

# BEST IN THE WEST AWARDS 2018

**ENTRANT NAME:** Colleen Van Mook, Executive Director **BIA/ORGANIZATION NAME:** Downtown Prince George

**TITLE OF ENTRY**: Open for Business

**CATEGORY:** Programming and Partnerships

**TIMEFRAME: 2017 & 2018** 

#### **BRIEF SUMMARY:**

Downtown Prince George is recognized as an organization that gets things done for downtown. The City of Prince George, Northern Development Initiatives Trust and Tourism Prince George are all organizations that have supported our mandate to promote and advocate for a better downtown. Through partnerships, shared resources and collaboration we have proven that Downtown Prince George is 'Open for Business' by providing development incentives, hosting events and providing a business friendly and attractive atmosphere in Prince George's downtown.









# WORK PLAN – PROGRAMMING & PARTNERSHIPS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

#### ABOUT DOWNTOWN PRINCE GEORGE (DPG)

Downtown Prince George (DPG) is the business improvement association serving all property owners and business tenants in the Prince George C1 Downtown Zone. Our mandate is to promote and advocate for a better downtown through partnerships, programs, promotions and events. Our goal is to create a positive culture of safety, vibrancy and beauty that will attract business owners and citizens to live, work and play downtown. Through our business development and beautification efforts we have partnered with government to target business growth and promote development in our downtown.

# **ABOUT THE CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE (CITY)**

#### 2016 - 2018 Corporate Plan - Strong Team . Strong Relationships . Citizens as Partners

"As BC's northern capital, Prince George is a model for sustainable Canadian cities. The local environment is healthy, supporting a robust economy and an enviable quality of life for residents. Everyone has housing they can afford, good food on the table, and a strong, supportive network of friends and co-workers. Built on regional assets, the economy is strong and stable. A vibrant downtown, great community, affordable lifestyle, and spectacular natural setting are Prince George's greatest strengths."

#### **COUNCIL FOCUS AREAS:**

Advance progress in the Downtown.

#### **KEY CORPORATE STATEGIES:**

- Program downtown civic facilities and spaces.
- Market downtown for development and growth opportunities.
- Facilitate the development of new partnerships to encourage a broader range of housing options.
- Develop and implement an Economic Development Strategy.

#### ABOUT TOURISM PRINCE GEORGE (TPG)

Tourism Prince George is a not-for-profit society governed by tourism industry stakeholders through an appointed Board of Directors. As a destination marketing and visitor services it uses a stakeholder model which means that all tourism businesses and organizations in the Prince George region are automatically stakeholders without having to pay a membership fee. A variety of partnership programs allow stakeholders to take advantage of leveraged opportunities to promote their businesses and increase tourism activity.

#### ABOUT NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE TRUST (NDIT)

The Northern Development Initiative Trust board, regional advisory committees and staff have a passion for growing the economy of central and northern British Columbia. When the Premier of British Columbia announced the Northern Development Initiative Trust, it was on the premise that, "The best economic development decisions for the North should be made in the North." Northern Development is an independent, non-profit corporation; a catalyst stimulating economic growth through investments in grassroots, community-led projects.



#### **OPPORTUNITY:**

DPG, along with the City, recognized the need to be creative with programs and partnerships and began to work together to develop and support initiatives that would increase the economic viability of Prince George's downtown. Through deliberate planning and discussion, DPG, the City, TPG and NDIT were able to create and support programs and initiatives that have now resulted in new energy and commitment to downtown. These programs, individually, are examples of how sharing funding, resources and expertise amongst many partners can achieve great results. Collectively, all these programs have made a huge difference in the business and economic climate of Prince George's downtown. DPG has been the common denominator advocating, supporting, executing and engaging stakeholders to ensure these programs are successful. The results have benefited all organizations by aligning goals and supporting each other to ensure a vibrant downtown.

#### **OPEN FOR BUSINESS - Downtown Revitalization Initiative Programs**

DPG has been an enthusiastic partner with the City for downtown revitalization. Our organization and its members have benefited from the decision of City staff and elected officials to support revitalization efforts for the downtown core and local business by prioritizing downtown development in their corporate plan. The City, DPG and other community partners continue to work together to assist business growth and economic development. For several years now, these strong partnerships have resulted in many successful and complementary programs.

#### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

The main goals of the collaborative partnership initiatives are to:

**GOAL A.** Attract new business development and support current downtown business and property owners.

GOAL B. Beautify and activate the downtown core making it more inviting and accessible.

**GOAL C.** Increase the number of residents living downtown.

The objectives of the partnership projects are to:

**OBJECTIVE 1.** Make as many partnerships as possible in order to leverage resources and share knowledge.

**OBJECTIVE 2.** Be open to creating and trying new initiatives and partnerships aimed at revitalizing downtown.

**OBJECTIVE 3**. Support the objectives of the partner organizations in order avoid duplication and perceived competition.

**OBJECTIVE 4.** Encourage community collaboration and partner engagement as part of the planning processes and program implementations.

