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Downtown's evolution inspires rebranding

By Jan Dean

Downtown Brampton's revitalization has been underway for years. It started with a vision of what the Downtown could be. And the people of Brampton bought into this vision of a vibrant downtown where people could live, work, and play. Brampton City Council bought into it, and built the City Hall and the Rose Theatre. Developers bought into the vision and started building condos. Downtown businesses bought in and started investing money in refurbishing old buildings that were built when the Downtown was the place to be in Brampton.

It's really happening. Downtown Brampton is evolving – and people are seeing it differently. It is definitely time to rebrand what we've got.

Karen Campbell, president of the Brampton Downtown Development Corporation (BDDC) says the changes in public perception of the Downtown really showed up in the electronic survey her organization conducted last fall. “Approximately 75 per cent of the more than 130 people in our survey agreed or strongly agreed with two statements: that Downtown is a centre for artistic and cultural experiences; and that the Downtown is a great place for community events and celebrations,” says Campbell.

There had been a number of logos being used to market the downtown, which created confusion in the marketplace. The survey findings validated the need for a new unified brand identity for the BDDC. “We wanted something new that reflected how people see the Downtown now,” says Campbell. “And definitely the Rose Theatre has been the catalyst for the change in perception of the Downtown.”

The Downtown rebranding group was small and made up of the Chair of the Marketing & Communications Committee, David Harmsworth and the three staff members of the BDDC: Campbell, Lisa Wright, manager of Marketing & Events, and Administrative Assistant Charlene Kelly. It meant they could make decisions and move quickly. The process started by hiring Interkom, a marketing group with a lot of experience in branding and rebranding. The added advantage was Interkom's experience working with Brampton – they handled the marketing launch of the Rose Theatre as well as working with the Brampton Economic Development Office and the William Osler Health Centre Foundation.

The goal was to develop a new logo for the Downtown, and a tagline to go with it. What they came up with is a colourful design that is made up of four banners of different colours and the tagline of “Imagine it here.”

Campbell is as enthused about the logo as she is about the tagline. “The logo is bright and simple – all the best logos are simple, so they look good when they're printed small on a business card.” And while you may not like all the colours, it's unlikely you won't like some of

them. Orange is for celebration, blue is business, arts and culture are represented by yellow and green is for lifestyle. The green banner is lifting a bit, hinting at all the new and exciting things that will be happening in the future. The white ribbon connects all the banners and themes.

Then there's the tagline. "We never had a tagline before," says Campbell. "But this one, 'Imagine it here' says it all. It ties into the future, and reflects how the Downtown is still evolving and developing. The whole thing is very exciting."

Very soon the BDDC will be sending out a direct mail postcard that explains and displays the new logo and tagline. While the Downtown banners won't be replaced, the new brand identity will appear on all the BDDC stationery and communications material.

Campbell says there's nothing unusual about the BDDC rebranding – companies do it all the time. It's about updating a look, making a statement. That's what the reformatting of the Business Times is about. For the BDDC, it was time to develop a more focused marketing approach that played into the increasingly positive perceptions of the Downtown and hinted at great things to come. The goal is to build on all that for the future.

The economic downturn will end eventually. And the BDDC will be ready to capitalize on the economic upturn when it comes with their new marketing material. The best marketing campaign connects with people on an emotional level. Campbell believes that will happen with the new logo and tagline.