



2027-2030

Downtown
Cobourg
—

DOWNTOWN COBOURG BIA

Strategic Plan



Presented by:



Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	9	Strategic Priorities
2	Importance of a Strategic Plan	10-11	Economic Vitality & Business Support
3	Board of Management	12-13	Vibrant Space & Experiences
4	Message from the Chair	14-15	Marketing, Events, & Destination Development
5	Message from the DBIA Manager	16-17	Collaboration, Partnership, & Advocacy
6	About the Cobourg DBIA	18-19	Organizational Sustainability & Good Governance
7-8	Vision, Mission, Values	20-21	Innovation & Future Readiness



Executive Summary

The Cobourg Downtown BIA Strategic Plan (2026–2030) is a collaborative roadmap that outlines the vision, values, and strategic priorities guiding the future of downtown Cobourg. Developed with valued input from BIA members, Board representatives, partners, and stakeholders, the plan reflects a shared commitment to strengthening the downtown as a vibrant, resilient, and welcoming place to do business and visit.

Our **Vision** is for downtown Cobourg to be a dynamic and distinctive destination where businesses thrive, experiences are memorable, and community pride is evident. Our **Mission** is to support and advocate for downtown businesses by fostering collaboration, enhancing the public realm, and delivering initiatives that drive economic vitality and long-term sustainability. Guided by our core **Values**, the BIA’s work is grounded in partnership, accountability, inclusivity, and forward-thinking leadership.

This four-year plan focuses on six strategic pillars that reflect the BIA’s mandate and areas of influence:

- **1.0 Economic Vitality & Business Support**
- **2.0 Vibrant Space & Experiences**
- **3.0 Marketing, Events & Destination Development**
- **4.0 Collaboration, Partnership & Advocacy**
- **5.0 Organizational Sustainability & Good Governance**
- **6.0 Innovation & Future Readiness**

Together, these pillars establish clear **objectives, priority actions, and measures of success** that will guide the BIA’s investments and efforts over the 2026–2030 term. The plan is designed to be practical and actionable—supporting day-to-day decision-making while remaining flexible to adapt to changing conditions and emerging opportunities.

The development of this strategic plan was a collaborative process, informed by engagement and reflection on the evolving needs of downtown businesses and the broader community. Through this work, the BIA has reaffirmed its role as a connector, advocate, and steward of downtown Cobourg’s continued success.

This executive summary provides an overview of the plan’s key components. The full document offers further detail on the BIA’s Vision, Values, Strategic Pillars, and implementation approach—setting a clear and focused direction for a strong, vibrant, and future-ready downtown Cobourg.

Importance of a Strategic Plan

A Downtown BIA Strategic Plan serves as a focused and action-oriented roadmap, guiding how the organization invests its resources, advocates for its members, and strengthens the downtown over time. The Cobourg Downtown BIA Strategic Plan (2026–2030) outlines the priorities, objectives, and initiatives that will shape the future of downtown Cobourg—supporting a vibrant business environment, meaningful experiences, and long-term economic vitality.

At its core, this plan reflects a shared understanding of what matters most to downtown businesses and the broader community. Developed through collaboration with BIA members, Board leadership, partners, and stakeholders, the plan brings together diverse perspectives to establish a clear and collective direction. It builds on the BIA’s legislated mandate while responding to evolving economic conditions, community expectations, and opportunities for growth.

This Strategic Plan provides clarity and focus—helping the BIA align its efforts, make informed decisions, and prioritize initiatives that deliver the greatest impact. It is designed to be both practical and flexible, serving as a living framework that guides day-to-day actions while remaining responsive to change.

Equally important, the success of this plan relies on strong partnerships. The Cobourg Downtown BIA works closely with the Town of Cobourg, community organizations, and regional partners to advance shared goals and advocate for the needs of downtown businesses. Through collaboration, accountability, and a commitment to continuous improvement, this Strategic Plan acts as a compass—ensuring that the BIA’s efforts are purposeful, coordinated, and focused on building a strong, resilient, and future-ready downtown Cobourg.



