

# Sparks Street

## ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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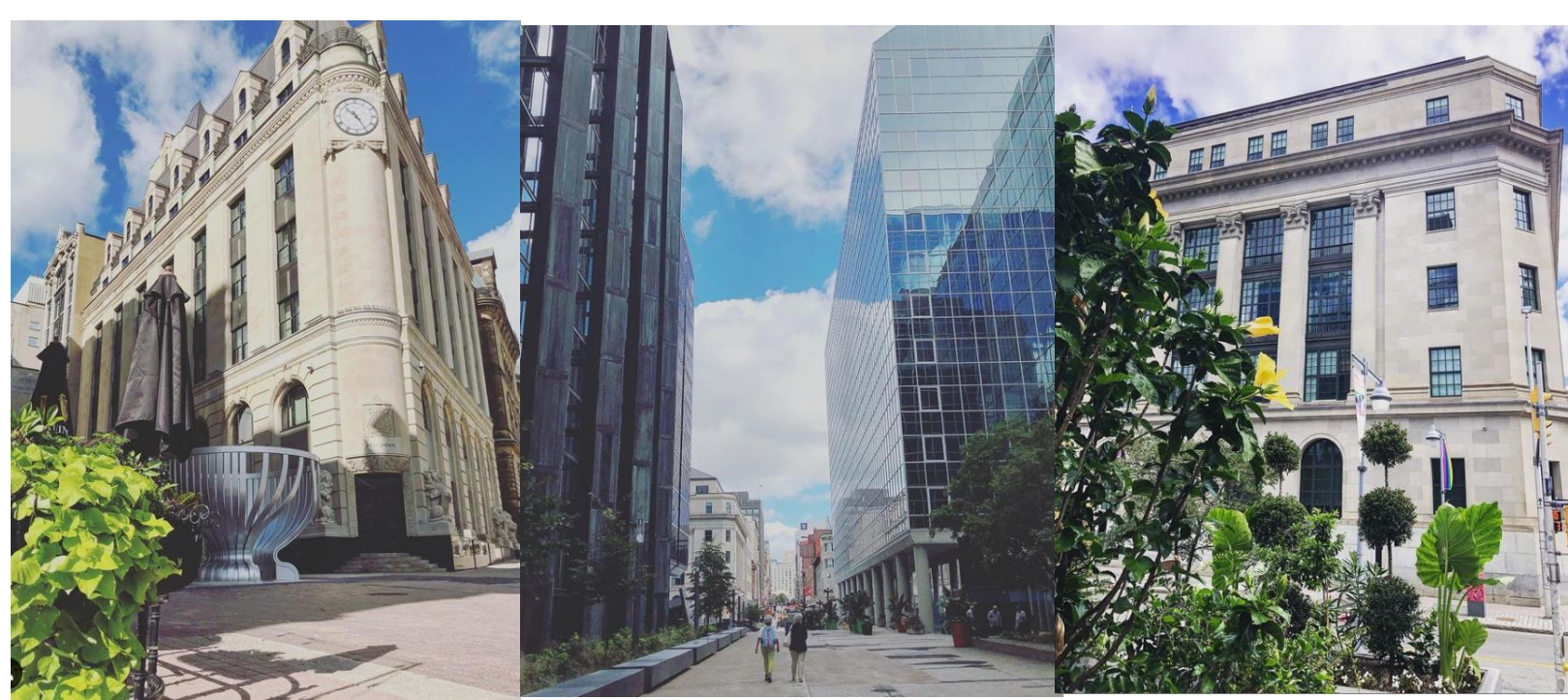


## MANDATE

Sparks Street BIA (Business Improvement Area) is proud to be one of the most vibrant commercial districts in Ottawa. Sparks Street BIA came into existence when local business and property owners joined together to improve, promote, and undertake projects that create a stronger and more competitive commercial district. We organize, finance and complete local improvements and promotional events.

The range of activities that Sparks Street BIA undertakes include:

- **Marketing:** Understanding who area customers are, and creating effective promotions to retain and expand the customer and visitor base
- **Business recruitment:** Working with property owners to ensure that available space is occupied, and that an optimum business and service mix is achieved and maintained
- **Special events:** Organizing and partnering in unique events that highlight the unique attributes of the area and increase customer visits



## 2020: AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR

As we began the process of drafting this report, it truly dawned upon us how much has happened over the past 12 months.

We entered the year with an expectation that this would be a statement year for the street and organization. In February, we hosted the largest winter festival in North America, Winterlude. It took years of effort by the board and staff to bring an event of this caliber to Sparks Street. A true success, it allowed us to showcase our community in the heart of downtown Ottawa to the world. We could not have asked for a better kickoff to 2020.

Three weeks later we would all be forced to close our doors to protect our community from Covid-19. As we moved into spring, we realized that this would not be over quickly. Businesses were slowly allowed to open. We have all had to become experts in the use of PPE and Plexiglass. We had to maintain physical distancing of customers, increase cleaning, and conduct daily wellness checks of our staff and ourselves. These were all things that most of us never had to think about before. We had to navigate and adapt to a constantly changing avalanche of information from various levels of government.

Merchants did not miss a beat, figuring out what needed to be done to safely re-open their doors when they were allowed. Patios were expanded. Retailers built online stores. Merchants focused on creating appointment shopping with their loyal customers.

For many of our businesses, their customers were/are working from home. Still, our members continued to open their doors to welcome in both new customers and the ones that have trusted them for years.

We find ourselves in awe of your undefeatable spirit. Every day it inspires us to strive to support your efforts any way we can. To tell your stories to anyone and everyone that will listen, and to make sure they do not stop listening. We will continue to produce programming, develop marketing campaigns, and build a public space to draw people to Sparks Street.

If we can be of assistance, please let us know. Our doors are open.

Kevin McHale  
Executive Director

The logo for Sparks Street, featuring the words "Sparks Street" in a red, cursive, handwritten-style font.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## EVENTS & ACTIVATIONS

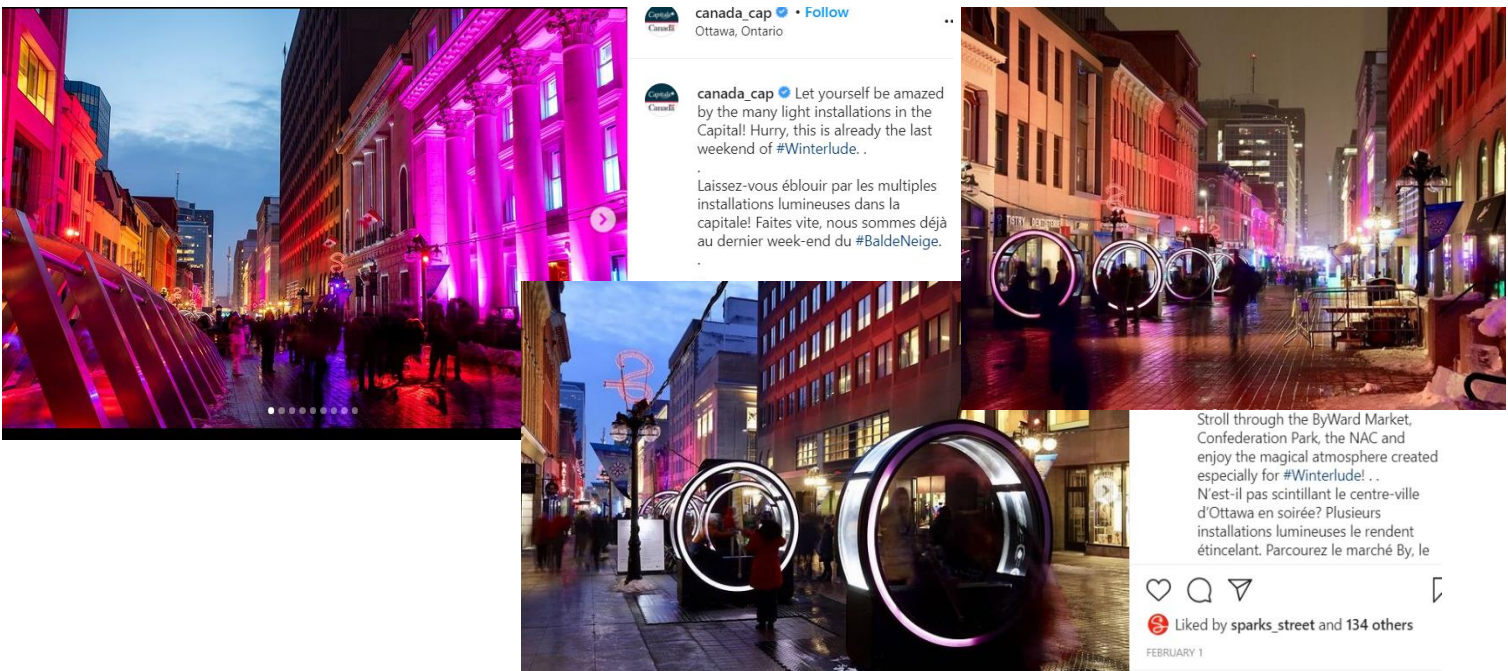
It was paramount in the landscape of the Coronavirus pandemic that Sparks Street followed the pillars of Risk Assessment for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19. The capacity to apply prevention and control measures such as the case with Songs from the Shed, and limiting outdoor meetings and cancellation of our major festivals was difficult proof of that. Any decision to restrict, modify, postpone, cancel, or proceed with holding a mass gathering will continue to be based on a rigorous risk assessment exercise in accordance with local, provincial, and federal health authorities.

