

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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



Kentville Business Community (KBC)  
*KBC works to create a community which is supportive and welcoming to current and future businesses, professionals, and organizations, and to attract people to shop, use services, and spend time in Kentville.*

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# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

What a memorable year it has been! We will certainly remember 2020 for some not very desirable reasons, but there are some good news stories that came out of surviving a lockdown and living through a global pandemic as well. Kentville's business community showed resilience and innovation during a challenging period, and will come out stronger in the end. Many shops created more robust online shopping or delivery options, some have taken the time to improve the look and flow of their shops and offices, and others have welcomed the advent of a surge in 'buy local' consciousness. Most worthy of mention, is the many organizations and businesses in the Town of Kentville who have supported folks who needed help during a difficult time. The efforts put into volunteering, offering free delivery, and providing donations to those in need has brought this community closer together. This past year, former Executive Director Zachary Best took a position with the Valley Regional Economic Network. We wish him all the best and thank him for the years he put into Kentville Business Community. I am excited to take on this new role as Executive Director, and look forward to building relationships with the business community in Kentville!



Genevieve Allen Hearn, Executive Director



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Without question 2020 has been a year that we will not soon forget. Lockdowns, business closures and social distancing have become part of our lives. Despite this, almost all of our local businesses continue to survive and as vaccinations begin, we believe that Kentville will come out the other side stronger than ever.

2020 has also been a year of transition for the KBC. Our Executive Director, Zach Best has moved on to an exciting opportunity with the Valley REN and our President, Wade Tibbo has moved on to an exciting new role as a Father! We are grateful to them both for the hard work they committed to the organization and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Regardless of the challenges presented this year, KBC has accomplished much over the past 12 months and I am extremely proud of the efforts undertaken by the Board and its supporters through such a difficult time.

Looking into 2021 and a post-pandemic world, KBC is poised to take on new challenges with a freshly written strategic plan and preparations already underway for the day when we can get back to holding events, promotions and continuing to support business.

I wish to congratulate every business in Kentville for showing their strength during this time and representing what a true business community looks like in the face of adversity.



Paul Dixon, Board Chair



# ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

## VISION

Kentville is the vibrant, diverse business and professional centre of the Valley.

## MISSION

KBC works to create a community which is supportive and welcoming to current and future businesses, professionals, and organizations, and to attract people to shop, use services, and spend time in Kentville.

## STRATEGIC PILLARS



**Engagement & Communication:** Act as a conduit of information for the business community and engage businesses and organizations in downtown events, activities, and projects.



**Support & Recognition:** Support the growth and synergy of businesses and organizations in Kentville, and celebrate successes.



**Marketing & Promotion:** Promote shopping, using services, and doing business in Kentville.



**Infrastructure & Investment:** Advocate for and assist with development and beautification efforts in the downtown.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

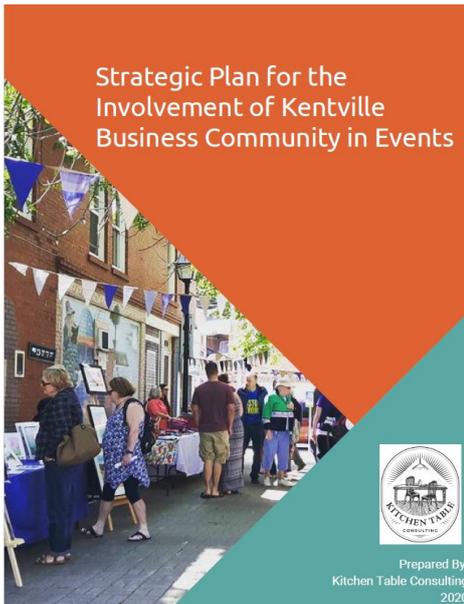
Paul Dixon - President  
Mark Paish - Treasurer  
Hillary Webb - Board Member  
Jason Blanchard - Board Member  
Jaimie Peerless - Board Member  
Gary Morse - Board Member  
Lindsay Young - Ex-Officio  
Genevieve Allen Hearn - Executive Director  
Doug Ralph - Communications Coordinator



# ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

There was a targeted effort to improve KBC's communication with businesses, as well as how KBC engages businesses in 2019/2020.

## EVENTS STRATEGY



The quieter days during the pandemic offered an auspicious time to dig into strategy development. KBC took this opportunity to create an events strategy, to better inform budget decisions and allocation of human resources related to events and activities in Kentville. Facilitated by Kitchen Table Consulting, the process involved surveys, key informant interviews, and guidance from an advisory committee.

The full report can be found on the KBC website.

