



**SUBJECT: State of the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) 2019**

**TO: Planning and Development Committee**

**FROM: Department of City Building - Planning Building and Culture**

Report Number: PB-03-19

Wards Affected: 1, 2

File Numbers: 560-08

Date to Committee: July 9, 2019

Date to Council: July 15, 2019

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**Recommendation:**

Receive and file department of city building report PB-03-19 providing an update on the State of the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) 2019.

**Purpose:**

This is the ninth report in a series of annual reports since the inception of Core Commitment, Downtown Burlington's Strategic Plan.

The purpose of these annual reports is to provide an overview of the prior year's highlights and to assess the current state of both of Burlington's BIA areas: Downtown Burlington and Aldershot Village.

This report aligns with the objectives set out in Burlington's Strategic Plan 2015-2040, particularly with respect to strategic direction 1: A City that Grows; and subsection 1.1e, which states: "small businesses contribute to the creation of complete neighbourhoods where residents are close to goods and services."

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**Background and Discussion:**

As is tradition, staff brings an annual report to Council to provide an account of the accomplishments, challenges and indicators or metrics of the health of the two BIA areas. The initiative started as a means to report on the progress of the City's Core Commitment Downtown Strategic Plan and has been expanded to include an overview

of the Aldershot Village BIA's yearly work as well. This report acknowledges and celebrates the uniqueness of each BIA area and is not intended to be a comparison of the two areas.

## **Aldershot Village BIA**

The Aldershot Village BIA was established in 2004 and supports approximately 250 retailers and service professionals along an 8km stretch of Plains Road spanning from the Queen Elizabeth Way to Highway 6, capturing properties on either side of the Plains Road road allowance. The Aldershot Village BIA is highly committed to the Aldershot community through partnerships with the Aldershot Community Honour Roll, Plains Road Village Vision Group, Partnering Aldershot and Alderfest Community Festival, among many others.

The Aldershot Village BIA is composed primarily of small businesses which are accessed by car and are generally less walkable and pedestrian friendly than businesses in other areas of the City. This is reminiscent of the area's transition from a highway, to a multi-purpose arterial and mixed-use corridor.

Aldershot continues to experience significant growth and change and Plains Road and the Aldershot GO Mobility Hub area continues to attract intensified new development and businesses.

## **Year in Review**

2018 was a very exciting and successful year for the Aldershot Village BIA. The BIA opened up a store-front office at 195 Plains Road East and was able to get permanent visibility and a dedicated meeting space. The Board also saw long-time Chair and inaugural member, Kelvin Galbraith step into a new role as Ward Councillor and the BIA staff successfully increased the name and presence of the BIA through a number of special events including five BIA Markets. The following is an overview of some of the initiatives and projects that were undertaken by the Aldershot Village BIA in 2018.

### *Development*

Aldershot continues to experience a significant amount of residential and mixed-use development, focused around the Plains Road corridor and Aldershot GO Station. There are currently 147 residential units approved or under construction along Plains Road and within the BIA boundary. Many of these units are incorporated into developments containing at-grade retail units. A possible 730 units are under review or appeal. Adjacent to the BIA boundary there are 421 units under construction at 101 Masonry Court, and another 1610 units possible units under review.

Particularly noteworthy, was the opening of the new “Gateway of Burlington” gas station and grocery store which opened at the west-end of the BIA (1134 Plains Rd West) in 2018. It is expected that mixed-use development will continue along Plains Road in the coming years.

### *Arts and Culture*

This past year, a new public art piece called *Dwelling* was installed on Plains Road in the median near the intersection of Plains Road and Francis Road. The art was created by artist Xiaojing Yan. *Dwelling* has six house shapes in different sizes made of stainless steel. The artwork creates a marker for the community and a sense of identity and belonging. This piece is part of the City’s public art collection.

### *Special Events*

Community outreach and special events are an integral part of the work of the Aldershot Village BIA. In 2018, the Aldershot Village BIA held another successful Christmas tree lighting event with approximately 300 people in attendance. The BIA hosted also five successful market events where BIA members were able to participate as vendors and many were able to establish new customers as a result. The BIA also sponsors an award through the Aldershot Community Honour Roll for a business that provides an outstanding contribution to the Aldershot community. Additionally, the Aldershot Village BIA is a significant contributor to the Alderfest event.

