

# - December 2014 Newsletter -

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## *Downtown News to 'Feel Good' About*



### **A Message from Economic Development Officer Wendy Gibson**

Cobourg's Downtown Vitalization Action Plan was ratified by Cobourg Council in the fall of 2013 and with approval of budgets and a grant from the Province of Ontario in 2014 staff got down to business of carrying out the plan. Anyone who has been following our progress is aware that the major projects include the Community Improvement Venture Initiative, Tourism Asset Feasibility Study, Building Asset Study and Heritage Master Plan. The more visible projects that we will see fully realized in the spring are the wayfinding signs and a facelift for Henley Arcade. What folks are not seeing is all the work going on behind the scenes by Town staff, the Downtown Business Improvement Area (D.B.I.A.) and volunteers.

We have a small working group who have established target sectors for business attraction and have reached out to successful businesses in other communities to discuss second locations in Cobourg. We had discussions with local realtors who are motivated to help us fill up the empty spaces but we are also relying on our Cobourg Ambassadors (yes that's all of you) to bring us word of any businesses they become aware of while travelling who might consider setting up shop in Cobourg. One lead from our Friends of the Downtown is already being explored with a positive outlook. It is our hope to formalize the Cobourg Ambassador Program in 2015.

Town and D.B.I.A. staff had numerous conversations with building owners to find out what plans they have for their buildings and how we can help manage this. Among these we are working closely with both owners of 2 King Street East and 52 King Street West as these are the largest available spaces with so much potential with the right tenants. We continue to direct clients to the Business Advisory Centre Northumberland to develop business plans before opening their doors and provide a strong case for retaining our businesses once they open. The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) was also instrumental in the success of our piloted Youth Entrepreneurship Program.

I have to congratulate the Marketing and Communications Team who have worked hard at getting the word out about our efforts through radio, social media, the "Downtown News to Feel Good About" eNewsletter, the downtown billboard and the sizzle video (currently being worked on) as part of our attraction efforts. We are building on Ontario's Feel Good Town to create feel good experiences. Preparation is also under way to develop a website focused on attracting investment to the downtown that will be used by the Community Improvement Venture Initiative in whatever form that takes in 2015.

A Downtown Coalition is being formalized and will go to Council for approval in January. The coalition will become the catalyst for aligning strategies, ensuring momentum of the action plan and developing and reporting performance measures.

The request for proposal has closed for the Heritage Master Plan and we are working on plans to pull this information once complete, along with all the other parts of the action plan to develop a one-stop-shop manual that will become our "Master Plan" for the downtown.

The process of downtown vitalization has been a positive one from the beginning that has led to much closer working relationship between the Town, Chamber of Commerce, Business Advisory Centre and D.B.I.A. some of whom are aligning budgets, events and marketing plans for 2015. Without the support of Cobourg Council we could not have reached the implementation stage of this initiative. We expected this to be a four-year plan and I am confident we will reach our goal and vision for a vibrant downtown as we move forward into the final stages of our project in 2015/16.

Sincerely,  
Wendy Gibson  
Economic Development Officer

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## **Durham College Students Present Conceptual Design Projects for Cobourg's Downtown**



(Cobourg, ON) December 5, 2014 - On Thursday, December 4 the Town of Cobourg's Downtown Vitalization Action Committee hosted architectural students from Durham College (DC) who presented their Conceptual Design Projects. Inspired by Cobourg's heritage downtown, the projects were part of a partnership between the Town of Cobourg and DC.

The project began in September, when students from DC's Architectural Technician and Architectural Technology programs were tasked with showcasing conceptual design work complementary of the character and heritage of Downtown Cobourg. Five sites within Cobourg's Downtown were chosen:

- **Site A - 1 King St. E.** (former Liquidation World, Oddballs Bar and residential units)
- **Site B - 62 King St. W.** (Bank of Montreal) and 52 King St. W. (former Bargain Shop)
- **Site C - 90 King St. W.** (Green Canoe Outfitters) and 92 King St. W. (92 King Restaurant and residential units)
- **Site D - 98 King St. W.** (H & R Block) and 100 King St. W. (Pizza and Stanley's Fish and Chips)
- **Site E - 97-99 King St. W.** (Northumberland Today), 101 King St. W. (Tile Studio) and 103 King St. W. (PJ's Custom Outfitters)

"The partnership between the Town of Cobourg and Durham College's Architectural Technician and Architectural Technology programs has been very successful," said Alison TorrieLapaire, Heritage Planner for The Town of Cobourg. "The final designs that the students have presented reflect an appreciation of the potential that heritage properties hold, and provide us with some new, creative ideas for these properties."

