

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Tourism Burlington

Burlington
ONTARIO, CANADA





Photo by: Hills Video

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision	1
Tourism Board, Staff	1
Message from the Chair	2
Treasurer's Report	3
Executive Director's Report	4
Marketing the Destination	5
The Visitor Centre	6
2021 By the Numbers	7
Culinary Tourism – Taste of Burlington	8
Volunteers & Committees	9
Special Thank you to our Partners	10

2021 VISION

Burlington is seen as a distinctive waterfront destination known for its culture, festivals, and outdoor experiences. Tourism is recognized as an economic driver.

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Jaclyn Jones, Board Chair – Whiting & Holmes Marketing
 Deanne Rodrigue, Vice-Chair – Independent Consultant
 Chris Lambert, Treasurer – The Pearle Hotel & Spa
 Dave Whale, Secretary – Joelle's / Jeff's Guy Shop
 Robin, Ashton – Conservation Halton
 Stephen Bell – Pepperwood Bistro
 Myles Rusak – Sound of Music Inc.
 Jason Stoner – Holiday Inn Burlington (Burlington Hotel Association)
 Councillor Kelvin Galbraith – Ward 1, City of Burlington
 Chris Glenn, Staff Liaison – City of Burlington

STAFF:

Kristene Smith, Executive Director
 Sally-Fitz-Gibbon, Visitor Services Coordinator
 Kelly Harris, Manager, Marketing & Special Projects
 Claire Gopaul, Weekend Travel Counsellor
 Maria Plazas, Weekend Travel Counsellor

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of my fellow board members, we are pleased to share this overview of activities and priorities set out and achieved for 2021. We kicked off the year with the successful transition of our new Executive Director, Kristene Smith, followed by welcoming new faces on our governing Board, Myles Rusak from the Sound of Music Festival and Chris Lambert from the Pearle Hotel & Spa. I am happy to say that adding these individuals to our team was just the beginning of our plans to reimagine the future of Tourism Burlington and what that future could do to help our industry partners.

We recognized that the approach destination marketing organizations may have taken in the past would not pull businesses that rely on tourism into economic recovery. Recovery timeframes would be longer than other industry segments. Consumer confidence would remain cautious.

So, we reviewed our organizational priorities against the tourism outlook in Burlington and throughout the region. We needed a focus on building a more relevant and forward-thinking foundation for the organization.

We needed to evolve.

We struck a procurement committee that evaluated Tourism Burlington's service needs and then sought out an eager and proactive partner to help guide us through the strategic planning process. Staff, volunteers, the Board, the marketing committee and our community of tourism partners all participated in helping to clarify and focus our direction and set plans for how to achieve our new vision and mission.

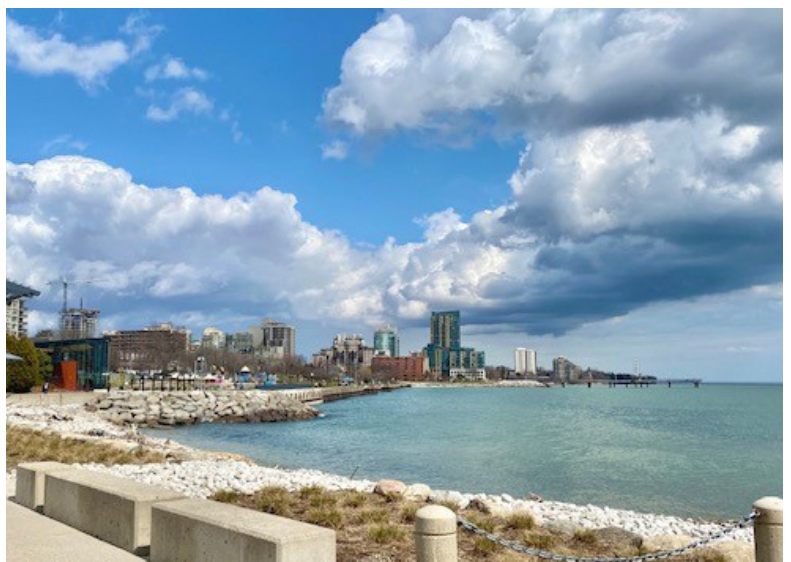
We are grateful for all the time, thoughtfulness and care they brought to the table to assist us in bringing our vision of sustainable tourism for Burlington to life.

Our team continued developing new and impactful marketing materials, including the visitor guide, re-designed website, and social media content. They imagined and executed new marketing initiatives throughout the year to help our tourism and hospitality industry partners promote their businesses. Perhaps, most importantly, they also lent an empathetic ear to many of our tourism partners during some tough times. We are so proud of the attentive and kindhearted work they do.

Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow Board Members for their commitment to tourism, our Executive Director for her leadership, our Tourism Burlington staff for their dedication, and our partners' for their continued support. The future of tourism in Burlington is brighter, thanks to all of you.

