HMA Green Business Spotlight

BIABC Best in the West Awards

Timeframe of the project

From February to April

Brief project summary

The "Green Business Spotlight" campaign was launched by the Heights Merchant Association (HMA) to celebrate and encourage environmental sustainability among small businesses and to facilitate a gentle peer pressure for others to increase their sustainable business practices in order to receive the same benefits. Businesses can nominate themselves by completing a list of green practices, and unlock achievement levels, from Green Business Level 1 to Green Business Leader, based on the number of green initiatives implemented. Rewards range from a wooden plaque award to display their Green Leadership, to extensive social media exposure and blog post features.

Opportunity/Need:

The Heights Merchants Association (HMA) comprises 360 businesses in a 2km long district. In 2019, it made a long-term commitment to contributing to a sustainable district in response to a growing demand in the area for sustainable products and shopping formats. The HMA formed a Green Business Committee, and worked to actively increase environmental responsibility among its BIA members. Unfortunately, even with a strong desire to help the environment, it may be challenging for some small and local businesses to determine how to become more sustainable. To aid in this endeavour, HMA launched the **Green Business Spotlight** campaign and in some years, has made funds available to help businesses purchase greener products.

By highlighting how small businesses successfully reach for sustainable goals, the campaign aims to encourage others to make similar commitments. In addition, the HMA also actively provides educational resources and support, which inform businesses about the value of investing in sustainability and show them how to do so effectively.

Goal/Objectives:

The main objectives include:

- To celebrate HMA merchants' achievements in sustainability,
- To inspire and support BIA members' investment in sustainable business practices, and
- To put HMA merchants' best "green" face forward to the public.

Audience:

Main audiences: HMA merchants and General Public
Note: The Green Business Spotlight has two phases of promotion - the first one is to the Merchants, the second one is to the General Public.

Secondary or Specific audiences (within and outside Burnaby Heights):

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- Customers
- Community members
- Visitors
- Partners & Stakeholders

Implementation:

There are two phases to the campaign:

- **From February to April 1**: *Plan and encourage HMA merchants to participate in the campaign:*
    - Promoted the program to our 360 businesses through electronic bulletin as well as an information package printed on environmentally sound, unbleached, recycled paper, which was then hand-delivered (not mailed).
    - Developed curated objectives for The Greenest Business Award for different kinds of businesses and left room for new and innovative suggestions.
    - Designed and sent out the merchant's kits (see supporting documents) to every business. The kit was designed with the campaign's green branding in mind and was printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.
    - Featured the campaign on the headline of Heights Merchant e-newsletter.
    - In addition, the HMA also invested in eco-friendly 100% cotton shopping bags to use in this and other year-'round promotions.

- **Throughout April (Earth Month):** *Putting HMA merchants' best "green" face forward to the public*
    - Promoted the campaign on Burnaby Now's leaderboard and print ad (see supporting documents).
    - Featured businesses on three green levels on social media, newsletter, blog posts/website.
    - Green Business Leaders receive the Green Leader Award in the presence of HMA members, elected officials, and community partners at the annual member mixer. (During covid restrictions, it was delivered in person to the merchant's shop and photos were shared on social media.)
        - The Awards are made of wood and can be hung in the merchant's front window or door to spotlight their environmental leadership in the community. They are dated with the year received, so merchants can "collect" the awards to cement their green reputation.

Results:

The campaign lasted 3 months and achieved the following outcomes with less than $1000.

- **To inspire and support BIA members' investing in sustainability and how to do so effectively.**

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- Showed leadership in sustainable practices by implementing practices for the HMA's internal operations and initiated multiple green initiatives.
- Ensured the application form is accessible both online and in physical copies.
- Promoted the campaign across all merchants' communication platforms.
- Ensured the merchants fully understand the campaign's branding and spirit.

- **To celebrate HMA merchants' pioneering achievements in sustainability**
  - Developed a list of clear winning objectives for different businesses.
  - Spotlighted the winners at an annual event for partners and stakeholders.
  - Utilized owned, traditional and digital media outlets to promote approximately businesses on three "green" levels of achievement.

- **To put HMA merchants' best green face forward to the public**
  - Developed tools, assets and materials that are engaging to both the community and business audiences.
  - Social media and website features reached more than 9,000 people.

Through the Green Business Spotlight campaign, we were able to recognize and reward businesses that have made a commitment to sustainability and inspired others to follow in their footsteps. The vision of HMA's Green Business Committee includes finding ways for the Heights to show leadership in sustainable business practices, marketing the Heights' greener elements, and helping Heights' businesses overcome barriers to establishing more sustainable practices, was clearly demonstrated through this campaign. By investing in environmentally responsible practices, the HMA demonstrates dedication to making the Heights a more sustainable place to live, work and visit.