

# RECOVERY STRATEGY

We were well into the planning stages in January for the 2020 events when we realized very quickly that we had to cancel them, but we are proud to report that we acted immediately, and the cost recovery impact was fairly minimal. The artists, vendors, performers and suppliers who were able to, agreed to defer their deposits for events in 2021 if the world circumstances allow us to hold them.

The response actions and strategies detailed below are what followed when we all first realized that this year was going to be unlike anything we have seen before. The DLBA's immediate and main priorities were reinforcing the importance of supporting local, providing resources to businesses, reaching out to our DLBA business owners to minimize isolation and anxiety stress and creating programs and opportunities to encourage economic restart and survival.

We immediately wrote and mailed out a letter to the property owners asking for rent relief for their tenants. The comment most often made by the businesses was, "thank you for sending this out. I had no idea how to even start this conversation with my landlord".

On March 31st, 2020 we donated \$3,000 to the Langley Memorial Hospital to support hospital staff with hot meals during their shifts. The only stipulation was that food had to be ordered from our DLBA restaurants. As many frontline healthcare professionals were working longer hours, often without breaks or food we wanted to have a way to thank the health care professionals who had been working around the clock, while supporting our local restaurants. We put the call out to our restaurants who were open and those who participated all agreed to provide a special \$10 meal. With the donation of \$3000, we were able to support our local hospital workers with approximately 300 meals.

[www.langleyadvancetimes.com/business/downtown-langley-eateries-pull-together-to-feed-hospital-staff/](http://www.langleyadvancetimes.com/business/downtown-langley-eateries-pull-together-to-feed-hospital-staff/)

**We connected with businesses to see how they were doing and made the public aware of which local businesses were open and what services they had to offer. This included all restaurant, retail and service businesses. This was an ongoing undertaking, and we continuously updated our businesses and the community with this relevant information.**

[www.langleyadvancetimes.com/news/some-struggle-some-thrive-during-pandemic-langley-city-business-survey-finds/](http://www.langleyadvancetimes.com/news/some-struggle-some-thrive-during-pandemic-langley-city-business-survey-finds/)

In the beginning of April, we started a heart themed "Community Strong" Campaign. This was a campaign where a local artist was hired to paint business windows in our BIA. We covered the cost of one window and if additional windows were desired, this service was made available to them at the reduced cost. This undertaking helped boost moral considerably throughout our business community, knowing that we were all "in this together". When everyone unities to spread positivity, that's when we see our community strength come together.

[www.langleyadvancetimes.com/news/video-painting-hearts-to-raise-spirits-in-langley-city/](http://www.langleyadvancetimes.com/news/video-painting-hearts-to-raise-spirits-in-langley-city/)

In April we also created a sharable graphic to show how small businesses could be supported. This was accompanied by a strong social media campaign focused entirely on the importance of "supporting local".

We created daily Instagram videos (over 60 in total), to provide hope, encouragement and to spread the word that we were all in this together. We have since been told by numerous businesses and community members that they tuned in every single day, just to hear what we had to say and for the familiarity of a caring face and message.



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## To help our local businesses we partnered with several online app companies including

- "GetintheLoop", which is a mobile media marketing company that assists Langley businesses at no cost with promoting their available products and services during these unprecedented times [getintheloop.ca/deals/langley](http://getintheloop.ca/deals/langley)
- "I Love This Chit!", which is a local company that promotes the purchase of a coupon or gift certificate to be used once businesses started to re-open [www.ilovethischit.ca/product-category/downtown-langley-bia/](http://www.ilovethischit.ca/product-category/downtown-langley-bia/)
- LOCO BC's #buylocal campaign, which is another, further reaching gift card campaign supported by numerous BIA's, Chambers and organizations across the region [www.locobc.ca/cpages/bc-buy-local](http://www.locobc.ca/cpages/bc-buy-local)

These partnerships allowed our local businesses to receive free advertising, continue to earn income and they also gained some valuable insight regarding what digital marketing is all about. All of these services were offered at no cost to our membership, and we ensured they were assisted with signing up and launching their listings.