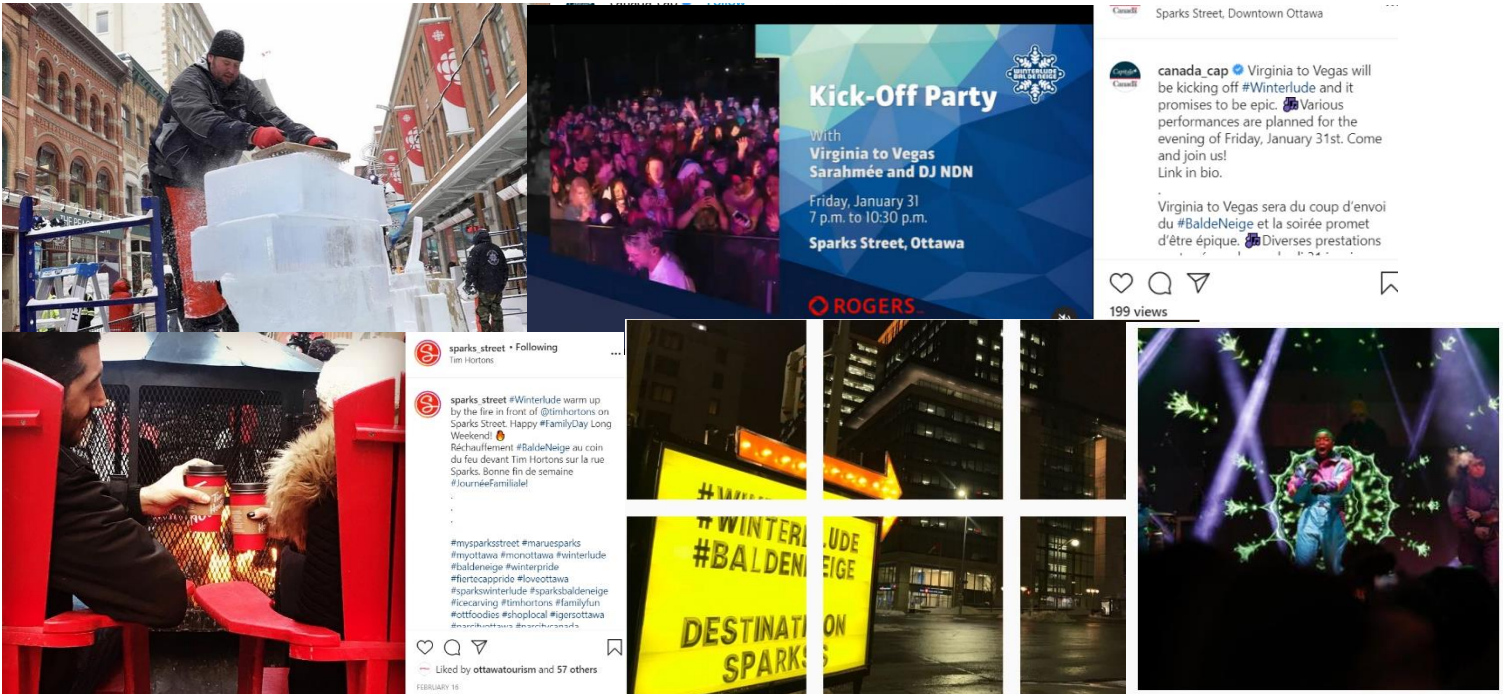
### Canadian Heritage



Sparks Street hosted the 2020 edition of what is now considered the flagship event of the winter tourist season in Canada's Capital Region: Winterlude. Canadian Heritage states that Winterlude is proud to be among the prestigious Ontario Signature Experiences as well as the 2019 Top 100 Events in Canada, according to BizBash. On average, 600,000 visitors take part in the festivities. The results of the SSBIA Winterlude 2020 Merchant Survey results showed an overall increase in member's sales, foot traffic counts, and revealed 90% of businesses experienced positive impact from the festival's location on Sparks Street with an expressed request it come back again the following year.

Sparks Street was integral in assisting with multiple layers of event management including: in-kind marketing support, activation site planning and ongoing venue consultation, locating and obtaining waived fees for office space rentals for Canadian Heritage operations and volunteers, catering support, internal and external organizational communications with members and public, assisting members with obtaining online visual support of their associated events, and site snow removal to name a few. We look forward to being a return destination in 2021 with a strategically scalable footprint under the current health protocols.





## E-Commerce Grant Program

With the majority of businesses closed on the street and no end in sight to this pandemic, Sparks Street went digital and created a one-stop online shop where gift certificates could be found for many of our businesses and restaurants. We partnered with the FanSaves Gift Certificate Program and assisted in upgrading many of our businesses to provide online shopping opportunities as our members strengthened or evolved their digital footprints.

The Sparks Street Board reallocated funds to quickly support our members to provide E-Commerce Grants. Our members were invited to apply for a one-time grant to assist them with creating their online shopping platforms or online marketing campaigns.



### SMALL BUSINESSES NEED YOUR SUPPORT

During these uncertain times, many of us are unable to visit our favourite shops and restaurants. Most businesses along Sparks Street are locally owned by your friends, neighbours, and family.

If you have the capacity to support them you can do so by purchasing gift certificates for future visits or buy something that's available online.



### OTHER WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES

If you don't need to order, make appointments or cannot afford items at this time you can still support small business by leaving a public review on Facebook or Google.



Merchants applied for one of two grants:

- a \$1000 grant to a Sparks Street member that wishes to establish an online store on a platform such as Shopify. It would allow our merchants to sell products and gift cards/certificates to people during the COVID-19 pandemic
- a \$1000.00 marketing grant for merchants who already have an online store to specifically promote their e-store on social media channels

As part of the application process, participants also had to have:

- an up to date Google listing (which is free) to help browser searches find the business
- A Facebook and or Instagram account as these are the social media platforms that consumers use the most

Once members applied, staff guided them through the process with suggestions on how they should proceed. As these stores came online, we promoted them on our channels.



## Poutinefest



In April 2020, due to the postponement of Poutinefest on Sparks Street, and Ottawa's intense cravings, we pivoted deliciously digital and launched an online 'Quarantine Poutine' photo competition. Ottawans accepted the challenge to use what they already had in their cupboards to build a great poutine at home. With any submission, entrants qualified to win a gift certificate valued at \$100 from the Sparks Street small business of their choice.

**Ottawa International Buskers Festival & Ottawa Ribfest** were postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With many performers and exhibitors traveling from afar, we will prepare and be ready for their exciting returns. We look forward to making that magic happen in our new health climate and are currently planning ways to make the pivot.

**Songs from the Shed** returned with PPE plexi – glass flair - we are thrilled to have had local talent providing tunes. It was music to Ottawa’s ears, a little normalcy amongst the pandemic noise. We proudly featured a gender balanced line up and have a fantastic photo gallery of our 2020 performance alumni ready to return in 2021. We plan to incorporate virtual elements and explore performance partnerships through our partnership with Ottawa Music Industry Coalition.



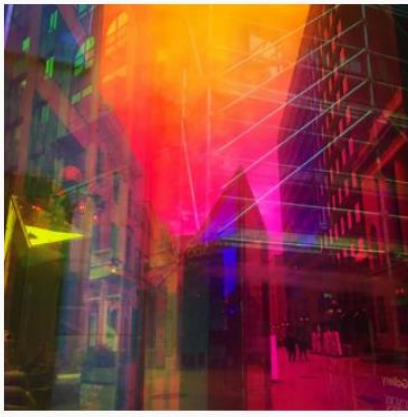
**Pristmatica**

This Fall, with its diamond-like, multi-faceted glory, Pristmatica came alive. Instagrammers united with dazzling outdoor interactions. Full COVID-19 health measures were put in place with handwashing stations, restrooms, and signage reminding our excited visitors to physically distance. It was a welcoming visual to a quieter season.

