

Annual Report

Executive Summary

The City Centre is the oldest part of Spruce Grove and has experienced, like many other downtowns, a migration of business to the new shopping centres and commercial nodes outside the core. The notion of a formal Business Improvement Area (BIA) was recommended in the City Centre Revitalization Paper completed in June 2014. The Spruce Grove City Centre Business Association (CCBA) has partnered with the City of Spruce Grove to identify grants and work towards the successful delivery of a City Centre Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) which was approved by City Council on April 27th, 2020.

Several consultants as well as world-renown expert, Roger Brooks, have also placed emphasis on the ability of a City Centre to provide year-round programming, not just in the summer months. The CCBA Board of Directors believe in this and as a result, an effort to provide spring, fall and winter programming was also made. We believe that the CCBA business community has taken ownership of the many recommendations and partnered with the City, wherever possible, in bringing about change.

This package is being presented to you as part of the CCBA's annual reporting process to City Council. The Board is required to hold Annual General Meetings, to elect Directors and to present a budget for the following calendar year and, this occurred on Thursday, September 30th, 2021.

City Centre Revitalization and the ARP

The revitalization of the City Centre has been identified as an important initiative of Spruce Grove in developing a sustainable community. It started with the City Centre Revitalization Discussion Paper which was presented to Council in July 2014. The recommendations were subsequently incorporated into the City's Corporate Plan. Two key initiatives that came out of the Discussion Paper were the establishment of a Business Improvement Area (BIA) for the City Centre and the formation of the City Centre Business Association (CCBA) to administer the BIA.

City Council approved the establishment of the City Centre Business Improvement Area (BIA) in August 2016 for the purpose of promoting the revitalization and redevelopment of the Spruce Grove City Centre. The Bylaw (C-966-16) further provided for the establishment of the City Centre Business Association (CCBA) as the Board for the BIA including the corporate bylaws under which the Board may operate.

The CCBA has had an integral role in the process leading to the development of the City Centre Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP). This has included extensive stakeholder involvement and working with the City toward the creation of a vision and plan for the revitalization of the City Centre. This resulted in a number of background studies which ultimately led to the development of a draft ARP. The City Centre ARP was approved by City Council on April 27th, 2020. The CCBA has continued to work with the City through the detailed planning and implementation phases such as the streetscape design and design of Columbus Park that started in late 2020 and will continue to provide support as the future implementation phases take place. We believe that through this partnership, local businesses have taken ownership of the initiative and together we are bringing about meaningful change for the benefit of the community.



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Events & Activities

The City Centre Business Association (CCBA) relies upon the successful delivery and growth of signature events to keep service levels high while keeping operating costs as low as possible for the membership. Given their value to the business community and the interest they have sparked in commercial reinvestment; we believe that these signature events have added to the overall vitality of our young association. We truly believe that signature events such as the Public Markets, Spring Fest and Fall Fest, contribute to building a sense of community within Spruce Grove and they foster a remarkable opportunity for inclusion where business, arts, culture and community align.

Unfortunately, our Signature Events were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the majority of our 2021 Signature Events to be cancelled. These cancellations forced the CCBA to get creative to still find ways to engage and promote the City Centre Businesses to the community in a time when so much was unknown.

Various Decorating Contests

The City Centre Business Association (CCBA) has become known for the many decorating contests we hold throughout the City Centre at various times of the year. These contests were created during the pandemic in 2020 as a means to gain exposure to the City Centre, and all the businesses within it. Whether it is the Spring Window Decorating Contest, or the Scarecrow and Snowman Decorating Contests, they all have one objective which is to showcase the City Centre and give the public the opportunity to see all that it has to offer.

The feedback regarding these interactive contests have been overwhelmingly positive from both the participating businesses and the community alike. Some businesses are taking the opportunity to use these contests as team building exercises, whether it is the planning and execution of their submission, or using the events as an opportunity to tour them with their staff.

The feedback from the community has also been overwhelmingly positive with many eagerly awaiting for the next one to commence after one ends. These contests are a great way for families to get outdoors and tour around the City Centre on foot viewing all the creative submissions, and participating in the contests by taking selfies with the submissions and/or voting on the event page for their favorite ones.

Fall Public Market

The Public Markets started in 2016 and have witnessed unprecedented growth and attendance. The total number of vendors grew from 72 for the entire 2016 season to an average of 120-140 per market in 2019. On Public Market days, we have specific individuals conduct head counts of the foot traffic that comes through. The average foot traffic per market is 4000, weather permitting, which has helped increase sales on market days for several businesses within the City Centre.