In a prominent and vacant building location in our downtown, we have partnered with Langley City for the past five years to create window cling graphics that advertise our combined annual events. Realizing that the usual clings were not going to work due to event cancellations, we quickly reached out to a local muralist. She created a mural on short notice that resonated how important small business is and how much the community supports and appreciates them.

We created, printed and distributed 1,000 "Thank You" postcards to all businesses that were open or starting to reopen, to distribute to their customers. The message was simple – thank you for supporting us. We did this so we could connect with the businesses and also provide them with something to say thank you to their customers.

We kept up a strong social media presence through our Downtown Dollar contests, partnering with businesses, bloggers and influencers. We also hosted a \$3,500 Instagram Giveaway which consisted of various items donated from supportive businesses prior to COVID, intended for a \$5 K Instagram Followers Giveaway in March. We realized the timing wasn't right, held off until mid-June and launched it as the Downtown Langley Dream Giveaway. Our instincts proved correct as people were genuinely waiting for something positive and the success of this promotion is evidenced by the following Instagram statistics:

**Gained followers 1,453**  
**Total likes 2,053**  
**Total comments 11,109**  
**Total shares 875**

**Our annual budget for Downtown Dollars\* is approximately \$10,000. With Board approval we increased this budget to \$20,000, and between April and August we gave away through online contests a total of \$8,560.**

**In addition to our own online contests, we also offered Dream Giveaway contributing businesses their own \$100 Downtown Dollars to host giveaways, resulting in over 40 in-house social media collaborations. The support and increased social media followers that each business received as a result of this was much appreciated, as has been evidenced by their ongoing and positive feedback.**

*\* Downtown Dollars (started in 2012) are the same as cash and accepted as such in the 90+ participating businesses. Businesses pay a one-time registration fee of \$25 and when they turn their collected Downtown Dollars in to the office, they are reimbursed 100%. We have a proven return rate of 97% on these dollars and every penny goes back into our business community.*



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Our Social Media Manager has created professional relationships with other social media experts throughout the lower mainland and the Province. These influencers noticed and appreciated what was happening with our social media, to the point that she was able to put out a call for "Downtown Langley Brand Ambassadors", with a list of criteria for the months of July and August. Although expecting only a few, she received over 100 responses from some very high-profile influencers of all types and had to make the difficult choice of selecting five. The influencers selected had a combined following of over 43,000, and this program proved so successful, that many of the applicants continue to want to work with us. As a result, we have selected five more for September and October to carry on with this successful social media endeavor.

We created a heartfelt video to say "Thank You" from our businesses to our local community for all their love and support. This video was placed on our home page and shared on all social media platforms. It raised awareness once again about the importance of supporting local.

We realized that as businesses were starting to open back up, we needed something to stimulate the economic recovery in a safe way and thus created two new events: "Pick Up Picnics" for the restaurants and "Ain't It Grand" for the retail and service businesses. We started working on these projects in early June and launched them at the beginning of July.

This took four weeks from concept to launch included graphics, business registration and informing the public.

The Pick Up Picnic Project ([www.pickuppicnics.ca](http://www.pickuppicnics.ca)) ran Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 12 - 4 between July 3 to August 16. At no cost to them, restaurants were asked to register for this to accomplish the following:

The goal was to run a restaurant program that encouraged customers to choose a participating DLBA restaurant to safely purchase a takeout order and then visit one of the many beautiful parks in Langley City to enjoy their Pick Up Picnic.

## How Did the Downtown Langley Picnic Project Work?

- Thirteen participating restaurants offered a Pick Up Picnic special
- Individual restaurants decided what they would offer for their Pick Up Picnic special and what they would charge
- Customers placed and paid for orders with restaurants directly, just as they would for a standard takeout order
- When customers picked up their takeout order, their food was provided to them in a DLBA reusable shopping bag with the DLBA Picnic Package inside the bag (there was no cost to the restaurants for these additional items)

## DLBA Picnic Package included

- Branded DLBA reusable shopping bag
- 1 oz. DLBA branded bottle of hand sanitizer
- Map of the parks in Langley City that highlighted the perfect places to enjoy their Pick Up Picnic
- 1 green waste and 1 garbage bag
- Thank You postcard



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All the restaurants had to do was provide the takeout order and any napkins or utensils, and once they registered for the program, the DLBA brought them 30 pre-stuffed DLBA bags for their use in the program, and were able to ask for more as required.

