

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

DOWNTOWN
BUSINESS COMMISSION **HALIFAX**





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Cover Photo: Tourism Nova Scotia & @daveyandsky
Photo (left): Tourism Nova Scotia & Alexa Cude



CEO'S MESSAGE



Paul MacKinnon
Chief Executive Officer

More People. More Sales. More Investment.

This year has brought both great success and challenges to Downtown Halifax. As we've hopefully put the immediate impacts of the pandemic in the rear-view mirror, we now come face-to-face with the longer-term challenges of an increasingly hybrid office workforce, lack of sufficient residential development to meet demand, skyrocketing costs, and rising social and public safety issues. Amongst the challenges however, this year also saw the return of cruise ships, conventions, large events, and a bustling night time economy.

This report takes a look back at the year that was, and highlights what the Downtown Halifax Business Commission (DHBC) accomplished in the areas of Advocacy, Marketing & Communications, Membership Engagement, and Placemaking. It also takes a look forward, with a new three-year strategic plan that has us focusing on attracting people, increasing sales, and inciting investment in Downtown Halifax.

DHBC remains steadfast in its commitment to passionately pursue a more vibrant and prosperous Downtown.



WHO IS DHBC?

Downtown Halifax Business Commission (DHBC) is the *business improvement district (BID)* that represents 1,600+ businesses in the urban core of Halifax, Nova Scotia. We are a not-for-profit organization that works to passionately pursue a more prosperous and vibrant Downtown.

Guided by our focus areas: *Advocacy, Marketing & Communications, Membership Engagement, and Placemaking.* DHBC runs programs, projects, events, and initiatives to help make Downtown Halifax a better place to live, work, and play.

MEMBER PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

If your business is located within *DHBC's boundaries*, you are automatically a DHBC member. DHBC represents all organizations, including property owners and tenants, located in the area between the Halifax Waterfront and the waterside of Brunswick Street, and between the Cogswell Interchange and the south end of Barrington Street.

For more information on the many member programs, supports and resources DHBC provides, please contact us anytime:

info@downtownhalifax.ca | 902-423-6658 | 1546 Barrington Street, Suite 104 | downtownhalifax.ca



Kimberly Dossett
Director of Finance & Operations



Allana MacDonald Mills
Director of Marketing



Jayme Lynn Butt
Communications Manager

DHBC STAFF



Jonathan Goldson
Placemaking Manager



Jessica Pettigrew
Membership Engagement Manager



Raf Peligro
Marketing & Communications Coordinator

*Administrative Assistant: Vacant
Navigator Outreach Coordinator: Vacant*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Christian Rankin, Chair
Co-Owner
Obladee Wine Bar

Marilisa Benigno, Vice Chair
President
Benigno Group of Companies

Issmat Al-Akhali, Secretary Treasurer
Owner/Operator
Granville Hall Student Residence &
Cameo Hotel & Suites

Erin Esiyok-Prime, Member at Large
Director of Marketing & Communications
Events East Group

Ashwin Kutty, Member at Large
President & CEO
WeUsThem Inc.

Sanjeev Pushkarna, Member at Large
Manager, Customer Solutions
Nova Scotia Power

Melissa Carey
Director of Restaurant Operations & Private Events
RCR Hospitality Group

Kristan Hines
Senior Vice President, Corporate & Public Affairs
NATIONAL Public Relations

Joyce Liu
Founder & CEO
Lumi Studios Media + Production

Matthew Martel
CEO
Black Business Initiative

Nathalie Morin
Co-Owner & COO
Rousseau Chocolatier

Blaise Morrison
Manager of Development & Planning
The Armour Group Limited

Jeff Ransome
General Manager
Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel

Jake Whalen
Senior Advisor
Halifax Regional Municipality



Photo (right): Lauren Thomander, Charcoal Marketing

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



DOWNTOWN BUSINESS COMMISSION HALIFAX

MISSION

To passionately pursue a more prosperous and vibrant Downtown.

VISION

Canada's Favourite Downtown.