Students were assembled into five groups and assigned to a specific site. In September each group met with Ms. TorrieLapaire. During their visit, they toured each site to gather information, take pictures and ask Ms. TorrieLapaire questions.

The project required students to assess each site in terms of the zoning by-laws, do a site analysis, study the Heritage/ Urban design guidelines and prepare a feasibility report. Students were asked to explore the development potential of the selected downtown sites, while conserving the character of the Commercial Core Heritage Conservation District of historic King Street. The final design projects take into account urban design and the compatibility of new development in Cobourg's heritage district, along with the potential for retrofitting existing historical structures.

"Cobourg is a great location for learning in the field," says Ali Taileb, Professor, Durham College School of Science and Engineering "Its strong heritage and the character of the architecture have given our students a great opportunity to hone their planning and design skills."

The partnership was initially formed between the Town of Cobourg and DC more than a year ago when Ms. TorrieLapaire and the Town of Cobourg's Business Development Officer, Kevin Narraway met with Susan Todd, Dean, School of Science and Engineering Technology to discuss how DC architectural students could participate in Cobourg's Downtown Vitalization Initiative. In June 2014, Taileb met with Ms. Torrie Lapaire, to discuss how the design projects planned for Downtown Cobourg would be integrated with the curriculum requirements for this semester's course in Land Use, Site Analysis and Planning.

The students have gained practical and relevant experience in land use, site analysis and planning, as well as knowledge of working in a municipal context. The concepts developed by the students will be integrated into the existing 3-D sketch of Cobourg's downtown and will help to illustrate a new vision for Downtown Cobourg. The Town of Cobourg looks forward to gaining a fresh perspective while maximizing the potential of these select downtown properties.

For more information on Durham College's architectural programs, please visit [www.durhamcollege.ca/arhc](http://www.durhamcollege.ca/arhc) or [www.durhamcollege.ca/arhy](http://www.durhamcollege.ca/arhy).

*For more information on the Conceptual Design Projects contact Alison Torrie Lapaire, Heritage Planner for The Town of Cobourg by calling 905-372-1005 or emailing [atorrie@cobourg.ca](mailto:atorrie@cobourg.ca).*



## Business & Tourism Centre Promotes Open Door Policy - Let's Talk!

Since we've embarked on the Downtown Vitalization process we've encountered a lot of interest from our citizens. You have questions and are looking for answers, or simply want to discuss a few ideas of your own. We welcome the opportunity to chat with you. It is our 'Open Door Policy' at the Business & Tourism Centre to ensure that your voice is heard.

Whether you have a suggestion on how to attract new business to the downtown, an idea on where to position the wayfinding signs or simply want more information - we are here to listen! Please come and sit down with any of us at The Business & Tourism Centre located at 212 King Street West. We are open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

*For more information on the Open Door Policy contact Wendy Gibson, Economic Development Officer for The Town of Cobourg by calling 905-372-5481 or emailing [wgibson@cobourg.ca](mailto:wgibson@cobourg.ca).*



### Interview: DBIA Chair Andrew Hall Chats About 2015

We chat with the Downtown Business Improvement Area's (DBIA) Business & Event Coordinator Andrew Hall and learn a little bit more about him, the DBIA's goals and plans for the upcoming year.

Q. Tell us a bit about yourself (education, hobbies, etc.) and how you came about working for, and becoming the Coordinator for the DBIA?

A. I grew up in Kingston, Ontario and studied Graphic Design at St. Lawrence College. Afterwards, I moved to Welland, Ontario to study Design Production at Niagara College. Four years of study gave me a rich background in both the artistic and technical aspects of Design.

Shortly after college, I found work at a sign company in the Niagara region. 12 years in the industry led me to a position at one of the largest sign manufacturers in Canada. There, I discovered a capacity for marketing, administration, policy management, etc., while somehow maintaining my love for creative design. By then, my wife and I had built a house near Grafton and I had established some local clients via my freelance design work. Some of my Downtown Cobourg clients alerted me to the available Marketing, Event & Business Coordinator position at the DBIA. I submitted my resume because I loved Downtown Cobourg, a local job was very appealing, and my downtown clients were very confident in my ability to provide the professional and creative strengths needed in the DBIA.

Q. What do you believe is/are the greatest challenge(s) for the downtown?

A. This is a big question and there are several answers. One of the greatest challenges we face is a sluggish economy. Locally, we have lost so many good jobs through various factors such as globalization. Our population can't (or simply doesn't) support the economy we once had. Online retailers and some big-box stores are a problem as they remove more money from the local economy than they contribute. For every dollar spent at some national retailers, up to 80 cents simply leaves the community, never to return. To make things worse, consumers have learned to rationalize where they shop by valuing low prices over quality, service, and economic impact. Another challenge we face involves properties and landowners. Many downtown building owners have yet to realize the long-term investment value of making serious repairs and upgrades to their buildings. There is much potential in these heritage buildings, but they must be made attractive to potential tenants, visitors, and buyers. This particular problem will require progressive thinking and effective leadership from both the public and private sectors.