Board of Management



Left to right back: Nicole Beatty, Carleigh Hunter, Joan Greaves, Denise Liboiron, Keith Herring, Amanda Murkar, Melissa Graham | Left to right front: Jennifer Boggart, Michelle Rochon, Tracey Tink | Absent: Scott McCracken, Richard Vandentillaart

The Cobourg Downtown BIA is guided by a dedicated volunteer Board of Management. The DBIA Board of Management worked collaboratively in the process of designing this strategic plan. We listened and learned from the business and community partners about what matters most to them and together we re-established our mission, vision, and values. With a forward-looking perspective, determined the objectives and key initiatives for this term and beyond. We would like to recognize and thank the following individuals for their leadership and commitment:

- Nicole Beatty** | Chair
- Joan Greaves** | Vice Chair
- Keith Herring** | Treasurer/Finance Committee Chair
- Amanda Murkar** | Member
- Michelle Rochon** | Member
- Jennifer Boggart** | Events Committee Chair
- Richard Vandentillaart** | Marketing committee chair
- Denise Liboiron** | Member At Large, Beautification committee chair
- Tracey Tink** | Membership Committee Chair
- Carleigh Hunter** | DBIA Manager
- Melissa Graham** | Economic Development Coordinator, Town of Cobourg, Recording Secretary



Message from the Chair

Downtown Cobourg means a lot to our community.

It is where people gather to meet friends, browse local shops, enjoy a meal, or take a walk along our historic streets. Many hardworking business owners open their doors daily and invest in our town.

The Downtown BIA exists to support those businesses, their families and their employees.

Our core purpose is to strengthen Downtown Cobourg. We do this by promoting downtown, enhancing its streets, and attracting people year-round through events, marketing, and partnerships. When our businesses thrive, so does our whole community.

This strategic plan outlines our focus for the next four years: fostering business growth, engaging members, promoting collaboration and effective governance, positioning our historic core as a destination, and ensuring a strong BIA.

Most importantly, this plan reflects the voices of our members. Downtown business owners shared their ideas, concerns, and hopes for the future. Their input helped shape the priorities in this plan and will continue to inform the direction of our activities and initiatives.

Downtown Cobourg already has something special. We have passionate business owners, eight blocks of electric services, shops and spaces, and a community that cares deeply about its downtown.

As the BIA, our mission is to build on what makes Downtown Cobourg special. We work with members and partners to keep it welcoming, safe, vibrant, and thriving.

Thank you to everyone who contributed and to those who support and make Downtown Cobourg a vital part of our community.

Nicole Beatty
Chair, Cobourg Downtown BIA Board of Management



Message from the DBIA Manager

Being part of Downtown Cobourg and working alongside our incredible business community is something I'm truly passionate about, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve as DBIA Manager. As we refresh our strategic plan, I feel a genuine sense of excitement about what's ahead and the role we can all play in shaping it together.

What I love most about this work is the people. I truly enjoy supporting our business owners, building connections, and seeing the way our community shows up for one another. There is something powerful about a group of driven individuals lifting each other up, sharing ideas, and working collectively to create something bigger than themselves, and that spirit is what makes our downtown so strong.

I am deeply committed to advocating for our members and continuing to highlight all that makes downtown Cobourg such a vibrant and welcoming destination. This strategic plan refresh is more than just a roadmap; it reflects our shared vision and the relationships that drive it forward.

I look forward to continuing this work alongside our members, board, partners, and the broader community as we build on our strengths, support one another, and shape a downtown that continues to thrive for years to come.

Carleigh Hunter
Manager, Cobourg Downtown BIA Board of Management



About the Cobourg Downtown BIA

The Cobourg Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a local board established by municipal by-law under the Ontario Municipal Act. Representing downtown businesses and commercial property owners, the BIA's mandate is to support the improvement, beautification, maintenance, and promotion of the downtown as a vibrant business and destination area.

