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BARRIE

DOWNTOWN BARRIE BIA 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

AWARD WINNING!



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello everyone! As Chair of the Downtown Barrie BIA Board of Management, I am incredibly proud to reflect on what has been a remarkable year for our downtown. Supported by a dedicated Board of Directors, staff, and community partners, 2025 has been a year of renewed energy, connection, and success.

This past event season truly brought downtown Barrie to life. The relaunch of the Troubadour Festival was a major highlight, a spectacular series that welcomed over 100,000 visitors and generated an estimated \$4 million in local economic activity. It was more than just a music festival — it was a celebration of creativity, collaboration, and community spirit that reaffirmed Downtown Barrie as a vibrant cultural destination.

Alongside Troubadour, the BIA's expanding lineup of events, from Open Air Dunlop and the Noella Tree Lighting Celebration to seasonal markets and mural unveilings, continued to attract thousands of residents and visitors, showcasing the heart and soul of our downtown.

We continue to strengthen partnerships with the City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie, Barrie Police Service, and many local organizations to ensure downtown remains a thriving and welcoming destination for everyone.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on building momentum, supporting our local businesses, and creating more reasons for people to visit, stay, and celebrate in the heart of our city — Downtown Barrie.

Steve Ricalis

Chair, Downtown Barrie BIA Board of Management



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2025 has been an extraordinary year for Downtown Barrie — one defined by connection, creativity, and community spirit. I am incredibly proud of how our organization continues to evolve and the collective progress we've made in strengthening the heart of our city.

The Troubadour Festival was undoubtedly a highlight of the year, along with the Open Air Dunlop Series drawing over 200,000 visitors to our downtown and generating more than \$10 million in economic impact. Beyond the numbers, it was a celebration of music and togetherness, and the Local Opener Showcase stood out as a shining example of community collaboration, giving 12 talented local performers the opportunity to share the stage with some of Canada's top headliners.

While social challenges such as homelessness and addiction continue to impact our downtown, we are encouraged by the growing alignment among all levels of government, police services, and social agencies who are working together to address these complex issues with compassion and purpose. The Downtown Barrie BIA remains a committed partner in fostering a downtown that is not only vibrant and prosperous, but also safe, inclusive, and welcoming to all.

As we look ahead, our work continues across our four key pillars, event facilitation, area marketing, public realm investment, and policy & partner influence. Each initiative we undertake reinforces our mission to support local businesses, elevate downtown experiences, and sustain the momentum that is transforming Downtown Barrie into a destination like no other.

Craig Stevens

Executive Director, Downtown Barrie BIA



BIA Board Members

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

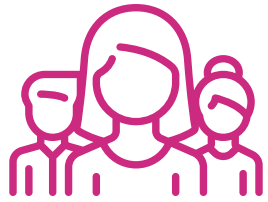
BIA Staff Members

Craig Stevens
Executive Director

Stacey Zubczyk
Operations Manager

Cam Stamper
Creative Development Coordinator

Rebecca Kokosarevic
Marketing, Events & Membership
Coordinator



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+.

~\$155, 365 INVESTMENT

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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

250,000+ total annual visits

Event Facilitator

2025 was a landmark year for events in Downtown Barrie, highlighted by the highly anticipated reintroduction of the Troubadour Festival. The BIA proudly brought nationally recognized Canadian headliners Dean Brody and Brett Kissel to the Meridian Place stage, drawing more than 10,000 attendees across both events and establishing a new benchmark for what’s possible in this signature downtown venue.

The Troubadour Festival was strategically paired with the Classic Car Show and Eats on the Streets Open Air Dunlop, creating a seamless blend of live music, family fun, and culinary experiences that significantly boosted both attendance and economic impact. The festival’s success reaffirmed Downtown Barrie as a leading destination for arts, culture, and entertainment in the region.

Another standout moment came with the Alley Cat Jam, held during the Eats on the Streets weekend. Led by internationally renowned muralists The Clandestinos, the event brought together over 25 local and regional street artists for a full-day live mural jam in Dunlop Mews. The creative energy continued with a DJ spin battle and a professional street-style breakdance competition featuring prize money, transforming the downtown core into a vibrant urban art and music hub.

The BIA events continue to bring thousands of residents and visitors downtown to experience our historic core in a safe, family-friendly, and inspiring environment, reinforcing the Downtown Barrie BIA’s role as a dynamic facilitator of community connection and cultural vibrancy.



OVER \$10 MILLION IN
ECONOMIC IMPACT

250,000+
TOTAL ANNUAL VISITS



TRUBADUR FESTIVAL

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





Area Marketer

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



“

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 community. The BIA marketing strategy focuses on the 'downtown area' that includes 300+ businesses and 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

2025



2025 continued to strengthen the Downtown Barrie BIA's marketing framework, connecting all the "dots" of our communications and promotional strategy. At the core of this model is our website, which serves as the primary hub for visitors, residents, and businesses to access the latest downtown events, promotions, and initiatives, reinforcing our four key calls to action: connect to a digital storefront, connect to a live event, sign up for the BIA newsletter, and purchase a Downtown Barrie Gift Card.

Our social media channels continue to be powerful outreach tools, engaging audiences with vibrant content that drives traffic back to our website as the single source of up-to-date information. Complementing this digital ecosystem, the BIA issued over 50 press releases throughout the year, resulting in substantial earned media value that provided an impressive return on investment, multiplying the impact of our communications budget.