Q. What makes Cobourg's downtown different than other towns of similar size?

A. Firstly, the beach and waterfront put Cobourg on the map. These are real gems and we're clearly not leveraging those assets enough. Investing more in Economic Development and Tourism efforts would better enable us to do that. Secondly, our proximity to the highway and the VIA station is a real asset. We could take better advantage of that, as well. Finally, I'm learning that Downtown Cobourg's most important difference is the incredible number of people who love it. There are a lot of citizens who are actually willing to do more than talk and are working toward the betterment of our town, right now.

Q. Aside from your passion for Cobourg's downtown what else are you passionate about?

A. I'm passionate about my family. My wife and two sons mean everything to me. A designer by trade, I'm crazy about the science and the art of good design, marketing, and business. I'm also a serious advocate for human rights and am a long-term member of Amnesty International. Nature and the environment get a lot of my attention, too, because I'm well-aware that our economy means nothing if we can't breathe our air or drink our water. Somewhere near the top of this list should be "good coffee."

Q. What common questions do you hear about Cobourg's downtown? Can you share with us the answers to those commonly asked questions?

A. I get a lot of questions. Lately, the most common question is "what are we going to do about the empty stores?" I cringe at this question because it means that the existing businesses are overlooked to a degree. I recognize the negative perception that an empty space creates. But, frankly, an existing business is far more deserving of our attention. In fact, the more we offer our attention and patronage to existing businesses, the more attractive our downtown becomes to new businesses. There is actually only a handful of useable, vacant spaces available downtown. But, there are still 230 businesses registered in the DBIA. My favourite question is, "who is the statue supposed to be?" My answer is, "no one in particular. But, I call him 'Lawrence.'"

Q. Tell us about the DBIA's successes in 2014.

A. There are many. We moved our administrative office to a street-level location on Division St. that enables us to be more visible as an organization and makes us more available to our members and the public. We increased the number of annual special events we run from 4 to 10, bringing even more footsteps to the downtown. Our social-networking efforts were quadrupled and have contributed to greater community awareness, involvement, and event attendance. Also, our partnership with the Town continues in terms of the Vitalization Action Plan. It's a pivotal project and we're proud to have such an active role in it.

Q. What do you have planned for 2015?

A. Special Events have to be constantly re-evaluated. 2015 is going to see some major changes to our existing events, and greater efforts in partnering with other events. We're excited to be exploring a new long-term marketing strategy, as well. Of course, our ongoing partnership in Vitalization efforts is something we remain excited about. Seeing the action items come to fruition is going to be extremely satisfying.

Q. How can citizens become more involved with their downtown?

A. Come downtown and visit the stores. Talk to the owners and staff. By knowing who they are and what they sell, you'll be that much closer to becoming a regular customer. That's the most we can ask of anyone. Attend special events; they're fun and make you feel more connected to the community. Better yet, volunteer, because many hands make light work, and it's one of the best ways to have direct input. Finally, utilize public services and spaces, like public transit, Victoria Park, the beach and waterfront, etc. It's one more way to be connected.

Q. Any hidden talents or favourite quotes you'd like to share?

A. My friends know that I do a bit of voice acting on the side when I can find the time. The rest should probably remain hidden. <wink>

*For more information on the Downtown Business Improvement Area please contact Andrew Hall, Event & Business Coordinator by emailing [dbia@downtowncobourg.ca](mailto:dbia@downtowncobourg.ca) or calling 905-377-8024. You can also visit the DBIA website at [www.downtowncobourg.ca](http://www.downtowncobourg.ca)*

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## Event: The Project Billboard is Unveiled at 1 King East



The Marketing & Communications team unveiled the Downtown Vitalization Initiative's Project Billboard on November 13 at 1 King East near the corner of King and Division Street.

The billboard was constructed to keep citizens up-to-date on the many projects taking place within the upcoming years.

"This billboard is an affirmation and a commitment by the Town and the Downtown Business Improvement Area to show the people of Cobourg that these are the things we're working towards," said Wendy Gibson, Economic Development Officer for The Town of Cobourg.

