

Hello



Owen Sound DIA Branding & Marketing Project



Main streets and downtowns
can be economic and cultural engines
for a community.



Project steps



- Launch
- Research
- Stakeholder Consultation
- Site Visits
- Branding
- Marketing Plan



The research



- Reviewed 24 related studies, strategies, and reports
- Summarized case studies
- Undertook research and development from other communities



Themes

Businesses and residents would benefit from continued development/ enhancement of:

- public parking,
- waterfront assets,
- walking trails, and
- public washrooms in the downtown.



Themes (continued)

- The proximity between the downtown core and natural recreational assets is unique.
(Trails, escarpment, river, harbour, waterfalls etc.)
- The infrastructure, capital improvements, policy changes, and strategic positioning made to support the harbour/ river precinct are coming to fruition.



Themes (continued)

- The downtown needs to be utilized, programmed, and accessible year-round while serving a variety of multi-uses.
- The downtown is currently positioned as a regional hub, due to its larger quantity of retail and service providers (compared to other neighbouring rural communities).



Stakeholder consultation/ public engagement



Completed:

- One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders
- OSDIA member survey
- Community & resident survey
- Individual marketing/ branding workshops with DIA board members and city staff



This is what we heard from
the community



Local residents



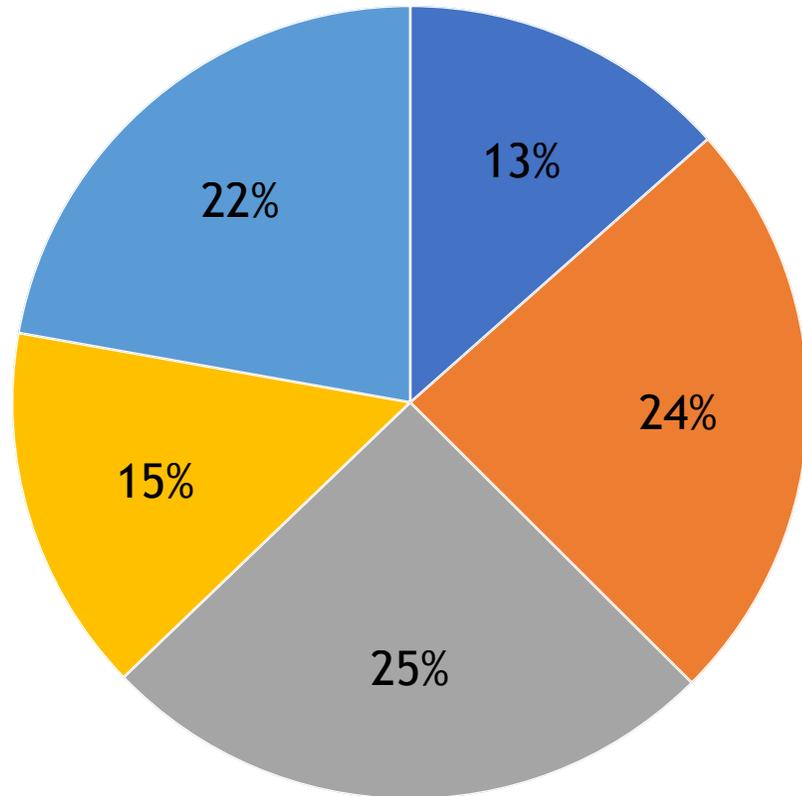
Feedback received noted that:

- The downtown is a working downtown and provides services, amenities which support local residents first, tourism second.



76% of respondents indicated that shopping is one of their core motivations for being in the downtown.

How frequently respondents are in the downtown



- Daily
- 3-5x a week
- 1-2x a week
- Every 2 weeks
- Once a month or less



Most frequented destinations in the downtown include:

- The OS Artists Co-Op
- The Farmers Market
- Waterfront/ River/ Harbour Areas
- Heartwood Home & Heartwood Hall
- Roxy Theatre



Common attributes used
to describe downtown
Owen Sound's
atmosphere/ personality:

- Friendly
- Artistic
- Eclectic
- Beautiful
- Quaint
- Charming
- Historic
- Potential



Top references
used to describe
the current state
of downtown
Owen Sound

- Vacant/ Empty
- Real Potential
- Scary/ Sketchy
- Beautiful/ Charming
- Unclean/ In need
- Small Town



Feedback on the atmosphere/
personality= positive comments

Feedback on the current
state= negative comments

There is a disconnect here...
but, there is a potential for better alignment
with a new brand



Business community & stakeholders feedback



The business community noted that the current vibe/ ambiance/ brand of downtown Owen Sound is:

Fairly negative - but, at the same time optimistic and acknowledges that there is positive momentum building.