The BIA's weekly newsletters continue to play a key role in keeping both the public and members informed. Our external newsletter, with over 5,000 subscribers, delivers timely updates on downtown events, experiences, and community news, while our internal newsletter keeps more than 400 member businesses and partners connected and informed about BIA activities and opportunities.

To further amplify our reach, we invested in traditional and digital media, including radio partnerships, online campaigns, and outdoor digital billboards, ensuring consistent and wide-reaching messaging across platforms. A grant partnership with RTO7 helped elevate our digital advertising campaigns during the event season, expanding our reach to new audiences across the region.

Through this integrated marketing approach—connecting digital engagement, earned media, and targeted paid promotion—the Downtown Barrie BIA continues to grow visibility, build trust, and attract visitors and investment to our historic downtown core.

Digital Marketing 2025

Website

 **Total users**
82,416

 **Total interactions**
446,956

 **Total views**
154,909

Top 3 pages
Troubadour (29,160), Homepage (21,393), Butter Tart Festival (12,316)

Instagram

 **Followers**
21.8K

 **Views**
2.3M

 **New Followers**
3,686

 **Total Visits**
29.3K

 **Interactions**
31.2k

 **Link Clicks**
698

Facebook

 **Followers**
7.5K

 **Views**
1.0M

 **New Followers**
617

 **Total Visits**
16,738


 **Interactions**
9002


 **Link Clicks**
3284

Threads

 **Total Visits**
3,318K

Communications

 **Total Number of Press Releases**
54

 **Earned Media**
\$75,000

Newsletter

 **Emails Sent**
306

 **Open Rate**
46.6%

 **Total Email Volume**
265,808

 **Subscribers**
4,439 External - 3,433,
Internal - 327

 **New Subscribers**
957

COMMUNITY





Public Realm Investor

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.

~\$150,075 INVESTMENT





Downtown Mural Program | 2025

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.

- The Land Knows Us - Pink Wall (Chase McEachern) - Alanah Jewel
- 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
- Home - Shak's World (Maple St) - Clandestinos
- 'Downtown Barrie' (Lakeshore Mews) - Blaze
- Fab Tray - Alleyway (Dunlop St East) - 16 local artists.
- Hot Air Balloons (Dunlop St East) - Clandestinos
- Shalak Collab (Dunlop Alleyway) - Shalak Attack Womens Artist Collab
- Name (Maple St) - Monica Loney
- Illuminate - (Mary St) - Clandestinos
- **2025! Alley Cat Jam (Dunlop Mews) - 25 artist collaboration**

Downtown Winter Patio Program | 2025

The Downtown Barrie Patio Program has become one of the city's favourite seasonal attractions, with over 20 patios bringing energy and connection to our pedestrian-friendly core. It's helped make Downtown Barrie the patio place to be.

Building on this success, and in collaboration with the City of Barrie and Flying Monkeys Craft Brewery, the program is now expanding year-round. After a successful 2024 winter patio pilot, the 2025/2026 season will welcome up to six winter patios, continuing to grow downtown as a four-season destination.

Downtown Pedestrian Counter Program | 2025

The Downtown Barrie Pedestrian Counter Program, delivered in partnership with Invest Barrie, now features 12 non-photographic sensors along Dunlop Street East and West and Meridian Place. These counters provide daily pedestrian flow data, giving the BIA valuable insights into how people move through the downtown. This data strengthens day-to-day planning and enhances event programming with clear, evidence-based understanding of visitor activity.

Downtown Safety & Security Partnerships | 2025

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

Further, in September 2025, the City of Barrie issued a State of Emergency to address the ongoing challenges of homelessness and addiction in the City. It called for a full complement of support services to those in need and alignment of government support.

Future Downtown Development - The Marshal Green Report - Continued Support | 2025

In 2024, Marshal Green was commissioned by the City of Barrie to produce the Marshal 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 continues to be following and supporting the progress of these recommendations from the report.



Policy & Partner Influencer

Why is a Policy & Partner Influencer important?

With strong Strategic Plans (Strategic Action Map©), 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.

~\$388,796 INVESTMENT



GROSS DOWNTOWN PRODUCT



'The Gross Downtown Product (GDP)' - is a term coined by the Downtown Barrie 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

\$171,242,176

COMMERCIAL + RESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT

~\$500,000,000



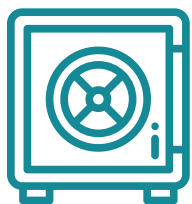
WHAT IF OUR BIA MEMBERS WERE 1 BUSINESS?
WE WOULD CONSISTS OF OVER
1,875 EMPLOYEES

IN THAT CASE WE WOULD BE RANKED LOCALLY AS THE

**#1 PRIVATE
EMPLOYER**

&

**#4 PUBLIC
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: ~\$500,000

Kitchener: ~\$1.4 Million

Kingston: ~\$5.5 Million



2025 Total Budget

\$755,236



2026 Proposed Total Budget

\$798,599



2025 BIA Levy

0.441034%



2026 BIA Levy

TBD



2025 Operational Budget

\$645,236



2026 Proposed Operational Budget

\$677,952



2025 Capital Budget

\$110,000



2026 Proposed Capital Budget

\$120,647



2025 Commercial Assessment

\$171,246,176



2026 Commercial Assessment

TBD



DWN
TW
BARRIE

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