

DOWNTOWN KINGSTON! IT'S THE REAL DEAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BIG DIG Wins National Award for Special Events & Promotions

Downtown Kingston! is thrilled to announce that the BIG DIG (aka the Lower Princess and King St. Reconstruction Project) will receive the award for Special Events & Promotions at the Business Improvement Area (BIA) National Conference today in London, ON. Submissions were judged on the following criteria:

1. **Innovation** — Does the project or program offer an innovative or unique approach to a BIA management or development challenge?
2. **Replication** — Does the entry present a solution, process or idea that others could modify for their BIA circumstances?
3. **Representation** — Is the project or program inclusive? Were partnerships employed to get the job done? Was the community involved in the effort?
4. **Outcome** — Was the impact of the effort significant? How was it measured? Was it compared to an initial goal? Were the goals and objectives reached?

The BIG DIG campaign was twofold in its goals: to maintain effective communications to businesses regarding the construction, and to market the downtown as a desirable place to shop, dine and enjoy during construction. From the outset, the objective was to “lighten” the mood surrounding the construction and do something unique, while at the same time, not discounting the very legitimate concerns of downtown businesses. This was done by highlighting the historic nature of the downtown with a Sewer Tourism theme. The catch phrase for the BIG DIG was “We’re unearthing the oldest limestone sewers on earth!” which aimed at peaking people’s curiosity and grabbing media attention through a significant media and PR campaign. The promotion was highlighted by “BIG DIG Deals” offered in many downtown businesses, and Sewer Visor T-shirts and hats that were purchased by merchants and their customers, and distributed to the crews on the construction site.

Effectively communicating with the businesses was another focus of the BIG DIG campaign. Disseminating information through newsletters and websites, flyers, personal visits, emails, surveys and meetings worked to engage them. This started over a year in advance with businesses in the construction zone. This enabled them to properly plan their purchasing, marketing and human resource requirements during the project. “The City of Kingston deserves a lot of credit in this whole process” says Rob Tamblyn, Development Manager at Downtown Kingston! “They really thought outside the box here and instead of issuing a tender for the project, they issued a Request for Proposal that included a significant marketing component. That detail really allowed us to focus on the communications aspect of the project and not just the infrastructure that was going into the ground”. The successful contractor, Len Corcoran Excavating, had at least 1 person on site all the time with a dedicated cell phone to answer any questions or concerns that businesses were having.

Understandably, there was a significant amount of concern leading up to the Princess Street Construction phase. It is important to acknowledge the commitment that members of the Downtown Kingston! Board of Management and businesses exhibited during this phase of the Downtown Action Plan. Without their feedback and their willingness to act as ambassadors for the betterment of downtown, the BIG DIG would not have seen the success that it did. It is also important to recognize the outstanding work of Corcoran Excavating, Utilities Kingston and the City of Kingston who continually exceeded expectations with timelines and the quality of communications with both businesses and the Kingston public.

In the end the BIG DIG promotion greatly assisted in softening the blow of a large construction project in Kingston's downtown, and will continue to do so as other phases of the Downtown Action Plan are undertaken in future years.

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