

UP TOWN WATERLOO



**2022
ANNUAL
REPORT**

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This past year has been one of many ups and downs, yet, based on our research and tracking, 2022 has also been a year of resilience and stability.

New business growth in Uptown is at 1.4% with an overall retention rate of 101%. Office and retail vacancy rates are declining. These numbers are definitely something to celebrate, especially after the last few years!

Our businesses have adapted, changing the way they operate and engage with their customers. Some have grown exponentially – taking them to places they never would have thought possible a few short years ago – and others held on for dear life hoping the lockdowns had ended and that they wouldn't have to close their doors. For all, the BIA was there to provide advice, ideas, coaching, funding, advocacy and an ear to listen.

February of 2022 marked our 50th anniversary. In tribute, we launched several special initiatives throughout the year including an incredible video series. We welcomed 18 new businesses to our fold, with a few more set to open in early 2023. For these reasons and more, we can and should celebrate. However, we need also remember, that for various reasons, we lost seven businesses and of those that weathered through the pandemic storm, many are still focused on recovery.

Traditional flagship events returned in-person in 2022 – including SunLife's Jazz Festival and Buskers Carnival as well as the city's Lumen Festival. The increasingly popular BIA markets – including our summer night market, Mayor's Oktoberfest Market and the new Winter Wonderland market – brought thousands of people to Uptown. By supporting other third party initiatives like the Winter Patio Party and FlamencoFest, vibrancy was added to our streets. After securing a significant grant, this past fall we began working with our City friends to improve and beautify Heritage Green – enhancing another Uptown space to be enjoyed by all.

We worked with businesses to once again close laneways and streets for patio and public activations. In an effort to encourage more people to visit and explore Uptown's many unique offerings, we grew our social networks through innovative media and advertising campaigns and kick started a new gift card program.

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (continued)

We continued our advocacy work with local, federal and provincial governments, as well as the media, to showcase how main street businesses were recuperating and how best to support them. We increased our funding programs to help businesses cover costs associated to events, special initiatives, vandalism, vibrancy initiatives, sidewalk activations and art through various forms.

Looking ahead, we are excited to support our membership as they work to build, expand, and for some, reinvent themselves – while staying true to what's important – thriving businesses and a flourishing economy, healthy lifestyle options, beautiful and useful outdoor spaces, innovative learning opportunities, caring neighbourhoods, impactful arts and civic engagement and sustainable development.

Please know that our Board and staff are here for you and proud to serve the heart of Waterloo.

Sincerely,



NANCY FOX
Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N. Fox'.



TRACY VAN KALSBECK
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Tracy Van Kalsbeek'.

2019 - 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Investor's Group
Chair



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City Councillor, Ward 7



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Beertown
Director



MELISSA DURRELL
Durrell Communications
Vice Chair



RYAN GOOD
Cabri Management
Director



MARK WHALEY
Waterloo MedTech
Director



KRISTEN HAMMOND
Treasurer



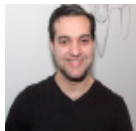
LAWRENCE GREAVES
Sorbara Law
Director



JANET WELDON
Sun Life Financial
Director



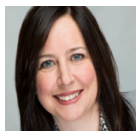
TRACY VAN KALSBECK
Uptown Waterloo BIA
Secretary



RAMI SAID
Revive Game Bar
Director



GABRIELLE ARVANITIS
Score Pizza
Director



KRISTIN SAINSBURY
City of Waterloo, Economic
Development Officer



NICK BENNINGER
Fat Sparrow Group
Director

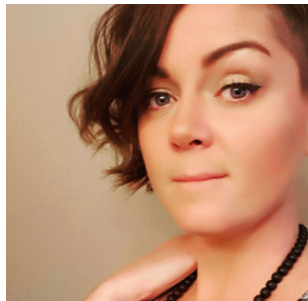


DANA SHORTT
Dana Shortt Gourmet & Gifts
Director

BIA STAFF



TRACY VAN KALSBECK
Executive Director



JANE BARKLEY
Marketing &
Communications
Manager



**DIEGO ALMARAZ
DE LA GARZA**
Program &
Placemaking
Manager



**DAWNE TAYLOR-
GILDERS**
Events & Outreach
Manager

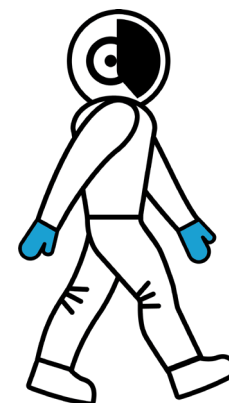


50th ANNIVERSARY



Officially established in 1972, the Uptown Waterloo Business Improvement Area (BIA) turned 50 in 2022, making us the second oldest BIA in the world! In celebration of this incredible milestone, we hosted numerous initiatives throughout the year to highlight our members and engage the community:

- A new logo was designed in house to highlight the 50th.
- Local film production company Digital Sabbath was commissioned to create a series of four videos (all publicly available on our YouTube channel) featuring a total of eight Uptown businesses to tell the real and personal stories behind the businesses.
- Collectible items were designed by local artists including a series of three limited edition posters (Steven Restagno, Della vanDokkumburg, Pamela Rojas), pins and patches featuring a new mascot 'The Uptown Explorer' (Jon Johnson), coasters, as well as 50th Anniversary totes (in house - Diego Almaraz).
- A Photo Contest engaged both amateur and professional photographers in sharing their favourite/best shots of Uptown Waterloo.
- 350 individual 'puzzle' pieces were created as part of a 50th Tessellation Project, designed by local artist Jason Panda, and then decorated by the community at events throughout the summer.
- In partnership with TOQUE, the BIA was advertised and several members were featured in editorial pieces in two issues with total distribution of 12,000 copies.



