

# **DOWNTOWN** *St. Catharines*

*St. Catharines Downtown Association*

## **MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK**



[www.mydowntown.ca](http://www.mydowntown.ca)

St. Catharines Downtown Association, March 2019

This handbook is meant to inform and generally support you as a member of the St. Catharines Downtown Association. We hope that as an active and interested member you will refer to it to acquaint yourself with all aspects of Association operations.

Please visit our website **www.mydowntown.ca** for further information about the Downtown Association. Please ensure that we have your current email address on file so we can correspond with you regularly.

For more information, please contact **Tisha Polocko**, Executive Director, or **Carolyn Watson**, Communications & Events Coordinator.

### **Our Office:**

80 King Street, main floor  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 7G1  
Phone: 905-685-8424  
Fax: 905-685-7771

Tisha Polocko: tisha@mydowntown.ca  
Carolyn Watson: admin@mydowntown.ca  
General: scda@mydowntown.ca

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday

**Website:** [www.mydowntown.ca](http://www.mydowntown.ca)  
**Facebook:** @scdta  
**Twitter:** @scdowntownassoc  
**Instagram:** @downtownstcatharines

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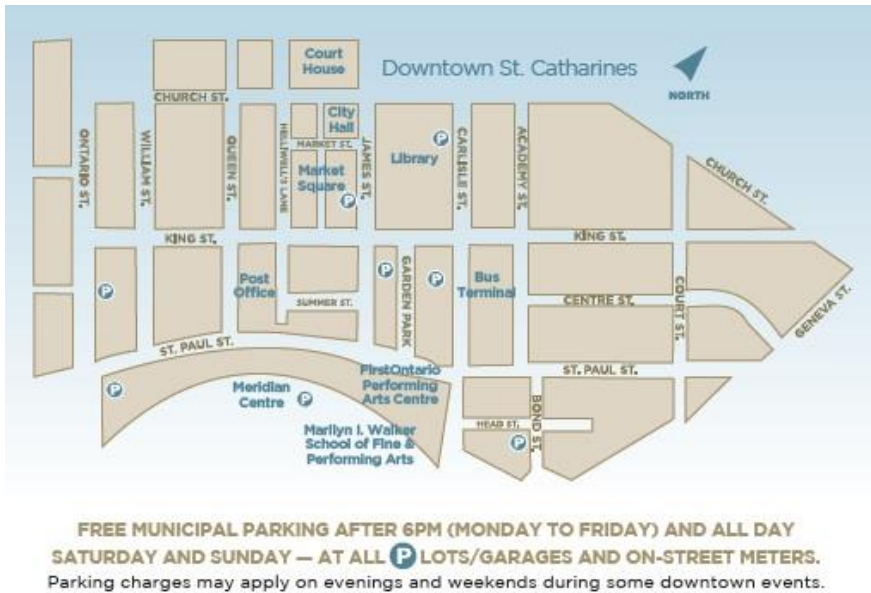
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## Membership

Welcome to Downtown St. Catharines! You automatically became a member of the St. Catharines Downtown Association by locating your business within the geographic boundaries of the Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA). These boundaries were defined in By-law #73-38 (1973) of the St. Catharines City Council.

Boundaries of the St. Catharines Downtown Association (BIA) are:



A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a "made in Ontario" innovation that allows local business people and commercial property owners and tenants to join together and, with the support of the municipality, to organize, finance, and carry out physical improvements and promote economic development in their district.

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## **St. Catharines Downtown Association**

The St. Catharines Downtown Association (SCDA) is a non-profit organization that represents approximately 600 members including commercial property owners, retailers, restaurants and professional offices in the designated BIA.

The mandate of the St. Catharines Downtown Association includes participating in programs aimed at the physical improvement and beautification of the core, as well as the promotion of the Downtown as a great place in which to shop, work, dine, play, meet, live and explore.

### **Management**

The Downtown Association is managed by the SCDA Board of Management which is comprised of volunteers who are BIA members.

