are investing in producing high quality content that positions Downtown Barrie in a positive light and is inclusive of the entire downtown Barrie community. The BIA marketing strategy focuses on the ‘downtown area’ that includes 300+ businesses but does not promote each individual business. However, it is structured for downtown businesses to be able to utilize the BIAs followers and corresponding exposure and audience reach.

-Downtown Barrie BIA Board of the Management

# COMMUNITY







# Public Realm Investor

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## Why is investing in the public realm important?

At its inception in 1970, the BIA concept was based on the importance of investing in ‘the space between and surrounding the buildings and the businesses’ - the public realm. Investing in the public realm creates a vibrant and enjoyable sense of place that attracts visitors to the Downtown.

A BIA aims to generate a personal connection for visitors (by way of beautification investments as simple as flower planters and banners or as complex as large public buildings, venues & parks) to public spaces strengthening a visitor’s connection to your business. BIAs that are invested in the public realm recognize that the backbone to a successful Downtown begins with drawing visitors to it by making it a sociable, exciting and vibrant environment.

*The Return on Investment (ROI) is the creation, enhancement, and beautification of the public realm within the Downtown area.*

## ~\$154,275 INVESTMENT





## Downtown Barrie Mural Program - (continuing development) 2024

The nooks and crannies of the Downtown present an opportunity for creativity and artistic expression, additionally this creates a safer and more inviting atmosphere. The new Downtown Barrie BIA Mural Project now has over 6 world class murals and we will be continuing to build upon.

- Strawberry Wall (Maple St) - Bareket Kezwer & Monica Loney
- Swift - Lakeshore Mews Alleyway (Dunlop St East) - Clandestinos
- Windows Into the Past (Dunlop St West) - Maple Convenience
- Shak's World (Maple St) - Clandestinos
- Fab Tray - P\_zza Alleyway (Dunlop St East) - 16 local artists.
- Hot Air Balloons (Dunlop St East) - Clandestinos
- 2024! Mary St Mural - Name to be determined
- 2024! The Land Knows Us - re-installed on Collier St Parkade

## Downtown Safety & Security Partnerships 2024

The City of Barrie Council has identified Community Safety and a Thriving Downtown as two key strategic priorities. The City is committed to working with the County of Simcoe as the social service provider and homelessness support; the Barrie Police Service and the Downtown Barrie BIA to address the public realm challenges. The following are initiatives that each partner is collaboratively pursuing:

- **City** - Explore all avenues for taking legal action to stop illegal drug dispensaries
- **City** - Investing in more funding for police presence
- **City** - Implemented the CNCC prisoner drop-off shuttle diverting over 230 people from Barrie since Fall 2023
- **City** - Staff cleaning city-owned alleyways in the Downtown to address property standards issues to help ensure cleanliness & community safety
- **Police** - Goal of the Enhanced Community Safety & Well Being Initiative is to work to reduce harm, address social disorder concerns and work collaboratively with stakeholders to assess & adapt our approach as needed
- **Police** - Increased visible presence of Barrie Police Service members in the Downtown core, including sworn members, special constables, citizens on patrol and auxiliary volunteers

- **Police** - Extended hours of coverage to increase the presence of Barrie Police Service
- **County** - Implemented & expanded a Community Safety Program with teams in the Downtown core to enhance safety for all residents
- **County** - Launched a Library Human Services Navigator to link vulnerable residents to services
- **County** - Increased funding to street outreach programs to connect homeless individuals to services including shelter
- **County** - Launched a funded partnership to pilot addiction treatment & transitional post-treatment services to women experiencing homelessness
- **County** - Funded enhanced daytime drop-in services including funding new food programs & warming/cooling programs

## LakHouse Condo Occupancy & Debut Condo Phase 1 Progress

2024 was the first full season of the most recent residential development taking occupancy - the LakHouse Condo on Dunlop St East. Since taking occupancy a noticeable observable increase in pedestrian flow happened. This included walking dogs, couples and groups walking into the Downtown and utilizing the waterfront. The BIA is looking forward to the imminent occupancy of the first phase of the Debut Condos on Dunlop St West in early 2025.

## Future Downtown Development - The Marshall Green Report

### Downtown West Focused

- **New Soccer Stadium at old Central Collegiate grounds**
- **New Performing Arts Center at old Sea Cadets grounds**
- **Renovated Ball Park at Queen Park**

In 2024, Marshall Green was commissioned by the City of Barrie to produce the Marshall Green Report which was a researched recommendation of locating and developing a number of public venues including a stand alone soccer stadium to support the Simcoe Rovers soccer team on the old Central Collegiate grounds, a new performing arts centre on the waterfront in the old Sea Cadets location and the redevelopment of Queens Park to support a potential relocation of the Barrie BayCats baseball team. This report provided a promising outlook of potential development that could attract 1000s of visitors to the downtown over all 4 seasons of the year.