## KEY FINDINGS

**85% OF  
BUSINESSES AGREE  
THAT KBC SHOULD  
SUPPORT EVENTS**

**BUSINESSES  
BELIEVE THAT  
ENGAGING WITH  
PRE-EXISTING  
EVENTS IS THE  
BEST WAY TO GET  
INVOLVED**

**BUSINESSES  
BELIEVE THAT  
SUPPORTING  
SEASONAL EVENTS  
MOST ALIGNED  
WITH KBC'S  
INTERESTS**

**“It’s important to have a central area that’s rich in colour and art in which to host events.” - Survey Respondent**

**“Events need to be in harmony with the business community and promote downtown as a destination.” - Survey Respondent**

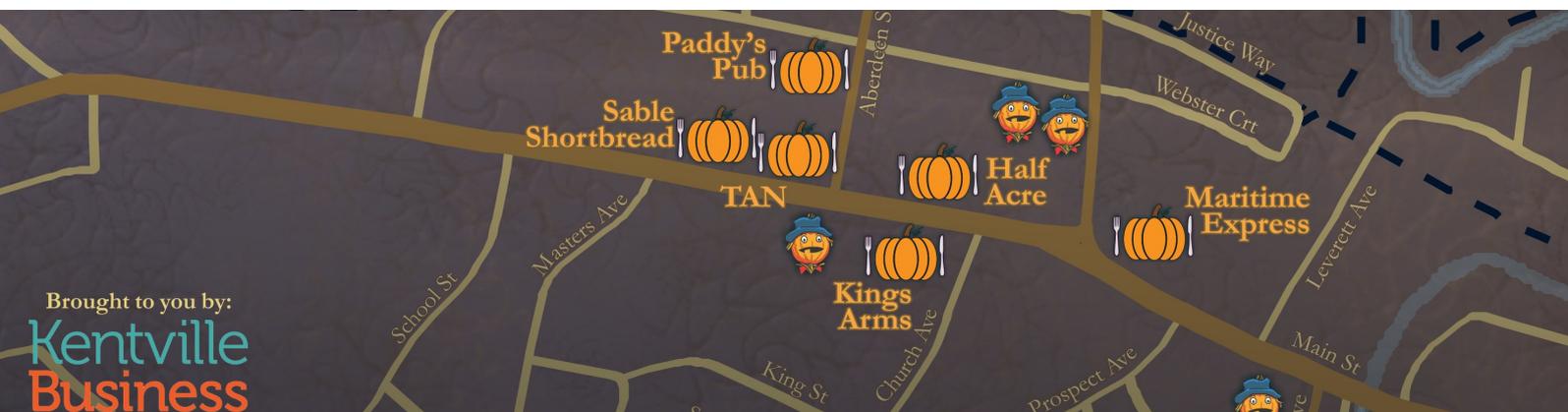


# ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

While COVID-19 prevented KBC from organizing the annual Multicultural Festival, Devour! Sip & Savour, or support other annual events in town, KBC was still able to offer events that encouraged the use of outdoor public facilities and the patronage of local businesses.



Responding to the Town of Kentville's request to activate Centre Square during the Square's beautification pilot project, KBC organized six weekly outdoor events showcasing local artists, musicians, storytellers and more. Activities took place August - October, and were so successful that KBC has planned to turn Under the Gazebo into an annual program.



Brought to you by:  
**Kentville  
Business**

Piggybacking on the popularity of the Pumpkin People Festival, KBC implemented ways to encourage visitors to spend more time in Kentville's downtown core. KBC commissioned Tides Contemporary Art Gallery to create pumpkin people displays in empty storefront windows, and ran a month-long event whereby local restaurants and cafes offered a specialty pumpkin item on their menu.

Presented by Town of Kentville and Kentville Business Community

# Holly Days Festival

The pièce de résistance this year was the collaboration between the Town of Kentville and KBC to offer a multi-day Christmas event that encouraged foot traffic throughout the town. This, paired with KBC's 'buy local' campaign, was a great way to encourage citizens and visitors to shop in Kentville during the holiday season.



The event involved a Santa 'drive-by', the lighting of the town Christmas tree, a holiday market, and a late night shopping party, as well as a consolidated schedule of events that included Town of Kentville activities, KBC activities, and activities run by the Kings County Museum and private businesses. 88% of businesses said they saw an increase in traffic during the weekend of Holly Days, and 72% of businesses declared they saw an increase in sales during the event. This partnered event illustrated the power of collaboration. In a post-pandemic future, KBC envisions getting involved with other assets in our community such as the Kentville library, the Kentville Historical Society, the Kentville Curling Club, the Kentville Silver Gliders, Valley Cheer, NSCC, KCA, and the Kings Family Resource Centre to provide a major, week-long event.