The SCDA Board of Management meets at least ten times per year. By late February each year, the Board presents its annual budget to the BIA membership at the Annual General Meeting. This member-approved budget is then presented to City Council by March of each year.

### **What does the Association office do?**

The Association office and its staff implement, facilitate and monitor all the activities of the organization. The Board and its committees determine these activities.

Association staff is comprised of an Executive Director and a Communications & Events Coordinator.

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The responsibilities of the office are varied:

- To carry out all activities of the Association as dictated by the Board and its committees.
- To host and organize all meetings of the Association.
- To manage and administer the Association's financial affairs: bookkeeping, accounting reports and annual budgets.
- To address member concerns and complaints by working with the Board, committees, membership and vested community interest groups.
- To communicate parking, traffic, streetscaping and by-law issues and ideas from the membership to the City and/or Region.
- To complete regular membership communications and initiate personal contacts.
- To update and maintain the membership database.
- To respond to requests for information from the local community as well as tourist-oriented agencies and individuals.
- To administer the parking token program. (For more information, see page 8.)
- To work with community stakeholders such as:
  - Municipal, regional and provincial governments and related agencies/offices
  - Niagara Regional Police Services
  - Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce
  - Niagara Grape & Wine Festival
  - Other BIAs and attractions
- To advocate on the membership's behalf all issues related to Downtown St. Catharines.

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## **Membership Cost (Levy)**

### **What does my membership cost?**

The cost of your membership levy is based upon your commercial assessment. Since assessments vary, there is no fixed cost for membership. However, keep in mind that it is the property owners who pay this tax. If you are a tenant, you are most likely paying indirectly as part of your rent.

### **When do I pay for my membership levy?**

You pay for your membership levy when you pay your business property taxes. Your levy is stated on your property tax bill under “BIA LEVY”.

### **What is the relationship between the SCDA and the City?**

The City of St. Catharines collects business property taxes and at the same time collects the BIA Levy. The Downtown Association enjoys a cooperative relationship with the City and its various departments. This is vital as some issues (such as by-law amendments) require input and support from City Staff.

### **Who can answer my questions about my levy?**

If you have any questions please contact the Downtown Association’s Executive Director (905-685-8424) or Financial Management Services at the City of St. Catharines (905-688-5601 ext. 1400).

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## Communications and Promotions

Our monthly newsletter filled with news and information about Downtown St. Catharines is sent by email to over 6,000 subscribers. The newsletter includes links to downtown events listings, and Downtown Deals which is a list of downtown businesses offering special sales and promotions. Stay informed by signing up to receive this monthly newsletter at **[mydowntown.ca/deals/signup](http://mydowntown.ca/deals/signup)**

At no charge to your business, you as a downtown member can benefit from the exposure our newsletter offers.

### Events Listings

**[mydowntown.ca/events](http://mydowntown.ca/events)**

If you would like your event (taking place within our BIA boundaries) listed on our website's events calendar, please email Carolyn [admin@mydowntown.ca](mailto:admin@mydowntown.ca) with the following information:

- Date of Event
- Name of Event
- Provide a website link that we can post with your event (Facebook event page, website, etc.)

### Downtown Deals

**[mydowntown.ca/deals](http://mydowntown.ca/deals)**

Downtown members can submit one "Downtown Deal" per month for inclusion on our website. Please send an email to Carolyn [admin@mydowntown.ca](mailto:admin@mydowntown.ca) with the following information:

- Description of Deal (e.g. 20% off purchase, buy one get one deal, etc.)
- Start date **and** expiry date of your deal
- Specify if Downtown Deal needs to be mentioned to get the offer



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## Parking

### Free Parking Downtown

There is free parking at Downtown City-owned garages, surface lots and parking meters evenings after 6 p.m. and all day on weekends.

### Special Event Parking Charges

Special event parking is \$5 when events are taking place at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre or Meridian Centre. Payment is by cash only and is paid on entrance to the Ontario Street garage, the Carlisle Street / Garden Park garage and certain downtown surface lots. Special event parking fee is \$10 at the IceDogs Way surface parking lot.

