

HISTORIC KINGSTON SHOP PROJECT

Some Suggestions for Action

SHORT-TERM

1. Focus on the local market

- a. Use surveys to collect demographics (if not already being done).
- b. Promote the historic Kingston shopping area in its suburbs and Frontenac.

2. Free, with an effort

Nothing I have ever succeeded in over the course of my political career came without having to fight for it: (Adapted from an early Encyclopaedia Britannica description of Benjamin Disraeli's life).

- a. Engage the Whig Standard with a series of articles focusing on the different types of shops in the historic core. If needs be, take turns being a journalist and write the articles, with a small editing committee to provide consistency. (Most of us have had the practice, haven't most people been to university where all that time was spent writing essays?). Articles need not be longer than 400 words.

Digital cameras are quite good at taking photographs with or without flash, and there are bound to be some excellent amateur photographers. Examples: Fashion boutiques, art galleries, changes over the years, etc.

- b. Engage local radio/cable television with community-oriented interviews. Run a **Shop Local** campaign (as previously done in past years). As most of this area has an historical past worth exploring and merchant-owners who have struggled to succeed over the years, there are many human-interest stories.

Note: It's important to present a positive picture of what this intriguing area has to offer. This is not the time to dwell on problems in public.

3. Make a concerted effort to attract shoppers from the suburban areas.

- d. Collectively, promote the area for shopping.
If the **Cataraqui Centre** can promote its shops with billboard and newspaper advertisements locally, the historic core shops might emulate its example.
Bring out the unique character of the shops. Contrast them with big box stores.

4. If parking is an issue, can anything be done about it?

For example, if the K-Rock Centre has an event that will make downtown parking difficult, tell people through city emails, radio and local television. Some cities employ electronic signs to advise incoming motorists about available parking places and spaces.

MIDDLE-TERM

8. Web sites: Develop a strategy to improve on the (external) commercial websites, some of which are unhelpful and really awful.

- Create a competition for the best **local** commercial web site, limited to shops that focus on Kingston (i.e., exclude the well-funded chain stores). Praise, publicise and reward the best.
- Build and encourage the development of an email list that focuses on the shops, restaurants and services as the City does for public announcements.
- Collect, analyse web site statistics and publish the data for shop owners and managers about who accesses relevant web sites.



d. Consistent with most other cities' tourist web sites, the **Tourism Kingston** web site makes no mention of the shops in the historic core.

As a departure from such common practice, the **Tourism Kingston** web site should consider adding a reference to the shopping area in the historic core near downtown hotels and / B&Bs.

Rationale: Because these shops lie within a clearly **defined area**, they deserve recognition as a tourist magnet.

9. Sustainable Kingston

Find ways for shops in the historic core to link visibly to the **Sustainable Kingston** programme.

Two examples:

- A common-design cloth shopping bag promotion available from all shops.
- Be proud: Post signs in shops that describe how each contributes to **Sustainable Kingston**.

10. Brand Kingston's Historic Core Shopping Area and the Brock Street Common

Through the use of distinctive street signage, brand **Kingston's Historic Core Shopping Area** and the **Brock Street Common** as identifiable tourist entities. Encourage shops to identify themselves as belonging to one or the other in their windows.

Improve the Appearance of the Central Business District 2:**11. Learn from other places; look outside North America.**

Kingston's urban history began with France and Britain. Modern-day Europe has had to identify and implement modern solutions to the car, develop strategies for historic core restoration and preservation, and promote shopping and restaurants in city centres. As with Kingston, many European centres and other older Canadian cities such as Québec City, especially recognise the value of their unique historical core areas as an attraction for tourist revenue and invest heavily in their past.

Engage some clever creative sources to make the historic shopping core stand out more than at present. One can see where the effort has been made in past years with brick crosswalks, special sign posting (Princess and Wellington), and attractive lamp standards. Do more, do much more!

The current appearance of Princess Street shows neglect and has been allowed to grow tired. The City seems careful to control changes to historic buildings (e.g., restoration of the Robert Macklin Gallery building) but only up to a point. In recent years, the harmony of buildings on Princess Street has been disturbed by

- inappropriate signage (e.g., Shoppers' Drug Mart)
- inconsistent building styles and materials that jar with the area's historical architectural tradition.

Raise the bar on imaginative architectural design and embellishment, and look to improve the area's urban design features and standards.

- Consider a future plan to pedestrianise part of the city core and boldly remove car traffic from the lower sections of Princess and Brock Streets.

Who were the champions then? Who are the champions now? Who are the visionaries?

12. Publish a quarterly or half-yearly online tourist e-magazine.

As with any magazine, an online or e-magazine requires good text editing and graphic design and avoids the cost of expensive colour printing and distribution. Excellent examples can be found online.

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