**The BIA will be following the progress of these recommendations from the report.**





# Policy & Partner Influencer

## Why is a Policy & Partner Influencer important?

With strong Strategic Plans (Strategic Action Plans), BIAs become integral vehicles for communicating localized business opportunities and challenges to policy makers, government partners, local community agencies and commercial organizations. By embracing a cooperative relationship with these partners, BIAs are able to advocate and influence positive change on behalf of the Downtown area, its businesses and the local community.

The ability to share captured data and effectively address policies & investment helps establish the right environment to contribute to building our local businesses and community. Creative problem solving and a strong working relationship with all key partners keeps the BIA on your side for creating a vibrant and exciting Downtown area.

*The Return on Investment (ROI) is strong relationships and a collaborative working approach to local challenges and opportunities.*

## ~\$371,343 INVESTMENT



Tourism Barrie and the Downtown Barrie Business Association (BIA) enjoy a longstanding partnership of promoting the downtown core to residents and visitors as an attractive and vibrant place to live, work and play. The BIA's redevelopment of Meridian Place & Memorial Square provides a great opportunity to further enhance tourism in Barrie with concerts and events.

-- Kathleen Trainor, Executive Director, Tourism Barrie

# GROSS DOWNTOWN PRODUCT



'The Gross Downtown Product (GDP)' - is a term coined by the Downtown Barrie Business Association (BIA) and is a riff on Gross Domestic Product, the measurement of a nation's overall economic activity. It's a terminology that has now been adopted by BIAs across the country.

This Key Performance Indicator was designed to quantify the total economic impact, specifically the value of all goods sold and services produced in a downtown over a given year.

## \$2.9M IN COMPLETED PROJECTS



EVENT FACILITATORS  
**\$320,000**



AREA MARKETERS  
**\$45,000**



POLICY & PARTNER INFLUENCERS  
**\$175,000**



PUBLIC REALM INVESTORS  
**\$2,300,000**



## AWARD WINNING BIA

LANDSCAPE ONTARIO, MERIDIAN PLACE (2020) • ONTARIO BIA ASSOCIATION, 2 AWARDS, MERIDIAN PLACE (2018) & DOWNTOWN MARKETING (2022)  
TOURISM BARRIE, PRESIDENT'S AWARD (2017)  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPER'S COUNCIL OF ONTARIO, MERIDIAN PLACE (2018)  
ONTARIO GENERAL CONTRACTOR'S ASSOCIATION, MERIDIAN PLACE (2019)

# OUR COLLECTIVE GROSS DOWNTOWN PRODUCT

GENERATED

**\$130,500,000**

IN TOTAL SALES

RESULTING IN

**\$16,950,000**

OF HST REMITTANCE

**4X**  
TAX REVENUE/ACRE

**3X**  
ASSESSED VALUE/ACRE

COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENT  
**\$170,841,000**

COMMERCIAL + RESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT  
**~\$500,000,000**



WHAT IF OUR BIA MEMBERS WERE 1 BUSINESS?  
WE WOULD CONSISTS OF OVER  
**1,875 EMPLOYEES**

IN THAT CASE WE WOULD BE RANKED LOCALLY AS A  
**TOP 5 PUBLIC & PRIVATE EMPLOYER**



# Budget

## What is unique about our budget?

At the inception of BIAs as organizations, a fundamental decision that was decided upon was how it was going to be funded. Many options were analyzed including voluntary annual dues (much like a Chamber or Tourism organization). What was settled on was essentially a 'self taxation'. This connects a BIA to its local municipality as it is administered & facilitated through the property tax roll as a special levy within the designated BIA geographic area.

The budget is determined & approved independently by the BIA Board, then it is approved through Council and collected for the BIA by the municipality. This is important as it permits the BIA organization an absolute opportunity to focus on investing the budget back into the BIA area without the distraction of collecting payments or selling memberships. The Downtown Barrie BIA allocates & adjusts its budget within the Four Pillars according to the list of action items within its Strategic Action Plan. Comparative budgets of BIAs with a similar sized geographic boundary & business mix:

**Guelph: ~\$786,000**

**Collingwood: ~\$750,000**

**Kitchener: ~\$1.4 Million**

**Kingston: ~\$5.5 Million**



2024 Total Budget

**\$726,433**



2025 Proposed Total Budget

**\$755,000**



2024 BIA Levy

**0.425211%**



2025 BIA Levy

**TBD**



2024 Operational Budget

**\$621,433**



2025 Proposed Operational Budget

**\$645,000**



2024 Capital Budget

**\$105,000**



2025 Proposed Capital Budget

**\$110,000**



2024 Commercial Assesment

**\$170,841,000**



2025 Commercial Assesment

**TBD**



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