### *Aldershot GO Mobility Hub Planning*

The Aldershot GO Mobility Hub is a locally recognized Mobility Hub centered around the Aldershot GO Station. Area Specific Planning of the City’s Mobility Hubs began in 2017. The Aldershot GO Mobility Hub study area boundary is comprised of an area of approximately 800m around the GO Station, south of Highway 403, including Waterdown Road and extending both east and west along the Plains Road corridor.

During both 2017 and 2018, there were multiple public engagement opportunities around the vision for the Aldershot GO Mobility Hub. At the end of 2017, a preferred land use concept was presented to Council. On July 12, 2018, the conversation about the draft precinct plans for Aldershot GO, Appleby GO and Burlington GO continued at a Council Workshop of the Committee of the Whole. Currently, the work on the Aldershot GO Mobility Hub is on pause as the Region’s Official Plan Review process is underway. As the process continues, the Aldershot Village BIA will continue to be engaged.

### **2019: The Year Ahead**

The Aldershot Village BIA is at a critical point in its growth. It is no longer a newly established BIA and has gained considerable momentum and presence in the community. In order to take their work to the next level, the Aldershot Village BIA is planning to embark on a process of Strategic Planning for the short term. Out of this plan, key initiatives for the next 3-5 years will emerge and will position the BIA to better address the needs of its members and the community and will further increase the presence of the BIA within Burlington. Staff will report back upon completion of the Strategic Plan.

### **Burlington Downtown Business Association**

The Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDDBA) was established in 1980 and supports approximately 420 businesses including a range of retail and service commercial establishments, restaurants and professional services, among others. The BDDBA BIA area, expanded in 2015, has a western boundary of Maple Avenue to Ontario Street. It captures both sides of Ontario Street over to Brant Street. The BIA area then extends on either side of Brant Street up to Ghent Avenue. The eastern boundary of the BIA extends from Brant Street along Caroline Street, down the west side of Martha Street, and along Lakeshore Road on both sides to Smith Avenue.

The Downtown continues to experience significant development and development pressures and continues to be a tourism destination for Burlingtonians and people through the GTHA alike.

### **Year in Review**

The BDDBA had another eventful year in 2018, which marked “Year II” of their current three-year strategic plan, Focus 2020. In 2018, the BDDBA successfully delivered 85% of its targeted work and welcomed 26 new businesses. They also successfully began to apply their membership endorsed *Statement of Guiding Principles*, which act as their official commenting position on development applications.

The BDDBA co-sponsored Sound of Music’s Downtown Streetfest, a 3-day event over the Father’s Day weekend, with programming designed to get people out of Spencer Smith Park and into downtown businesses. 2018 brought Streetfest farther up Brant Street to Caroline Street and increased the offerings to capture a broader business mix.

Downtown Jazz Fest, in partnership with the Burlington Performing Arts Centre, was a resounding success, with each of the 4 performances having over 400 patrons. The

BDBA was also quick to prepare one-of-a-kind programming to make Roger's Hometown Hockey event a success and our Downtown event ready. This included the unveiling of the BDBA's vinyl window marketing campaign, "Celebrate Downtown".

The BDBA was successful in raising more than \$40,000 in sponsorship and completing multiple beautification initiatives including the installation of new, heritage-style street signage in all of the areas of the expanded BIA boundary and contributions to the construction of a raised planter bed along the Elgin Promenade.

### **Core Commitment Update**

On November 4, 2013, Council approved the revised and updated Core Commitment, which established a new vision for the downtown together with a set of guiding principles and a new set of recommended actions. With respect to the latter, Core Commitment includes a number of strategic initiatives intended to support and strengthen Downtown. The original Core Commitment was adopted and approved in May 2005.

Core Commitment is referenced in the City's Strategic Plan 2015-2040 as the strategic action plan for the downtown. It is set out in the City's Strategic Plan that the recommendations of the Core Commitment will be put in place for the downtown and extend where possible, to other urban centres.

### **Core Commitment Initiatives**

Core Commitment includes an implementation strategy and a series of strategic initiatives, approved in principle by Council, subject to budget approval. The table attached as Appendix A provides a review and status update on these initiatives. The initiatives identified in the implementation plan are largely completed. Core Commitment is due to be updated, either through a review of the existing plan or a new strategic plan process, reflective of the vision of the community. Staff will report back to Council with a proposed Terms of Reference including a project timeline, estimated cost and engagement plan, following the scoped re-examination of the adopted Official Plan.