Kind Regards,

Jaclyn Jones
Chair, Tourism Burlington



TREASURER'S REPORT

Revenues	\$ 542,555
Operating Expenses	\$ 394,143
Marketing Activities	\$ 103,471
Visitor/Partner Services	\$ 65,547
Net Income	\$ - 20,606

Deloitte has audited the 2021 Financial Statements in partnership with the City of Burlington's finance department and in consultation with the Tourism Burlington Executive Director. Per the Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, the auditors have attested that the statements represent the financial position of Tourism Burlington as of December 31, 2021.

In 2021 we were fortunate to access funds under FedDev Ontario through the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund to support our website, a digital display, photography, and lure videos. The City of Burlington continues to be a strong financial contributor. We want to take this opportunity to thank the city for maintaining this support for tourism and the economic benefits it brings to Burlington businesses.

Finally, the Board of Directors decided to use reserve funds for a strategic plan; the project began in September and was attributed solely to the shortfall of \$20,606 as presented in the 2021 Financial Statements.



Photo by: Michael Lyons



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It is with great pleasure that I present Tourism Burlington's 2021 Annual Report. Over this past year, the tourism industry has faced both challenges and opportunities. I am proud of our team's accomplishments, the resiliency that our partners have shown, and the dedication of our Board of Directors.

Highlights we are proud to share from this past year include the continued work on advocacy with our Team Burlington partners (Aldershot Village BIA, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Burlington Downtown Business Association, and Burlington Economic Development) through the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN), and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario's lobby day at Queen's Park, federal and provincial roundtables, and pre-budget consultations. Work was also done in consultation with the Burlington Restaurant Association to ensure our hospitality businesses could provide input as we represented them in various ways.

Our staff leaned into innovation as they worked tirelessly on new programming during months when our businesses faced lockdowns, restrictions, and labour shortages. They developed ways to promote locally and regionally while preserving consumer confidence with our residents and visitors through videos, social media, the Take out to Help out campaign, and the Wicked Awesome Server recognition program.

I applaud our Board of Directors for keeping an open mind in order to be agile and amendable during a year when work plans and changes needed to pivot quickly. Equally as nimble was our team, who, without question, dug into several tasks outside their daily tasks to support our businesses and bring dynamic programming to our residents and business community. Their summaries of activities included in this report are presented with pride, which was critical to this past year's success. A special thank you to Kelly and Sally for their efforts this past year.

Sincerely,

Kristene Smith
Executive Director, Tourism Burlington

MARKETING THE DESTINATION

Who would have thought that 2021 would be an entire year of dealing with COVID-19, but it's behind us and hopefully for good. As we were in the pandemic all year long, many of our marketing plans changed, and again there was a real focus on local.

We did not print a guide, as we had remaining guides from 2020 and without events, the demand was low. Instead, we launched a new digital guide. It featured great content focused on local and outdoor assets. Features included: 5 Ways to Experience Burlington, For the Love of Golf, Local Flavours, Healthy Living in Burlington, and more. We did produce a printed postcard with the Guide cover and a sticker with a QR code that linked directly to the digital guide that we used for handouts at our Visitor Centre and at the information tent we had in the summer months at Spencer Smith Park.

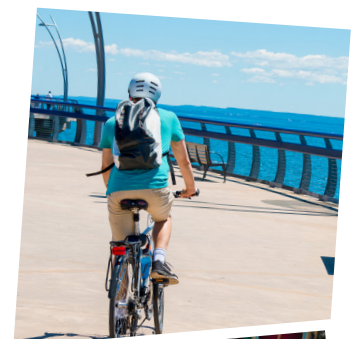
We launched the Local Love Pass for the spring and summer through the free web-based passport platform, Bandwango. 1,635 people signed up for the pass (the target was 1,000), and approximately 40 businesses participated; there was no cost to participate.

We used the Crowdriff platform to feature user-generated content on our new website and our social media channels on the digital marketing side of things. With less event content due to closures, we introduced monthly themes on our social platforms, highlighting 'women-owned businesses' and 'couples who work together,' etc. On the Taste of Burlington channels, we offered Chef Profiles which were quite popular. We also continued with our popular tags, #MondayMotivation, and #FanFriday, on the Discover Burlington channels to bring uplifting messages to our followers. Finally, we continued with the #TakeOuttoHelpOut campaign during the various lockdowns and engaged in a short video campaign with this theme.

With funding from the Federal Government, we worked on a lure video and photography campaigns to update our assets for when things opened up in Ontario. An ad spend was placed on the video, which was viewed more than 27,000 times on our YouTube channel.

Finally, after attending the Travel Media Association of Canada virtual conference, we made great connections with travel writers who did not realize Burlington was a destination. We organized paid visits for two influencers who visited our local restaurants and attractions and promoted to their channels; we also obtained photos and blog content.

