



OBIAA 2023 AWARDS SUBMISSION

Contact Name: Suzy Godefroy	Pillar & Category: Public Realm – Streetscaping & Public Realm Improvements
BIA/Organization: Downtown Brampton BIA	Time period: May 2022-October 2022
Entry title: Activate Downtown Brampton	
Project description: Activate Downtown Brampton animated underused public and private spaces through community-led beautification, public art, events and activations. The project was a collaboration between Downtown Brampton BIA, City of Brampton and 8 80 Cities.	

NEED OR OPPORTUNITY

The Activate Downtown Brampton project was conceived in response to the challenges faced in our Downtown community and the impacts to local Downtown businesses during the pandemic. The BIA was looking to support local business through economic recovery, while infusing energy and vibrancy into downtown Brampton.

In addition, the Region of Peel’s Water and Wastewater infrastructure upgrades capital project was planned, and had begun construction from April 2022 to late 2024, which would ultimately impact local businesses already impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The City recognized the importance of revitalizing its Downtown to provide vibrant and inclusive spaces to support its community through COVID-19 recovery and navigate disruptions due to the Region of Peel’s Water and Wastewater infrastructure upgrades. As part of the Meanwhile Strategies of the Integrated Downtown Plan (IDP), the City of Brampton proposed laneway activations to improve pedestrian circulation while enhancing the public realm with street furniture and public art.

In partnership with 8 80 Cities’ expertise in placemaking and community engagement, the City and BIA collaborated to form the Activate Downtown Brampton project and applied to the My Main Street Community Activator program.

AUDIENCE

Virtual focus groups were held in June 2022 to understand the needs of:

1. Business owners and employees
2. Youth
3. People with disabilities
4. Arts & creative community, consisting of the following groups
5. Black & Caribbean community

In addition to this, we also engaged with the older adults’ community through conversations with the Brampton Age-Friendly Committee, the Brampton Seniors Council, the Brampton Cycling Committee and the Heart Lake Rotary Club.

The team also conducted one-on-one interviews with community leaders from organizations such as My Poss-abilities, International Women Achievers' Awards, Punjabi Community Health Services and Alzheimer Society of Peel.

The key questions asked in these sessions were:

1. How do you/your organization currently engage in activities in the downtown?
2. What kinds of activities would you like to see happening in the downtown's public spaces?
3. What are the most important things you would like us to know about the community you represent as it relates to activating downtown's public spaces?

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the Activate Downtown Brampton project were to attract local residents to the heart of the city and create opportunities for social connection in underused public spaces through bold laneway installations, community programming, and live musical showcases that celebrate the City's rich cultural diversity.

The working team, together with a community steering committee, defined 10 Measures of Success to evaluate Activate Downtown Brampton project. (see RESULTS below)

IMPLEMENTATION

The total project budget for Activate Downtown Brampton was \$223,650.00 and fully funded through the My Main Street program.

The Project Team established a Project Steering Committee that included representatives of the Brampton community and prioritized representation from equity-deserving communities. The Steering Committee's role was to provide key insights into the project from the community's perspective, while being advisors and amplifiers of the Activate Downtown Brampton project.

A) Vivian Lane was transformed into a space that could host activities and activations by designing it to be:

1. Playful and accessible
2. Flexible
3. Active on the edges

Through a public call for artists, Brampton-based Abiola Idowu's concept was chosen for its use of bright geometric shapes to create a scene of togetherness and celebration. With the help of 40 community volunteers, the Vivian Lane ground mural was created over the course of one week.

To enhance the landscaping in Vivian Lane, we introduced new elements:

1. Clusters of young trees and plants to create shade and comfort
2. Two vegetable gardens in planters with plants such as rhubarb, lavender and strawberries
3. Two empty planters filled with sand and sand toys to create raised sandboxes; and
4. Two visitors parking spots at the end of the laneway, were converted it into a parklet and extending the laneway further and designed with astroturf and painted picnic tables.
5. Parking spots next to Vivian Lane converted to public space with Astroturf and picnic tables
6. Picnic tables and new trees and greenery in Vivian Lane

We asked the community to rate the design elements from 'Not Important' to 'Very Important'.

- o 87% of respondents said the ground mural was very important
- o 77% of respondents said trees and greenery were very important
- o 71% of respondents said tables and chairs were very important
- o 55% of respondents said sandboxes that were added were very important

We compared activity before and after the transformation on weekends and weekdays and found that more people were using the space after the transformation.