### **Initiatives Completed**

The initiatives generated out of the Core Commitment document are nearly complete. Appendix A provides an update on the Core Commitment Initiatives.

## **Other Initiatives**

The following is an update on other initiatives identified in Core Commitment, as well as several downtown projects underway.

### *Burlington Beach Regional Waterfront Park Master Plan*

On May 25, 2015, Halton Regional Council approved an updated Master Plan that provides direction to Regional staff for the future park development. Phase 1 of the implementation of the Burlington Beach Regional Waterfront Park Master Plan was completed in 2017 and included an upgraded gazebo, concrete walkway, pedestrian lighting, benches and tree planting. Phase 2, which was completed in 2018, included improvements to the promenade (asphalt re-surfacing and bollards), concrete surfacing at seating areas and pathway at west end, benches and a new safety railing along a section of the concrete wall. Future phases include environmental and technical studies prior to detail design and implementation at Beachway Park.

### *The Elgin Promenade*

Identified through Core Commitment as a strategic initiative to improve pedestrian connections, the Elgin Promenade multi-use path takes advantage of the existing underground TransNorthern Pipeline and regional trunk sanitary sewer easements that run east-west through the downtown. Phases 1-3 of the Elgin Promenade project are completed and are being enjoyed by the community.

Phase 4 of the Elgin Promenade was approved for construction in 2020 through one-time funding provided by the Federal Gas Tax to the City of Burlington.

### *Pop-Up Patio Pilot*

The Pop-Up Patio program is currently entering the final year of the pilot program. Upon completion of the 2019 Pop-Up Patio season, staff will be reporting back to Council with recommendations on next steps for the program. This report will include results of a public engagement process aimed to capture the experiences of downtown residents, restaurant patrons and pop-up patio operators among others. Staff would like to point out that Pop-Up Patios do not fall under the Temporary Use By-Law provisions being contemplated in report PB-35-19.

### *Civic Square*

Due to accessibility concerns and failing infrastructure, city staff identified the need to repair and revitalize the existing Civic Square. In 2018, public consultation was undertaken in order to get public feedback on some improvements to Civic Square and then again in 2019 to determine if anything had been missed from the 2018 public engagement. The revitalization of Civic Square was approved in the 2019 Capital Budget, and additional funding identified through the one-time Federal Gas Tax funds, however, further conversation about budget and design are anticipated to take place in 2019.

### *Streetscape Design Guidelines*

City Building Department report PB-50-19 provides an update on the Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines. This report is being considered in the same reporting cycle.

### *Downtown Precinct Plan*

In April 2018, the former City Council adopted a new Official Plan for the City which included a new precinct plan for the Downtown. In February 2019, Council provided staff the direction to re-examine the policies of the Adopted Official Plan. On May 21, Council considered staff report, PB-49-19 which outlined the work plan for the scoped re-examination of the Adopted Official Plan. Through this work, a revised precinct plan will emerge and will form the basis for multiple initiatives in the Downtown.

### *Waterfront Hotel Planning Study*

The Waterfront Hotel Planning Study kicked off in March 2017 to comprehensively plan this key waterfront site and guide the property owner in its redevelopment. Three public meetings/workshops and two community surveys were conducted in 2017. In November 2017, an update on the status and progress of the study was presented to Council at the Planning and Development Committee meeting. From January to April 2018, ongoing stakeholder engagement sessions were held.

PB-23-18 was brought to the Planning and Development Committee in June 2018 and established a set of key policy directions to guide the development of a final concept. Through the work completed to date, there is a lack of consensus among all parties around what constitutes an appropriate development for this

property. Staff will re-activate the discussions related to the Waterfront Hotel property and report back to the Planning and Development Committee in in Q2 2020 with an augmented work plan, including details on timelines, a new public engagement plan and any additional budget required to support this work.

## **New Initiatives**

### *Downtown Performance Indicators*

In 2015, Planning Staff brought a report on the State of the Downtown (DID-2-15) which included a series of downtown performance indicators, developed using the Results Based Accountability (RBA) approach. Since these indicators were developed, there have been mixed results in their application. The metrics were well-intended and were an attempt to meaningfully measure the success of the Downtown, however, there are multiple metrics for which data is not consistently available, relies heavily on the data collection of third parties, or which has never been available. Additionally, since the creation of these metrics, the role of the Special Business Area Coordinator was expanded to include the Aldershot Village BIA.