Kelly Harris | Manager, Marketing & Special Projects



THE VISITOR CENTRE

As with everyone, 2021 was a challenging year and the Visitor Information Centre certainly took a hit. Being closed, off and on, for 4 ½ months of the year affected our performance measures. It was evident that visitors had a low comfort level when the centre reopened.

Due to Covid-19 and the continual opening and closing, the year-over-year comparison of visitor statistics is not represented fairly. However, we were able to assist 6,614 visitors to the Visitor Centre and the Lakeside Tent. During the lockdowns, we monitored phone calls and emails to our general information box, answering a multitude of inquiries. We also provided curbside pick-up for merchandise purchased online.

We were successful in our grant application, securing \$35,910 through the Federal Government for the Canada Summer Jobs program. This enabled us to hire five students for 12 weeks each during the summer and one student from September to December. With the extra staff levels, we were able to open the Visitor Centre seven days a week and initiate a 'Lakeside' Information Tent in Spencer Smith Park. The tent created visual excitement with residents and visitors. Inquiries provided referrals to local restaurants, hotels, trails, attractions, downtown shopping, etc., and we were truly able to promote the destination. It proved to deliver quality statistics. We worked with the City of Burlington in the storage of the tent and equipment at Discovery Landing and thank them for their partnership.

The students were also able to help administratively on several projects including social media content, the Lakeside Information Tent, visitor collateral inventory, and statistic collection and analysis. The student working from September to December assisted in various marketing initiatives and visitor services.

Sally Fitz-Gibbon | Visitor Services Coordinator



Photo by: @ billydhillon

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

2021 was to be a year of recovery. However, it proved to be nearly as complex as the previous year. Through it all, Burlington's tourism industry worked hard to adjust to the changing climate, safety protocols, restrictions, and re-openings. Tourism Burlington saw the resiliency and grit of its partners and provided support to those businesses by amplifying their message, whether it was consumer confidence, virtual programming, or innovative attractions, to ensure the community and visitors had the best experience in the safest ways possible.

Despite being locked down for several months throughout 2021, our commitment to our partners remained the same, to drive local business, advocate for all sectors, and market Burlington as a destination of choice, locally and regionally.

201,120 unique visitors to the Tourism Burlington and Taste of Burlington websites, an increase of 16% over the previous year.

48,008,509 impressions from consumer faced Tourism Burlington and Taste of Burlington social media coverage.

728,603 pageview on the Tourism Burlington (316,612) and Taste of Burlington (411,911) websites.

7,354,502 paid impressions from consumer faced Tourism Burlington Facebook advertising event campaigns.

2,995,427 paid impressions from consumer faced Taste of Burlington Facebook advertising campaigns

15,437 subscribers to our three primary newsletter databases, Discover Burlington consumer newsletter, Taste of Burlington consumer newsletter, and Partner News.

6,614 visitors to the Visitor Information Centre and visitor inquiries at the Lakeside Information Tent at Spencer Smith Park from June to August 2021.

\$2,910 souvenir sales from the Visitor Information Centre and the Lakeside Information Tent. This is an increase in \$2,300 over the previous year.

21,707 social media referrals to the Tourism Burlington and the Taste of Burlington websites from social media campaigns.

CULINARY TOURISM - TASTE OF BURLINGTON

2021 was another difficult year for our culinary partners. With numerous lockdowns, mask mandates, and strict health and safety rules for restaurants, many continued to struggle and had to pivot to Take-out only at certain times of the year. Our focus was on providing consumer confidence. With a grant and partnership from our Regional Tourism Organization, we produced a video highlighting three of our partners and the safety protocols they had implemented to ensure customer safety.

Patio dining was popular with the season extended, so we produced a couple of blog posts for the Taste of Burlington website highlighting patio dining, dog-friendly partners, and more. We continued the #TakeOuttoHelpOut campaign, encouraging residents and visitors to order take-out to support restaurants. The campaign included regular gift card prizes for people who tagged us in their take-out pictures on social media.

Despite various lockdowns, two successful Taste of Burlington prix-fixe programs took place. The winter program ran from February 18th to March 21st, 2021. This program was activated during a lockdown, so the theme was #TakeOuttoHelpOut, extended from three weeks to five weeks to help the culinary community. Funding from the Federal Government enabled us to waive the participation fee, so we had a great response with 59 restaurants in the program, our most extensive program yet. We amended the requirement that they must present a prix-fixe menu, allowing our restaurateur partners to offer one featured special or an entire prix-fixe menu; it was entirely up to them and what they could handle with limited staff.

