

# Downtown Delivers

## Work Plan

Entrant name: Becca Blachut, Marketing Coordinator

BIA/organization name: Downtown Victoria Business Association

Title of the entry: Downtown Delivers

Category: Programming & Partnerships

Timeframe of the project: December 7, 2020 – March 31, 2021

Two-sentence brief summary: Downtown Delivers is a program that makes local deliveries from restaurants and retailers in downtown Victoria free for both the businesses and their customers.

Victory follow up: The 2020 holiday season and post-holiday months concerned businesses in downtown Victoria. Retail sales leading up to Christmas were unpredictable and the usually low sales months of January and February were anticipated to be even worse due to the pandemic. For restaurants, the big food-delivery services like SkiptheDishes and UberEats required margins so high, the already-challenged businesses could barely break even. The Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA), with its mission to nurture and promote the vitality and vibrancy of downtown Victoria and its business community, sought a program to help member businesses compete with larger stores and services by offering free and fast local delivery. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the DVBA launched Downtown Delivers, a program making local deliveries from restaurants and retailers in downtown Victoria free for both the businesses and their customers.

### Supplemental Materials:

- News articles:
  - [CTV](#)
  - [Times Colonist](#)
  - [Victoria Buzz](#)
  - [Victoria News](#)
  - [CHEK News](#)
- Website:
  - [PDF](#)
  - [dvba.ca/downtowndelivers](http://dvba.ca/downtowndelivers)
- Newspaper ad:
  - [Times Colonist](#)

- [Victoria News](#)
- Images (generic)
  - [Click to see/download from Dropbox](#)

### **Opportunity/Need:**

At the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, Downtown Victoria's business landscape changed drastically. As a popular tourist destination and a hub for public servants, the pandemic impacted all businesses in downtown Victoria heavily. Without the masses of tourists and with office workers at home, business continued to suffer through the fall and into the winter.

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Most people living in and around Victoria were working and planning their holidays from home. Although there was an awareness of the need to support local business through the pandemic, the added costs of delivery for those uncomfortable or unable to leave their homes was a real consideration, especially with easy options from major retailers like Amazon available. The Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA), with its mission to nurture and promote the vitality and vibrancy of downtown Victoria and its business community, sought a program to help member businesses compete with larger stores and services by offering free and fast local delivery. On December 7, 2020, the DVBA launched Downtown Delivers, a program that makes local deliveries from restaurants and retailers in downtown Victoria free for both the businesses and their customers.

### **Goal/Objectives:**

With the needs of the downtown business community in mind, the overall goal of Downtown Delivers was to help member retail businesses compete with larger stores and services offering free and fast delivery to local customers. With Downtown Delivers, the DVBA intended to inject over \$100,000 directly into the local economy by subsidizing delivery fees using Victoria-based couriers and delivery services. The program had to be easy to use for both businesses and customers, the timeline was tight, and increasing the reach of member businesses was vital – the DVBA wanted to see that people outside of the City of Victoria were supporting downtown businesses.

## Objectives:

1. Subsidize over \$100,000 in delivery fees for both restaurant and retail businesses by March 31, 2021.
2. Expand reach of downtown retailers beyond residents of the City of Victoria by subsidizing delivery costs of over 1500 orders from people living in the communities beyond the City of Victoria.

## Audience:

The primary audience for Downtown Delivers was people living from Sooke to Sidney who were staying home due to the pandemic. The DVBA sought to encourage people who want to support small and local businesses, but who were facing barriers like added costs of delivery and not being able or willing to visit downtown.

The secondary audience was the downtown businesses. With over 1,300 business members, the DVBA is challenged to find ways to support members directly and equitably. Downtown Delivers was a program that was easy to conceptualize and use, so businesses could readily connect with and benefit from the DVBA.

## Implementation:

The DVBA first began rolling out Downtown Delivers by focusing on free delivery for retailers. It was early December and the DVBA wanted to encourage Victorians to purchase their gifts from downtown businesses. The DVBA team researched local couriers and reached out to three to see if they could facilitate the program. The three local couriers were happy to support the DVBA as partners of Downtown Delivers and they helped to define the boundary of Downtown Delivers – retail delivery would be available from Sooke to Sidney, and the communities in between. With the help of the couriers, systems for how the program would work were determined as the businesses were informed. Once the businesses had a few days to ask questions and understand the program, Downtown Delivers was publicly announced. Two weeks later, a system for free delivery for restaurant members was finalized and the extension of the program was announced. It was vital that for restaurants, the DVBA covered both the cost to customer and the cost to the restaurant, so that the entire purchase amount remained with the food-service business. To do so, the DVBA partnered with a local food-delivery service which was able to create a category within their app for free restaurant delivery.

Since Downtown Delivers required a large budget, the DVBA board needed some convincing before approving the program. To convince the group, the DVBA presented the board with the facts: the challenges caused by the additional public health restrictions, the lack of downtown office workers, and the data suggesting 91% of people would do at least some holiday shopping online. Then, the DVBA explained that

Downtown Delivers was an easy-to-roll-out campaign that would mitigate these challenges.

The DVBA anticipated government funding that would allow the extension of the Downtown Delivers program. The program launched before the funding was secured, as there was a sufficient surplus in the budget nearing the end of the year to cover the expenses. Originally, Downtown Delivers was slated to end on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Once the governmental funding was secured, the DVBA decided to expand the program. First, it was extended until February 15<sup>th</sup>, and then, once the team was able to assess the cost of the project, it was extended finally until March 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Results:**

*Downtown Delivers ends on March 31<sup>st</sup>, two days after this application is submitted, so the results of the program are yet to be determined. This answer is based on the most recent data available.*

1. Result – Objective #1: Subsidize over \$100,000 in delivery fees for both restaurant and retail businesses by March 31, 2021.

At the time of writing this, the DVBA surpassed the \$100,000 budget of Downtown Delivers. Luckily, surplus from 2020 allows the DVBA continue the program until its end date. By subsidizing over \$100,000 in delivery costs using local couriers and delivery services, the DVBA injected that amount directly into the local economy. Over 8,000 customers living in Sooke to Sidney took advantage of Downtown Delivers, choosing to support local from home instead of supporting Amazon.

2. Result – Object #2: Expand reach of downtown retailers beyond residents of the City of Victoria by subsidizing delivery costs of over 1500 orders from people living in the communities beyond Victoria.

The DVBA was especially curious about the number of people outside the City of Victoria that utilized the program. The DVBA considered that information would reflect how many people were influenced to choose downtown over other options. The thinking was that – for the most part - people living nearby to downtown would have shopped there regardless. People in the surrounding communities, like those living in Langford and Saanich, would have probably chosen a different option if Downtown Delivers did not exist. Over 2,400 people – approximately one-third of those who took advantage of Downtown Delivers - lived in municipalities outside the City of Victoria.