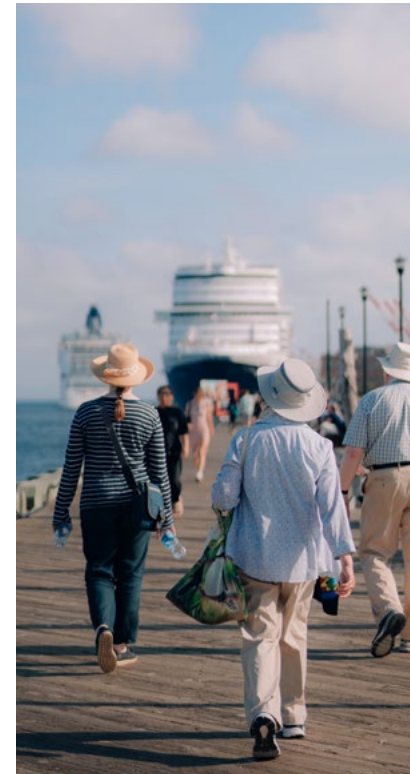
VALUES

Agility, Community, Data Driven, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IDEA), Leadership, Professional Relationships.

STRATEGIES

Advocacy
Partnerships
Placemaking
Promotion

Downtown Halifax Business Commission



ATTRACT PEOPLE

TARGET:

By 2026, Downtown Halifax's annual visitation will exceed 14.5M; the residential population will be 22K with an employee base of 20K.

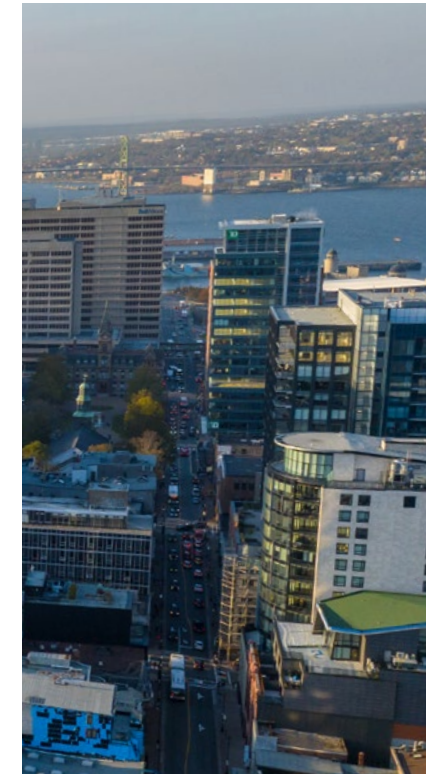
downtownhalifax.ca



INCREASE SALES

TARGET:

By 2026, Downtown Halifax's ground floor sales will be \$430M and ground floor vacancy will be under 10%.



INCITE INVESTMENT

TARGET:

By 2026, significant progress will be made on 30 new Downtown Halifax projects, there will be 1K new residential units, and HRM will have committed to a significant streetscape project.

ADVOCACY



DHBC represents the collective voice for its members when speaking with government, media, and other stakeholders.

HIGHLIGHTS

Represented Downtown Halifax at the Business Improvement Summit, in Vancouver, B.C., in September 2022.

Successfully advocated to delay the implementation of on-street paid parking on weeknights and Saturdays.

Leadership member of the International Downtown Association of Canada and together developed a priority paper on federal priorities for Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) nationally.

Active participants in the Canadian Urban Institute's (CUI) "Bring Back Main Street," "Restore the Core," "City Talk," and "CUI x Local" initiatives.

Communicated with Premier Houston's office and Provincial Government Ministers on various Downtown issues, including our disappointment in the delay of the new Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

Continue to advocate for continuation of pandemic support programs.

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Council passed a policy that differentiates commercial tax rates, ultimately benefiting Downtown.

Successful inclusion of Downtown and Main Streets recommendations in Halifax Partnership's 2022-2027 Economic Growth Plan.

Consultation with HRM on heritage conservation districts; amendments to sandwich board bylaw; e-scooter regulations; and Cogswell District, Brunswick Street, and Lower Water Street bike lanes.

Left: DHBC's CEO being interviewed at the SaltWire Holiday Parade of Lights. Photo: Michelle Doucette



DHBC's CEO regularly meets with community and business leaders. Here, he is discussing Downtown's economy with U.S. Consul General for Atlantic Canada, Lyra Carr.



DHBC's CEO delivering coffee and treats to the Cogswell District construction team.



Mayor Mike Savage helped DHBC's CEO celebrate 20 years on the job in July 2022.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

35

DHBC's Event Sponsorship Program invested \$109K into 35 events happening in Downtown Halifax.

Photo: Lyndsay Doyle

DHBC's Marketing & Communications team work with our members, partners, stakeholders, event organizers, and media to get more "feet on the street." This is done by promoting the businesses, attractions and events that make Downtown Halifax a destination for all ages.

HIGHLIGHTS

Social Media: 129K followers (including 4,571 new) and over 7M impressions across all DHBC social platforms.

Website: Over 369K website views on downtownhalifax.ca, 40.6K views specifically on DHBC's [events page](#).