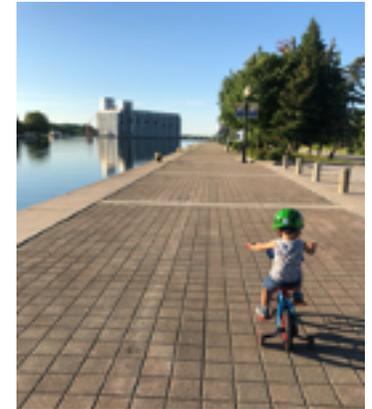
Descriptive words used to articulate their perception of downtown Owen Sound:

- Threatening
- Unkept
- Vacant
- Culture
- Strong
- Distinct
- Potential
- Resilient
- Gritty
- Artistic
- Authentic
- Tired



When asked to provide specific imagery to represent downtown Owen Sound a variety of images were provided, including:

- Visuals of the harbour,
- Sydenham River,
- Walking/ cycling/ driving along waterfront,
- Street flowers/ trees,
- Food & beverage experiences,
- Property standards, and
- Red brick buildings or historical architecture.



Strengths

- Quality and variety of businesses
- The Farmers Market and food scene
- Downtown's location in relation to the river and, as a regional hub

Weaknesses

- Vacant storefronts & unmaintained infrastructure
- Issues with lack of initiative/ collaborative team effort
- Visible poverty and correlating issues



Opportunities

- Waterfront/ River Precinct development
- Marketing & business attraction
- Partnerships

Threats

- Post COVID economy for restaurants, businesses and downtown programming
- Property issues including neglect & tax rebate for vacancies
- Pedestrian safety



Summary of all research findings



- The business community must come together
- Residents and business owners have legitimate concerns about safety
- The timing is perfect for an identity change
- We have the ability to change perceptions and re-write the story



The brand story in development



Downtown Owen Sound brand
perceptions are evolving.



Please note
We will now refer to
"Downtown Owen Sound"
as "the region".



When **bold changes** need to be made,
bold moves need to be taken.



Are You **Bold**?



So, assuming that there is a taste for renaming the region, what would it be called?

Good question...



It was clear in the survey responses, that the River is a large part of the region. It has been overlooked for years. In fact, much of the city's architecture has turned its back on the river.

The river is an element that can create tangible experiences while at the same time romanticizing the region with a name that is has been associated with positive connotations.



District: an area, region, or section with distinguishing character.

By incorporating the word “District”, we are attaching the River to *the region* and in turn, attaching all of the positive connotations to *the region*.



