

**Simcoe BIA Board of Management
Strategic Planning Meeting
Wednesday January 8, 2025 at 12 :00 pm
Riversyde 83**

Meeting Notes

Present:	Board Members	Community Members
	Tiana Moe Laura Downey Morgan Xiola Marianne Ward Nathan Kolomaya Stephen Khalla Councillor Doug Brunton Councillor Adam Veri	Joe Botscheller - Volunteer (Tax 2000) Vince Gallea - Volunteer (Retired) Gord Rollo - Volunteer (Retired) Councillor Alan Duthie Karen Matthews - Executive Director Simcoe & District Chamber of Commerce Les Anderson (Staff) Josh Parsons (Staff)
Regrets:	Clarence Burke Joy Allgood	

1. Review of 2024

The board briefly reviewed the successes of 2024 and the team was commended on a job well done.

2. Looking Ahead to 2025

Tracking Event Success

- The group discussed the need for clear metrics to determine the success of promotions and events.
- For example, *Treats in the Streets* was deemed successful based on treat distribution, but broader success metrics need to be identified.
- Questions raised:
 - What should these metrics be?
 - Is it the BIA's responsibility to track and define them?
 - Should the focus of events be driving sales or increasing awareness of the downtown core?

Community Feedback

- Anecdotal evidence and social media engagement suggest that the community is pleased with current events.
- Business participation in events has increased annually.

Encouraging Business Participation

- Ideas included providing support for bulk orders (e.g., treats for events) to make participation easier for businesses.

Year-Round White Lights

- The idea of installing year-round white lights on the light posts, inspired by the Orillia BIA, was introduced and discussed briefly.

Parking Challenges

- Parking downtown remains an ongoing issue with many of the BIA members. The BIA will submit a letter to the Norfolk County Budget Committee regarding increased parking enforcement in the downtown core.
- Potential solutions discussed included:
 - Increased bylaw enforcement.
 - Revisiting or removing the two-hour parking limit.

3. Priorities for 2025

The following areas were identified as strategic priorities for 2025:

- **Bylaw Enforcement:** Enforce the regulations that exist downtown.
- **Filling Vacant Storefronts:** Work with Norfolk County and local realtors in marketing and filling available real estate.
- **Garbage and Cleanliness:** Enhancing downtown upkeep, including street cleaning and sidewalk repairs.
- **Downtown Awareness:** Promote the downtown core and what it has to offer.
- **Building Strategic Partnerships:** Build relationships with other organizations to support downtown initiatives.
- **Increased Beautification Efforts:** Enhancing the visual appeal, incorporating new ideas such as the year-round white lights on the light posts.
- **Business Owner Engagement:** Offer education and support for local business owners.
- **Pedestrian-Friendly Spaces:** Explore ways to improve walkability and safety downtown as well as wayfinding or directional signage.
- **Use of Financial Reserves:** Utilize the existing reserve funds for key projects.
- **Advocacy for Residential Expansion:** Work with Norfolk County staff and local realtors to promote more residential development downtown and encourage existing approved developments to get started.
- **Retail Growth:** Try to attract more retail businesses to the downtown.
- **Significant Properties for Sale:** Work with Norfolk County and local realtors to find qualified buyers for the significant properties for sale, with the potential of retail and residential use.
- **Storefront Upkeep:** Work with existing business owners and property owners to encourage better maintenance and curb appeal for businesses/properties.
- **Leadership Development:** Strengthening leadership and advocacy within the downtown community.
- **First Impressions Program:** Explore opportunities to enhance the initial perceptions of the downtown area.

4. Survey the Members

- A “draft” survey of the BIA members was included with the agenda package. This will be discussed at the February Communications/Events Committee meeting.

5. What Could Be the Game Changer for Downtown Simcoe?

- Is there a significant project or an event that would put Downtown Simcoe “back on the map?”
- Further brainstorming and discussion will take place at the committees and board meetings.

Priorities Assigned to the Committees

Communications / Events

1. Downtown awareness
2. First impressions program
3. Business owner engagement
4. Leadership development

Beautification

1. Garbage and cleanliness
2. Storefront upkeep
3. Pedestrian-friendly spaces
4. Increased beautification efforts

Simcoe BIA and Norfolk County

1. Bylaw enforcement
2. Use of financial reserves

BIA, Norfolk County, Others

1. Filling vacant storefronts
2. Significant properties for sale
3. Retail growth
4. Advocacy for residential expansion
5. Building strategic relationships