Provided grant funding of \$7.5K to 7 member businesses to participate as vendors in the 2022 Evergreen Festival.

Coordinated a "Buy Local Again" campaign with ACOA and 9 other BIDs from around Nova Scotia.

Became a [Rainbow Registered](#) business.

Partnered with Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission to offer free ferry service during March Break.



BE LOCAL. BUY LOCAL.

Photo: Lauren Thomander, Charcoal Marketing

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



*Photo (top left): Tourism Nova Scotia & @daveyandsky
Photo: (bottom left): Stoo Metz Photography*

Partnered with Tourism Nova Scotia, Discover Halifax, and other local photographers to add hundreds of new photographs to DHBC's collection.

Coordinated the Urban BIDs summer events campaign with Bell Media (radio and TV).

Ran 3 summer & 2 winter marketing campaigns and distributed "Welcome Back Cruise Ships," "Pups on Patios," and "Buy Local Again" collateral to members.

Welcomed a new Communications Manager in September 2022.

Featured 101 businesses in the 2022 [Downtown Halifax Holiday Gift Guide](#).

MARCH 13 - MARCH 18

FREE FERRY

11 am - 2 pm
SHOP, EAT & EXPLORE
BOTH SIDES OF THE HARBOUR!



Promoted [DELIGHTFUL DOWNTOWN](#) with an extensive radio, print, and digital ad campaign.

Ran print & digital ads with Discover Halifax, Curated Magazine and Guide, Sea Nova Scotia, Neptune Theatre, Family Fun Halifax, The Coast, Eastlink, SaltWire and more.

Offered free on-street parking during the holiday season, Valentine's Day, and March Break.

Revamped the Downtown Halifax Member Update and distributed it to over 1K members on a bi-weekly basis.

Facilitated over 20 interviews with media to promote DHBC's advocacy and placemaking projects.

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



Photo: Lauren Thomander, Charcoal Marketing

DHBC works hard to build relationships with our members. It is important that we are seen as advocates on common issues and act as a resource when it comes to problem-solving. We also offer engagement opportunities through networking events, information sessions, and workshops.

As a DHBC member, you are entitled to many member programs and resources, including, but not limited to:



Please contact jessica@downtownhalifax.ca for details on member programs and resources!



Photo: Stoo Metz Photography



Photo: Michelle Doucette Photography



HIGHLIGHTS

Completed a DHBC website rebuild to better serve our members and community.

50 Downtown Spotlight interviews completed, written, and featured on our website and social media.

Coordinated 11 member events with record attendance including our 2022 AGM, Holiday Social, First Aid/CPR training for members, and many Welcome Centre activations.

Distributed a membership-wide pulse survey to plan accordingly for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Results showed increased engagement and awareness year over year, including a 130.8% increase in open-ended feedback.

Hired a Business Census Researcher to complete an Atlantic Canada Downtown Census among members. Over 1K entries were completed.

Delivered welcome packages to every new business, connecting them to DHBC's team, programs, and resources.

Added 3 new people to the Membership Engagement Action Team.

Pro-actively communicated with our members via dedicated e-blasts, phone calls, event invites, media advisories, and over 100 in-person visits.

Maintained DHBC's member database as well as a list of businesses that opened, closed, or relocated during 2022-2023.



Photo: Michelle Doucette Photography

PLACEMAKING

DHBC believes that all spaces have the potential to be “places.” We champion best practices in Downtown planning, design, management, and utilization of public spaces that inspire vibrancy in Downtown Halifax.

HIGHLIGHTS

Awarded 7 “Gritty to Pretty” grants worth \$47K, which included 3 new murals from our BIPOC grant stream. Visit downtownhalifax.ca/arttour to view.

Invested in Granville Mall to encourage more usage by installing bistro tables, chairs, LED tree wrap lights, and a public art installation called “The Blooming Seating” which was a partnership with OSO planning + design.



Photo: Joyce Liu, Lumi Studios Media + Production

76 Through DHBC’s “Beautify Your Business” grant, \$36K was invested into 76 Downtown businesses wanting to improve and enhance their storefront.

PLACEMAKING

Photo: Richard Yang, Lumi Studios Media + Production

15

DELIGHTFUL DOWNTOWN light shows happened at Grafton Park from October to March, attracting over 100,000 spectators (775 people daily).

NEW LIGHT SHOWS: Mi'kmaq History Month, Halifax Explosion, African Heritage Month, Heritage Day, and International Women's Day.



Hired 6 Downtown Crew members to help maintain the cleanliness and beauty of Downtown, during peak tourism months.