“Each panel of every prism is laminated with a dichronic film,” explains Pierre-Alexandre Le Lay of RAW Design, the Toronto-based firm behind Pristmatica. “That means each surface reflects different colours depending on the angle of the light source and the viewing angle. During the day, the prisms reflect natural light. After dark, they’re illuminated from within, creating a more pronounced directional effect.” Mr. Le Lay conveys, “The goal is to present a new way of seeing the city...”

We are exploring new adaptive installations with the potential for new exhibitors for 2021.





## WiFi Pilot Project



Sparks Street went totally ON THE GRID with complimentary WiFi from O'Connor Street to Metcalfe Street. Public access internet is an important public offering brought forward in the Public Realm Plan.

The seven-week pilot, originally scheduled to run October through November has been extended. It has been a successful proof of concept that will continue to the end of Winterlude with hopes of creating a permanent network.

The network also allows us to generate accurate pedestrian counts using technology created by Inpixon. This data will help us make decisions as we continue investment in the public realm, discover how people use Sparks Street, and can help change the perception that Sparks Street is only busy during the day. It will be invaluable to see the shift in pedestrian traffic as we move past Covid and into recovery.

The ability to collect year over year data will also be invaluable to organizations like Ottawa Tourism and others who use Sparks Street.

The network provided satisfactory speeds though we wish to explore building the fastest public network in downtown Ottawa. In 2021, with extension of the WiFi pilot project, Sparks Street will look to find a correlation of transactional sales to the beacon data.

The data will assist property owners in attracting quality tenants to the area. We will be looking to show festival numbers and make comparisons and the data will help us validate programming decisions.

Interesting Stats:

- Tuesdays and Thursdays are the busiest days, Sunday is the quietest
- Prismatic exhibit increased loiter time (16%) and pedestrian traffic (42%) on that block compared to the week after, with similar weather conditions



- 13,535 unique visitors to the street in the first two and a half weeks. Over time, can separate first time daily versus weekly visitors
- Majority of people spent between one and five minutes in the WiFi zone
- Inpixon's software tracks temperature and precipitation, variables that affect pedestrian traffic

We encouraged visitors to take part of this pilot project by completing a one-minute survey after logging on

- How would you rate the speed of our Wifi?
- When connecting to a free Public WIFI, rank in the following in importance:
  - Speed of connection
  - Price
  - Whether it is safe
  - Whether it is owned by the premises
- When you visit a place is having access to free WIFI important to you?

We hope to share these results near the end of the pilot as constructive feedback to grow the complimentary program and will pursue incentivizing partnering opportunities with Inpixon or another organization offering next gen technology.

## MEMBERSHIP & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT & INSIGHTS

The small business and tourism industry has been hit hard by COVID-19, forcing destinations to cut programs, festivals, and scale back. But it has also provided Sparks Street with an opportunity to rethink our strategies and investments. Sparks Street set forth foundations and leveraged new and returning relationships with local partners to rebuild and make small, strategic strides toward recovery in 2021.

### OCOBIA (Ottawa Coalition of BIA)



Ottawa is home to 19 BIAs found in downtown, suburban, and rural settings. Together, they represent more than 6,400 property owners and businesses who employ 120,000 people and generate a quarter of a billion dollars in municipal tax revenue each year. OCOBIA is a unified voice of the 19 Business Improvement Areas within urban, suburban, and rural Ottawa who, when combined, represent more than 6,400 businesses and their 100,000 employees to:

- Advocate and influence policies that affect BIAs and their surrounding communities
- Protect the interests of BIAs and communicate the importance of their impact on local economies and tourism
- Promote strong, successful, and effective BIAs in the City of Ottawa
- Implement joint initiatives that benefit groups within OCOBIA on issues and projects, including studies and research in marketing
- Facilitate and share the exchange of information, experiences, and ideas among BIAs through a centralized resource

Sparks Street Executive Director, Kevin McHale, was influential and an early proponent in the establishment of OCOBIA as a Member of the Transition Board, and now a member of the official board. Sharing resources of Sparks Street experience,

he was an early promoter and supporter, formalizing solid working relationships with the Mayor's Office and key stakeholders. He continues to sit on the Board after two years of involvement.

## IDA & IDA Canada



Sparks Street engaged with IDA (International Downtown Association) Canada, a national coalition of the International Downtown Association, representing organizations across the country that manage Canada's business districts. As Sparks Street identifies as being a vital place in the nation's identity, our key focus centres on our economic wealth.

As per IDA Canada, Canadian business neighbourhoods and city cores are varied in form, size, and make-up and yet across the country, these business districts play a significant role in communities locally, provincially, and nationally. The goal of IDA Canada is to unite Canada and lay the foundation of the coalition's Canadian advocacy and research efforts.

During the 2020 global pandemic, The National Network provided Sparks Street with engagement opportunities, best practice resources and solutions, and advocacy efforts on national matters related to community building and placemaking.

Through these virtual connections, we strengthened our online presence within the IDA community, a community that captures the passion of placemaking.

In December 2020, Kevin McHale participated as panelist in IDA Canada's Webinar: *Lessons Learned for 2021* providing firsthand experience of the affect on our precinct's landscape and the intricacies of planning activations under the Covid lens.

## Festivals & Events Ontario



Sparks Street actively participated in Tuesday Talks hosted by Festivals and Events Ontario. The weekly online round table discussion, with guest speakers, shared industry insights, adapting to the ever-changing landscape of live events and festivals in 2020 and beyond, and how innovative ideas and technology will help.

Sparks Street engaged collaboratively, building our roadmap to resilience with tools acquired from these valuable sessions. These high-level engagement sessions allowed us to explore how we can be nimble through uncertainty in 2021, with thought-provoking takeaways for sharing to navigate the way ahead.

## TIAO



The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is recognized by government as the voice of tourism.

TIAO works on behalf of its membership, collectively representing 188,000 businesses and 391,000 employees, to take on pressing policy issues that impact the Ontario tourism industry. TIAO leads the way in government relations on behalf of the Ontario tourism industry, including tourism businesses and operators, destination marketing organizations, regional tourism organizations, and educators.

### Ontario BIA Association

In our twice weekly Best Practices Calls on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the conversations never failed to amaze us. The opportunity for direct peer-to-peer discussions was integral to sharing and learning how we can help be a part of future economic recovery, not just within our own community, but across the province. Sparks Street was proud to supply OBIAA (Ontario Business Improvement Area Association) members with our in-house ideas, resources, templates, and governance as we are an incredibly unique catchment in Ontario.

- Currently about 310+ BIAs in Ontario, 19 in Ottawa
- More than 70% of Ontario's BIAs are members of OBIAA
- BIAs represent over 100,000 Businesses and 17,600 property owners
- Accumulated Levy of Ontario's BIAs – more than \$55M
- Employment by BIAs is over 150 part-time staff and 200 full-time staff

The concept of a BIA was developed here in Ontario and over the years has spread around the world. In 2020, Sparks Street and OBIAA proudly celebrated 50 Years of BIAs. Businesses, governments, and community members believe in the concept and have seen the successes in the model of "Main Street" communities everywhere.

### Mainstreets:

- Represent sustainable development, making the best use of our existing infrastructure and creating compact communities that encourage walking, cycling and transit use
- Have historic connections to the origins of the community
- Have symbolic significance as the centre of civic life
- Are a central hub for festivals and celebrations
- Reflect a positive image of the entire city
- Provide opportunities for local and incubator businesses
- Offer an experience not found in new malls, plazas



Out of sheer frustration, a group of businessmen including Alex Ling a true visionary in the west end of Toronto, along Bloor Street West, went to City Hall and the Province seeking legislation that would compel all businesses within a designated area to pay a levy for the purpose of revitalizing their business strip through physical improvements and promotional activities. The levy would be collected by the City and turned over to the elected Board of Management to be used as needed. After some persuasion, the idea was finally adopted and the Business Improvement Area (BIA) legislation was enacted and became Section 204-217 of the Municipal Act. Bloor West Village became the pioneer of the BIA concept and was designated as the first BIA in 1970!



## Ottawa Public Health

Sparks Street was thrilled to approach Ottawa Public Health as a partner and participate on a panel for Ottawa Public Health's Covid-Wise Stencil and Mural Campaign. The program was launched on September 4, 2020 as a means to further promote Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) Be SocialWise / Be COVIDWise bilingual campaigns, and create murals for local Business Improvement Areas (BIA) to remind the public to wear a mask, adhere to physical distancing guidance, and practice good mask and hand hygiene when in situations where maintaining a 2-metre distance may be difficult. Local Ottawa artists with past large-scale public mural experience were invited to develop and submit:

- A detailed sketch, and explanation of the content that reflects the sentiments of Ottawa Public Health's Be SocialWise / Be COVIDWise campaigns
- Entries were narrowed from 45 to 3 by a panel of internal (OPH) and external judges (BIA) based on: Meeting the requirements detailed in the call (detailed sketch, budget, sample work and concept and ability to deliver product by September 29, 2020)
- Appropriateness and flexibility to work with the artist to make minor changes
- Inclusion of public health messaging into the artwork
- Originality

The top 3 selected artists were engaged to paint the 8X8 mural, which was displayed outdoors. OPH provided the plywood, transportation of the piece, and delivery of the piece to the BIA to be installed. Sparks Street designed and installed rigging and lighting to proudly display the piece. A first of its kind on the street.