The River District

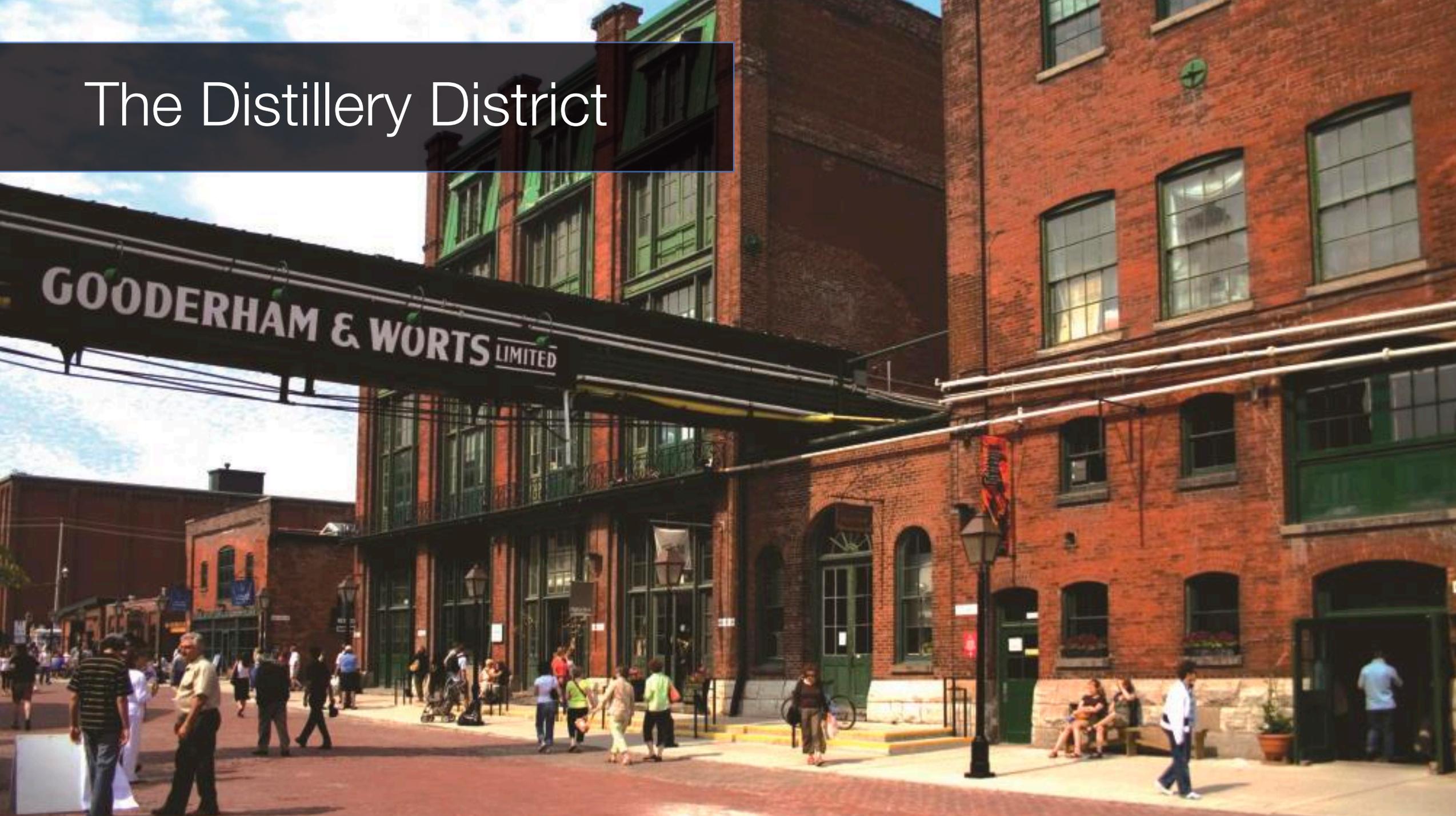


The term 'District' is an established term used in big cities to divide the city into consumable and marketable areas.

For example, Entertainment District, Fashion District etc.



The Distillery District



“The Distillery District”

- Cobblestone streets & red brick architecture
- Transformed into a district in 2001 - multiple years to gain notoriety
- Upscale, pedestrian friendly area
- Year round appeal
- 100+ tenants and no big box/ chains
- emphasis on niche retail and services



Toronto Entertainment District



A nighttime photograph of a busy Toronto street, likely Yonge Street, showing light trails from traffic and numerous illuminated billboards. The billboards include advertisements for 'rookie blue', 'Sears home services', 'FALLSVIEW', 'ALL ABOUT MEN TOUR', 'Lacoste', 'XXI FOREVER', 'SHARP', 'WE DARE YOU', 'NOW OPEN! BOOK TODAY!', and 'IT COULD BE YOU'. The scene is vibrant with city lights and a sense of constant activity.

“Toronto Entertainment District”

- Concentration of theatres/ performing arts, centres, nightclubs
- Bright lights
- Action
- So much to choose from
- In the heart of the city
- Busy/safe streets

The River District is a place where people gather.

It is a destination for people looking for a city experience, in a rural setting.

It is a place where people feel safe and meander.

It is a place for celebration and community.



The River District is an evolution of
Downtown Owen Sound.

It is the place where a rich history can be
honoured and the future successes can be
realized.



What the name River District will do:

- Re-establish a connection to the river/harbour,
- Be a place people want to be part of,
- Take time to take hold,
- Be a rallying point for people to get behind,
- Define what the 'region' looks like,
- Create a sense of place and pride,
- Require everyone to be on board and on the same page,
- Be something visitors can connect with, and
- Become the envy of other communities.



To Sum Up



Are You **Bold**?



Questions?





Development, Management & Marketing