

OBIAA 2023 AWARDS SUBMISSION

Contact Name: Ellen McGran	Pillar & Category: Marketing & Promotion – Special Events
BIA/Organization: Hyde Park BIA	Time period: July – December 2023
Entry title: Christmas in Hyde Park! Ft. The Grinch	
Project description: <i>(two sentences; 50 words or less)</i>	
<i>Growing on the success of the first Hyde Park Christmas Market, the HPBIA set out to solidify the Hyde Park Christmas Market as a main-stay event for the community of Uptown London. This year's event focused on the question "What if the Grinch stole Christmas?"</i>	

Need/Opportunity

The Hyde Park Business Improvement Association (HPBIA) was founded in 1979 and designated as a Business Improvement Area in 2017. With over 400 members (comprised of commercial and industrial assessed businesses), the HPBIA works to beautify and promote Hyde Park in Uptown London fostering a sense of community for residents and businesses while attracting visitors and customers from across London and neighbouring counties.

Growing the tourism footprint in Uptown London is a mandate of the HPBIA and supported in our developing strategic plan. As such, activations undertaken are reflective of our primary goals with events being an important element for the HPBIA.

Over the years, the HPBIA has established and continues to run two annual Christmas events, along with our annual PondFest which takes place every June; the success of these events leaves BIA members and the community wanting even more. As a result, the HPBIA piloted the first annual Hyde Park Christmas Market in 2021. The event was a resounding success. Surveys with BIA and non BIA member vendors along with community feedback such as: "This is the best Christmas Market we have sold in across the City," "The vendors are treated so well here!," "We want more events that bring our community together," "Can we do an outdoor market for special occasions," "I'd love to see a makers market where home makers can sell their amazing creations" and "We loved the Christmas fireworks keep those!" The pilot proved the feasibility and overall satisfaction of businesses and community members alike, resulting with the second annual Hyde Park Christmas Market in 2022 – already a staple and signature event for the community.

Christmas Markets bring people together during the holiday season, giving the community a space to gather and connect while participating in holiday-themed activities such as roasting marshmallows, viewing light displays, local musical talent, fireworks and shopping local. Well executed events are profitable for local businesses such as merchants selling gifts, crafts, and wares, food trucks selling food and beverages, right down to the paid grounds crew. The wide range of activities and offerings ensure that people from all diverse backgrounds can find something to enjoy while creating life-long memories and thus strengthening the sense of community.

The Hyde Park Christmas Market offers a space for local residents, Londoners and surrounding counties to connect and share in the festive spirit, at no cost, ensuring there are no barriers to entry for anyone in our community. Hyde Park is home to a lot of young families, but also home to a lot of retirees, as well as low-income housing. Activations in Hyde Park are essential to creating social cohesion among these groups.

Mixed with a few big box retail operations, small and medium businesses are representative of the majority of employers in the Hyde Park area. The HPBIA does not see as much foot traffic as downtown BIAs do, thus events like the Christmas Market help to generate increased foot traffic in the area. Supporting this is [Research out of the UK](#) that indicates for the 2016 Birmingham market: "Spend at the markets was £6 whilst spend elsewhere in the city was £17." This positively impacts economic development in Hyde Park, thus contributing towards a stronger economic footprint.

Audience

The primary target audience of the Hyde Park Christmas Market is the residential community of the Greater Hyde Park Area (the area directly surrounding HPBIA boundaries). Our secondary audience were residents of the City of London.

Target Market	Geographics	Demographics	Psychographics	Benefit/Usage Rate
Residents of Greater Hyde Park Area	Live in a 5km radius surrounding Hyde Park BIA boundaries, from intersection of Hyde Park and Gainsborough Roads Population of 37,105 across 13,474 households	Median age of 47 70% of residents own their home. Average household income of \$96,415. 57% of residents are married. 51% of residents have children. 34.7% of the population self-identifies as a visible minority. 28.9% of residents self-identify as immigrants.	Family oriented, value time with family over time at work. Established in careers, or preparing to enter workforce. Have disposable income to spend. Value sense of community. Would prefer to visit kid-friendly events over nightlife.	Connect with community and neighbours. Find new local business and eats. Get into holiday spirit by attending a community event within walking distance to their home. Start and/or finish Christmas Shopping in a unique market experience.
Residents of London	Live in a 15km radius surrounding Hyde Park BIA boundaries, from intersection of Hyde Park and Gainsborough Roads. Population 422,324.	Median age of 39 60% of residents own their home, 40% rent. Average household income of \$62,011. 44% of residents are married. 37.8% of households have children.	Family oriented, value time with family over time at work. Values time with friends Prefers to shop locally than internationally. Seeks out new adventures and experiences.	Visit area of London they may not be familiar with. Explore offerings of Local vendors. Get into the Holiday spirit with a free event

Goals & Objectives

Goal: Create a memorable, holiday experience for the community of Hyde Park.

Objectives:

1. Host 40 vendors, including food trucks.
2. Community attendance of 3,000 people over the weekend.
3. Have 3-5 live musicians play the event.
4. 1-3 free activities for patrons to partake in.

Implementation

The Christmas Market focuses on creating a safe and fun outdoor family event with kid's crafts, marshmallows for roasting, and even Mrs. Claus visiting to say 'Hi' and collect letters to Santa! Live music filled the air throughout the weekend showcasing close to 50 local vendors (local businesses, artisans, crafters) for visitors

to enjoy while finishing (or starting!) their Christmas shopping in the comfort of seasonally decorated, heated tents.