OPH reached out to multiple BIA's that had many younger-aged pedestrians for both the mural and the stencil campaign. The BIA's that responded in a timely fashion and assisted with the stencil campaign were given a priority opportunity to showcase these murals. Sparks was able to secure first opportunity. A full communications plan and launch day was then executed.

Key Messages of the CovidWise program:

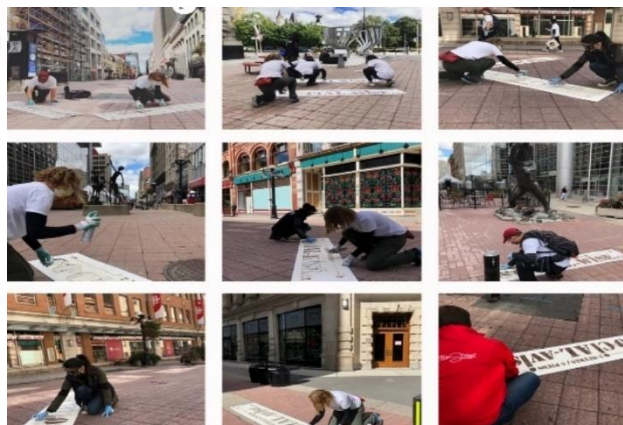
- Engaging local Ottawa artists in the development of Be Social Wise / Be COVID Wise murals will increase visibility in an innovative way for public health COVID messaging in high traffic areas
- Sparks Street supported OPH striving to remind and encourage the public to socialize in a safe way through online social media education, outreach (stencilling campaign), and visual artwork in high traffic areas (murals).



←.....• 2 METRES / 6 FEET •.....→  
**SOCIAL-WISE.CA**



As you make your way down Sparks Street, past the magical reflective colour spectrum of #Prismatic, between O'Connor and Bank Street, you will find the newest Art on Sparks. Thanks to a partnership with Ottawa Public Health (OPH), Sparks Street has become the new temporary home of a Social-Wise mural installation!



## Ottawa Festivals



Sparks Street participated in weekly “Ottawa Festivals Industry Calls” round table panel discussions wherein leaders provided insights to support an integrated response to economic challenges. The Ontario government participated in these calls as well as engaging partners in the heritage, sport, tourism, and culture sectors in order to gather critical feedback on how best to reopen the economy. This input will inform decisions as the government implements its Framework for Reopening our Province and provided essential information with an eye on the future of pivoted programming and a reimagined event space.

An example are the key findings from Abacas Canada about Canadian event habits as of April 2020:

- 35% say they are listening to more music than before the pandemic started
- 31% say they are watching more videos from musicians online than before
- 24% say they are watching more recorded live concerts than before
- 43% say they have discovered new artists during the pandemic
- 63% of Canadians said it would take three to six months with 11% indicating that they would attend right away (once physical distancing restrictions are lifted) before they would feel comfortable going to a music festival or a concert in a large venue
- 74% of "live music lovers" said it would take three to six months with 19% indicating that they would attend right away (once physical distancing restrictions are lifted) before they would feel comfortable going to a music festival or a concert in a large venue
- 30% say they have watched a live music show on Facebook or another social media platform and most (70%) say they have been satisfied with the overall experience

## Ottawa Tourism



Ottawa Tourism provided integral resources to its membership as tourism habits shifted in a fundamental manner. Increased signs of this shift in behaviour was illustrated in Ipsos’ public attitude and behavioural online poll results from April 20, 2020 – it was an awakening for all of us and illustrated how Sparks Street as an open-air destination is a critical part of our profile and how businesses reliant on tourism will need to adapt offerings to a hyper local market.

- Three in four Canadians were not comfortable of taking a vacation this year
- More than eight in ten Canadians avoided public places like malls, restaurants, and coffee shops
- Net intention to travel to other provinces continues to drop, especially with Ontario and Quebec being the most impacted (currently the provinces worst-hit by the pandemic). Likelihood of travel within their own province is declined compared to the 9 of 14
- 42% of Ontarians are likely to avoid travel even within their own province

- Views on tourists are overwhelming negative, with a majority saying the pandemic has made them less supportive of tourism. This feeling is especially strong toward tourists coming from elsewhere in North America or internationally
- 46% of Ontario residents are not supportive of intra-provincial tourists and 71% of Ontarians are not supportive of International tourists at this time
- Travel plans are on hold indefinitely, and when they travel, they intend to start closer home
- 67% of Canadians will not make any plans to travel till the situation is normal in Canada
- 65% of Canadians will travel only closer to home post COVID-19 and will not use mass transit and will not travel to crowded places
- Personal car is the most favourite type of transportation for a future vacation

An important note to the numbers above that they included current border closures and assumed a length of time for the lockdowns/physical distancing to be in place. As physical distancing measures were stepped up, these numbers have improved. These numbers also provide a glimpse when the market is expected to recover especially with the assistance of economic stimulus announced by various levels of government in Canada and across the world.

For Sparks Street, these calls provided an extremely practical outlook into how people are adapting to the current work-from-home, physical distancing culture. The insights from these virtual panels will help Sparks Street and its businesses in recovery campaign planning, this will be a necessity over the next four years.

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

### Sparks Gives



**Promotional Campaign: December 7 – December 18, 2020**

Twelve Days of #SparksGives, follow along as Sparks Street helps our core community. In small ways, we can make big change.

The Sparks Gives initiative endeavours to support the needs of our local community by providing funding to help organizations that passionately work to improve the lives of those in the closely surrounding community of Sparks Street.

To show our sincere appreciation for the work that you do, we are providing a \$250.00 cash donation to your organization in December, 2020.

The 12 Days of Sparks Gives will be a featured program initiative on all of Sparks Street's digital channels, including website rotator, Sparks Live Blog, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. We will be tagging Sparks Street businesses and our charitable partners on each post, one per day, during the 12 Days of the Sparks Gives program. The Gallery of Giving will remain on the blog and our Instagram as part of our December content stream.

In addition to the \$250.00 cash donation to support your fundraising goals in 2020, Sparks Street is pleased to offer the following support for your organization in 2021:

- Opportunity for your organization to execute a lunch hour outdoor event/program on Sparks Street (mutually agreed upon scope and dates)
- Digital support when executing lunch hour event on Sparks Street (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Dedicated Social Post (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) in support of up to two fundraising and/or program initiatives
- Twelve months of logo visibility on Sparks Street Partners page with direct link to your organization

Through our programs, festivals, and events - Sparks Gives looks to identify and support the ever-growing and ongoing needs of our neighbours as YOU are truly the heart of our downtown core.

Community connections are essential and human need is at the forefront of the Coronavirus pandemic. With its official launch in December 2020, the Sparks Gives philanthropic initiative endeavours to support the needs of our local community by providing funding to help organizations that passionately work to improve the lives of those in the closely surrounding community of Sparks Street. We have proudly become better neighbours identifying the following twelve organizations with continued support in 2021. This program will grow over the next four years as Sparks Street expands its identity as not just a business district, but a neighbourhood in its own right.