UPTOWN MARKETS

Our markets have increasingly become important as we put more of a focus on placemaking – making Uptown a must-visit, Regional destination.



Uptown Night Market

Started as a way to add vibrancy to the core while giving community members a safe way to interact during the pandemic, our summer market has now morphed into an evening enterprise – giving visibility to local vendors and adding to Uptown's lively night life.

This past summer, we moved the Uptown Night Market, with its 60 unique vendors, to the upper parking lot at the Waterloo Public Library. Combining culture and retail, the relocation allowed us to increase vendor numbers, offer onsite programming for kids in partnership with the library, add live performers and musicians and illuminate it all with some cool lighting. Total number of visitors: 6,254



Mayor's Oktoberfest Market

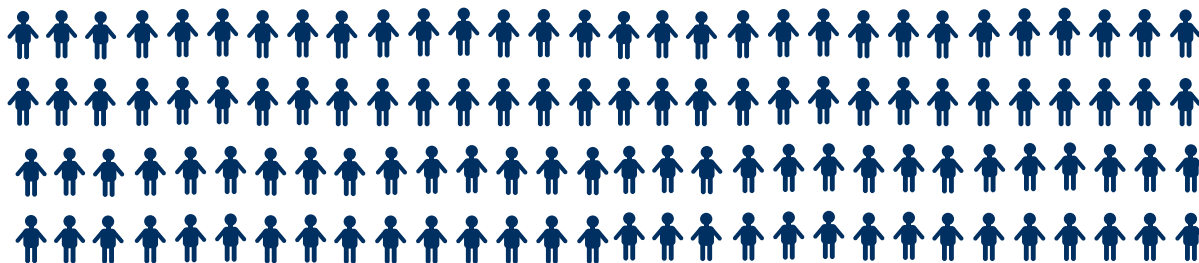
Oktoberfest is a long-standing tradition in our community and back by popular demand, was the Mayor's Oktoberfest Market. Held at City Hall, the one-day market featured a variety of local artisan, food, clothing, jewellery and service vendors – complete with special Oktoberfest-themed performances - that could be discovered throughout the event. This market has been a great way for us to get into the 'wunderbar' spirit and support local businesses and vendors. Total number of visitors: 3,012

UPTOWN MARKETS (continued)



Holiday Artisan Market

A new addition to Uptown Waterloo's Winter Wonderland initiative that included in-store promotions, special events, the official holiday tree lighting and visits from Santa, was the Holiday Artisan Market. Hosted on a Friday evening and Saturday at the beginning of December, the market could be found inside the Shops at Waterloo Town Square providing great ideas for holiday gifting. Live music and holiday-themed characters also added to the festive feel. Total number of visitors: 2,982



12,248
ATTENDEES

PLACEMAKING

Placemaking continues to be a priority for the BIA, as we grow the vibrant, identifiable and joyful Uptown vibe. Some of the 2022 placemaking projects in Uptown included:

- The temporary transformation of **Princess Street** into a vibrant, pedestrian-focused place (first envisioned in 2021). The 2022 edition of the Princess Street transformation included “The SLATS” installation (Street Lively Active Temporary Seating), created by local designer Amy Esplen. “The Winding Path” mural was restored, and planters with native trees and pollinator friendly species were placed throughout the street to provide shade and biodiversity to the otherwise sterile space. The objective for the intervention was to create a sense of wonder; a temporary place in the heart of the city where passersby could let time stop and reflect. In July, the Flamenco Fest organized an outdoor performance at the space that was attended by around 300 people. In September, as part of the city-wide LUMEN event, we organized a street party in which local drag queen Melody Bijou performed. This street intervention was in place from May to October 2022.
- The **Dominion Lane** closure to vehicular traffic was first implemented in 2021 to provide space for restaurant patios, allowing them to expand their outdoor seating capacity. Simple elements were added such as umbrellas, string lights and planters made of recycled wood pallets. The sense of enclosure provided by the historic urban form resulted in a unique experience for customers and anyone walking through the laneway. Dominion Lane also included the implementation of an Art Walk, in which six local artists painted back doors of businesses backing onto the laneway. The 2022 iteration of the Dominion Lane closure included all the elements from last year plus additional decorations and string lights. This laneway intervention was in place from May to October 2022.
- **Uptown Banner installation** – September 2022. Almost 200 colourful banners were designed in house and installed throughout Uptown Waterloo to add vibrancy and sense of place. They include the new Uptown brand colours in eight different designs.