**"It made people move around the square, and it was the busiest evening I've seen in years. Keep building on this!" - Holly Days Survey Respondent**





# INFRASTRUCTURE & INVESTMENT

While the pandemic set the façade program timelines back slightly, there will still be five façade projects completed by the end of spring 2021. The front of 41 Aberdeen is complete, and the back of 41 Aberdeen Street facing Centre Square will be completed in the spring. 12 Cornwallis Street underwent a complete transformation, and showcases a modern take on the two-storey brick buildings found throughout the Town of Kentville. 55-61 Webster Street also underwent improvements this year with a new paint job and updated lighting. As well, plans are underway to paint another bold mural in the Town of Kentville, using a talented artist from Tides Contemporary Art Gallery. This project is expected to be completed by end of May.



41 Aberdeen Street (above) and 12 Cornwallis Street (below) received facade funding.





## INFRASTRUCTURE & INVESTMENT

In November KBC offered a 'micro-grant' program, giving businesses \$200 rebates on exterior holiday décor to make the town look extra special during the holiday season. Twenty-six businesses participated, and the business community response was overwhelmingly positive. 88% of businesses declared that decorating on the third week of November works well for their schedules, and they would be happy to participate again next year.



girliture and Freedom Miniatures (above) were holiday micro-grant recipients.

KBC's Events Strategy identified that Kentville is the epicenter of the Apple Blossom Festival, but there are no blossoms to be found in town! KBC applied for a TreeCanada Edible Tree grant to plant apple trees throughout town, with the support of Town of Kentville's Parks & Recreation Department.





## SUPPORT & RECOGNITION

Businesses and organizations needed a different kind of support during the lockdown and subsequent COVID-19 restrictions. There were an unfortunate few businesses that couldn't survive the pandemic pressures, but most found ways through. Kentville Business Community acted as a conduit of information during the uncertainty of the lockdown. KBC sits on a regional economic development task force, led by Valley Regional Enterprise Network, to stay abreast of developments and opportunities for businesses and organizations during the pandemic. This information was then relayed to KBC members through communication channels including newsletters and KBC's Facebook page.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, KBC still found ways to support and recognize businesses in town.



Retailers across town (above) were given #wearekentville bags to help promote their shops during the holiday season. Valley Stove & Cycle (bottom, left) received the David White Trophy for 'Most Holiday Spirit' for their décor and Bricks & Birches (bottom, right) were welcomed to Kentville through KBC's new 'welcome program' that includes a welcome gift package, a feature in KBC's newsletter, and a post on KBC's social media platforms.





# MARKETING & PROMOTION

During a stay-at-home year, all eyes were on computer screens. Kentville Business Community contracted a Communications Coordinator in the early fall, who took this moment in time to build content for a captive audience. Facebook and Instagram engagement increased significantly this past year.

Additionally, the website was revamped to be more user-friendly, and the newsletter - which KBC uses as it's main form of communication with members - has adopted a regular monthly schedule. Currently, there are over 400 newsletter recipients (increase of 100% since 2019).



The new interface makes navigating the KBC website more user-friendly (left).



Instagram and Facebook followers and engagement with content has seen a significant increase this past year (below).



## Kentville Business Community

@kentvillebusinesscommunity · Community Organization

2,024 people like this

2,285 people follow this



KBC has also teamed up with Town of Kentville to develop a streamlined message for happenings in Kentville.

The community page in The Grapevine (left) is an example of a collaborative marketing strategy between KBC and the Town of Kentville.



## MARKETING & PROMOTION

On the coattails of two successful *Discover Kentville* promotional videos with Canopy Creative, Kentville Business Community signed on for five more videos to highlight the unique offerings in town. When the lockdown order was announced, KBC released a 'Project Stay Home' video with thoughtful and heartfelt messages from businesses and residents. This video received KBC's most views yet - with 48.6K views to date.

Shortly after the lockdown lifted, KBC released a 'Welcome Back' video showing residents enjoying the sunnier weather and participating in retail experiences around town. This video has been viewed 40.9K times so far.

The holidays brought some uncertainty. Mask wearing was enforced, and the Atlantic 'bubble' had closed. But one thing was certain - people wanted to support local businesses to ensure their survival through a challenging period. Around the same time, the plastic bag ban was enforced provincially. KBC used this opportunity to hand out re-useable #wearekentville branded bags to businesses, and highlight these bags in a promotional video. The result was KBC's most creative video yet - a holiday shopping video from the perspective of a re-useable bag.

KBC used this promo as a launchpad for a 'buy local' campaign, as well as a 'tag for the bag' give-away, using the branded bags filled with items seen in the video.

