

OBIAA 2023 AWARDS SUBMISSION

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<b>BIA/Organization: Downtown Yonge BIA</b>	<b>Time period: May 2021- September 2022</b>
<b>Entry title: Yonge Growth: The Road to Recovery in Downtown Yonge</b>	
<b>Project description: (two sentences; 50 words or less)</b> “Yonge Growth: The Road to Recovery in Downtown Yonge” is a comprehensive and integrative package of resources for both DYBIA members and the general public aimed at addressing two specific COVID-19 recovery challenges: a. Assist our member businesses across all sectors to better understand the shifts in consumer behaviours b. Create interest for the general public who lives, works, plays and invests in Downtown Yonge to return to the neighbourhood	

1) **NEED OR OPPORTUNITY**

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected downtowns across the globe, and Downtown Yonge was no exception.

The Downtown Yonge BIA represents 2,000+ businesses across 1.3km of Canada’s most iconic street, Yonge Street, totalling \$7 billion of commercial real estate and seeing nearly 60 million pedestrians exploring the neighbourhood on an annual basis. The area is home to the Toronto Metropolitan University campus, which encompasses more than 40,000 students and faculty, 60,000 employees within our boundaries and over 100,000 residents within a 10-minute walk of the neighbourhood, along with many parks, green spaces and public spaces that attract visitors from all over the province.

The pandemic saw our members struggle to understand the ever-changing consumer spending & visitor patterns amidst the evolving public health restrictions and a 60% decrease in pedestrian counts on average in 2020. The downtown core did not see the immediate return of pre-pandemic activity levels, with office occupancy dropping to under 10% in 2021, and visitors overall seeing less of a draw to return downtown. According to our 2022 member survey, 35% indicated customer acquisition/retention as the biggest challenge, and 61% indicated they were very concerned with “bringing back customers” over the coming months. The vibrancy of the neighbourhood was being affected, however the DYBIA did not have access to the data to understand the extent of the impact and given that our first goal in our *Living Yonge* strategic plan is “Liveable and Vibrant”, this was a concern we needed to address. Coupled with no levy increase in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, DYBIA was challenged to create a smart and effective program that addressed these concerns while also being budget conscious.

**Yonge Growth: The Road to Recovery in Downtown Yonge** is a comprehensive and integrative package of supports aimed at addressing two specific challenges:

- a. Assist our member businesses across all sectors to better understand the shifts in consumer behaviours
- b. Create interest for the general public who lives, works, plays and invests in Downtown Yonge to return to the neighbourhood

It also serves an important role in the advocacy efforts the DYBIA makes on behalf of our members’ interests across all levels of government and to other stakeholders. If we don’t understand the problem, we cannot find appropriate solutions.

2) **AUDIENCE(S)**

Downtown Yonge is a neighbourhood for all, and this initiative was no different. As a tool for recovery, our goal was to create resources that are inclusive of all groups who enjoy Downtown Yonge. Given that this was a two pronged approach to address both sides of the issue, we have identified one audience per challenge.

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Demographics</b>	<b>What is the need</b>	<b>Type of Intervention Needed</b>
DYBIA Member businesses	-DYBIA Retail Mix <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19.3% Clothing Retail</li> <li>• 31.4% Foodservices</li> <li>• 14.8% Other Retail</li> </ul>	-Up-to-date information on the economic situation in Downtown Yonge to help businesses adapt	-Regular data updates on different metrics

Audience	Demographics	What is the need	Type of Intervention Needed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19.3% Other Services</li> <li>-35% of members indicated customer acquisition/retention as the biggest challenge (2022)</li> <li>-61% of members indicated they were very concerned with “bringing back customers” over the coming months (2022)</li> </ul>	their operations to better suit customer needs  -New resources to entice customers back to the neighbourhood	-A resource for the general public that entices them back to Downtown Yonge that is helpful for all members
Residents, employees, students, investors and visitors	<p><b>Residents-</b>            -30% decrease in residents out and about in 2020 compared to 2019            -Nearly 60% of DYBIA member businesses were at least partially working from home in 2021</p> <p><b>Employees-</b>            -60% decrease in employees working in office in Downtown Yonge</p> <p><b>Visitors-</b>            -September 2020-February 2021 saw a 56% decrease in visitors compared to 2019             -6-10% of all visitors in early 2021 were from M4A and M5A postal codes, which were both within a 10-15 minute walk of the neighbourhood</p>	-Something to bring people back to downtown  -a document that isn't specific to pandemic times, that doesn't have an expiration date	- a resource that details all the exciting things that are available year round  -a legacy document that is functional for years to come, no matter the future makeup of the neighbourhood

### 3) GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: To create an inclusive, accessible program that addresses both the immediate needs of member businesses struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, along with creating new reasons to entice visitors back into Downtown Yonge to further support our strategic goal of “Liveable and Vibrant”.

