

UPTOWN WATERLOO BIA **STRATEGIC PLAN** 2012 – 2017



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THE PROCESS

Online survey...

Draw it Up...

Visioning and obstacles session...



UpTown Waterloo is the envy of many communities of similar size and scale. It has shown positive growth, prosperity, ease of doing business and great community activism. However, faced with the complexity of a large-scale Light Rail Transit project in the coming years, the uncertainty of key economic factors, and managing anticipated rapid growth, the UpTown Waterloo BIA needs to work together to find a common practical vision for the next 5 years. Unlike other strategic planning processes, this process worked within the complexities identified to build consensus through collaborative exercises to go from strategic vision to actionable plans. The success of this plan will be seen in the way the BIA board, membership, and identified stakeholders, work on plan implementation using the tools developed and used in this process.

Starting broad, the process undertook a comprehensive and creative way to engage the wider BIA membership, as well as the general public around a common understanding of the needs and wants for UpTown Waterloo. An online survey was sent to over 400 BIA members for completion. The survey sought to understand how the membership feels about where the UpTown area is today, and what it will look like over the next 5 years. As well, a community 'Draw it Up' project was undertaken with the placement of over 400 paper placemats distributed to local cafés and restaurants. The general public were encouraged to draw their vision for UpTown Waterloo on these placemats. The result was a visual representation of creativity and ideas generated through a fun and participatory activity.

The next step was the visioning and obstacles session. This was completed with a group of 12 BIA members during a full day workshop. All BIA members were invited to attend. The outcome was a collaborative and consensus-based understanding of five areas of strategic vision for UpTown Waterloo.

After establishing the vision, the team identified obstacles that might be in the way of attaining the vision. It's important to understand the roadblocks to be able to clearly define a path towards meeting goals. The group identified a cluster of five strategic obstacles that would require strategies to overcome them.

The vision and obstacles were then taken to a wider audience. With over 30 participants, the BIA membership worked in teams to develop strategies to overcome each of the identified obstacles. The outcome was a collection of new and creative ideas. These ideas form an inventory of 'idea objectives' to help meet the overall vision for the next 5 years. The participatory nature of this activity allowed for a wider distribution of ideas, more creative exploration of possibilities and greater buy-in for concepts developed.

The board then refined these ideas into actionable plans. During a 2-hour process, the board built on the ideas generated in the strategy workshop and refined them into actions with timelines, deliverables and people assigned. This process has mapped out the first quarter of strategic activity for the BIA board and membership. This same process can be replicated by the board each quarter to keep moving actionable plans forward for each strategic theme.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Online survey...

Draw it Up...

Understanding the need to outreach to a broad representation of BIA membership, as well as gain feedback from the general public about their vision for UpTown Waterloo, the process created a two-tier plan for meaningful public engagement. Engagement can often be confused with consultation. Consultation is merely the task of asking and receiving opinions. Engagement involves participants in the strategic process—building on their user-generated ideas, and making their participation a foundation for the strategy.

Survey to BIA Membership

It was important to create a multitude of opportunities for participation among the BIA membership. Understanding that different options for participation would allow the board to bring a good representation of membership into the strategic process. The online survey was created and sent to all BIA members (over 400 listed) with a 10% survey response rate¹.

The survey was the first layer in the asset-based community development part of the planning process. The intent was to learn from the BIA membership at large what their thoughts were on the factors that contributed to the overall success or failure of a vibrant UpTown core.

The online survey link was sent out via the BIA staff to all of its membership. The following is a list of questions and coding to demonstrate the most prominent ideas, and comments.

¹ 40/400 responded to the online survey providing a 10% response rate. This is less than the average of 30% response rate for online surveys. Hamilton, M. B. (2003). Online survey response rates and times: background and guidance for industry. Tercent, Inc

1. What made you decide to live and/or own a business in UpTown Waterloo?

- Small town feel, close community, vibrant, but safe and clean (10)
- Family-owned businesses had been in community for many years (5)
- Proximity to public transportation and 'walkability' (5)
- Promise of new growth and developments (2)

2. Please describe a time when you were enthusiastic about doing something for your community.

- Volunteered time towards a community event or initiative
- Opened retail store

3. Think about what you most want UpTown Waterloo to be like in 5 years?

a. What does it look like?

- Sidewalks, pedestrian and bike "friendly" (8)
- Green—landscapes and gardens (4)
- Increased density (2)
- Outdoor cafés, lively streetscapes, vibrancy (5)

b. What do you see and hear?