#### **AUDIENCE:**

DPG has worked collaboratively with these partners to plan, design, support, market and implement these programs. We are enthusiastic partners because we know that the programs align with our goals of business attraction, development and retention of business for the downtown. Some programs are aimed specifically at current downtown property and business owners, potential downtown property and business owners and new development projects for downtown. The complementary programs engaged the citizens of Prince George and visitors in an opportunity to experience an accessible, vibrant and active downtown.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

#### **Partners:**

- City of Prince George (City)
- Downtown Prince George Business Improvement Association (DPG)
- Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT)
- Tourism Prince George (TPG)
- Local Business
- · City Residents

#### **Actions:**

In order to achieve these goals, the following programs and partnerships have been created either in collaboration with DPG, to support DPG in its mandate and/or to complement DPG in its efforts to build a better downtown.

## Downtown Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw 7735 (2005) – Funded by the City & NDIT

 Up to 5 years of municipal tax exemptions on the increased improvement value – provided by the City.

#### Downtown Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw 8370 (2011) - Funded by the City & NDIT

- Up to 10 years of municipal tax exemptions on the increased improvement value of commercial or residential buildings provided by the City
- Low Development Cost Charges provided by the City
- Option to receive benefits up front made possible from the partnership between NDIT and the City (program ended in 2017)
- \$10,000 per residential unit provided by NDIT

#### Business Façade Improvement Program - Downtown C1Zone - Funded by NDIT

- 25% grant (up to \$5000) to streetscape (façade) improvements for qualified business properties
  - Made possible by partnership between City, NDIT and DPG.

#### My Downtown Beautification Micro Grant (DPG Budget - \$5,000)

• Up to \$500 per project to beautify a storefront – managed and funded by DPG.

#### My Downtown Event Micro Grant (DPG Budget - \$5,000)

Up to \$500 per project to host a downtown event – managed and funded by DPG.

# Downtown Summerfest (DPG Budget - \$152,000)

# Downtown Winterfest (DPG Budget - \$84,000)

- Annual one day events organized by DPG to celebrate and promote downtown and downtown businesses
- Funding through Celebrate Prince George Community Grant provided by the City and TPG
- Funding through Fabulous Festivals Event Grant provided by NDIT

#### Plaid Friday (DPG Budget \$5,000)

- Annual one-day event organized by DPG and supported by NDIT to promote shopping at local downtown businesses as an alternative to Black Friday
- Supported by the City, TPG, NDIT, and over 60 downtown businesses



## Foodie Fridays (Award Winning Program) – funded by the City

 Outdoor food market developed by the City to encourage business growth and attract new customers downtown.

#### Love Downtown PG – (DPG Budget \$2,500)

- Marketing campaign exclusively for downtown businesses over 65 currently registered
- Partnership between DPG and NDIT

#### Downtown Parking, Roads – Funded by the City

- The City changed how it manages on-street parking downtown to alleviate congestion and free up customer parking at businesses
- The City added angle parking to increase parking stalls downtown
- The City changed one-way streets to two-way streets to increase accessibility and business visibility

#### **RESULTS:**

The support and interest of the partners to make Downtown Development a priority has infused energy and confidence in the future of our downtown. These partnership initiatives have provided DPG with more funding to share with its members, more support to share with developers and more incentive to share with property and business owners. The City, NDIT and TPG support DPG through grant funding, expertise, resource materials, joint programs, joint marketing and regular communication. As a result, the business community is fully on board with revitalizing downtown, as evidence by the number of new businesses, the number of investments downtown, decreasing vacancy rates, event participation, and feedback from the business owners and Prince George residents.

GOAL A: Attract new and support current business development in downtown.	OBJECTIVES
- Completed upgrades to 5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue for 45 new on-street parking stalls (30% increase)	2
- Provide a sophisticated digital and marketing platform for 67 local independent downtown	2, 4
businesses through the Love DowntownPG program.	
GOAL B: Beautify and activate the downtown core.	OBJECTIVES
- Downtown Summerfest and Downtown Winterfest have become annual signature destination	1, 2, 3 & 4
events bringing thousands of residents and visitors to downtown.	
- 16 downtown businesses took advantage of the Micro Grant Program in 2017.	
- Introduced Plaid Friday as an annual event to promote downtown holiday shopping resulting in	
increased retail sales and increased downtown community pride.	
- Funded 40 businesses to improve their building facades, since 2012 totalling \$2M.	
- Foodie Friday supported increased vendor sales and welcomed people into the downtown	
during the day.	
GOAL C: Increase the number of residents living downtown.	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>
- Over 25 Downtown Revitalization Tax Exemptions projects, worth more than \$50.5M:	2 & 3
\$7.7M of incentives awarded to 32 multi-family units	
151 multi-family units proposed for construction in 2018/2019	

The ability of Downtown Prince George to partner with the City of Prince George, Tourism Prince George and Northern Development Initiative Trust has generated funding and support that allowed us to implement and partner on these numerous events and programs. These initiatives represent the collaborative nature of Prince George and the collective focus on improving our downtown.