- Shepherds of Good Hope
- The Union Mission
- Centretown Emergency Food Centre
- Dalhousie Food Cupboard
- Salvation Army Kettle Campaign
- Salvation Army Street Outreach
- Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities

- YMCA/YWCA
- The Good Companions Seniors' Centre
- Operation Come Home
- Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre
- Youth Services Bureau

## CONTESTING

### Sparkscation - Summer 2020



We created two major contests, **Sparkscation**, which was executed in the summer with 6,000 web entries. Amazing social media engagement with two prize packages awarded. We targeted staying local, for Ottawans looking for a full experiential downtown staycation. Included was a hotel stay, meals, activities, and some shopping! Two lucky entrants were thrilled to have been awarded the grand prizes. Here's what we included:

#### **Package 1 (winner announced August 17, 2020)**

- 1-night stay at the Ottawa Marriott Hotel
- Breakfast for 2 at Nate's Deli
- Lunch for 2 at The Office Resto Pub
- Dinner for 2 at Rabbit Hole
- Shopping at The Snow Goose and Swatch
- 4 tickets for a Haunted Walk Bubble Tour

#### **Package 2 (winner announced August 24, 2020)**

- 1-night stay at the Ottawa Marriott Hotel
- Breakfast for 2 at Creperie Rim
- Lunch for 2 at Brixton's British Pub
- Dinner for 2 at Bier Markt
- Shopping at Winners and Canada's Four Corners
- 2 bike tours from Escape Bicycle Tour

## Scroll in to Win – Fall 2020

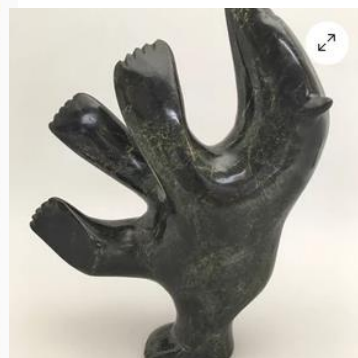
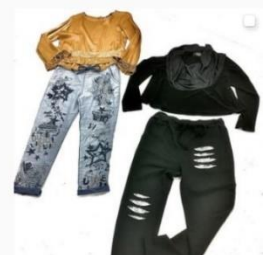
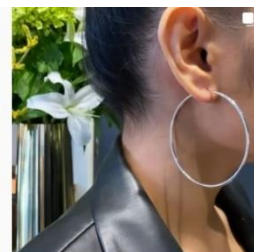
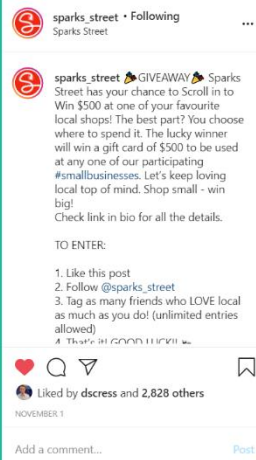


After a successful two year run of our Stroll in to Win campaign, and with the implementation of Covid phasing and government restrictions for business openings, we made an adaptable strategy, and took it digital with Scroll In to Win.

Sparks Street had your chance to Scroll in to Win \$500 at one of your favourite local shops. The best part? The winner got to choose which one. Participants were asked to LIKE the post, FOLLOW @Sparks\_Street, and tag as many friends who love local as much as they do. One lucky Winner was chosen by random draw.

To be featured in the month-long campaign, member assistance was requested. Businesses were asked to put together and photograph three different merchandise or service options that they thought our social audience would love. The winner would be spending their \$500 via Gift Card/Certificate at the small business of their choosing – so the ask was to BE CREATIVE & send us as many options to help get their fantastic ideas and merch out there to thousands of Ottawans looking to love local. The supporting digital channels we elected were our Sparkslive Web, Facebook, Twitter, Sparks Live Blog, Sponsored Instagram Ads, Radio Spots and Radio digital ads, and featuring Top Social Media Influencer Little Miss Ottawa.

The results were amazing with 6,598 comments, 3,000 likes and 1,232 new followers to our ever growing Sparks Street Instagram account.





## Get Cosy on Sparks Street – Holidays 2020



In December, Sparks Street turns holiday wonderland. Trending in Ottawa were people home for the holidays, looking to experience holiday lights. As a partner of Christmas Lights Across Canada, Sparks Street decked our blocks with twinkling lights and Christmas trees. We are a safe, pedestrian friendly, FREE destination for people to stroll and take in the holiday scenery with opportunity to pop in to all our great businesses to warm up and get their gift shopping started. Ottawa wants to support local businesses more than ever. Though we are not a drive-thru as ever popular in suburban areas, we offer a hyper experiential, relaxed walk-thru experience.

Get Cosy on Sparks Street was heavily featured in our digital content stream on all of our channels; Sparks Live Blog, Website rotator, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. We highlighted Sparks Street businesses who have one or all of the following:

- Exciting hot chocolate offerings for our Featured Cocoa Crawl Blog Post (could also be alcoholic)
- Decorated windows or interiors
- The ability to be open past 6:00pm (evenings and/or weekends)
- Prizing we can add to our Cosy Kit Instagram giveaway (would need a total of three for any item great for keeping warm) Cosy Kit Giveaway
- Prizes awarded: Dec. 4, Dec. 11, Dec.18

Participants were asked to Enter by liking the Instagram post, follow @sparks\_street, and to tag as many friends who love hot chocolate and local.

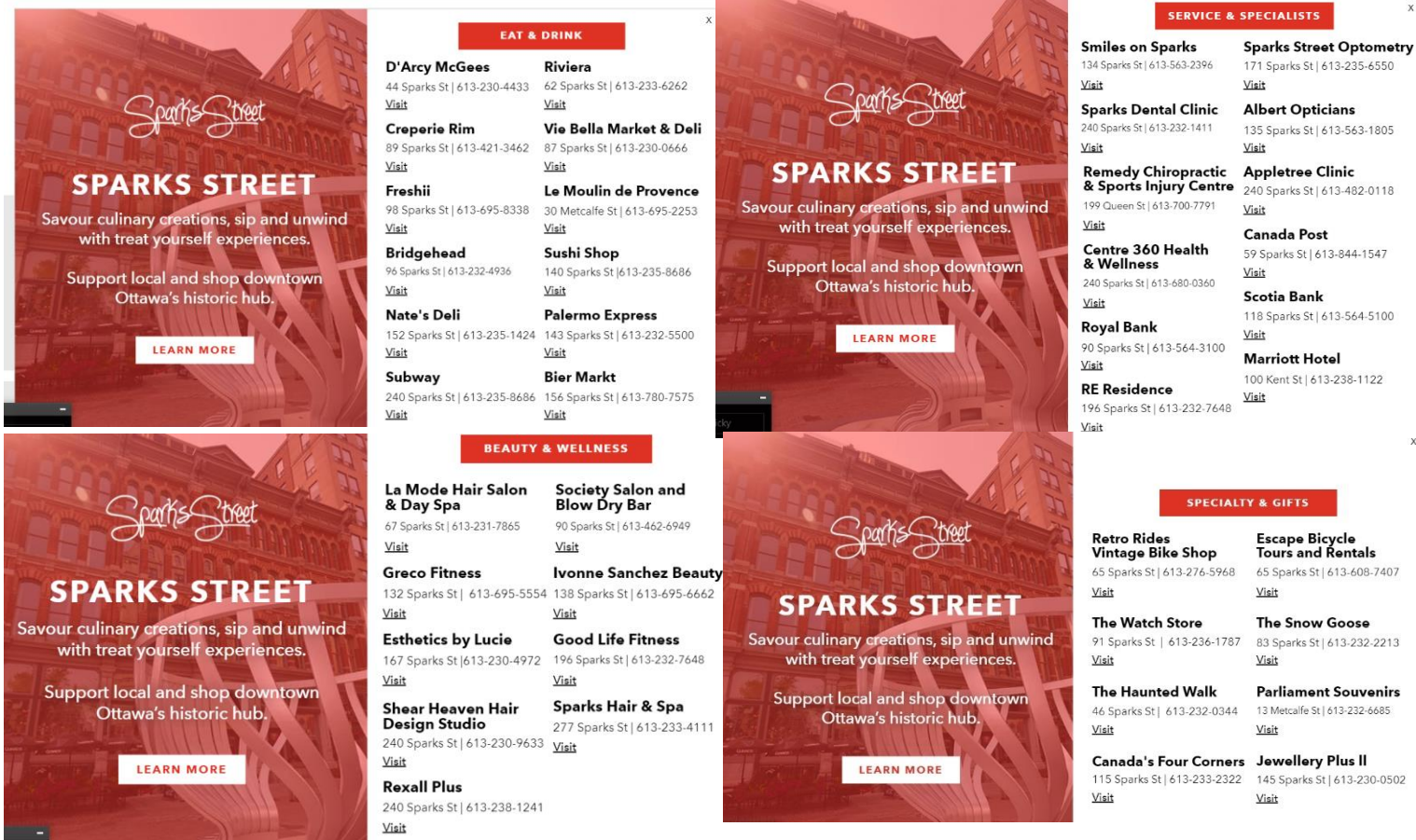
We want to thank our Members who offered up these great contest experiences and love and appreciate our followers for continuing to support our local businesses.

## MEDIA

### Stingray Media (HOT 89.9 and LIVE 88.5)

With support for major contesting and sustaining messaging driving core audiences to Sparks Street as a destination for open-air strolling, patios and supporting local we ran two multi week campaigns in 2020

- More than 1 in 3 adults under 50 heard the invitation to visit Sparks Street at least 5 times per week
- Sparks Street is also top of mind for opportunities and activations hosted by the radio station in 2020 but due to current health climate were not able to execute. We look forward to future activation
- We also had prominent programmatic digital display ads, 26 consecutive weeks



## St. Joseph Printing

Where magazine provided timely, local information on the hottest and most essential shopping, dining, cultural attractions, and entertainment. Sparks Street was included in print copies available in Ottawa's signature hotels, concierge, or guest services desks.