- Trees, greenery, flowers (5)
- People walking around, pedestrian vibrancy, shopping/dining (8)
- Music, people laughing/talking, cultural events (7)

c. How has it changed?

- More people out walking, more vibrant and busier (4)
- Diversity of shopping and dining options (3)

d. What existing resources (i.e. organizations, programs etc.) could help achieve your vision?

- BIA (6)
- City of Waterloo (3)
- Developers and business owners (3)

4. Can you share an experience in UpTown when you really loved living in this community? What made it so enjoyable?

- Urban living, walking, enjoying the Square, restaurants
- Events—Buskers festival, Jazz festival, parades

Draw It Up

The Draw It Up was an integral part of learning and engaging the UpTown general community in the strategic planning process. Not only did the methodology used provide a new and interesting means of providing visual feedback, but it was also unique and therefore generated excitement and interest from the UpTown general public about the visioning exercise.

The Draw It Up placemats were distributed to 10 local eateries and cafes. They were distributed to half the establishments during the week of September 19-23rd, and the other half the next week of September 26-30th.

There were three different questions posed and the following is a sampling of the themes demonstrated in the drawings.

What do you think is UpTown Waterloo's gift to its citizens?

- Festivals/events
- Music
- Retail shopping
- Parks/green space
- Architecture and history
- Cafés and restaurants
- Safety and cleanliness

What three wishes do you have that would make UpTown Waterloo an awesome place to visit?

- Free parking
- Outdoor markets
- Carousel in the park
- Green spaces, flowers, trees
- Places for conversation
- Heated building for putting skates on in winter
- Free children's programming
- Children's play area
- World class restaurants
- Bike paths
- Better traffic flow

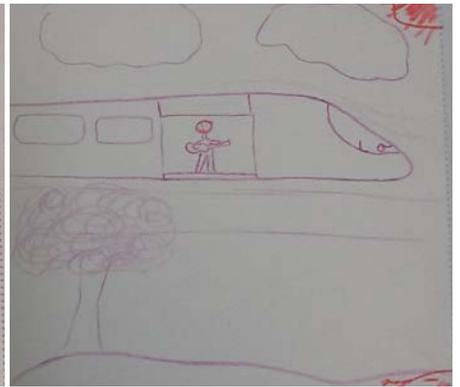
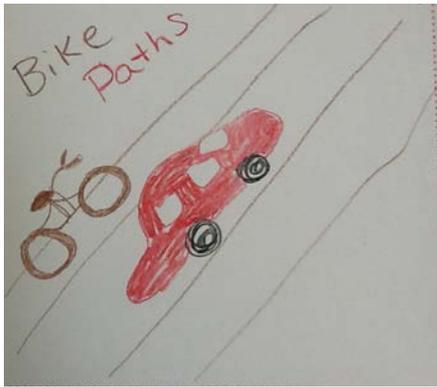
What's your gift to the UpTown Waterloo Community?

- Consumer dollars
- Smiles!
- My business
- Riding public transit
- Volunteering
- Taxes

What do you think is UpTown Waterloo's gift to its citizens?

What three wishes do you have that would make UpTown Waterloo an awesome place to visit?

What's your gift to the UpTown Waterloo Community?



VISION

Brainstormed...

Answers clustered...

Named and discovered...

Through a creative and collaborative process, those BIA members who attended the full-day vision and obstacles workshop, brainstormed answers to the following prompt question:

“How do you see UpTown Waterloo in the next 3-5 years?”

The answers were then clustered into groupings where ideas were built on to one another. The resulting clusters were then named by the group. The following is the practical vision for UpTown Waterloo BIA:

1. Who we are and what we want to be:

This was identified by the group as: a big city, with small town charm; a place that has pride and cultural diversity; a place that supports excellence for the future, but honours the heritage of the past; a place that is green and safe and attractive.

2. Designing Street Life:

This included the need for bike-friendly, bright and attractive streetscapes. This grouping also identified the challenges and opportunities posed by the construction of the LRT.

3. Support Diverse Economic Vitality:

This vision includes characteristics such as ongoing support for small, unique businesses, free accessible parking, and a 0% vacancy rate.

4. Community—Creating People Spaces:

Defining People Spaces as walkable, places for families, farmers' markets, bike rentals—things that entice regular use of the public square.