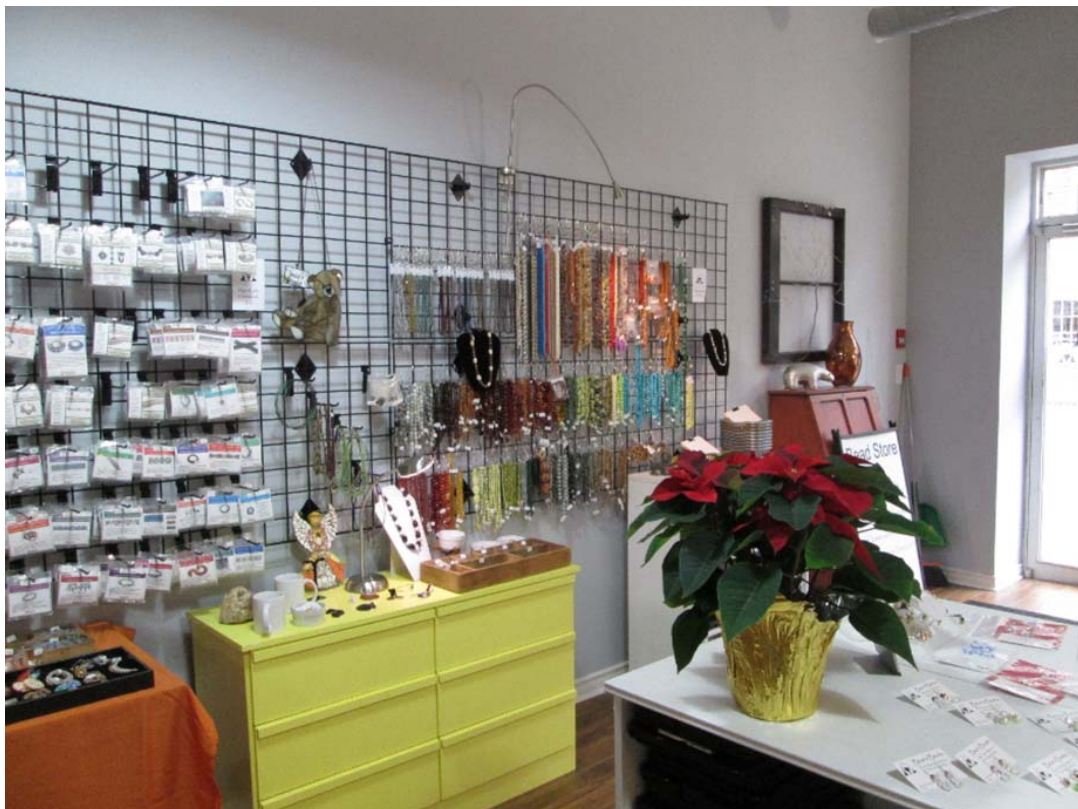
*Note: A protective frame has recently been installed around the Project Billboard.*

*For more information on the Project Billboard contact Ashley Purdy, Communications Officer at The Town of Cobourg by emailing [apurdy@cobourg.ca](mailto:apurdy@cobourg.ca).*



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## **New Business: Bear's Beads Relocates to Downtown Cobourg**



**We'd like to officially welcome 'Bear's Beads' to Downtown Cobourg. Bear's Beads relocated from Division Street to 73 King Street West and is owned by Barbara Nutley Hunter, a first time entrepreneur with a love for the crafting world - especially beads!**

**Q. Tell us about Bear's Beads and how you got started.**

A. I've always been artistic but in more of a crafty way and about 10 years ago I walked into a bead store and was instantly hooked. The colours and textures are limitless and I love that no two pieces are the same.

**Q. Why did you decide to relocate to Downtown Cobourg?**

A. I started with a studio in my home selling just my jewellery but soon realized that there is a need for a beading store in Northumberland. The choice to locate in Downtown Cobourg was easy. It's where the arts scene is centered, the vitalization process will bring a new vibrancy to the area and I love the people.

**Q. Have you always been an entrepreneur?**

A. Not at all. This is my first business. I was a software trainer for the federal government for 10 years and before that I was a group insurance underwriter.

**Q. What are some of your goals for a successful new year?**

A. One of the best ways to build my business is to engage people in this craft. We will be having more classes -- for adults and for children - and will be inviting guest artists to showcase their work in the store.

**Q. If you had to describe your business in one word what would it be?**

A. Friendly.

**Q. When customers come into your shop what do they most often ask for?**

A. Do we teach classes? (Yes, we do!)

**Q. What type of purchase/item would make a great stocking stuffer?**

A. We have Christmas earrings, pendants and charm bracelets for \$10 including tax. They'll make a great teacher gift, too.

**Q. Tell us about any sales, specials or events coming up at Bear's Beads.**

A. We'll be having a last minute Christmas sale starting on December 19th going to December 24th where everything in the store will be 25% off. (Classes and parties excluded.)

***Welcome to Downtown Cobourg Bear's Beads!***

*For more information on Bear's Beads visit the store at 73 King Street West or email [bearsbeads@sympatico.ca](mailto:bearsbeads@sympatico.ca)*