Governed by a volunteer Board of Management, the BIA works on behalf of its members to advocate for a strong downtown economy, invest in placemaking and marketing initiatives, and foster collaboration among businesses and partners. While the BIA operates independently, it maintains a close and collaborative relationship with Town of Cobourg, working together on shared priorities related to economic vitality, streetscape improvements, events, and long-term downtown sustainability.

The Cobourg Downtown BIA plays a unique role as both a connector and a champion for the downtown—bridging the interests of businesses, the municipality, and the broader community. Through strategic investment, partnership, and advocacy, the BIA helps create a downtown that is welcoming, prosperous, and positioned for long-term success.



Mission and Vision

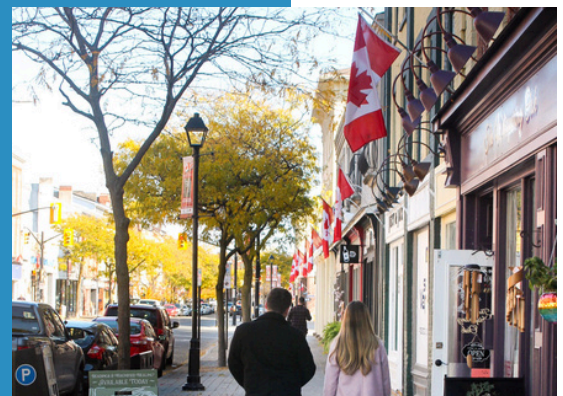


Vision

To create a year-round destination where community, creativity, and commerce come together in the heart of Cobourg.

Mission

To support and enhance Downtown experiences and environments that cultivate business growth and community vitality.



Values

Innovation- Accountability -Respect - Collaboration - Inclusivity



These values reflect the principles that guide the Cobourg Downtown DBIA's work and relationships. They shape how the organization leads, collaborates, and invests in the downtown.



Innovation

We embrace new ideas, creative solutions, and continuous improvement to move downtown forward.



Accountability

We follow through on our commitments, use resources responsibly, and act with transparency.



Respect

We treat all businesses, visitors, partners, and community members with fairness, courtesy, and professionalism.



Collaboration

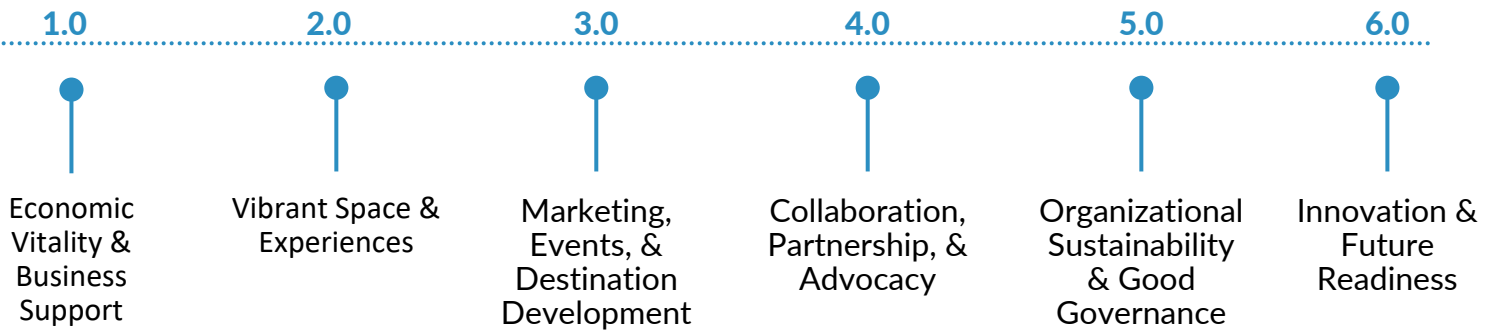
We work together with businesses, partners, and the community to achieve shared goals.