5. Unique place to be:

Some of the ideas that were generated to create a people place that is 'unique' include: great restaurants with great chefs, extended parking, interesting buildings and facades.

OBSTACLES

Attain the vision...

Uncover obstacles...

List roadblocks...

To be able to attain the vision that was defined by the group, they were also asked to uncover all of the obstacles that could prevent the realization of the vision. The following is a comprehensive list of all perceived roadblocks in the way of seeing out the UpTown Waterloo practical vision for the next 3-5 years.

1. Lack of participation:

Issues related to a lack of participation, were described as the need for more community, and small business participation, a general lack of time amongst us all, difficulties in communication and general BIA 'buy-in' and apathy among members.

2. Market forces that undermine our vision:

These outside forces were identified as an economic downturn, the influx of large 'out of town' developers, and rent increases that may impede diversity of renters.

3. Lack of leadership and vision:

This obstacle included thoughts around the lack of civic risk taking, opposition to change, the bureaucratic red tape and difficulties with city politics (ei., bylaw compliance).

4. Image appearing inaccessible:

This obstacle was centred around the challenges of how the UpTown area is perceived given specific difficulties such as LRT construction, the need to balance some conflicting priorities (parking vs. pedestrian vs. bike), and some of the repercussions of the late night life.

5. Physical limitations:

This obstacle relates to how some of the infrastructure difficulties are challenging for UpTown—such as old fire hazard buildings, lack of space, and parking north of Erb Street.

STRATEGIES

Ideation...

How can we overcome our obstacles?

"The Plan"

With a practical vision developed, and a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles preventing the realization of that vision, the BIA membership was asked to work in teams to creatively brainstorm strategies to overcome the obstacles. The first step is to turn the obstacles into opportunity statements². Now viewed in the positive, the teams were free to think boldly and creatively to find a wide range of solutions. The teams were then asked to further refine their ideas by clustering them in categories of strategies. The result was participant-designed strategies to overcome roadblocks and move towards the practical vision.

The strategies were then organized into four strategic directions. The individual strategies are colour coded to show which obstacle they were originally addressing. The four strategic directions are:

1. Marketing and Communications
2. Advocacy and Relationship Building
3. Programs and Events
4. City Planning and Economic Development

With the four strategic directions in place, a small team from the board identified a set of key initiatives to focus the work of the plan for the next year. The full list of ideas and potential strategies for consideration are part of the Strategic Plan Appendix and are for use by the board to do annual planning. This process of determining the workplan and priorities of the organization should be done annually to ensure that work being done is focused on the current realities facing the UpTown BIA that year.

² The goal is to see challenges as opportunities and to make doable suggestions around solving problems. Opportunity statements are always worded in the format: "How might we...?"

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Marketing and Communications:

Where we are and where we want to be:

The work to date in the area of UpTown BIA marketing and communications has been tremendously successful. With an engaged marketing sub-committee and a knowledgeable staff, there a list of strong successes in this area. The group was keen, however, to look in new directions and seek out new marketing and communication ideas—ones that would ‘up the game’ as the UpTown BIA faces the impact of the pending LRT construction, as well as increased growth and development in the UpTown core.

There are four strategies that make up the Marketing and Communications Strategic Direction.

Promoting the benefits of UpTown

There are many reasons to visit and shop in UpTown. Using a variety of marketing tactics, understanding the features and benefits of UpTown can inform a marketing strategy building on the shop local program and UpTown bucks.

Marketing and Communications to celebrate UpTown content

The UpTown has a lot to offer. This strategy suggests a more targeted approach to specific areas within the Region that are of interest. Targeted marketing to specific neighbourhoods could be tracked within stores and restaurants to measure the impact marketing and communication is making. It’s just like tourism, but on a micro scale.

Proactive, Diverse and Accessible multi-media communications

Create a two-way conversation instead of just one-way marketing and communications. This strategy encourages discourse with members and the broader UpTown community about changes in the core, as well as basic communication about business services, LRT updates and feedback about the UpTown.

Telling the UpTown story

A multi-media approach to story telling, this strategy encourages a diverse range of activities to actively tell the UpTown story and attract more visitors. Specifically calling for more and better of use of social media, experience marketing and general advertising, Telling the UpTown story is about connecting with a diverse range of audiences within the diverse community.

1ST
YEAR
FOCUS

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Advocacy and Relationship Building

Where we are and where we want to be?