In 2020 the Spruce Grove City Centre Business Association was set to execute 4 Public Markets and 1 Night Market. Each Public Market is themed, and in 2020 the themes included a 'Youth Entrepreneur Showcase', 'Furry Friends', 'Rock the Art Walk' and 'Crafters Creations'.

Registration began in January 2020 and by April 1st each market was more than three quarters sold out. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the ban of large gatherings, the CCBA Board of Directors had to make the difficult decision to cancel all Public Markets and issue refunds to all vendors who had paid to participate. The cancellation of the Public Markets was not only devastating to the CCBA, but also to the vendors, the community and the City Centre businesses who benefit from the additional foot traffic on Public Market days.



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As we are all aware, the global pandemic has continued throughout 2021. As mid-summer approached, the statistics regarding COVID-19 became more favourable and the province announced that there would be opportunity to celebrate Canada Day under less restrictions. As part of this mounting confidence, the City of Spruce Grove approached the City Centre Business Association regarding the opportunity to host a Fall Market as part of the City of Spruce Grove's *Community Comeback events*. The CCBA was very excited at the opportunity and looking forward to running a successful event which would encompass Fall Market, Art Walk and Youth Entrepreneur components. Several collaborative meetings took place and vendors, entertainment and, a robust marketing campaign were secured.

The market was set to take place both inside and outside at the Spruce Grove Pioneer Centre as part of a pilot project for where to run the markets in during future construction phases. Just days before the event date, the province announced a 4th wave to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was devastating for everyone and the CCBA Board of Directors made the difficult decision to cancel the Fall Market. Although some vendors for this market were placed both inside the Spruce Grove Pioneer Centre and outside in the surrounding parking lots, the cancellation had to be done as vendors, volunteers and entertainment were cancelling their participation. A large part of the budget for this event was for marketing which could not be recovered. The CCBA looks forward to 2022 and the opportunities that it will bring.

Wednesday's City Centre Find of the Week

Wednesday's City Centre Find of the Week was created during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 out of the need to promote City Centre businesses to encourage residents to support small businesses and to shop local at that time more than ever before. This social media based showcase commenced in September of 2020 and is run a few times throughout the month to maintain engagement with our following, and to showcase an item from a local business that the public might not be aware they carry. At the end of the week there is a random draw and the showcased item is given away to the winner. Due to its success and the positive feedback from the business community, the CCBA continued this online event throughout 2021 as well.

Fall Fest

Fall Fest was an existing event created in 2016 by a few of the business owners within Grove Plaza. These business owners initially approached the CCBA for support in organizing the financials and marketing efforts while leveraging off the CCBA's Facebook following and growing volunteer roster. Fall of 2020 was the year that the event was going to be taken over by the CCBA, and grew to a new scale all the while keeping true to the original intent of the event, which was to shine a spotlight on the businesses within Grove Plaza and on the City Centre as a whole.

Fall Fest 2021 was set to have a variety of activities such as live music and performances, free inflatables, free pumpkin painting and pumpkin giveaways, story time with Princess Elsa, food vendors and sampling, fire pits for wiener/marshmallow roasting, games and prizes.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 and the restrictions put in place, this large-scale event as planned was unfortunately cancelled for both 2020 and 2021.

Moonlight Madness

Moonlight Madness is an event designed to promote shopping local and supporting small businesses within the City Centre. In 2021, this event will observe roughly 20 businesses stay open late, offer in store promotions/sales to help residents get an early start on their holiday shopping. This event will be modified due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the focus on the importance of shopping local and supporting local during the holiday season will remain.



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Conclusion

While we have encountered obstacles in 2021 with the cancellation of many Signature Events due to COVID-19, the CCBA has worked tirelessly to find ways to utilize social media to maintain engagement and encourage support for the City Centre and all the businesses within. With the adaptation of existing events, and the creation of new ones that work within the restrictions put in place due to COVID-19, the CCBA still believes that a collaborative and concerted effort has taken place to tie in the various service and shopping nodes within our zone.

Furthermore, we look forward to 2022 when the redevelopment of the City Centre continues on, which will bring future growth and reinvestment within the heart of the city. We have embraced the opportunity to partner with the City of Spruce Grove in bringing about the structure of the City Centre ARP document and look with great anticipation in a continued partnership as we begin to execute the various stages of implementation in the years to come.



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