The second program ran from October 4th to 24th and saw 29 partners participate. At this time, lock-downs had lifted so restaurants could offer dine-in, patio dining, and take-out. Thanks to sponsorship, we lowered the fee to participate and introduced a new partnership with the Sound of Music Festival, bringing Live Music Wednesdays to the program. This proved to be a positive addition to the program. Overall, feedback from restaurants was good. However, take-out continued to be popular as many were still concerned about dining out at restaurants.

We launched a new campaign in the first quarter, called Wicked Awesome Server. We felt that the front-line staff deserved recognition for their hard work. We approached Nickel Brook Brewing to partner with us and PV&V Insurance came on board as a sponsor to collaborate prizes for deserving nominees. We presented a prize pack and certificate to servers every week or two and highlighted all the winners on our social media and the website. We recognized winners with a full-page ad in the Burlington Post at the end of the year. This campaign was very popular, with regular nominations coming in and recipients thrilled to win, so we are pleased to say it will be ongoing.



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION:

Tourism Burlington relies on our team of dedicated volunteers, which includes a volunteer Board of Directors, Marketing Committee, seasonal or adhoc committees and visitor services support in order to deliver services.

Due to the pandemic many of our volunteer positions have been virtual, paused or limited. Notably, our Visitor Information Centre volunteers, however, we still wish to acknowledge their support.

A special thank you to: Anna, Cheryl, Elaine, Lorraine, Rhoda, Wendy.

MARKETING COMMITTEE:

The Marketing Committee met virtually in January, March, and May of 2021; meetings were subsequently paused while we went through our strategic plan. Many of the committee members participated in engagement with our strategic plan. Members of the 2021 marketing committee were:

Andrea Dodd (Aldershot BIA); Allison Jack (Burlington Public Library); Nancy Helmers (Art Gallery of Burlington); Laura Buisman (Art Gallery of Burlington); Bridget Saulnier (Nuvo Taste); Maria Gerow (Burlington Beach Rentals); Sheila Wiebe (Bronte Creek PP); Samantha Statham (Burlington Downtown BIA); Michelle Fex (Burlington Public Library); Sara Rams (Burlington Taxi); Cameron Stevens (Burlington Performing Arts Centre); Robin Ashton (Conservation Halton); Jennifer Gendron (Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Centre); Leah Bryden (Royal Botanical Gardens); Janet Stephens (Museums of Burlington); Andie Weese (Burlington Economic Development); Adam Belovari (City Arts & Culture Department); Dave Whale (Joelle's/Jeff's Guy Shoppe); Bryar Hind (Pearle Hospitality); Razan Hawaa (Courtyard by Marriott); Len Almeida (Vikings Landing); Linda Cvetanovic (Springridge Farm); Jenny Wilkins (Waterfront Hotel); Brittany Hunter (Regional Tourism Organization)



BURLINGTON STEPS UP

Celebrating the Burlington business community's outstanding leadership throughout COVID-19



PARTNERS IN TOURISM:

Aldershot Village BIA
Attractions Ontario
Burlington Downtown Business Association
Burlington Economic Development
Burlington Chamber of Commerce
City of Burlington



Photo by: I've Been Bit Travel

VISITOR GUIDE PARTNERS:

Activate Burlington
 Admiral Inn
 Aldershot Village BIA
 Arts & Culture Department, City
 Art Gallery of Burlington
 Best Western Hotel
 Burlington Central Public Library
 Burlington Downtown Business Association
 Burlington Chamber of Commerce
 Burlington Economic Development Corporation
 Burlington Hydro
 Burlington Furnished Rentals
 Burlington Taxi
 Comfort Inn Burlington
 Cottage Country Candy/Scholtens Inc.
 Courtyard by Marriott
 Decathlon
 Frederick Fine Art
 Freeman Station
 Harmony Fine Jewellers
 Hilton Garden Inn Toronto/Burlington
 Holiday Inn Burlington Hotel & Conference Centre
 Homewood Suites by Hilton
 Industria Burlington
 Museums of Burlington
 Joelle's & Jeff's Guyshop
 Karina Gould-MP
 La Crème De la Crème Creamery
 Lettuce Love Cafe
 Mrs. B's Gift House
 Mythos Greek Cuisine
 Nickel Brook Brewing
 Paradiso Restaurant
 Pumpkins After Dark
 Royal Botanical Gardens
 Spencers at the Waterfront
 The Pearle Hotel & Spa
 The Platter Company Gourmet Market
 Walkers Chocolates
 Waterfront Hotel Downtown Burlington

Culinary Tourism Alliance
 Destination Canada
 Destination Ontario
 Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism
 Tourism Industry Association of Canada
 Tourism Industry Association of Ontario

thank you



BurlingtonTour



tourismburlington



TourismBurlington

Tourism Burlington
414 Locust Street
Burlington, ON L7S 1T7
905.634.5594 | 1.877.499.9989
info@tourismburlington.com

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