Did you know? Last summer, the Crew removed 460K cigarette butts scattered throughout the Downtown core. On average, they collectively pick-up close to 6K butts a day.

LED tree wrap lights, a 26-foot-tall holiday tree, lamp pole lights, and decorations across Peace and Friendship Park, Grafton Park, Raymond Taavel Park, and Bedford Row.

Maintained 13 poster kiosks and poles that are used for community advertising.

Installed banners that promoted the Old South Suburb Heritage Conservation District and various Downtown events.

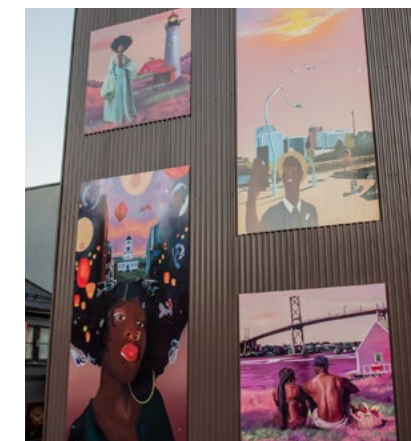


Installed the DELIGHTFUL Gift Box on Sackville Landing for the Evergreen Festival in December.

Removed over 100,000 sq. ft. of graffiti.

Installed 146 Christmas wreaths along Downtown streets.

30 painted picnic tables (including wheelchair-accessible tables) across 7 Downtown locations.



NAVIGATOR OUTREACH PROGRAM



Photo: Stoo Metz Photography

Downtown Halifax's Navigator Outreach Program offers direct support to homeless and street-involved individuals on the streets of Downtown Halifax. The initiative, entering its 15th year, is a partnership between DHBC and Spring Garden Area Business Association, and is partially funded by HRM. This program is but one essential component of a comprehensive strategy to address homelessness in our community.

HIGHLIGHTS

358

individuals were supported in securing housing, health and wellness services, employment, photo ID, and medication access.

Assisted in finding permanent housing for 23 people in HRM.

The biennial "Point-in-Time" (PiT) count was conducted in April 2022, determining that over 586 people were experiencing homelessness in the HRM.

Began a monthly photo identification clinic, in partnership with Halifax Public Libraries and Access Nova Scotia, and as a result 641 people obtained photo ID.

Organized an annual memorial event for people who died while experiencing homelessness.



Photo: Tourism Nova Scotia and @daveyandsky

DHBC IS ATLANTIC CANADA'S LARGEST BID

WHAT IS A BID?

The idea of an organization devoted to serving a particular business improvement district (BID) is a very simple one: businesses in a defined area, typically a Downtown or commercial main street, hold a vote and agree to create a special levy which is added to their commercial taxes. This levy goes to a specific organization with a mandate to do advocacy, marketing & communications, membership engagement, placemaking, and other projects of common interest. The very first BID was created on Bloor Street, Toronto, in 1970. In the 50+ years since, hundreds of BIDs have formed in Canada, thousands in the United States, and many more around the world.

DHBC WAS FORMED IN 1987

Downtown Halifax Business Commission (DHBC) was established through a vote of the businesses in the Downtown in 1987. Once created by vote, the levy is mandatory. It is charged to all commercial property owners, identified as

a separate line item on their municipal tax bill. Landlords typically then charge this proportionately to their tenants. HRM collects the levy and remits it to DHBC. Though the levy is DHBC's primary revenue source, the organization leverages it to raise additional revenues in the form of grants, sponsorships, project revenues, etc.

DHBC is led by a Board of Directors, consisting of members who are elected to their positions at the Annual General Meeting each June. The Board creates an annual budget and sets the appropriate levy amount to fund it. This amount is then approved by HRM Council, as part of their annual budget process.

DHBC always seeks to provide excellent value for members. Whether you are a large multi-tenant, a business owner, or an employee, we are happy to meet with you to discuss the return on investment you are getting from your DHBC membership.

2023-2024 BUDGET

REVENUE

Members Levy	\$1,770,378
Sponsorships, Grants & Partnerships	\$207,405
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Carry forward from 2022-2023	\$1,977,783
	\$57,753
	<hr/>
TOTAL REVENUE	\$2,035,536

OPERATING EXPENSES

Advocacy	\$240,651
Marketing & Communications	\$382,500
Membership Engagement	\$87,620
Placemaking	\$436,983
Administrative	\$887,782
	<hr/>
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$2,035,536

SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$(0)
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Photo: Michelle Doucette Photography

**DOWNTOWN HALIFAX
BUSINESS COMMISSION**

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