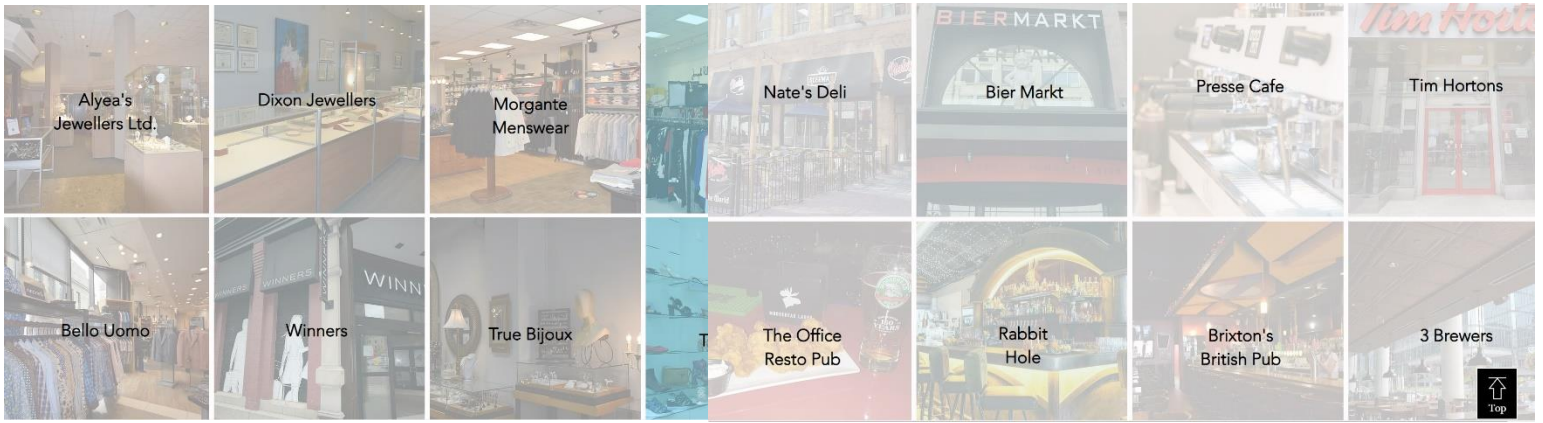
## Postering Ottawa

This year we collaborated with Postering Ottawa during our major art installation, Prismatic. Postering Ottawa provided turn-key postering services in our targeted walkable area. They also provided the campaign with social media support.

## Sparks Street Website

An overhaul of our Sparks Street website took place in Spring 2020. With a virtual presence being key and critical during the Coronavirus landscape, we made sure our merchants were cleanly and visually well represented. Visuals are crucial to our successful marketing initiatives. The images we use have an enormous impact on the success of our digital footprint and other digital campaigns. In 2020, we strived to use visual assets that were relevant, reassuring, and inspiring during these challenging times.

We updated the landing page's four main categories to visual, more user-friendly, clickable links: Shop, Dine, Services, Play. We modified our Directory's look and feel and introduced store frontages, allowing visitors to see inside our shops and services; a great visual connection.



## Member Communication

Ongoing communication of COVID-19 Reporting, Resources and Documents to our public and membership was critical, we were able to include these in organized and easily accessible sections of our website. From News releases, useful links, to provincial regulations and bylaws - in a world scattered with information, we compiled the most pertinent and useful on this page as we progressed from the unknown to Phase 1, 2, and now the current five phase colour coded system.

Weekly Membership emails (e-blasts) were executed as way to filter information and re-engage internal communications in timely fashion.

*Sparks Street*  
**WE'RE OPEN & SAFE DURING COVID-19**

- ✓ Heated Patios
- ✓ Take Out & Delivery
- ✓ Curbside Pick Up
- ✓ By Appointment Services
- ✓ Virtual Shopping
- ✓ Thanks for loving, living & supporting local, Ottawa! We appreciate you!

Photo credit: The Rabbit Hole

**MEMBERS PAGE**

A lot of comprehensive, detailed information came out from the government today, which I hope will be helpful to the industries asking for more data from this government around their decision making.

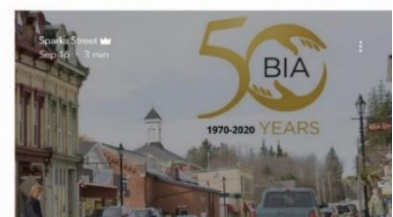
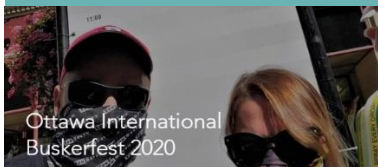
The government announced a new COVID-19 response framework, which colour codes different situations as it relates to COVID-19. The full document can be found [here](#).

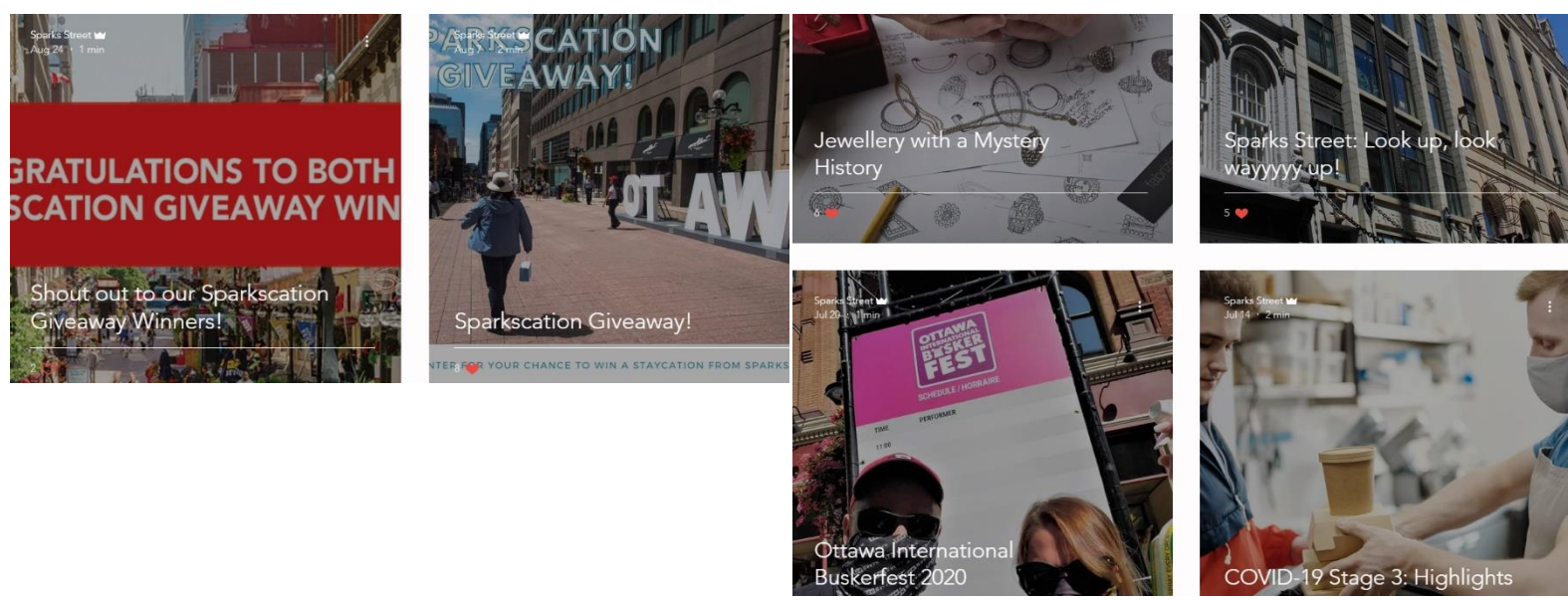
## Sparkslive Blog:

2020 was an important year to tell our story. To give our visitors and residents a behind the scenes in-the-know view on all things Sparks Street. We are proud to have introduced #MySparksStreet Blog. With topics covering policies, to current events, notable celebrations, to just good plain frivolous fun, like foodie tours, contests, and fun trivia facts – this is our place to open up. We will continue to use this highly sharable channel as a way to communicate all things Sparks and are excited for the strategic direction it will take in 2021. Since the introduction of the blog, we have seen a dramatic increase in traffic to our website.

**#MySparksStreet**

Our Blog from Stroll to Scroll





## Influencer

- We formed a strategic partnership with Ottawa’s top influencer, with an Instagram following of 42.8K, Little Miss Ottawa delivered fantastic reach, Instagram coverage, and boosted engagement of our signature contests, patios, shopping, and interactive destinations. She featured Sparks Street in her blog posts, bucket lists, and several Instagram posts including short Reels vignettes and Tik Tok.
- In 2021 we will be exploring Influencer marketing on a micro and macro level (“micro-” and “nano-” influencers who have smaller audiences but who can speak authentically about their experiences), with the possibility of new voices to Ottawa’s Social Feeds, for example sharing of relevant, trusted, content with travel bloggers, foodies and parent bloggers that will create resonance with our visitors and align with Sparks Street’s brand identity.