As such, staff is planning to bring to Council a “toolkit” of metrics, developed based on best practices and in line with the work undertaken by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association. The intent is to create a suite of metrics which can be drawn upon as applicable for each of the BIAs in a way that is consistent, meaningful and contextually appropriate.

Appendix B provides a complete summary of the current metrics and the results for Downtown Burlington, as well as a selected snap shot of Aldershot Village BIA.

### *Downtown Parking Utilization and Needs Study*

The Downtown Parking Utilization and Needs Study will assist in examining the way parking is used in the Downtown, identify areas which have parking constraints, and lay the ground work to determine if and where additional parking is required. An approved policy framework guiding the development of the Downtown is required to be in place prior to the commencement of the Downtown Parking Needs Study. Once initiated, it is expected that it will take 12 months to complete.

*City Wide Parking Standards Review*

In June 2019, Council approved of a staff direction to proceed with Zoning By-law amendments to implement the recommendations of the City Wide Parking Standards Review study. At this time, the study does not include recommended parking rates for intensification areas, including the Downtown. Following approval of the adopted Official Plan, parking standards for Downtown will be established through the Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review and informed by the Downtown Parking Utilization and Needs Study.

*Pedestrian counter*

The City currently has a pedestrian counter which is used throughout the city to monitor pedestrian traffic. The counter was installed on the west side of Brant Street, just north of Pine from January to July (end) 2018.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Total Pedestrian Traffic</b>	<b>Daily Average</b>
January	24,350	785
February	23,513	840
March	35,045	1,130
April	36,563	1,219
May	57,448	1,853
June	56,226	1,874
July	50,772	1,683

Courtesy of: Transportation Services

Staff is happy to report that the pedestrian counter was returned to the Downtown by the end of June 2019.

*Development*

The Downtown has experienced a significant amount of development activity including mixed-use and residential development inquiries, applications and construction activity. The City Building Department will provide a report on the City of Burlington Growth Analysis Study which was prepared to inform the growth analysis work being undertaken by Halton Region, through PB-19-19, in this same Council cycle.

### *Arts and Culture*

The City's public art program continues to expand and enhance the quality of life of Burlingtonians. In 2018, the Downtown added two new pieces of public art to the City's Public Art Collection; Portal, a mixed-media reflective structure and Squeeze, a urethane resin material set in a fence, both apart of the Elgin Promenade. Please note in Appendix B that the number of Downtown pieces in the City's Public Art Collection appears to have been reduced from 2017. This is accounted for by the removal of the listing of four pieces from the Public Art Collection that were not commissioned by the City. While they remain in our Downtown for the enjoyment of visitors and residents alike, they are not physically counted in the City's Collection.

### *Special Events*

In 2018, the Downtown hosted a number of special events as it does annually. This past year, 372 events were held in the Downtown, 181 of which were held between May to September. This is slightly less events held than the previous year, attributed to poor weather and a spike in the number of events held in honour of Canada 150. It was estimated that these events brought 661, 208 people to the Downtown. Hometown Hockey, Ribfest, Sound of Music, Candlelit Stroll, Treats in our Streets and the Santa Claus Parade are significant contributors to the large number of visitors to the Downtown.

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## **Financial Matters:**

N/A

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## **Connections:**

Both the Aldershot Village BIA and Burlington Downtown Business Association continue to work closely with the city on all matters relating to their respective geographical areas and beyond. Both Brian Dean and Judy Worsley, Executive Directors, were instrumental in the preparation of this report. Staff will continue to foster relationships with both BIAs to continue to advance the work programs of the BIAs and the City. Staff would also like to thank the numerous contributors to this report, including Tourism Burlington, Burlington Economic Development Corporation, Staff from Transportation Services, Capital Works, Special Events and Parks and Recreation.

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## **Public Engagement Matters:**

N/A

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## **Conclusion:**

Both of Burlington's BIAs continue to evolve and make Burlington a great place to live, work, shop and play. The year ahead will be an exciting one as the Burlington Downtown Business Association will soon celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> year and the Aldershot Village BIA will embark on the creation of a strategic plan. Staff will report back on the creation of a new or a revision to Core Commitment and the creation of a tool-kit of metrics to assess the success of both BIAs for the future.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Special Business Area Coordinator

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## **Appendices:**

- A. Core Commitment Initiatives Tracking
- B. Aldershot and Downtown Performance Indicators

## **Notifications:**

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**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, Director of Finance and Director of Legal. Final approval is by the City Manager.