Inclusivity

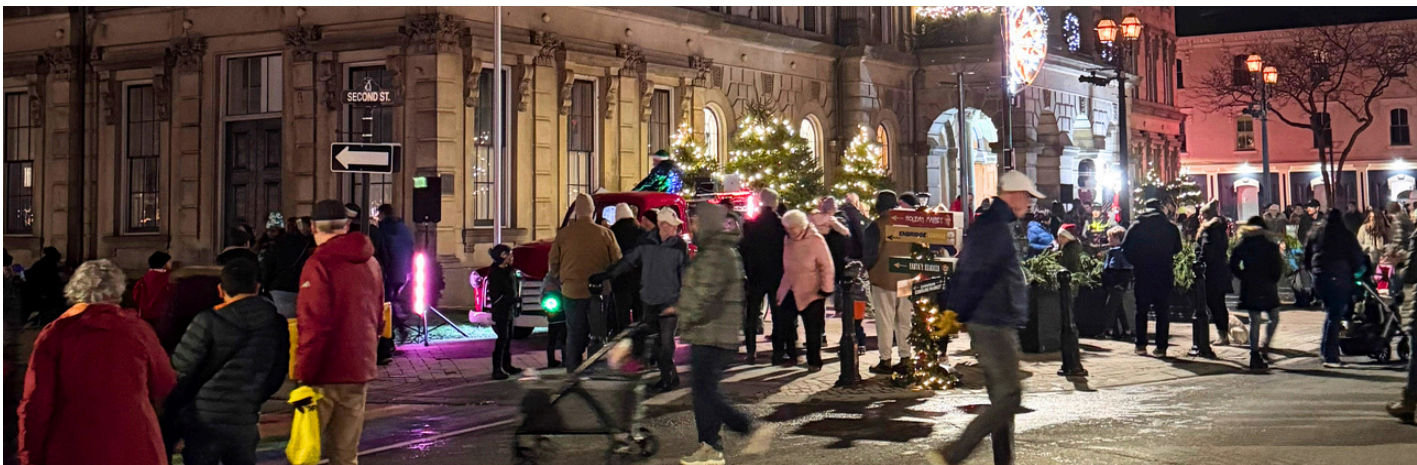
We ensure everyone feels welcome, represented, and able to participate in shaping the downtown experience.

Strategic Priorities



Over the 2026–2030 term, the Cobourg Downtown DBIA has identified six strategic pillars that will guide its work and investments. Together, these pillars are designed to deliver meaningful value to levy-paying members while strengthening the downtown as a vibrant, competitive, and welcoming place to do business and visit.

Collectively, the strategic pillars reflect the DBIA’s commitment to a balanced and practical approach to downtown revitalization—supporting economic vitality, placemaking and activation, strong partnerships, effective governance, and long-term sustainability—while delivering tangible value to DBIA members and contributing to a thriving downtown Cobourg.



1.0 Economic Vitality & Business Support



At the heart of a strong downtown is a healthy, resilient business community. The Cobourg Downtown BIA is committed to supporting existing businesses, attracting new investment, and creating the conditions for long-term success. This means advocating for a business-friendly environment, connecting members to resources and supports, and championing initiatives that drive foot traffic, increase local spending, and strengthen the overall downtown economy.

Our focus extends beyond short-term activity to building a downtown where businesses feel supported, storefronts are vibrant, and entrepreneurship can thrive. By working closely with partners, sharing insights, and investing in placemaking and promotion, the DBIA aims to foster a dynamic downtown where businesses are positioned to grow, adapt, and flourish—benefiting members, visitors, and the broader Cobourg community alike.