As the City of Waterloo rapidly grows in terms of population, the role of the BIA in the conversations regarding expansion is critical. For many years, the UpTown Waterloo BIA has enjoyed a friendly and partnered relationship with the City of Waterloo. From a governance perspective, the BIA board has had the representation of one or more city councillors, and has in recent years participated in quarterly meetings with the heads of city departments for a formal exchange of information and ideas. Going forward, the BIA membership has clearly articulated strategies and action plans for continued dialogue and partnership between the BIA board and the City of Waterloo. The role of the BIA needs to be expanded to include a prominent advocacy and relationship development strategy—one that will build the foundation for a strong and productive relationship with city officials and politicians.

There are three strategies that make up the Advocacy and Relationship Building Strategic Direction.

1ST
YEAR
FOCUS

Creating a 2-way Street

The BIA is looking for more two-way communication between the organization, its members and the City. This strategy would see more transparency in the communication that affects the UpTown businesses, in addition, the BIA is seeking more active opportunities to participate in the problem solving necessary to overcome challenges the core faces. This strategy would see more strategy nights where issues facing UpTown are provided to the membership, with the opportunity to strategize possible solutions.

Developing Advocacy

The core is surrounded by residential neighbourhoods and the residents who live in the core should be the biggest supporters. While in many cases this is likely true, there are numerous developments taking place in the core and these new residents should become the UpTown's newest brand champions. Active outreach and involvement by the BIA in welcoming these new residents, as well as outreach to existing residents would support the continued success of the UpTown.

Stronger partnership with city

This strategy is not about the municipality, but instead suggests that the BIA members need to form a stronger partnership with their community, with their city. This strategy sees UpTown Ambassadors walking the streets, a new urban sensibility and general pride in the UpTown. The UpTown BIA membership was difficult to engage; activities need to be undertaken to ensure that active participation takes place to form a strong tie between the city core and the people who live, work and play there.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Programs and Events

Where we are and where we want to be?

There is a rich history of UpTown BIA events that have created an energy, awareness and affinity among many in Waterloo Region for the UpTown core. Among the success stories, include: Buskers Carnival, the Jazz festival, UpTown Country and Ice Dogs festival. These events are seen as promotions that bring together the community, businesses and city around a common understanding of work, life, and play as key components to a thriving city centre. The BIA membership looked at building upon existing programs to help improve communication among UpTown businesses and see more targeted events that promote the UpTown retail experience. These three strategies are encouraged within the current landscape of events already taking place.

There are three strategies that make up the Programs and Events Strategic Direction.

Enhance city support

The UpTown requires programming that supports the development of new businesses and animation of less travelled parts of UpTown. The neighbouring streets to King get far less traffic and could be better supported through programming and events and draw visitors through the entire UpTown core. In addition to animation, an incubation program for new businesses could be developed, further supporting the development of the core and building on Waterloo's tradition of innovation.

1ST
YEAR
FOCUS

Integrating with more one-on-one support

Owning a business can be an isolating and lonely experience. It is hard for members to pull themselves away from their shops and restaurants to participate in all activities that the BIA offers. Integrating more one-on-one support would help bring the BIA to the members who need some help. Discovering new methods of delivering information to members, actively reaching out to understand problems members are facing, or moving the monthly BIA meeting around the core would begin to change the relationship between the organization and the membership. This strategy would also help the BIA focus their limited resources to the groups that need the most support.

Supportive and innovative inclusive events

Under the new events category, this strategy would see the development of new events focused on food, kids events and the further development of Open Streets, formerly Square 2 Square. The Open Streets event is an easy addition to the UpTown's roster of stellar events, due mainly to the volunteer board that is organizing it. Active participation in the Open Streets event is highly recommended since it is low hanging fruit for members to take advantage of the people being drawn into the core.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

City Planning and Economic Development

Where we are and where we want to be?

It was clear that the BIA membership have a passion and vision for the UpTown core that has implications for the way the UpTown is planned and economically developed. As previously mentioned, the BIA membership would like to see an increased importance placed on the role of advocacy and dialogue with the City of Waterloo.

There are six strategies that make up the City Planning and Economic Development Strategic Direction.

1ST
YEAR
FOCUS

Increase population

The population is growing in the UpTown. Developments are well underway and new residents will be moving in. The BIA should be part of understanding what the implications are and how best to support these new residents—after all, all of them will need the products and services offered by UpTown business owners.