To continue to build moral we held a strong social media campaign (including using bloggers and influencers) supporting this program in addition to the following:

- Weekly giveaways of \$100 downtown dollars and a branded DLBA picnic blanket throughout the duration of the program
- A grand prize of \$1,000 downtown dollars for one lucky winner that was announced at the end of the promotion

Over 530 Pick Up Picnics bags were used over the six week period.

We created the "Ain't It Grand?" ([www.aintitgrand.ca](http://www.aintitgrand.ca)) campaign which ran from July 3 to August 28. This campaign allowed anyone who shopped in Downtown Langley at participating stores the chance to win 1 of 2 \$1000 Downtown Dollars Prizes. This campaign brought continued awareness to our local businesses and was a fun contest for shoppers. Thirty-two businesses took part and with over 22,000 receipts collected (estimated at a very conservative \$30/receipt), we know that over \$660,000 was spent in our participating stores over the eight-week span of the contest.

We have recently completed three new murals that will be added to the Mural Walk. Artists continue to donate their time and creativity, and we have been told that this is because we have developed a welcoming environment where they want to share their talent. The Mural Walk has proven to be a huge success for the DLBA and DLC and has been featured by Destination BC, numerous influencers, our social media ambassadors and hundreds of people who have taken part.

**Throughout all of this, we did not shut our doors. We stayed in continuous contact with our local businesses and our community and were there to answer any question they had, by phone, email or in person.**

**We believe that as a direct result of our efforts and the tenacity of our small business owners, and by keeping the businesses feeling less defeated and constantly instilling hope, this has resulted in no business closures due to the pandemic. For us it was about being able to support, stay strong and ultimately help our beloved businesses survive.**

We once again hosted our annual Christmas Promotion – Shop Your Heart Out. We reduced the registration cost to \$100 from \$175 in previous years. We are delighted to say that we had 36 businesses registered and as always, all contest materials and social media graphics were supplied by the DLBA. This event ran from Nov. 12 to Dec. 24.

We have created a new event that will run between February 14 and March 14, 2021 Called "Window Walk 2021". Businesses will sign up for a modest commitment fee of \$25, and then they will be included on the "Window Walk 2021 passport". This idea came from a concept that was based on the success of the Mural Walk, and it has been proven that people are looking for activities to do with family and friends, while being responsible about social distancing.

Owners will decorate their windows any way they want to best represent their businesses, and the DLBA will create a passport that people can follow along with. Participants on the Window Walk will vote for their favourite window on-line and be entered in a draw for \$500 downtown dollars. In addition, the business window with the most votes will have \$500 dollars donated to their Langley charity of choice.

We feel this will provide people with a fun activity during the slow months, continue to engage people on social media channels and encourage the businesses to be creative after Christmas.

We are still planning on hosting our large events in 2021 unless we are unable to. Our challenge is that planning for these events start as soon as the last one is over. We promise to keep you informed as things progress, and if we are not able to host large people-gathering events, we will continue to strive to come up with other, creative ways to encourage shopping and dining local and stimulating our local economy.



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## Results

- Increased support for buying local and why that is paramount
- Minimal loss of businesses and vacancy rate in the immediate downtown core
- Increase to social media followers between March and November: Instagram almost tripled and we now have over 10,000 followers and Facebook increased by over 2,000 new followers.
- Increased awareness of what the BIA is and the strength in working together

**We were recently informed that we are the successful recipients of a *BIABC Excellence in Response & Recovery Effort* award for our efforts during the past nine months. We were also nominated for a Langley Chamber award for *Most Innovative*.**

**We are extremely proud that the DLBA team has been recognized for continuing to work hard for our businesses.**

At almost the end of a very challenging year, we just want to thank you for staying strong, supporting each other and believing in yourselves. Even when it seems impossible, by supporting each other and working together, anything is possible.



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