PLACEMAKING (continued)

The BIA worked alongside property owners to commission 3 murals in Uptown in 2022:

- **Emergent** - Stephanie Boutari – October 2022 (Between Old Goat Books and Prohibition Warehouse). “Inspired by the intertwining of nature, architecture and technology, this work imagines a world in which these elements interact, grow and deconstruct in a symbiotic and optimistic state of flux.”
- **Joy in Plain Sight** – KWFAMOUS (Robin Lindner, Sam Staresincic and Brie Pointer) – November 2022 (Revive Game Bar side wall). “What brings you joy? Not the big things, but the little things. The laugh of a child, the playfulness of a kitten. The celebration of a new job or the first real laugh with a new friend. Joy is encompassed in the little moments of time and play. The overlap of simplicity and happiness. It is found in a funky flow of a shape or the colours that fill you up with light. The primary concept of this project was the joy of collaboration and play. Finding our childlike joy in art, colour and freedom to be lost in our own imaginations. And to share that creativity with our community; to share joy in plain sight.”
- **Moon Moths** - Keisha Thomas – November 2022 (Fratello Pizza side wall). “This piece explores a combination of unified subject matter meant to educate and bring awareness about night pollinators. It features moths and a dark sky background - acknowledging that many species pollinate at night rather than day. The selected species are native to Ontario and are on the endangered and special concern lists. These include: Hoptree Borer, Bogbean Buckmoth, Aweme Borer, False-Foxglove Sun Moth, Mottled Duskywing and others. Cited names and details of each will be included on interpretive signage for people to discover.”



UPTOWN DIGITAL

Uptown Waterloo has a significant following of engaged users on social media. Our primary channels are Instagram, Twitter and Facebook where we have a combined following of nearly 55,000 followers. Our channels are used to promote Uptown events and businesses with one of many overarching goals being to get people excited about exploring Uptown with all the amazing things it has to offer.

In 2022, feature campaigns included:

- 50th Anniversary video series. By far our most successful YouTube uploads to date, the series currently has 4,731 total combined views (over a one-month period).
- Annual WaterLouie sightings and Uptown Hoppy visits.
- Our LARGEST giveaway ever! Our 2022 holiday giveaway to win one of three \$1,000 Uptown Dollars prizes ran for two weeks leading up to the holidays and received over 8,000 entries!
- With overwhelming anticipation for the return of large, in-person gatherings, we placed significant attention on promoting Uptown events such as the Comfort Food Crawl, Uptown Markets, Treats in the Streets, Winter Wonderland; as well as BIA sponsored, member and City of Waterloo events.

We also used our social media channels for good, bringing awareness to different causes and special days throughout the year such as: World Water Day, World Epilepsy Day, Earth Day, World MS Day, St. Mary's Red Day, National Indigenous People's Day, Pride Month and International Overdose Awareness Day.



UPTOWN DIGITAL (continued)



Beyond social media, we also engage our members and the community through other digital communication:

- **Email** (note: average industry open rate is 25%). We email our membership regularly with updates and opportunities. In 2022, we created and disseminated 81 communications to 453 subscribers, with an average open rate of 37%. An additional seven communications were specifically sent to restaurants with an open rate of 52%. We also have a monthly public e-newsletter which highlights member events that goes out to over 2,200 subscribers with an open rate of 45%.
- **Google maps.** Throughout the year we created and promoted a variety of google maps to help people navigate special events, promotions and walks/trails. In 2022, those google maps were viewed over 107,000 times with the most popular being our St. Patrick's Day map promoting ways to celebrate St. Patrick's Day Uptown as a safer alternative to unsanctioned gatherings elsewhere.
- **Website.** Our website is a hub and resource for both members and the public. In 2022, our website garnered 63,000 views. It also has an event calendar which members and the public can use to submit any special event happening Uptown. In 2022 we had 74 event calendar submissions.
- **Partnerships.** Each year we partner with various organizations to help promote BIA members and events both in person and digitally, such as the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Explore Waterloo Region, On the Scene KW and KWFamous. These important partnerships help to grow awareness, engagement and support for our Uptown businesses.



110
MEDIA MENTIONS

38 INTERVIEWS



2.75 MIL.

SOCIAL MEDIA
IMPRESSIONS



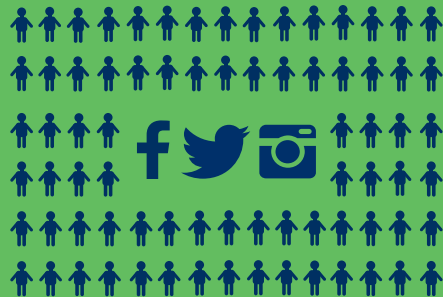
88

COMMUNICATIONS
WITH UPDATES AND
OPPORTUNITIES

SENT TO MEMBERS

24K

SOLD IN NEW
GIFT CARDS
MAY - DEC



54.7K SOCIAL MEDIA
FOLLOWERS

2022 IN REVIEW



\$19K

SOLD IN
UPTOWN
DOLLARS



18 NEW BUSINESSES
OPENED



29K

HAND IN HAND
FUNDS GIVEN



12.3K

ATTENDEES
OF UPTOWN-
MARKETS