Diversify business services

The UpTown has a delightful mix of independents and chains. This strategy would encourage the mix to be maintained, ensuring a unique shopping and dining experience in the UpTown, with the necessary addition of chains, which often act as anchors and draw visitors.

Physical changes to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety

More parking, increased visibility of the UpTown Loop and more bicycle friendly zones.

1ST
YEAR
FOCUS

Enhance usability

The better and more robust way-finding system would aid visitors and promote more foot traffic. The UpTown is very walkable and accessible by a significant residential community surrounding it. Creating a person-centric design and paying particular attention to the experience of those on foot will enhance usability of the UpTown.

Accessible unique retail opportunity

Stores open later. This is a difficult proposition for many businesses owners, however, it could be achieved by taking small steps and actively marketing those steps. One suggestion is to create an 'UpTown Night' where stores are open later and potentially restaurants participate by creating a Prix Fixe for those nights encouraging visitors to do some shopping and then stay for dinner. These types of experiences help drive economic development activities.

Building the UpTown familiarity and ease

Make it easy for people visiting the UpTown. One challenge that city cores face is the perception that if it can't be seen then it doesn't exist. Often this takes the form of visitors not heading to parts of the core that aren't viewed to be easily accessible. This strategy encourages the BIA to think about the experience of those coming into the UpTown and giving them an easy way to know what's around. Think of the map that greets you at the entrance to a mall. You can easily and quickly figure out where you are and where you want to go.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STRATEGY

Level of engagement...

Large/small venues...

Design Thinking methodology...

Continued concern...

Early in the process, the board and staff of the BIA had concerns about the level of engagement of the larger BIA membership in the strategic planning process. The original process called for a series of full day meetings that would have meant the completion of the strategy by the end of December 2011. As the process unfolded, it became clear that the engagement strategy needed to be flexible, multi-layered and creative to be able to appeal to a wide range of business participants.

The consultants worked with the BIA staff and board on a few options and tested them with the larger BIA membership. It was thought that smaller groups meetings at several different time slots would appeal to a greater number. When participation was less than expected, the plan was then altered to larger venues, with an evening time slot and the promise of food and refreshments. This was the most successful form of engagement for the strategic planning process.

At the core of the Design Thinking methodology is the ability to change and re-prototype as needed. This is what the process demanded and the end result was a relatively successful engagement of membership—one that can adequately meet the criteria for inclusive thought.

Recognizing that membership engagement is a continued concern, the BIA board underwent a short exercise to generate a few new ideas and opportunities that were outside of the framework of the strategic plan. Ideas generating from that exercise can be found in [Appendix B](#).

TOOLKIT

Toolkit...

How do we keep the plan 'in play'

It is vital to the success of this plan that the board and BIA membership are in continuous contact with the vision and actionable items that resulted from the process. To help equip the board going forward, the following tools have been included in this strategic planning report:

1. Vision/Action Plan poster

This poster is ideal to have in a visual location at board meetings, AGMs and other strategic gatherings. It reminds the board of the vision priorities and then outlines the next four months worth of actionable items.

2. The IDEA/ACTION LAB process

This process, already demonstrated to the board, is a great way to create actionable plans. The worksheets take into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of the idea in the present and future, the measurable accomplishment and what resources (personnel, financial, time etc.) are needed. It is recommended that this process be undertaken by the board each quarter or as often as necessary.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2012 – 2017 **APPENDIX**



APPENDIX A

EVERY IDEA MATTERS

This Appendix contains every idea written during the Strategy Night at the Brick Brewery. While the Strategic Plan lists the strategies without the clustered ideas that helped define them, the Appendix has every detail because they form the basis for future planning. The ideas listed in these pages should be considered thought starters and provide the committees with direction for how implementation might look when working on a strategy.

It should be noted that there is repetition among the ideas and this is important because it will help the UpTown BIA remember what was important to members during the time when this work was originally done in 2011/2012. Numerous mentions of the same idea suggest a collective will to see that happen, or it might suggest a particular problem that the community was facing. This document will help the organization remember what wasn't in place in 2012 when they consider the next strategic plan in 2017/2018. Despite a significant engagement issue among members, this part of the document should also demonstrate the creativity and diversity within the membership. The ideas range from practical to 'never-going-to-happen', but they all solve the challenges the organization faces. Use the creativity as a springboard for new ideas when doing annual planning.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Marketing and Communications:

Where we are and where we want to be:

The work to date in the area of UpTown BIA marketing and communications has been tremendously successful. With an engaged marketing sub-committee and a knowledgeable staff, there is a list of strong successes in this area. The group was keen, however, to look in new directions and seek out new marketing and communication ideas—ones that would 'up the game' as the UpTown BIA faces the impact of the pending LRT construction, as well as increased growth and development in the UpTown core.