On the weekend, we found that after the physical transformation of Vivian Lane, the number of people hanging out in Vivian Lane increased by 242% and the number of people moving through Vivian Lane increased by 136%.

B) In response to the community's needs, the team offered a variety of programs in Vivian Lane. A whole day Family Fun Day was held with programming that included Loose Parts Play, Tai Chi, family-friendly yoga, Children's Story Time and live music. Brampton Library also provided activation kits which included Bean Bag Toss and Giant Tic Tac Toe which gave additional options for children and their families to participate.

Other events included Night Markets, Wellness Markets, drumming circles, and arts-based events where local businesses and outside vendors were invited to participate. Opportunities to learn were provided through activations by community organizations including Alzheimer Society of Peel, Chess lessons through Enroute2Success, and Bike Brampton.

C) Live Music was planned for 23 weeks on Saturdays at different locations in downtown Brampton including Vivian Lane. Genres of live music included salsa, country, Latin, Classic Rock, Reggae, R&B, Jazz, and Electronic Dance Music (EDM). The musical artists were selected to meet the diverse interests of Brampton residents and to promote cultural representation through music. Live musicians were coordinated through local Brampton non-profit organization. There was also a Salsa Dance Party in McArter Lane and Flavours & Vibes in Buffy Lane. The Salsa Dance Party offered live salsa music, dancing, food and drinks. Flavours & Vibes featured 15 up-and-coming Canadian performers including Afro, Latin, Jazz, and South Asian musicians. These two events connected Brampton residents to different cultures through music, food and drink, all within the downtown.

Working with a music curator was key for the BIA's success in staging four live music performances per week. Throughout the 23 weeks of programming, we were able to showcase and support 86 bands with 269 musicians total. This was the largest number of musical performances curated and compensated in a single series in Brampton. After nearly two years without opportunities for live performances, we were often reminded and thanked by artists and community members alike for our efforts in bringing Activate Downtown Brampton to life.

RESULTS

The team defined the success of the Activate Downtown Brampton project by the metrics below.

1. *10 or more independent businesses involved in the planning and design of the laneway pop-up.*

EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. 10 independent business owners were part of focus groups that were hosted during the planning of the laneway pop-up. 1 local artist and 1 local non-profit organization were part of

the design of the laneway pop-up. 30 independent businesses were part of the programming of the laneway pop-up.

2. *10 or more community members engaged in the organization and roll out of the activations.*

EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. 30 local vendors were engaged which included artists, service providers and staff from local community organizations.

3. *100 people provide direct feedback during the activations on their enjoyment of the project, travel patterns, and hopes for downtown Brampton's placemaking.*

EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. A total of 110 people provided direct feedback - 42 people through engagement boards and 68 people through intercept surveys.

4. *300 unique impressions made on the BIA's social media posts regarding the project.*

EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. BIA's social media posts regarding the project received more than 300 unique impressions. The social media post regarding the Salsa Dance Party received 8,553 unique impressions.

5. *40 volunteers supporting the activations, laneway installations, and musical performances.*

EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. More than 40 volunteers supported the activations, laneway installations and musical performances.

6. *At least 100 attendees for each musical performance.*

EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. 150 attendees each Saturday across four locations in downtown.

7. *80% of intercept survey respondents stating they will return to the downtown core in the future.*

A survey conducted by the BIA for their Shop Local 2 Win showed that 69% to 71% of those who were surveyed planned to shop more locally in the future. This shows an interest among Brampton residents to stay in the city and shop in the city.

8. *At least 50% increase in pedestrian traffic during laneway pop-up.*

EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. On Saturdays, there was a 140% increase in pedestrian traffic, and on weekdays, there was an 87% increase in pedestrian traffic when there was an event going on.

9. *50 downloads or more of the final findings/recommendations report.* – Yet to be determined.

10. *10 or more programming partners are from equity seeking communities.*

EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. 20 programming partners were from equity seeking communities.

Through Activate Downtown Brampton, the team was able to attract residents to downtown, increase opportunities for social connections, drive traffic to our local businesses, celebrate Brampton's cultural diversity, establish several partnerships and engage diverse communities in re-imagining underused public spaces. The cornerstone of the activations in Vivian Lane was the Brampton community. By engaging with the community – asking them what they would like to see and do in downtown Brampton – we were able to build on existing community assets and leverage partnerships with community organizations to bring those things to life through Activate Downtown Brampton