### Parking Tokens

The Downtown Association sells parking tokens to consumers and businesses. Tokens are available to purchase at the SCDA office for \$10.00 per roll (40 tokens per roll, value of 25 cents per token). The tokens are accepted at all City-owned parking meters. Please note that tokens are no longer accepted by St. Catharines Transit.



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## **Activities of the Downtown Association**

Please ensure we have your current email address on file so you can receive regular correspondence from the Downtown Association office, including our monthly newsletter.

We will maintain your business information in our database, and list you in the business directory on our website.

### **Marketing**

By way of a General Marketing Program, a range of ongoing and one-time services are provided. The Downtown Association:

- Advertises in local media as well as tourism publications
- Purchases and installs BIA décor (Christmas, banners, etc.)
- Administers, supports and sponsors ongoing Downtown events
- Produces a Shop, Dine, Play print brochure, as well as an annual wall calendar which includes a full business directory
- Constructs and maintains BIA information kiosks
- Offers members the opportunity to advertise specials and sales on the Downtown Deals section of our website

### **Events**

The Downtown Association executes and helps sponsor a number of annual events designed to promote Downtown and provide community goodwill. The following events are presented by the Association:

- Downtown D'Lish (semi-annual restaurant promotion)
- Full Moon Ghost Walks and October Ghost Walks
- Christmas / Holiday promotions

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## **Communications**

Member communications are fundamental to the success of the Association. Be it events or broader-based economic issues, the Association provides a number of opportunities for member-to-member contact. Member communications include:

- Website updates and email blasts
- Monthly eNewsletter
- Updates and postings on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- “Core Communication” annual print newsletter
- Membership publications (membership handbook, member listings and the like)
- New Member Orientation Packages
- Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- Our yearly budget, distributed at our Annual General Meeting, lists activities, dates and advertising for the year
- Event planning and follow-up communications

Additionally, Downtown Association staff members do regular “walk-about” in the BIA, which helps guarantee that we understand the realities of BIA business life and that we are visible to our membership.

## **Advocacy**

Advocacy not only is the way that the Downtown Association responds to your concerns but also the manner in which those concerns are presented to stakeholders.

Stakeholders include community agencies, government and your business peers in the BIA (Business Improvement Area). Advocacy involves creative problem-solving and negotiating and is demonstrated in issues relating to the downtown such as:

- Municipal and Regional affairs
- Municipal construction and redevelopment

- Façade improvement
- Parking
- Traffic
- Greening and streetscaping
- Urban stewardship
- Signage
- Market value assessment

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## Member Participation

In order to maximize the benefits of your membership, you should, quite simply, *participate*.

Participation can be as little as opening your mail or as much as donating your time and expertise as a volunteer.

The following suggestions can help your business take advantage of opportunities created by the Association...for you.

- Open your Downtown Association mail and read it – delivered mail, snail mail, email.
- Read “Core Communication”, the Downtown Association’s annual print newsletter.
- Talk to other BIA members in your neighbourhood. There is a wealth of experience, insight and creativity within the BIA.
- Attend the Annual General Meeting.
- Consider joining one of our committees, such as our Promotions and Marketing Committee or the Downtown Beautification and Greening Committee.
- Let us know if you have an event or sale to promote. We can help promote your business on our website and through social media channels.
- Participate in Association events.
- Register for Association activities by the prescribed deadlines.

- RSVP when we ask because it helps the Downtown Association spend *your* money wisely.
- If your business information changes or if you know of another member whose information has changed, please contact the Downtown Association office. A current database is needed so that the SCDA can keep in touch with you on a regular basis.
- Let the Downtown Association know how you feel about an issue. Since the Association advocates for nearly 600 members, we can only do that well if you help to keep us informed.

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## Notes

*Let's work together to make  
Downtown St. Catharines a great place to  
Shop, Work, Dine, Play, Live & Explore!*



## *St. Catharines Downtown Association*

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