The following is a list of ideas, clustered by strategies in the thematic area of marketing and communications:

Promoting the benefits of UpTown

- 'Shop local' program that works
- Community (BIA businesses and customers) get loud on issues
- BIA develops an education campaign to show why people should shop in UpTown and not in malls

Marketing and Communications to celebrate UpTown content

- Make UpTown a destination focused area—focus the message
- Market outside of King Street, Regina, Dupont, Princess, Spring, Caroline
- Market our limitations as positives
- Façade program more apparent

Proactive, Diverse and Accessible multi-media communications

- Communications with local BIA members
- How business services work
- Advertising
- Regular updates of information
- Accessible communication
- Advertise at universities
- Ask for feedback from the community
- Form groups to solve identified issues
- Introduce UpTown stores
- Demonstrate how the BIA helps UpTown

Telling the UpTown story

- Better one of a kind experience—not your box store smart centre
- Social media and news campaign
- Create an experience
- All BIA members resend info
- Attribute slogan
- Connect to bloggers
- Advertising in outskirts - new subdivisions
- External advertising
- Marketing through LRT construction
- Create destination advertising in tourism mags
- Use Facebook and Twitter
- Visitor centre
- Promote arts and culture
- Rogers community TV spots or interviews

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Advocacy and Relationship Building

Where we are and where we want to be?

As the City of Waterloo rapidly grows in terms of population, the role of the BIA in the conversations regarding expansion is critical. For many years, the UpTown Waterloo BIA has enjoyed a friendly and partnered relationship with the City of Waterloo. From a governance perspective, the BIA board has had the representation of one or more city councillors, and has in recent years participated in quarterly meetings with the heads of city departments for a formal exchange of information and ideas. Going forward, the BIA membership has clearly articulated strategies and action plans for continued dialogue and partnership between the BIA board and the City of Waterloo. The role of the BIA needs to be expanded to include a prominent advocacy and relationship development strategy—one that will build the foundation for a strong and productive relationship with city officials and politicians.

The following is a list of strategies, clustered by ideas in the thematic area of advocacy and relationship building:

Creating a 2-way Street

- Greater access to city council
- Better/more communication transparency
- Maybe establish a semi-permanent committee to see projects through
- Specific timeline around LRT
- To know what our discussions are achieving where do they go?
- Two-way communications where we feel we can actually affect change
- Better representation of the BIA at these idea gathering meetings

Developing Advocacy

- Incentives—UpTown dollars
- Accessibility of all people
- Affordable housing
- Programs for small business
- Link to local neighbourhood associations

Stronger partnership with city

- Speakers corner
- UpTown ambassadors
- Urban sensibility
- UpTown 'wow'—having Pride in UpTown
- All businesses code of conduct
- Community association engagement
- Partnership with all UpTown businesses

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Programs and Events

Where we are and where we want to be?

There is a rich history of UpTown BIA events that have created an energy, awareness and affinity among many in Waterloo Region for the UpTown core. Among the success stories, include: Buskers Carnival, the Jazz festival, UpTown Country and Ice Dogs festival. These events are seen as promotions that bring together the community, businesses and city around a common understanding of work, life, and play as key components to a thriving city centre. The BIA membership looked at building upon existing programs to help improve communication among UpTown businesses and see more targeted events that promote the UpTown retail experience.

The following is a list of ideas, clustered by strategies in the thematic area of programs and events:

Enhance city support

- Incubation program
- Rental control
- Activities/Place for kids/families
- Incentives
- Coupons
- More development on Regina St.
- Programs for new businesses

Integrating with more one-on-one support

- Determine what the issues are facing UpTown
- Info nights
- BIA rep for access issues (e.g. CNIB training)
- Move the monthly BIA meetings around the UpTown
- Ask members why they are not involved
- Connect with other BIA groups
- Kids events during meetings
- Quantify what we would consider 'good' participation
- Recognition program for members who participate

Supportive and innovative inclusive events

- School bus trips
- Lunch time events
- Restaurant hopping (try food!)
- Food festivals
- More annual events
- Contests for community
- Kids events
- Family events
- Open Streets

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

City Planning and Economic Development

Where we are and where we want to be?