1.0 Economic Vitality & Business Support

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	MEASURES OF PROGRESS
<p>1.1 Improve Business Retention and Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1.1 Partner with the Town’s Economic Development Department to support at-risk and existing businesses. • 1.1.2 Provide guidance on grants, loans, and financial programs (including how to apply). • 1.1.3 Relaunch Digital Main Street support. • 1.1.4 Encourage consistent business hours and coordinated operating times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer business closures and vacancies. • Increased use of grants and support programs. • Support for Digital Main Street in place. • Standard business hours adopted.
<p>1.2 Strengthen the Financial Health of Downtown Businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.2.1 Support improved business conditions and financial health of Downtown businesses. • 1.2.2 Promote initiatives that drive foot traffic (local shopper promotions, loyalty programs). • 1.2.3 Share market insights and trends (“know our numbers”) to inform business decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved business profitability (self-reported). • Increased foot traffic and local spending.
<p>1.3 Enhance Storefront Quality and Streetscape Standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.3.1 Encourage maintenance standards for vacant and active storefronts (debris-free, clean gutters, windows, signage). • 1.3.2 Expand beautification initiatives across the district. • 1.3.3 Explore incentives or penalties to support compliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced number of visibly distressed or unmaintained storefronts. • Improved appearance and visitor experience downtown.
<p>1.4 Build an Engaged, Supported, and Connected Membership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.4.1 Offer meet-and-greets, toolkits, welcome packages, and start-up materials. • 1.4.2 Share regular communication (newsletter, social media updates). • 1.4.3 Develop partnerships with Ec. Dev, County, Chamber, Town, Experience Cobourg, and CBAA. • 1.4.4 Allocate time to research and adopt best practices from other BIAs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher member participation and satisfaction. • More partnerships and collaborative programs implemented.

2.0 Vibrant Space & Experiences



A vibrant downtown is defined not only by its businesses, but by the experiences it offers and the character it conveys. The Cobourg Downtown BIA is committed to enhancing the public realm and strengthening the downtown’s visual identity through thoughtful placemaking, creative activation, and coordinated beautification efforts. By investing in streetscape design, public art, wayfinding, and storytelling, the DBIA aims to create a downtown environment that is welcoming, distinctive, and easy to navigate.

Equally important is ensuring that downtown spaces are clean, accessible, and actively used. Through coordinated maintenance, partnerships, and a curated calendar of high-impact experiences, the DBIA will draw people downtown throughout the year and encourage them to stay, explore, and return. Together, these efforts will help position downtown Cobourg as a lively, engaging destination—one that supports businesses, reflects community pride, and delivers memorable experiences for residents and visitors alike.

2.0 Vibrant Space & Experiences

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	MEASURES OF PROGRESS
<p>2.1 Enhance Downtown’s Public Realm and Visual Identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1.1 Develop a Streetscape Design for ongoing and sustainable investment. • 2.1.2 Expand public art (murals, sculptures, temporary installations, historic plaques). • 2.1.3 Partner with AGN, local artists, and cultural groups to curate micro-cultural activations. • 2.1.4 Beautify vacant storefronts with seasonal artwork and coverings. • 2.1.5 Increase the number of planters and coordinate community partnerships for maintenance. Improve signage, wayfinding, and historical storytelling (QR codes, window stories, listening tour). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetscape design completed • More visible public art and beautification projects. • Increased foot traffic and online engagement with QR activations. • Positive community feedback on downtown appearance.
<p>2.2 Improve Cleanliness, Maintenance & Accessibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.2.1 Implement a coordinated maintenance program (pressure washing, litter removal, cigarette cans). Improve lighting year-round (streets, storefronts, parking lots). • 2.2.2 Advocate for accessible infrastructure upgrades in partnership with the Town. • 2.2.3 Participate in construction planning to reduce disruption and support downtown access. • 2.2.4 Track ROI and satisfaction related to maintenance investments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaner, more accessible public spaces. • Fewer maintenance concerns reported. • Higher business and visitor satisfaction. • Maintenance investment produces ROI.
<p>2.3 Deliver Engaging Experiences that draw people Downtown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.3.1 Plan and deliver a curated set of high-impact downtown experiences each year. • 2.3.2 Publish a monthly events calendar across DBIA channels. • 2.3.3 Create interactive features (e.g., Speaker’s Corner, Instagrammable displays). • 2.3.4 Partner with tourism and community groups to amplify programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased event participation and foot traffic. • Higher engagement on social platforms. • Strong community and visitor feedback.