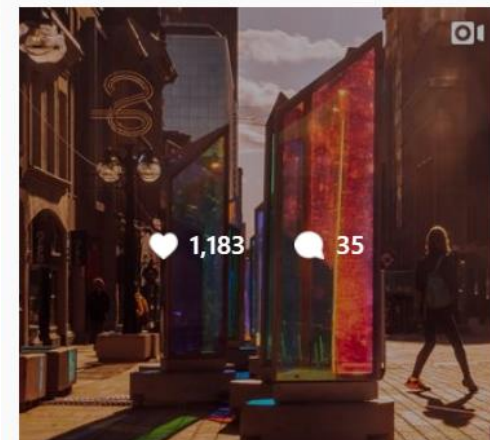
OTTAWA TRAVEL ABOUT CONTACT

In BLOG / OTTAWA / THINGS TO DO

### Sparks Street Shopping Guide



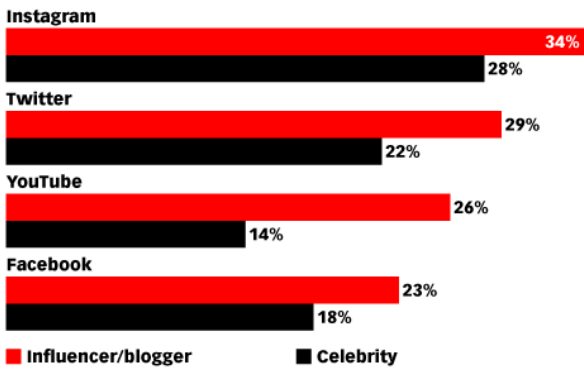
Interested in more ideas for Sparks Street? Check out this post with [staycation ideas](#) for your travel type including restaurants to visit.



d by Sparks Street. As always, all thoughts and opinions are my own. I hope you have as much fun shopping as I did.



**Daily US Social Network Users\* Who Have Purchased a Product/Service Based on an Influencer/Blogger or Celebrity Recommendation, by Platform, Dec 2018**  
 % of respondents in each group

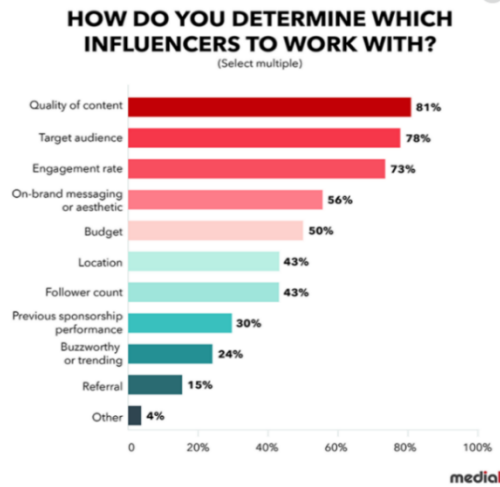
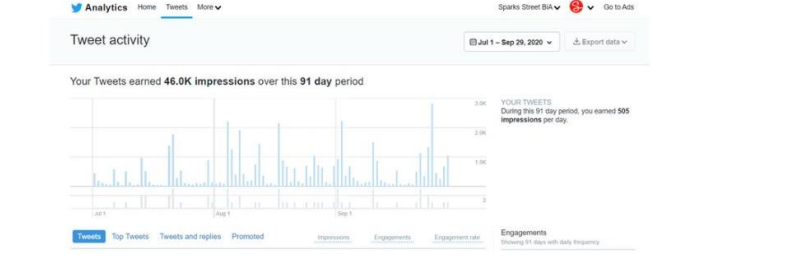
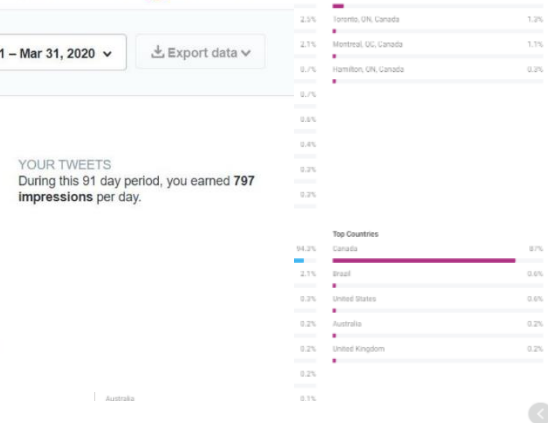
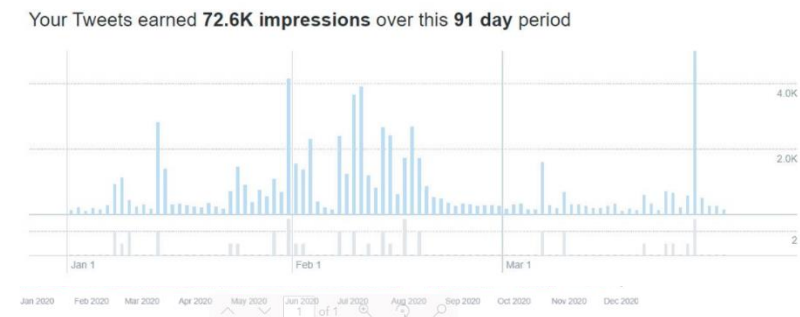
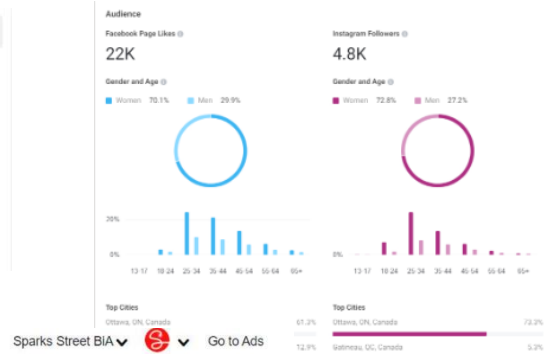
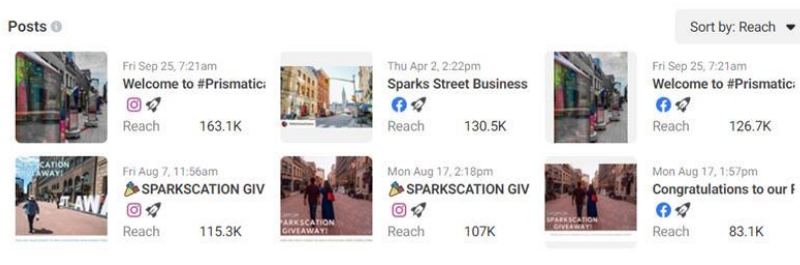


Note: ages 13+; \*daily users of each platform  
 Source: CivicScience as cited in company blog, Jan 16, 2019

244790 [www.eMarketer.com](http://www.eMarketer.com)



**Sparks Street Social Media: Analytic Snapshot**



## Policies and Procedures

### COVID-19 Safety Plan

The Sparks Street BIA and Mall Authority staff is a small and dedicated team, all working together to keep everyone healthy and safe everyday - especially during the Covid-19 crisis. An open environment exists where suggestions and concerns could be shared between individual staff members and the entire team. A COVID-19 Safety plan was enacted with the understanding of inherent risks, administrative controls, screening tools, changes to the ways people work and interact, procedural training and signage was set forth to lower the risk of transmission. For example:

- policy to limit the number of people in a space at one time
- schedules to stagger work shifts and breaks
- established cleaning and disinfection protocols
- provided education and training on proper hand washing techniques
- use of mandatory masking and PPE such as hand sanitizer which was provided by the office
- visitor policy
- isolation and communication protocols
- effort for all meetings with external clients using electronic means and E-Votes
- inclusion of this safely plan as part of our weekly staff meetings

### Anti-Harassment & Anti-Discrimination Policy

Approved in June 2020, Sparks Street is committed to fulfilling its obligation to provide every Member and Employee with a work environment that is safe and free from harassment and discrimination on the grounds set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code (the "Code").

Sparks Street will not tolerate harassment or discrimination on the grounds set out above of any of its Members or Employees in any of its workplaces, by anyone, including: other employees of the SSBIA and non-employees.

Accordingly, this Policy applies to all of the SSBIA's employees, Members, volunteers, students on placements, and individuals contracted by the organization.

### GBA+



The team at Sparks Street became GBA+ certified as a step forward in our commitment to GBA+ analysis planning. We are actively working to strengthen its implementation as we plan exciting experiences for our valued residents and visitors.