It was clear that the BIA membership have a passion and vision for the UpTown core that has implications for the way the UpTown is planned and economically developed. As previously mentioned, the BIA membership would like to see an increased importance placed on the role of advocacy and dialogue with the City of Waterloo. As it relates to the current planning and execution of city plans, the following is a list of the ideas and strategies:

Increase population

- Support of housing developments
- Housing rentals above shops on King Street
- Accommodations in Waterloo on both ends of LRT

Diversify business services

- Offer new businesses/services
- Walk-in clinics
- Size restricted chain stores
- More city 'say' in who comes in
- Avoid too much emphasis on high-end shops

Physical changes to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety

- King streetscape—wider sidewalks
- More parking structures
- Trails pump up the loop visibility
- Parking—1000-car structure
- Bicycle-friendly roads accessibility

Enhance usability

- Way-finding signs (parking included)
- Enhance pedestrian traffic

Accessible unique retail opportunity

- More stores
- Unique services
- Businesses open extended hours
- More cabs at night
- Free parking
- Incentives
- Savings passport
- Emphasize free parking on weekends and after 6 pm.

Building the UpTown familiarity and ease

- Signage parking—way finding
- Bike lanes on King Street
- Long-term parking options
- Boundary signage—welcome to 'gate way'
- Bixie bicycles
- Rickshaws, free bicycles
- Walking access—convenience
- Attractions—bus tours, tourists, senior homes, neighbourhood, suburbs

APPENDIX B

ENGAGEMENT IDEAS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Discovery Workshop with Board

Board members were asked to identify some of the obstacles in the way of better engagement of membership and the board in BIA events and issues. After identification of obstacles, the board members worked on ideas that may have “traction” to increase membership engagement. The following is a list of their ideas:

Question: **What are the obstacles preventing BIA members from participating and engaging in the Strategic Planning Process?**

Obstacles

Small operators lack time. Large operators lack a sense of community.

Process seems long and cumbersome. Results seem too far away.

Main focus is running their business and don't have time to participate.

No understanding of what the BIA does—therefore have no interest in any of their initiatives.

Feeling that it may not change things for them.

Set in their ways.

Would rather spend any extra time with their families.

Hours difficult to engage as it conflicts with hours of businesses.

“What's in it for me?”

Unclear about how issues affect them personally.

Overwhelmed

Don't think we need to make any changes to what we are already doing.

Don't see value in process/participating.

Not aware of positive results of the BIA

Lack of interest

No one listens anyway, so why bother

The board was then asked to use the obstacles as a jumping off point to brainstorm ways to overcome those obstacles. The following is a list of the strategies that could create traction around engagement of the membership.

Inform people (flyers, emails etc.)

Show people that real things start with this type of process.

New ideas can bring great change.

Show people why its important.

Make issues/events worth their time—what out their interests and work backwards from there.

Demonstrate interesting global/national initiatives to show what is possible in urban areas.

Provide an in-depth explanation of what we are trying to achieve prior to trying to engage the membership.

Highlight how important the business community and their voice is to the core.

Visit the businesses and educate (monthly or weekly).

Get them out to events with their families!

Have an “UpTown App”—way to stay engaged that is easy.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

BEING A BOARD MEMBER IS CHANGING

There is a lot of work to be done and the UpTown BIA requires a new committee structure to support the new activities outlined in the Strategic Plan 2012 - 2017. New committees will be formed, with the current Marketing Committee being broken into two different groups. The new committees are: Advocacy and Relationship Building, City Planning and Economic Development, Marketing and Communications, Programs and Events, and Finance. Each committee will have a BIA Board member as its Chair, with the rest of the Board choosing a committee to be part of. Committee membership is open to the BIA membership and this should be seen as a precursor to joining the Board as a member.

NEW BOARD MEETING STRUCTURE

8:00 - 8:30 Board Meeting

The Board meeting will be shortened to 30 minutes, unless circumstances require a longer meeting. This portion of the meeting will be used for quick updates and discussion.

8:30 - 9:30 Committee Meetings

The latter part of the meeting will be committee focused and the Board will split into four groups to discuss the agenda for the larger committee meeting, provide an update on projects or work being done, in addition, this time will provide an avenue for checking back into the Strategic Plan and ensuring alignment.