3.0 Marketing, Events, & Destination Development



A strong downtown brand and consistent storytelling are essential to attracting visitors, supporting local businesses, and positioning downtown Cobourg as a destination. The Cobourg Downtown BIA is focused on increasing awareness through coordinated marketing efforts that highlight the downtown’s unique character, events, and experiences. By delivering targeted campaigns, ongoing storytelling, and clear communications, the DBIA will strengthen visibility and ensure downtown Cobourg remains top of mind for residents and visitors alike.

Beyond awareness, the DBIA will work with tourism, travel, and hospitality partners to grow visitor traffic and encourage longer stays. Through strategic partnerships, seasonal promotions, and event-driven travel opportunities, downtown Cobourg will be promoted as a place worth visiting, exploring, and returning to. These efforts will help translate marketing into measurable activity—bringing more people downtown and supporting a vibrant local economy.

3.0 Marketing, Events, & Destination Development

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	MEASURES OF PROGRESS
<p>3.1 Increase Awareness through Strategic Marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1.1 Develop and implement a downtown Communications and Marketing Plan. • 3.1.2 Run coordinated ad campaigns (local + regional, radio, digital, billboard, podcast, print). • 3.1.3 Produce ongoing downtown storytelling (podcast/broadcast, digital news magazine). • 3.1.4 Promote key events and programs through targeted marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased digital reach and campaign engagement. • Higher attendance at promoted events.
<p>3.2 Grow Visitor Traffic Through Tourism & Travel Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.2.1 Coordinate with VIA, GO, rentals, and tourism partners to attract “import shoppers.” • 3.2.2 Develop travel promotions tied to downtown events and seasons. • 3.2.3 Offer sponsored or discounted travel packages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in out-of-town visitor traffic. • Increased uptake of travel and event packages.

4.0 Collaboration, Partnership, & Advocacy



A strong downtown is built on strong relationships. The Cobourg Downtown BIA is committed to fostering collaboration among downtown businesses while strengthening partnerships with the Town, community organizations, and regional stakeholders. By creating opportunities for businesses to connect, share information, and work together, the DBIA will help build a more unified and resilient downtown business community.

At the same time, the DBIA plays an important advocacy role—representing the collective voice of downtown businesses and working with partners to address shared challenges and opportunities. Through active participation on committees, coordinated partnerships, and clear channels for communication, the DBIA will support business and community needs while advancing initiatives that contribute to a safe, vibrant, and economically healthy downtown

4.0 Collaboration, Partnership, & Advocacy

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	MEASURES OF PROGRESS
<p>4.1 Strengthen Collaboration Among Downtown Businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.1.1 Host business meet-and-greets and promote peer referrals. • 4.1.2 Keep a centralized directory of business hours. • 4.1.3 Maintain an online communication hub for members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher participation in business networking. • Improved business-to-business communication and referrals.
<p>4.2 Build Strategic Partnerships and Advocate for Business & Community Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.2.1 Advocate for business needs with the Town and partner agencies. • 4.2.2 Create a non-emergency “who-to-call” directory for safety and social issues. Work with community partners (Greenwood, Fare Share, Cornerstone, etc.). • 4.2.3 Increase DBIA participation on local committees and tourism networks. • 4.2.4 Pursue sponsorships with major employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger partner relationships and representation. • Increased sponsorships and collaborative initiatives.