We encourage all members and visitors to incorporate GBA+ into their work by asking some basic questions and challenging personal assumptions about diverse groups. Through the systematic use of GBA+, we are all able to improve our work, services, and planning by ensuring it is inclusive of diverse perspectives.

### Sustainability Policy

Sparks Street BIA & Mall Authority recognizes that the profitability and business interests of the street are closely related to the strength of the communities it serves. The BIA & MA is invested in focusing its resources on the social and environmental impacts it has or can contribute to on the street and within the local community. This policy was created to provides guidelines for procedures and practices to be implemented within all operations and programming to

continue the BIA's efforts to be a sustainable organization within its community. As growth and awareness of sustainable practices evolve, so too shall the BIA & MA with it and continue to adapt. Priorities include:

#### Sustain Responsible Operations

- Reduce environmental impacts by building sustainable procedures throughout all programming, events, and within administrative operations
- Source materials/suppliers responsibly, ethically, and locally to the best of our ability
- Consistently work towards a goal of sustainability within our organization

#### Empower Through Opportunity

- Encourage members and staff to actively seek out new opportunities for initiatives
- Engage with like-minded organizations and individuals
- Provide partners with opportunities to promote their sustainable initiatives to Sparks Street members and visitors

#### Education

- Provide educational opportunities to members through workshops and information sessions/distribution
- Ensuring staff awareness of local initiatives and policies that can be adopted within our own programs and operations
- Promote increased public awareness and community participation in Sparks Street programs and initiatives

#### **Third Party Events**

For a Third Party Organizer to execute an event on Spark Street, they must provide specific details. A formal policy document was created and will be implemented as events return to Sparks Street with considerations for a thorough event proposal from the partner or client, including proof of insurance, fees, considerations for Sparks Street businesses, health regulations, fire codes, look and feel of physical structures, advertising, cleanliness, and use of space. This will set expectation for both parties as Sparks Street maintains its excellent reputation as a desirable location for street activations and animation.

#### **Staff**

An engaged and fully staffed team in 2020 meant a lot of objectives could be met. Our committed team, commendable with their passionate productivity (despite hybrid in-office work-from-home schedules), was a positive force.

- Laura Young returned as Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations in June 2020
- Marissa Lord officially joined the Sparks Street team full-time in March 2020 as Communications & Engagement Director
- Bob Rumscheidt joined Sparks Street in March 2020 as Site and Logistics Manager
- Executive Director, Kevin McHale, celebrated his seventh year with the organization

# ON THE STREET IN 2020

## Covid 19 & PPE:

- In late Spring, Sparks Street Phone booths signage was implemented with messaging mirroring Ottawa Public Health guidelines
- Window decals were installed encouraging the public that businesses were open
- Social Distancing floor stickers with footprints illustrating distance-friendly service were designed, offered, and installed to all interested businesses
- Sparks Street partnered with Top Shelf Distilleries to provide sanitizer kits which we distributed to our members
- Sandwich boards were designed for through-fare events such as Prismatica and Songs from the Shed



## Patio Highlights

Patio fees were waived to assist operators in the current Covid landscape. An extended season into winter has been offered and we are looking into ways to support and promote socially distanced outdoor dining on Sparks in 2021. We commend operators on their perseverance through this tumultuous season.





## Store Frontages



As per Section 9.3 of Tate Economic Research Inc. & Community Land Use & Economics Group, Sparks Street Retail Strategy studies have found that when pedestrians pass by as few as three contiguous vacant storefronts, they perceive that the retail component of the district has ended. Activating these 'dead zones' is imperative to rebuilding a healthy commercial base on Sparks Street.

We will continue our internal efforts for active collaboration and cooperation with property owners such as PSPC, NCC as Sparks Street looks to animate identified vacant storefront window to install displays to attract pedestrian attention and encourage window-shopping with the use of backdrops, art exhibits, and decorative lighting.

## Business Directory Update:

- The Peace Room and The Shoe Box closed
- J3 Beauty will be joining in 2021

## Landscaping

- Sparks Street produced two RFPs for multi-year contracts for Bollards and Landscaping. The RFPs were issued in late Fall 2020 with several reputable vendors showing interest. The contracts will be awarded in 2021. We look forward to formalizing the documentation and working collaboratively with our new partners.

## Enbridge

- Looking to replace critical infrastructure under Sparks Street in the next several years. Sparks Staff and City of Ottawa staff will work to ensure minimal impact on surrounding businesses.

## Parking

- New public parking garage opened at 101 Queen Street.

## Cycling

- With the work-from-home climate, we saw less commuters and bike racks were not as heavily used
- Bike Racks were made available for winter cycling

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

### THE SPARKS STREET BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

#### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at December 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

Table 1 - Statement of Financial Position - Financial Assets

Financial assets	2019	2018
Cash on deposit with the Corporation of the City of Ottawa	\$717,731	\$655,556
Accounts receivable	5,503	6,275
<b>Total financial assets</b>	<b>723,234</b>	<b>661,831</b>

Table 2 - Statement of Financial Position - Liabilities

Liabilities	2019	2018
Bank indebtedness	7,969	6,973
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities <i>[note 3]</i>	35,123	47,465
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>43,092</b>	<b>54,438</b>
<b>Net financial assets</b>	<b>680,142</b>	<b>607,393</b>

Table 3 - Statement of Financial Position - Non-Financial Assets and Accumulated Surplus

Non-financial assets	2019	2018
Prepaid expenses	3,815	4,878
<b>Total non-financial assets</b>	<b>3,815</b>	<b>4,878</b>
<b>Accumulated surplus</b>	<b>\$683,957</b>	<b>\$612,271</b>

### THE SPARKS STREET BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

#### STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

For the year ended December 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

Table 4 - Statement of Operations - Revenue

Revenue	2019 Budget <i>[note 4]</i>	2019 Actual	2018 Actual
Tax revenue <i>[note 2]</i>	\$411,944	\$367,770	\$308,571
Sponsorship and other	155,500	180,171	173,857
Payments in lieu of taxation	105,197	167,644	160,522
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>672,641</b>	<b>715,585</b>	<b>642,950</b>

Table 5 - Statement of Operations - Expenses

Expenses	2019	2019	2018
	Budget [note 4]	Actual	Actual
Advertising	406,841	451,460	391,813
Salaries	151,800	120,562	99,949
Office	76,750	31,043	18,716
Rent	29,000	23,612	25,864
Insurance	19,000	13,740	13,125
Professional and consulting	2,500	862	779
Audit fees	1,750	2,620	2,906
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>687,641</b>	<b>643,899</b>	<b>553,152</b>
<b>Annual surplus (deficit)</b>	<b>(15,000)</b>	<b>71,686</b>	<b>89,798</b>
Accumulated surplus, beginning of year	612,271	612,271	522,473
<b>Accumulated surplus, end of year</b>	<b>\$597,271</b>	<b>\$683,957</b>	<b>\$612,271</b>

## THE SPARKS STREET BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

### STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET FINANCIAL ASSETS

For the year ended December 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

Table 6 - Statement of Changes in Net Financial Assets

	2019	2019	2018
	Budget [note 4]	Actual	Actual
<b>Annual surplus (deficit)</b>	<b>\$(15,000)</b>	<b>\$71,686</b>	<b>\$89,798</b>
Decrease (increase) in prepaid expenses	-	1,063	(995)
<b>Increase (decrease) in net financial assets</b>	<b>(15,000)</b>	<b>72,749</b>	<b>88,803</b>
Net financial assets, beginning of year	607,393	607,393	518,590
<b>Net financial assets, end of year</b>	<b>592,393</b>	<b>\$680,142</b>	<b>\$607,393</b>

## THE SPARKS STREET BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

### STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the year ended December 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

Table 7 - Statement of Cash Flows - Operating Activities

Operating activities	2019	2018
Annual surplus	\$71,686	\$89,798
Changes in non-cash working capital balances related to operations		

<b>Operating activities</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Decrease (increase) in accounts receivable	772	(6,078)
Decrease (increase) in prepaid expenses	1,063	(995)
(Decrease) increase in accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(12,342)	22,984
<b>Cash provided by operating activities</b>	<b>61,179</b>	<b>105,709</b>

Table 8 - Statement of Cash Flows - Change in Cash and Cash Equivalents

<b>Change in cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents during the year	61,179	105,709
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of the year	648,583	542,874
<b>Cash and cash equivalents, end of the year</b>	<b>\$709,762</b>	<b>\$648,583</b>

Table 9 - Statement of Cash Flows - Cash Breakdown

<b>Cash and cash equivalents consist of</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Bank indebtedness	\$(7,969)	\$(6,973)
Cash on deposit with the Corporation of the City of Ottawa	717,731	655,556
	<b>\$709,762</b>	<b>\$648,583</b>

**CONTACT:**

Sparks Street BIA & Mall Authority  
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