Objectives:

We broke down our objectives to ensure we are meeting the needs of each audience type.

*Objective for DYBIA member businesses’ resource*

- Create 2 to 3 different resources each with a different dissemination method that describe the state of economic recovery clearly and simply that all members can use to be able to shift their business operations accordingly.
- Engage 5% of DYBIA member businesses in our top 3 business sectors; foodservice, retail and services

*Objective for general public resource*

- Create a program that highlights the inclusivity and accessibility of Downtown Yonge while reaching over 200,000 impressions between September 2021-September 2022

### 4) IMPLEMENTATION

Given that there were two main goals for this toolkit, we have broken down the implementation into two distinct processes.

**i. DYBIA and Member business resource implementation- Roadshows, Newsletters**

The DYBIA Board has always understood the value of data in decision-making, however the biggest challenge to this program was finding the appropriate data sources that are trustworthy, updated in a timely manner and include the information that we needed to ensure the full story was told. After weeks of consultation with our members, DYBIA staff, other BIAs, partners and stakeholders, we

narrowed down our list of indicators that were important to understand the whole picture along with data providers who were at the forefront of economic analysis.

Indicator	Frequency of Update	Does DYBIA currently collect this data?	Data provider
Pedestrian and Vehicle Flows	Monthly	Yes- since 2010	Springboard
Office Occupancy	Monthly	Yes- since 2020	SRRA
Retail Inventory	Bi-annually	No	Hz Insights/ 260 Collective
Resident Mobility	Bi-annually	No	Environics Analytics
Visitor Mobility	Bi-annually	No	Environics Analytics
Neighbourhood \$ spend by sector and by postal code	Monthly	No	Moneris

Once we gathered all the data sources needed, we began the dissemination of the data through data “roadshows” in Spring 2021, which allowed us to reach and interact with dozens of members and stakeholders who were able to ask for clarifications and allowed the data to be more accessible to those who may not be equipped to analyze reports. These 45-minute presentations gave members a better understanding of visitor mobility patterns, resident mobility patterns, traffic flows and more, along with conclusions and recommendations based on this data. They also gave the DYBIA an opportunity to gain feedback from members on whether this data was useful for them, what data should be tweaked and what other metrics we could be tracking instead. These presentations were also recorded and posted on Youtube for those who were not able to attend.

To ensure this data was accessible to all business types, including smaller businesses who may not have as much experience working with data, these presentations were also offered as private sessions for individual member business if they preferred a dedicated session for their entire team, with data tailored to their sector.

After the success of the roadshows and feedback from members, it was found that many wanted a short report detailing the impact of COVID-19 on Downtown Yonge’s economy, to allow for a better understanding of the state of the neighbourhood and help businesses with grant applications during this difficult period.

From this feedback came the “Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Downtown Yonge”, a one-time report which looked at the state of Downtown Yonge during the height of the pandemic, and include both Toronto-wide indicators and ones specific to Downtown Yonge. This report was found to be incredibly useful across our membership and stakeholders, allowing members but also the DYBIA team a window into the impact of the pandemic on the economy of Downtown Yonge and allowed for more targeted advocacy across all levels of government based on a multitude of economic factors.

After the second round of roadshow presentations in Fall 2021, feedback from members gave way to a new resource, the Economic Newsletter, a bi-annual summary accompaniment to the roadshows, for members who needed a quick summary of the data that was easily shareable across departments. This 4-page report detailed all the major indicators shared in the presentation, and became the highlight of the roadshows.

Given that Toronto was still in the middle of lockdowns and the pandemic was raging on, there was very little budget for the creation of all of these resources, magnifying the importance of having access to data sets from early on. Each resource was designed and written by the Downtown Yonge BIA staff team, with constant feedback from DYBIA members to ensure it is accessible and pertinent to all sectors, while each data set was sourced from partners that are experts in their particular field. Keeping the design process in-house also meant that there was no additional money spent on designing the documents, only accounting for approximately 15 hours of design time from one DYBIA staff member, and the data procurement totalling \$75,000 for 1 year of data.

**ii. General public resource- Downtown Yonge Your Way**

As part of our strategy, we felt there was a gap in a hyper-local resource that showcased the rich cultural history, accessibility, and attractions that were available year-round in the community, despite changing public health measures, as well as changing seasons. Downtown Yonge Your Way was born after 3 months of creative consultation in November 2021, DYBIA's first neighbourhood guidebook dedicated to showcasing the year-round energy, vibrancy and wonder of one of the most well-known neighbourhoods in Toronto. It focuses on the hidden stories of a neighbourhood and its "third spaces"; the attractions, amenities and exciting finds that are accessible to all at any time of year. It also includes all the practical information one would need when going on an excursion; transportation maps, parking maps, historical facts, arts & culture offerings and more.