5.0 Organizational Sustainability & Good Governance



Strong governance and sound organizational practices are essential to the long-term success of the Cobourg Downtown BIA. This pillar focuses on ensuring the BIA operates with clarity, accountability, and professionalism—supported by up-to-date policies, clear procedures, and well-informed leadership. By strengthening governance frameworks and providing training for Board and committee members, the DBIA will build trust with its members, partners, and the broader community.

Equally important is planning for continuity and future leadership. Through improved accountability, succession planning, and investment in staffing capacity, the DBIA will ensure it remains resilient and effective through periods of change. These efforts will support consistent delivery, reduce disruption, and position the organization to adapt and thrive over the 2026–2030 term and beyond.

5.0 Organizational Sustainability & Good Governance

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	MEASURES OF PROGRESS
5.1 Update and enhance Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.1.1 Complete and formalize the Governance & Operational manual. • 5.1.2 Provide training for Board and committee members. • 5.1.3 Publish policies and procedures in an accessible online format. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual approved by Board and Council. • Board training completed • Annual review of policies completed.
5.2 Enhance Board & Committee Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.2.1 Implement a risk management framework. • 5.2.2 Introduce standardized onboarding for all governance roles. • 5.2.3 Require annual commitment forms from Board and committee members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased trust and confidence among members and stakeholders.
5.3 Build Succession Planning for Leadership & Staffing Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.3.1 Develop a professional development plan for staff. • 5.3.2 Explore increased staffing capacity to support DBIA operations. • 5.3.3 Create a mentorship/internship program. • 5.3.4 Develop a formal HR succession plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear succession pathways established for staff, Board, and committees. • Reduced disruption during leadership or staffing transitions. • Improved organizational continuity.

6.0 Innovation & Future Readiness



To remain relevant, resilient, and impactful, the Cobourg Downtown BIA must continually adapt to changing conditions and emerging opportunities. This pillar focuses on strengthening the DBIA's capacity to fund future initiatives, modernize key downtown infrastructure, and plan proactively for long-term sustainability. By pursuing new funding sources, leveraging data, and maintaining strong partnerships with the Town, the DBIA will position itself to respond effectively to growth, change, and evolving community needs.

Looking ahead, Innovation & Future Readiness ensures the DBIA is not only maintaining today's successes, but also preparing for tomorrow's challenges. Through strategic investment, thoughtful planning, and a commitment to continuous improvement, the DBIA will build a flexible foundation that supports a vibrant, accessible, and future-focused downtown Cobourg.

6.0 Innovation & Future Readiness

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	MEASURES OF PROGRESS
<p>6.1 Strengthen DBIA’s capacity to fund future projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.1.1 Pursue grants, development corporation funding, and other external funding sources • 6.1.2 Explore partnerships to co-fund priority infrastructure needs (e.g., lighting, sound system, streetscape upgrades) • 6.1.3 Assess opportunities to expand the DBIA boundary to increase revenues and long-term sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased external funding secured. • New funding partnerships established. • Long-term revenue opportunities assessed.
<p>6.2 Modernize Downtown Infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.2.1 Replace or upgrade the downtown sound system to support events and improve visitor experience. • 6.2.2 Track and analyze visitor data (e.g., foot traffic, event attendance, visitor origin) to guide future investment decisions. • 6.2.3 Prioritize infrastructure projects that increase accessibility, safety, and overall vibrancy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority infrastructure upgrades completed. • Improved event delivery and visitor experience. • Visitor data used to inform investment decisions.
<p>6.3 Ensure the MOU remains current, sustainable, and aligned with future needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.3.1 Conduct an annual review of the MOU to assess sustainability, relevance, and future alignment. • 6.3.2 Update the MOU as needed to reflect changing priorities, capacity, and long-term goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual MOU review completed. • MOU updated to reflect evolving priorities and capacity.

For inquiries, contact us.



Downtown
Cobourg

 www.downtowncobourg.ca

 www.facebook.com/downtowncobourg

 www.instagram.com/downtowncobourg/