Events are assigned an operating budget which is managed and tracked by the General Manager and Bookkeeper and approved by the HPBIA Board of Management. For this event, the HPBIA had set aside a budget of \$45,000. This, together with the ReConnect Ontario Grant and other sponsorships, led to a total budget of \$78,000.

Successful management of our events comes from a high level of engagement and collaboration led by HPBIA staff. Tooled with a detailed project plan, regular planning meetings take place with actionable outcomes. Active participation from community partners is encouraged to ensure that the entire community (families, children and people from all equity seeking groups) will benefit; and to lean on the expertise of our partners such as the Hyde Park Lions, Northwest London Resource Centre, Oxford Dodge of Hyde Park, Family Centre Fox Hollow, and the HPBIA Event Committee comprised of Board Directors.

The HPBIA also employs a team to deal with overall ground logistics that includes setup, takedown, and ongoing daily maintenance (to address vendor or public issues) along with troubleshooting during the event.

Growing on the success of the 2021 Christmas Market, and on the heels of PondFest, HPBIA staff began brainstorming Christmas ideas; “What if we had an ice sculptor?” “A snowman building contest?” and from the back of the room “... What if the Grinch stole Christmas?” And it began – how do we get the Grinch to steal Christmas?

Finding a Grinch was key to the success of this year’s Christmas Market. Staff spent a few months searching for the right Grinch, securing the perfect Grinch by the end of September. For the marketing of the event we teased the Grinch to our target market in several ways before announcing that he had escaped from the mountains of Whoville and was on his way to Hyde Park. The Grinch was on-site all weekend, stealing Christmas Cheer and making sure no one enjoyed their time.

We believe an important key element to success with vendor markets is keeping vendors happy – there’s no Christmas Market without people selling things! Using past experiences with vendors, we planned to over-communicate our expectations of vendors, using things like a Vendor Agreement Document, and a Vendor Information Package. This led to smooth set-up and tear downs for our vendors. As a special “Thank-You” to those who braved the cold all weekend with us, we gave each vendor a fleece blanket, embroidered with the HPBIA logo. We also gave each vendor a \$25 VISA gift card, courtesy of the London COVID Recovery Network. Small gestures like this go a long way in ensuring vendor satisfaction and repeat attendance.

Event mishaps are nothing new to the HPBIA – it seems we only put on events in inclement weather. The morning of our Christmas Market, we were faced with high winds of 80+KM/HR and torrential rain. As event staff were facilitating our concurrent (indoor) morning event, grounds crew staff were literally holding down tents so they didn’t blow away in the wind. This was the worst-case scenario for us – we didn’t want to cancel the event, but needed to keep everyone’s safety in mind. Thankfully, the wind died down, and the tent company returned to re-stake our tents, and the event proceeded.

Part of the fun of outdoor events is working with electricity! The one giant generators rented to power the entire event for the weekend went on the fritz – lights were flickering, power was off for 10-15 minutes in some of the tents - several times, and vendors were getting frustrated. Our grounds crew mitigated these concerns by purchasing an emergency generator, giving us back lights, music and money transactions.

In an HPBIA-exclusive twist, we like to “Ring Out” the year at Christmas with fireworks set to Christmas Music. As it gets dark much earlier in the day during December, we are able to set off the fireworks at 6:30pm. This ensures that children of all ages can enjoy the show – many seeing their first fireworks ever.

Except it didn’t quite go as planned.

Picture this: we're 15 minutes out from setting off our Musical Fireworks. We've arranged with our performer and the Grinch to sing "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch," with the Grinch staging the setting off of the fireworks. The guitar strums, the musician starts with "You're a mean one....." and before he can even say "Mr. Grinch" POP! The generator died. Not just out of gas, but dead. No sound, no electricity. Nothing but darkness, and thousands of people waiting for fireworks.

Our grounds team, sound team, and Grinch leapt into action. The Grinch and our performer kept the crowd entertained, as the rest of the team tried to see if we could do the fireworks as scheduled. Unfortunately, we had to pivot, and we set the fireworks off without music – luckily no one outside of ourselves knew any different with the fireworks being one of the best across the City.

The electricity problems were solved the following day when we received a new generator to replace the broken one. The Hyde Park Christmas Market closed with a resounding success and was a highlight for the HPBIA 2022 event season.

TIMELINE

July-September 2022	Booking all needed aspects of market Development of market rules and regulations Development of marketing plan and sponsorship opportunities Ongoing planning committee meetings
October 2022	Ongoing planning committee meetings Review of vendor applications/vendor acceptances go out Continue working on marketing plan Begin implementation of marketing plan
November 2022	Ongoing planning committee meetings Heavy in-person promotion of the event through posters and hand-outs at the Hyde Park Santa Parade
December 2022	Event Event Close Out

Results

Objective	Result
Host 40 vendors, including food trucks.	Hosted 47 vendors, 6 food trucks
Community attendance of 3,000 people over the weekend.	Estimated 3,000-4,000 attendance over the weekend (based on sales, head counting and other attendance metrics)
Have 3-5 live musicians play the event.	Five musicians or bands provided live music for the duration of the vent.
Create 1-3 free activities for patrons to partake in.	Had two activities for visitors: marshmallow roasting and Letters to Santa

Even with weather and electric challenges, the 2022 Hyde Park Christmas Market was an immense success. Community and vendor feedback was incredibly positive, with one response to a post-event survey stating:

"I loved the organization of this event! Plus, the magic that was infused into all of the small details - the fires, the swing installation, the heaters in the tents, the lights, the signage! Everything was done extremely well. Job well done!"

Judging from community feedback coupled with the photos of many smiling faces, we are confident we achieved our goal of creating a memorable holiday experience for the community of Hyde Park.