All the research for the contents of the guidebook was done by one DYBIA staff member over 10 hours with a budget of \$15,000 for the design. To ensure the neighbourhood is accessible and inclusive for all, virtual experiences were also included, along with a number of free amenities and activities offered, and plans for a physical print run in the coming years of recovery for those who face barriers to internet access. This will also give DYBIA members a resource they can display in their business no matter the sector to entice people back into the neighbourhood and make their visits more exciting.

To continue the reach of the guidebook, our Explore to Win contest was launched in Summer 2022 to encourage Torontonians to explore Downtown Yonge. Entries included receipts to Downtown Yonge businesses or photos taken at any DYBIA event. Winners were selected every 2 weeks, with prizes from various DYBIA member businesses, including restaurants, retail, services, entertainment and more. The entire contest (including promotional materials) cost \$10,000, and was run entirely by DYBIA staff, with entries taken via Google Forms.

## 5) RESULTS

Objective	Audience	Outcome	Benefit to defined audience
Create 2 to 3 different resources each with a different dissemination method that describe the state of economic recovery clearly and simply that all members can use to be able to shift their business operations accordingly.	DYBIA Member businesses	Four (4) resources were created: -Bi-annual Roadshow presentations (offered as both open and private sessions) -Youtube recordings of the presentations for future use -Bi-annual Economic Newsletters -One-time "Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Downtown Yonge" report	-A variety of resources with different dissemination methods gave members the information needed, whether it was in-depth analysis or quick summaries
Engage 5% DYBIA member businesses in our top 3 business sectors; foodservice, retail and services	DYBIA Member businesses	-Over 6% of our members attended the 4 roadshows, representing businesses across all sectors -Three (3) private roadshow presentations done to individual members	-Each sector was able to gain insights for the neighbourhood overall along with sector-specific data for more targeted approaches
Obtain 3 to 5 new data sources that tell the full story of the state of the economy in Downtown Yonge by December 2021	Downtown Yonge BIA staff	-Secured data from 5 data sources by December 2021 - the Economic Newsletter & traffic flow data garnered over \$150,000 of media value and was picked up by seven (7) media outlets.	-increased visibility of DYBIA through media interviews, articles -increased data availability to advocate for specific member concerns

Objective	Audience	Outcome	Benefit to defined audience
Create a program that highlights the inclusivity and accessibility of Downtown Yonge while reaching over 200,000 impressions between September 2021-September 2022	General public	-Downtown Yonge Your Way created in November 2021 - Explore to Win contest created in Summer 2022 -Over 250,000 impressions across both initiatives -Over 6,000 pageviews and link clicks across both initiatives -Nearly 200 contest entries, our highest engagement rate for a contest, and over \$6,000 of direct spend to DYBIA businesses from submissions	-created opportunities for the general public to win prizes for each dollar they spent in Downtown Yonge  -increased visibility through promotional materials  -Downtown Yonge Your Way has become a staple resource for outings in Downtown Yonge, making the neighbourhood more accessible for all

6) SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

[Link to Economic Update roadshow presentation recording](#) (Fall 2022)

[Economic Newsletter \(Q4 2022\)](#)

[Impact of COVID-19 on Downtown Yonge report](#) (October 2021)

Links to media articles and interviews:

[Business News Network \(BNN\) Bloomberg](#) (July 2022)

[CP24 News](#) (November 2022)

[Retail Insider](#) (July 2022)

[Link to Downtown Yonge Your Way guidebook](#)

Explore to Win contest materials:

**EXPLORE TO WIN Contest**

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN 1 OF 5 \$500 PRIZE PACKS

SCAN TO ENTER

TWO WAYS TO ENTER:

- ✓ SUBMIT A PHOTO OF A RECEIPT OF A PURCHASE MADE IN DOWNTOWN YONGE
- ✓ SUBMIT A PHOTO YOU TOOK AT A DOWNTOWN YONGE EVENT

CONTEST ENDS SEPTEMBER 7 2022

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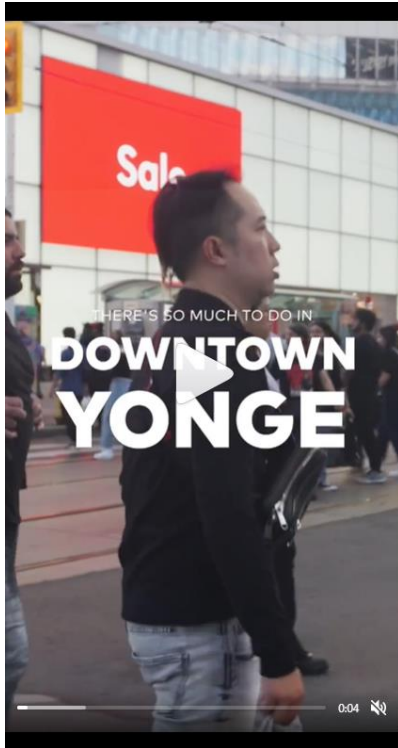
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